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Hartmut Winkler

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> "It would be good to imagine a new linguistic science that would no longer study the origin of words, or etymology, or even their diffusion, or lexicology, but the progress of their solidification, their densification throughout historical discourse; this science would doubtless be subversive, manifesting much more than the historical origin of truth: its rhetorical, languaging nature."
>
> (R. Barthes: The Pleasure of the Text)[1]

In 1954, Max Black wrote an essay on metaphor which marked the breakthrough to a completely new understanding;[2] based on an older text by I. A. Richards,[3] he sketched a theory which no longer regards metaphor as an 'ornament of speech', but as one of the basic mechanisms of language in general, and which for the first time shows a way of describing metaphor as a formal structure, as a sub-machinery in the large functional framework of language.

In order to appreciate this change of perspective, one has to keep in mind that traditionally 'figurative' language was considered secondary and derivative; while literal meaning seemed vouched for and made reliable by convention, metaphor, leaving aside conventionalized metaphors, seemed to spring exclusively from the given situation and spontaneous inspiration. Both in the context of rhetoric and later in the context of poetics, metaphor was considered an indispensable means of expression that animated language and worked against its hardening, but the core of language was and remained its 'actual', literal use. As a theory in the narrower sense, then, metaphor theory only begins where it breaks away from the traditional conceptualization of rhetoric.

In an attempt to clarify what 'figurative' language use actually was, rhetoric had developed two main conceptions of metaphor: the view that metaphor represented an implicit comparison, and secondly, that the metaphorical expression replaced a literal expression in the text, that the figurative sense corresponded to an 'actual sense' that could be recovered, for example, through paraphrase. The comparison thesis had the potential to provide a concise picture of the cognitive process that makes the understanding of metaphors possible, by making vivid the concrete back-and-forth between the figurative expression and its literal context; but whenever one tried to spell out the 'comparison' in concrete terms and attempted to name the common third that makes the comparison possible in the first place, not only did the aesthetic evidence of the

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[1] NY: Hill&Wang 1975, p. 43 [1973].

[2] Black, Max: Metaphor. In: Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, New Series, Vol. 55 (1954/1955), pp. 273-294.

[3] Richards, LA.: The Metaphor. In: The Philosophy of Rhetoric. NY/London: Oxford UP 1936, pp. 89ff.

metaphor fall by the wayside, but the plausibility of the model itself came into doubt. The second approach, which Black called ‘substitution theory’, because it assumed an equivalence between figurative and literal language, exposed itself from the outset to the suspicion of depriving metaphor of its ‘image value’ and its specific surplus of meaning. ‘Creativity’ and ‘productivity’ of metaphor were accordingly emphasized mainly by those authors who ultimately refused to explain the mechanism of metaphor at all and believed that they could readily attribute it to ‘intuition’ or ‘spontaneity’.

Black proposes in his essay to describe the metaphor as an ‘interaction’. The starting point is the disconcertment that the metaphorical expression does not seem to fit properly into its concrete textual environment; a metaphor, Black says, can only be understood if the difference is overcome and the meaning of the metaphorical expression and that of the context are reconciled. But how is this reconciliation to be imagined?

If we want to adopt an example that Black uses to illustrate his model, the statement that man is ‘a wolf’ sets in motion an interaction between the concept of wolf and that of man. The characteristics normally attributed to wolves ‘interact’ with the characteristics of humans; all the characteristics of the wolf that are applicable to humans are ‘projected’ onto humans in the metaphorical process. Humans are perceived through the traits and characteristics attributed to wolves. In addition to the notion of interaction and projection, Black uses the image of a filter: The ‘wolf system’ forms the filter through which certain characteristics of humans are emphasized and others are pushed into the background.

Black thus assumes that for every concept of language there is a system of features and properties that can be presupposed as knowledge about the concept’s semantics, and that this knowledge, in the case of its metaphorical use, is transferred to other contexts and to other objects. To emphasize that this is conventional knowledge, a social agreement completely independent of truth or falsity, Black does not speak of ‘properties’ but of a ‘system of associated commonplaces’.

And in both the notion of ‘filter’ and that of interaction, Black emphasizes that the metaphorical exchange does not leave the respective ‘systems of associated commonplaces’ untouched; on both sides of the metaphorical interaction there is a change and extension of meaning that Black sees as the specificity of metaphor.

The model outlined is a breakthrough in several respects. Black adopts from Richards the notion that the mechanism of metaphor splits the overall meaning of words into various individual components, properties, or features, some of which determine the metaphorical process. More clearly than Richards, however, Black shows that in each metaphorical interaction a system, i.e., an organized multiplicity, is applied to the new object. With Black it becomes apparent that each term is a ‘node in the network of language’, and the metaphor in each case projects a whole network section, i.e. concrete semantic values and at the same time a structural model, onto the new, hitherto unfamiliar context. The question of a single axis of ‘comparison’ is thus resolved, as is that of whether the metaphor ‘substitutes’ for a concrete linguistic element, and whether a paraphrase can in each case exhaust its meaning.

A second crucial gain of Black’s work is that he sees metaphor as a mechanism between two concrete-material textual parts; a word or textual section is inserted into a materially concrete con-text, whereupon the two ‘interact’. Accordingly, Black refers to the metaphor as a ‘focus’ and the textual surrounding space as a ‘frame’.[4]

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[4] It is interesting that Black gains this clarity by reinterpreting a Richardsian conceptual pair: Richards’ argumentation, too, started from the concrete material con-text, but then, in order to be able to substantiate the terms ‘vehicle’/’tenor’, subtly switched to a semanticized concept of context, which conceived of the overall meaning of the utterance, thus including the blank space which the metaphor fills.

But Black's theory also has serious problems. One of its main difficulties is triggered by the notion of 'associated commonplaces'. Commonplaces, as has already been said, is what Black calls all those ideas, images, and beliefs which can be presupposed as shared knowledge surrounding the individual terms; thus the understanding of the 'wolf' metaphor depends on knowledge of the common characteristics and properties of a wolf; and the totality of these properties forms the 'wolf system' which is metaphorically projected onto humans.

