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SOME ADDITIONAL ASPECTS OF SEMANTIC INDEFINITENESS OF PROVERBS

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Remarks on proverb semantics 2

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1. The modal (functional, pragmatical) indefiniteness.

As we know, proverbs do not function as mere poetic adornments of speech; neither are they used, normally, to meet man's needs for philosophical phrasemongering. As a rule, they are used for some practical, pragmatical purposes in various circumstances of everyday communication. With the aid of a proverb one can aim to provide an endorsement to his statements and opinions, forecast something, express doubts, reproach someone with something, accuse someone of something, justify or excuse somebody, mock somebody, comfort somebody, jeer at somebody's misfortune, repent something, warn against something, advise something or interdict somebody from doing something, and so on, and so forth. It is unthinkable to consider the proverb apart from such pragmatic functions.

Unfortunately, paremiologists have so far only some vague ideas of the functions of proverbs. Moreover, the proverb lies just somewhere on the borderlands between language and folklore, and shares its functions with both of them, and one cannot say there is a notable agreement between the conceptions of different authors on the func-tions of language or folklore, neither is there a notable unity in the terminology used by different authors who have written on these matters.[1] We accept here a more simple and widespread scale, namely the set of three degrees

<u>statement</u> → <u>evaluation</u> → <u>prescription</u>.[2]

We suppose, however, this scale should fit in with the nature of the proverb, and it has, incidentally, the virtues that it (a) operates with concepts general enough, and (b) allows to consider the set of its subfunctions (or functional aspects) as a unified system.

The functional aspects mentioned are in certain rela-tionships with grammatical moods of the sentence. Hence the

illusion may arise that proverbs can be classified functionally straight on the ground of their "superficial" grammatical moods, so that the proverbs with stating (designative, informative) function were represented with indicative sentences, and those with normative (prescriptive, evocative) function, respectively, with imperative sentences.[3] This illusion, however, would be immediately shattered against two complications:

(1) the evaluative (emotive, expressive) function has no separate or distinct manifestation (or "surface equivalent") in the shape of any grammatical mood;

(2) as affirmed by several authorities, every verbal utterance fulfils not only one function, e.g. that corresponding to its grammatical mood, but all its main functions (or at least several different functions) simultaneously;[4] otherwise, a context-free proverb, like any other utterance, is functionally indefinite.

It is likely unreasonable to imagine that the proverb could have its say about the matters which have no social relevance or topicality, or in situations including no alternatives, or that it could state something with entire indifference, or put forward statements which let no strategic (prescriptive) advices or hints to be derived from them. It also appears to be obvious that a proverb cannot order, interdict, advise anything without qualifying previously as good or bad (or axiologically irrelevant) either the suggestable or forbiddable activity or attitude itself or something linked to this activity or attitude, e.g., its end, means, degree of intensity, speed, time, place, etc.; and if the proverb puts forward appraisals, these appraisals are, in turn, likely to be founded on some cognized truths, laws and regularities (or current opinions, beliefs or at least prejudices).

Let us take, for example, the common Estonian proverb <u>Kes kopikat ei korja, see rublat ei saa</u> (literally: <u>Who</u>

does not gather the copeck that will not get the rouble). Superficially, this sentence is a pure statement. However, we are not capable of describing its meaning to any extent without taking into account the pragmatical "connotations" and axiologic qualities of its main c-elements copeck and rouble. Thus, we must immediately introduce the axiological concept of 'good', reasonong roughly as follows: (1) 'the copeck is money'; (2) 'the rouble is money'; (3) 'the money is a good'; (4) 'the rouble is a greater denomination than the copeck'; (5) 'the rouble is a greater good than the copeck'. Hence we get the following description on the stating-evaluative level: (6) 'who does not gather (spare) a lesser good, that will not achieve a greater good'; further, the concept of 'good' can be specified, establishing the opposition between its hedonic and utilitarian aspects: (7) 'not-gathering (squandering) is more pleasant'; (8) 'gathering (sparing) is more useful'. The premises mentioned enable us to give some interpretations on the prescriptive level: (9) 'gather (spare) small goods' – i. e. active "real strategy"; (10) 'squander (do not gather) small goods, but remember that then you must content youself with your present state, desist from striving for a qualitatively higher state in some sense, etc.' – i.e. a passive "pseudo-strategy". The description can be extended to some thinkable ironical, axiologically "inverted" uses as well, the meaning 'to strive for gathering' of the word to gather being altered into 'to enable gathering' and the axiologic qualifier 'evil' being substituted for the qualifier 'good'. Then summarized description on the stating-evaluative level might be 'who does not strive for/enable the accumulation of the good/bad quantity in some pragmatically important aspect, that reaches/avoids the leap to the desirable/undesirable quality (in some aspect bound with the previous one)'.

Thus, it feels rational indeed to conceive each proverb

text as performing all the three functions mentioned simultaneously. On the other hand, the far- or deep-reaching interpretations of such kind may often prove uncheckably arbitrary and "concocted".

The functions under discussion could be arranged in a certain natural way: statement → evaluation → prescription. This arrangement reflects the general succession of the stages of human cognition (cf. e.g. Lenin's well-known formula: immediate (sensual) apprehension → abstract thinking → practice). So, from the <u>theoretical</u> or <u>gnosiological</u> point of view, the informative stage would be the lowest, the evaluative stage the intermediate and the prescriptive one the highest. It is interesting to note that from the <u>historical</u> point, if we consider these modes as the historical forms of presentation the information serving the purpose of social regulation, the genetical sequence of the stages appears to be diametrically opposite: according to J.A. Levada (1966:68-69) the historically lowest, in this respect, is just the directly expressed norm, prescribing that the ancestors' practice and customs be kept, and the highest is the informative form where the addressee himself must draw conclusions from the circumstances (facts, opinions, etc.) he was apprised of, and behave accordingly. Anyhow, the stating and prescriptive functions occupy <u>extreme</u> positions on our scale, and at the same time they can be <u>explicit</u> as to their formal manifestation. As a rule, the evaluative stage that lies between the is, vice versa, formally <u>implicit</u>. The proverb disposes of almost no formal devices for expressing its attitudes towards its topics except the f-pattern <u>Better... than...</u> and some other similar ones. Usually the appraisal occurs implicitly, being hidden into the tropical tissue of the sentence, or it can be judged of only by extratextual para-factors in a concrete actualization, such as the intonation and the facial expression of the speaker,

his social, sexual and age characteristics, etc. The evaluative aspect, on the other hand, plays a very important role in the semantic structure of the proverb, for it is this aspect that directly determines the implicit prescriptive output in the proverbs with informative "surface function" (or indicative mood). On the other hand, grasping the evaluative "shades" and "nuances" of single lexical components and syntagms of the proverbial sentence and judging of the evalutive total qualifier of the sentence as a whole are the things often very troublesome to do, especially without any support from the contextual data, and they cannot be done without a good deal of arbitrariness. By the way, this complication is ill-natured in the sense that it enables to assign to proverbs ad hoc just such convictions and attitudes the investigator is seeking for.

