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ON SOME BASIC ISSUES OF THE THEORY OF FUNCTIONAL SENTENCE PERSPECTIVE V
(Some more thoughts on Marie Luise Thein's critique of the theory)

The present paper continues the discussion of Marie Luise Thein's ambitious critique of the theory of functional sentence perspective (FSP), presented in her book *Die informationelle Struktur im Englischen* (Thein 1994). The discussion was opened in the preceding volume of *Brno studies in English* (Firbas 1997). For the benefit of the readers who have read Thein's critique but are not acquainted with the theory of FSP, the paper Firbas 1997 briefly outlined the interplay of factors determining the functional perspective of the sentence and recapitulated the delimitation of the thematic and the non–thematic (transitional and rhematic) functions of the sentence constituents, and concentrated on the role of intonation in FSP and the concept of communicative dynamism (CD). The present paper focuses on the roles of context and word order in FSP.

I

Thein characterizes the theory of FSP as 'a context–free grammar' (Thein 1994.22). She does so in spite of the fact that the FSP theory consistently examines the operation of semantic and grammatical sentence structures in context. She goes even to the length of saying the following:

> Fragt man nach der Rolle des Kontexts in Firbas' FSP–Modell, stellt man fest, daß dieser fast vollständing vernachlässigt wird. Die Folge davon sind willkürliche Urteile. Denn in der Realität sind Äußerungen stets in einen Kontext eingebettet, dessen Kenntnis für deren Verständnis unabdingbar ist. Daher kann auch die informatinelle Struktur sinnvollerweise nicht ohne die Einbeziehung des Kontexts untersucht werden. — Thein 1994.22

What role do I assign to context in the theory of FSP as I have presented it in my writings? In the interplay of factors which determines the functional per-

spective of a sentence, the FSP theory consistently ascribes the leading role to the contextual factor. It does so because it consistently links the functional perspective of a sentence with the particular act of communication in which the sentence is produced and/or perceived. It never views a sentence structure used in a particular act of communication as a decontextualized phenomenon. It consistently examines how semantic and syntactic sentence structures 'come to life' in acts of communication in order to serve as sentences fulfilling and reflecting particular communicative purposes. When the last two sentences of the above adduced quotation maintain that in reality utterances are always embedded in a context, the knowledge of which is indispensable for their understanding, and that in consequence information structure cannot be enquired into without taking context into account, then they actually voice one of the most essential and consistently adhered to tenets of the theory I advocate. My writings on FSP therefore disprove the assertions expressed by the first two sentences of the quotation, which allege that my FSP model almost completely (*fast vollständing*) ignores (*vernachlässigt*) the role played by context, which leads to arbitrary conclusions (*willkürliche Urteile*).

Throughout my enquiries into FSP, context has been one of my main concerns. Empirically grounded, my enquiries into FSP have been gradually widened and deepened, and the conclusions drawn from them refined. Since an early stage of the enquiries, I have been aware not only of the important role played by context, but also of its complex character. In a Czech paper written as early as 1957 (Firbas 1957a), I found it necessary to speak of degrees of familiarity ('knownness') of a piece of information drawn from context (ibid. 36–7). In an abridged English version (Firbas 1966) of this paper, I restated the high relevance to the theory of FSP of the criterion of known and unknown information, and simultaneously re-emphasized that the degrees of familiarity ('knownness') vary (Firbas 1966.246). Using refined formulation employed in my later writings, I can present the results of the enquiries undertaken in Firbas 1957a and 1966 in the following way. In regard to the immediately relevant communicative step to be taken in the development of the communication, the presence of a piece of information in the immediately relevant context qualifies the information as known. On the other hand, the absence from this section of context renders a piece of information unknown (new). It is natural to assume that there should be a borderline area between the immediately relevant context and the rest of the complex phenomenon of context.

These observations are not at variance with Daneš's view that context is a graded phenomenon and that, strictly speaking, the concepts of known and unknown information are vague (Daneš 1974.109; cf. Firbas 1994.119–29). They do not certainly refute the paramount importance of context in FSP. On the contrary, in my enquiries into FSP, they mark the beginning of a continuous effort towards a better understanding and the delimitation of the section of the complex phenomenon of context that is immediately relevant to the functional perspective of a sentence operating in the act of communication. The stage reached in this effort by the end of the eighties is summarised in Firbas 1992b,

a paper listed in Thein's bibliography, but not taken into consideration in her account of my treatment of context in my writings. As this paper offers a fairly extensive abstract of a synthesis of my writings (Firbas 1992a), it should have been consulted. (Even an extensive abstract, however, merely summarizes. For a more detailed account the reader is referred to Firbas 1992a.) The problem of the immediately relevant context has occupied an important place in my enquiries. In order to spare the reader a number of references at this point, I feel it appropriate to recall at least a few observations on the immediately relevant context. These observations will not be exhaustive. For a more detailed treatment, may I refer again to the sources mentioned above.

In Firbas 1992b, I offer the following general observation on context.

> Context is a very complex phenomenon. The immediately relevant context, verbal and situational, is embedded within the entire preceding context, equally consisting of a verbal part and a situational part accompanying it. In its turn, this sphere is embedded in a still wider sphere of common knowledge and experience shared by the producer and the receiver of the message. Eventually the entire contextual complex so far described is embedded within the wide context of human knowledge and experience. Needless to say, there are borderline spheres. It is the borderline sphere between the immediately relevant context and the rest of the context that is of particular importance to FSP. — Firbas 1992b.171

The sphere of context created by the development of a text, spoken or written, reflects a considerable narrowing of the section of the extra–linguistic reality chosen to be dealt with. In regard to the immediately relevant communicative step to be taken (which is to produce a sentence functioning in a perspective), a further considerable narrowing of context takes place, constituting the immediately relevant context, verbal and situational. In the flow of communication, the immediately relevant context is continuously changing. Pieces of information retrieved from it render the sentence elements expressing it context–dependent in the narrow sense, i.e. dependent on the immediately relevant context.

It has been shown that a piece of information may be retrievable from a wider context and in that sense dependent on it, but at the same time absent, and irretrievable, from the immediately relevant context, and in that narrow sense independent of this narrow contextual sphere, which the language user (producer or receiver) is induced to regard as pertinent to the communicative step about to be taken (Firbas 1992b.169–70). Let me add that, unless otherwise specified, I use the terms 'retrievable' and 'irretrievable', and in consequence 'context–dependent' and 'context–independent', in the narrow sense, i.e. in that of 'retrievable and irretrievable from', and 'dependent on and independent of, the immediately relevant context'. I have also followed this practice in other papers of mine.

