

# THE GAP BETWEEN SYSTEMIC DESCRIPTION AND DEFINITION OF FUNCTION<sup>1</sup>

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## 1. Introductory remarks

The combination of »systemic« and »functional« at first sounds like CHOMSKY's »Colorless green ideas« that »sleep furiously«, it sounds like nonsense. »Systemic« analysis excludes a »functional« analysis. Between both approaches lies a gap. I cannot attend a party and at the same time try to define the aim, the results, the function of that party. For in so doing I'm destroying the party, at least my active participation in it. It isn't possible to have both.

Applied to language these reflections represent only a part of the whole truth. For – within language use almost 3 different attitudes may be differentiated, and it is possible to describe the meaning of a language on every level systemically. But the levels themselves are interrelated functionally.<sup>2</sup> The second level emerges from the first, and the third emerges from the second. And the transition from one level to the next is describable by specific linguistic and cognitive mechanisms. And any transition contributes special stylistic effects to the communication, special »functions« of the lower level in respect to the higher one.

What I sketched briefly is actually the topic of extensive debate within General Systems Theory. I would like to resume it and to apply the results – as I see them – to questions of grammar.

But before tackling that project I have to confess that I'm not speaking to you as a systemic-functional insider. Perhaps I'll use the special idioms which guarantee the cohesion of that group too seldom ... My background is manifold:

1. My main interest was originally the grammar of semitic languages, especially that of biblical Hebrew. In the meantime a change of interests took place, a change to General Linguistics.
2. In 1981 I published a book called »Metaphorische Grammatik« where I summarized the ideas for descriptive Linguistics then available. The result has been a methodology based on the triad: Syntax – Semantics – Pragmatics. Especially the term »syntax« has been totally redefined and is not to be confused with »syntax« in its widespread understanding.<sup>3</sup> The new »syntax« within that triad restrictively analyzes the level of expressions without any intrusion of semantic knowledge.
3. Based on that theory I spent one decade (1985–1995) working on the biblical story of Joseph (Gen 37–50) as an example. The results have been published in 5 volumes (THLI 4: 2 vols; THLI 7: 3 vols.).
4. Not with the 90s did I encounter with General Systems Theory, especially in the form

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<sup>1</sup> Contribution to the »24th International Systemic Functional Congress«, July 21–25, 1997, Glendon College, York University, Toronto, Canada.

<sup>2</sup> KNEER, NASSEHI: »Funktion... bezeichnet den dynamischen Aspekt eines sozialen Systems, nämlich diejenigen sozialen Prozesse, die den Erhalt und die Stabilität der Systemstrukturen in einer sich ändernden Umwelt gewährleisten sollen ... (according to PARSONS) müssen alle sozialen Systeme folgende vier elementaren Funktionen erfüllen: Anpassung, Zielerreichung, Integration und Strukturhaltung.«

<sup>3</sup> C. HALLIDAY xvi: »This word suggests proceeding in a particular direction, such that a language is interpreted as a system of forms, to which meanings are then attached. In the history of western linguistics, from its beginning in ancient Greece, this was the direction that was taken: first the forms of words were studied (morphology); then, in order to explain the forms of words, grammarians explored the forms of sentences (syntax); and once the forms had been established, the question was then posed: 'what do these forms mean?'. « – That report certainly quotes correctly the standard position of grammarians using their own jargon. But it should be added that usually the »forms« are not identified as such but on the basis of the knowledge of contents/functions attached to them. So traditional »syntax« pretends to analyse »forms of sentences«. But as any »sentence« is a semantic unit such a »syntax« always represents a mixture of observations on the expression (=form) level with definitions of function on a semantic level.

LUHMANN gave to it.

5. And not until the 90s did I encounter with the concept of systemic-functional grammar. And there I discovered a great similarity between my ideas from 1981 and the concept HALLIDAY published 1985 on the basis of previous works.

On the basis of all these experiences I would like to present some reflections. And I hope for a lively discussion.

## 2. Gaps between Constructivism, Deconstruction and empirical research?

Let me begin by quoting some sentences from a previous article in which I expressed my fascination concerning an image used by PETER HANDKE:

»I appreciate very much what the Austrian poet PETER HANDKE expressed. He said that normally one uses language as a number of labels for things. The language itself is regarded as dead, without dynamics, as a pure instrument for informing us about things but not as an instrument to move things. But HANDKE wants to emphasize that language is not a piece of glass through which we may look at reality. On the contrary, he stresses that with language it is possible »to turn things«. That's a German expression with a double sense. First, he wants to say that indeed the language always »turns things of the world«. Consciously or unconsciously – every author turns things by his or her language. The second meaning of that German expression: »to turn a thing« = to commit a crime. Every utterance – if we follow this word game for a moment – has a criminal aspect. I fear that this is valid for my own lecture here, too. ... Therefore, that's HANDKE's conclusion, we have to smash the glass of the language. Then it will be impossible to continue to look through it to a pretended reality. Instead, we are forced to look at the language itself, language in pieces, but now we are able to perceive the elements of language, to determine the function and the possibilities of language.«<sup>4</sup>

Within the humanities – philosophy, hermeneutics, linguistics, sociology, General Systems Theory – the same question is being debated and the same results are established. But the way the writer formulated his insights is simpler and more impressive. So when LUHMANN stresses that in the age of mass media we all are forced to perceive many texts, that means: information selected by other observers who then became authors. And usually in our everyday life we accept the illusion of seeing reality through these products, naively cultivating the error that these texts (news, advertisement, entertainment, drama, narratives, poetry, etc.) are only glasses helping us to see the reality.

