ON THE POETRY AND THE PLURIFUNCTIONALITY

OF LANGUAGE

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§1. *Introduction*

The scientific works of the Prague linguistic circle on linguistics and literature are usually found under the heading 'structuralism'. The rival term 'functionalism' is frequently used, but more in the U.S.A. and the Soviet Union than in Western Europe. For American linguistics it is the functional approach which is the truly distinctive feature of Prague linguistics, that which sets it apart both from post-)Bloomfield structuralism, which limited itself to the formal classification of linguistic utterances, and from transformational grammar of the Chomskyans, which dismisses the functional perspective as inessential for the explan-

ation of language and of linguistic competence. In early
accounts of their own position members of the Prague school
habitually used simultaneously both the expression 'functio-
nal' and the expression 'structural' to characterise their
works.

In fact, functional analysis was the point of departure
for the two main concerns of Prague linguistics, phonology
and poetics. What distinguishes a linguistic sound, a pho-
neme, from a mere noise is the function it has of discrimi-
nating between meanings. What marks the difference between
a poetic text and an ordinary linguistic text is the fact
that the communicative function - through which language
comes into being and which shows itself in the concentration
on what is said - is overlaid by the aesthetic function -
which shows itself in a turn of attention (or *set*) towards
the structure of the means of communication, i.e. of the
linguistic utterance as such.

Functional analysis led directly to structural analysis.
Once function had been discerned the question arose what
effect the function of discriminating between meanings has
in the sound-system of a language and how the aesthetic fun-
ction, the focus on the linguistic medium as such, is brought
about. In phonology questions like these led to the disco-
very of a hierarchically ordered system of binary distinct-
ive features. A system of binary oppositions can be con-
ceived as the most rational procedure for decoding infor-
mation. In poetics the attempt to determine the underlying
structural base of the aesthetic function issued in the
thesis that the principle of equivalence, which in normal
speech is constitutive of the paradigmatic axis of selection
(for the selection of a linguistic unity as a member of a
linguistic chain from an arsenal of unities which are

meaningful in a similar way), also determines the axis of
combination in a poetic text (Jakobson, 1960). Poetic
texts are marked by a complex and varied network of rela-
tions of similarity and contrast between their components
which gives them the character of a dense unity (*Dichtung*).

Within the theory of science the teleological approach
has been conceded a heuristic value ever since Kant. It
serves as a guiding thread for research which aims to set
out in a systematic way the mechanisms which are the basis
of a process oriented about some goal. One thinks of the
way Harvey systematically set out the mechanism of the
circulation of the blood in discovering the functions of
the heart. In the linguistics of the last sixty years the
heuristic fruitfulness of the teleological approach has
shown itself in the way teleological explanation has comple-
mented not so much causal analysis but rather structural
analysis. When teleology and functional analysis is dis-
cussed in contemporary literature in the philosophy of sci-
ence any reference to the extremely successful linguistic
research in this direction is missing.[1] Examples are limi-
ted to material taken from anthropology, psychology, socio-
logy and biology, although only in the case of biology are
recent examples dealt with, while in the other sciences the
old examples, to be found already in the classic works by
Hempel and Nagel of the '50s, continue to be traded back
and forth. The absence of linguistics is all the more
regrettable in view of the fact that, quite apart from the
combination of teleological and structural analysis, this
discipline has brought to light a second original feature,
the phenomenon of plurifunctionality.

Literature in the philosophy of science proceeds as
though an object or a process could have only one function.

Even in the case of the single venture in the direction of
a plurifunctional perspective in the anthropological dis-
tinction between manifest and latent function, the former
is characteristically dismissed from the start as a pseudo-
function. On this point analytic philosophy of science con-
curs with the functionalism of the '20s in the areas of art
and architecture, which indulged in a pronouncedly extreme
and, as can be shown, literally infantile monofunctional-
ism. The phenomenon of functional equivalence (one end,
many means) has indeed been dealt with at length in the
theory of science. A sentence can be emphasised not only
by being written in capitals, but also by means of italics,
by letter-spacing, or by underlining. The four techniques
are functionally equivalent. The other alternative (one
means, many ends) remains however unnoticed and unevaluated.
Yet the (potential) plurifunctionality of an object is a
factor which should not be underestimated if we want to
talk about its survival, its future existence, something
which is as important for a pragmatically oriented philoso-
phy of science as is the explanation of its present exist-
ence. An explicit thematisation of the phenomenon of pluri-
functionality is a contribution of the *Cercle Linguistique
de Prague* to the general philosophy of science which has
still scarcely been acknowledged. It thereby anticipated
by forty years in linguistics and, what should attract just
as much attention, in the science of folklore, a movement
which has only gained prominence in recent years in archi-
tecture. After functionalism had stripped away so many
functions people are today trying to give back to buildings,
streets and whole cities ('multi-purpose user-facilities')
something of their lost wealth of functions.

Before turning to some problems posed by plurifunction-
ality it would seem to be a good idea to provide the begin-

ning of an explanation of the word-field 'function'.
Especially in German-language literature, talk of an 'aesth-
etic' or 'poetic' function of language may be bound up with
scientific and technological connotations, from which one
would like to see both they and one's self dissociated.
Talk about a goal is much less likely than talk about func-
tion to lead to the suspicion that linguistic phenomena are
being distorted: yet function and goal are two correlative
concepts. Goals are normally ascribed to independent enti-
ties, functions to non-independent entities. What counts
as independent and non-independent is to a certain extent
a matter of one's perspective. If one considers a speaker
as independent, one asks about the goal he has in mind when
speaking. If on the other hand he is considered as non-
independent, as in the case of the spokesman for a corporate
body such as a government, one asks about his function.
Assigning the concept of function to a non-independent part
of a more inclusive whole has also established itself in
the metonymic use of the expression 'part' for function.
Cultural entities, such as language, and actions, such as
speaking, are *per se* non-independent. With reference to
languages and speech acts one therefore asks not about
their goal, except in the case where these are made inde-
pendent through personification, but about their function.
One only speaks about the function of an object or process
when these are either used by a subject in the service of
a goal, or when they are integrated in a system which is
goal-directed in the cybernetic sense. Functional analysis
(of a non-independent part) and a final or teleological
analysis (of the independent whole whose part it is) there-
fore presuppose each other. It is this intrinsic connec-
tion of functional analysis with the relation between a
part and its wholes which yields the common denominator of
functionalism and structuralism. In coining the slogan

'structuralism' in 1929 Jakobson had put forward the expo-
sition of the inherent lawful relations of an arbitrary
group of phenomena, which were to be dealt with not as
though they were a mechanical heap, but as a structural
whole, as the specific interest of a science which could
properly call itself structuralist.

While the concept of a goal is only used when something
is a means for a subject, 'function' can be used both for
something which refers to a subject and for something which
is integrated in a system. If not (only) the goal-oriented
entity, but (also) the means is a subject, it is best to
speak about its *role*. Talk about its function is also
usual, while talk about its goal is used only in special
cases where objectualisation is involved.

§2. *From Bühler's three-function schema to Jakobson's six*

A characteristic tray of Prague structuralism in gener-
al and of Roman Jakobson's theory in particular is the fact
that poetics is treated as a component of linguistics which
cannot be anything other than integral. One can go still
further and put forward the view that the most important
principles of structural linguistics have their starting
point in the study of poetical language and are marked by
this (Holenstein, 1975). This holds not least of functional
analysis. This was neither an abstractly formulated func-
tional principle nor a schema of functions which was first
of all discovered and tested in ordinary language and then
subsequently extended to deal with poetic texts. It was,
rather, precisely the other way round: the search for the
essence of poetical language, poeticity, that which makes
a linguistic utterance poetic, had led to the distinction

between different linguistic functions and to the discovery
of changing hierarchies of functions.

