

Pragmatics, Pragmatics, Metapragmatics: Contextualizing Pragmatic Contexts

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...the complete meaning of a sign cannot be but the historical recording of the pragmatic labour that has accompanied every contextual instance of it; . . . to interpret a sign means to foresee-- ideally-- all the possible contexts in which it can be inserted (Eco 1937 : 706).

1. Analytic and Structuralist Pragmatics

When Charles Morris(1938) isolated syntax, semantics and pragmatics as three interactive dimensions of semiosis, he thought that he was contributing to an international project envisaged by the founding members of the Vienna Circle-- the project, namely, of the unification of the sciences. Ironically, a half- century after Morris specified these three dimensions, and despite his having defined the notions of syntax, semantics and pragmatics in what no doubt seemed to him a highly general and therefore maximally non- controversial manner, consensus about what falls within the scope of each semiotic dimension remains split roughly along the lines of scholars' nationalities. Herman Parret (1983) has shown how ,in general, scholars working in the Anglo Saxon or Peircean ("analytic") semiotic tradition find themselves pitted against scholars in the ("structural") Continental tradition, which began with Saussure, extends through Hjelmslev and perpetuates itself in post- Hjelmslevians like Greimas (23-88).¹ Specifically, the dispute between the analytic and structuralist factions centers on the element of dynamism that Peircean semiotics, in contrast to Saussurian/Hjelmslevian semiotics, builds into the very nature of semiosis. As Parret puts it, "[t] the dynamism of the sign relation in Peirce is in fact due to the functioning of the third term, the interpreter, which is simultaneously a sign itself and an essential ingredient of any sign relation " (29)

Thus, whereas Peirce's analytical semiotics evolves "a logic of action " (30), the dyadic concept of the sign operative in structural semiotics produces chiefly " a relational logic " (30), providing " no perspective either on the dynamism and the creativity of the sign and the meaning process or on the *interpretation* regularities and rules of *inference*" (31) at work in that process. We are as a result left with a seemingly irresolvable dispute, ² namely, whether semiotics should be viewed as a formal or rather as a functional grammar (36), with the analytic semioticians setting up semiosis on a functional basis, the structural semioticians by contrast urging for signs closed, immanent systematicity. Historically speaking, therefore ,Morris's dream

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of a general semiotic, 3 which would provide a metalanguage into which the various subsidiary scientific languages of sign- systems could be translated, never got past the first, rather mundane or empirical stage of translating Saussure into Peircean terms and vice -versa.

Indeed, as Parret's analysis suggests, however we choose to redescribe Morris blithely minimalist definitions of syntax as " the study of the syntactical relations of signs to one another in abstraction from the relations of signs to objects or to interpreters" (13); or of semantics as the study of " the relations of signs to their designate and so to the objects which they may or do denote" (21); it is on Morris' definition of pragmatics as " the science of the relations of signs to their interpreters" (30) that the dispute between analytic and structural semiotics hinges. As Jef Verschueren has shown, on the Continent, but not in the Anglo-American tradition, scholars generally adhere to Morris' view that pragmatics should concern itself with, very broadly speaking, the relation of signs to interpreters (1985: 459). By contrast, the Anglo-American tradition includes within the scope of pragmatic inquiry only such narrowly delimited topics as deixis, implicature, presupposition, speech acts and conversation (459-60).

Here, in fact, we witness a strange chiasmus of sorts. On the one hand, the analytic tradition, which began with Peirce's emphasis on the dynamic contribution of interpreters to the process of communication, attempts how to formalize the constraints that delimit just how much interpreters can so contribute. Thus Grice posits "maxims" that constrain permissible conversational implicatures, and Montague develops a grammar that includes and formalizes deictic terms, or rather the deictic *features* of utterances-- features that Montague defines as "the set of all complexes of relevant aspects of intended possible contexts of use" (Montague 1974: 98). On the other hand, scholarship on the Continent, where semiotics originally bore a formalist impress, now resists specifying in any very exact way the constraints within which context dynamizes communication. Instead, pragmatic inquiry in its continental guise concerns itself with " the huge range of psychological and sociological phenomena involved in sign systems in general or in language in particular" (Levinson 1983: 5; cf. Parret 1983: 10).

We have then a quite complex configuration of disputants, *each* of whom, notwithstanding Parret's analytic, structuralist distinction, distributes semiosis between structure and function, code and interpretant- - but in ostensibly incommensurable ways. In order to rethink the syntax-semantics- pragmatics relation as such, it may therefore prove necessary to reinscribe the very notions of structure and function-- or rather the difference these terms capture--within a less interactable matrix of oppositions. Such a matrix can be marked off, I submit, with an alternative set of

distinction invoked, or at least set into play, by Prague School functionalism: the distinctions of provisional versus eternal or intemporal; focal versus global; *de facto* versus *de jure*. But before I attempt to substantiate the importance of the Prague School in this connection, I should like to sketch in, very briefly, the root-concepts of pragmatics operative within the ongoing debate over what constitutes the proper scope of pragmatic inquiry itself. In talking about the notions of pragmatics informing this debate, I shall not only drop Parret's distinction between the "analytic" versus "structural" traditions, but also shift, by and large (though not entirely), from generally semiotic to more particularly linguistic terms. For recent, and in fact nearly all, work in pragmatics (so-called) has been conducted under the auspices of either linguistics or philosophy of language--although I should like to put off making, at least for the time being, any *general* remarks about the relation of semiotic to philosophico-linguistic inquiry in this connection.⁴

