Form and Function
Some Hermeneutic Remarks on Semantics and Analogies ∪ ¡ ∪
An answer to Prof. Schweizer

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In his article in *BN* 86 (1997) 63-65, Prof. Harald Schweizer gives his reaction to my article in *BN* 82 (1996) 21-26 in which I presented my concordance of analogies between Third and Second Isaiah. This presentation was based on my dissertation, entitled *Analogies in Isaiah*[1]. As to this, Schweizer poses two questions: the first with regard to the position of semantics and the second with regard to the function of analogies. He wishes to do so in respect to his *Freunde in Amsterdam*[2], among whom I would like to consider myself. And indeed, friends may differ, but they may argue about as well.

In this article, I would like to make a few hermeneutic remarks on both issues raised by Schweizer. Doing so, I not only intend to clarify the different positions more in detail, but also to help the discussion further.

I would like to start with the question on semantics. Although a lot of publications on semantics exist, the semantic analysis of biblical texts is still in its infancy. In modern linguistics, the period of historical semantics (=etymology) and of word-semantics[3] is behind us (though this is regrettably not the case in every exegetical publication). Conversely, semantics is text-related. Words do not get their meaning as separate words, but in concrete texts. A dictionary, for instance, cannot any longer be considered as a collection of meanings, but has to be considered as a collection of lemmata. Because of these reasons, I did not include any semantic feature-structure into my search-procedures for the computer (how ever much this might be desired by exegetes, considering for example a parallellity between Isa 60:4f and 49:22e within the framework of 'parts of the body on which one can carry somebody else'). This would result in the role of the computer changing from an information-producer —an apparatus that computes starting with 'lower' information (two clauses) and resulting in 'higher' in formation (an analogy)— to an information-carrier —an apparatus that determines

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[1] A.L.H.M. VAN WIERINGEN, *Analogies in Isaiah*. Volume A: *Computerized Analysis of Parallel Texts between Isaiah 56-66 and Isaiah 40-66*. Volume B: *Computerized Concordance of Analogies between Isaiah 56-66 and Isaiah 40-66* (Applicatio 10), VU University Press 1993.

[2] H. SCHWEIZER, *BN* 86 (1997) 63.

[3] For instance a study like B. KEDAR, *Biblische Semantik. Eine Einführung*, Stuttgart — Berlin — Köln — Mainz 1981.

data of the same information-level, namely the question whether information, defined in advance, appears elsewhere—, resulting in, the power of formalisms no longer being decisive.[4]

The fact, that semantic meanings are not available separated from texts, implies also that semantics cannot be disconnected from other textual aspects. In other words: the famous triad of text-syntax, text-semantics and text-pragmatics consists of distinguishable parts, but not separable textual categories.[5]

An indication as 'second person', for instance for a verbal form, indeed has semantic implications, but it is also an adequate description for the appearance of the verbal form in question. Even more, the indication 'second person' has its consequences for the text-pragmatics as well, as it, for example, in discursive texts indicates the addressee. In my view, Schweizer's thesis, that the category 'number' is *nur im Rahmen semantischen Verstehens bestimmbar*[6], need not only syntactic, but pragmatic addition as well.[7]

Such terminology does not at all necessarily imply an equalisation between forms and functions. Thus a verbal form is not identical to something like a 'predicate'; a preposition-phrase is not identical to something like a 'circumstantial indication' — terms I have never used in my research. Likewise, the observation that a clause begins with a conjunction, is not identical to the interpretation of such a conjunction (that, because, when, and, although …). The function of the conjunction which occurs most, ‍1, is not determined by syntactic observations, but by a semantic interpretation. My analogies give the possibility to compare texts, *in casu* clauses, mutually, separate from such interpretations. An example from my concordance[8]: in the analogy, made by the clauses Isa 58:2d and 56:1c, which both consist of three phrases, viz. a conjunction-phrase, a nominal phrase and a verbal phrase, the concrete conjunction-lemma אֲשֶׁר and the conjunction-lemma ‍1 are paralleled, separate from their different functions both at the higher text-syntactical level of the sentence and at the level of the semantic meaning.