The earliest moves in this direction come from the
period of Russian formalism. Already in 1916, L.P.Jakubin-
skij, like Jakobson a founder member of the Petersburg "Soc-
iety for the Investigation of Poetic Language" (*Opoyaz*),
had described the difference between ordinary and poetical
language in a teleological perspective:

> Linguistic phenomena should be classified by taking account in
> each particular case of the intention of the speaking subject.
> If they are employed for the purely practical aim of communi-
> cation then what is involved is the system of everyday language
> (of verbal thought) in which the linguistic components (sounds,
> morphological elements, etc.) have no autonomous value and are
> only a means of communication. But one can imagine other lin-
> guistic systems (and they do in fact exist) in which the prac-
> tical aim takes second place (although without diappearing
> completely) and where the linguistic components then take on
> a value of their own (Eikhenbaum, 1927, p.39).

Three years later in his famous lecture on "modern Russian
poetry" to the Moscow Circle of Linguistics Jakobson dis-
tinguished poetical language additionally from emotional
language in the process of arguing against a psychologistic
interpretation of poetry. Whereas practical everyday lan-
guage and emotional language are defined by their communi-
cative function, poetry is determined as 'language in its
aesthetic function'. Poetry is 'simply an utterance with
a set (*Einstellung*) towards expression' (1921, p.31). Here
words have, in Chlebnikov's formulation 'a power and value
of their own' whereas they remain indifferent to any relation
to the object of discourse (the reference) towards which
one is normally turned (*eingestellt*) in practical uses of
language. Poetic language has this in common with emotional
language, that there is in both a close connection between
the phonic moment and the meaning.

In the programmatic "Theses of the Linguistic Circle of
Prague" on the occasion of the first Slavists' conference
in 1928 these approaches were taken over from Russian for-
malism. The section on the functions of language which,
in accordance with the interests of the Prague audience,
culminated in a paragraph about 'the poetic function',
stresses throughout the variety of different functions.
These were indeed listed, and again - as was typical for
the Prague group - in binary oppositions: inner and manifest,
intellectual and emotional (including the speaker-centred
expressive and the hearer-oriented appellative function),
practical and theoretical, as well as language with a
communicative and language with a poetical function. The
prominent position of inner language, which has such an
interior position in analytic philosophy of language, may
likewise be due to Russian influence. At the IXth Inter-
national Congress of Psychologists the two Russian psycho-
logists of language, Vygotskij and Luria had put forward
the specific function of internal speech, and this, together
with its specific structure, were dealt with by Vygotskij
in 1935 in his book *Thought and Language* which has since
become a classic of the psychology of language: its speci-
fic function consists in the solving of problems and in the
organisation of the pursuant actions. It is important for
the next stages that the "theses" (1929, pp.14, 21) assigned
the two central functions, the practical communicative and
the poetic function to the constitutive components of the
speech event. This is completely in line with Jakobson's
Moscow lecture mentioned above. In the communicative
function the intention of the speaker is directed towards
what is designated (*le signifié*), in the poetic function
towards the sign itself (*le signe lui-même*), the linguistic
expression as such.

In the early '30s Karl Bühler, building on an earlier
sketch (1918), published his famous scheme (1934, pp.24ff.)
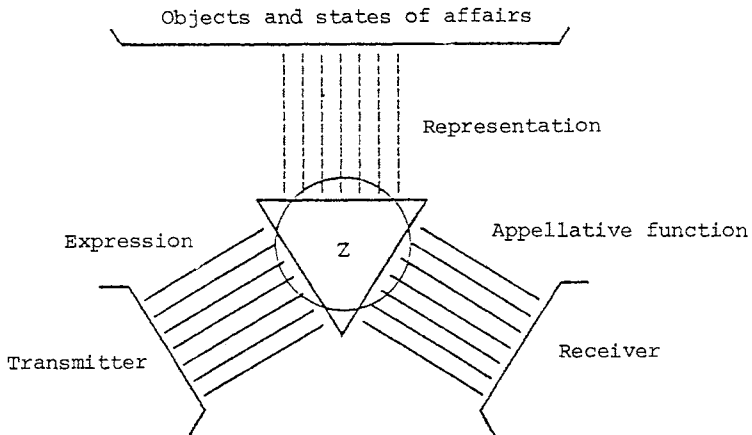of linguistic functions (Fig.1):

Objects and states of affairs

Representation

Expression   Appellative function

Z

Transmitter   Receiver

Fig.1

It was natural for the Prague Circle to take up this so-
called Organon model. There was first of all a historical
reason for this: Bühler was well-known to them through
lectures he gave to their circle and through his Viennese
colleague Trubetskoy. And also two substantive reasons: on
the one hand there was a gap in Bühler's approach, with its
claim to being systematic, namely the poetic function -
which for the Prague Circle was a cornerstone of linguistic
functional analysis. Bühler connected poetic language with
the function of expression, as was then quite common, and
in any case not unexpected in the case of a psychologist.
On the other hand the approaches of the Prague group and of
Bühler had in common the attempt to assign functions to the
constitutive components of the speech event, and to anchor
the former in the latter. Bühler limited himself to three

extra-linguistic bases (*Fundamenta*) of the speech situation,
the speaker, the hearer and the object of discourse. The
linguistic components proper on the other hand he did not
take into account, although his famous schema should have
brought him to realise the importance of these. He does
not make any use in his functional analysis of the central
factor in his schema, the sign Z, although at the same time
it is noticed and discussed by him in a differentiated way.
Rendering the linguistic sign by means of a triangle over-
laid by a circle and the incongruence of the two figures is
intended to indicate the apperceptive complementation which
the sensible sound-material acquires in linguistic use.
The model and the accompanying text directly invite one to
pick out the code as an independent component - the code of
the linguistic system, which is decisive for the appercep-
tive *Gestalt* of the sound-material; the apperceptive *Gestalt*
being represented by the triangle, the sound-material by
the circle. The physical channel which connects speaker
and hearer is clearly distinguished from the merely inten-
tional or symbolic reference to the objects of discourse by
the continuous lines. In other words it was to be expected
that it would only be a question of time before there arose
an immanent linguistic complement of Bühler's model (and
not merely an external *ad hoc* accumulation as is the fate
of most scientific models). The poetic function of lan-
guage corresponds to the sign as a whole, the meta-linguis-
tic function to the code, and the phatic function to the
channel.

    Bühler's Organon model was filled out in two stages.
The first step consisted in bringing together the two ap-
proaches, the Bühlerian trichotomy and the Russian formalist/
Prague structuralist dichotomy between the practical and the
poetic function. It was first set out explicitly and in

print in Mukařovský's contribution to the Copenhagen Con-
gress of Linguists in 1938:

> a fourth function, unmentioned in Bühlers scheme, emerges.
> This function stands in opposition to all the others. It
> renders the structure of the linguistic sign the center of
> attention, whereas the first three functions are oriented
> toward extralinguistic instances and goals exceeding the
> linguistic sign. By means of the first three functions the
> use of language achieves practical significance. The fourth
> function, however, severs language from an immediate connec-
> tion with practice. It is called the aesthetic function, and
> all the others in relation to it can be called collectively
> the practical functions. The orientation of the aesthetic
> function toward the sign itself is the direct result of the
> autonomy peculiar to aesthetic phenomena (Eng.trans.,p.68).

