

Chapter 2

Science and Fiction: A Fregean Approach

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Abstract In Frege's analysis of the relationship between science and fiction there are two important aspects, which the paper will discuss. It shows that Frege makes a strict distinction between *Dichtung und Wissenschaft* on the level of object language but not on the level of metalanguage. (1) In his "On Sense and Reference" and in scattered remarks elsewhere Frege explains the semantics (and pragmatics) of scientific and everyday discourse. As a kind of side product he presents an explication of the concept of fictional discourse concerning questions of illocutionary force and reference. Here Frege anticipates J. R. Searle's speech-act-theory of fictional discourse, which allows to understand works of fiction as consisting (at least partly) of fictional discourse. On the basis of Frege's distinctions this approach is defended against ontological arguments, which make use of terms like 'fictive entities' or 'non-existent objects' in the Meinongian tradition. (2) Frege excludes the connotative or figurative elements of language, called "colourings and shadings" (*Färbungen und Beleuchtungen*) of sense or thought, from the scientific use of language and assigns such elements to "the art of poetry" or "eloquence". The fact that the expression 'colouring' is itself a figurative term, raises a paradoxical question: To what extent does understanding Frege's own explanation of the difference between sense and colouring depend on the poetic or at least rhetoric use of language? There are reasons to believe that Frege was—even if only reluctantly—aware of this paradox. Otherwise he would not have repeatedly emphasized that explanations of categorial logical distinctions (particularly such as those between 'function' and 'object') cannot dispense with "figurative expressions" (like 'unsaturated' and 'saturated'). Insofar as such distinctions are "reliant upon the accommodating understanding of the reader", they pay tribute to a rhetoric of cognition. While Frege denies that colourings contribute to cognitive *content*, he must still admit that they make an indispensable protreptic contribution to *conveying* cognition.

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There is an old controversy between so-called emotivism and cognitivism, especially in ethics and aesthetics, concerning the status of moral and aesthetic value-judgements. A similar controversy is to be found in the theory of poetry, only similar because this controversy does not concern the nature of judgements, i.e., the judgement of literary critics about works of poetry, but the nature of poetry itself. The question is, what function or purpose does poetry fulfil, or to put it more cautiously, what functions or purposes (in the plural) can poetry fulfil. Now, this question is not quite a new one, in fact it is as old as poetry itself, and this also applies to how to answer it. Since the days of Plato and Aristotle this question has been answered by comparing poetry with philosophy and science. Here, very often the position of poetry (and arts in general) has been a defensive one; poetry has been defended or justified as a subject in its own right against the claims of philosophy and science. An early example in the English tradition is the famous *Defence of Poetry* by Sir Philip Sidney (1771).

From the beginning, poetry was pushed into a defensive position by the question of whether and how it may convey truth and knowledge. So, defending poetry often consisted of showing that there was a place left in the field of knowledge, which was not yet occupied by science and philosophy. Seen historically, the most recent additions to this field were the mental and the social fields of study. Eighteenth century authors like Henry Fielding and Laurence Sterne are praised for their psychological observation and their analysis of human nature, and nineteenth century authors like Émile Zola are praised for their sociological insight and analysis of human society. Comparing poetry with sciences in this way became more difficult in the twentieth century, as there were now special sciences concerned with the mental and the social, namely psychology and sociology. When it came to the themes of literature, all the different facets of the human condition, which the field of knowledge is concerned with, were already distributed. For poetry the consequence seemed to be its end as an “organon of truth” (to use Hegel’s formulation); also it appeared that poetry would have to give up claiming its own truth and would be reduced to repeating the truth of science for non-scientific people or that it would have to leave the field of truth and look for a different field of activity in which to sustain a relevant function. I think it is this alternative, which gives the emotive theory of literature its plausibility. As Frege put it: the function of literature is not to convey truth and knowledge but to affect our feelings (Frege 1983, 151f., 1997, 238ff., cf. 1918, 63, 1997, 330f.). Now, Frege’s emotivism in the field of aesthetics and the theory of poetry is founded on his philosophy of language, especially on his concept of meaning. In this respect he is the father of modern emotivism in the analytic tradition (R. Carnap, I. A. Richards etc.).

What I want to do is to investigate the emotivistic approach by considering its concept of meaning. In fact, I want to argue in favour of the cognitivist view of poetry on semantic and pragmatic grounds. The position I hold does not deny emotive functions of poetry but maintains (on the other hand) that poetry (at least some poetry) has cognitive value, i.e., may convey knowledge, as well. I would like to explicate the meaning of literature by analysing the concept of meaning in literature.

