Text and Meaning
Literary Discourse and Beyond

Edited by
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Interpretive Semantics

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I. The Objectives of an Interpretive Semantics

Common theories and methods of linguistic semantics in the past five decades have either been based on formal descriptions in the context of logical or system-linguistic approaches or have been oriented to the practical needs of lexicography and the definitions of meanings suitable for dictionaries. In addition, these approaches were limited to the unit "word" since the meaning of more complex linguistic units (clause, phrase, or text) was thought of as an assemblage of atomistic elementary building blocks combined in a compositional way. The idea behind these approaches, the idea of a simple compositionality not only of the physically expressed linguistic forms but also of the "content" side of complex linguistic signs or sign-chains, has been termed, from a more critical point of view, as "checklist-theories" or as a "necessary-and-sufficient-conditions-semantics." This kind of linguistic semantics is based on two implicit assumptions critically identified by John Lyons as the "assumption (or premise) of the existence" and the "assumption (or premise) of the homogeneity" of linguistic meanings, both of them posing many theoretical and philosophical problems.[1] Following the "assumption of existence" most semantic theories hold that there do in fact exist entities (things, objects) that can be called *the* meaning X of a word Y, entities that can be defined, named, and described precisely. According to Lyons the justification of such a premise should first of all be critically discussed before choosing such a problematic theoretical instrument as the construction of new Platonic entities of this kind. The second problematic assumption, the "premise of homogeneity" of meaning of all sorts and aggregations of linguistic signs, is the assumption that "meaning," wherever it appears, exhibits an uniform type of phenomena, whether one speaks about morphemes, words, phrases, texts or acts of communication.[2] The fact that words are used within phrases expressed with the purpose of performing communicative aims of very different kinds, and the fact that words are embedded in texts, contexts, situations and backgrounds of very different types doesn't occur at all in these traditional linguistic theories of meaning, or is relegated to the fringe of semantics if not exiled to such neighbouring disciplines as pragmatics or sociolinguistics. This happens especially when this fact could become dangerous for

the logical or checklist theories. The question of what kinds of prerequisites must be present for a word to be able to fulfil the communicative functions it is dedicated to has never been discussed in those mainstream approaches to linguistic semantics.

In contrast to these kinds of semantic theories, an interpretive semantics will be a form of theory and research of meaning that poses (and tries to answer) the question into which preconditions or prerequisites must be fulfilled to ensure that a given word, a phrase, a text, or a communicative act performed by means of linguistic signs can be understood adequately. By "adequate," I mean equally to the communicative aims of those who uttered the words (phrases, text) and in conformity with the semantic conventions of the language or language community in which the utterance is taking place. Since the preconditions of an adequate understanding (or an adequate interpretation) of linguistic units regardless of what kind or complexity are a matter of the world or contextual knowledge of the interpreting or uttering individuals, an interpretive semantics always will have to be a semantics that tries to account for the knowledge usually called "non-linguistic" necessary for an adequate understanding or interpretation of a linguistic unit both in semantic theory and in explanation and description. In short: an interpretive semantics tries to explore the knowledge relevant for comprehension that forms the precondition for an adequate interpretation of a linguistic unit of whatever length and complexity. Please note: The notion "interpretive" must not necessarily be restricted to written texts but applies to the understanding of all kinds of communicative acts, even the shortest.

II. Word Meaning, Sentence Meaning, Text Meaning: A Short Outline

"Checklist"-approaches of component- or marker-semantics are not compatible with the objectives of an "interpretive" or "understanding" semantics, since they delimit what belongs to the meaning of a word or a phrase so rigorously that a chunk of knowledge that has to be considered as an important part of the indispensable preconditions of the understandability of these linguistic units will be excluded from the (notion of) "meaning," in the process defining "meaning" in a reductionistic manner. An interpretive semantics will replace such a reductionistic definition of the object of research of linguistic semantic enquiry with an approach that (without any blinders and premature delimitations)