Generally speaking, the moment a piece of information is expressed in a text, it becomes retrievable, and remains so throughout the text simply because it has occurred in it. The situation is different if seen from the point of view of the

dynamics of the communication. In regard to the moment of utterance and/or perception, when a given sentence is produced and/or perceived, a piece of information occurring in the preceding context has its retrievability gradually obliterated if it is not re–expressed. The stretch of text through which it retains its retrievability without re–expression has been described as its retrievability span.

This raises the question of the length of the retrievability span. It has been shown that its length is very short. Let me recall here (cf. Firbas 1992b.170) that analyzing an old English homily, Svoboda (1981) came to the conclusion that without re–expression a piece of information remained retrievable for a span not exceeding seven clauses. Examining a chapter of a short story by Katherine Mansfield (Firbas 1992a) and a part of a chapter of a novel by Muriel Spark (Firbas 1990), I found that the distances between the items of co–referential strings did not exceed three sentences (simple or complex). A co–referential string is made up of linguistic elements having the same referent, in other words naming (designating) the same phenomenon, concrete or abstract. As has been indicated, the distances between the members of a co–referential string are constituted by the number of sentences (simple or complex) not containing another member of the string. An examination of these distances can indirectly throw valuable light on the question of the length of the retrievability span. The results of such an examination have been offered in Firbas 1995. The material examined was modern English fiction prose, represented by 18 texts consisting of 37 sentences on average. (Firbas 1995 presented detailed analyses of two texts.) Surprisingly high was the number of zero distances (the members of the strings occurring in adjacent sentences or even in the same sentence) — 1085. The number of distances amounting to 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 sentences were 131, 67, 42, 20, 19, 19, 15, 8, respectively. Longer distances showed strikingly lower frequencies. These statistics reflect a strong tendency to keep the distances between the string members very short.

All the numbers given are naturally linked with non–initial string members, for initial string members have no co–referential predecessors, and therefore cannot close a distance between two members. In this connection let me mention the following observation. The total number of the non–initial members was 1450. Out of them, 66 were rhematic, the rest being thematic. Out of the 66 non–initial members, 41 conveyed information evidently occurring outside, and 25 occurring evidently within, the retrievability spans opened by their predecessors. The qualification 'evidently' was used at this point, for no conclusion in regard to the length of the retrievability span had so far been drawn. It follows that the character of the group of 25 members differs from that of the 41 member group. Whereas the 25 members convey predominating additional irretrievable information[1], the 41 non–initial members convey irretrievable information.

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[1]   Additional irretrievable information can be illustrated by *him* and the second *you* in *You*

While the 25 member group occurred in a sphere taken up by distances amounting to one through eight sentences, the 41 member group occurred in a sphere taken up by distances amounting to six through 27 sentences. (The distance of 27 sentences was the longest recorded in the texts examined.). The 25 members, which conveyed predominating additional irretrievable information, were consequently heterogeneous in regard to retrievability/irretrievability. On account of their retrievable information they occurred within the retrievability spans of their co–referential predecessors. On account of conveying irretrievable information, however, the 41 members occurred outside the retrievability span of their co–referential predecessors. It is important to note that the sphere taken up by the 25 members overlapped with the sphere taken up by the 41 members. The overlap took place in the area taken up by distances amounting to six through eight sentences. It appeared that in the corpus examined this area was indicative of where the retrievability span ended.

It does not seem possible to give an exact number of sentences constituting the retrievability span. This is also because of the existence of the phenomenon of potentiality created by equivocal outcomes of the interplay of FSP factors and leading to possible different interpretations (cf. Firbas 1992a.180–10, 181–2, 183–6; 1992b.179.81; 1997.68, 79 and 80). With this proviso, it can be said that the immediately relevant context is constituted by all the retrievability spans that are open (live) at the moment of utterance and/or perception. I have been aware of the paramount importance of this contextual sphere for FSP ever since 1957 (cf. Firbas 1957a.36–7). This fact alone disproves Thein's assertion that my FSP model almost completely (*fast vollständing*) ignores (*vernachläßigt*) the role played by context (Thein 1994.22; cf. here p. 11).

Thein does not inform her readers that apart from the immediately relevant preceding verbal context, I have also dealt with the immediately relevant situational context. The latter forms a narrow section of the part of the situational context that accompanies the text and is in its turn part of the situation in which the entire text has been embedded. What constitutes the immediately relevant situational context? In the first place, the language user who creates the text. Next in importance is the addressee. Both the sender (creator) and the addressee act as referents that are permanently retrievable in regard to the immediately relevant communicative step to be taken. It is worth noticing that they can both be expressed by pronouns that require no antecedents in the text. Other permanently retrievable referents are represented by *one* and *they*, used to refer to people generally, their German and French counterparts being *man* and *on*, respectively. The situational *it/es/il* comes under this heading as well. The number of permanently present referents is evidently small (cf. Firbas 1992a.24–5). A full list of them is still to be established. On the other hand, for instance, the

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an additional irretrievable piece of information — that of contrast — which predominates. under the circumstances even rendering its bearers rhematic. (For other types of predominating irretrievable information, see Firbas 1995.22-3. In the course of future enquiries, further types may be established.)

pronouns *he* and *she*, and *they* used about particular individuals do not express retrievable referents unless (a) they have their antecedents in the immediately relevant preceding verbal context or (b) their referents have become items of immediate concern shared by the sender and the addressee (see Firbas 1992a.25 and the discussion below).

For instance, *she* occurs in the opening sentence of a story, that is at the moment when no preceding verbal context exists, and does not refer to a person who has become an object of immediate concern shared by the sender and addressee (see the discussion below). If a story opens with the sentence *She felt desperate*, the reader learns that a female individual known to the author, but not to the reader, is extremely distressed. In this case, the use of *she* acts as a conveyer of irretrievable information, although it normally expresses information that is retrievable. This use of *she* is felt by the reader as a literary device. In contrast to the opening sentence *She felt desperates*, the fairy tale opening *Once upon a time there was a king* duly signals the momentary irretrievability of the character (*a king*) to be dealt with. It does so through the non–generic indefinite article.