Let us give an example about the axicological ambiguity of the proverbial trope. According to G.B. Milner, the English and Scottish versions of the proverb <u>Rolling stones gather no moss</u> have axiologically reverse meanings, depending on different interpretation of the words <u>rolling</u> and <u>moss</u>: (a) the English version: 'a restless, unstable, wandering from place to place, etc., person gathers no money, wealth, property, etc.'; (b) the Scottish version: 'an active, keeping on the move, etc., person "gathers" no staleness, stagnation, etc'.

The following is an example about the extratextual factors. Let us take some proverbs about social inequality, e.g., <u>Kel vägi, sel võimus</u> (literally: <u>Who has the might that has the power</u>), <u>Vaene on rikka roog</u> (literally: <u>The poor is the rich's food</u>) or any other. If the contextual data are lacking, different investigators can conceive them as expressing different sentiments and attitudes, such as: (a) vigorous social criticism, realizaton and exposure of or protest against social unjustice and the power of money in the class society; (b) sorrowful irony of working people

at their desperately difficult and hopeless social and material status; (c) sentiments of resignation, non-resistance, obedience, etc., implanted in the minds of working people by the ruling classes or springing from narrow--mindedness and conservatism of the peasantry itself; (d) cynical self-justification of the exploiting classes, or their attempts to show social inequality as natural, inevitable and eternal, and so on. The texts under discussion can, on principle, express all the listed attitudes and some others as well, but the c-elements <u>might</u> – <u>power</u> and <u>food</u> have here a too neutral "timbre" to decide which of these or other cases have or have not occurred actually in oral tradition and how frequently.[5]

If we use N for denoting some material situation concealed in a proverb with stating surface function, then, depending on the actual presence/absence (truth-value) of N and on its axiologic value (good/bad), 8 different prescriptive outputs can be derived from it: (1) 'retain N'; (2) 'abolish N'; (3) 'attain N'; (4) 'avoid N'; (5)...(8) the passive equivalents of them.[6]

Beyond the axiological aspect, the modal indefiniteness of the proverb can manifest itself also in numerous other forms. In subsequent, we shall briefly refer to some of them.

A proverb with prescriptive surface function need not be moulded into direct (imperative) order or interdiction; it can be formed as a grammatical indicative as well, i.e. as a formulation of a norm or ideal severed from the concrete single addressee, by means of such words as <u>must</u>, <u>may</u>, <u>ought</u>, <u>cannot</u>, etc., or their L-lingual or poetical synonyms. But the text can lack even such deontic determinants. In proverbs of many languages the word <u>is</u> and its equivalents, also other copulae and the grammatical indicative as such in general, can get, besides their usual meaning 'is actually', also meanings as 'must (be)', 'may

(be)', 'is allowed', etc., and <u>is not</u> (or the indicative negation in general), respectively, need not only mean 'is not actually', but also 'is interdicted', 'ought not', 'need not (be)', and so forth.

It is quite plausible that the assignment of (either informative or prescriptive) surface function influences directly and thoroughly the course of further interpretation, both on the functional deep levels and also while considering the world outlook of the proverb (i.e. whether we believe that there are reflections of either <u>reality</u> or <u>ideals</u> in them). Depending on the concrete content of the c-elements and the concrete actual setting, all the alternatives here can be implied, e.g.: (a) the reality not belonging to standardization and regulation, or at least practically not governed by norms and rules; (b) the norms which are regularly kept to (i.e. the norms <u>and/or</u> the reality); (c) the norms which exist, but are actually regularly violated (i.e. the norms <u>but not</u> the reality).[7]

For example, the Estonian proverb <u>Kelle leiba sa sööd, selle laulu sa laulad</u> (literally: <u>Whose bread you eat, the song of that you sing</u>) could be received in several, different from each other, functional variants, e.g.: (a) 'it inevitably <u>turns out</u> that...'; (b) you are <u>constrained</u> to "sing", even if you do not like it'; (c) 'try to <u>sham</u> this "singing" outwardly'; (d) try to <u>suggest</u> this conformable attitude to yourself', and so on.

Sometimes it may remain questionable whether the grammatically indicative sentence ought to be interpreted as a statement about some real fact(s) or as an <u>epistemic</u> sentence, i.e. whether 'is really', 'is known that...', etc., or rather 'there is the opinion that...', 'it seems that...', 'it feels that...', or whether the proverb allows of both kinds of interpretation.

For example, in Estonian repertoire do occur lexically and syntactically similar and, in all probability, also

genetically connected sayings <u>Sööb vähe söödetu</u> (literally: <u>Little eats that who is fed</u>) and <u>Sööb palju söödetav</u> (literally: <u>Much eats that who is being fed</u>). However similar they were, the first saying is obviously a statement about the reality, whereas the second one states a certain opinion (illusion, feeling). The sentence <u>Oma tilk on parem kui võõra hulk</u> (literally: <u>One's own drop is better than other man's plenty</u>) makes both interpretations possible, whereas <u>Oma lapse s- ei haise, oma lapse kisa ei kuule</u> (literally: <u>One's own child's faeces do not stink, one's own child's cry is not heared</u> (i.e. does not disturb, derange, etc.)) suggests mainly epistemic interpretation.

As a rule, a proverbial sentence leaves its "<u>alethic quantifier</u>" unfixed: we cannot say precisely how strong validity the proverb tries to assign to its norms and statements. It feels, anyhow, inexpedient to impute to the proverb ambitions of presenting any, say, truths with absolute validity, even if it includes such quantifying f-elements, as <u>always</u>, <u>never</u>, <u>every</u>, <u>everyman</u>, <u>nobody</u>, etc., or some of their more poetical analogues.