accounts for the role of external contexts that make possible understanding the linguistic units in the first place. These contexts therefore can be referred to as contexts of understandability. Since all contexts of whatever type must be present in the act of understanding of linguistic units as part of the knowledge of the interpreters (just as they had been present before in the mind of the utterer of the linguistic signs as the knowledge that motivated the utterance of these very signs in these very contexts) they may be referred to as "epistemic contexts" necessarily present in the attribution of meaning to the linguistic units and means used. Interpretive semantics, therefore, will be a kind of semantics that wants to (and must) make explicit the contexts of use and understanding as the epistemic preconditions of the understandability of linguistic signs. Single words, in actual communicative processes, fulfil the function to activate such contexts of understandability, i.e. agglomerations of understanding relevant knowledge, in the working memory of the communicating and understanding people. Or, as one of the founders of an interpretive view in linguistic semantics, Charles J. Fillmore, puts it, they "evoke" particular frames of knowledge forming the epistemic background for the adequate understanding of the individual linguistic unit.

Frames, in the most frequent usage of this term, are "chunks" of knowledge structured internally and characterised by prototypical character. For example, Fillmore mentions the "commercial event," the related frame(s) being evoked by words such as *buy, sell, pay, purchase, cost, price, invoice, buyer, seller, teller,* etc. Depending on the parts of speech of the lexical units contributing to an utterance different types of frames can be involved. Following the verb-centred model of syntactic structures proposed by Lucien Tesnière in his valency grammar, Fillmore initially had in mind mainly verb-based frames, that is, frames of a type that could be called "predication frames."[3] Around the verb (as the central predicative expression in a phrase) are grouped several other elements of a phrase, guided (or organized) by the verb-frame, but containing more elements as the syntactically demanded complements. Fillmore calls these participants of a verb frame "frame elements." They are attached to the related predicative expression (verb or another part of speech in predicative function) as prototypical (semantically determined) "actants" (in the sense of Tesnières valency grammar). Actual complements in a phrase can be assigned to these frame elements. But frequently frame elements that are not verbally expressed play an important role for the adequate understanding of a phrase, being implicitly "entailed" (presupposed) in the meaning of the phrase.[4]

Certain frame elements, attached to a higher-ranking predicative frame, represent rather abstract positions of "actants" (such as persons, things, props); as frame elements they represent substitute positions that may be specified with respect to frame-relevant aspects but often need not to be specified with respect to other aspects—e.g. the "seller" in a "commercial event" frame can be a real person or an abstract entity (as *"department store X," "company Y," "Ltd. Z"* etc.). Frame theorists in Cognitive Science invented the notions "slots" and "fillers" for these phenomena, frequently used nowadays. Every frame requires frame elements of a certain type. Some of these "requirement features" have been dealt with earlier in linguistic theory and, e.g. referred to as "subcategorization rules." (For example: the word "bark" requires in the position "agent" an element with the feature "dog-like.")

Whereas the linguist Fillmore focuses on predicative frames, other frame semantic approaches, such as that of Lawrence W. Barsalou, focus on so called "concept-frames" that are verbalized by nominal expressions (that is, those parts of speech that express complements and represent frame elements in Fillmore's approach).[5] In this approach the "slots" are the "attributes" that characterize a concept as e.g. "dog" (here e.g. features as "has X numbers of feet," "has size Y," "has skin Z," "moves in the manner M" etc.). Predicative frames and concept frames can be brought together in a more general frame theory that in principle reconstructs all kinds of semantic aspects (all kinds of epistemic elements) that are important for the meaning, i.e. the interpretation of a linguistic expression as certain kind of frames. The scope of a frame theory is, however, not exhausted by these types of frames. For instance, knowledge of text genres may play an important role in the understanding of linguistic utterances, i.e., types of knowledge normally not treated in linguistic semantic theories.