More generally speaking, poetry is something like a paradigm case in the field of the philosophy of language. The adequacy of a theory of language is sometimes even tested by showing its adequacy to poetry (*Dichtung*), especially to fiction. We can already find this proceeding in Frege. Explaining the semantics and pragmatics of scientific and everyday discourse in his *Über Sinn und Bedeutung* Frege presents as a kind of side product an approach to the semantics and pragmatics of fictional discourse and fiction as well. Though I do not agree with Frege's emotivistic conclusion concerning the function of fiction itself, his view of fictional discourse seems convincing to me.

To speak about fiction presupposes accepting factual reality as its counterpart. In contrast to panfictionalism, which attempts to annihilate the distinction between fact and fiction, we have to keep up the opposition between aesthetical 'illusion' and extra-aesthetical 'existence'. The confusion of fiction and reality, or rather the blurring of the boundary between fact and fiction, has itself often been made the topic of fictional literature (as in Cervantes' *Don Quijote*); the playful manipulation of this boundary is known as 'fictional irony'; and 'life is a dream' may be regarded a literary topos (e. g. with Calderón, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Lewis Carroll). But we must keep in mind that all this is to be taken as a literary re-presentation (*Vergegenwärtigung*) of this confusion and its implications for life, not as the claim or assertion that there is no difference between fact and fiction.

The category of reality remains regulative in force even if, in some cases, it may be difficult or even practically impossible to distinguish between fact and fiction. In Frege the acknowledgment of reality corresponds to the presupposition that we refer to objects in assertoric discourse:

Now we can of course be mistaken in the presupposition, and such mistakes have indeed occurred. But the question whether the presupposition is perhaps always mistaken need not be answered here; in order to justify speaking of the reference of a sign, it is enough at first, to point out our intention in speaking or thinking. (Frege 1892a, 31f., 1997, 156)¹

What is important is that there are criteria for the distinction between fact and fiction, not that they will lead to a decision in every single case. It may even happen that these criteria become themselves subject to debate, but it is not possible to dispense with such criteria altogether: The distinction between fact and fiction and accordingly between science and poetry is a transcendental condition, that is, a condition of the possibility of every orientation in the world.

In scattered remarks in his papers Frege presents an explication of the concept of fictional discourse concerning questions of reference and illocutionary force. Here Frege anticipates J. R. Searle's (1975) speech-act-analysis of fictional discourse, which allows to understand works of fiction as consisting (at least partly) of fictional discourse.² On the basis of Frege's distinctions this approach can be defended

¹The page numbers of Frege's works refer to the first German editions (cf. the bibliography). The English translation given here follows for the greater part the edition of Beaney (Frege 1997), which includes the original pagination.

²A similar approach based on Fregean distinctions is presented in Gabriel (1975). Cf. the short English version Gabriel (1979).

against ontological arguments, which make use of terms like ‘fictive entities’ or ‘non-existent objects’ in the Meinongian tradition.

Frege is mainly engaged in distinguishing science from fiction. The differentiation is carried out in three ways. Two of them are semantical and one pragmatic. The main distinction in Frege’s semantic is that between sense (*Sinn*), reference (*Bedeutung*) and colourings (*Färbungen*). We can read and understand fiction. So fiction has sense and in understanding it we grasp the sense of its words and sentences, but in distinction to science, which claims reference, fiction lacks reference:

Of course in fiction words only have a sense, but in science and wherever we are concerned about truth, we are not prepared to rest content with the sense, we also attach a reference to proper names and concept words; and if through some oversight, say, we fail to do this, then we are making a mistake that can easily vitiate our thinking. (Frege 1983, 128, 1997, 173)

Ordinary assertoric discourse and especially scientific discourse strives for truth and a necessary condition for sentences to be true (or to be false) is that its words have reference. Sentences in fiction need not be true but may be true. In that sense Frege’s statement that “in fiction words only have a sense” is not quite correct. Sense is *sufficient*, but it is not excluded that words and sentences in fiction do have a reference, only they do not need to have one. To have reference is “a matter of no concern to us” in fiction (Frege 1892a, 33, 1997, 157). In the case that words, especially proper names (including definite descriptions) in fiction are without reference, the sentences are neither true nor false. The thoughts which are expressed by such sentences Frege (1983, 141f., 1997, 230) calls “mock thoughts” (*Scheingedanken*). This characterisation is a negative semantical one. If the words in fiction have reference the sentences are true or false, yet in both cases the poet does not perform the speech act of assertion. His utterances are without illocutionary force, especially without “assertoric force” (*behauptende Kraft*) (Frege 1918, 63, 1997, 330). This characterisation is a pragmatic one. It means, that the thoughts, which are presented in fiction, are presented without claiming their truth. Following Frege fiction is a deviant kind of discourse, namely a non-assertoric discourse without claims to reference and truth.