The 'commonplaces', then, can be intersubjectively presupposed, they are organized in bundles, i.e. in subsystems, and they have the status of knowledge deposited around the terms of language. Exactly with this, however, the difficulty is already named: While the concepts themselves belong to language, the status of that associated knowledge remains completely unclear; the knowledge of the 'commonplaces' seems to occupy a sphere of its own, which appears isolated from language, but on which language nevertheless depends for its functioning. In Black's own work, this problem remains unsolved; in his text, however, we find a concept that, although explicitly rejected by Black, can take us further: the notion of connotations.[5]

2

Beardsley (1962) places the notion of connotations at the center of his theory. Beardsley writes:

> "You can start your explication [of the example-metaphor 'briars'] either in object-language (talking about the characteristics of briars) or in metalanguage (talking about the connotations of the word 'briars'). […] But though these two ways of speaking overlap, since in part the connotations of the word derive from what is generally true of the objects, they do not coincide completely."[6]

The concept of connotations is a tremendous gain: In contrast to Black's 'commonplaces' or the hasty jump to the 'properties of objects', the notion of connotations is clearly restricted to the sphere of language. Now language itself seems capable of managing those 'properties' which only a moment ago had to be attributed to objects, and it becomes clear that there is at least the possibility that 'knowledge' in the concepts' environments has its place in language itself.

The second advantage of the new term is that two types of properties can now be contrasted:

> "[…] the possibility of the metaphorical performance […] depend[s] upon a felt difference between two sets of properties in the intention, or signification, of a general term: first, those properties that (at least in a given sort of context) are taken to be necessary conditions for applying the term correctly in a particular sense (these are the defining, or designated, properties, or the central meaning of the term in that sort of context); second, those properties that belong to the marginal meaning of the term, or (in the literary critic's sense of the word) its connotation[.] […] [W]hen a term is combined with others in such a way that there would be a logical opposition between its central meaning and that of the other terms, there occurs that shift from central to marginal meaning which shows us the word is to be taken in a metaphorical way".[7]

Beardsley, then, sketches the model of a conflict at the level of features: The very fact that certain central features of the metaphorical expression do not fit the new context indicates that it is a metaphorical use and redirects attention to the peripheral features, which Beardsley calls

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[5] Richards did not use this term, instead he spoke of 'aspects' (loc. cit., pp. 93ff.).

[6] Beardsley, Monroe C.: The Metaphorical Twist. In: Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, vol. 22, no. 3 (Mar. 1962), pp. 293-307, p. 294 (add. H.W.).

[7] Ibd., p. 299.

connotations. The model of metaphor, then, is that of a ring-shaped application: The peculiarity of metaphor is that it omits central features of the applied concept but introduces the peripheral ones into the new context.

Taking up a second example Black uses, the phrase that 'the chairman plowed through the discussion' excludes almost all of the features that would normally define plowing; if one were to enumerate them, the agrarian sphere, the association of sowing and reaping, and the link to a particular implement would probably be indisputably such definitional features that could not be brought into the new context of a meeting or assembly. Applied, on the other hand, are certain peripheral features of plowing, such as the association that the activity of plowing 'turns the underside up', notions of ruthlessness, force, and power, and possibly the connotations of 'regulating' and 'fruitful.'

Beardsley, then, completes the model laid out by Richards; but two things set a clear limit on Beardsley's theory: first, that he still mixes ontology and the linguistic level, speaking of 'connotations' but sometimes also – bypassing language, as it were – of the 'properties of things themselves'; second, that while he distinguishes the defining from the peripheral features of a concept, he does not relate his notion of connotations to that of denotation.

The reason for this omission – this startling consequence is now to be drawn – is probably that the model of metaphor as outlined is completely incompatible with the usual notion of a single meaning, a denotation in the singular. If the definition of metaphor depends on splitting the 'object' into 'features' (and these into defining and peripheral ones), then the 'denotation' of a word cannot designate a singular meaning but will have to depend on the defining features.[8]

It is self-evident that the signifier is in any case not confronted with a singular object which it designates; but all semantic models that want to insert a singular concept (a conception, idea) of 'the' tree between the signifier 'tree' and the multiplicity of concrete trees must be opposed by the metaphor in its irreducibly plural meaning as a structural model. Denotation is plural: The notion of denotation can mean nothing other than an effect of those 'defining features' that control the applicability of a concept to concrete contexts and to concrete objects.

Of course, semantic theories have been developed which seek to describe a plural conception of denotation; thus there is the 'component analysis' originating with Jakobson and Hjelmslev and leading to the prominent theory of 'semes'; a theory which assumes the existence of a finite number of 'atomic' components which, when combined, constitute the meaning of lexemes (i.e. words). And there is a second, more epistemic/skeptical direction,[9] which conceives of meaning as composite, but as an inconclusive and ultimately uncontrollable structure in the teeming of its components.

Proceeding from the model of metaphor referred to so far, I would argue, a different perspective on the question of the constituents of meaning is possible. Thus, in my opinion, quite contrary to the terminology of the discussed authors, there is neither a possibility nor a necessity to draw a line at all between the plurally understood denotation and the connotations. The 'definitional features' (denotation) differ from the 'peripheral' connotations by degrees at best; and the observation of precisely the language change initiated by metaphorical use shows how quickly

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[8] Lyons' 'Semantics' first distinguishes the notion of 'sense' (as a network structure within language) from that of denotation, and then defines the latter as the relation between a lexeme (i. e. a word) and the class of extra-linguistic objects denoted by the lexeme. Lyons, then, does not mention the fact that classes on the side of objects are not given, but are a result exclusively of the structuring performance of language itself, i.e., of those 'features' which are managed by the 'sense-relations'. A correspondingly puzzling role is played by the completely abruptly introduced notion of 'applicability', which is neither referred back to the sense relations, nor to possible *criteria* of application. (Lyons, John: Semantics. Vol. 1, Cambridge: UP 1977, pp. 204ff.).