In a frame-based interpretive semantics the meanings of phrases or sentences will not be mere additions of isolated lexicalized concepts but represent a complex (and often complicated) interaction of different linguistic elements that include, besides the verbalized (by its own lexical units designated) frame elements, a type of knowledge that has been "evoked," e.g. by variations of syntactic positions in the phrase (positions of words, positions of sub-phrases), or so called "synsemantica" ("functional words"),[6] stress signals and similar linguistic means. Particularly on the level of text meaning such means play an important role for an adequate understanding (e.g. concerning anaphoric relations related to elements being invented to the "world" of a text).

Words evoke and focus frames (put frames under a perspective); several (or all) words in a phrase may evoke and "fill" a single predicative frame (and assign concept frames to the "slots" of the predicative frame); or they may evoke different interrelated frames. By the word-evoked frames text elements are introduced into the text world that can be referred to in the further progression of the text, this being independent of whether the text elements have been introduced explicitly (by its own designating linguistic units) or implicitly, i.e. simply by evoking the related background frame. As "introduced into a text world" can be characterised all frame elements that are, according to the particular linguistic and epistemic conventions valid in a particular speech- and communication-community, assigned to a certain frame "evoked" by preceding linguistic units in a text. What could be called "explicitness of designation" is not a compelling, necessary precondition for this status but may be useful for a better or easier understanding in certain contexts and situations. However, following the theoretical approach presented here, a "complete explicitness" is in principle not possible since linguistic expressions have mainly the purpose of evoking and activating pre-existing and available knowledge in the process of text understanding (and not the purpose of "expressing" or "notifying").

III. Texts as Elements of Communicative Processes

Just as well as any text theory and language-related theory of understanding, any semantic theory, above all one termed "interpretive," has to cope with a specific dualism to the extent that its subject matter has to be appropriate (perhaps albeit not exclusively, but particularly) for both language and linguistic communication. This dualism can be marked by two perspectives, i.e. two points of view any researcher can take with respect to that kind of subject matter (or collection of subject matters) we usually call "language" or "linguistic communication." These points of view can be characterized as follows: first, texts as elements of communicative processes, and, second, texts as objects of interpretive endeavors or interpretation—or, put differently, texts as objects and/or inducements for perceptual and constructive acts. I shall begin with the first kind of perspective.

The fact that language (units of language, events of application of language, occurrences of language etc.) can be viewed from the viewpoint of communication might be regarded as trivial. But this is not really the case any more, since recent proposals have been put forward that assign to this perspective a quality termed

"textuality" (or whatever notion is used for it; labels have variously been: "writing," "theory of writing," "intertextuality," "hypertext," et al.) and an existence and mode of functioning *sui generis*, claiming that it is independent of the question if, when, how, or by whom the linguistic units (or chains of units) designated by these notions have been produced and for what communicative purpose. For a long time it has been a matter of course in linguistics to see texts (and their parts) as elements of communicative processes, i.e. processes in which members of a community "communicate" to other members of that community certain "contents" (independently of the fact of whether they had in mind particular recipients or simply the audience of all people able to speak his/her own language). The comprehension of a text, viewed from this perspective, focuses on the understanding of communicative intentions (independently of the fact of whether these are real intentions of real, known persons, or presumed intentions), assigned to the utterers of the perceived and interpreted (chains of) linguistic signs as interpretation-supporting assumptions based on general societal—i.e. conventional—knowledge, using abductive syllogisms. In the hermeneutic theory of Friedrich Schleiermacher this mode of understanding is equivalent to his concept of "*divinatio*," i.e. the putting-oneself-in-the-position-of-the-author.[7]

The envisioning of texts as communicative events has often been misunderstood in language and text-theory (sometimes deliberately). False dichotomies such as "intentionalism" vs. "conventionalism" are evidence of those misconceptions. The reason why these are misconceptions of a communicative viewpoint is that reference to (communicative) intentions must not be confounded with a (false) subjectivism. What is termed "intentions" in theories using this term (as in the theory of communication of Herbert Paul Grice)[8] is nothing else but a (re)constructive extrapolation with respect to the situation and context given on the basis of the conventions of use of the linguistic means utilized in the text to be understood and known by the interpreting or comprehending individual. The greater the temporal distance to this event (the act of utterance to be interpreted) is the more the epistemic backing of a *divinatio* (an intention-oriented attempt of understanding) faints and the more the process of interpretation tends to become what Schleiermacher called the "grammatical technique" of interpretation. An exclusively "intentionalistic" way of understanding of a given text is not at all possible since an interpreter cannot have other knowledge of the "intentions" of the text producer than by the signs perceived. From these signs he or she extrapolates the (assumed, presumed, for an