The metalinguistic function was added in 1952 as a
fifth function. (See Jakobson, 1953, pp.556ff.) It was the
heyday of communication theory and of the logical analysis
of language. Communication theory led to a strengthened
and more precise attitude towards the linguistic code as an
independent factor of the speech event and the replacement
of the ambiguous Saussurian opposition of *langue-parole*
through the more concise opposition code-message. The
systematic distinction between object- and meta-language
was urged from the side of logic (Tarski, 1944)[3] as a means
of avoiding the antinomies (of the liar, of heterological
terms, etc.,) and in order to make possible a definition of
truth. In the case of Jakobson (cf. his 1962) a different
priority stands in the foreground: the indispensability of
metalinguistic utterances for the acquisition and under-
standing of language. New and strange linguistic unities
are acquired and made understandable through differentiation
from and paraphrased by means of units which are already
familiar.

Finally in 1956 came the integration of what was now a six-member schema of functions of the phatic function, which had first been described by the functionalist Mali-nowski.[4] Certain linguistic utterances have as their function only to bring about, confirm or extend contact with someone without conveying information with any content. (Jakobson, 1960, pp.355f.) The text of the 1956 Presiden-tial Address to the Linguistic Society of America (first published in 1976) combined into a single diagram (Fig.2) the six components of the speech event and the functions assigned to these (which four years later in "Linguistics and Poetics" were to be displayed in two figures: 1960, pp.353,357):

                         CONTEXT
                       (referential)

                         MESSAGE
                         (poetic)
ADDRESSER _____ ADDRESSEE
  (emotive)   (conative)
                         CONTACT
                         (phatic)

                          CODE
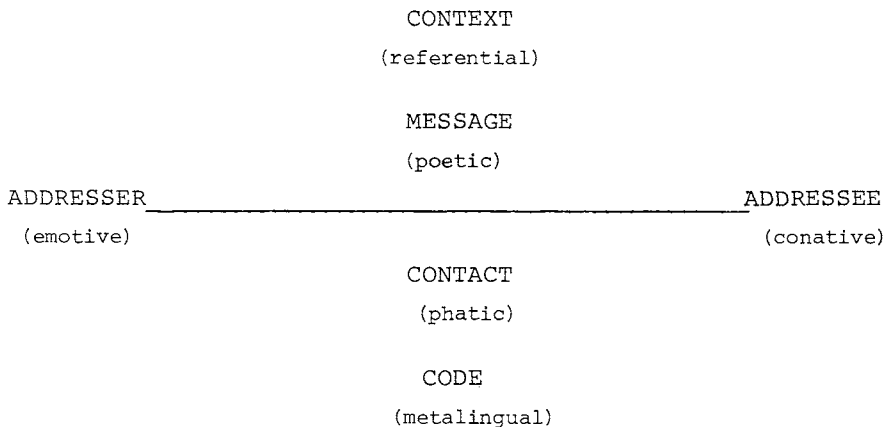   (metalingual)

              Fig.2

§3. *From formalism to structuralism - from the separation of the work of art to the autonomy of the aesthetic function*

In the early phases of Russian futurism and formalism there was proclaimed and indeed there began the creation of a *poésie pure* and, as an extreme form, a *poésie concrète*. The poetic text was celebrated as a pure sound-formation which, when it pointed to anything outside itself at all, pointed not to objects which it designated clearly and about which it made propositions with a truth-value, but rather pointed - synaesthetically - to neighbouring sensations such as odours and colours. It was in this way that Ossip Brik analyses parallelism - an eminently grammatical procedure - as a mere repetition of sounds (Pomorska, 1968, pp.28ff). Those formalists who were acquainted with the philosophy of language were nevertheless soon making use of the Frege-Husserl distinction between the reference and the meaning of linguistic signs, particularly in order to specify the nature of poetic language. As a particularity of poetic language an inner connection between sound and meaning was described, one indifferent to the object and to the truth-value of the proposition (and to its emotional potential). Jakobson's pronouncement at that period has often been quoted (1921, p.41):

> Let others superimpose upon the poet the thoughts expressed in his works! To incriminate the poet with ideas and emotions is as absurd as the behavior of the medieval audiences that beat the actor who played Judas and just as foolish as to blame Pushkin for the death of Lensky.

Later the thesis to the effect that the objectual reference retreats into the background, that there is in the extreme case a complete lack of objects for (also fictionality of) poetic propositions was corrected. It is not the lack of an extra linguistic reference which is characteristic of

poetical texts, but the way in which meaning and/or refer-
ence is made ambiguous (Jakobson, 1960, p.370). The move
towards greater differentiation went hand in hand with the
discovery of phonology, particularly with the discovery
that the expressive material is inseparable in its *Gestalt*
from its sign-function. Sound associations were experi-
mented with, not only the associations with other sounds
and with colours and odours and with varieties of sense-
data but also with meanings. Sounds turned out to be pho-
nemes, 'i.e. accoustic presentations suited to associate
themselves with meaning-presentations' (Jakobson, 1960,
p.94). Certain sounds become associated at all only be-
cause they have meaning in common. The association owes
its poetic attraction to the (semantic) unity in or under-
lying the (sensual) contrast between the two sound-forma-
tions: 'He is naked and bare'. Other sounds have a poetical
effect, because they are ambiguous: 'The *kosa* ("braid" or
"scythe") sometimes adorns the head, hanging down to the
shoulders; sometimes cuts the grass.' In short:'the con-
tents are part of the structure of the poem.'[5]

Language has a multi-dimensional structure and is
plurifunctional. The poeticity of the text consists not in
the exclusion of one of the relations which are constitutive
of language, but only in a re-orientation of these relations.
Having defined language with a communicative function in
their "theses" (*Thèses...*, 1929, p.14) as '*dirigé vers le
signifié*' the Prague linguists, with their keenness for
binary oppositions, described language with a poetic func-
tion with good reason not as '*dirigé vers le signifiant*'
but as '*dirigé vers le signe lui-même*'. Signs have, on the
Saussurian view, two sides. They consist of a *signans* and
a *signatum*. Both components surface in poetry.

Nor, however, does the poeticity of a text consist in
the exclusion of all practical function in favour of an
isolated poetic function, but only in the presence and -
in the optimal case - in the dominance of the poetic func-
tion. In opposition to tendencies in early formalism Prague
structuralism did not concentrate on isolating poetic lang-
uage, the pure poetical text, but on the isolation of the
poetic function. 'What we emphasise is not the separatism
of art, but the autonomy of the aesthetic function' (Jakob-
son, 1934, p.412). There is no opposition to the view that
a poetic text can also have functions other than the purely
aesthetic: it can be propagandistic, therapeutic, document-
ary, informative, for example. What is opposed is simply,
on the one hand the reduction of the poetic function to
other functions of language, the psychologistic reduction
to its emotive function, the spiritualistic reduction to
the idea of disclosure of some sublime theme, the revela-
tion of otherwise inaccessible truths; and on the other
hand the reduction of procedures which owe their develop-
ment primarily to the poetic function, to procedures with
a merely utilitarian function such as the reduction of par-
allelism, an almost paradigmatic procedure, to humdrum
mnemotechnical procedure (Jakobson, 1966, p.423). 'The
poeticity ... is an element *sui generis*, an element that
cannot be reduced mechanically to other elements' (1934,
p.412). With the conception of an autonomous yet isolated
poetical function Prague linguistics, - for which is charac-
teristic the dialectical unification of the opposites which
Saussure and Russian formalism had split apart: synchrony-
diachrony, form-content, *langue-parole*, etc. - has gone
beyond the false antagonism of those who would play *poésie
pure* and *poésie impure* (engaged literature) off against
each other. Simultaneously they have provided their most
original contribution to functional analysis, the themati-

sation of pluri- or multi-functionality and of variable
hierarchies of functions. This was decades ahead of discus-
sions in the theories of science and of art (in particular
of architecture).