In addition to referents constantly retrievable from the immediately relevant situational context, any other referent is retrievable from it if it becomes an object of immediate concern shared both by the sender and the addressee. For instance, moving from one group to another, one of the women at a party suddenly slips and falls. The noise caused by her fall attracts the attention of those present. Turning to his friend standing next to him, one of the participants says: *I hope she hasn't hurt herself.* Although a number of women are present, *she* is unmistakably used in reference to the one who has had a fall, has become an object of immediate concern shared by the two friends and in consequence a referent retrievable from the immediately relevant situational context. It is important to note that the immediate concern shared by the sender and the addressee is an essential condition of the retrievability of such a referent. The common (shared) concern renders the referent capable of serving as a signal of actual presence in, and hence retrievability from, the immediately relevant situational context.

It is evident that in the act of communication a semantic and syntactic sentence structure can be used without conveying information retrievable from the immediately relevant context, verbal and situational; cf., for instance, also the following possible narration openings: *A king ruled his country ruthlessly and despotically* and *A heavy dew had fallen.* In such cases, absence of information retrievable from the immediately relevant context, verbal and situational, does not decontextualize the semantic and syntactic sentence structure. The irretrievability of the information conveyed by the constituents of the sentence structure does not place it outside the complex phenomenon of context. Moreover, in the course of the development of the communication, sentences opening a text are as a rule followed by sentences forming its following context.

Bearing in mind that one and the same sentence structure can show different contextual applicability, I speak of different instance levels at which it can

function. The instance levels are determined by the extent to which the sentence structure conveys retrievable information from the immediately relevant context, in other words, by the extent to which it becomes context–dependent in the narrow sense of the word, i.e. dependent on the immediately relevant context. At what has been termed the basic instance level, a sentence structure only conveys information irretrievable from the immediately relevant context, and is therefore context–independent in the narrow sense of the word. This has been exemplified by the entirely context–independent text openings. Entirely context–independent sentence structures, however, can also occur in the course of the development of a text. An essential characteristic of basic instance level application is that sentence structures operating at it have their functional perspectives determined by the interaction of the semantic factor and linear modification, an interaction unhampered by the contextual factor (Firbas 1959.52; 1979.45). It can take place owing to the absence of elements conveying retrievable information. In this manner, it is through irretrievability that the contextual factor permits the interaction of the semantic factor and linear modification fully to assert itself. Seen in this light, basic instance level applications are by no means decontextualized. This is, however, not the way Thein presents such applications. She presents them as context–free (*kontexfrei*); in other words, she finds them to be decontextualized. This is what she says in regard to sentences operating at the basic instance level.

> Diese kontextfreien Sätze gehören zu einem von ihm definierten *Basic instance level*, der eine semanto–syntaktische Abstraktion ist und mit der Tiefenstruktur der TG bezw. der semantischen Repräsentation der generativen Semantik verglichen werden kann. Neben dem *Basic instance level* nimmt er einen *Ordinary instance level* und einen *Second instance level* an. Letzterer geht auf Bolinger zurück. Er ist maximal kontext–gebunden. Der Normalfall sei der Ordinary instance level, d.h. der Fall einer in einen Kontext eingebundene Äußerug. — Thein 1994.27

The instance levels, reflecting the extent to which a sentence structure is induced to convey retrievable, i.e. context–dependent, information, are determined by empirically established signals yielded by the interplay of FSP factors. The characteristic feature of the basic instance level is the absence of conveyers of retrievable information. The absence of such information permits the interaction of the semantic factor and linear modification — reflected by the interaction of the signals yielded by these two factors — fully to assert itself. Considering the interplay of FSP factors, the very absence of irretrievable information serves as an empirically verifiable signal. It follows that the semantic and syntactic sentence structure operating at the basic instance level cannot be identified with, or compared to, the deep structure of transformational grammar, or the semantic representation of generative semantics. In the light of the arguments offered by me here and based and on my previous writings, the following assertions by Thein fail to give a correct account of the results of my research.

> Der kontextfreie Satz ist eine reine Abstraktion. Für die Beschreibung der sprachlichen Realität ist dieses Konstrukt unbrauchbar, denn sprachliche

Äußerungen sind immer in einen mehr oder weniger konkreten Kontext
eingebettet. — Thein 1994.27

Selbst bei fiktionalen Textanfängen setzt der Autor einen gewissen Er-
fahrungskontext voraus. Nur wenn wir diesen vernachlässigen, können
wir erste Äußerungen von Texten als kontextunabhänging ansehen. —
Thein ibid.

As the basic instance level has been established by an enquiry into the signals
yielded by the interplay of FSP factors — an enquiry which constantly takes the
operation of context into account —, a semantic and syntactic sentence structure
functioning at the basic instance level cannot be regarded as 'context–free'
(*kontextfrei*), i.e. as decontextualized. Nor can it be regarded as a pure abstrac-
tion (*reine Abstraktion*). The signals and their operation are bare facts. These
facts are part of the linguistic reality, and their examination and establishment
form part of functional linguistic description. This disproves Thein's assertion
that they are constructs useless (*unbrauchbar*) for a description of linguistic
reality. As for her statement that language utterances are always embedded in
a more or less concrete context, it cannot be taken for a valid criticism of the
concept of instance levels. For this concept is based on the very fact that differ-
ent contextual conditions cause one and the same semantic and syntactic sen-
tence structure to depend on the immediately relevant context to varying extent.

The first sentence of the second quotation tells the readers that even when
dealing with fiction prose beginnings, I assume the existence of some experien-
tial context. This observation can be accepted with the proviso that under the
given circumstances I prefer the term 'situational context'. Nevertheless, the
second sentence of the quotation shows Thein's misunderstanding of my term
'context–independent'. She argues that a fiction prose beginning can be re-
garded as context–independent only if one ignores (*nur wenn wir ... vernachläs-
sigen*) the existence of the experiential (situational) context. However, unless
stated otherwise, I use 'context–independent' in reference to an element that
conveys information irretrievable from the immediately relevant context. Used
in this sense, 'context–independent' does certainly not ignore the wide sphere of
context, verbal and situational, beyond the immediately relevant context. In my
writings I have never severed the functional perspective of the sentence from the
contextual conditions under which it is created. I have never decontextualized it.
Establishing that a particular section of the complex phenomenon of context is
of pre–eminent relevance to the communicative step about to be taken does not
disregard the existence of context. On the contrary, it pinpoints the section of
context that is decisive for the functional perspectiving of a sentence structure in
the act of communication. Thein's critique fails to appreciate the pre–eminent
role played by the section of context that is of immediate relevance to the act of
communication and hence to the perspective in which a sentence structure is
induced to function.