2. Definitions, Taxonomies

All issues in pragmatic inquiry are, primarily, the range and specific nature of those mechanisms or, as Gazdar terms them, functions by means of which the contexts of language-use help determine the meaning of the sentences used or uttered. Pragmatics attempts not only to establish that, but also to specify how a context paired with a sentence produces a (meaningful) utterance. Most broadly, pragmatics attempts to derive a function f_p that can map the domain E (the set of all possible utterances) into the range M (the set of contexts for utterances) (Gazdar 1979: 4-5). This pragmatic "function," in turn, takes on a more or less properly mathematical character--that is, f_p signifies to a greater or lesser degree the relation between mutually dependent variables--in proportion with the degree of indeterminacy imputed to M itself. As we shall see, Prague School functionalism in particular assigns (*de jure*) absolute indeterminacy to M and thus allows for only provisional and highly localized maps--non-generalizable functions, as it were--with which to project the set of all possible utterances onto the set of contexts those utterances might conceivably affect or be affected by.

In any event, the broad and therefore quite flexible conception of pragmatics as an attempt to map utterances onto contexts itself remains subject to dispute (see Levinson 1983: 5-35). Lyons (1977), for one, tries to explain away the very notion of pragmatics as a specific mode of inquiry. Lyons resorts to the argument that since working linguists (and, we might add, semioticians) do not always or even often think of themselves as conducting research within the three domains in question, Morris' dimensions lack even a heuristic or regulative value (119). Yet as for example Gazdar (1979: x; 2-4; 89ff., esp. 161-8) and Levinson (1983: 33-35) point out, the

contexts in which language is used supplies language-users with information not derivable just from the syntactic or semantic rules of a language . Thus, whereas syntax and semantics may be necessary conditions for the design and interpretation of sentences, syntactic and semantic features do not suffice to explain how utterances of sentences--utterances specific to a particular place, time and socio- cultural milieu--link up with the meaning of which sentences, semantically speaking, are the bearers (Levinson 1983: 18-9). Sentence-meaning, that is to say, seems to be a function not just of (a) the syntactic rules that determine the design and interpretation of elements coordinated into a meaningful increment of speech; and not just a function of (b) the semantic rules that determine what sort of world- fragment (Parret 1983:9) a given increment of speech bears on; but also a function of (c) the the context in which the utterance, the empirical realization of the abstract or idealized sentence, in fact gets said. But then we still have got to specify how much autonomy or rather instrumentality we should grant to (c) vis-a-vis (a) and (b).

In fact, one way to taxonomize the manifold variants of pragmatic inquiry is to posit a distinction based precisely on the degree of instrumentality assigned to pragmatic constraints. We may distinguish, more specifically, between those who approach the relation of syntax and semantics to pragmatics through what Levinson terms "Pragmatic reductionism," versus those who account for the syntax- semantics-pragmatics relation via "pragmatic complementarism" (Levinson 1985:98) whereas reductionists, making a very strong claim for pragmatics, "seek to show that a systematic pattern of distribution or construction is actually not due to a rule of grammar but rather to a preferred code of use, itself following from a more general principle", complementarists, making a weaker claim, seek "to show that such a systematic pattern, which may or may not be specified by a rule of grammar, is consistent with a pragmatic principle specifying one " (98). I do not have space here to attempt, using Levinson's criterion of reductionism versus complementarism, an exhaustive classification of past and present work done in pragmatics. I shall, however, cite exemplars of each stance toward pragmatics in order to prepare the way for my more substantive claim: namely, that Prague School functionalism, just as it allows us to circumvent any rigid distinction between form and function insemiosis in general, allows us to rethink pragamatic constraints as such outside of the reductionist-complementarist dichotomy in which other accounts of language- as- use remain trapped.

2.1. Pragmatic Reductionism

Take for instance the pragmatic reductionism evident in Austin (1963[1940]). Disputing the ability of logicism or "ideal-language" philosophy (e.g., Carnap's

logico-syntactical method of analysis) to dispel a number of problematic features of actual language use, Austin argues that

The supposed 'ideal' language ... is in many ways a most inadequate model of any *actual* language: its careful separation of syntactics from semantics, its lists of explicitly formulated rules and conventions, and its careful delimitation of their spheres of operation are all misleading. An *actual* language has few, if any, explicit conventions, no sharp limits to the spheres of operation of rules, no rigid separation of what is syntactical and what semantical. (13)

Although Austin does not use the term "pragmatics" in this context, to the extent that what counts as a syntactic and what as a semantic feature of a given utterance is determined by the use or "situation" of the speech-act, syntax and semantics may be reduced to pragmatics-- at least at a certain (most fundamental) level of inquiry. As Austin puts it a few pages earlier: the reason why I cannot say 'The cat is on the mat and I do not believe it' is not that it offends against syntactics in the sense of being in some way 'self-contradictory'. What prevents my saying it, is rather some semantic convention (implicit, of course), about the way we use words in *situations*" (10). Austin here grounds the principle of non-contradiction itself not (or at least not most basically) in an idealized, logically-purified language to which actual or ordinary" language can at best hope to approximate, but rather in the conventions or implicit rules by which language use is from the start constituted.