§4. *Multi- versus monofunctionalism*

What makes the works of the Prague Circle so extra-
ordinarily fruitful is their concrete approach. Their pro-
grammatic theses were immediately followed by analyses of
prototypical examples. After their insight into the neces-
sity to semiotics and aesthetics of perspectives which take
into account the theory of action, they began with a sure
instinct the analysis of those works of art in which action
appears most directly, that is to say drama and in particu-
lar that sort of drama in which the 'recipients' are most
actively involved, people's theatre. They developed an
insight of theirs of great importance for functional anal-
ysis – that a thing is rarely given with only one function,
but more normally with a whole bundle of functions – for
the case of two illustrative multi-functional phenomena:
dress and architecture, of which they gave detailed descrip-
tions. As soon as multi-functionality as such comes into
the centre of attention the question arises of the relation
between the functions. Is it a matter of affinity, of imp-
lication, of subordination, of incompatibility, of aversion?
And what is the sort of possible change of function? This
change does not consist in one function giving way to anoth-
er which has nothing in common with the first, as is still
assumed in a somewhat unreflective way in the actual German
work on aesthetic reception (i.e. the *Rezeptionsästhetik*).
A more likely form is a change in the ranking (dominance)
of functions and in the varying degrees of manifestation or

latency of the individual functions (Jakobson, 1935b).

A first function of objects of use consists in the fact
that - given their relation to a cognitive subject - they
do not merely *exercise* their practical function but also
- semiotically - *express* it. In the technical terminology:
'The object not only *performs*, it also *signifies* its func-
tion' (Mukařovský, 1937, p.236). A 'natural device' in
architecture is the way in which building-elements, rooms,
etc., are given a form which *indicates* their specific
function. Aesthetic architecture is distinguished from
merely utilitarian architecture through the way the prac-
tical function of furniture and rooms is secondary, and
serves primarily to give a semiotic form to space by direc-
ting the attention and the movements of the visitor. Of
course the practical and the semiotic function may also
part company. There are entire stylistic movements which
set their heart on concealing practical functions behind
architectonic constructions. Such a split is artistically
attractive only when it is experienceable as something in-
tentional or when the distracting form stands in some other
connection with the building, such as for example the case
where, with its monumentality, it signals its importance or
signals aesthetically its outstanding qualities. Only in
bad architecture do function and form stand in a relation
to one another which says nothing, neither in a positive
nor in a contrastive way, nor so as to present consciousness
with additional aspects through amplification.

Certain functions are regularly supported by specific
other functions. Thus the magical function of verbal as
well as non-verbal rites is bound up in a striking way with
the aesthetic function. Aesthetic effects are frequently
the same as those intended by magic. Aesthetic works are

able to enchant. Their characteristic attractiveness pre-
destines them regularly to accompany the erotic function,
which is likewise out to capture the senses. According to
Bogatyrev (1937, p.75) the aesthetic function of clothes
frequently has the subsidiary function of concealing the
erotic function, precisely because of this affinity of
effect. Today, where the erotic function no longer has to
be hidden but at most justified, it is possible that the
aesthetic function is merely an alibi. Bogatyrev's analy-
sis of national constumes shows that there are indeed com-
binations of latent and manifest functions in which the
manifest function is by no means a pseudo-function, as is
supposed to be the case in the examples of the Hopis'
rain dance which is so popular in analytic philosophy of
science. Here the manifest magical function is dismissed
as a pseudo-function and the true function which is all
that needs to be taken seriously by science - the strength-
ening of the group identity of the Indian tribe - is said
to be latent. This function is claimed to be something the
Indians are not aware of, but is noticed only by anthro-
pologists (Stegmüller, 1969, p.564).

Apart from explanation, analytic functional analysis
aims at the prediction of the existence of an object on the
basis of a function which the object possesses in some sys-
tem. It ignores the fact that frequently secondary func-
tions guarantee the survival of an institution which has
since lost the primary function to which it perhaps owes
its origin. Magical rites, particularly, survive a ration-
alising period of enlightenment in virtue of a strong
secondary aesthetic function, often too in virtue of a
religious, regionalist-nationalist or even merely commercial
transformation, which is often very easy to bring about.
An example which is closer to home than the rain dances of

the Hopi Indians is our own Christmas tree. Here a cycle
of functions can be observed which is also to be found in
poetry. 'When, that is, products of literary poetry, them-
selves based on folk poetry, in turn penetrate back through
to the people' (Bogatyrev, 1932/33, p.257). The Christmas
tree owes its wide popularity in Eastern Europe to an
aesthetic and/or status function, which caused it to be
introduced by the mobile intellectual upper classes into
the villages in which, then, its original magical function
again gained the upper hand.

It is however by no means always the case that when a
primary function disappears, secondary functions continue
to ensure the existence of a phenomenon:

> It happens that the loss of one function also involves the
> loss of other functions. Thus when national costumes disappear
> old clothes simultaneously lose their aesthetic value and are
> felt by the peasants to be less comfortable, less practical,
> etc. (Bogatyrev, 1930, p.335).

Certain functions can dominate so strongly that they are
able to conceal functional injury or breakdown in secondary
respects. The dysfunctionality, the imperfections in the
latter come to be realised only when the dominating function
falls away. The aesthetic function in particular seems to
be such that it induces secondary justifications of addit-
ional functions. Mukařovský (1936, p.34) also sees in the
aesthetic function a guarantee of the further development
of a cultural phenomenon which has lost its practical func-
tion. Its aesthetic character is retained for future per-
iods in which there occur possibilities of its being used
in another practical function.

Secondary functions can also serve for the classific-
ation of a domain of phenomena defined by the dominance of

another function. Thus literary genres can be character-
ised to a certain extent on the basis of a function which
for them is of only secondary importance. At least in the
case of classical examples the referential function is of
great importance for epic poetry, the emotive function for
lyric poetry (Jakobson, 1960, p.357) and, one might add,
the appellative function for dramatic poetry with its moral-
ising and didactic tendency.