Thus, the semantic indefiniteness of the proverb embraces also its functional or modal aspects and manifests itself quite multiformly. If we mark with X the "material information" presented, for instance, in the Estonian proverb <u>Sõber sõbra naha koorib</u> (literally: <u>The friend will peel the friend's skin</u>), this sentence as a potential may get various concrete modal definitions, such as: (a) 'it always turns out so that X'; (b) 'one must fear that X'; (c) 'it may happen that even X'; (d) 'unfortunately, it often happens that X'; (e) 'it is natural that X'; (f) 'it is generally known that X'; (g) 'there is the public opinion that X', and so forth.

2. The indefiniteness of the information-bearing structure (actual division) of the proverb text.

G.L. Permyakov (1970:19; cf. also 1968a:26, 1968b:226) has repeatedly put out the thesis that "пословицы и поговорки являются знаками ситуаций или определенных отношений между вещами". The concept of situation is somewhat ambiguous here, and can be understood in several different senses, e.g.:

(1) Situation means the semantic interrelations of the words of the proverb text itself (taken as context-free), these relations being described in such a degree of generality that they cover the literal meaning of the text, as well as all the conceivable transferred meanings of it.[9]

(2) Situation refers to this or that concrete (immediately apprehensible or reproduced lingually) setting that provokes actualizing of this or that proverb.[10]

(3) The author has not taken for requisite to distinguish the virtual situations presented in the content of the proverb texts themselves from the situations actualizing proverb texts, for he supposes that the proverb text can be taken, in respect of the situation actualizing this text, simply for a poetic copy, signifier or a description of it.

The last opinion, though implicitly shared by many other paremiologists and phraseologists, seems to be thoroughly untenable. Let us put forward some imaginations of antithetic character.

(1) The relations of proverb texts to the situations actualizing them are not correlated 1:1, nor can they be considered as relations of variants (i.e. texts) to invariants (i.e. situations); texts and situations are merely roughly correlated. One and the same text (constant as to its wording) can be used in many different situations and, respectively, different persons can respond to one and the
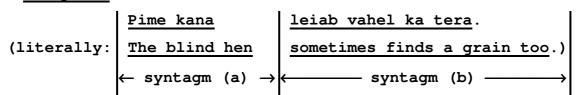
same situative "provoker" with different proverbs, depend-
ing on which "irritant" from the complex of the situative
"irritants" the sender of the text topicalizes, how he
evaluates this topicalized component of the situation and
in what way he intends to comment it upon.

(2) For several reasons it is arguable whether the
semantic structure of a proverb text can be called
situation, even if taken apart from any actual context: (a)
<u>situation</u> seems to assume some static relationship, setting,
field of tension; proverb texts, on the contrary, are
sentences and the reception of them inevitably includes the
act of predication, i.e. inevitably represents a dynamic
process connected with, say, the moving of information; (b)
<u>situation</u> seems to require of its elements a certain
"scenic unity", belongingness to one and the same "universe",
but it is difficult to conceive anything concrete that could
be such a "space" or "frame" or "background system" inside
which the virtual proverb text could set up its situations;
(c) the point of view under discussion would leave the
specificity of proverbs among other signs of situations
unfixed, as <u>at least</u> "situations" (if not events) may be
called referents of the most part of signs; (d) <u>situation</u>
hardly fits for labelling orders and interdictions, but
proverbs, as we know, have frequently just the impera-tive
form.

(3) Moreover, it is quite impossible to think of the
act of <u>actualization</u> of the proverb as simply of an act of
signifying or describing the situation, thanks the fact that
the proverb fulfils not only infomative, but also axio-
logic and deontic functions in human communication, i.e.
the proverbial actualization divides its context clearly
into past and future components and connects itself with
both of them. For example, the proverb can regard an ac-
tually given situation as an "input" and, proceeding from
that, predict some good or bad consequences, advise

something, warn against something, etc. But it can also take a real situation as an "output" and derive from it retrospective suppositions about the causes of what has happened, excuse some deed, reproach somebody, etc. Even if we should restrict our analysis to the (indicative or prescriptive) surface function only, the actual division of the proverb text would remain indefinite, and each text would have chances to be actualized in two principal ways, opposite as to their information-bearing structure: (a) prognostically, i.e. when the apprehension proceeds from the nearest past (i.e. from the "situation") to the future, from the existent to the possible, etc., and (b) retrospectively, when it proceeds from the nearest past to a more remote one, from the known facts to the unknown ones, from the effect to the cause, from the overt to the covert, etc.

Let us give now some examples to illustrate our theses on the indefiniteness of the information-bearing structure of the proverb.[11]

Example 1.

(literally:	Pime kana	leiab vahel ka tera.
	The blind hen	sometimes finds a grain too.)
	← syntagm (a) →	← syntagm (b) →

Actualization 1. Somebody is being talked about, the participants of the discourse having previously accepted the general opinion that the person in question is clumsy, incapable, inattentive, that his actions and undertakings often tend to fail, and so on. Someone remarks that, despite of this, the failure has made a new attempt, and finds fault with it. Another person objects to it: "Don't say so, the blind hen sometimes finds a grain too." – The actualization is of prognostical type. At the level of indicative surface function syntagm (a) presents the given component, syntagm (b) is new. Further, the information goes on moving in the sphere of the new, at deep function levels, roughly so: (1) '"to find a grain" is good' → (2) 'being the "blind

hen" is not a <u>completely</u> bad state' → (3) depending on whether the actual addressee is the actual "blind hen" himself or somebody else, 'cheer up and go on attempting, you can still "find the grain"', or, respectively, 'do not be sure that he whom you usually regard as a "blind hen" cannot "find a grain" in particulat cases'.
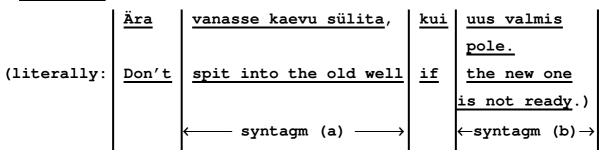
<u>Actualization 2</u>. Somebody has succeeded in something, and this happening is being discussed. Only one of the communicants knows something nearer about the person being talked about. The competent person comments: "Well, the blind hen sometimes finds a grain too." – The actualization is retrospective not in temporal sense, but in the sense that here the apprehension proceeds from the overt to the covert, from the single to the general. At the surface level syntagm (b) is obviously given, while syntagm (a) is new, e.g.: 'N. is a blind hen', and having interpreted <u>blind hen</u>, we shall proceed at the evaluative deep function level: (1) 'N. <u>in general</u> is, after all, bad (incapable, clumsy)', and hence the prescription → (2) 'do not think that N's success was regular', and → (3) more general decisions follow as to further attitude towards N.