General Systems theory at this point reminds us that in such cases we are not confronted with the reality itself but with constructions of reality. There is no direct access to the reality. – So any linguistic methodology has to take that constructivist perspective into account, has to describe coherently the construction of reality delivered by an observer = author. The literal meaning, even that of metaphors – even if it sounds odd sometimes – is the first object of the description of what a text wants to say.

But we still need an analogy to the smashing of the glass HANDKE spoke of. With the name JACQUES DERRIDA is associated the so-called Deconstruction. There is intense discussion on the relation between Deconstruction and General Systems Theory. LUHMANN offers a stupefying solution: He says that we need now – i.e., after having been confronted with a fictional world – an observation of second order which refuses to naively follow the construction of meaning by the author. Instead of the fictional world now the language itself, the style, the literary techniques and artificialities become the object of my description. Not the reality behind but the glass = the language itself is now the object to be dealt with. A second, and up to now hidden meaning of the text, starts to appear. Instead of a referential meaning we are learning how the author is getting in contact with his recipients, how he or she is dealing with them.<sup>5</sup> On that level, any so-called 'objective meaning' has been destroyed like a piece of glass, but we have learned much about the kind of communication going on.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Cf. SCHWEIZER, H, (1992) 39s.

<sup>5</sup> KNEER, NASSEHI 103: »Die Beobachtung eines anderen Beobachters läßt erkennen, daß jede Beobachtung an einen blinden Fleck gebunden ist. Der Beobachter zweiter Ordnung kann daher wissen, 'daß jede Beobachtungsoperation eine eigentümliche Kombination von Blindheit und Sicht ist, also auch die seine, und daß es die Blindheit für Bestimmtes ist, die Sichten auf Bestimmtes eröffnet, und daß diese Sichten ohne Blindheiten nicht zustandekämen.'«

We did reach the level of a critical analysis of texts. We might be content with it and we could underline that we always were dealing with a homogeneous field, namely that of language, or with homogeneous units, namely texts. Both presuppositions are important for any progress within General Systems Theory. – But I think we have to split up that harmony. Semiotics and communication theory tell us that texts are only one element within a real communication which contains further totally disparate elements: there are real persons as actants of the dialogue, these persons are mentally shaped by the linguistic structures and patterns of their society, there is a certain cultural and historical knowledge shared by the members of that society, there are real objects copresent in the situation of communication. It is not yet clear how these important elements can be integrated in a theory of social systems. Are they not too different to be described in one single system? At the moment there seems to be a gap between communication theory and the theory of social systems.<sup>7</sup>

But I think a solution can be devised as follows: any part of a communication event is not important in its crude materiality – as actant with flesh and blood, as wooden table or chair etc. – but only as an *observed* element, as an element of the mind of the author. He or she selected that element when writing the text or at least he or she were influenced by it. So such a material object has become a perceived and interpreted element of my cognition.<sup>8</sup> Synchronic or previous events or texts which didn't influence the author or which even were not known to him or her are not important for our description or interpretation of texts. On that level it is quite possible that a speaker and/or hearer has the impression that not only words and clauses are speaking but also gestures,<sup>9</sup> the way of furnishing a room, the way of breathing, modulations in the voice etc. Seen in such a way it is possible to include historical and cultural events or knowledge. Even here the events are not meant as 'objective hard' events, but only as events which in some way influenced the mind of the author.

The same is valid with texts: If we are faced with an highly literate author then we might detect a deliberate game of citations and allusions which opens additionally to the explicit text a clearcut frame or background present only implicitly in the text. In terms of General Systems theory the question is: which other texts or further events does the actual text define and select as its specific background so that the actual text must and can be understood by the difference, by the contrast, by the gap to that background? Seen in this way we probably have bridged the gap between General Systems Theory and communication theory – at least theoretically. In terms of methodology, of course, the problem arises how to detect convincing relations and how to avoid mere speculations.

I would now like to illustrate these three levels we recognized either from the image from PETER HANDKE or from the discussion about the relation between General Systems Theory and a constructivist or deconstruction perspective.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Cf. LUHMANN (1995) 25ss. – For further formulations of the same solution, see MUSSIL (1995) 82ss. In LUHMANN'S terms one has to respect the difference between »Information« and »Mitteilung« as elements of a communication = social system. – It is very interesting to see that the same discussion is going on within Analytical Philosophy, see KELLERWESSEL: the term *reference* may be used twofold, first *semantically* – according to »normal« and »regular« language use and disregarding the special parameters of the actual communication (that is what we called »naive«) one indicates the extralinguistic object to which a name is pointing. On that level – to give an example – a *noun* normally is a *name* for such an object. But – secondly – a critical *pragmatical* analysis must be added, now including the knowledge about *speaker, hearer, situation*. It could happen that the first semantical analysis is confirmed or has to be corrected (whereas the noun *chair* proves to point to a real object, the noun *truth* does not), cf. 412ss. »Ein Sprecher kann eine Kennzeichnung gebrauchen, um auf ein bestimmtes Einzelding Bezug zu nehmen, auch wenn dieses Einzelding nicht die Kennzeichnung erfüllt, also nicht als ihr semantischer Referent zu betrachten ist ... Weicht ein pragmatisch erfolgreiches Bezugnehmen von dem semantischen Referieren der verwendeten Kennzeichnung ab, läßt sich dieses pragmatische Bezugnehmen korrigieren« (424s). Accordingly, even logic has to differentiate between »pragmatisch wahr« and »semantisch wahr« (428) – the salient point is the inclusion or not of the individual parameters of the communication event which actually is going on.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. SCHMIDT (1995) 225ss.