adequate understanding of a sign-chain coercively to be imputed) "intentions" of a text producer by using what Charles Sanders Peirce called "abductive reasoning" (i.e. an inference that leads from the perceived to the rules that explain or motivate the occurrence of the perceived signs in a particular context).[9] The basis of such abductive inferences always is formed by the repertoire of (linguistic) rules or conventions (first of all conventions of use of the single signs). One might rightly claim that every understanding as part of social interaction (not only the understanding of texts or linguistic signs but all understanding aimed at the understanding of social, interactional, non-linguistic actions) is based on abductive inferences.

Therefore, in opposition to a misapprehension nowadays widespread among scholars in humanities and cultural sciences (three decades after the Jacques Derrida's *Of Grammatology*) a "communication-oriented" viewpoint in a theory of language, text and meaning cannot at all be equated to an uncritical intentionalism.

IV. Texts as Objects and/or Inducements for Perceptive and Constructive Acts

It is a problem for every theory of language, text, and understanding (for the purposes of this paper used synonymously with "comprehension"), that besides a communicative viewpoint there exists a second viewpoint that has a long and time-honored tradition (namely in the theory of signs handed down from Antiquity and Middle Ages) which combines with a "text-theoretical modernity" in the shape of a Derrida. In this view, an observance of the fact that texts normally come into being in conjunction with communicative efforts has to be regarded as completely irrelevant, even misleading, to the practical interpretation as for the theory of language and texts. As far as I am aware of, in recent theories of language only one author accounted for this dualism of signs (and texts as combinations of linguistic signs); it is the phenomenological philosopher Edmund Husserl in his *Logical Investigations*, where he distinguishes between *signs* (*Zeichen*; i.e. symbolic signs in the full sense of this term), and *indications* (*Anzeichen*; i.e. indexical signs). According to Husserl, all linguistic signs are indications too, standing for something specific, this specific thing being the mental or cognitive acts that motivate the respective signs in their respective uses.[10] More recent approaches in text theory (as, most prominently, Derrida) radicalize the perspective or viewpoint of "indication" by applying an intrinsic

value as object of interpretation to the signs and sign-chains explicitly not to be constrained or restricted by any conventionality. These approaches, therefore, are not only anti-intentionalist—but go much beyond this. They are anti-conventionalist in that they refuse to tie down theoretically the interpretation of signs (or sign-chains) to existing rules of usage of signs in a social community.

This kind of theory of comprehension, interpretation, and language is, in the literal sense of the word, un-social, insofar as they try to exclude any social aspect or perspective from linguistic and text-theory. However, such theories burden themselves with tremendous substantiation necessities since they cannot explain how the knowledge used by interpreting signs and texts enters the minds of the interpreter, and what this has (or could have) to do with social aspects. Such theories are therefore also, "anti-epistemological," since they substitute for knowledge that is historically verifiable a free-floating mind in all of its hidden present-time-ness. (In this respect there is a strict contrast between the approaches of Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault, the latter having ever striven for the epistemological project of a "genealogy" of knowledge).

At least, this is true with a radicalized and text-form-centered viewpoint: text understanding is always an *endeavor* of interpretation that bears an irreducible "constructivist" character. Every understandable entity becomes an object for efforts of understanding, the outcome influenced as much by the knowledge and viewpoints of understanding individuals as by the given facts in the text form. The given facts of the text indeed might, from a certain point of view, be referred to as "dead sound" (Wilhelm von Humboldt) (or "dead ink") which are "animated" (or "brought to life"), i.e. filled with knowledge, with sense, only by the understanders' or interpreters' inferential acts. [11] In a social community (without which no language, no texts, no textuality, no writing/*écriture* could exist) this knowledge is always a socially-formed knowledge. Therefore, finally, an epistemological perspective on language and text-understanding—that is, an observance of the structures and forms of knowledge relevant for understanding as of the ways in which it comes in its own—will be indispensable.