The fate of whole artistic genres and stylistic tenden-
cies, their coming and going, seems often to be bound up
less with their aesthetic quality as with secondary func-
tions. A work of art which is emotionally no longer moving
loses its topicality. It is in any case striking that
aestheticians who see *delectare et movere* as an essential
property of works of art (cf. Jauss, 1977) frequently belong
to the proponents of a relativistic historical point of
view. For Jakobson, who defines the aestheticity or poet-
icity of a text in structural terms, being moved, which
shows itself in pleasure, is secondary, something which
varies according to the historical and biographical situa-
tion. One can appreciate a poem by Goethe as a work of art
without having any pleasure in it.[6]

Not only can different functions be compatible with
one another, complement each other reciprocally, they can
likewise stand in conflict with one another. The aesthetic
function suggests itself once again as a prototypical exam-
ple of such conflict. For in a certain sense the aesthetic
function turns out to be the 'dialectical negation of func-
tionality' (Mukarovský, 1937, p.244), in so far as the
subject's attention turns from causes and effects, and
hence from the practical use of a work, to its structure
in all its proud autonomy. The fact that a piece of

furniture is outstandingly beautiful can be an obstacle to
its use. One experiences the tendency to put it on show
instead of using it. In the same way the artistic form of
a poem can distract from its content and its communication
- unless it is a perfect poem in which content and concrete
realisation (in audible recitation) are themselves structur-
al elements of the artistic whole. An object of use can
also be constructed in like manner, i.e. such that its
beauty is only fully displayed when it is used. In the
case of a car the streamlined design stands out only when
the car is driven. There is no aspect of reality and
hence no function of language which cannot be employed as
an aesthetical structural element. This is a first answer
to Jauss's criticism (1977, p.168) of Mukařovský that he
leaves unexplained 'how the aesthetic function can be a
dialectical negation of the communicative as well as the
emotive function and is simultaneously supposed to be com-
municative'. A second answer involves referring to the
attractiveness of the aesthetic structure, which directs
the attitude or set of the subject to the work of art,
certainly no longer only to its content - as is the case
where the communicative function dominates - but also the
interplay of formal and material factors which make of a
text a whole valuable in itself ('selbstwertiges' Ganzes).
Thirdly Mukařovský's semiotic principle,'an object not
only performs but also signifies its function', holds not
only for objects with a practical function but also for
those with an aesthetic function. A work of art performs
not only the aesthetic function it is intended to perform,
it simultaneously signals it also. Fourth, the truly dial-
ectical possibility that precisely because in poetry 'com-
munication is not really important' (Jakobson, 1934, p.406)
and the truth content of a poem is secondary, the censor-
ship exerted by one's own unconscious and by authority -

and how many poets have not used this opportunity, often
unadmitted but highly consequential - is weaker, so that
(*prima facie* fictive) poetry is often more faithful to the
truth than a diary, more informative than a newspaper report,
and more provocative than a handout of a professional agi-
tator.

With a little less pathos and a little more sarcasm one
might quote here an example which is today more than well
known: the disclosure of 'what we always wanted to know
about (or see of) sexuality' occurred first on film and
then on stage, step by step, in that exceedingly aestheti-
cally sensitive directors, first and foremost Ingmar Berg-
mann, proclaimed each successive stage in this stripping
away as an imminent aesthetic necessity. This somewhat
sarcastic excursus should not be taken to deny the close
affinity between the erotic and the aesthetic. What leads
to the mutual involvement of art and the erotic is their
common sensual attractivity (see discussion of Bogatyrev,
1937, above). While the sexual-erotic function in many con-
temporary films is nothing more than a substitute for the
lack of any aesthetic function, the reverse is often true
for dress. The aesthetic function may be a substitute for
the weak or absent erotic function of clothes which have
nothing attractive to reveal.

So much concerning Jauss's problem of how an aesthetic
work can be both communicative and emotional in spite of its
dialectical negation of and its distraction from communica-
tion and emotion. The relation between functions is par-
ticularly complicated in the case of linguistic sounds (cf.
Jakobson and Waugh, 1979). The phonic materiality of
sounds is such that they function immediately both synaesthet-
ically and associatively. There is a correlation between

the sound-opposition *i* and *u* and the visual opposition
light and *dark*. The strikingly discrete structure of lin-
guistic sounds, however, also makes them mediately suitable
for the construction of an exceptionally rational system of
discriminations. The thirty phonemes of an average lang-
uage permit the formation of for example a repertoire of
signs of 30^4 (810,000) combinations of four sounds. In
natural language this bi-functionality of sounds leads to
different constellations. The immediate latent function
can be used in a subsidiary fashion, in that for certain
semantic fields only particular phonemes, which directly
symbolise these fields phonetically, are admissible. It
can also censor selectively: it is statistically demonstra-
ble that lexemes, the meaning of which coincides with the
immediate symbolism of the sounds, have greater chances of
survival in the course of linguistic development. But the
immediate meaning (that which is natural, latent and direct-
ly pertinent to sound-symbolism) and the mediate (artificial,
manifest, arbitrarily assigned) meaning can also come into
conflict. In everyday language, where attention is normally
directed to what is said, this conflict usually goes unnot-
iced. In poetry on the other hand, with its set towards
(*Einstellung auf*) the sign as a whole and its tendency to
make manifest all the relations which contribute to the
latent make-up of this sign (cf. Jakobson, 1960, p.373),
this conflict is more than noticeable. The poet can exploit
the conflict as a means of estrangement, but he can also
try to balance it out by paying particular attention to the
context. Thus French poets, faced with the relation bet-
ween the dark sound of *jour* and the light sound of *nuit*,
compensate for this by means of a phonological and/or sem-
antic context which fits more neatly the sense-content of
day and night (Jakobson, 1960, p.373). Finally, the con-
flict can also be heuristically effective by directing

the attention of sensitive language-users to other less
dominating components of the *signatum*, which agree more
readily with the latent sound-symbolism.

> Instead of perceiving a contradiction between the *signata* and the
> phonetic peculiarities of the corresponding *signantia*, I uncon-
> sciously assign to the various *signata* differential natures. Thus
> *jour*, in conformity with its dark vowel, presents the durative
> aspect of continuing action, *nuit*, with its light vowel, the per-
> fective aspect of completed action. For me the day is something
> which endures, night something which sets in, or comes to pass
> (night *falls*, as we say). The former connotes a condition, the
> latter an event (Lévi-Strauss, 1976, p.17).

The Prague theorists of aesthetic reception of the '30s are
ahead of their descendants in Konstanz in explicitly thema-
tising the complexity of changes of function. In particular
Bogatyrev's semiotic analyses of folk-costume and customs
(1936 and 1937) are a mine of information and insight about
the manifold aspects of functional analysis. The dynamic
form of the phenomenon of plurifunctionality, which
involves a continuous change in the hierarchy of functions
and a dominant function which determines the mode of appear-
ance of all the other functions, is here clearly presented
in what is one of the earliest phases of the investigation
of these matters. Bogatyrev (1937, p.43) sets out the
following order of ranking for everyday dress (ranked in
order of power):

     1) practical function (best suited to protection from
cold and heat, dirt, injury);
     2) indication of social status or class;
     3) aesthetic function;
     4) indication of regional background.

Sunday and holiday costume on the other hand shows the
following re-distribution of values:

1) holiday or ceremonial function;

2) aesthetic function;

3) ritual function;

4) nationalistic or regionalistic identification;

5) indication of social status or class;

6) practical function.

In the exchange of the dominant function, individual sub-
ordinate functions are strengthened, others recede into
the background or are eliminated, new ones are added, cer-
tain forms become obligatory, others optional. For example,
if clothing associated with work or with a profession
advances to the status of holiday costume, it becomes bind-
ing on a whole age or gender group (think, for example, of
the growth in popularity of naval attire as Sunday clothes
for children). Functions change with the transition from
one bearer to another. Galoshes, whose dominant function
in the Russian cities in which they first came into use was
the practical one of protection from dust and dirt, acquire
a largely aesthetic function in the countryside, where they
are worn by young people sauntering through the streets on
holidays in fine weather. Songs and costumes, where at
first the aesthetic function dominated, come to lose this
in favour of indication of age when they become reserved
for children.

The reality of the function of the identification of
region and religion so heavily emphasised by Bogatyrev can
be illustrated by a moralising gloss of the Freiherr von
Knigge:

> The calvinist merchants of Emden set out their gardens in the
> Dutch style; now I once heard one of them say of another mer-
> chant of the same confession who had however taken it upon
> himself to include in his garden certain alterations shocking
> to the reformed community, that this garden had a distinctly
> Lutheran stripe.