The kind of speech-act-analysis of fiction outlined above has been criticised for degrading the significance of poetry. The course of the mimesis-debate appears to feed this fear. Since Plato, poetry has had to justify itself in the face of philosophy and science, just as rhetoric has had to do in the face of logic. Distinctions such as those between ‘proper’ and ‘improper’ speech seem to confirm the suspicion that fiction has a deficient status compared with fact. Only in this way can we explain why attempts based on the theory of speech acts to define fictional discourse through its deviations from ordinary discourse have been misunderstood as exclusionary. J. R. Searle’s (1979, 67) characterisation of fictional discourse as “parasitic” may have encouraged this misunderstanding. This is so because Searle goes no further than a negative characterisation, without treating in any detailed fashion the positive possibilities of fictional literature. The self-limitation of a single author, however, cannot be regarded as the failure of the theory of speech acts in its entirety. In any event, the explication of fictional discourse in terms of a theory of deviance implies

neither the exclusion of fictional discourse nor a hierarchical order in which assertoric discourse is placed above fictional discourse. The negative characterisation only states the obligations from which fictional discourse has been freed to be able to fulfil its peculiar function in the form of poetry, that is, as fictional literature, complementary to other forms of cognition. The point of such analysis is precisely to make clear in comparison, for example, with history, that poetry, despite its fictionality, can have cognitive value. This is not the position of Frege, who defends an emotivistic view of fiction, but at least there is a Fregean way to justify a cognitivist position.

Before we later go over to defend the cognitive value of fiction, we have to distinguish fictional discourse from discourse about fiction. Whereas the first is non-assertoric the second is assertoric. The question therefore is, what are the assertions about in this case, i.e., what is the reference of fictional proper names (or other expressions which appear to refer to fictive objects like, for instance, definite descriptions). One answer, which was given by A. Meinong and some Neo-Meinongians (cf. especially Parsons 1980, 1982), is that such discourse is about fictive, i.e., nonexistent objects. (I distinguish ‘fictive’, a predicate applying to objects, from ‘fictional’, a predicate applying to texts, stories, discourse, and so on). The next question is, whether we have to accept fictive objects. Frege himself did not comment on their possibility. In spite of that his distinction between customary (*gewöhnlicher*) and indirect reference (*ungerader Bedeutung*) helps us to eliminate talk about fictive objects in favour of talk about fictional texts etc.

The punchline of Frege’s distinction is that the indirect reference of a word is its customary sense. Let’s consider a simple example: The sentence ‘Little Red Riding Hood gathered flowers’ does not occur only in the fairy-tale *Little Red Riding Hood*. It might be an answer to a question like ‘What did Little-Red-Riding-Hood do when she left the path?’ as well. In this case the sentence is not used in a fictional but in an assertoric way. To make clear that the assertoric utterance of the sentence ‘Little Red Riding Hood gathered flowers’ is not about a fictive object called ‘Little Red Riding Hood’ we ask for its truth-conditions. The assertion is true if and only if it is true, that the fairy-tale *Little Red Riding Hood* tells us (says so) that Little Red Riding Hood gathered flowers. Now the truth of the utterance is a question of the *sense* of the text of the brothers Grimm. The descriptive name ‘Little Red Riding Hood’ here occurs in indirect reference (i.e., in an intensional context) and therefore, as Frege pointed out, its reference is a sense and not an object. In this way the utterance is analysed as an assertion not about a fictive object but about the content of a fictional text. For the analysis of more complicated cases cf. Gabriel (1993). Frege seems to treat his own example sentence ‘Odysseus was set ashore at Ithaca while sound asleep’ only as a possibly fictional one, but it might be used assertoric as well, namely in an assertion about the content of Homer’s *Odyssey* (1892a, 32, 1997, 157).