Austin's subsumption of syntactic features under implicit semantic conventions, and of semantic conventions under "the way we use words in *situations*," 5 points ahead to the question with which Toulmin, in his aptly-titled *The Uses of Argument* (1958), begins. Toulmin starts by asking "how far logic *can* hope to be a formal science, and yet retain the possibility of being applied in the critical assessment of actual arguments" (3). Extending Austin's analysis of both syntax and semantics into situations, Toulmin applies Austinian reductionism to the realm of formal logic in general, placing in question even the view "that the validity of syllogistic arguments is a consequence of the fact that the conclusions of those arguments are simply formal transformations of their premisses" (118). Instead, Toulmin reinscribes the operation of formal logic within the (largely) jurisprudential concepts of "data," "Warrant," and "backing." As Toulmin puts it, "Once we bring into the open the backing on which (in the last resort) the soundness of our argument depends, the suggestion that validity is to be explained in terms of formal properties, in any geometrical sense, loses its plausibility(120). But when logical validity itself becomes a matter of the suitability of arguments (and steps of arguments) for practical purposes or actual situations, pragmatic constraints acquire, in effect, absolute force. The syntactic and semantic determinants by means of which utterances earn well-

formedness and pertinence or fit--such determinants become merely secondary or epiphenomenal. By implication, what makes sense; what counts as meaningful or non- (logically-) absurd sentence or propositional component of a sentence; what figures as semantically appropriate--all this follows from the more fundamental practical or rather pragmatic constraints under which these features of utterances can in the first place be isolated and defined. The limit-case of such a reductionist stance may be stated thus: what you term a syntactic feature of an utterance I may term a semantic one or vice versa; and there are no pre-existent criteria to which we can appeal independently of the practical uses we make of these terms in the process of inquiry or research.

2. 2. Pragmatic Complementarism

Yet this reduction of syntactic and semantic to pragmatic consideration is flanked by a line of inquiry we may label complementarist, again to use Levinson's nomenclature. The complementarist and reductionist standpoints on pragmatics are--like formalist versus functionalist approaches to semiosis in general-- at root incommensurable. Parret, for one, points up the incommensurability of the reductionist and complementarist lines in his account of the possible "perversions" of pragmatic inquiry. Indeed, Parret suggests how a complementarist method can pervert not just pragmatics, but syntax and semantics as well. Parret uses "The suffix *icism* in a pejorative way. 'Icisms' postulate sets or relation which do not consist of *interdependent* entities but *isomorphic* ones" (1983: 9). Thus, "syntacticism, " for instance, "is the perversion whereby the sign -function gets a holistic interpretation--- which destroys any possibility of realizing the relations between world and sign, and sign and sign-function (11). Syntacticism simply posits complementary relations between signs ,sign- users and the world- fragments signified, instead of specifying how these relations are mutually constraining or interdependent. Likewise, "pragmaticism" "considers [signs] simply to reflect [subjectivity]..."(10). Whereas pragmaticism, semanticism and syntacticism produce merely "juxtaposed" subdisciplines --modes of inquiry that have "only *paratactic* but not functional relationships" to one another--pragmatics, semantics and syntactics produce, by contrast, "interpenetrating or intermediating "modes or inquiry (11). Parret's study as whole, in fact, attempts to avoid, on the one hand, the one extreme of complementarism-- whereby it becomes impossible (and indeed misguided) to try to establish the degree of instrumentality of pragmatics vis- a- vis syntax and semantics. On the other hand, Parret also studiously avoids the reductionist extreme-- the non- dialectical approach of subsuming any one "subdiscipline" under any of the others.