Characteristically, Knigge objects to this hypertrophy of
the identification function because it is detrimental to
what is for him the more important function of supra-
regional communication in society.

> I am of the opinion that these differences in the customs of
> the German states make it very difficult, in foreign provinces
> outside one's own native area, to start up friendships, to
> please in society, to have an effect on or win over other
> people.

In view of this multifunctionality which one soon comes up
against when one pays a little attention to the phenomena
themselves, the question arises how both on the one hand
analytic philosophy of science and on the other hand the
architectural current which as 'functionalism' has entered
into the history of art were able almost simultaneously to
arrive at their naive unproblematic monofunctionalism.
Monofunctionalism is typical of machines, of highly devel-
oped biological organs, of formalised languages and -
strikingly - of an early stage in the development of chil-
dren's intelligence. The architectural monofunctionalism
of Le Corbusier and of the Bauhaus may in part go back to
the fascination with machines: the house as *machine à
habiter*, the chair as *machine à s'asseoir*, etc.[7] The
unreflected monofunctionalism of analytic philosophy of
science may well be conditioned by too one-sided a concen-
tration on biological examples, on the highly developed
individual and collective studied in physiology and etho-
logy (cf. the specialised organs of 'higher' animals and
the division of labour in communities of bees and ants; on
this Mukařovský, 1966, p.121), as well as by the logical
ideal of univocal - and in their own way also unifunctional
- terms of scientific language. One forgets too easily that
the higher development consists not necessarily only in the
formation of specialised organs but also conversely in a

plurifunctional adaptation of what was a monofunctional
organ. Think of the role assigned to the human hand in
the process of hominisation, its polyfunctionality in con-
trast to the hands of the other primates which merely
scratch and seize. In the realm of sociology the experi-
ence of plurifunctionality, at least of that of members
of human societies, is formulated most impressively by Max
Frisch in what he says about the problems which have arisen
in connection with foreign works (*Gastarbeiter*) in Switzer-
land: 'We called for labour power, but what we got was
human beings'. In the third area of examples, the language
of science, it has likewise become common knowledge that
the survival value and the chances of survival of natural
languages *vis à vis* formalised languages consists precisely
in their plurifunctionality (including context-sensitive
ambiguity).

   Monofunctionalism is, above all, as was remarked at the
beginning of this paper, infantile. The child in the pro-
cess of acquiring language is for a long time unable to
assign two different meanings to one linguistic form. Thus
initially a French child uses the article *les* exclusively
(as a pluraliser) to signalise a plurality. In order to
signalise a totality (as a totaliser) as this article can
simultaneously be employed in adult language, the child
resorts at this early stage ostentatiously to an additional
morpheme: *toutes les voitures*. Occasionally it will even
take refuge in ungrammatical forms in order to keep apart
two functions, such as indefinite reference and numerical
indication which can simultaneously be expressed by the
indefinite article in the adult language. Thus in order to
indicate that what is in question is a single cow, it
creates the ungrammatical expression *une de vache* (Karmiloff-
Smith, 1976, pp.300ff.). The child is unable simultaneously

to express two functions such as a wish and a piece of
factual information, as this is normal in adult language
by means of constative forms such as *it is cold*, when what
is principally intended is the demand to close a window
(cf. Halliday, 1977, pp.42, 71).[8]

§5. *On the plurifunctionality of the poetic text*

A consequence of the plurifunctionality of language is
that the linguistic analysis of a poem cannot restrict
itself to the poetic function (see Jakobson, 1960, p.357).
It has to take into account the other functions of the text,
not in an additive fashion but in an integrative way in
relation to the dominating poetic function which transforms
and unifies them into a structural and functional whole.
Conversely, every study of linguistic phenomena has to
analyse the role played in these phenomena by the poetic
function. It plays a not inconsiderable role in propaganda
texts, in rhetoric generally and, as Jakobson has pointed
out, in the acquisition of language.

The obstinate prejudice to the effect that structural
poetics limits itself to a text-immanent, if not merely
phonological-grammatical analysis of poems, is a complete
misunderstanding of its intention and scope. It is a mis-
interpretation of the dominance of the poetic function
(with its primarily phonological and grammatical means) to
take this function to be exclusive. The failure to recog-
nise the central role played from the beginning in Prague
linguistics by semantics, as well as pragmatics - in the
form of functional analysis - in contrast to contemporary
tendencies in American linguistics and analytic philosophy

of language, is probably due to a fixation on the revolutionary one-sidedness of Russian formalism and on positivist/anti-mentalist one-sided emphases within currents of thought which likewise claim for themselves the term 'structuralism'. Against the tendency to reduce linguistics to mere combinations, Jakobson (1949, p.38) coined the phrase: 'The primary function of the sign is to signify and not to figure in certain given constellations.'

   The same prejudice passes over the programmatic theses and theoretic reflections about just this theme (Jakobson and Tynjanov, 1928; Jakobson, 1935b). It passes over the exemplary studies in which interpretations are given of the poetry of the Hussites in its historical and sociological context (Jakobson, 1936) and of the poems of Pushkin and Mayakovsky in their biographical and psychological context (Jakobson, 1930, 1937). Finally it overlooks Jakobson's interdisciplinary cooperation with a specialist on myths, Lévi-Strauss, in one of his best known poetic analyses, that of Baudelaire's *Les Chats* (1962). As a linguist, and in view of the dominance of the linguistic medium as such Jakobson does indeed limit himself, in most of his analyses, to displaying immanent linguistic structures. The occasional moves in the direction of the extra-linguistic context may, when considered independently of his theoretical reflections and studies of examples, make an anecdotal impression, as when Yeats' geometrical symbolism in which the number 3 and its exponents $(3^2, 3^3)$ plays a central role, is discovered not only in the number of word-categories of his poems but also in a confession in his 27th (3^3) year (1977, pp.42,51).

   Considerations of the extra-linguistic context are frequent and consistent enough to enable one to recognise the relation which, according to Jakobson, characterises the

relationship between a poetical text, its author, and its
period of genesis. The relation is a double one. It is
poetic and/or functional. In the first case the historical
situation is a context for the relation of which to the
poetical text as such the same principle of equivalence is
decisive as is constitutive of the poetical text in the
narrower sense, that is, an equivalence principle in the
form of multiple relations of similarity and contrast (cf.
1937, p.162). This continued relevance of the principle of
equivalence is valid primarily for the verbal context of a
poem, consisting of contemporary poetry, of which an indi-
vidual text is a part, and of the traditional poetry which
precedes it.

> Certainly we do not want simply to deduce the work from its con-
> text. On the other hand we are not allowed in the analysis of
> a poetical work to ignore disguised and repeatedly occurring
> correspondences between the work and its context, especially
> regular connections between certain traits common to many works
> of a single author and some specific place, time or biographical
> detail which in their origin they all share. Context is one of
> the components of speech: the poetic function transforms it as
> it transforms every other component (Jakobson, 1937, p.154).

The poetic attraction of Pasternak's metonymic style is
doubled when it is contrasted with the metaphorical style
of Mayakovsky. Both styles also have their correlates in
the authors' respective biographies, and in the artistic
and scientific *Weltanschauung* of the time, in which rela-
tions as such are more important than the atomistically
considered objects they connect (Jakobson, 1935a).