II

As I have recalled in Firbas 1997 (presenting my first set of comments on Thein's critique), the impact of context on the functional perspective manifests itself through the operation of the contextual factor. Throughout my enquiries into FSP I have been demonstrating the leading role of this factor in the interplay of the FSP factors. Although the leading role of the contextual factor and the interplay in which it operates are of pre–eminent importance for the understanding of my approach, they are not taken account of in the critique. Thein, in fact, asserts that I hold on ([Firbas] *hält fest*) to the view that it is the sentence position (*Satzstellung*) that is the FSP means of prime (first) importance, in other words, taking precedence over the other means ([in Firbas's view] *'die Satzstellung sei das vorranginge Mittel der FSP'*, Thein 1994.22). As I have been demonstrating in my writings, linearity, or rather (after Bolinger 1952) linear modification, undoubtedly plays an extremely important role — as all the FSP factors do —, but in the interplay of factors it is hierarchically inferior to the contextual factor. So are the other FSP factors. I trust that I have amply exemplified it in my previous writings (see Firbas 1992a, a synthesis of them) and at some length in the first set of my comments on Thein's critique (Firbas 1997.65–8). Let me just recall that an element conveying a piece of information retrievable from the immediately relevant context carries a lower degree of CD than any other element that conveys irretrievable information, and does so irrespective of its semantic character and its position in the linear arrangement. In participating in the interplay of FSP factors in spoken language, intonation reflects the degrees of CD as determined by the interplay of the non–prosodic FSP factors or raises them through prosodic intensification, ultimately respecting the domination of the contextual factor (see, e.g. Firbas 1992a.143–213).

The section of her critique in which she expresses her assertion concerning my treatment of sentence positions is entitled by Thein 'Firbas's so–called means of FSP' (*Die sog. Mittel der FSP bei Firbas*, Thein 1994.22). The term 'means' induces me to insert the following comments. In the first part of her book (cf. Firbas 1997.49), Thein has undertaken the ambitious task to assess the state of the art, also including my writings on FSP in her survey. As has already been mentioned, these have been developing the theory of FSP on an empirical basis, gradually widening and deepening it, and simultaneously refining some of its concepts. As I see it, an ambitious presentation of the state of the art should take the development of a theory into account. True enough, I originally spoke of 'means of FSP', but the development of my enquiries has led me to deal with 'factors' and 'signals'.

The concept of factor is in harmony with conceiving of FSP as a formative force. My enquiries have led me to the conclusion that this formative force resolves in factors, three of which operate both in written and in spoken language, a fourth joining them in spoken language. Let me recall that the three factors are the contextual factor, the semantic factor and linear modification, and the fourth intonation. Each factor asserts itself through its means. As I regard these means

as signals, I have eventually come to speak of four factors, each factor yielding its signals. As I have demonstrated in my writings, including Firbas 1997, the factors operate in an interplay reflected by the interplay of the signals they yield; the interplay constitutes a system, which proves to be efficient even if not rigidly closed and perfectly balanced.

As I have demonstrated in my writings, including Firbas 1997, one and the same semantic and syntactic sentence structure can function in different perspectives; see, for instance, the discussion of the possible different functional perspectives of *One of the rooms faces the see* in Firbas 1977.69. This bears out the fact that the interplay of FSP factors takes place at a hierarchically higher level than those of the syntactic and semantic structures. It also substantiates Daneš's requirement of the three–level approach to syntax (Daneš 1964). My designation 'semantic and syntactic structure' covers a formation viewed of out of context (decontextualized), but applicable under different contextual conditions, and hence capable of functioning in different perspectives. I restrict the use of 'sentence' to a contextualized semantic and syntactic sentence structure. This approach of mine has not been taken account of by Thein. This is evidenced by the following formulation of hers.

> Bei den sog. syntaktischen Mitteln der FSP nimmt Firbas eine Einteilung in drei Gruppen vor: die Satzstellung, der verbale und situationelle Kontext und semantische–kontextuelle Mittel (1974.42f) ... In dieser Dreistellung folgt Firbas dem von Daneš propagierten „three level approach" (Daneš.1964.225). — Thein 1994.22

The three groups (*drei Gruppen*) of means are evidently meant to represent the means (signals) yielded by the three FSP factors operating both in written and in spoken communication: linear modification, the contextual factor and the semantic factor. It is maintained that this threefold division of the means of FSP follows Daneš's three–level approach. These formulations, however, do not correctly present the place assigned by me to the FSP factors and the signals yielded by them. In terms of Daneš's three levels — the semantic, syntactic and FSP levels —, none of the three FSP factors mentioned operates on its own on one of the three levels, but all the three factors operate on the highest of the three levels, that is on the level of FSP. Let me recall that I hold that one and the same semantic and syntactic sentence structure (the sameness condition pertaining even to the linear arrangement of the elements) can function in different functional perspectives. In other words, one and the same sentence structure can perform different (communicative) functions. (A brief recapitulation of the FSP factors and the signals they yield, as well as an outline of the interplay of these factors, reflected by the interplay of their signals, has been offered in Firbas 1997.79–83.)

The observation that a semantic and syntactic sentence structure can be viewed out of context, and the observation that a sentence — i.e. a semantic and syntactic sentence structure — fulfilling a communicative purpose in the act of communication can be approached at three levels, are not in disagreement with regarding language as a system of systems (Vachek 1958). They do not imply

that the levels are disconnected. The question whether FSP is merely imposed upon the semantic and syntactic sentence structure can therefore be expected to be answered in the negative. The following notes will substantiate this answer. At the same time, they will make it possible to say a few words (by no means exhaustive) on the relation of my work to that of Mathesius. I feel that Thein's information concerning this point is not presented with sufficient insight.