<u>Actualization 3</u>. The "grain" has still been "found", and the participants of the discouse know it; they are also fully aware of personal characteristics of the "finder" – all this together constitutes the given information. The proverb text in corpore is new, more exactly, the two connecting operations: (1) "amplified" describing of this contradictory and unexpected happening, the description being transferred from the L-language to the P-language (this operation, of course, takes place at each proverb actualization); (2) carrying the single case under the general rule, resp. certifying the general statement (i.e. proverb) through the concrete happening against a concrete background, a certain "here-you-are"-component that arises here. By the way, this is the only type of actualization where the proverb text

could be called, with more or less good reason, the "sign of situation".

Actualization 4. The proverb is actualized at the absolute beginning of the discourse, or it has nothing to do with the concrete actual setting and/or topic of the conversation. Proverb-formed titles of literary works, particulary those of plays can serve as examples of this type of actualization; also proverb-formed introductions of fables, occurring of proverbs in introductions of some folk tales, the whole of the following plot serving as an exhaustive "exegesis" or "endorsement" of the parable, etc. In this case the proverb text as a whole is given, and the information offered during the subsequent explaining procedure constitutes the new.[12]

Example 2.

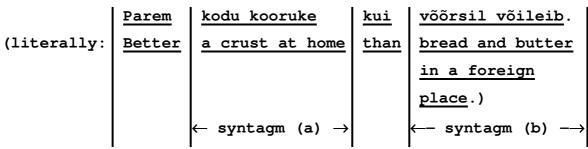|	Ära	vanasse kaevu sülita,	kui	uus valmis pole.
(literally:	Don't	spit into the old well	if	the new one is not ready.)
		←—— syntagm (a) ——→		←syntagm (b)→

In this example we consider only two actualizations, reverse as to their information-bearing structure.

Actualization 1. Somebody has the "new well half done", and though he has no concrete intensions concerning the "old well", someone warns him, just in case, with this proverb. The addressee finds that his present performance or state can nohow remind of "spitting", but the (metaphorical) situation of "unfinished state of the new well" is quite fitting to refer to the existent (real) situation — consequently, syntagm (b) ought to be regarded as the given information. Further, the addressee has to interpret the metaphor in syntagm (a) to realize against which action he had been warned. Thus, syntagm (a) is what carries the new information on the surface function level. The following procedures on the deep function levels should clear up how

the given interdiction ensues from the given actual situation, finding what actual referents the implied components of the allegory (such as "water", "thirst", "drinking" etc.) might have.

Actualization 2. Somebody shows disrespect for something or somebody "old" (past, former), or intends to break off the intercourse with it (him), or to do away with it (him), or to destroy it (him), etc. Doing so he is not conscious of possible bad consequences of his behaviour, and is admonished: "Don't spit into the old well if the new one is not ready!" The given information contains in syntagm (a). Connecting the interdictive modal construction don't with this syntagm introduces the first stage of the new information. Thus, here the "rhematic" operations begin at the prescriptive level. Further, here the operations on deep function levels, motivating the interdiction received, must also follow.

Example 3.

(literally:	Parem	kodu kooruke	kui	võõrsil võileib.
	Better	a crust at home	than	bread and butter in a foreign place.)
		← syntagm (a) →		← syntagm (b) →

Depending on the concrete situation, either syntagm (a) can be topicalized (e.g. if someone grumbles at the scantiness of the "crust of home"), or syntagm (b) (e.g. if someone's well-being in foreign parts has previously been praised). The whole "material information" conveyed by the text can be given as well, analogically to Actualization 3 in above Example 1. It must be rememberd, however, that this proverb is one of those relatively rare specimens with evaluative surface function, and deriving its deep functions ought to proceed somehow otherwise, as compared to the texts with "normal" (indicative or prescriptive) surface function; on principle, we can move here in two

different directions from the surface function level. Hence considering the stages of moving of the new information at deep function levels is connected here with complications too.

Example 4.

The sentences A tree is known by its fruit and Lolli tuntakse suurest naerust (literally: A fool is known by much laughing) display a very similar surface structure, but differ notably in the possibilities of their actual division. In the first sentence, apparently, either of the c-elements tree and fruit can perform the role of the given information, while in the second one only much laughing can be topicalized. Conceivably the difference is due to different interrelations between the concrete c-elements in either case: between the "tree" and the "fruit" a 1:1 relation seems to be presupposed, while laughing fools constitute, obviously, only one of all possible kinds of fools, and fool as such rather belongs to the evaluative than to the stating modal level. Thus, the reception of the proverb about the laughing fool would proceed roughly so: on the surface function level much laughing is given, fool is the new information (more exactly, the predication 'the laugher is a fool'); the interpretation moves ahead on the evaluative level: 'to be (regarded as) a fool is ob-viously bad' → 'if being taken for a fool results from much laughing, much laughing is bad too' → the pre-scription: 'do not laugh too much'.

In the few examples above we attempted to demonstrate merely the indeterminacy of the information-bearing struc-ture of the proverb text, without any ambitions to deal with theoretical and methodical problems of the actual division of proverb texts. We are fully aware that actually the process of linking proverb texts with their contexts is a notably more complicated process than the above examples can show.[13]

3. <u>Textual indefiniteness of the proverb as a type</u>.

There is an essential misconception which has tenaciously reoccurred in the writings of several authors up to the present moment. It is the point of view that proverbs represent a sort of ""ready-made" utterances" which "permit no extension or variation" (Lyons 1971:177) or "cliches" with invariable wording which circulate "in the once and for all fixed form" (see, e.g., Permyakov 1968a:9). Obviously enough, conceptions of this kind can arise only if the investigator has a relatively small number of texts at his disposal, or if he works mainly at printed sources, particularly with more ancient ones. These sources often obtained their content not from the living oral tradition, but, let us borrow R. Abrahams's (1967:182) witticism, "begged, borrowed and stole" it from other, still earlier printed sources.