Beyond this relations of equivalence play a role not
only in poems but also in the interpretation of poems.
Jakobson's analysis of Brecht's party poem (1965) is dedi-
cated to the East German linguist and folklorist Wolfgang
Steinitz, a dedicated adherent of the communist party.
Jakobson had got to know him in 1940 during their common

exile in Sweden. While they were bidding each other fare-
well at the station in Stockholm, just before Jakobson was
to start his hazardous voyage to New York, Jakobson remem-
bers Steinitz replying to his offer to help him settle in
America as follows (1975, p.xii): 'I am a communist, my
place is here...and after the war I intend to continue my
work in a revolutionary Berlin.' Brecht's poem contains a
repeated demand to those who are 'wise' not to leave the
party:

> *Gehe nicht ohne uns den richtigen Weg*
> *Ohne uns ist er*
> *der falscheste*
> *Sei bei uns weise!*
> *Trenne dich nicht von uns!*

One fails to grasp the intention of structural poetics
and the essence of the aesthetic as such if one (cf. Jauss,
1975, p.148) fails to see more than the classical theory of
reflection in the setting out of positive or negative (or
contrastive) relations of equivalence. The theory of
reflection fails to take into account the specific hierarchy
of linguistic functions in a poetic text. For the idea that
the poetic text functions as a depiction - whether typified,
alienated or whatever - of reality accords far too much
importance to the cognitive function. Reflections, i.e.
equivalences between literary text and surrounding context
have no (or only a secondary) cognitive function, but
rather a (dominating) aesthetic function in that they turn
the attention of the subject to the artistic medium as such.
Reflection is, like any content, part of the structure of
the work of art and not its cognitive aim. The relation
between the work of art and reality is pointed to in a
direct indeed crude way (*ad usum delphini*) by wall paintings
of the kind where there is a continuous transition from

painting to its surroundings and where one barely notices
when the illusion of the picture stops and the palpable
reality of the surroundings begins, or which objects (flow-
er pots, windows, flights of steps, etc.) are real and
which are merely painted. Thanks to such continual equi-
valence relations, reality becomes part of the work of art.

What both structuralism and functionalism are opposed
to is an exclusively causal-historical explanation of cul-
tural phenomena, a one-dimensional, uni-directional rela-
tion between a work and its time. The correlation between
the literary and historical series has its own structural
laws which need uncovering (Jakobson and Tynjanov, 1928).
More important than the causal relation which points back
to the past is the teleological and functional relation
which anticipates the future. A work has to be understood
both on the basis of its genesis and on the basis of its
character as a project. The futurists had declared the
future to be the tense appropriate to poetry. Only weak
poets wait on events, as Mayakovsky put it, in order to
reflect them or, in the extreme case, to reflect about them;
strong poets run ahead of their time, pulling it after them.
In his obituary article for Mayakovsky Jakobson (1930)
inquires into the literary anticipation of suicide by its
most famous representative which, during the lifetime of
the poet, was taken for a literary stunt and whose reali-
sation was then evaluated not as a 'literary fact' but as
an absurdity. Before the effect upon the reader, which is
placed in the foreground by the historians of the effects
and of the reception of literature, there comes the (reflex-
ive) effect upon the author himself.

> The poet lives in a myth which he himself creates and consequently
> directs his life - more or less subliminally - towards the pattern
> created. In short, according to the results of Jakobson's

> analysis, not only is the life situation active in the process
> of literary creation, but the product created is likewise active
> and often decisive in the poet's actual biography. Thus one
> cannot draw a sharp borderline between the two, nor can one
> generate one from the other unequivocally. Both sequences are
> in a relation of complementarity and form a kind of feed-back
> system (Pomorska, 1977, p.373).

In the words of the poet Yeats (quoted by Jakobson and Rudy, 1977, p.8):

> *The friends that have it I do wrong*
> *Whenever I remake a song,*
> *Should know what issue is at stake:*
> *It is myself that I remake.*

§6. *On the plurifunctionality of the poetic device*

The analysis can be taken further. Not only is the poetic text plurifunctional but so also is the poetic texture, the poetic device involved in lending shape to a text. The device to which a text owes its aesthetic character - the projection of the principle of equivalence, of relations of similarity and contrast belonging to the axis of selection, onto the axis of combination, has many other consequences. The first of these is the much remarked plurivocity of poetic texts.

First however a word about the 'structuralist' definition of poeticity in the terms of Jakobson's notion of projection. One can get a grip on what has value - beauty, goodness - or on what is dynamic - force, causation, intention - only by setting out invariant presuppositions and/or entailments of a structural sort. It is important to give metonymic definitions (to use Jakobson's terminology) e.g. of force as the product of mass and acceleration, of

causality as the invariant sequence of two events given
additional boundary conditions to be more closely specified,
of intentionality as the dependence - in the form of a
feedback system - of a process on a plan. It is to meto-
nymic definitions such as this that modern natural sciences
owe their striking success. Attempts to provide metaphor-
ical definitions, on the other hand, lead to open or hidden
tautologies, as when causation is defined as production, or
beauty as brightness, elegance, etc.

   The same structural property (a network of relations of
equivalence in the syntagmatic axis of combination) which
makes a text 'beautiful' is, we can say - modifying words
of Kant[9],- conducive to its plurivocity. For every lin-
guistic unity a distinction can be made between an invariant
core-meaning and variable context-meanings. 'Coach' has
quite different connotations when uttered in a station and
when uttered in a garage, although the two referents have
many common properties, a fact that is decisive for the use
of a term. The context determines which are the connota-
tions which the core-meaning acquires. If the context to
which a term is related is manifold then the term, too, will
be ambiguous. The context is decisive for the over-deter-
mination of the term.[10] In poetry, because the linguistic
sequence is submerged under relations of similarity and
contrast (at all linguistic levels), the context in which a
term is experienced is at one and the same time made mani-
fold and acquires its own distinct profile.   Relations of
similarity and contrast have an associative effect, that is,
they form contexts, and hence determine meaning. 'In poetry,
any conspicuous similarity in sound is evaluated in respect
to similarity and/or dissimilarity in meaning' (Jakobson,
1960, p.372). The most transparent examples of plurivocity
from poetically formed contexts are to be found in examples

of parallelism. In parallelism individual sentence-parts
are made to approximate to one another through metrical and
grammatical parallelisation and in their way their meaning
is modified either metaphorically or, in a suitable context,
antonymically (cf. Holenstein, 1976b, p.11f.). Particularly
illustrative is a triplet from the *Song of Judith* (16.9) in
which the beheading of Holophernes is described in song:

> *Her sandal ravished his eyes,*
> *Her beauty captured his mind,*
> *The sword severed his neck.*

Through the immediate context, their object (*eye* and *mind*),
the verbs of the first two lines acquire a metaphorical
meaning, whereas the additional context which is the
parallel relation to the third line works to dissolve this
metaphorical meaning. It becomes mixed with the original
concrete meaning. At the same time *to ravish* and *to capture*
take on a metonymic connotation. They appear as a prepar-
ation for the beheading (cf. R.A.P.Roberts, 1977, p.988).

The plurivocity of poetic texts is not something which
is or should be resistant to inquiry, something for a
romantic, anti-scientific 'symbolist' or 'hermeneuticist' to
accept devoutly as a gift of grace or fate. Plurivocity is
an automatic consequence of the mechanisms of language which
the poet brings to emphasis (cf. Jakobson, 1960, p.370f.).