Critics might argue that we do avoid acknowledging fictive objects but only at the cost of acknowledging intensional ones. People understand Frege’s idea, that the indirect reference of expressions is their customary sense, in such a way that the senses coordinated with names (proper names and definite descriptions) become intensional objects in indirect speech. Although Frege sometimes suggests this inter-

pretation, it is still a step in the wrong direction. The distinction between sense and reference is a distinction between semantic roles and semantic roles should not be confused with ontological objects. From the fact that people speak of senses in indirect speech, one cannot without further argument conclude that these senses are ontological objects of a special kind. Now in order to avoid acknowledging intensional objects, one can analyse references to senses as references to meaningful uses of linguistic expressions. Within these limitations, fictive objects like literary figures can be conceived of as individual senses constituted by the corresponding fictional texts.

The arguments given above consist of two parts. First, I have tried to show that so-called fictive objects in so far as they are needed at all can be captured as Fregean senses. Second, I added an interpretation of senses, which avoided conceiving them as intensional objects in the ontological sense. Intensions are linguistic, not metaphysical objects. Hence the outlined approach is a Frege-Wittgensteinian one. Compare Gabriel (1975, 33–42, 1979, 249–253). It is possible both to accept the first part without accepting the second and to accept the second without the first. It is therefore not surprising that, independently of its application to problems concerning the semantics of fiction, the non-ontological conception of senses (intensions) is relevant to such traditional philosophical discussions as the nominalism-Platonism debate. The position defended here can be characterised as non-psychological conceptualism.

Frege's understanding of science becomes especially clear in his view of logic and the role which logic plays in science. Logic, with its orientation on the concept, neglects the sensuous side of thought and eliminates the "intuitive" (Frege 1879, IV, 1997, 48). Exemplary are Frege's efforts to keep the 'purely' logical free of all sensuous-psychological 'impurities'. In the philosophy of language, this purism finds its expression in the disregard of those elements of language whose contribution to the semantic content of propositions is irrelevant in terms of truth-value and to this extent of no relevance for making inferences. Among these elements are grammatical and pragmatic aspects of language that have to do with the relation between the speaker and the listener:

Now all those features of language that result only from the interaction of speaker and listener—where the speaker, for example, takes the listener's expectations into account and seeks to put them on the right track even before a sentence is finished—have no counterpart in my formula language, since here the only thing that is relevant in a judgement is that which influences its *possible consequences*. (Frege 1879, 3, 1997, 54)

In his conception of science Frege connects his *Begriffsschrift* with the ideal of a system, explicitly formulated in the posthumous paper *Über Logik in der Mathematik* (Frege 1983, 221, 1997, 310), but conceived already in *Die Grundlagen der Arithmetik* (Frege 1884, § 3, 1997, 93). Here Frege gives an interpretation of the concepts 'analytic', 'synthetic', 'a priori' and 'a posteriori' in such a way that these become proof theoretic meta-predicates for judgements and for sciences as well. (Of course proof theory is not to be understood here in the sense of Hilbert. Hilbert's conception is criticised by Frege). By tracing the chains of inference from the judgements of a science backwards to its premises, it is Frege's ideal to find out the

totality of axioms, basic laws or laws of nature, from which the judgements of this science are deducible by purely logical inferences. This ideal does not correspond to the logic of discovery (*ars inveniendi*) but to the logic of justification (*ars iudicandi*). Frege is not interested in the genesis but only in the validity of scientific knowledge. Looking at the foundation of a science he gives—in dependence of the provability of the particular judgements—a classification of sciences, which we can put in the following way:

- (a) A science is *analytic* if and only if all proofs are reducible to logical basic laws and definitions.
- (b) A science is *synthetic* if and only if there is among its basic laws at least one synthetic law.
- (c) A science is *a priori* if and only if all its basic laws are a priori.
- (d) A science is *a posteriori* if and only if there is among its basic laws at least one a posteriori law. Frege (1884, § 3, 1997, 93) explains: “For a truth to be a *posteriori*, it must be impossible for its proof to avoid appeal to facts, that is, to improvable and non-general truths that contain assertions about particular objects.”
- (e) A science is *synthetic a priori* if and only if all its basic laws are a priori, and there is among these basic laws at least one synthetic law.

The ambition of Frege’s logicism was to show that arithmetic is a purely analytic science. Because of Russell’s antinomy he gave up this program but he continued to transform modes of inference, which do not belong to logic, like the inference by mathematical induction from n to $n + 1$, into axioms. This is the case in the system of the Peano axioms. So the epistemological nature of arithmetic is still determined by the epistemological nature of the axioms (Frege 1983: 219f., 1997, 308f.).