Eco (1987), as a matter of fact, points out that Morris' initial formulation of syntax, semantics, and pragmatics as "sciences" smacks of complementarism from the start:

Since every science has a proper object, [Morris'] definition [of e.g. pragmatics as a "science"] risks [transforming] semiotics into a mere confederation of three independent sciences, each of them dealing with three independent objects. In this sense, semiotics becomes a generic label such as 'natural sciences.' . . . (696)

In contrast, Eco himself wants to argue that

Pragmatics cannot be a discipline with its proper object as distinguished from the ones of semantics and syntactics. . . The object of pragmatics is that same process of semiosis [which] also syntactics and semantics focus under different profiles. But a social and perhaps biological process such as semiosis can never be reduced to one, and only one, among its possible profiles. (697)

Eco's remarks suggest, however, the extreme difficulty of maintaining, in one and the same argument, two basically antithetical commitments : on the one hand, an anti- reductionist commitment to pragmatics as only one "profiles" of signification and/or communication (704), consistent with or complementary to its syntactic and semantic profiles; on the other hand, an anti- complementarist commitment to pragmatics as (more or less) instrumental vis- a- vis the syntactic and semantic features of signification and/or communication. This second, anti- complementarist commitment entails that the syntactic or semantic profile of a given utterance *can* (at least at a certain level or stage of analysis) be reduced to the contextual or pragmatic constraints that (at least in part) determine what counts-- what can be isolated-- as a syntactic or semantic feature of that utterance. To say that any adequate or theoretically productive account of the scope and nature of pragmatic inquiry must dialectically balance the anti -reductionist with the anti- complementarist commitments, furthermore, is not to provide any real or at least non-trivial strategy for achieving this crucial balance.

2. 3. Metapragmatics

Indeed, I offer these excerpts from the closely- and often hotly- argued debate over the proper scope and nature of pragmatics not because I want to endorse, from

the outset, either the reductionist or complementarist positions. Rather, I wish to suggest that Prague school functionalism points beyond the ostensibly irresolvable debate I have excepted by displacing the terms of the dispute unto a level, or rather into a context, where the terms in fact become commensurable. Within this (larger) context, we are newly equipped to reconceptualize two correlative distinctions in terms of which the debate over pragmatics has (at least in effect) been waged: (a) the reductionism- complementarism distinction and (b) the functionalism- formalism distinction. More specifically, through the concepts set into play by Prague School functionalism, we can map (a) into the context of the *de jure- de facto* distinction; and we can map (b) into the context of the provisional- intemporal distinction. To this extent, and by a necessity occasioned (as I discuss below) by the peculiarly reflexive relation of pragmatic rules vis- a -vis contexts as such, I wish to dwell for the moment at a level that might be termed to meta -pragmatic.

I do not mean here, however, to multiply (meta-) levels and generate neologisms gratuitously. Instead, I wish to contextualize, using in particular the Prague School concept of functional context, what it means to say in the first place that context determines meaning, that sentences are but incomplete idealizations of context- bound utterances. The recognition of the importance of context, I want to argue has its own context. In fact, I shall register in this connection the basic impetus for my argument: namely, the pragmatics as such marks of a generalized institution, at work in all language- use, that the indefinite multiplication (or rather multipliability) of contexts is a condition of possibility for using language to begin with (I here build on the important formulation found in Derrida, 1982[1971] and 1988. On this view, meaning is pragmatically determined because the resolution of meaning to contexts- - more specifically, the resolution of sentence- meanings into utterances uttered in contexts-- is a forever incomplete operation, since a context is by definition always only more or less, never absolutely, specifiable.

Put otherwise, we can always only give, on pain of never completing our list of contextual factors, merely a local specification of context. We can always say only in part what the spatiotemporal, let alone the socio- cultural, context of an utterance is. And it is precisely in the Prague School's notion of functional contexts, in which the various functions of an utterance are always only more or less operative-- and more or less operative always only within particular social collectivities-- that we discover a commitment to the indefinite multipliability of contexts. This multipliability of contexts, as Jakobson and Mukarovsky in particular demonstrate, can be delimited only temporarily and provisionally,⁶ and again always within a further socio- institutional context, by assigning relative dominance to one function of an utterance vis- a- vis its other functions. Thus we might say that the Prague School, admittedly *avant la lettre*, built into its pragmatics, from the start, a meta- pragmatics; or at

least an awareness that, in principle if not at a given moment of analysis, any given portion of the context of an utterance always bears on another portion of that context, any context C_n on context C_{n+1} .

3. Archeology of Speech Acts

In contextualizing the notion of pragmatic context, I shall structure my account, at least to some extent, by means of Mary Louise Pratt's *Towards a Speech Act Theory of Literary Discourse* (1977). Pratt's book is important in this connection because, in the first place, it brings into focus a particular variant of pragmatic inquiry (speech-act theory) that still provides the terms in which recent debates over discursive practice, in the broadest sense, have recently been waged debates such as, for instance, Lyotard's (1988[1983]) and Habermas's (1981)⁷. In the second place, in setting out the possibilities and limits of its own approach to pragmatics, Pratt's text offers an at once suggestive and misleading description of the purported failure of the Prague School to develop a genuinely pragmatic analysis of literary discourse: suggestive, because Pratt's account, by virtue of what it omits, helps us see how Prague School structuralism anticipated the sorts of criticism leveled against speech-act theory (at least in its initial formulation) by Derrida and Lyotard, among others; misleading, because Pratt's account of Prague School structuralism has been influential in scholarly discussion at large, assisting in the trend to assimilate the Prague School either to Russian Formalism or alternatively to French structuralism.⁸ Hence my purposes here are at one archeological, for I wish to recover the partially lost legacy of the Prague School vis-à-vis current debates over pragmatics, and more narrowly forensic or argumentative, for I wish to suggest that Prague School functionalism can help us rethink the stakes of speech-act theories in particular and pragmatic inquiry in general.