True enough, the normal shape of the proverb as <u>proverb type</u> (in the sense put forward by the Finnish school) is often relatively clearly identifiable, as compared to longer and/or "not-formulary" folklore items, and its frequency in the proverb type (either in the oral currency or among archive texts) is often notably predominant, as compared to other variants of the same proverb. The normal shape of a proverb can mostly be fixed with full definiteness, i.e. numerous real texts, identical among themselves, can be considered as its perfect representatives, and we need not combine it from fragments of many different variants (as in the case of folk songs) or content ourselves with a normal shape, textually indefinite altogether, that can be represented only at some "emic", metatextual level (as in the case of folk tales).

The variability of folklore pieces may not be so universal, as the scholars of the Finnish school (and their successors) have been used to think. In some genres of some

peoples and cultures the possibly exact reproduction of folklore texts can be seeked for, indeed (cf., e.g., Dundes 1964:23,24), but we have a good reason to think that the folklore of cliches is a mere exception against a background of varying folklore, and that the relation of identity between the texts belonging to one and the same proverb type is only a particular case against a background of a far more usual relation of difference between them.

All the hitherto experience with any more extensive archive material ought to convince us of the untenability of the cliche-conception. If one would consider a sufficient number of authentic proverb texts recorded from the oral tradition, he could, in all probability, see anything but cliches. The texts that, on the one hand, must surely be taken for the representatives of one and the same proverb, reveal, on the other hand, rich and multidimensional variability: the vocabulary, syntactical constructions, euphonic patterns – they all would proved to be varying manifoldly.[14]

The variability of proverb texts cannot be the variability of their "wording form" merely. V. Voigt (1970b:126) notes: "Ändert sich der Text eines Proverbium, so ändert sich natürlich auch dessen Bedeutung." In connection with it we shall encounter with a range of mutually interrelated problems, all of them linked with the main question of how to distinguish the semantically relevant differences between the proverb texts from the semantically irrelevant ones.

(1) We would get a quite reasonable solution on principle, but quite inapplicable practically, if we postulate that there are no semantically irrelevant differences at all, i.e. every, however slight, alteration of the wording of the text eo ipso brings about a shift of the meaning of the text (though, may-be also minute). But unfortunately or fortunately, up to now nobody has made any

attempt to describe explicitly such semantic micro-
-differences, which exist, for instance, between sentences,
as <u>A new broom sweeps clean</u> and <u>New brooms sweep clean</u>, or
between <u>Measure thrice and cut once</u> and <u>Score twice before
you cut once</u>, or between <u>There's many a slip 'tween the cup
and lip</u> and <u>Between the cup and the lip a morsel may slip</u>,
or between <u>Dogs that put up many hares kill none</u> and <u>If you
run after two hares, you will catch neither</u>, etc.

(2) We might suppose, then, that there are no semantic
differences at all between the variants above, and come to
an agreement that only the texts coming from <u>different</u>
proverb types will be considered as differing in the
meaning, while whatever wording variants inside one and the
same proverb are regarded as irrelevant or remaining below
the level of susceptibility of our distinctions. However,
this settlement would grant us only a partial success. Just
the concept of <u>proverb type</u> itself is the peg on which
several specific complications hang. To divide some corpus
of proverb texts into sets of variants of different proverb
types (or to select from it all variants of a certain
proverb type, or to decide whether two texts are
representatives of one and the same proverb type or of
different ones, etc.) we can utilize the criterion, put
forward by M. Kuusi (1966:98; cf. also 1963:340): "Wenn zwei
Sprichwörter die gleiche Idee und den gleichen Baukern
aufweisen, bilden sie Varianten desselben Sprichworts".
There is no reason to call this criterion in question, for
it corresponds to our intuitive imaginations about the
"variants of one and the same proverb" in every respect.
Nevertheless, if we should try to apply this criterion for
dividing a larger quantum of texts, there would remain a
considerable number of cases we could not firmly judge of.
The main cause of this trouble does not lie in the too im-
pressionistic formulation of the basic initial concepts of
<u>idea</u> and <u>kernel</u>, but in the fact some borderlines between

different proverb types are actually very clearcut and others very vague. The semantic space is "covered" or "fulfilled" with proverbial sentences very unequally. In "densely populated" districts the tradition may have looked up and realized all the possibilities for expressing some concept or idea so thoroughly that literally all thinkable lexical and grammatical manifestations of that concept or idea occur in recorded texts already.[15] Therefore, we may expect that while considering a sufficiently large corpus of archive texts, one will have quite frequently to do with very capacious "organic molecules" (or the so-called type-groups or type-families) embracing several different "type nuclei", instead of clearly distinct proverb types. Taken separately, the most typical texts coming from different nuclei might be regarded as representatives of different proverbs without doubt, but, on the other hand, these nuclei are bridged with each other by means of a set of variants which can be arranged in such a way that the transition from one nucleus to the other proceeds fluently, step by step, and we cannot show precisely where the wording differences of variants of one and the same proverb just turn into differences between (the variants of) different proverbs. Consequently, it is impossible to formulate the nomenclature of semantically relevant (i.e. "intertypological") differences of texts, clearly distinct from that of semantically irrelevant (i.e. "intratypological") differences, as the typological interrelation of two or more proverb variants is determined not only by the "absoute quantity" of their (semantic or formal) differences, but also by the proverbial environment or background against which the comparable texts occur and against which they must be considered.

Notes.

1. For functions of folklore see, e.g., in Bascom 1954; a

comprehensive review of the functions of language and of conceptions concerning them can be found in Robinson 1972. The functions of the proverb, as well as those of folklore in general, have been conceived mostly as appearing in a more general social and cultural context. The present writing, on the contrary, intends to focuse just on the communicative functions of the proverb, closely linked with its actual (vs. virtual) aspect. Thus, our concept of the <u>proverbial function</u> differs greatly from the meaning of this term as understood by some other authors (cf., e.g., Voigt 1970a, 1970b; Szemerkényi & Voigt 1970; Jason 1971 etc.).