<sup>8</sup> Such a position corresponds well with insights of 'Situation Semantics', cf. SCHWARZ, CHUR 178: »In Situationen und Ereignissen muß nicht alles aufgeführt werden, was in der Situation auftritt. Die abstrakten Situationen, die man aus den Grundelementen aufbaut, geben immer nur einen Ausschnitt dieser Realität an. Man benötigt abstrakte Situationen, weil reale Situationen nie vollständig beschrieben werden können.«

<sup>9</sup> Cf. e.g. GALBRIS and in a broader semiotic sense: HODGE, KRESS, or in the light of General System Theory: KNEER, NASSEHI 91.

first we have to deal with the naive perspective which takes any description as the reality itself. That is the constructivist position: instead of grasping the reality directly we reconstruct it mentally and expose it to communication (observation of first order). An author offers a more or less coherent fictional description of the world.

second we have to question how a deconstructionist critical examination of the naive perspective can take place. That is the observation of second order: the first order observation (and the observer!) is being observed: How does the author use language? What are the specific effects of such usage? How does this style affect me?

third: beyond pure information given by the actual text further elements of that communication event have to be included. The mediator is the cognition, the mind of the author of the actual text. Do these elements by contrasting or reinforcing the actual text contribute important accents to the communication event?

So we are confronted with at least two main gaps. The first consists in the fact that not only the seducing mind of the author but also some irritating mechanisms in our languages are easily creating the confusion of a fictional world with the real world. The second gap theoretically is not so severe if we accept that under the horizon of cognition the difference between language and »speaking« objects, events etc. is diminishing. The main problem here is a methodological one: How to gain knowledge of these additional elements of the communication event?

### 3. Literal meaning / fictional world

Learning modern languages or languages of antiquity (Latin, Greek) or different semitic languages I early got the impression that we are always using the same categories: *subject, predicate, object, attribute, etc.*. And that impression was reinforced in the 70s by the books of JOHN LYONS, who included the insights from further languages in his grammatical reflections. Sometimes scholars of semitic languages complained about that practice with the argument: grammatical categories of Greco-roman origin are not adequate for the description of a language belonging to a totally different language family.

But I don't agree with them. I'm convinced that the human mind using language of whatever kind is subject to comparable constraints – be that in Germany, Canada or China.<sup>11</sup> I now call these fundamental mechanisms: »cognitive basic categories«. They were first published in 1981; the analysis of the Joseph story is equivalent to a broad empirical test of these universally applicable categories. And if you take only the front cover of HALLIDAY's grammar, which – I think – shows the essence of his system in a marvellous outline, you'll detect a considerable overlap with »my« basic categories. Why? HALLIDAY didn't copy the ideas in my book. Instead, the true reason is a further confirmation of my actual thesis: those with a different background in language knowledge, who start reflecting on language use and grammar, are led to comparable solutions and systems.<sup>12</sup> This confirms the assumption that the human mind using language all

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<sup>10</sup> But I have to express a certain astonishment: what seems to be a heavy theoretical problem provoking heated debates is not so new at all: In 1900 SIGMUND FREUD published his book on interpreting dreams. And there the same positions are formulated and extensively applied. He differentiates between the manifest pictures of dreams and the latent contents of dreams. Due to *Verschiebungen* (caused e.g. by internal censoring) the difference between what is *said* and what is *meant* is often considerable. If the interpreter limits himself to the level of manifest pictures the results would be totally misleading. – Based on such insights, available for an entire century, I published in 1981 the concept of a twofold semantic description and interpretation of texts – then unaware of the terms of *constructivism, deconstruction* or *General Systems Theory*.

<sup>11</sup> Concerning *predication* I tested this contention with a native speaker of Chinese.

<sup>12</sup> BACHE ch. 1–4 extensively discusses the problem of »Universal Grammar«. Our methodological positions are very similar. What he underlines several times is the difference between a »real-world-interpretation« and the construction of »real- or possible-world situations as conceived by the locutionary agent and his addressees« (55). That represents exactly the first level we are dealing with.

over the world has the same constraints, the same way of functioning.<sup>13</sup>  
Let me mention some of these mental subsystems.

### The mechanism of naming – »sememe« as a particular meaning

The example given by HALLIDAY (1994) xviii: *man clean car* as an utterance of a nineteen-month-old child shows exactly that level: the child is able to segment one composite experience into three component parts – as H. wrote. The different parts are perceived and named as such. But I'm not convinced that at the same time »the different grammatical functions assigned to *man*, *clean*, *car* express the different roles of these parts with respect to the whole«. The only thing that is obvious is: the child is able to deal with real objects (*man*, *car*) and actions (*clean*). Both different kinds of linguistic units are named and put side by side. Perhaps a feeling for the different roles of these linguistic entities already exists. But the child is not yet able to communicate that feeling, i.e., to use the respective grammatical forms – I would say in contrast to HALLIDAY. So we only are confronted with isolated meanings, names.

This sememe, this potential actant of a predication can be supplementally described (adjunction): the mere naming is possibly considered too minimal for the current communicative purposes or necessities; this extensive subsystem makes it possible to introduce an established particular meaning in a more specified linguistic manner.

Cf. »those two splendid old electric trains with pantographs«, HALLIDAY (1994) 180.