First, then, let me briefly recount Pratt's argument. Pratt states her basic case thus: "[Taking as my departure-point] the claim that literary discourse must be viewed as a *use* rather than a *kind* of language, I have advanced the hypothesis that a descriptive apparatus which can adequately account for the use of language outside literature will be able to give a satisfactory account of literary discourse as well" (xii). Pratt thus argues that "a socially based use oriented linguistics is a prerequisite toward sealing the breach between formal and sociological approaches to literature" (xix). Indeed, Pratt attributes this breach between the formal and sociological approaches to what she calls "the Poetic Language Fallacy" (6ff), a fallacy that Pratt in turn assigns, indiscriminately, to both the Russian Formalists and Prague School structuralism. Through the Poetic Language Fallacy, Pratt argues, "the concepts of 'poetic' and 'nonpoetic' (or 'ordinary' or 'everyday,' or 'practical') language were

incorporated by the Russian formalists and the Prague School into the framework of structural linguistics, as formal linguistic categories" (xii). Furthermore, Pratt notes how such quasi-linguistic categories, applied in particular to poetics, represent not empirically falsifiable divisions of the material under study, but rather a more or less ingenious way of articulating a foregone conclusion. As Pratt, puts it, "the weakness of the 'poetic language' argument immediately surfaces as soon as 'ordinary language' is treated not as a vacuous dummy category but as a real body of data" (25).

Admittedly, this Poetic Language Fallacy, which Pratt further specifies as the postulation of "a separate grammar of poetry which is related analogically to the grammar of language" (11) at large, and the concomitant view that "intrinsic textual properties constitute literariness" (26), does in fact operate, at least at some levels,⁹ in Eichenbaum's "Theory of the 'Formal Method'" (1971[1926]). Witness for instance Eichenbaum's claim that "[t]he basis of our position was and is that the object of literary science, as such, must be the study of those specifics which distinguish it from any other material" (831), as well as his mention of "the contrast between poetic and practical language that served as the basic principle of the Formalists' work on key problems of poetics". (832) But-- and this is the point I want to stress here" -- even *if* we grant Pratt's assertion that "the Formalists were only interested in the structural properties of literary utterances" (6);¹⁰ and even *if* we grant that the Formalists in this respect took their cue from Saussurian structural linguistics, which on Pratt's view "does not claim to describe real utterances of any kind but rather the abstract set of rules which underlies real utterances" (7); we need not grant Pratt's elision of the Prague School with the Formalists, nor, therefore, her contention that "Prague School structural linguistics, though it made a point of calling itself 'functional,' was, like Saussure, almost uniquely concerned with the function of elements within the linguistic system rather than with the functions the language serves within the speech community" (7).

To say that, for instance, Mukarovsky's functionalism is situated (primarily) upon "the linguistic system" rather than "the speech community" is not just to gloss over important historical differences between the formalist and structuralist movements (Cf note 8.). By misreading Mukarovsky in this fashion— that is by not reading how Mukarovsky's notion of social collectivities contextualizes Pratt's own rather empty or at least unnuanced idea of speech communities— Pratt thereby deflects criticism away from the *decontextualizing* effects of her own (pragmatic) metalanguage. Yet Pratt's is a metalanguage whose very claim to descriptive richness *vis-à-vis* the object-language, literary discourse, rests in the first place on a painstaking attentiveness to contexts. To anticipate : my point is that although Pratt claims to be developing, in contrast to Mukarovsky and the other members of the Prague

School, a pragmatic metalanguage adequate to the relation between literary discourse and discourse at large, her analysis is vitiated by an infinite regress of meta-pragmatic contexts that Mukarovsky's functional analysis, unlike Pratt's approach, builds into the metalanguage from the start and thereby dispels.

In what follows, therefore, I wish to address not primarily the historical but rather the conceptual or theoretical stakes of identifying the Formalist notion of literariness with in Prague School's commitment to the idea of functionality. Thus, I shall not make it my main business here to knock down what we might very plausibly argue to be the merely straw-man Russian Formalism (and for that matter Prague Structuralism) that Pratt incorporates into her argument- perhaps chiefly for heuristic or rhetorical purposes. Rather, I want, first, to dispute, through a detailed examination of (certain of) Mukarovsky's and Jakobson's remarks in this connection, Pratt's characterization of functional contexts as merely the notion of literariness in disguise. Second, I wish to show how Pratt's own pragmatics (and other even more broadly speech- act- based approaches to literary and other discursive practices), with a marked emphasis on use and context, can in turn be construed, meta-pragmatically, as a specific case of that indefinite multipliability of contexts with which Prague structuralism invests language- use in general. As I shall attempt to demonstrate, Prague structuralism generates indefinitely multiple contexts for any and all utterances-- including the utterances constituting pragmatic inquiry itself-- through what may be termed two meta- pragmatic rules: (i) the dialectical interplay of linguistic functions one within another, and thus the dialectical interplay of the sets of pragmatic rules constituting each function; and (ii) the relativization, via the social collectivities in which particular functions arise, not of linguistic functions themselves, but rather of the pragmatic rules by which a given utterance can in the first place be assigned a given function or, in other words, use. 11 These meta-pragmatic rules, I submit, furnish a kind of second- order metalanguage against which certain kinds of pragmatic analysis can be read as an object- language-- an object- language that, as formulated, remains unable to resolve certain paradoxes of reflexivity it nonetheless occasions by its very commitment to contexts.