The sketched classification of sciences is of course only possible for such sciences, which allow an axiomatic-deductive representation, and especially not for the humanities. Accordingly Frege underlines:

What are called the humanities (*Geisteswissenschaften*) are closer to poetry (*Dichtung*), and are therefore less scientific, than the exact science, which are drier in proportion to being more exact; for exact science is directed toward truth and truth alone. (Frege 1918, 63, 1997, 330)

What is excluded in Frege’s view of logic and science (following the quotation from the *Begriffsschrift*) is, for example, the subject/predicate distinction, which is replaced by the argument/function distinction. Also excluded from the scientific use of language are the connotative or figurative elements of language, called “colouring and shading” (*Färbungen und Beleuchtungen*) of sense and thoughts (Frege 1892a, 31, 1997, 155). Frege goes so far and too far (cf. Gabriel 1975, 125) when he declares:

It makes no difference to the thought whether I use the word ‘horse’ or ‘steed’ or ‘nag’ or ‘prad’. The assertoric force does not cover the ways in which these words differ. What is called mood, atmosphere, shading in a poem, what is portrayed by intonation and rhythm, does not belong to the thought. (Frege 1918, 63, 1997, 331)

Frege's German examples are 'Pferd', 'Roß', 'Gaul' and 'Mähre'. Other examples are 'walk (*gehen*)', 'stroll (*schreiten*)', 'saunter (*wandeln*)' and 'dog (*Hund*)', 'cur (*Köter*)' (Frege 1983, 152, 1997, 240f.) For Frege colouring and shading belong to the realm of mental "ideas" (*Vorstellungen*). In contrast to sense and reference they are therefore not objective but subjective "and must be evoked by each hearer or reader according to the hints of the poet or the speaker" (Frege 1892a, 31, 1997, 155).

Whereas for Frege such elements ought to be eliminated from science they are essential for poetic fiction. So the two negative characterisations of *Dichtung* already explicated are supplemented by a positive surplus of these "colourings". Frege explicitly assigns such elements to "the art of poetry" or "eloquence" and hereby specifies semantical elements, which transform fictional discourse into fictional literature.

The Fregean expression 'colourings' is a translation of the Latin term '*colores*' of ancient rhetoric, in which the function of winning over listeners through colourings of the matter to be represented is attributed to the ornamentation (*ornatus*) of speech (Quintilianus 1995, book IV, Chap. 2, §§ 88–100). With regard to ancient usage in general cf. Ernesti (1962a, 383–385, 1962b, 63–66). The terminology found acceptance in poetics (Scaliger 1987, 121). Frege's form of expression coincides remarkably with that of Ernesti (1962a, 384) in his German commentaries on ancient rhetoric. The latter speaks like Frege of "*Beleuchtung*" along with "*Colorit*". Most of all, he defines *Colorit* as "character of expression with respect to *sense and thought*" (emphasis G. G.).

One still speaks today of favourable or biased reports and presentations as 'coloured'. Antiquity itself, however, presents a neutral view with respect to colourful embellishment or portrayal. Both usages can be found in Frege. In no way does he devalue colourings in general; instead, he only denies their cognitive value. He explains this denial by arguing that while colourings may indeed have an emotive effect they are in distinction to sense "not objective" cognitive contents (Frege 1892a, 31, 1997, 155f.). Here Frege is following a view found throughout the epistemological tradition. The corresponding demand placed on philosophical style is that it has to represent the "naked" truth, rejecting "the embellishment of words that aids the orator" (Wolff 1996, § 149f.). The metaphor that truth is supposed to appear "naked" should give the philosopher reason to think about his own rhetoric.

The fact that the expression 'colouring' is itself a figurative, metaphorical term, raises a paradoxical question: To what extent does understanding Frege's own explanation of the difference between sense and colouring depend on the poetic or at least rhetoric use of language? There are reasons to believe that Frege was aware of this paradox. So in his elucidation of the concept of thought in the late paper *Der Gedanke* he complains about the linguistic difficulties of the philosophical categorical discourse:

Something in itself not perceptible by sense, the thought, is presented to the reader—and I must be content with that—wrapped up in a perceptible linguistic form. The pictorial aspect of language presents difficulties. The sensible always breaks in and makes expressions pictorial and so improper. (Frege 1918, 66, footnote, 1997, 334)

In his earlier paper *Ueber Begriff und Gegenstand* Frege even emphasises, that elucidations (*Erläuterungen*) of categorial logical distinctions—particularly such as those between ‘function’, ‘concept’ and ‘object’—cannot dispense with figurative expressions like ‘unsaturated’, ‘complete’ and ‘saturated’. These expressions “are of course only figures of speech; but all that I wish or *am able* to do here is to give hints (*Winke*)” (Frege 1892b, 205, 1997, 193; emphasis G. G). About these hints Frege (1904, 665) even says:

I have to limit myself (*muß mich darauf beschränken*), to hint by a figurative expression at that what I mean, and I am reliant upon the accommodating understanding of the reader.