The poetic device which makes a text beautiful functions
both cognitively and emotively. Psychobiological investi-
gations of aesthetic experience (Berlyne, 1971; quoted by
Bock, 1978, p.192), yielded the result that linguistic and
non-linguistic material of medium complexity is felt to be
pleasant whereas a degree of complexity which is too high or
too low is experienced as unpleasant. An optimal degree of

complexity for some material is present when the recipient
succeeds in grasping a unifying principle in the variety of
what is offered. Invariance in what is variable and hence
unity in multiplicity is just what the projection of the
principle of similarity onto a linguistic sequence achieves.

The same poetic device can, finally, function in yet
another way - namely as a device of disautomatisation and
as a mnemotechnic device. These are two functions which are
cultivated by pragmatists among theoreticians of literature,
the first by those with a sociological interest, the second
by those whose orientation is psychological. The relations
of similarity brought into being by the poet do indeed
create not only unusual but also what, for the laws of
everyday speech, are anomalous connections. The simplest
example is the metaphor 'a laughing meadow'. *Laughing* and
meadow are instances of incompatible word-categories
according to the laws of linguistic combination. Only an
animal, or even perhaps only a human being, can laugh. The
unusual connection hinders understanding and calls forth
the attention of the reader until he discovers the property
which gives the connection a sense (cf. Hörmann, 1973, p.
320ff).

Jakobson (1965; 1966, p.423) has objected in quite
striking terms to the two theses of disautomatisation and
mnemotechnics. His opposition to the disautomatisation
thesis in particular, which followed his own early work on
deformation as a poetic device (1921, pp.90, 92, 103) to
which his Prague colleague Mukařovský had paid so much
attention, may well surprise. But all that Jakobson is
really objecting to is the elevation of disautomatisation
of experience of the world and social life to the essence
of poetic language, to the primary function of poetic

language. The same holds of the function of making memor-
able (the mnemotechnical function) which people have tried
to employ to give a genetic account of grammatical parallel-
ism, the more so as parallelism is the prototype of the
poetic principle of the projection of relations of equival-
ence onto the syntagmatic axis. The easy memorisability
of poetic texts can be explained as much in terms of the
psychology of association (based on relations of similarity
and contrast) as in terms of the cognitive psychology which
is based on meaningful organisation. Poetic texture may,
after all, serve memorising and disautomatising functions.
But the pragmatic-utilitarian view that the primary function
lies in such use is perverse. For the primary function con-
sists in what the tradition called beauty and what nowadays
is called aestheticity, a term no less rich in problems of
its own.

<div align="right">(Translated by Kevin Mulligan and Barry Smith.)</div>

Notes

1. An exception is the biologist E. Mayr (1974, p.114) who makes
reference to Jakobson's analyses.

2. Already in his 1928 (pp.109f.) H. Dempe had extended Bühler's three
basic functions (after the version of 1918) with 'secondary functions',
and therewith also, referring to Croce and Vossler, mentioned too the
aesthetic function, though without any further development.

3. "The first of these languages is that 'about which we speak'.... The
second is the language in which we 'speak about' the first language,
and in terms of which we wish, in particular, to construct the
definition of truth for the first language. We shall refer to the
first language as the *object language*, and to the second as the *meta-
language*." (Tarski, 1944, p.21f.)

4. "*Phatic communion* – a type of speech in which ties of union are
created by a mere exchange of words... They fulfil a social function
and that is their principal aim, but they are neither the result of
intellectual reflection, nor do they necessarily arouse reflection in
the listener... *Phatic communion*...serves to establish bonds of
personal union between people brought together by the mere need of
companionship and does not serve any purpose of communicating ideas."
The stock example of phatic language is provided by gossip: "...this

(note 4 cont.)
atmosphere of sociability...achieved by...the specific feelings which
form convivial gregariousness, by the give and take of utterances
which make up ordinary gossip." - "Always the same emphasis of affirm-
ation and consent, mixed perhaps with an incidental disagreement which
creates the bonds of antipathy." (Malinowski, 1923, p.314ff.)

5. Jakobson in a lecture given in Louvain in 1972; cited by Holenstein,
1975, p.34.

6. The acceptability of sentences like 'That is beautiful, but it
doesn't please me' is a favourite topic of linguistic analytic aesthe-
tics: cf. the discussion in Strube, 1980. Incompatible with Jauss'
aesthetic experience are utterances such as, 'Oui, cela est parfaite-
ment beau, mais il me fait bâllir' (Madame de Longueville); or, 'I
admit that Raphael is a great painter but I do not like his work; it
does not move me' (M. Macdonald). - Precisely such a running together
of the pleasurable and the unpleasurable is characteristic of 'new art':
'The impression which is made by living art is...rather that of some-
thing hard and strict...than of something elegant and smooth - it
distinguishes itself sharply from the conventional and from the agree-
able comfortableness of the artistic expression with which one is
familiar.' (F.X.Salda, cited by Mukařovský, 1936, p.46). A running
together of this kind is especially typical of those cases where
beauty is sought for dialectically in something that is *prima facie*
ugly.

7. "Partout on voit des machines qui servent à produire quelque chose
et qui le produisent admirablement, avec pureté" (Le Corbusier, 1928,
p.233). "Architectural functionalism proceeds from the premise that a
building has a single, precisely delimited function given by the
purpose for which it is built. Hence Corbusier's well-known comparison
of a building to a machine, a typically unambiguous product from a
functional point of view." (Mukařovský, 1942, p.37).

8. In industry too monofunctionalism is something infantile, character-
istic of an early phase of industrialisation. Machines are, it is true,
monofunctional (and with advantage); the energy with which they are
driven however, and the raw materials which they transform, are both
distinctively polyfunctional. The failure to take account of this fact
leads to uneconomic wear and tear which does justice neither to the
material of the economy nor to its needs.

9. "...For this reason the same property which makes a building
beautiful also contributes to its being good (to its *bonitas*), and a
face would also have to have for its purpose no other form than for
its beauty." This sentence, from Kant's *Nachlass* (1923, p.628), may
serve as a guideline for this section and especially as a historical
support.

10. Bock (1978, pp.186ff.) distinguishes a threefold semantic effect
of context. It works in an *integrative* way - the context clarifies
or reveals from the first the connection between individual parts of

(note 10. cont.)
the text which, without this additional information, remain unintelli-
gible. It works in a *selective* way - the context determines which of
the possible meanings of a linguistic unity become actualised. It
operates in such a way as to *expand the meaning*, activating potential
connotations which without it would have remained unremarked. An
example of the integrative effect: 'Franz, enraged, is tearing the
mirror to pieces.' A mirror is not torn but rather broken into pieces.
The sensefullness of the connection between 'tearing to pieces' and
'mirror' is revealed only with the addition of the sentence: 'The
shreds of paper flew about wildly in the wind', which tells us that we
have to deal with a London newspaper and not with an article of bath-
room furniture. The not wholly adequate example, which I use for the
sake of its brevity, derives from me, and not from Bock. In itself it
serves as a more suitable example for the selective effect. The con-
text, the verb and the second sentence, indicate which of the possible
meanings of 'mirror/*Mirror*' is to be selected. Of quite special
importance for poetics is the third effect, that of extension of mean-
ing. Bock and his co-workers discovered that plurivocity of textual
passages is most often realised where the context - the relevant
experiments deal with visual contexts - is also plurivocal. Thus the
ambiguity of *'Dorfkapelle'* (village chapel/village band) was most
frequently noticed where the accompanying image showed a man by the
side of the group of musicians and in front of a small country church.
The different meanings of a term are not, as a rule, equal in value.
The less common remain latent in the absence of an appropriately stimu-
lating context. The sense-modificatory effects of the changing context
surrounding a work is the subject matter of the theory of (literary)
reception (*Rezeptionsästhetik*).

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