The particular meaning – simply named or extensively described – can only express the facts (predication) in connection with a second particular meaning (simple or complex).<sup>14</sup> This type of linguistic act can also be understood as a system,<sup>15</sup> with constraints that no one is able to escape when using language – even though at the same time connected with linguistic artificialities that must be exposed.

It's not only here that we are reaching the level of »grammatical functions« or the level of the »different roles of these parts with respect to the whole«, HALLIDAY (1994) xxviii. Don't forget that in principle the same grammatical functions previously formed what I called »sememe group«, i.e. adjunctions. As the functions created a new kind of unit then so a further new type of unit is emerging now, a *clause*. But I want to tell you that a German scholar usually has great difficulties with the English term »clause«. At the beginning of that year I tried together with twelve students to describe and to interpret a text with the help of HALLIDAY's »Functional Grammar«. But the project quickly fell through because we did not find a definition of »clause«.

What seems to be clear to you is in German a longterm problem known under the question: »Was ist ein Satz?«. And during the eighties the question took a pragmatic turn. The linguists no longer focused on the level of facts or that of logic (predication) but started to look for indications of borders within the individual text. Of course there are obvious segmentations such as punctuation marks. Further criteria: only one finite verb (and its dependent sememes) may be situated within one single such unit; there are nominal clauses; the difference between narration and direct speech has to be respected; the old term »interjection« has to be taken seriously; logical conjunctions mark the beginning of the next unit; etc.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Contrarily HALLIDAY ties himself very closely to the conditions of English grammar. I think he does not exploit the universal explanatory power of his terminology enough. – What is different from one language to another is the level of expressions and the way to combine these wordforms, the way to form complex wordforms out of smaller units (kernels, pre-, in-, suffixes). I'm conceiving of that level without relating it to the semantic level. That will lead us to a morphology based on distribution analysis, in best accordance with semiotics. At the moment we are developing an algorithm for it. – DAUSES: »Auch ist die Vorstellung von Grammatik als einem streng gegliederten und durchdachten System weitgehend ein Vorurteil, das in uns durch die lateinische Grammatik, den Schulunterricht und wohl auch so manche Theorie genährt wurde« (15). So the grammar of one individual language is no adequate reproduction of the cognitive structures of the human mind: »die Grammatik weder streng rational und systematisch strukturiert ist, noch als in sich strukturiertes System betrachtet werden darf« (16). In grammars we have to assume a 'hierarchy of levels': a context sensitive search for meaning → analysis of lexemes → analysis of markers of relations → expression level (analysis of phonemes) (cf. 24).

<sup>14</sup> Further necessary particular meanings, actants ([object], [recipient] etc.) can be dependent on this second particular meaning which is placed in relation to the first –  $f(a,b)$ .

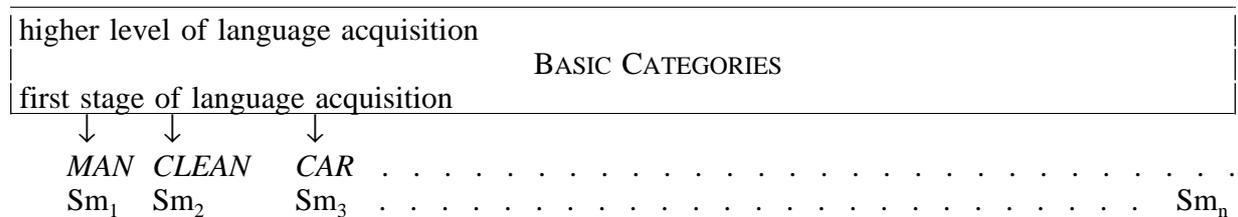
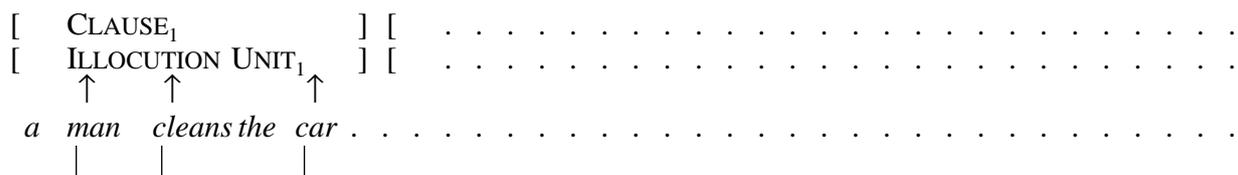
<sup>15</sup> Cf. SCHWEIZER, H (1989) and (1995) chaps. 5.7.3; 5.8.1 etc.

<sup>16</sup> For an overview on that debate: SCHWEIZER (1994), OSWALD (1995). GIL 49 quoting HALLIDAY/HASAN from 1976 seems to confirm my scepticism about their separation of »text« as a semantic unit from the level of grammatical units. Contrarily, I'm interested in segmenting the text in a textual perspective and in integrating pragmatics into grammar. (But the opinion of GIL that the term »Äußerungseinheit« was invented by RATH 1990 is wrong, as can be seen by a glance in my »Metaphorische Grammatik« (1981) 23ss.31ss.)