2. This triad might be paralleled with some other scales and opinions, more or less analogous to it.

(1) V.I. Lenin's (1969:152-153) famous formulation of the dialectical way of cognition: "От живого созерцания к абст-рактному мышлению *и от нее к практике*...".

(2) A. Taylor's (1965:7) statement: the proverb "<u>summarizes</u> a situation, passes a <u>judgement</u>, or offers a <u>course of action</u>" /Underlining mine. A.K./.

(3) The well-known triplet of the functions of language, elaborated by K. Bühler (1933): the so-called aspects of the first, second and third persons. The same aspects have been presented by R. Jakobson (1960:353ff.) as the principal functions among his so-called six basic aspects of language, i.e. (a) the referential (or denotative, or cognitive) function, focused on the <u>context</u> (the "aspect of the third person"); (b) the emotive (or expressive) function, focused on the <u>addresser</u> (the "aspect of the first person"); (c) the conative function, focused on the <u>addressee</u> (the "aspect of the second person").

(4) Section B ("task area: attempted answers") in R.F. Bales's classification of the functions of verbal acts, characterizing the interactions in problem-solving groups, and namely: a verbal act (in its 6th function) "gives orientation, information, repeats, clarifies, confirms"; it

"gives opinion, evaluation, analysis, expresses feeling, wish" (the 5th function); it "gives suggestion, direction, implying autonomy for other" (the 4th function) (cited from Robinson 1972:44).

(5) Ch. Morris's (1955:95-103) kinds of pragmatic signs; <u>designator</u>, <u>appraisor</u> and <u>prescriptor</u>.

(6) The branches of logic, incl. the two more developed branches of modal logic: (a) "ordinary" (propositional) logic that considers statements from the point of view of their <u>truth-value</u>; (b) axiologic logic that is concerned with <u>appraisals</u> and operates with the categories of <u>good</u>, <u>bad</u>, <u>indifferent</u>, <u>better than</u>, <u>worse than</u>, etc.; (c) deontic logic that deals with problems of <u>norms</u>, <u>orders</u>, <u>interdictions</u>, <u>permissibility</u>, etc.

3. Just these two modalities, the stating and the prescriptive, have been noticed, incidentally, by H. Jason (1971:618) who calls them "two ways.... in which the proverb brings its intentions to the listener".

4. See, e.g., in Jakobson 1960:353; Ivin 1970:12; Halliday 1970:144; Robinson 1972:52. It is of no moment here that Halliday's and Robinson's nomenclatures of functions themselves are different from that used in the present paper.

5. The complications ensuing from the axiologic indefiniteness of proverbs, e.g. their thematical ambiguity, have been formerly noticed by V. Kafarov (1967:13): "Скажем, пословица "обошьет весь мир игла, а сама голым-гола" могла бы попасть в разные разделы: она прозвучит как жалоба в устах работника и как насмешка в устах тунеядца, будучи сказанной в осуждение непрактичности и отсутствия сметливости, очутилась бы в разделе "ум — глупость". Она свидетельствует также о трудолюбии, но в первую очередь — о социальной несправедливости...".

6. For analogical variants, appearing at describing wishes, see in Ivin 1970:124.

To illustrate such kind of branchings, let us consider, e.g. H. Jason's (1971:621) example <u>Father and mother are as guests in this world</u>. Jason comments upon this text as follows: "This metaphor can have two contradicting meanings: a) as the parents will soon leave this world, use the opportunity to take care of them as long as they are with you; or the opposite: b) if parents are burden to you, don't worry. They will die soon anyway." As to the present example, the meaning of "two contradictory meanings" might be somewhat specified. On the stating (i.e. surface function) level both interpretations obviously give identical results: 'the parents will soon die' or something similar. All the contradictions come in just on the evaluative level: interpretation (a) proceeds from the presupposition 'the death of the parents would be bad (because...)', while interpretation (b) proceeds from that 'their death would be good (because they are a burden)'. Correspondingly, the prescriptions must also be different.

7. For the ambiguity of the term <u>norm</u> in ethics ('reality' or 'ideal' or 'frame') see in Arhangelskij 1968:83; Kon 1967:146,215; Uledov 1968:88.

8. The well-known story about <u>Mens sana in corpore sano</u> provides a good historical example of this kind of indefiniteness.

9. The way of forming and titling the logico-thematical groups in Permyakov's logico-semiotical proverb classification itself makes this interpretation possible. For example, in the texts included into the logico-thematical group "Вещь и ее противоположность", three semantic components are distinguished: (1) the thing; (2) its opposite; (3) their interrelation, formulated here as 'co-existence/non-co--existence'. Thus, e.g. the sentence <u>Где смех, там и слезы</u> gets the description 'Всякая вещь существует вместе (в единстве) со своей противоположностью и не может существовать без нее', and the sentence <u>Где прибыль, там нет</u>

<u>убытка</u>, respectively, the description 'Никакая вещь не может существовать вместе (в единстве) со своей противоположностью; где вещь, там нет ее противоположности' (see Permyakov 1968a:202,205).

10. Cf., e.g., the subsequent passage: "Если, допустим, речь идет о каким-нибудь небольшом (по росту или по возрасту), но хорошем и умном человеке, опытном и умелом работнике, мы тут же вспомним пословицу "Мал золотник, да дорог" /..../ Иначе говоря, мы подбираем клише по характеру ситуации" (Permyakov 1968a:26; cf. also 1970:19).

11. All the methods appearing under the common denominator <u>actual division of sentence</u> may be divided into two principal approaches.

(1) <u>The "theme – rheme"-division</u> which is being carried out on the ground of the semantic and syntactic structure of the sentence itself, without regard to any concrete context.

(2) <u>The "properly actual" division</u> which is by all means a context-bound procedure and takes into account the actual information-bearing structure of a sentence in a certain concrete actualization. D.L. Bolinger (1952) terms the components of this type of division <u>material information</u> and <u>actual information</u>, P.Adamec (1966:20-22), respectively, <u>основа</u> and <u>ядро</u>, and M. Halliday (1970:162ff.) <u>given (information)</u> and <u>new (information)</u>. If we have to do with proverbs, the latter approach seems to be considerably more expedient, and we shall accept it when considering the examples below (though all the situations described are fictitious).