3.1. Functional Contexts

In order to show how the Prague School stimulates such meta- pragmatic considerations, however, let me first discuss how the Prague structuralist notion of functional context in fact prevents, minimally, any overhasty conflation of (a) the Prague School's functionalist analysis of art and literature with (b) what Pratt attributes (indiscriminately) to (all) the Russian Formalists as the Poetic Language Fallacy: the quixotic search for "literariness" or that intrinsic quality or property of

poetic language that differentiates it from so-called ordinary language. Granted-- and to this extent, Pratt's critique of the Prague School is in fact borne out by the texts at issue-- Mukarovsky does in some instances seem to vacillate between, on the one hand, positing merely a difference in degree between poetic and other utterances, and, on the other hand, making poetic utterances a class or sort of language- use different in kind from other sorts or utterance. Thus, in the first section of Mukarovsky's essay "On poetic Language," "Poetic Language as a Functional language and as a Material," Mukarovsky at one point asserts

that no single property characterizes poetic language permanently and generally . Poetic language is permanently characterized only by its function; however, function is only a *mode of utilizing* the properties of a given phenomenon. Poetic language belongs among the numerous other functional languages. . . . (1977 [1940] : 3-4)

Immediately after this passage, however, Mukarovsky makes the following claim :

The aesthetic "orientation toward the expression itself," which is, of course, valid not only for linguistic expression and not only for verbal art but for all arts and for any realm of the aesthetic, is a phenomenon *essentially* different from a logical orientation toward expression whose task is to make expression more precise, as has been especially emphasized by the so-called Logical Positivist movement ("Viennese Circle") and in particular by Rudolf Carnap. (4)

Arguably, any approach to language- use that calls itself functionalist cannot legitimately label as "essential" the difference between one "mode of utilizing" language and another mode. Nor is it permissible for a functionalist approach to brand "the Logical Positivist notion of language [as] *completely* different from the notion of language as a means of communication in everyday life" (1977 [1940] : 5, my emphasis). Here Mukarovsky's self-contradictory propositions-- the proposition that we must ground meaning in modes of language- use, versus the proposition that philosophical and communicative uses of language are absolutely distinct, not resolvable into even the same universe of discourse-- bear out Pratt's criticism that "[Mukarovsky] end [s] up maintaining a difference in kind and denying it at the same time" (26). For once we grant a difference in kind between the use to which language is put in logico- syntactical analysis and the use to which it is put in communicative situations at large, it is but a short step to the dreaded Poetic Language Fallacy.

Yet I should like to insist, in turn that there is a difference in kind between, on the one hand, locating inconsistencies in Mukarovsky's functionalist argument,

and, on the other hand, resolving the functionalist position itself back into the view to which Prague school (poly) functionalism is manifestly opposed: the view, namely, that utterances are bestowed with intrinsic properties, of a given sort, even apart from the contexts-- and in particular the speech communities or, in Mukarovsky's parlance, "Collectivites"-- in which the utterances are designed and interpreted. To be sure, both Holenstein(1979: 10-11) and Steiner (1982: 198-99) have identified the monofunctionalism evident, for example, in the Russian Formalist Leo Jakubinsky's 1916 essay "On the Sounds of Poetic Language"-- a restricted or very limited functionalism that, as Holenstein notes, merely redescribes in slightly different terms "den Unterschied zwischen gewöhnlicher and poetischer Sprache in finaler Perspektive" (11). For Jakubinsky, "practical " versus "poetic" language may be distinguished on the basis of whether the means of expression in each case are wholly subordinated to the communicative function, or whether conversely the means of expression are accorded independent value, negatively defined against the communicative function (See, however, note 10.). We seem in fact to witness here, in the clear-cut opposition between communicative and non- or extra- communicative (poetic) function, that covert redescription of literariness with which Pratt identifies functionalism generally.