Segmenting a text with such criteria leads us to units that are based on the mechanism of »predication« (verbal or nominal clause) and those which are not. I call these units »illocution units« either phrastic or aphrastic.<sup>17</sup>

By pure enumeration I want to call to mind further different cognitive domains, each one capable of being regarded as a separate system: Since KANT, at the latest, we are aware of the fact that we can imagine facts only if they are located in (*sic!*) space and time (deixis). The categorical recognition of both subsystems is not at all trivial.<sup>18</sup> – When using the systems mentioned so far, the speaking subject can formulate his or her own attitude towards the facts (codes = modalities) or he/she can refrain from doing this, which again creates the impression of an objective, correct description of the facts.<sup>19</sup> – In theory, all the more in everyday speech, the combination of these systems has to be concentrated to give the impression of purposeful homogeneous action. This is accomplished by the system of possible elocutions (illocution).<sup>20</sup>

These individual cognitive systems represent particular functions that are crucial for any linguistic usage in any particular language. They may be conceived of as separate mental orientations, which all together contribute to the creation of the complex linguistic unity which we call e.g. »clause«.<sup>21</sup>



And by combining clauses it is possible to create such literary units as »scenes« or »episodes« which reinforce the impression that we are confronted with a complex piece of reality even in instances like the following example where nothing really refers to the outside world:

<sup>17</sup> In German: »Äußerungseinheit«, phrastisch (=satzhaft) or aphrastisch (nicht-satzhaft).

<sup>18</sup> For a analysis of that pair in terms of General Systems Theory see CIOMPI.

<sup>19</sup> It is amazing how little attention is usually paid to this important subsystem in grammars. The mistake often lies in the assumption that one does justice to the problem by listing modals or corresponding conjugational forms. Cf. our division of the subsystem in six independent fields, the question being repeated on several levels of interpretation: SCHWEIZER, H (1995) chaps. 5.7.6; 5.9.5; 5.11 as well as the practical analyses in vol. I + II. – HALLIDAY is close to that concept, take his »world of consciousness« with its subdivisions of »saying, thinking, feeling, seeing«.

<sup>20</sup> SCHWEIZER, H (1995) chaps. 5.7.8; 5.12. – I didn't find that aspect or term in HALLIDAY (1994). – Initially, one can orient oneself on K. BÜHLER's *organon*-model to discover the essential options before developing further differentiations: Am I going to represent facts? Am I going to cause an interlocutor to act in a specific way? Am I going to express my own feeling at present?

<sup>21</sup> See the outline in SCHWEIZER THLI 7, vol.iii, 71.

37:18a	They saw him already from afar.	B	→	CODE EPISTEMOLOGY
37:18b	And before he reached them	A	→	DEIXIS: CHRONOLOGY
37:18c	they conspired against him to kill him.	S	→	CODE IMAGINATION/AXIOLOGY
37:19a	They said to one another:	I	→	CODE EPISTEMOLOGY
37:19b	»Behold,	C		CODE INITIATIVE
37:19c	here comes that master of the dreams!			
37:20a	Come on!	C		
37:20b	Go ahead!	A		
37:20c	Let us kill him,	T		
37:20d	and throw him into one of the wells!	E		
37:20e	We will say:	G		CODE EPISTEMOLOGY
37:20f	'An evil beast devoured him.'	O		
37:20g	Then we will see	R		
37:20h	what becomes of his dreams!«	.		

Don't forget: at that first and naive semantic level, fiction is the result of language use. »Nouns« give the impression of pointing to individual objects of the reality outside our mind. »Tree« and »truth« from this perspective are equivalent. »Verbs« seem to be »predicates«<sup>22</sup> i.e. to refer to real actions in the outside world. »The boy throws« from this perspective is equivalent to »the philosopher thinks«. »Predications« = clauses seem to refer to facts of the real world. From this perspective »the river is flowing« and »god is announcing« both have the same density of reality.

It is not only the creative fictional capacity of the author that is urging us to reconstruct such imaginative worlds. More closely to our field of research it must be stressed that many elementary mechanisms of our languages have seductive effects. We cannot avoid that first step of semantic analysis. It is necessary to see exactly that fictional world offered to us by the text. But we would be greatly misled by stopping our research here. The glass of language must be smashed.

#### 4. Critical analysis of language = Smashing the glass

Any author is an element of his or her synchronic speech community, a complex social system of negotiating procedures that not only solves pending problems but at the same time determines by self-referentiality which patterns of language, thought, actions, behaving and perception are regarded as acceptable at the particular moment.<sup>23</sup>

The description of semantic aspects presents a gradual and progressive exposure of linguistic artificialities, a progression from the literal to the intended meaning.

The motivation to continue the semantic analysis at all and not to be content with the literal and fictional sense lies in productive conflicts between expectations awakened by each linguistic formulation and the exposure of the impossibility of their fulfillment measured against the basic categories and linked with the respective analytical level.

Let's take some examples: *a man exploded with rage* or *un homme éclatait de rire*. In both cases a man disappeared with a great deal of noise. The reasons are different but – taken literally – the effect is the same. Of course, by spontaneous reflection we correct that fiction: no one is disappearing. The speaker used an intensifying image. Intuitively, we understand the hidden meaning. But children often teach us, that they still have to learn to switch back and forth between these two levels of meaning. Such switching is an ambitious ability of the human mind. – In English, French, German, Hebrew and probably many other languages you may express: *war is approaching*. To correct that fiction we need an epistemological procedure to analyze what is offered to us as actant, here: *war*. Is *war* really an actor to be found among other real persons? The fictional sense presupposes such an understanding. Now we detect that *war* is an abstract entity, disguising the fact that human beings are mentally hostile to each other, and that the

<sup>22</sup> Often there is great confusion when the terms are used *interchangeably* .