I accept Mathesius' teaching of the roles played by the process of naming (the onomatological process) and that of syntactic structuration in the production of a sentence serving a particular communicative purpose. Items, concrete or abstract, selected out of the extra–linguistic reality are named and their names, expressed by linguistic elements, are brought into mutual relationship to form a sentence. Mathesius' functional analysis of present–day English is accordingly carried out under two headings, that of functional onomatology and that of functional syntax (Mathesius 1975). I accept Reichling and Daneš's views emphasizing that syntactic structuration does not merely combine forms, but effects a semantic connection, i.e. a connection of meanings (Reichling 1961.1, Daneš 1968.55). The aim of fulfilling the language user's communicative purpose is pursued throughout the sentence production process, which culminates in putting the sentence in a functional perspective. In this way, the functional perspective of the sentence implements the language user's communicative purpose.

Now the fact is that according to different contextual conditions one and the same semantic and syntactic sentence structure can as a rule function in different perspectives. These are manifested by an interplay of signals yielded by an interplay of factors. My enquiries have led me to conclude that in Indo–European languages the FSP factors are the same and so are the types of signals yielded by them. Both synchronically and diachronically speaking, the interplay is flexible enough to accommodate different language structures (Firbas 1972.83). In consequence, the system revealed through the interplay of FSP factors is hierarchically superior to other systems of language. As language is a system of systems, the FSP system cannot and is not separated from the systems to which it is hierarchically superior. This brings me back to Mathesius' concept of FSP.

Mathesius views FSP as a formative factor (Mathesius 1942.185). According to him, it asserts itself in that in unmarked word order it places the theme before the rheme. In regard to modern English, he has pointed out a number of constructions that enable the realization of this order and testify to a strong tendency of English to make the grammatical subject act as theme (for instance, compare *The house has not been lived in, The chair has not been sat on,* and *He is warm* with *In diesem Haus hat man nicht gewohnt, Auf diesem Sessel ist man nicht gesessen* and *Es ist ihm warm*). He regards the theme–rheme order as objective and therefore as non–emotive (one could say, unmarked) and the rheme–theme order as subjective and therefore as emotive (one could say, marked). He finds that FSP manifests itself as an important word–order principle. Other important principles are the grammatical principle, the emotive principle (he terms

it 'principle of emphasis') and the rhythmical principle. Additional principles of minor importance are in operation as well. Mathesius holds that word order is determined by the relations obtaining between the word–order principles and their interaction. He considers the word order phenomena to form a system. An important place in this system is taken up by the principle that plays the dominant role. Whereas in English this role is played by the grammatical principle, in Czech it is the FSP principle that dominates. Mathesius' contribution to word order studies has not been fully appreciated. His inspiring observations leading to view word order as a system dominated by a leading principle are ground breaking revelations. Two modifications of mine, which follow, do not weaken the importance of his revealing ideas.

The first modification concerns the objective and the subjective orders. Though accepting the view that the theme–rheme order is to be regarded as objective and the rheme–theme order as subjective, I do not find that the former is necessarily unmarked and the latter unnecessarily marked. In their most natural application, the sentence structures *A strange boy has come into the room* and *Into the room came a strange boy* are both perspectived to the notion of 'a strange boy'. In each case the subject is rhematic, the verb transitional and the adverbial thematic. Although the order of the former of the two structures is subjective, it is unmarked; and vice versa, although the order of the latter is objective, it is marked. This interpretation is not in agreement with Mathesius'. As for the most natural application of the Czech counterparts, the reverse holds good. In accordance with Mathesius's interpretation, the orders of *Nějaký divný chlapec přišel do pokoje* [Some strange boy he–came into room] and *Do pokoje přišel nějaký divný chlapec* [Into room he–came some strange boy] are indeed subjective and objective, and marked and unmarked, respectively. As I have shown in Firbas 1964.117–22 and 1992a.122, where more example sentences are presented, the explanation of the differences between the two languages derives from the following fact. It is the deviation from the requirements of the leading word–order principle that causes markedness. Whereas the requirement of the Czech leading word–order principle is the placement of the theme before the rheme, the requirement of the English leading word–order principle is the placement of the constituents according to their syntactic functions, the chief demands being the placement of the subject before the verb and the placement of the verb before the subject complement or the object and the object complement. The common denominator to which the English and Czech marked word orders can be brought is their deviation from the leading word–order principle. This substantiates the important role played by the leading word–order principle.

My second modification concerns the FSP word–order principle. In its most natural contextual application, the sentence structure *A strange boy has come into the room* would be regarded by Mathesius as insusceptible to FSP because its unmarked word order does not display the theme–rheme sequence (Mathesius 1942.187). This naturally raises a question: how can one say that a sentence is insusceptible to FSP when one knows that it does not display the

theme–rheme, but the rheme–theme sequence? I have shown that apart from positions in the actual linear arrangement, other signals are in play that interact in determining the functional perspective of the sentence. As I have also shown, the signals are yielded by FSP factors. Like the word–order principles, the FSP factors do not operate independently of each other, but in an interplay. Like the word–order principles, the FSP factors constitute a system. As the positions in the actual linear arrangement are not the only signals through which the interplay of FSP factors operates, the system of FSP is hierarchically superior to that of the system of word order. These conclusions have been arrived at on an empirical basis. It is worth notice that Mathesius' approach consisting in not viewing linguistic phenomena, or principles (factors) organizing them, in isolation is eventually also applicable to FSP.

Two terminological notes must be added at this point. As subjective word orders cannot be invariably regarded as indicating (or co–indicating) non–as–a–matter–of–fact attitudes, I have started using the qualification 'emotive' for word orders conveying such indications, as well as for the principle creating such word orders. The intensity of emotions so conceived of may, of course, vary. This has led me currently to use the terms 'emotive' and 'marked' synonymously when speaking of word orders. When referring to the word–order principle, I use the qualification 'emotive'.

As FSP is not determined solely by the factor of linear modification, but is the outcome of an interplay of factors, I have found it appropriate to replace the term 'FSP word–order principle' with the term 'FSP linearity word–order principle'.

Thein's criticisms do not appreciate the interplay of the FSP factors, reflected by the interplay of the signals; nor do they appreciate the relationship between the system of FSP and that of word order. In consequence they do not appreciate the true systemic positions of the phenomena described or criticized, i.e. their positions in the system. Let me comment on the paragraph that in the critique opens the section entitled 'Sentence position' (*Satzstellung*).