The categorial elucidations belong to the level of the logical metalanguage, and they pay tribute to a rhetoric of cognition. While Frege denies that figurative and metaphorical colourings contribute to cognitive content, he admits that they might give hints for a better understanding and make an indispensable protreptic contribution to conveying categorial cognition: “Where the main thing [...] cannot be conceptually grasped, these constituents are fully justified” (Frege 1918, 63, 1997, 330 f). In this case connotative elements of language obviously *do* have cognitive value—even in logic. Cf. the extensive treatment of this matter in Gabriel (1991, 65–88, especially 79 ff.) and also Schildknecht (2002, part 2.)

We can summarise: In his analysis of the relationship between science and fiction Frege makes a strict distinction between *Wissenschaft* and *Dichtung* on the level of the object language but not on the level of the philosophical metalanguage. Here he goes back to semantical elements, which he ascribes to poetry otherwise. Frege does not go as far as Wittgenstein (1980, 24) who declares: “Philosophy ought really to be written only as a *poetic composition*” (*Philosophie dürfte man eigentlich nur dichten*). But he concedes—even if only reluctantly—that at least sometimes the categorial discourse of philosophy is forced to use poetic language. This result implies, that colouring—in contrast to Frege’s own view—might perform a cognitive contribution. Frege’s emotivistic conception of fiction, according to which fiction has the function of evoking the emotions of the reader, is therefore to be supplemented by a cognitivistic approach. Using Fregean distinctions such an approach will now be developed systematically.

We understand the meaning of every day and scientific sentences when we know what they are saying, when we understand the sense and know the reference of their words. (Here we are dealing with declarative sentences only). It is the case, however, that sentences may have meaning not only by saying something. Generally speaking one can mean something by description or by re-presentation (*Vergegenwärtigung*). Sentences which report actions, events, situations etc., as if they had taken place, can, in the second sense then, have meaning, if what they pretend to report can be understood as standing for something else. This kind of meaning relation may be called the relation of the particular to the general. The difference in question can be formulated as follows: in the first case a sentence merely means what it says, and in the second it also means what it shows. A sentence or a text can consequently mean more than it says. Especially poetic texts mean more than they say. They may do so by suggestion, connotation, contextual implication, etc. A

poetic or literary work of fiction then is a text, which means more than it fictionally—in fictional discourse—says. Here Frege's colourings play a central role. Semantically, what we have here is a new direction of meaning, a transition from referential meaning to symbolic meaning. The category of the particular is central to an identification of the cognitive value of literature, at least as long as we avoid G. Lukács' (1967) limited view. Together with the concept of changing the direction of meaning, it makes up the common core of the various aesthetic conceptions of Baumgarten's "*perceptio praegnans*", Kant's "aesthetic idea", Goethe's "symbol", Cassirer's "symbolic pregnancy", and Goodman's "(metaphorical) exemplification". Following Kant's *Kritik der Urteilkraft* (Kant 1968, § 49) it is impossible to explicate an aesthetic idea completely by conceptual thinking. If we construe this insight semantically, we can identify an aesthetic idea of a poetic work with the surplus of meaning, i.e., the whole of all the possible connotations implied contextually by the text of the work. Connotations of this kind are not specific to literary works of fiction alone; they are essential to literary works of non-fiction as well.

A literary work of fiction may be true even though it contains no true statements. The truths of fiction must not be reduced to truths (true statements) *in* fiction. They are truths, which are not *told in* but *shown by* the text; they are truths to which the recounted events, persons, and things are in the relation of the particular to the general. Interpretation of a literary work of fiction has then to find out the undetermined general to a given particular, which is the whole of the recounted events, persons, and things.

Admittedly, fictional literature does also convey true propositional information without asserting it. In Frege's words:

In poetry we have the case of thoughts being expressed without being actually put forward as true, in spite of the assertoric form of the sentence; although *the poem may suggest to the hearer that he himself should make an assenting judgement*. (Frege 1918, 63., 1997, 330; emphasis G. G.)