Whereas a radicalized communication-theoretical viewpoint on language and textuality could be accused of its "oblivion of sign" (which is the case in nearly all of traditional linguistic theory), a text-theoretical (or "writing-theoretical") radicalization could be accused of an ignorance of the social grounding of the understanding-relevant knowledge, and, therefore, of the knowledge in its socially determined structures, an interpretive semantics has to avoid both kinds of one-sided view and has to cope with the fact that language

is a social phenomenon, and that therefore, the knowledge necessary for an adequate understanding, the description of which is the ultimate purpose of any semantics, is determined socially (at least that part of this knowledge that can play a role in a linguistic description at all).

V. Meaning-Relevant Knowledge-Levels and Heuristic Typology

Since in linguistics (and in the predominant theories of language of whatever origin as well) the inquiry into the understanding-relevant knowledge up to now never has been tried in an explicit manner, any attempt at its systematic description in the framework of an interpretive semantics is uncharted ground. A language-theoretical and/or linguistic study of the meaning-relevant (or understanding-relevant) knowledge has to be different from considerations in neighbor disciplines (as in cognitive science and psychology of language the description of the "encyclopaedic" knowledge and the construction of so called "ontologies"), at least insofar as "language" is a means of communication of a very special type that can be fully explained only on the basis of specific linguistic theories, that is, theories that take seriously the function of signs as signs. This holds even if one concedes that linguistic communication is part of the general human ability to communicate, sharing with it important basic principles, and that it uses many human abilities (perception, schematization, formation of conceptual and frame-like structures, cognitive processes) that might also be used for other purposes or in the carrying out of fundamental cognitive operations. Amongst others, a linguistically reflected exploration of the understanding-relevant knowledge must describe the rules and conventions of language in their functioning and therewith account for phenomena that can (or must be) be traced back to parameters of the social.

In the description of the knowledge that is relevant for an adequate understanding three aspects can be distinguished: the "procedural" (or "process-related"), the "material" (or "substantial") and the "modal" aspect. With respect to the procedural aspect, every instance of understanding will develop on a time axis. This is a result of the linear nature of linguistic signs (and sign-chains) that compels complex contents to be linguistically deployed in the form of a successive linear progression influenced by a lot of different factors. This feature of linear structure makes possible (and forces) what is called "phrase structures"

(syntax) and text structures. With respect to the progression of understanding this linear character, the corollary of the linear character of understanding is that, at any point in the text, there is a "before." This "before" can be referred to as the "antecedent" or "prehistory" of this particular instance of understanding. Concerning the understanding-relevant knowledge this means that in every phrase or text understanding there is a successively accumulated knowledge evoked by the previous linguistic progression—a knowledge that forms the background for the understanding of each linguistic element introduced by the actual perception to the actual cognitive processing. From this accumulated (short-term present or actualized) knowledge expectations can be deduced relating to the (possible) continuation of the linear sign chain (phrase, text) beyond the actual point in the linear progression where the understanding individual (or his or her cognitive process) has arrived at a particular moment in the process of text comprehension. This presumed "hereafter" of an actual (single-sign-directed) instance of understanding can be referred to as its "presumed aftermath."