Form and function do not have a one-to-one relationship. This main idea is determinative both for the *Werkgroep Informatica* and for myself. Therefore, it is rather nice to find that Schweizer shares this opinion.[9] Possibly, the hermeneutic difference is

[4] VAN WIERINGEN, *op.cit.*, Vol. I, 224-225. For a matter of fact, there are formal criteria for the analogy between Isa 60:4f and 49:22c; see: Vol. II, 223.

[5] For Gen. 22:1-19, I have expounded these ideas in: The Reader *in* Genesis 22:1-19. Textsyntax — Textsemantics — Textpragmatics, *Estudios Biblicos* 53 (1995) 289-304. Very recently, I have done so very elaborately for Isa 6-12: *The Implied Reader in Isaiah 6-12* (Biblical Interpretation Series 34), Leiden — Boston — Köln 1998; in particular 2-11.

[6] SCHWEIZER, *op.cit.*, 63.

[7] It is eye-catching that *Computerunterstützte Textinterpretation. Die Josefsgeschichte beschrieben und interpretiert im Dreischritt: Syntax — Semantik — Pragmatik*, Band I: Textbeschreibung und –interpretation (THLI 7/1), H. SCHWEIZER (ed.), Tübingen — Basel 1995, beside a separate chapter on syntax, deals with semantics and pragmatics in only one chapter.

[8] VAN WIERINGEN, *op.cit.*, Vol. II, 120.

[9] Already also H. SCHWEIZER, *Sprachkritik als Ideologiekritik. Zur Grammatikrevision am Beispiel von QRB* (THLI 1), Tübingen 1991, 3: "Zwischen Ausdrucks- und Inhaltsebene besteht keine Eins-zu-Eins Relation".

smaller than the concrete research-orientation[10] implies.

The second question, that Schweizer poses, concerns the function of an analogy. In a way, this is a surprising question coming after his standpoint about syntax and semantics. So rigorously as aspects of meaning are avoided within syntax, so strikingly easily is an analogy connected to terms like 'cliché', 'quotation of a later author' and 'standard-expression'. Conversely, I have devised the terminology 'analogy' in order not to imply one-to-one relations in intertextuality — just as I do not accept a one-to-one relation between form and function for the syntax. Exegetes used to make use of interpretative tags like 'quotation', 'allusion', 'proverb' and other indications for intuitively observed relations between texts, in my case between Third and Second Isaiah. Such names, however, do not make clear of what such a relation consists. Because of that, I would not approach these relations from a functional point of view in my research, but from a descriptive one.

This implies that the function of each analogy has to be determined within the concrete text. It can never be maintained that analogies should have outward characteristics, which unambiguously reflect some synchronic or diachronic functions. Each exegetical research has to start with the text itself. Each concordance should subsequently be solely an aid. In my dissertation, I have expounded this on the basis of Isa 60.[11]

It is striking that Schweizer lets a work-phase precede his syntactic, semantic and pragmatic considerations; a phase in which he constitutes his text, *in concreto* using a diachronic exegesis.[12] Thus, the reflections are not made *on the text*, but *on the text constructed by the researcher*. Such a standpoint seems to be at odds with the wish, frequently formulated, that it is about *nur (um) Recherchen am hebräischen Text selber*[13]. Nevertheless, I totally agree with this wish and I would willingly break a lance for it.[14]

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[10] For example, M. SCHINDELE (Externe Syntax: Verbindungen zu weiteren Texten, in: SCHWEIZER, *Textinterpretation*, 42 *et seq.*) gives word order an important role as well —see: VAN WIERINGEN, Vol. I, 127-132 [the first analysis-phase of six]— and W. BADER (Der Befund an identischen Wortformen, in: SCHWEIZER, *op.cit.*, 22 *et seq.*) works with 'clusters' (however, not with 'gaps') as well —see: VAN WIERINGEN, Vol. I, 181-201—.

[11] VAN WIERINGEN, *op.cit.*, Vol. I, 202-221.

[12] Thus for instance: H. SCHWEIZER, *Biblische Texten verstehen. Arbeitsbuch zur Hermeneutik und Methodik der Bibelinterpretation*, Stuttgart — Berlin — Köln — Mainz 1986, 37.

[13] SCHWEIZER, *BN* 86 (1997) 64.

[14] I would like to thank Drs. Maurits J. Sinninghe Damsté for his correction of the English of this article.

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