> Grundsätzlich geht Firbas wie Mathesius bei der Satzstellung von einer positionellen Kennzeichnung der FSP aus: Das Thema stehe am Anfang, das Rhema am Ende. Diese Annahme ist aus der Untersuchung flektierender, agglutinierender Sprachen gewonnen und wird einfach auf das Englische übertragen. Firbas schränkt diese These zumindestens ein, indem er anerkennt, daß Abweichungen von der normalen Satzstellug auch andere Gründe wie z. B. eines emotionellen Stils haben könne.— Thein 1994.22

Thein does not tell the readers that the FSP functions are determined by an interplay of FSP factors. Neither a thematic nor a non–thematic element is position–bound. In consequence of the interplay, different thematic and non–thematic (transitional and rhematic) elements can take up different positions in the actual linear arrangement. The positional signalling (*positionelle Kennzeichnung*) yielded by linear modification is not the only type of signal employed by FSP. Each factor is a yielder of signals of a particular type. As has been re-

called, Mathesius indeed held that as a formative force FSP manifests itself through word order, but although he spoke of an interplay of word–order principles, he did not speak of an interplay of FSP factors. This is not respected by the critic's account.

In presenting the operation of the interplay, it is convenient to start with the effect linear modification produces if unhampered by the interplay. This effect consists in a gradual rise in degrees of CD while the other factors do not operate counter to linear modification, but in the same direction. The gradual rise in degrees of CD has been referred to as basic. It is, however, important to note that, in this connection, 'basic' has not been used in a language specific way. In fact, the most frequent and most natural distribution of CD in a particular language need by no means be a gradual rise in CD.

Comparisons of Czech, English and German have shown that the laws of the interplay of the FSP factors operate in all the three languages. The structures of the three languages, of course, are not the same, which is reflected, for instance, by differences in their word order systems. What are the consequences of this? It must be borne in mind that the system of FSP (the interplay of the FSP factors) is hierarchically superior to the system of word order (the interplay of the word–order principles [factors]). The interplay of FSP factors is therefore capable of accommodating different word orders (see p. 21). This has been illustrated (see p. 22) by the comparison of the Czech and the English sentence structures containing the subjects *nějaký divný chlapec* and *a strange boy,* respectively.

Analyses have established that, as illustrated, for instance, by Czech, English and German, Indo–European languages show a strong tendency to place the thematic elements before the rhematic. True enough, the distribution of thematic, transitional and rhematic functions varies. For instance, Czech places the rheme proper far more often in end position than English or German. Both English and German frequently place rheme proper in the penultimate position. This does not, however, disprove the strong tendency to make the thematic elements precede the rhematic. Analyses of texts show that this strong tendency is a well established fact. One can hardly speak of an 'assumption' (*Annahme*) here. Nor can one say that on the basis of analyses of inflective and agglutinative languages this 'assumption' has simply been applied to English (*wird einfach auf das Englische übertragen*). Analyzing different arrangements in terms of the interplay of FSP factors, I need not have recourse to modifications (*Einschränkungen*) or admissions (*Anerkennungen*) in the sense maintained by the critic. As for the deviations (*Abweichungen*) from the normal placement of the sentence constituents (*normale Satzstellung*), they are accountable in terms of the interplay of word–order principles. As has been pointed out, marked (emotive) word order is determined by the emotive word–order principle. I will add another note on marked (emotive) word order below. To sum up, the distributional pattern of thematic and non–thematic functions may differ, but analyses of texts show that in all the Indo–European languages that have so far been ex-

amined the tendency to put the thematic before the rhematic elements is very strong .

In order to illustrate the above presented argument, let me offer a brief FSP analysis of Thein's German paragraph just commented on. For considerations of space, I have to refrain from a detailed analysis, but I trust that, though remaining sketchy, because not using the full apparatus of FSP theory, the analysis will sufficiently illustrate and substantiate the argument presented. It will deal with the basic communicative (distributional) fields (Firbas 1992a.17, 19; 1997. note[3]) provided by the sentences constituting the paragraph, as well as the subfields (ibid.) provided by the subordinate clauses occurring in its last sentence. Each field functions in a perspective. As the subfields serve as communicative units within their superordinate fields, the interpretations of their perspectives are offered separately.

In each of the fields, basic field or subfield, the finite verb, or rather its notional component[2] cannot complete the communication and serve as rheme proper. It cannot do so due to the presence of a successful competitor[3] preventing it from doing so. In each case, it is transitional and as such has been <u>underlined</u>. Let me add that the rhemes proper are **in bold type**. The themes are *in italics*. The rest of the constituents, which are not marked in any way, are non–thematic. For the purpose of the present argument, I can refrain from specifying the FSP functions in greater detail. Among other things, it is not necessary to pay special attention to the function of transition proper performed by the categorial exponents of the finite verb.

Grundsätzlich <u>geht</u> *Firbas* wie Mathesius bei der Satzstellung **von einer positionellen Kennzeichnung der FSP** <u>aus</u>: *Das Thema* <u>stehe</u> **am Anfang**, *das Rhema* **am Ende**. *Diese Annahme* <u>ist</u> **aus der Untersuchung flektierender, agglutinierender Sprachen** <u>gewonnen</u> **und** <u>wird</u> **einfach auf das Englische** <u>übertragen</u>. *Firbas* <u>schränkt</u> *diese These* **zumindestens** <u>ein</u>, **indem er anerkennt, daß Abweichungen von der normalen Satzstellug auch andere Gründe wie z. B. eines emotionellen Stils haben könne.**

indem *er* <u>anerkennt,</u> **daß Abweichungen ... haben können.**

daß *Abweichungen von der normalen Satzstellung* **auch andere Gründe wie z. B. eines emotionellen Stils** <u>haben können.</u>

In each of the fields, basic field or subfield, *the theme* precedes **the rheme proper**. This is not accidental. It illustrates a very strong tendency that is fully borne out by analyses of Czech, Russian, English, German, French and Spanish texts — just to mention the languages more or less dealt with in my writings on

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2 On the FSP functions of the notional component of the finite verb and its categorial components, see Firbas 1992a.70-1, 88-93; 1997.65-6.

3 For a discussion of the successful competitor of the verb, see, e.g., Firbas 1992.41-65. An element cannot become a successful competitor of the verb unless context-independent.

FSP. The extent to which this tendency can assert itself in a language, of course, depends on the extent to which in the given language linear modification can assert itself. Let me remention at this point that the interplay of FSP factors can accommodate different language structures creating different word order systems (p. 21).