[9] Scriven or Pap are mentioned in Beardsley.

formerly peripheral features can move up to central features, and central features can drop off into the connotative space of meaning.

There may be ‘more important’ and ‘less important’ partial meanings; but ‘important’ and ‘less important’ are categories exclusively of function; of function within the framework of a model which needs clarification, and which seems to me more likely to be clarified if the functional differences do not already appear guaranteed in the choice of words.

A first proposal for redefinition, then, would be to dispense with the distinction between denoting features and connotations altogether, and to call both defining and peripheral features ‘connotations’. ‘Con’-notations because together they control applicability to contexts, and thus ‘meaning’. The proposal to include also the defining characteristics in the concept of connotations returns to a concept that had already been advocated in 1843; J. S. Mill,[10] who introduced the separation into denotation and connotation in the first place, still equated the concept of connotation with that of the ‘intension’ of meaning, thus calling all those characteristics connotations that make it possible to recognize individuals as elements of a class, to subsume them under a concept. (He correspondingly called denotation the extension of meaning, the relation to the total set of denoted objects).

In Ogden and Richards,[11] however, this definition is already lost when Mill’s notion of denotation is differentiated into the notions of denotation and reference, and the referential meaning is contrasted with an ‘emotive’ one, which now forms the domain of connotations. Thus, the concept of connotations will have to be defended both against its colloquial meaning and against a theoretical tradition that has moved far away from Mill; connotations in the sense sketched here are neither ‘emotive’ nor indeterminable, nor do they ‘add’ to a core of meaning that obeys different laws than they do themselves.[12]

A first test for the new concept is another partial problem in the field of metaphor: Peculiarly, none of the models referred to incorporates the literal meaning into the investigation. Except for a remark in Richards,[13] literal usage appears throughout as the fixed, stable background on which figurative language depends, and which the intervention of metaphor at best sets in motion on a case-by-case basis.

Against the background of the presented metaphor theory, however, the literal use is initially nothing but a borderline case of the metaphorical: If the metaphor deliberately violates some of the features that are usually prerequisites for its application (in the case of ‘plowing’, the agrarian context), the literal use is accordingly characterized by nothing other than a relative harmony of connotations.

It is important to emphasize that this harmony, even in the case of literal use, is always only a relative one; any application of a term to a context excludes dimensions of meaning that this term would have in other contexts, so never are all ‘connotations’ actualized, some are always excluded as ‘inappropriate’. What is more: Of course there is a systematic connection between the connotations already found in the context and those that the newly applied term brings into

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[10] Mill, J. S.: A System of Logic. London 1843.

[11] Ogden, C. K., Richards, I. A.: The Meaning of Meaning. London 1923.

[12] The notion of a connotation parasitically attached to the ‘actual meaning’ has survived the passage from linguistics to semiotics almost unscathed. Thus, for example, in the ‘Elements of Semiology’ (1963) Barthes calls ‘connotation’ what he had still called ‘myth’ in the ‘Mythologies’ (1957), and he uses the same graphic representation for both terms, in which a proliferating connotation seems almost to crush the ‘actual’ language. (Barthes, Roland: Mythologies. NY: Farrar 1972/1991, p. 113; B., R.: Elements of Semiology. NY: Hill&Wang 1968/1986, p. 93).

[13] “Literal language is rare outside the central parts of the sciences. We think it more frequent than it is through the influence of that form of the usage doctrine which ascribes single fixed meanings to words[.]“ (Richards, op cit., p. 120).

this context: A part of the connotations will have to match in order for the term to appear 'appropriate' (redundancy), a certain part will be newly added by the term (information), and a third part will fall victim to the application and be excluded as 'inappropriate'.[14] (An example of this mechanism is 'the car in the child's hand', a formulation that neither contains a metaphor nor makes 'car' a polyseme for large and for small cars. It is a literal usage which, like all contextual applications, excludes certain dimensions of meaning; at most, one could speak of a borderline case, insofar as unusually many and unusually important connotations are excluded.)

The fact that metaphor excludes central dimensions of meaning is stated by Black and by Beardsley; but that this mechanism applies to literal use in quite the same way can only really be made plausible if one follows the proposed redefinition, abandons the notion of a singular denotation, and includes 'defining features' in the 'connotations' as well. Specific to the metaphor, then, would be only that even those connotations are excluded that would have been considered indispensable in the majority of all contexts.

3

This formulation already suggests a quasi-statistical model; and indeed one will have to resort to notions of statistical accumulation if one wants to clarify the relationship of the 'central' to the 'peripheral' connotations in more detail.

Where – first the more general question – do the connotations, the dimensions of meaning of a word come from in the first place? If together with Ricœur one excludes the assumption that there is "a so-called original, or fundamental, or primitive, or proper meaning",[15] the connotations can only be thought as a kind of *deposit of past discourses*.

This initially simple idea, an idea, however, that has far-reaching consequences, can already be found in Bühler's theory of language, written in 1934.[16] The fact that such an early witness is called upon here is no coincidence: Bühler, who was one of the first to react to the shock that Saussure had caused in German linguistics, was faced with the task of mediating in some way between the new idea of a synchronic linguistic system and the traditional diachronic view. One of his most compelling theorems, therefore, is that he constructed a mechanism of transition linking individual utterances – concrete discourses – to the system of language.[17]

Bühler started from the observation that texts fixed in writing function relatively independently of context primarily because the "factors of the synsemantic surrounding field" necessary for their comprehension "are largely preserved [in the text]".[18] Self-contained texts, then, aim for disengagement from their contexts and have a tendency to draw into themselves what, in the case of situational utterances, the situation would contribute to the meaning. In these mecha-

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[14] In semantics, these differences have been discussed via the problem of 'selection restrictions' (Lyons, op. cit., pp. 265, 327).