<sup>23</sup> The idea suggested here seems to me a typical example how a semiotically given nucleus (cf. the entries in DE SAUSSURE: *arbitrary, convention, speech community*) can be developed in systems theory, offering numerous new insights in pragmatics.

clause says that these human beings are more and more incapable to solve their problems in a civilized manner.<sup>24</sup>

So, methodologically we need a broad second level of semantics, equivalent to the first level. It is not sufficient to describe some isolated mechanisms »above the clause« (as HALLIDAY wrote) like coherence by pronouns, different kinds of speech, Para-/Hypotaxis, metaphors. All these items are important and partially exceed the standard program of grammars.

But that's not enough. The »smashing of the glass«, the deconstruction of the fictional meaning must take place consequently, beginning from the critical analysis of single sememes by reconstruction of the second meaning of clauses up to the hidden meaning of whole scenes and episodes, even to the level of the whole text.<sup>25</sup>

The text undergoes a tough examination on all levels. Some examples:

If the *subject* of a sentence is detected as an abstract noun, then the meaning of the whole sentence – taken in the literal and fictional sense – is destroyed. The new understanding of the illocution unit must be made explicit.

If the *verb* of a sentence taken at the first step naively as the *predicate* proves to belong to the modalities (e.g. *see, hope, command, dream, permit, begin, acknowledge, etc.*), then equally the literal and fictional meaning of the whole sentence is destroyed.<sup>26</sup>

If neither clause nor context provide me with information needed to sufficiently understand what is said, that might be an indication that the author is not really interested in the literal and fictional sense but that he or she wants to express a metaphor.

If a scene – as in the example above – contains nothing else but perceptions and communications, then that piece of context is not a self-sufficient description of a part of the objective reality, but has an – often – preparatory function in relation to another scene where really »hard« action in the outside world is reported.<sup>27</sup>

Most texts analyzed exhaustively in such a way a second time will show a lot of shifts, describable with the »cognitive basic categories«. The fictional meaning is crumbling, and a totally different kind of understanding of the same text is emerging.

One effect of that shifting process is that on any level of interpretation the text is divided in different units which altogether are related to each other in a strict hierarchical manner:<sup>28</sup>

First we are confronted on the level of expressions with a chain of single wordforms. Taking that chain without semantic knowledge the expression of any text can be characterized as unique, provided with a specific structure that can be analyzed by distributional analysis.

Moving to the semantic level – that is what we are interested in at the moment – the following units can be distinguished:

- the chain of single *Sememes*
- several of these *Sememes* may be combined to form *groups of Sememes* (i.e. adjuncts)
- several *Sememes* or *groups of Sememes* form a *clause / Illocution Unit*
- several *clauses / Illocution Units* taken in the literal sense form a *Textgrammatical Unit, a scene*
- after a critical analysis of linguistic artificialities: several *Textgrammatical Units or scenes* form a *Textlinguistic Unit* as a thematically coherent stratum of the text. The TGU's belonging to it may not be contained in the text

<sup>24</sup> Cf. the resp. example in Hebrew and its description: SCHWEIZER (1991) 160s. – Very helpful are the three degrees of abstraction as proposed by LYONS (1977).

<sup>25</sup> See GLONING and his search for a new semantics, including pragmatic features.

<sup>26</sup> The central mechanism of predication –  $f(a,b)$  – cannot be upheld after a constitutive element of it had disappeared. *a* means the first content, about which something is said (= *subject*). *b* means the second content, which is to be attributed to the *subject*. *f* means the function that actually links these two contents together. In the example quoted from HALLIDAY: *man* represents content *a*, *clean* represents content *b*. But the author does not show by conjugation that he or she is activating function *f*. In the case of a finite we could analyse, that *man* and *clean* are bound together by a function that can be determined by *dynamic-initiative*: something happens by will. The additional element *car* is dependent from content *b* and does not have the same elementary range as the kernel of the predication. On the actual critical level, which I call text linguistics, an actant or the predicate must evoke the impression that some reality of the objective world is being described. If that can't be said of only one element, the whole predication breaks down.

<sup>27</sup> In SCHWEIZER (1995) ch. 2.1 (including lists and graphics in vol.ii) a number of such shifts are demonstrated as well as their effects on the whole text.

<sup>28</sup> The following data apply for the story of Joseph: the 2512 wordforms of the expression level are opposed to an up to now unknown number of sememes. These sememes form 757 illocution units (= clauses?); these are text-grammatically classified – still remaining in the literal/fictional sense – in 56 linear text-grammatical units (=scenes, episodes, reports); now »smashing the glass« these 56 textual units of the fictional level represent 8 text-linguistic units under the auspices of a critical reexamination. These 8 units constitute at least one text. Cf. SCHWEIZER, H (1995) chap. 2.2.3 and (1995SEM).

sequentially. There may be interruptions after which a previous TLU will be continued.  
– All *Textlinguistic Units* which are often interwoven form the whole text = *Textpragmatic Unit*.<sup>29</sup>

The idea of acting through language not only requires the description of contributions of discourse in a text. Also central here is the thematic progress of the text (theme-rheme), i.e. the question which isotopies are selected from the wealth of possible semantic fields and what importance they receive. The actors of the text are shaped by the text itself and not by external information. In analyzing their interaction, we have to reconstruct what is said explicitly and literally, which expectations have been placed on the interlocutor, how this assumption reflects the speaker, which subliminal messages are hidden in what has been literally said – on the basis of namable indications. The complete statement of the question which up to now was restricted to the text itself multiplies as soon as we include the statement of the problem related to the entire text, expressed in the following paraphrase of LASSWELL's formula: »Who acts – with the assistance of the text – when, where, how, toward whom, with which intentions and effects?«

In the case of the story of Joseph all the picturesque details of the fictional level have been eliminated by our critical analysis. At no point does the author show that he is really acquainted with Egypt, with the rise of a Hebrew slave there to the viceroy. The author provides us with no dates, no names of cities or villages, he gives no explanation for the horrible famine for seven years. The Pharaoh remains anonymous. The fictional world of the text contains nothing that could be regarded as a solid bridge for us to the world outside the text, to the historical world.