12. It might be referred, e.g., to the following points.

(1) The information conveyed by a proverb is not an absolute and unchangeable "thing in itself"; here at least two aspects must be distinguished: (a) the "sender's aspect", or the intended result, and (b) the "receiver's aspect", or the actually received result. These aspects need not coincide (and, practically, they often do not): the receiver need

not realize correctly to whom the saying had been directed; he need not understand the proverb in the same way as it had been intended by the sender; even if he grasps the sender's intentions adequately, he need not believe the assertion (conclusion, prediction) presented by the sender, or need not agree with the sender's appraisal, or he may draw from what was said prescriptive consequences altogether different from those sought by the sender, etc. (2) The information-bearing structure of a proverbial actualization depends greatly on the concrete relationships of the communicants with the concrete denotates of the c-elements of the text (e.g. with the actual "dramatis personae" of the text).

(3) There are no strict borderlines between the communicative scene and the more general social and cultural context in which those scenes appear.

13. Cf., in this connection, V. Mathesius's (1947) and J. Firbas's (1966) reasonings about the beginning sentences of folk tales, such as Byl jadnou jeden král, etc.

14. For a telling example about the abundance of syntactical and modal transforms the variability of proverbs displays, see in Kuusi 1967:75-80.

15. It is not without interest to note that something analogous is valid, evidently, for the language as such in general. H. Õim (1971:207-208) writes: "... it is not exact to conceive the semantic structure of language as a "network" of evenly dismembered connections. Language turns out to be structured in certain directions or districts in a notably stronger way than in other ones. On certain topics a more detailed, a more refinedly dismembered communication seems to be possible than on other topics."

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Резюме.

1. **Модальная (функциональная, прагматическая) неопределенность**. В повседневном употреблении пословицы, как правило, используются для практических (прагматических) целей: они используются для доказательства или предсказания, в них ищут оправдания или извинения, с их помощью утешают или упрекают, предлагают или предупреждают и т.п. Более точное представление о функциях пословиц пока отсутствует. Пословица, находящаяся на границе фольклора и языка, безусловно разделяет свои функции с каждым из них, однако, и о функциях фольклора и языка еще не выработано единого мнения и терминологии для их описания. В работе акцептируется более простая и наиболее распространенная шкала: УТВЕРЖДЕНИЕ → ОЦЕНКА → ПРЕДПИСАНИЕ.

Названные функциональные аспекты имеют некоторую родственную связь с грамматическими наклонениями предложений. Однако, не стоит полагать, что пословицы можно функционально классифицировать прямо на основе их грамматических наклонений, т.к. (а) у эвалюативной (или эмотивной, экспрессивной) функции отсутствует собственная манифестация ("поверхностный эквивалент") в виде грамматического наклонения; (б) каждое вербальное высказывание одновременно выполняет несколько разных функций, т.е. и бесконтекстная пословица является функционально неопределенной. Неразумно полагать, что пословица могла бы затрагивать темы, которые лишены жизненного значения и актуальности, или содержать утверждения, которые нельзя было бы перевести в стратегические рекомендации. С другой стороны, если в пословице нечто предписывается или запрещается, это значит, что в ней заранее должно быть сквалифицировано как хорошее / плохое либо само предлагаемое / запрещаемое действие, либо что-то связанное с этим, например, его цель, средство, степень интенсивности, темп, время, место, и т.п.; эти оценки в свою очередь должны основываться на каких-то узнанных истинах и закономерностях или хотя бы на бытующихся положениях и предрассудках. (Для

иллюстрации приводится ход интерпретации эстонской пословицы "Kes kopikat ei korja, see rublat ei saa" через все три функциональные уровни.)

Вышеупомянутые функции можно некоторым естественным образом упорядочить: утверждение → оценка → предписание. Этот порядок отражает общую последовательность ступеней человеческого познания (ср. известную формулу Ленина: чувственное восприятие → абстрактное мышление → практика). С теоретической или гносеологической точки зрения информативная ступень является, таким образом, самой низкой, эвалюативная – средней и прескриптивная – высшей. Интересно отметить, что с исторической точки зрения, рассматривая эти ступени как формы представления информации, служащей целям социальной регуляции, их естественный генетический порядок представляется обратным (см. работы Ю.А. Левады). Во всяком случае, утверждающая и прескриптивная функции занимают на нашей шкале крайнее положение. По формальной манифестации они могут быть эксплицитными. Эвалюативная ступень, которая находится между ними, как правило, выражается имплицитно, т. е. оценка скрыта в образной ткани текста или же образуется только под влиянием контекстуальных факторов. Таким образом, эвалюативная ступень является в сематической структуре пословицы, с одной стороны, чрезвычайно существенной, т.к. в ассертических пословицах оценка самым непосредственным образом определяет прескриптивный вывод. С другой стороны, опознание эвалюативных оттенков лексических компонентов пословицы, а также определение эвалюативной результанты пословицы в целом является очень трудным и подчас весьма произвольным.

(В последующем изложении приводятся примеры аксиологической неопределенности текста пословицы.)

Если обозначить буквой X некоторую ситуацию, представленную утверждающей пословицей, то в зависимости от наличия / отсутствия X и от ее аксиологической направленности (хорошее / плохое), можно вынести 8 разных прескриптивных следст-

вий: (1) 'сохранить X'; (2) 'ликвидировать X'; (3) 'достигнуть X'; (4) 'исключить X', и (5)...(8) – их пассивные соответствия.

Модальная индефинитность пословицы имеет множество форм проявления и вне аксиологического аспекта.

(1) Прескриптивная по функции пословица не обязательно должна быть оформлена в виде прямого приказа или запрещения (императива). Она может быть оформлена и в виде изъявительного наклонения, при помощи модальных слов "надо", "можно", "нельзя" и т.п. Но и эти деонтические определители могут отсутствовать в тексте. Слова обозначающие экзистенциальную модальность в пословицах могут приобретать и значения 'должно быть' / 'запрещено', 'допустимо' / 'не следует' и т.п. В зависимости от истолкования поверхностной функции как информативной или прескриптивной кардинально зависит дальнейший ход интерпретации пословицы на уровне глубинных функций, а также более общая мировоззренческая интерпретация текста (т.е. ищем ли мы в том или ином высказывании отражения действительности или идеалов). В зависимости от конкретного содержания с-элементов и от конкретной исходной ситуации здесь возможны все альтернативы, так могут подразумеваться (а) действительность, не подлежащая нормированию и регулировке; (б) нормы, которым регулярно следуют, т.е. нормы и/или действительность; (в) нормы, которые существуют, но систематически нарушаются, т.е. нормы, но не действительность.