[15] Ricœur, Paul: Metaphor and the Main Problem of Hermeneutics. In: New Literary History, no. 6 (1974/75), pp. 95-110, p. 99.

[16] Bühler, Karl: Sprachtheorie. Die Darstellungsfunktion der Sprache. Jena 1934. Engl.: B., K.: Theory of Language: The Representational Function of Language. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins 2011. Despite the publication date, Bühler was not part of the infamous Nazi German Studies; he taught in Vienna, was arrested in 1938, and emigrated to the United States in 1940.

[17] He thus takes a problem into consideration which eludes both the – subsequently dominant – synchronic perspective and the traditional diachronic one, and which unfolds an unexpected topicality in a theory of discourse which today is still more of a linguistic-philosophical rather than already a linguistic problem.

[18] Bühler, Theory, op. cit., p. 190.

nisms, Bühler sees a model that recurs at all levels of language; and he sketches a picture of language as a system that reifies typical contexts in its own structure.

> "[I]t can be, yes, it must be the case to a sufficient degree that the language (la langue) to some extent gives up the stage of an amoeba-like plasticity from speech situation to speech situation in order to allow the speaker in new respects productivity on a higher level with a partially solidified, congealed device [.]"[19]

Bühler thus describes language as an apparatus that absorbs the situations of its use in order to make them available for new use in a conventionalized way.

According to Bühler's model, then, the 'connotations' would be a result of concrete utterances (or discourses) in the past; they would be a kind of precipitation left on the words by the concrete uses in the discourse. Each individual use applies something of the complex contextual meaning of the sequence in which the word stands to the individual word, each individual use leaves a trace; this trace, however, will only endure if subsequent discourses take it up and confirm it; in all other cases it will be lost in the noise of discourse. From Bühler's point of view, meaning is a phenomenon of repetition: a statistical effect over the immense amount of parallel discourses.

And conversely, it is the concrete contexts that 'inform' the words; the discourses 'work on the system', build meanings and erode meanings; initially completely independent of whether the use is metaphorical or literal.

The decision to dispense in principle with the distinction between denotation and connotation proves itself, I think, in the image of statistical accumulation: If the connotations are deposits of concrete discourse, one will only be able to distinguish between those that are frequently and those that are more rarely affirmed. The 'necessary' features, then, as the dictionary definition enumerates them, form a kind of 'core' in a much larger set of connotations; at the margin of this set are found completely ephemeral or idiosyncratic connotations without intersubjective meaning; finally, the connotations that are crucial in the context of metaphor would be found in the middle zone between the core and the margin...

A second gain from the idea of quasi-statistical accumulation is the notion that it is *typical* contexts that enter into the structure of language and into connotations; it is statistical accumulation that creates the compression pressure that suggests the idea that the singular signifier is confronted with an equally singular correlate. The hardness and relative stability of the terms is not given, or guaranteed, for instance, in the material hardness of the signifiers; it is the result of *hardening* through repeated use.

Finally, a third implication draws attention to the mostly neglected problem of contextual quantities. If together with Black one restricts context to the physical text in the surrounding space of a word or utterance, then it becomes more than important whether there is concretely much or little text in the surrounding space.

For one, the individual discourse (the individual utterance, the single 'work') creates an interior space in which, as long as it exists, different rules apply than in the space of discourses in general; the experience of literature shows that new connotations can be established and stabilized within a work relatively quickly.

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[19] Bühler: Sprachtheorie, Jena: Gustav Fischer 1934, p. 144 (transl. H. W.). The English version of the book puts it, in my opinion, far more cryptically: "[I]t may be, indeed it must be the case that in some points language (la langue) departs from the stage at which it has an amoeba-like plasticity from speech situation to situation, that it abandons this plasticity in order to make it possible for the speaker to be productive in a new way and on a higher level; the implement of this higher productivity is that which has congealed or solidified[.]" (Bühler, op. cit., p. 161).

Secondly, following the notion developed in Jakobson and then in Lacan, the distinction between metaphor and metonymy depends on whether both metaphorically/metonymically related elements are present in the context, or if one displaces the other from the context; a model that makes any sense only if one quantitatively constrains the notion of context.

And thirdly, the problem of contextual quantities is the one that maintains the most intense connection to any notion of discourse power; if the construction of linguistic meaning indeed obeys a quasi-statistical accumulation, contextual quantities[20] become an immediate power factor on the terrain of language.

For the narrower field of metaphor theory, two initially confusing consequences result from what has been said. First, the established notion will have to be abandoned that it is metaphor alone that leads to the enrichment of language through connotations, that it alone keeps language 'alive'.[21] For, of course, connotations are also accumulated in the 'literal' use of words. Since there is no context in which only redundant meanings occur, there will always be a part of the contextual meaning that will act back on and leave its 'trace' on the applied term. And furthermore, the actualization of the redundant connotations will also have to be conceived as 'work on the system'; as conservative work that confirms the established central connotations, 'nurtures' them, and works against their natural decay.

The specificity of metaphor, then, would have to be modified: In contrast to literal use, metaphor is characterized by the fact that it forces one to go through the connotations consciously and individually; the failure of the usual, central partial meanings forces an examination of which of the connotations are applicable in the context and which are not. This examination happens at lightning speed, almost simultaneously, and as such is of course not conscious; its result, however, is a branched complex of individual conceptions, which is pictorially-simultaneously adjusted to the new context.[22] The impression of 'freshness' and 'liveliness', which the metaphor evokes, thus does not arise because the individual connotations themselves are in that moment produced, but because their selection, their combination and integration into a complex is 'newly', i.e. contextually established.[23]

The second characteristic of metaphor that one will have to abandon is the idea that while the path of metaphor is 'pre-paved' in the connotations, its overall meaning sovereignly transcends the conventionalized. However, if the metaphorical process is described, as outlined, as a selection and recombination of conventionalized connotations, the metaphor's surplus of meaning, at least as far as the mechanism of its production is concerned, is no different from that in the case of literal application. The metaphor brings connotations into the context anew (those that are neither redundant nor excluded as inappropriate), and it carries the trace of the connotations actualized in the context out of the context.