Besides the more "technical" (and, in some sense, "formal") level of differentiation of "procedural" knowledge into the comprehension of the linguistic forms and text comprehension the identification of the "material" (or "substantial," or "content-related") dimension of knowledge has a much greater importance for the theory and empirical study of an interpretive semantics. This knowledge is as polymorphic as "the real life itself." And, therefore, to attempt to construe rigid patterns (or grids) of classification would advocate a problematic linguistic encyclopaedism. On the other hand, the fact that an objective and ultimately valid classification will never be possible must not deter us from studying the different varieties of the meaning-relevant (or understanding-relevant) knowledge. That a semantically reflected typology of types of understanding-relevant knowledge does not lie completely outside in the "exteriority" of a linguistic theory of semantics is shown by the fact that implicit meaning-related classifications of types of semantically relevant knowledge are widespread in traditional linguistics. These concepts include dichotomies such as "semantic knowledge" vs. "pragmatic knowledge," "meaning" vs. "illocutionary force," "linguistic knowledge" vs. "encyclopaedic knowledge," "denotation" vs. "connotation," "conceptual meaning" vs. "additional meaning," "meaning" vs. "stylistic value," "grammatical function" vs. "textual function," "autosemantica" vs. "synsemantica," "concept words" vs. "functional words," "lexical morphemes" vs. "inflectional morphemes" etc.

As such kinds of differentiations are quite common in linguistics (albeit concealed and not in terms of a typology of knowledge), it would be worthwhile to embark on a heuristics of the meaning-relevant knowledge on behalf of an interpretive semantics, since it is only by this path that a solution for many yet unsolved problems of semantic and understanding theory can be approached.

There are good reasons for the assumption that the entire understanding relevant knowledge (as all kinds of knowledge) is not given as an amorphous bulk but, as a result of cognitive and social processes, is rather organized in knowledge frames (or schemata), that is, it is given (stored in as well as called up from memory) in a structured manner. A heuristic differentiation or typology of different varieties of the understanding relevant knowledge can thus be conceptualized as a differentiation of various types of frames. Such a typology (of frames) first of all has to account for the basic conditions of cognition and for the linguistic formation of results of acts of cognition (that are to be communicated in a specific communicative act). If we speak about the world we refer to something and state something about it. In linguistic or logical terms, we perform (linguistic or cognitive) acts of referring ("reference") and "predication." Thus a first step of frame differentiation could be the distinction between referential and predicative frames. Referential frames would be related to things, persons and similar objects; predicative frames would be related to actions, events, circumstances etc. But in fact the matter is not so simple, since it is possible to refer predicating to events, actions etc. too. Nevertheless, there is a significant difference. If I refer to referential objects as "the sale," "the murder" etc., the object of reference is presented in a frame with a predicative structure. Prototypically predicative is a frame if to a central, frame-defining predicate specific other frame-elements can be attached to (in linguistic expressions grammatically realized as complements). In valency grammar those elements are represented as the valency specifications of verbs (e.g. "Someone has sold something to somebody").

The situation is different if the objects of reference cannot be traced back to predications, as e.g. "father" in a phrase like "The sale of my father is completed." The frames relating to such a kind of objects of reference are most frequently called "concept frames" in the relevant literature. This mode of speaking bears some problems since, finally, predications as "sale," "to sell" etc. represent concepts as well. So one ends up again with something like the everyday concept of "thing" and is forced to distinguish "thing-frames" form "predication-frames." But this would be a kind of ontology again, i.e., an ency-

clopedic classification of the entire world (a problematic and scientifically questionable endeavor). This attempt should, therefore, not be pursued further for the moment.

In text understanding still very different types of knowledge are operating that are often ignored in linguistic and particularly cognitive research. Thus a genre-related knowledge (as well as a knowledge related to social, situational, functional and regional varieties of language and of register features) may influence or determine processes of understanding up to that level usually called "semantics." These phenomena concern what could be referred to as types of "contextualization" relating not merely to coincidental and idiosyncratic knowledge but to a knowledge that is based on stable conventionalized rules and structures.

Finally there is the vast area of modal knowledge, relating to phenomena such as grades of certainty, of truthfulness, of presuming concerning the content of linguistic expressions and applying to a not negligible part of word and text meanings. So, for example, the contextualizing advance information "fictional" vs. "non-fictional" will contribute essentially to an adequate understanding of a text. (As tests with generations of students have demonstrated again and again, students of literature have a very strong tendency to vote for "text" if one confronts them with examples of sign-chains and the task of differentiation between "text" and "non-text"—even if the interpretative expense would be very great). To draw a very preliminary conclusion: A typology of the understanding-relevant knowledge is momentarily hardly more than programmatic, if necessary, and it is rather uncertain if such an endeavor could ever be carried out to a satisfying end.