(2) Иногда остается неясным, следует ли индикативное предложение интерпретировать как утверждение о некоторых реальных фактах, или же как эпистемическое предложение (как например 'в действительности ...', 'известно, что ...' или же 'полагают, что ...', 'кажется, что ...' и т.п.).

(3) В пословицах, как правило, остается открытым также и "алетический квантор": мы не можем точно определить, какую степень обязательности пословица присваивает своим нормам и утверждениям. Во всяком случае представляется нецелесообразным присваивать пословице представление об абсолют-

ности устанавливаемых ею истин, даже если в ней присутствуют такие кванторные ф-элементы, как "всегда", "никогда", "всякий", "каждый", "никто" и т.п.

2. <u>Неопределенность информационной структуры (актуального членения) пословицы</u>. В работах Г.Л. Пермякова не раз утверждается, что "пословицы и поговорки являются знаками ситуаций или определенных отношений между вещами". Понятие "ситуации" в этой формулировке можно понимать по-разному: (1) "ситуация" обозначает семантические отношения слов, встречающихся <u>в самом тексте пословицы</u>; (2) "ситуация" указывает на конкретное материальное (или речевое) состояние, которое <u>вызывает</u> актуализацию той или другой пословицы; (3) указанные выше значения "ситуации" не считали необходимым различать, т.к. полагали, что пословицу можно считать просто поэтической копией, обозначающим или описанием ситуации, которая актуализировала пословицу. Последнее мнение, однако, было бы совершенно несостоятельным. Пословица выполняет в человеческом общении не только информативную, но и эвалюативную и прескриптивную функцию. Актуализация пословицы четко разделяет контекст на компоненты прошлого и будущего и связывает себя с каждым из них. Пословица может рассматривать актуально данную ситуацию как "<u>вход</u>" и на основе этого преугадывать какие-нибудь хорошие или плохие результаты, советовать что-нибудь, предупредить от чего-нибудь и т.п. Но ситуация, данная в действительности, может рассматриваться и как "<u>выход</u>" и из этого могут быть выведены заключения о причинах происшедшего и т.п. Уже на уровне индикативной или прескриптивной поверхностной функции актуальное членение текста пословицы остается открытым и в общем у каждого текста есть перспективы актуализироваться двумя противоположными способами: (а) <u>прогностически</u>, где познание движется от непосредственного прошлого (т.е. исходной ситуации) в будущее, от действительного к возможному, и (б) <u>ретроспективно</u>, где познание движется от непосредственного прошлого к более далекому, от известных фактов к неизвестным, от следствия к

причине, от открытого к скрытому.

(Затем приводится ряд примеров для иллюстрации неопределенности информационной структуры пословицы.)

3. <u>Текстовая неопределенность пословицы как типа</u>. В паремиологии распространено ложное представление, что пословицы являются своеобразными окаменелыми клише, которые употребляются в раз и навсегда сложившейся и устойчивой форме. Такого рода представления могут, видимо, возникать только тогда, когда в распоряжении исследователя имеется относительно малое количество текстов, и/или если он работает только с печатными источниками, которые часто не отражают обстоятельств бытования живой традиции. Хотя и вариативность фольклора в действительности не является столь универсальной, как это казалось представителям финской школы, все же весь накопленный опыт анализа архивного материала убеждает нас в том, что представление о пословицах как клише является совершенно несостоятельным: тексты, входящие в один тип, варьируются как в плане лексики, так и в плане синтаксиса и эвфоники.

Вариабльность пословичных текстов не может быть лишь вариабльностью формы: изменениям в плане выражения так или иначе сопутствуют изменения в плане содержания. Таким образом, целый ряд проблем сосредотачивается вокруг вопроса: как различать семантически существенные отличия между текстами пословиц от семантически несущественных. В принципе разумное, но практически неприемлемое решение мы получили бы, постулировав, что семантически нерелевантных различий вовсе не существует: пока еще никто не сумел (да и не пытался) эксплицитно описать семантические микроразличия, которые имеются у очень близких, но не полностью совпадающихся текстовых вариантов пословиц. Можно условиться, что разные пословицы (т.е. тексты, представляющие разные типы пословиц) являются семантически различными, а варианты одной и той же пословицы – совпадают или, во всяком случае, различаются лишь незначительно. Но и это решение вопроса обеспечило бы только частичный успех, т.к. много трудностей связано с самим понятием <u>типа пословицы</u>. Для определе-

ния одно/разнотипности текстов пословиц, можно пользоваться, например, критерием идейного и ядерного тождества М. Кууси. Хотя этот критерий и является самым корректным среди сходных, все же при применении к большому числу текстов он оставляет много случаев неопределенными. Главной причиной является не столько импрессионистская формулировка основных понятий "идея" и "ядро", сколько то, что границы между типами пословиц в действительности иногда очень четкие, а инодга – очень расплывчатые. Семантическое пространство наполнено пословицами очень неровно. В наиболее "тесно заселенных" местах могут быть реализованы все возможности для выражения некоторых идей или понятий настолько полно, что, практически, все возможные лексические и грамматические средсва выражения этих идей или понятий встречаются и в реально зафиксированных текстах. В достаточно большом архивном корпусе текстов нам часто приходится вместе четко различающихся типов пословиц иметь дело с объемными "органическими молекулами", которые охватывают несколько ядер разных типов. Эти ядра связываются посредством вариантов, последовательность которых можно было бы упорядочить таким образом, чтобы переход от одного ядра к другому происходил бы по ступеням. В силу этого нельзя точно указать, где различия между вариантами одной и той же пословицы перерастают в различия между вариантами разных пословиц. Следовательно, оказывается невозможным сформулировать определенную номенклатуру межтиповых текстовых различий, которая четко отделялась бы от номенклатуры внутритиповых различий, т.к. типологические соотношения текстов пословиц определяются не только абсолютной величиной этих различий, но и пословичным окружением (или фоном), на котором эти различия обнаруживаются.