A third notion that recurs in the theory of metaphor, however, is worth upholding: For even if one conceives of the meaning of words not as rigid but as the result of congealment, it is metaphor that brings 'movement' to these congealed meanings. But this too, it is worth insisting, not thanks to a genuine 'creativity', but in an extremely reduced, technical sense: Namely, by forcing us to examine the individual connotations for applicability in the context, metaphor dissolves – linguistic theoretical reflection essentially only traces this path – the appearance of

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[20] ...and also the question of how many copies are printed…

[21] The notion is found, for instance, in Richards (op. cit., p. 90) or, even more extremely, in Beardsley's more than peculiar explanation of the way in which metaphor acts back on the system of language (op. cit., pp. 302ff.).

[22] Perhaps speaking of metaphor as a linguistic *image* at all owes itself only to this impression of a simultaneity of different partial conceptions. As is well known, the characteristic of the image (in contrast to language, for instance) is that it presents its information simultaneously.

[23] Meant here are new, 'creative' metaphors; of course, metaphors can in turn be conventionalized.

a rigid or even singular meaning. A metaphor can be concretely understood (or produced) only when certain components of meaning are perceived as dispensable, when the word is thus perceived as composite, as an interplay of its connotations. Thus, the experience of metaphor liquefies again those components of meaning which, in the case of literal use, appear to be drawn together into a solid crystal structure. 'Movement' in this sense, then, is first of all the movement of connotations, a movement inside the words. The metaphor, accordingly, is the mechanism that forces the attention to switch to the micro-level of partial meanings.

Most of the time, however, when metaphor theory speaks of the dynamizing function of metaphor, it is not the dynamization of the partial meanings that is meant; more obviously, metaphor creates 'movement' in the vocabulary, insofar as the metaphor seems to leave its 'place' and vagabond into another sphere of meaning. This idea is most clearly formulated by Richards, who calls metaphor "a borrowing between and intercourse of thoughts, a *transaction between contexts*".[24] The first striking thing about this formulation is that only one of the two contexts seems to be a material-concrete con-text, namely the one in which the metaphor occurs; but that the second context, from which the metaphorically vagabonding expression originates, has a much less material character. This second concept of context is rather based on the idea of a quasi-topological division of the vocabulary into thematic spheres, as developed by Trier[25] in his theory of word fields.

Initially, then, this second 'movement' of metaphor seems to be a macro-level movement between words. Metaphor moves from one sphere of vocabulary to another, and moreover sets the vocabulary itself in motion by crossing and, at least in the long run, undermining the boundaries between the spheres. However, if one dissolves Trier's concept of the 'word field', which, for its part a metaphor, suggests a two-dimensional expansion of the vocabulary, it becomes clear that Trier's concept of spheres designates precisely that knowledge of typical contexts which – according to the idea developed here – belongs to the central connotations that every word carries with it.

Both types of 'movement', then, the one inside words and the seemingly external migration of the metaphor between spheres, are closely related. And the discussion of Trier makes clear that the 'transaction between contexts' described by Richards addresses distance or proximity relations in vocabulary, which, if one does not want to conceive them simply metaphorically-spatially, must be traced back to proximity relations in concrete material con-texts, proximity relations that repeat themselves and pass by way of statistical accumulation into the knowledge of 'typical contexts' that words make available in a conventionalized form, as connotation.

The notion of connotations and the insistence on the connection between language system and discourse, then, seems to be especially useful in relating the extremely heterogeneous claims that play a role in metaphor theory to a model that is at least in outline consistent.

Two implications of what has been said so far, however, are unsatisfactory: First, the notion of accumulation, and to a lesser extent that of connotation itself, evokes once again the traditional idea that the words of language are somehow 'full' and rest saturated – saturated in discourse, though no longer with 'meaning' – in themselves; according to the traditional notion of the fullness and 'presence' of meaning, words do 'represent' the object, but compensate for its absence by the fullness of a ramified knowledge. Such a notion, almost needless to say, no one

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[24] Op cit. p. 94 (emph. H. W.).

[25] Trier, Jost: Das sprachliche Feld. Eine Auseinandersetzung. In: Neue Jahrbücher für Wissenschaft und Jugendbildung. No. 10, 1931, pp. 428-429; c.f. Lyons, Semantics, op cit., pp. 250ff.

will be able to seriously defend after the poststructuralist critique of language. The plausibility of what has been said will therefore depend on whether the notion of connotation can be reconciled with the notion of language as a network of negative relations.

The second point which has not been very satisfactory so far concerns the concept of context. This concept has hitherto been restricted only to the extent that it should encompass the material con-text, but not, for instance, the extra-linguistic situation or the conditions of utterance. But if the connotations realized in context drive metaphorical application, it would be desirable to know how contextual meaning, other than added up from word meanings, can be conceived.

4

The concept of connotation[26] has the problem of suggesting 'fullness'. The connotations appear as a kind of possession of the words, as an accumulated wealth; the words, conversely, as if they accumulated something in order to then rest in themselves. The shortcoming of this conception lies above all in the fact that it contains unspoken ontological implications; the image of fullness correlates with the assumption that language reaches out of itself and enriches something that is not language itself, experience, for instance, or even immediate reality.

The critique of such ontological presuppositions is the core of structuralist and post-structuralist language theory. And step by step, the insistence on the systemic character of language as an exclusively self-supporting network of relations, and on the signifier as the only accessible, because material, side of the sign, has led to a purification of terminology, which can also be traced in metaphor theory. Against the same background, the argumentation presented here has emphasized that, crossing over from 'properties' to 'connotations', Beardsley's theory took an important step towards restricting the consideration to the terrain of language.