VI. Towards a Linguistic Epistemology

Most human knowledge is formed and expressed in language, available and explicable only in language (in the linguistic form in which the results of an analysis of knowledge must be expressed). Language in turn (i.e. the function and achievement of its words/signs, phrases and texts) is based upon knowledge. It serves the reference to it, its evocation and actualization. Without including elements of an analysis of knowledge, the meaning of linguistic signs and sign-chains (phrases, texts) is quite simply not explicable and analyzable. Texts, in turn, are the form of realization for language as well as for knowledge. Language

only exists in the form of texts (and text parts), as texts conversely require the language, work and play with its material. But texts as well are the most important form in which human knowledge is expressed. They not only serve the physical "storage" of knowledge as "systems of safekeeping" but act on it conversely to a considerable (and decisive) extent by influencing, combining and transforming the knowledge, using the tremendous and multilateral possibilities of its indeterminable re-arrangement.

How closely what we name "text" is interlaced with the entire human knowledge (that in respect to texts can be characterized as the "understanding-relevant" knowledge) becomes obvious by stating the entire failure of all former linguistic efforts to define and explain "text" ("textuality," "textual coherence") merely on the basis of "grammatical" rules. "Texts" (and the cohesion of the single phrases and words they consist of) depend—as is now common knowledge—in such a fundamental manner on language-external knowledge that reaches far beyond the limits of "lexical-semantic" and "grammatical" knowledge in the sense of traditional linguistic theories that without the framework of such knowledge structures one—strictly speaking—cannot refer to it as "text" ("text coherence," "text understanding"). This knowledge comprises far more than only the "text world" that is more or less explicitly constituted and in fact construed in any text.[12] Any element of a "text world" itself is embedded in structured contexts of knowledge (or "epistemic contexts"), often very dense and with strong evocative power.

The choice of presumed, inconsiderable linguistic means sometimes makes possible the linking-up of extremely condensed knowledge-structures. By extensive use of such cross-referential structures, even texts that appear to be linguistically simple texts can, up to a high degree, be epistemically charged and condensed. "Inter-textuality" is only a very insufficient notion for such phenomena and, even more, it is a partially misleading concept since it presupposes that all knowledge that has to be used for the interpretation of a text is (or can be) in the shape of this knowledge formed and instantiated in actual texts. Inasmuch as one cannot prove the actual existence of these related texts it would be better (and more precise) to speak of "epistemic contextualizations" instead. Language, then, would be first of all and primarily a means of contextualization (calling up and linking of contexts). Combinations of linguistic signs (and sign structures) in texts direct the efforts of contextualization to be undertaken by the recipients to certain paths but are not able to predetermine them within narrow limits.

A scientific, linguistically reflected analysis of the correlation of language, communication, textuality, text understanding, and text meaning presupposes a consideration of understanding relevant knowledge in all of its varieties and facets and in its full extent in which it guides understanding. In its present state, linguistics (and linguistic semantics and text-theory as well) still is far from such an adequate perspective. What would be necessary is a perspective of research I have begun to summarize under the concept of a "linguistic epistemology." An interpretive semantics would be an essential part of it.

Notes

1. Lyons, *Die Sprache*, 128.
2. Lyons, *Die Sprache*, 128.
3. Fillmore, "Frame Semantics," 117. See also Tesnière, *Eléments de syntaxe structurale*.
4. Fillmore, "Frame Semantics," 117.
5. Barsalou, "Frames, concepts, and conceptual fields," 25.
6. Marty, *Untersuchungen zur Grundlegung*, 208.
7. Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutik und Kritik*, 169.
8. Grice, "Meaning."
9. Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 171.
10. Husserl, *Logische Untersuchungen*, 23.
11. Humboldt, "Ueber die Verschiedenheit des menschlichen Sprachbaues," 416.
12. Cf. Stein, this volume.

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