So the additional question arises: What then does the author want to tell us behind these weak fictional elements? – First, we are reading an exciting novel, an extraordinary piece of entertainment in the best sense, including humor, sophisticated behavior in situations of dialogue, sly exaggerations. And within such an erudite and slack »tone« – second – the author is promoting some messages: (a) Be confident in your own abilities! (b) Outside the Holy Land it is well possible to live comfortably and in peace. Egypt as a symbol for a »land of life«. (c) Canaan = Palestine should only be regarded as »land of burial / death«. – So the fictional world of the text seems to be an appealing pretext under which a shift in validations should be initiated.

Doubtlessly, a great deal of experience still has to be gathered here. But a textual linguistics with this orientation can comprehend speech acts as a specific form of »social systems« without any difficulty, can prove *en detail* the fruitfulness of this approach with the aid of numerous descriptive concepts. In contrast, all forms of linguistics (i.e., of propositions) that divorce themselves from these contexts become anachronistic.

## 5. The elements of communicative situation, intertextuality

While describing and analyzing a given text in the twofold way I sketched up to now, we are walking on solid ground. The object of our inquiry is absolutely clear. But now we are confronted with a gap, with the constraint to leave the written text. Of course, we could shy away, could refrain ourselves to the classical task of a linguist, namely to describe given utterances. But semiotics teaches us that we have to take the step from text to discourse (Cf. HODGE/KRESS). Understanding a text is only possible if we see the gap or the difference between its fictional construction on the one side, which we analyzed critically, and on the other side, the environment of that text. Both sides – text and environment – contribute to the meaning.

»Das Verstehen von Texten liegt ... nicht in der kognitiven Konstruktion von Bedeutung, sondern im rekonstruktiven Erfassen der je besonderen bedeutungskonstituierenden Differenzen von Texten und ihren zugehörigen Kontexten. Solche Rekonstruktion mag bei schriftlichen Texten schwieriger sein als bei aktuell beobachteten mündlichen, sie mag hochgradig materialabhängig und daher im Einzelfall sogar häufig überhaupt nicht zu leisten sein. Entscheidend bleibt aber, daß jeder Text seine besondere historische Kontextdifferenz und damit Bedeutung besitzt und daß dieser grundsätzlich nachgespürt werden kann auf dem Wege der Rekonstruktion ihres ursprünglichen Abhebungskontextes.«<sup>30</sup>

There is a principal gap, for we are leaving the solid basis of our text at hand, and there is the possibility that that gap is being deepened or made wider by historical coincidences: perhaps some important elements of that environment have been lost over the course of time.

<sup>29</sup> See the outline in SCHWEIZER THLI 7, vol.iii, 40, equivalent to (1995SEM) 276.

<sup>30</sup> PRANGEL (1995) 167.

Nevertheless, the concept of grammar has to change: the grammar of text has to move into a grammar of discourse. It is important to see that any text by drawing a distinction between its internal explicit structure and its environment itself defines its relations to the environment. And to a certain extent these indications can be controlled with the effect that the huge mass of environmental elements possibly relevant for the understanding of our individual text diminishes and becomes easily or at least better comprehensible. – I would like to give some examples of different ways of bridging that gap.

### 5.1 Intertextuality: citations, allusions

With the story of Joseph we see a great helplessness among scholars. One group dates the work in the 10th c. B.C., the other locates the original text in the Persian Period (5th century B.C.). Everyone who is a bit familiar with history knows that the two positions presuppose totally different historic, cultural, sociologic and religious backgrounds. But which one is valid? How to gain more clarity?

As a first step we took the chain of wordforms of the Hebrew story of Joseph (2.512) on the one side and the text of the entire Hebrew Bible on the other, and we programmed the computer to search any sequence of wordforms in the Joseph story within the larger corpus of the Hebrew Bible. The results have been surprising.<sup>31</sup>

The amount of unique relations between one sequence of wordforms of the Joseph story and one outside further text is relatively high.

These identical items on the level of expressions are not equivalent with complete clauses in several instances.

The distribution of these findings is restricted to certain text collections within the Hebrew Bible.

If we take that text which is alluded to as a background for the respective scene of the Joseph story experimentally, then often a stupefying meaning is becoming apparent.

Such insights allow two different kinds of conclusions:

- (a) The material may be evaluated for a relative chronology. A certain probability is emerging whether the story of Joseph has to be placed at the beginning of a development, so that the text linguistically influenced later texts, or that the Joseph story is to be located at the end of such a diachronic process so that the author could reuse formulations already known to him. In our case the latter possibility is valid so that the Joseph story is a relatively young text, belonging to the Persian period.
- (b) The texts alluded to furnish hidden meanings often in contrast to the explicit text of the Joseph story. The explicit text normally is rational, impious, but the author often alludes to famous theophanies. The difference between background and explicit text is equivalent to a remarkable profanation. While the actor Joseph seems to be a simple and humble young boy, in the light of the texts alluded to Joseph is placed on the same level as Mose and David, even that of Yahwe. Whereas the explicit text proceeds straightforwardly to a horrifying murder, the text behind is calming us down, etc.