The question, however, is also reproduced in the concept of 'connotations'; for what is the status of the seemingly irreducible qualitative knowledge that the connotations hold? And how does this knowledge relate to the negative-differential network of language? Do the connotations form a kind of parasitic structure that enriches the net with qualities coming from outside? That the concept of connotations does not necessarily have that blurred emotive meaning which is attached to it in everyday language has surely become plausible. But what can be said about connotations when – worse than in the case of the signified – they do not seem to be matched by a material signifier? Questions of such scope probably cannot be answered satisfactorily. But a roughly sketched answer will have to be attempted, if the concept of connotation is to be protected from its unfortunate conceptual history, and from the accusation that it restores the signified.

The starting point is once again the dictionary definition. A dictionary entry describes the meaning of a term by listing "salient features",[27] characteristics, and typical contexts. The dictionary definition, then, consists of words (and words only) and, except for rudimentary syntactic structures, it functions largely additively, i.e., gets by with a simple stringing together of words. A dictionary entry thus defines a term by referring from this term to a certain number of other terms, and – it traces in these references exactly those partial meanings which have been called above the 'central connotations' (or denotation in the plural).

Only seemingly, then, does one change levels when one passes from a term to the analysis of its partial meanings, its properties, or its typical contexts: The dictionary definition shows that the connotations are themselves lexicalized, that they are *words* like the term itself; part of the

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[26] …just like the concept of denotation and meaning…

[27] Lyons, op. cit, p. 209.

same symbolic system, or at least a certain type of connection that exists between the words of language.[28]

Connotations, in the technical sense proposed here, are words. Other words, seen from the perspective of the word that is currently under discussion. The connotations install a star-shaped reference structure for each term (which the dictionary definition only traces): Each individual term points (with varying intensity) to a number of other terms; the respective references/relations overlap reciprocally or they do not overlap; in their totality, at any rate, they form that 'net' which pushes itself up from the ground by the force of net-relative references alone and which has been the binding image for language since Saussure.

The false notion of 'fullness' thus seems to dissolve relatively effortlessly into a structure of network relations; the connotations are not 'possessions' of the respective term but are themselves concepts and to that extent possessions of themselves. Terms function as connotations where they are referenced in the network; all terms together are managed by language.

In the model sketched here, the notion of certain reference qualities, which is likewise rejected by structural semantics, proves to be incomparably more persistent.[29] The fact that the dictionary definition contains not only isolated terms but also rudimentary text parts and syntactic structures is less irritating[30] than the fact that we have to assume references/relations of different intensity. Going back to the notion of quasi-statistical accumulation, according to which the central connotations were distinguished from the peripheral ones above, 'intensive' references in the network would be those that are frequently confirmed in the discourse. (It is interesting to note that the character of peripheral, rarely, or never confirmed connotations changes completely as soon as the connotations are conceived as references in the network of language: Thus, in principle, no two words can be imagined that do not maintain any – even potential – relationship; for absolutely any pair of words a context can be constructed that causes their bundles of connotations to interact[31]).

Without the idea of a hierarchy of references, therefore, the model represented here cannot do; but the question about the qualities of references is reversed, so to speak: What the language user finds as 'proximity in the network', as a reference necessary for definition, or as 'similarity' in the vocabulary, is a quasi-statistical, i.e. a quantitative effect over the totality of discourses.

The model as a whole, it should be noted, returns to a concept of Saussure's that has been particularly harshly criticized in the reception history of his texts. In the concept of 'association'

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[28] Whether the connotations are actually fully lexicalized is an interesting linguistic-philosophical question, especially for the 'peripheral' ephemeral or idiosyncratic connotations; Lyons, for instance, discusses the problem and explicitly warns against equating, for example, the component 'male' with the corresponding lexeme (op. cit., pp. 318f.). Any model, however, that assigns to the components of meaning their own sphere outside of language would have to show how, if not through the structuring performance of language, this sphere acquires its form.

[29] That structural semantics also finds it extremely difficult to make the network of language plausible as exclusively binary-oppositional/negative/functional is evidenced by a skeptical statement by Lyons: "Oppositions are drawn along some dimension of similarity." (op. cit., p. 286 (emph. H.W.)).

[30] Although no theory exists as to the manner in which syntactic structures have developed from, say, originally lexical ones, it is nevertheless plausible to assume that syntax must be regarded as a kind of shortcut, a spin-off, of semantic structures that are particularly frequently actualized in discourse. So the basic syntax-pattern of Western languages (subject-predicate-object) mimics the model of *action*.

[31] It was one of the discoveries of the surrealists, Lacan writes, "that any conjunction of two signifiers would be equally sufficient to constitute a metaphor," only to object scornfully, "except for the additional requirement of the greatest possible disparity of the images signified, needed […] for metaphoric creation to take place." (Lacan, Jacques: The agency of the letter in the unconscious or reason since Freud. In: L., J.: Écrits. A selection. London: Tavistock 1977, pp. 146-178, here: p. 156. [1957]).

Saussure had tried to grasp the proximity relations in a language's vocabulary; whereby the decision for the dazzling concept of association corresponds with the fact that Saussure counted among the paradigmatic series also those that are built up along semantic similarities.

The concept of association was accordingly attacked on the one hand as 'psychological' and on the other hand rejected as a shortcut towards the signified. Both accusations, I think, are true; from the perspective of the model proposed here, however, a peculiar reevaluation would arise if it could be shown that while linguistics cannot benefit from the psychological/psychoanalytic concept of association, the latter, conversely, could benefit from a linguistic-theoretical clarification.