But what is the function of true information within a work of fiction? To answer this question, let us look to an example, namely at the initial passage of Gottfried Keller's novel *Der grüne Heinrich* (*Green Henry*) in its first edition:

Among the most beautiful cities, especially in Switzerland, are those which lie at the same time by a lake and a river, so that, like a wide gateway at the end of the lake, they immediately absorb the river, which runs right through them into the country. Such as Zurich, Lucerne, Geneva; and Constance, too, is in a way one of them. (Keller 1956, 9)

The place names mentioned here refer to real cities—it is possible to relate them to actually existing objects. The passage quoted could almost have been taken from a travel guide, for instance one advertising trips to Constance. In the context at hand, they induce the reader to take an imaginary boat trip: "It is hard to imagine anything more pleasant than a tour on one of these lakes, for example the Zurich one. Board the ship to Rapperswil [...]" In the course of the imaginary boat trip, which then follows, Zurich and its surroundings are descriptively made present in their historical and geographic characteristics (for about two pages in the novel). Although composed in a poetically rich language, the presentation does (if related to the time

in which the story is set) not only make reference to real places, but is moreover verifiable (the propositions stated are true). It could therefore well be part of a classical travel account, which is not only concerned with providing a route for traveling, but also tries to capture the atmosphere of things. However, the passage is in fact part of a novel, and this determines our attitude towards it. With a travel account, we may delight in its poetic qualities, but we will insist on its reference and truth. In a realist novel, by contrast, reference to actually existing entities and truth constitute a frame for the actions of the characters (in accordance with the demand for realistic ‘plausibility’); but we do not expect that they have to be true in every detail. It usually suffices if the novel is consistent with well-known facts, if it does justice to them; but we do not insist on the justification of these facts. Thus, while propositional truths may play a vital role in such cases (as background knowledge), they are not being *asserted* in a strict sense. We do not expect that the claim to truth is pursued. Rather, we expect that the poetic re-presentation will surpass factual truth by endowing it with a symbolic meaning for the situation of the characters within the novel. For instance, the juxtaposition of lake and river becomes a symbol of the contrast between rest (systole) and motion (diastole) in the life of Green Henry. In his novel, the author Keller comments directly on the change of direction in meaning. Following the description of the boat trip, the text takes up the motif from the beginning as follows:

And so, the charm of the location near lake and river is similar for Lucerne and Geneva, and yet at the same time quite different and peculiar to each. To add to those cities an imaginary one in order to plant there the green seed of poetry may be in order. After having established a *sense of reality* through existing examples, fancy claims its place again; and all misinterpretation is prevented. (Keller 1956, 11, my emphasis. This refers to what I have called ‘plausibility’ above)

“Misinterpretation” is here to be taken as a reading which attempts to establish reference to reality. Concerning the second edition of *Green Henry*, Keller notes that he has filled the book with “all kinds of fibs” in order to “make it more clearly a novel”. He further explains that there are still “donkeys”, who “take it at autobiographical face value” (Keller 1956, 1155, letter to Maria Mellos 29.12.1880). It is granted that *some* biographical elements are incorporated in the novel. However, in a literary treatment of personal experience, an author will have to express these experiences for others in an exemplary way; he will have to turn the singular into a particular, thus abandoning its referential status.

In general, we can say the following: realistic, naturalistic, and historical novels must, to a certain extent, refer and be verifiable; however, this is not the basis of the specific cognitive value of such texts. Even in cases where fictional literary texts lay a claim to conveying *new* propositional knowledge—such as insights into the reality of life—the cognitive achievement does not consist in assertions of abstract general propositions. Rather, it consists in concrete non-propositional, narrative representation of the content of such propositions. The first sentence of Tolstoy’s novel *Anna Karenina* serves as a standard example for such an abstract general proposition in literary criticism: “All happy families are alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.” It is clear that this sentence guides the reading of the

novel, if only because of its prominent position. It would be absurd, however, to identify this sentence with the cognitive value of Tolstoy's novel. Asked about the "main thought" of his work, Tolstoy replies that in order to say what he intended to express he would have to write the same novel over again (Tolstoy 1978, 296f.). In other words, the cognitive achievements of narrative re-presentation cannot be captured exhaustively in a propositional way.