So the literary corpus is showing us an author who is playing with a long literary tradition. And »playing« means too: he is reusing these texts in a sometimes frivolous and humorous way.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> In the text the author has selected exactly this number of expressions in exactly this sequence from the repertory of alphabetical letters accepted in his or her speech community and from the repertory of accepted wordforms based on it. This imparts uniqueness to the text even on the level of expressions which is understood to be free of meanings. The unity of this aspect of the system also makes an analytic description of specific effects and impacts of this level possible and, incidentally, allows the highly automatized use of computers. In a different way, this stresses the homogeneous level of language investigation here which we call SYNTAX of expressions. Cf. BADER, W (1991) chap. iii, SCHWEIZER, H (1993) and the articles by BADER and SCHINDELE in SCHWEIZER, H (1995). Seen from this perspective, a morphology can be developed based on systems theory and understood to be completely free of meanings. At the moment, we are working on this project.

<sup>32</sup> The main material for the argumentation is the distribution of the expressions done by the computer automatically. The findings then were interpreted by respecting the meaning of the texts the computer pointed to, c.f. M. SCHINDELE and my conclusions in THLI 7 / i,366ff.

## 5.2 Thematic contrasts

Above we dealt with the fictional world of our text, with the possibility that the literal meaning can be described as a system, where every textual element is included. Now in this perspective of fiction we may search for further texts which realize a comparable fictional world – whether there are relations on the level of expressions or not.

In the case of the Joseph story we find several examples which are divergent in details but homogeneous in structure. And the term »structure« includes both: similar structures and contrastive structures. So the Joseph story can be read in contrast to the books of Haggai, Zechariah, Esra / Nehemia and others. There a centripetal tendency is realized: Jerusalem and its temple are to be rebuilt. The main mediator is one single person who has the best access to the foreign ruler of the occupying power. Together with a religious restauration that centripetal tendency is successful. I'm omitting further details.<sup>33</sup> Joseph equally has best access to the foreign ruler. With his assistance Joseph realizes a centrifugal tendency: the »land of life« is not to be seen in Jerusalem or Palestine but in Egypt. The author is picking up the wishes and hopes of most people of his time and, in contrast, he is depicting a contrastive solution, even intensified by using a humorous tone and often exaggerating allusions.

## 5.3 Historical and cultural plausibilities

Even if one gets the impression that the air is becoming thinner and thinner there still is a link for a controlled bridging between the text and its discourse even on the level of the critical examination of the fictional text world. Behind the first, the fictional meaning we analyzed a clear refusal of the author to describe »hard facts«, instead his text has a thoroughly appealing structure. And against the first impression of mere picturesque and dramatic entertainment we now see that the question of »existence« is omnipresent: Where can we stay? Where should we live? Where is the land of death? The answer is given: the »land of life« is the diaspora, e.g. Egypt. That's an implicit appeal to leave Palestine with its center: Jerusalem.

On the basis of such insights it is again possible to search for further contestations of similar or contrastive texts on the one side and on the other – that is what I want to stress now – to even add material of totally another kind.<sup>34</sup> To give an example: With very different investigations which reinforced each other we up to now have the impression that it is very reasonable to situate the original story of Joseph at the end of the fifth century B.C. On that basis even the Greek coins from that period, found in Palestine, begin to speak for they show us – with other materials – that during that period in Palestine two cultural mainstreams have to be assumed: The intercultural exchange was developing, the universal hellenistic culture was in preparation. Oppositely the Jews tried to retain the identity of their people and religion and not to immerge in the great intercultural community. The reconstruction of the wall around Jerusalem is a symbol speaking for that tendency.<sup>35</sup>

The author of the story of Joseph apparently belonged to the first group. He certainly lived in Palestine (his knowledge about Egypt is not very accurate), but he was multiculturally oriented and at the same time kept a clear distance to the traditions and tendencies in his own people. His text is a kind of mental breakout.

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<sup>33</sup> Cf. SCHWEIZER, H, THLI 7 / i, 372ss.

<sup>34</sup> The bridging of the gap which we are effectuating could be illustrated by the marvellous outline in HALLIDAY (1978) 11.

<sup>35</sup> For further details see: SCHWEIZER, H (1998) and the books by HENGEL and WILLI.

## 6. Concluding remarks

Grammar of whatever shape has to be a means that allows us to understand linguistic utterances. Communication theory/semiotics and General Systems Theory teach us what at the same time can be regarded as a kind of platitude, namely that an utterance only can be understood by respecting its linguistic structure *and* its textual and nontextual environment.

I wanted to show that there are gaps resulting from the existence of several self-sufficient systems. The first one is the individual amount and sequence of the wordforms of a specific text, the chain of expressions taken semantic-free. The second one is – instigated by the first system – the reconstruction of the fictional world by a person who knows the conventions of that linguistic community. The third system emerged from the critical observation of the fictional world and is equivalent with the destruction of the fiction: a sense up to now hidden is elaborated. The fourth system lies in the mostly contrastive contribution to the message by the environment seen in the eyes of the author.

But I did not restrict myself to showing isolated systems and subsystems and the gaps between them. That would be somewhat frustrating. Based on our analysis of the story of Joseph I wanted to show that any system contributes a specific function to the construction of a textual unit. And, last not least, I tried to show that even the gap between highly abstract theory and practice-oriented methodology can be bridged. So I'm convinced that a grammar in a broad sense can be envisaged, describing both the linguistic items as well as the allocated situational influences.

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