Even in the Prague School's 1929 "Theses" 12 we find evidence to support Pratt's criticism that what should be a commitment to functional gradualism-- a mere difference in degree between different uses of language-- all too often manifests itself as a commitment to generic differences of kind-- either- or distinctions- amongst sorts of utterance. Thus, in the thesis "On the Functions of Language, the members of the Prague school assert that "[i]n its social role one must distinguish speech according to its relation to extralinguistic reality. It has either a *communicative function*, that is, it is directed toward the object of expression, or a *poetic function* that is, it is directed towards the expression itself" (in Steiner 1982: 12). Accordingly, continues the thesis, "[i]t is advisable to study those forms of speech in which one function *totally predominates* and those in which manifold functions interpenetrate" (12, my emphasis). In the first clause of this latter sentence, the Prague School seems to be hedging its bets against precisely that manifold interpenetration of functions which the second clause of the sentence makes room for--- an interpenetration that in turn points beyond what, I am quite ready to grant Pratt, can only be a spurious distinction between poetic and ordinary language.¹³

But other, more developed accounts of functional contexts by the Prague School do not prove so susceptible to Pratt's attack on literariness or rather the poetic language Fallacy. I have in mind both Mukarovsky's extended analysis, in a number of different texts, of the role of the aesthetic function vis- a- vis the other functions, and also the well-known six- function schema set out, long after the official demise of the Prague School, in Jakobson's "Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics"

(1960). It is not just that these polyfunctionalist accounts make it impossible to distinguish between literary and non-literary discourse in any absolute or generic sense. By the same token, through what I have identified as two meta-pragmatic rules-- (i) the dialectical interplay of functions and (ii) the relativization of the pragmatic rules by which functions are assigned to particular utterances within particular social collectivities-- through these two rules, Jakobson and Mukarovsky also, in effect, multiply indefinitely the contexts within which a given utterance is in principle operative at a given time t_a , as well as the contexts within which an utterance will potentially be operative, or has possibly been operative, at time t_{n+1} or t_{n-1} . By focusing on the more developed Prague School functionalism that Pratt fails to give its due, I shall now move toward a further specification of just these meta-pragmatic rules: rules that not only give Prague School functionalism a descriptive power beyond that of the speech-act model as such, but also suggest how, specifically because of its bearing on the pragmatic dimensions of language-use, Prague School structuralism can neither be too quickly aligned with other structuralisms, nor too readily set over against a *post*structuralism whose concerns the Prague School had in many respects already articulated.

3.2 Metapragmatic Rules: Jakobson

In (1960), Jakobson states at the outset that

Language must be investigated in all the variety of its functions. Before discussing the poetic function we must define its place among the other functions of language. An outline of these functions demands a concise survey of the constitutive factors in any speech event, in any act of verbal communications (353).

Jakobson, at roughly the same time as J. L. Austin's post-Wittgensteinian researches, here builds on the rudimentary theory of speech acts already in place in Karl Bühler's *Sprachtheorie* (1934) - on the attempt, which Holenstein associates with the Prague School in general as well as Bühler, "to coordinate the functions of the constitutive components of speech-events and to anchor those functions in such speech-occurrences." ¹³ But Jakobson is also careful to stress the poly or multi-functionality of any given utterance: its constitutive dependence on a field of interpenetrating functions; its status as a speech-act whose effects, far from being delimitable by the rule-system proper to, say, the referential function alone, distribute themselves, in fundamentally indefinite quantities or magnitudes, among the other linguistic functions in which the speech-act is (simultaneously) either in fact or in principle engaged. As Jakobson puts it,

Although we distinguish six basic aspects of language, we could, however, hardly find verbal messages that would fulfil only one function. The diversity lies not in a monopoly of some one of these several functions but in a different hierarchical order of functions. The verbal structure of a message depends primarily on the predominant function. But even though a set (*Einstellung*) toward the referent, an orientation toward the context- - briefly the so-called *referential*, "denotative," "cognitive" function- - is the leading task of numerous messages, the accessory participation of the other functions in such messages must be taken into account (353).

Insofar as Jakobson emphasizes "the [potential] accessory participation of the other functions" in each particular manifestation of linguistic function, his model avoids driving a wedge of generic or absolute difference between literary and non-literary discourse and thereby falling victim to the Poetic Language Fallacy.

Indeed, Pratt's critique of Jakobson in this connection reveals the antinomy--the delimitation of contexts by context-based analysis--on which speech-act models for pragmatic inquiry must inevitably founder. Pratt, in commenting on the polyfunctionalist view Jakobson here articulates, in effect reverses direction and faults Jakobson, it seems, for making *too* gradual the distinction between the various uses to which language can be put. Pratt suggests that the descriptive power of Jakobson's model suffers in part because, for Jakobson, "there seems to be no one set of linguistic properties in terms of which the six functions are distinguished and related," and in part because "there are some important types of verbal structure for which the model does not attempt to account" (31). But in the one case, Pratt, assuming a set of linguistic properties prior to or more fundamental than the functions or uses to which language is put, seems to contradict her own professed desire to redefine so-called kinds of language by appeal to the context or use of utterances typically associated with that "one set of linguistic properties" Pratt here seems to retract her own concerted opinion that "with any utterance, the way people produce and understand [it] depends" not on linguistic properties against which the various possible functions of the utterance may be defined, but rather "on unspoken, culturally-shared knowledge of the rules, conventions, and expectations that are in play when [the utterance] is used in [a particular] context" (86). In the other case, Pratt, criticizing Jakobson's model to the extent that it does not account for certain kinds of verbal structure, seems to conflate with the *de jure* generative power of a theoretical model the particular applications that have, in fact, been generated from that model. In this respect, too, we witness, on the part of one who wishes to dissolve meaning into use, a certain baffling tendency toward reifying the achieved results of a theory, instead of addressing the possible applications or uses of it.