For the purposes of illustration, at least the following should be pointed out in regard to the text under discussion. All the verbs, or rather their notional components, are context–independent, and so are their successful competitors. Irrespective of sentence position, it is the successful competitor that carries a higher degree of CD and completes the development of the communication. All this is on account of the semantic character of the verb, the semantic character of the constituent proving to be a successful competitor, and the character of the semantic relationship into which the verb and its successful competitor have entered. Under the same contextual conditions as those displayed by the text, the observations just made also apply to the following three groups of sentence structures. Within each group, the functional perspectives of the sentences remain the same in spite of the different sentence positions of the verbs and their successful competitors.

Der Forscher geht **von einer positionellen Kennzeichnung der FSP** aus.

[Sie behauptet,] daß *der Forscher* **von einer positionellen Kennzeichnung der FSP** ausgehe.

Geht *der Forscher* **von einer positionellen Kennzeichnung der FSP** aus?

Das Thema stehe **am Anfang**

[Der Forscher behauptet,] daß *das Thema* **am Anfang** stehe.

Steht *das Thema* **am Anfang**?

Diese Annahme ist **aus der Untersuchung flektierender, agglutinierender Sprachen** gewonnen.

[Er behauptet] daß *diese Annahme* **aus der Untersuchung flektierender, agglutinierender Sprachen** gewonnen sei.

Ist *diese Annahme* **aus der Untersuchung flektierender, agglutinierender Sprachen** gewonnen?

It is well known that if we compare the German verb, for instance, with the English verb, we find that the latter can occupy fewer positions in the sentence than the former. Nevertheless, in either case, the placement of the verb is fixed by the grammatical word–order principle. That the positions of the verb are not fixed in the same way in the two languages is due to differences in their structures. These differences are naturally reflected in their word order systems. Generally speaking, it is interesting to note that the interplay of the FSP factors enables the verb to take up different places in the linear arrangement without affecting the functional perspective. In this way, for instance, the German verb is free to co–signal the superordinate or subordinate character of the clause it

occurs in. The operation of the verb examined in the light of FSP exemplifies the relation between the interplay of FSP factors and the interplay of word–order principles, or rather between the system of FSP and the system of word order. It illustrates the hierarchical superiority of the former to the latter.

In demonstrating that the subjective word order, implementing the rheme–theme sequence, is not the common denominator to which English sentences with marked word order can be brought, I (1964.119–20) commented on the sentences Mathesius (1942.303–4) has adduced to illustrate the marked character of subjective word order. Thein quotes two of these sentences commented on by me and accompanies them with her own comments. Before dealing with Thein's comments, let me first give the two sentences and add my interpretation.

Hers is the meekness that belongs to the hopeless.

Therefore have we linked ourselves to the only party that promises the boon we seek. — Mathesius 1942.303

Hers is **the meekness that belongs to the hopeless.**

Therefore have *we* linked *ourselves* **to the only party that promises the boon we seek.**

I find (1964.117–20) that as both sentences implement the theme–rheme sequence, their word orders are not subjective. Nevertheless, they are marked. They are stylistically coloured, which suggests some degree of emotiveness. The markedness is due to the deviations from the requirements of the grammatical word–order principle. In accordance with these requirements, a subject of an English declarative clause precedes the finite verb. Neither sentence complies. The first opens with the subject complement followed by the finite verb, which in its turn precedes the subject. As for the second, its finite verb precedes the subject as well. The common denominator to which Mathesius' examples of stylistically coloured word order can be brought is the deviation from the requirements of the grammatical principle. This holds good irrespective of whether the word orders are subjective or objective. As I have already pointed out, in English it is not the deviations from the FSP linearity principle, but from the grammatical principle, that renders the word order marked (emotive). The way Thein presents Mathesius' criterion of marked word order, as well as mine, for that matter, cannot claim adequacy.

> In Abkehr von Mathesius' stilistisch geprägten Kriterien der subjektiven bzw. objektiven Folge, die eher den Verhältnissen in flektierenden Sprachen entsprächen, postuliert Firbas eine „emotive" und eine „nicht-emotive" Satzstellung (1964.20). Solche emotiven Äußerungen wiesen zwar eine unnormale Syntax auf, verkörperten jedoch die Grundverteilung der CD. — Thein 1994.23

Thein maintains (i) that in abandoning (*in Abkehr*) Mathesius' stylistically motivated criteria of the subjective and objective word orders, I have postulated emotive and non–emotive word orders (*eine „emotive" und eine „nicht-emotive" Satzstellung*). She adds (ii) that although such emotive utterances do not show normal syntactic structure (*eine unnormale Syntax*), I claim that they

implement the basic distribution of degrees of CD. (*Solche emotiven Äußerungen wiesen zwar eine unnormale Syntax auf, verkörperte jedoch die Grundverteilung der CD.*)

(i) I have not rejected the concepts of subjective and objective word order, but demonstrated that what Mathesius regards as subjective word order can be marked provided in the given word order system the FSP linearity principle is the dominant word–order principle. I have not postulated an emotive and a non–emotive word order. The distinction between the two types of word order has been established on empirical grounds. Deviations from the requirements of the leading word–order principle in a given word order system are observable signals.

(ii) Thein characterizes my treatment of the emotive (marked) order by telling the readers that I link uncommon syntactic structure (*eine unnormale Syntax*) with a gradual rise in CD. This formulation suggests that I invariably link marked word order with a gradual rise in CD. The fact, however, is that as for Czech I regard word orders as emotive (marked) if they show deviations from the requirement of the leading word–order principle, i.e. the FSP linearity principle, which requires a rise in CD. Essentially, Czech emotive (marked) word orders show a fall in CD. As for English, I regard word orders as emotive (marked) if they show deviations from the requirements of the English leading word–order principle, i.e. the grammatical principle. As for the distribution of CD, such word orders display either essentially a rise or essentially a fall in CD.

I do not think that it is quite exact to characterize Mathesius' criterion of subjective word order as stylistically determined. The starting point of Mathesius's assessment is the assumption that the rheme–theme sequence, which is implemented by the subjective word order, is invariably emotive (marked) because displaying the reverse of the procedure from the known to the unknown. The stylistic colouring of the rheme–theme sequence is assumed by him to be the natural consequence of this. I have not abandoned the distinction between subjective and objective word order, but as I have already explained I do not hold that the rheme–theme order invariably renders the word order emotive (marked). Nor have I ever claimed that emotive (marked) word orders necessarily implement the basic distribution of CD.