Anyway there might be general statements, implied contextually or shown by the text, which the author of a work of fiction wants to communicate as his message. Following Beardsley (1958, 403f., 409ff.) we may call such statements 'theses', but a thesis is not an argumentative speech act. Indeed, a sensible reader of a literary work of fiction will not expect that the truth of a thesis will be defended in the text. It may be defended outside the text by the author or the reader, but this is another question. Hence a thesis of a literary work of fiction is no assertion. On the other hand, the reader will expect that the author (a) himself believes that the thesis of his text is true, and therefore (b) accepts the consequences of the thesis.

I want to stress that literary works of fiction, which do not show or imply theses may nevertheless convey knowledge. They may fulfil the relation of the particular to the general in other ways than presenting a thesis. And this seems to be not the exception but the norm. When literature teaches us to see the world in a new way, or when it confirms our view of the world (which can also be a genuine gain in insight), this rarely happens in a propositional mode of speaking. The kind of knowledge we have to do with in these cases is knowledge by acquaintance. Through literature we become acquainted with situations, feelings, forms of life etc. more often than through being confronted with implied theses. The knowledge conveyed here cannot be propositional knowledge. The specific cognitive value of literature lies in its capacity to make things and situations present, i.e., to re-present them. This is the case even when the work of fiction contains or implies theses.

The cognition of things and situations cannot only be conveyed through propositional descriptions, but also through making situations present, thus becoming acquainted with them. Accordingly, we have to distinguish between the propositional knowledge *that* something is the case (knowledge by description) and the non-propositional knowledge *how* it is or would be to find oneself in a certain situation (knowledge by acquaintance).³

When the situations of others (including literary characters) are made present to us, this has a cognitive value because it can broaden the horizon of our understanding. It allows us to partake, in our imagination, of a wide range of different situations, motives, emotions, attitudes, perspectives, and sentiments, most of which we would never have come across in real life—or which we are spared.⁴ What we have here is therefore not an immediate, 'actual' acquaintance; it is not a direct epistemic contact with things. Imaginary re-presentation does not aim at the "production of presence" (Gumbrecht 2004) in a real sense. Its aim is a cultivation of our reflective

³For a justification of the recognition of non-propositional cognition from the perspective of perception theory, cf. Schildknecht (2002, 199–215).

⁴For the role of imagination in the reception of fictional literature cf. Sutrop (2000).

judgement (in the Kantian sense). The successful literary presentation of attitudes or ways of life has a cognitive value independently of whether we approve of these attitudes or ways of life or abominate them. It shows us the *conditio humana* and, if need be, also its corruptions or perversions.

The idea that we partake in our imagination of the lives of literary figures, in the sense of *cognitive* ‘empathy’, is supported by a rehabilitation of emotions in current epistemology. Thus, already Robert Musil (1978, vol. 1, 494) emphasised that “intellect and emotions are not enemies”. Two functions of emotive language have to be distinguished: its use to appeal and its use to make things present. The emotivistic view of literature holds that the function of literature is to convey emotions by evoking or awakening them. This causal way of putting things implies that it is vital to actually *feel* the emotions conveyed. But this is an undue restriction. The presentation of the feeling of alienation in Kafka’s works does not primarily intend to evoke this feeling, but rather to make it comprehensible.

The preceding analyses should have made clear, why fictional literature can have a cognitive value despite (or rather by virtue of) its fictionality. In this respect, fictional literature often comes closer to real life than history precisely because its aesthetically complex, i.e., detailed and nuanced re-presentations do not depend on the truth of singular facts. Its cognitive achievement is to exemplarily make present the *conditio humana*, the human situation in the world. Thus, while fictional literature may be concerned with the same reality as science, it is not interested in mere facts, but rather in viewing reality from a human perspective.

Summarizing our results concerning meaning and cognition in science and fiction, we may put it in the following way. Instead of the traditional bipartite distinction between meaning as object and meaning as content, which also underlies the Fregean distinction between reference and sense, we have a tripartite distinction. The symbolic relations, which are concerned here become clearer by distinguishing between three corresponding kinds of meaning acts. First referring, second saying, and third showing (illocutionary acts are not considered here). Roughly speaking, in scientific texts and every day discourses, knowledge is conveyed by the acts of referring and saying, in literary fiction by saying and showing, and in non-fictional literature (as in the texts of Wittgenstein) by referring, saying, showing. The essential step in favour of the cognitive value of literature is to go beyond the propositional acts of referring and saying, and to acknowledge the act of showing as a meaning act in its own right.

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