But the singlemost revealing criticism Pratt ventures in this connection is that, vis- a-vis the poetic function, Jakobson "does not provide any criteria for determining when [the] presence [of the poetic function] has reached the point of dominance" (33). Such criteria, however, presuppose not a mobile interpenetration of the functional contexts in which any given utterance participates-- not a continuously shifting configuration of functions comprising, at all times, accessory functions-- but rather a static structure of functional relations to which one and the same set of criteria can be applied, over and over again, in order to determine the dominance of this or that particular function. The demand for such criteria, as I see it, constitutes a demand for (fixed) language -kinds versus (unfixed) language- uses. Thus, meta- pragmatically speaking, Pratt's particular mode of pragmatic inquiry--even in setting out its object and specifying its limits-- countermands its own avowed intention to meet "the need for a contextually based approach to texts. " Pratt instead embarks on the dubious mission of developing context-free criteria with which to describe, classify and to some extent predict context- bound instances of utterances. Pratt's analysis does not answer the imperative, of peculiar force in pragmatics, to maintain a homology of context -boundedness between the metalanguage and the object language; whereas Jakobson's metalanguage-- in that very inability to "deduce" "a text's function" from "a text's intrinsic properties" which Pratt criticizes (31)-- by contrast meets the double imperative of specifying both pragmatic and meta-pragmatic contexts.

3.3 Metapragmatic Rules. : Mukarovsky

At this point, however, in order further to clarify the meta-pragmatic yield of Jakobson's stress on the accessory participation of functions one within another, it may prove helpful to move backward chronologically and examine Mukarovsky's analyses of the aesthetic function and function in general. This is because Mukarovsky analyses quite transparently couple the first meta-pragmatic principle-- namely, the intersection or rather interplay of various functions-- with the second such principle-- namely, the binding of functional configuration to particular, historically- specific social collectivities. Indeed, as Mukarovsky's functionalism suggests, the two meta-pragmatic rules at issue might alternatively be characterized as, in the first place, a rule for the indefinite multiplication of the *modal* contexts of a given utterance distributed *among* an indefinite number of rules for use at any given time; and, in the second place, a rule for the indefinite multiplication of *temporal* contexts for a given utterance distributed *across* an undefined number of functional configurations-- these configurations being indexed, in turn ,to an undefined number of past, present and (possible) future social collectivities. Together, in fact, the two meta- pragmatic rules I am eliciting from Prague School functionalism capture both that difference

and that deferral which, in another context, Derrida assigns to the structure of signification in general : "[d]ifference as temporization, *difference* as spacing" (1976[1968]:9).

But I am perhaps getting ahead of myself. For the moment I shall restrict myself to assembling a number of Mukarovsky's polyfunctionalist statements. First, we have those statements or propositions which issue the imperative of interpenetrating functions. In his essay on "The Place of the Aesthetic Function among the Other Functions," for instance, Mukarovsky, proposing to "revise" the (monofunctionalist [37]) emphasis hitherto at work in "functional architecture and functional linguistics" (34-5), confirms that

We are not concerned with the aesthetic as a static property of things, but with the aesthetic as an energetic component of human activity. For this reason we are not interested in the relation of the aesthetic to other metaphysical principles, such as the true and the good, but in its relation to other motives and goals of human activity and creation. (1978[1942]: 32-33)

In consequence, as Mukarovsky observes in the same essay, "there is not an insurmountable difference between practically and aesthetically oriented activities" (34); in consequence, too,

not even the most ordinary colloquial speech is, in principle, devoid of the aesthetic function. And so it is with all other human activities... In brief, we shall find no sphere in which the aesthetic function is essentially absent; potentially it is always present; it can arise at any time. It has no limitation, therefore, and we cannot say that some domains of human activity are in principle devoid of it, while it belongs to other in principle. (35)

Indeed, claims Mukarovsky, "there are cultural forms [like "folklore culture"]... in which functions-- among them, of course, the aesthetic-- are almost indistinguishable from one another, in which they appear with every act as a compact bundle... (36). And if "[a]ny function, not just the one which the acting subject ascribes to his [or her] act or creation, can always be evoked" (36-7), then Mukarovsky is quite justified in drawing a broader "conclusion pertaining to functions in general": the conclusion, namely, that "can be formulated as the basic polyfunctionality of human activity and the basic omnipresence of functions" (37).

Propositions of this class-- propositions about the polyfunctionality not just of linguistic utterances but of all human activity, and about the impossibility, therefore, of indexing a single function to a given activity or utterance-- may be found throughout