For it is indeed striking that the concept of connotations, developed here via the mechanism of metaphor and the relationship between discourse and system, retains a certain closeness to the everyday notion that a connotation, or indeed an association, is what comes to mind for an average member of the linguistic community in relation to a given term. Associations, however situational and individual they may be in each concrete case, certainly make use of those paths in the network that discourse has carved into the system and that literal application and, more conspicuously, metaphor utilize. So as unclear as the concept of 'association' is, its key position between psychoanalysis and linguistics could contain, in miniature as it were, the program that step by step gains contour in the psychoanalytic/linguistic theories of Jakobson, Lacan, Metz,[32] and in a very different way in Lorenzer.[33]

And for yet another reason it seems to me worthwhile to reconsider the reviled notion of associations: It is precisely the 'semantic' ones among Saussure's paradigmatic series that have the power to bring into the realm of the imaginable not only the possible exchange in a context, but also a covert co-presence in the context of unrealized words. The connotations of a word, and this is taken for granted by everyday consciousness, 'resonate' whenever the word occurs. Thus, if one understands the connotations as references to other words, as suggested here, one will have to conclude that these words – although, as Saussure says, "in absentia"[34] – by being concealed and 'represented' by the given word are present after all. The 'representation', however, is the role of the sign in general; and there would result a quasi-metonymic relation between the present word and the absent/present words to which it refers.

If we return to more solid considerations, there are two questions in particular that require additional clarification: the question of what the contextual juxtaposition looks like concretely, which turns into the conventionalized proximity relations of the vocabulary, and the second question, already posed once before, of where to conceive of the material place that the connotations occupy.

Structural semantics, as is well known, takes the network relation for granted. But if one claims, as outlined here, a regular mechanism between discourse and system, the question arises what 'proximity in discourse' and 'proximity in context' actually mean, if this is to result in the conventionalized proximity in vocabulary. This question, too, cannot be answered completely; first, however, three levels of contextual proximity can be distinguished: the simply additive stringing together, which has already been mentioned in connection with the dictionary definition; the one- or multi-word sentences of small children would be an example of such contiguity, and even the language of military orders shows only rudiments of syntactic or morpholog-

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[32] Metz, Christian: The Imaginary Signifier. Psychoanalysis and the Cinema. Bloomington (USA) 1982 [1973-76, 1977]; the fourth and most interesting part of the book tries to develop a theory of the cinematic metaphor (op. cit, pp. 149ff.).

[33] Cf.: Lorenzer, Alfred: Sprachzerstörung und Rekonstruktion. Vorarbeiten zu einer Metatheorie der Psychoanalyse. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1970.

[34] De Saussure, Ferdinand: Course in General Linguistics. Lasalle, Illinois: Open Court 1986, p. 122 [1916].

ical structures. The second, infinitely more complicated level is that of syntax. The syntactic structure distributes weights by itself and produces meanings that are regular but not a simple interaction effect of the lexemes involved. The third level represents an extreme of such syntactically produced meaning: The explicit definition is able, with syntactically minimal effort, to concatenate any signifier with any connotations.[35] All three mechanisms produce contextual proximity in specific ways; the simple positioning next to each other certainly to the least degree, the explicit definition to the strongest, while the semantic effect of the different syntactic patterns is probably the most difficult to evaluate.

In the history of theory, there have been two attempts to describe the semantic effect specifically of syntagmatic ordering: the theory of 'collocations' by Porzig[36] and that of J. R. Firth,[37] who used the same term. Porzig was interested, for example, in the connection between the lexemes 'tongue' and 'lick', which occur extremely often in the same context and frequently in the same syntactic dependency. Firth asserted a level between syntax and the extra-linguistic situation, which he regarded as the real source of lexical meaning. Neither theory, however, fully solved their problem, nor gained wider influence.[38]

The last question to be raised in the immediate context is that of the material location of connotations. It has already been said that it would be futile to try to find them in the individual material signifier,[39] and doubtlessly their material equivalent will be equally impossible to find in the individual current discourse, insofar as – according to Bühler's model – the conventionalized meaning is precisely that which no longer needs to be produced in the individual context.

And yet, the thesis presented here, which asserts a systematic mechanism between discourse and system, depends entirely and completely on whether a material carrier of the connotations can be named. The answer that will be attempted here is split into two answers: First, the connotations are materially represented in the discourses of the past.

Material *syntagmatic* combination, material proximity in the discourses of the past is, in the model represented here, the indispensable precondition for *paradigmatic* proximity to emerge in the network. Or, more clearly still and brought down to a formula: What was never syntagmatic sequence cannot appear in the present as connotation, as the partial meaning of a word.

The central mechanism of language is that syntagmatic proximity turns into paradigmatic proximity.

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[35] It should be remembered in any case that above the syntax only contiguity, i.e. the non-hierarchical sequence of syntactic units, prevails. Contextual proximity above the level of the sentence, then, would again be described as a sequential order, and quantitatively, for instance, via distance values.

[36] Porzig, W.: Wesenhafte Bedeutungsbeziehungen. In: Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur, no. 58 [1934].

[37] Firth, J. R.: Papers in Linguistics. 1934-51. London: Oxford UP 1957.

[38] Which is certainly also due to the long period of one-sided orientation of linguistics to the synchronic perspective of investigation; Firth and Porzig, from today's perspective, can be addressed as avant-gardists of discourse theory, despite all the eccentricities of their texts.

[39] In any case, talk of the 'signifier' often has the weakness of claiming its material hardness and evidence also for those mechanisms of language that cannot be shown in the individual signifier that is concretely and materially present in the text. In many cases, the notion of the signifier becomes a metaphor for the side of the language in general that is averted or withdrawn from consciousness.

The hardness of this determination will scarcely be sufficiently emphasized. It solves the puzzle left by Saussure, who had simply juxtaposed syntagmatic sequencing and 'associative' (paradigmatic) sequencing as equal 'axes', and for the first time it gives space to the fact that only the syntagmatically ordered textual elements are materially accessible.

The second answer, imprecise as it must remain, is closely related to the first: As far as the present is concerned, the material 'locus' of connotations is distributed among that myriad of *empirical memories* that have participated in past discourses, captured syntagmatic proximities, and received their form through past con-texts. Even in this distribution among empirical minds, meaning is a phenomenon of redundancy.