Thein concludes the section dealing with sentence position as follows.

> Wann allerdings die Abweichung von der normalen Satzstellung durch die FSP bedingt sei, oder wann sie Zeichen eines emotiven Stils sei, kann Firbas nicht sagen. Für ihn schließen sich die beiden Fälle gegenseitig aus. Diese Auffassung ist jedoch irrig, denn was in (18–19 [see the two example sentences above; J.F.]) vorliegt, sind syntaktische Varianten, die sowohl in ihrer informationellen Struktur als auch bezüglich ihres Stils von unmarkierten Fällen abweichen. — Thein 1994.23

Thein opens the concluding paragraph with two assertions: (i) one that I cannot say when the deviations from normal word order are conditioned by FSP, and (ii) the other that I cannot say when the deviations serve as signals of emotive style.

(i) As I have recalled in the present notes, my previous writings have demonstrated that deviations from normal word order are created by FSP, or rather by the FSP linearity word–order principle, if in the given word order system this principle plays the dominant role. It is important to note that the condition expressed by the *if*-clause applies to Czech, but does not apply to English. As in the English system of word order, the dominant role is played by the grammatical principle, it is the deviations from this principle, not from those the FSP linearity principle, that render the word order emotive (marked). It is also important to note that 'normal word order' is not to be understood as a language–specific term. What is termed 'normal word order' here is determined by the interplay of the word–order principles of a given language. For instance, the character of Czech normal word order differs from that of its English counterpart. I have discussed this issue in Firbas 1979.55, from where the formulation cited below is drawn. 'Natural' is replaceable in it by 'normal'.

> From the point of view of specific languages, an order that is natural in one language may not appear to be so in another. In fact, it is possible to speak of language specific natural unmarked orders and language specific natural marked orders. — Firbas 1979.55

(ii) The question implied in Thein's second assertion has already been answered in my comments on her first assertion: word–order emotiveness is created by deviations from the requirements of the leading word–order principle.

Emotiveness is naturally not signalled by word order only. Apart from word–order emotiveness, it is possible to speak, for instance, of phonological, morphological, lexical and intonational emotiveness. Every system of language has marked means at its disposal for conveying various kinds and degrees of emotiveness (cf., for instance, various types of prosodic intensification discussed in my writings on intonation; see, e.g., Firbas 1992a, b, and also 1997). As has been pointed out, word–order emotiveness is conditioned by the relations obtaining between the word–order principles. These relations may change in the course of historical development. As I have demonstrated in Firbas 1957b.87ff. and 1992a.127–34, the intensity of English word order emotiveness has decreased in the course of this development. It was higher in Old English than in Modern English. This is due to the fact that while the dominant word–order principle in Old English was the FSP linearity principle, in Modern English it is the grammatical principle. As the interplay of FSP factors is hierarchically superior to the interplay of word–order principles, in other words, as the system of FSP is hierarchically superior to the system of word order, different leading word–order principles are accommodated by the hierarchically superior system of FSP (e.g., Firbas 1972.83).

The FSP theory does not separate FSP from emotiveness. Such a view, however, is implied in Thein's assertion about the two cases, or rather facts, 'that exclude each other in my approach' (*Für ihn schließen sich die beiden Fälle gegenseitig aus.*) Which are these two facts? Thein alleges that for me the deviations from normal word order caused by FSP and the signals of emotiveness exclude each other. She concludes that this interpretation is erroneous (*irrig*). In

order to substantiate her assertion, Thein adduces the two example sentences of mine already discussed above, and maintains that they represent syntactic variants that through their information structure as well as their stylistic colouring (*ihres Stils*) deviate from unmarked cases. In this way she wishes to show that contrary to my approach, hers does not sever information structure (FSP) from stylistic (emotive) colouring.

Let me return to the two sentences under consideration. It has been pointed out that the emotive character (the stylistic colouring) of their word orders is due to the deviation from the requirement of the grammatical word–order principle. Like other signals of emotiveness, even word order signals are information bearing. Conveying the language user's attitude, they participate in the developments of communication. As to the sentences under consideration, this produces an overall rise in degrees of CD spreading over them. The rise in CD affecting the theme is followed by rises in CD carried by the transition and the rheme (cf. Firbas 1997.24). It is worth comparing the English sentences with their Czech counterparts.

Vlastní jí je **pokora, která charakterizuje lidi v beznaději.**

Proto jsme *se my* připojili **k té jediné straně, která slibovala blaho, jež hledáme.**

'Typical of–her [in Cz, *jí* is a non–prepositional dative] is meekness which it–characterizes people in despair.'

'Therefore we–are refl. pron. we we–joined to the only party which it– promised boon which we–seek.'

Like their English counterparts, the Czech sentences show a theme–rheme sequence, but whereas the English sentences deviate from the requirement of the leading word–order principle, the Czech sentences do not. Placing the theme before the rheme, they comply with the requirement of the FSP linearity principle, which plays the leading role in the Czech system of word order. In contrast with their English counterparts, the Czech sentences do not therefore display word–order emotiveness. This, however, does not mean that cases of word–order emotiveness are more frequent in English than in Czech. Owing to the lower flexibility of English word order, the opposite appears to be the case. As has been mentioned, emotiveness is not indicated through word order only. Other marked devices can be used. In this connection, the presence of the first person plural of the personal pronoun *my* [we] in the second Czech sentence is of interest. Unlike its English counterpart, its use is not obligatory. Though not in a particularly conspicuous way, its marked presence throws some emphasis on the involvement of the speaker. Though the effect is perhaps comparatively small, it plays its part as a CD raiser. In any case, my approach does not sever FSP from emotiveness. Any linguistic sign of emotiveness raises the degree of CD of its bearer. Thein's critical assertions testify to her failure to appreciate the relationship between the system of word order (implemented through the interplay of the word–order principles) on the one hand and the system of FSP (implemented through the interplay of FSP factors) on the other.

Closing my first paper on Thein's critique of my approach to FSP (Firbas 1997), I mentioned that not all the critic's contentions had been covered. Neither has the present paper dealt with all the remaining points brought up by the critic. As in the previous paper, however, I should like to repeat how important it is for a scholar to go *ad fontes* when encountering a critical account of another scholar's efforts, and how important it is to check to what extent the critic's presentation of a work criticized is reliable and correct.

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