To describe the connotations as a network of references and the important connotations thus as 'facilitation/priming' may be reminiscent of the physical synapses of the brain – neurophysiology has so far failed to provide a more material answer. The argument put forward here gets by with a much simpler conception of memory and requires of it only that it make the experience of past discourses available to current discourses.

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If one now wants to summarize what has been said to a single point, then, in complete contrast to everyday understanding, the central point of the metaphor appears to be – convention. At first, the buildup of connotations follows the rules of conventionalization. It has been said that already in the individual text it can be observed how new connotations are installed exclusively by the mechanism of syntagmatic sequencing and stabilized by the fact that the continuation of the text confirms them. Such connotations, however, initially have validity only within the respective text; they are therefore to be sharply distinguished from those connotations which at some point in time arose in the same way, but were then taken up by text after text until they were finally established intersubjectively and had become part of language itself. Connotations of this second type precede the individual text. (The metaphor, this brief sideways glance may be permitted, uses connotations of both the one and the other kind; in the concrete analysis, therefore, the already conventionalized part must be strictly set apart from those connotations which the text itself has built up). Conventional-regular, then, is the mechanism, and conventional are the connotations themselves; they are intersubjectively-binding, if one follows the definition proposed here and understands as 'connotations' all those partial meanings that make up the structure of a word, its relation to other words, and in essence: its definition.

Completely regular, secondly, is the mechanism of context application. Both literal and metaphorical usage are subject to the same law that words can only be applied to contexts along certain 'appropriateness criteria'. The application, then, must be prefigured by certain connotations shared a priori by the context and the newly applied word.[40] Literal usage may be characterized by a relative harmony of connotations, while metaphor allows for conflicts even of the central connotations; but metaphor can function as a 'filter' (Black) only by highlighting among the possible connotations those shared by the context and the metaphorical expression.

Likewise and thirdly, the "deformation" that the conventionalized inner structure of the terms undergoes in the concrete context takes place in a regular way. Never, this has also been said, are all the connotations realized in the context that make up the conventionalized scope of meaning of a term; the connotations of the syntagmatically arranged terms are always reconciled with each other, and connotations that appear to be 'inappropriate' in the context are excluded.[41]

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[40] Of course, the selection restrictions themselves are more complicated in structure, but they are not the issue here.

[41] Black used the term 'interaction' which, as shown, applies to metaphor and literal usage in the same way.

It was the syntagmatic proximity of other terms and the matching of connotations that, following the model outlined here, ‘inform’ the term and leave that ‘trace’ which, when confirmed, can turn into conventionalized proximity, proximity in vocabulary, paradigmatic relation.

And there is a fourth part to the clockwork of metaphor: If as its specific feature and as the essential difference to literal usage the fact was mentioned that the failure of central partial meanings forces us to go through the peripheral connotations one by one, to check them for applicability in the context and to draw them together to form that new constellation which constitutes the meaning of the metaphorical expression in the context, then this process can also be imagined as completely regular. Compared to literal use, the metaphor carries disproportionately more complex information into the context; but also this surplus seems to be describable in its structure without having to resort to terms like ‘spontaneity’ or ‘creativity’.

Despite a multitude of unresolved subproblems, the picture of an almost closed mechanics emerges precisely on that terrain of language which seemed to almost completely defy theoretical description; metaphor, and similarly the concept of connotations, seemed to stand for the fact that the spontaneity of speech was irreducibly subjective, and that language could not be dissolved into rules and practices.

Peculiarly, however, insisting on the spontaneity and creativity of language had the consequence of overestimating the reliability of the linguistic system: As long as the ‘connotations’ could only be added to a fixed, guaranteed (and singular) denotation, as long as they could be set off against the ‘actual’ meaning as a subjectively luxurious sphere, ‘language’ seemed to be reliably protected from its uncontrollability (the unmanageability of the innumerable parallel discourses).

Undoubtedly, the connotations are indeed unmanageable. The conventionally and intersubjectively/redundantly hardened connotations at the core of each term are surrounded by a corona of far less reliable partial meanings; partial meanings which (sporadic, or in the process of hardening or dissolving) cannot be redundantly presupposed in all empirical memories. Each individual term dissolves towards its periphery and takes on a personal coloring from memory to memory (and from text to text); what appears as a ‘core’ is stabilized only via social practice (statistical accumulation) and is constantly threatened by that language change which penetrates the core of meaning via the peripheral connotations. Any theory of language will have to face the fact that this imponderability and intersubjective ‘fuzziness’ afflicts the core of language itself[42] and cannot be expelled from this core by the means of a simple definition (‘connotation’ versus ‘denotation’).

That metaphor, of all things, forces a notion of connotation that undermines the apparent certainty of meaning is anything but accidental: By redirecting attention from the seemingly secure middle to the manifold partial meanings, metaphor offers the paradoxical experience that a constellation of partial meanings can be mechanically-regularly applied (and intersubjectively understood) without this bundle of connotations being quantitatively completed or spelled out in an intersubjectively-binding manner. Metaphor is the privileged example of the fact that language, although it functions completely mechanically, is in no way dependent on secured and fixed “basic elements”. Security and certainty within language exist only in the form of intersubjective (and intertextual) redundancy – a basis exposed to an irreducible sliding, which would strike fear into the heart of any mathematician.

[42] The theory of seme, for instance, could be accused of trying to deny this fact.

The metaphor is a mechanism. It is a borderline case of contextual application, a rule-like violation with rule-like consequences. Its meaning is unfinalizable; but if one takes its structural model seriously, it becomes clear that even the meaning of ‘literal’ application cannot be finalized other than pragmatically.

The same metaphor that appeared as the impregnable residuum of freedom, subjectivity, and spontaneity within language reveals, if one examines its structure, the fact that on the terrain of language, rule and ‘freedom’ do not simply confront each other, but that language will rather have to be described as a specific entanglement of mechanicity and ‘fuzziness’ (misunderstanding). With this ‘fuzziness’, however, it will hardly be possible to console those who accepted the rule in order to be able to deny the mechanicity.