# DETERMINANTS OF MEANING:
# INVISIBLE, THOUGH UBIQUITOUS CONTEXT

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In the course of research on the essence of meaning, different concepts appear as theoretical derivatives of the intuitive notion of meaning, depending on which of the key determinants of meaning (reference, inference, or context) dominate the respective line of study. On the basis of underlying specific philosophical aspects of alternative conceptual apparatuses gravitating to the relevant determinants, various competing and arguing philosophical schools ("-isms") emerge, e. g. referentialism, inferentialism, contextualism. While the development of the first two starts from a certain determinant and ends with corresponding "-ism", the third, contextualism, has followed another model    the context itself as a general determining category is left in the background. The question is still waiting to be seriously dealt with, as to what sort of needs the non-linguistic use of the notion of context meets, and what characteristics of context, as a linguistic category, justifiably spread into other areas. Here an attempt is made to draw attention to several basic properties of context and to its potential and prospectives of functioning as a general logical and philosophical category.

**Keywords:** Context – Contextualism – Determinants of meaning – Inferentialism – Meaning – Referentialism

Throughout history, mankind has successfully practiced determining the meaning of words and expressions. This is based on intuitive notions of meaning relevant to learning language and its use as a syncretic substance. Parallel with this, the scientific studying of the language itself, the needs of accurate translation, and the special requirements of scientific language regarding monosemantic unequivocal expression have motivated attempts to determine the meaning of "meaning" explicitly. Linguistic, logical and philosophical thematic temptations relevant to the strategy of automatic translation, representing thinking as computation, and constructing artificial languages have intensified interest in analyzing the essence of meaning in recent decades. As often happens in scientific cognition, the analysis of a given intuitive notion may split it into various theoretical concepts focused upon particular characteristics and aspects of the intuitive notion in question, and explicating these features with increasing accuracy. Each of them gets included in a respective system of objects, principles, methods and criteria and usually becomes an alternative of the other ones as a theoretical interpretation of the initial idea.

An example: The intuitive notion of chaos refers to objects like Popperian "clouds"

as an antipode of "clocks" (Popper 1973). The theoretical conceptualization of "chaos" explicates some of its characteristics, such as homogeneity, equiprobability, stochastic equilibrium, instability of motion of elements (ingredients, composite parts), etc. Further, there appear various theoretical concepts of chaotic system, e.g. "a dynamic system is chaotic if it is sensitive to initial conditions, topologically mixing, and has dense periodic orbits" (Chaos theory, Wikipedia). They are very distinct from the initial intuitive idea, and ultimately diverge to the point of becoming Wiggins' chaos, Devaney's chaos, Lyapunov's chaos, Li-York's chaos etc.

This situation is typical. It occurs in mathematics (non-Euclidean geometry, non-Cantorian set theory), in logic (logical pluralism) and in other scientific fields. I shall point out some characteristic phases of its development illustrating them by four famous quotations from logic and philosophy of mathematics. The starting point is a question about the nature of an object (thing, phenomenon, property, relation, etc.) corresponding to a notion as it is put by Putnam regarding meaning: "In one sense, we all know well enough what "meaning" means. Thus what is wanted here is not a *synonym* for the word "meaning" (e. g. "significance"), but a conceptual analysis" (Putnam 1975, 126). Putnam emphasizes the difference between the intuitive notion and its theoretical derivatives. The question, at least in the beginning, suggests a substantial answer. The analysis, however, is focused on explicating various aspects and properties, and as a rule the instrumental side predominates in it. Thus, it shows a tendency of turning in the direction of attributive and operational answers. Moreover, it cannot be said in advance whether the tools pre-ferred as promising will be sufficient to interpret all important properties of the initial notion. So it is normal a need of revising the very means of conceptualization to be felt; usually, this situation is like that outlined by Church regarding logicism in philosophy of mathematics: "If we are to take the *logicists seriously*, we must concede them a broad sense of the term, logic" (Church 1960, 181).[1]

Following the chosen strategy of expanding the range of chosen tools, the situation develops with accumulation of concrete theoretical and metatheoretical results but also with accumulation of relativism, when extending the potential of tools and shifting the emphasis from substratum questions to attributive and operational answers. The model of ontological relativism becomes increasingly pertinent updating the situation "replacing ontology with ontologies" depicted by Qiune: "A curious thing about the ontological problem is its simplicity. It can be put in three Anglo-Saxon monosyllables: 'What is there?' It can be answered, moreover, in a word –'Everything'" (Quine 1980, 1).

The result is pluralism of theoretical concepts and conceptions interpreting the initial intuitive notion; there forms a constantly expanding field of competitive alternatives where divergence strongly prevails over convergence.

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[1] One can compare this to "By stretching the term *inference* … we could directly extend the infer-entialist treatment of meaning from expressions like *and* to expressions like *dog*. What are the pros and cons of such a stretching, and is it really viable?" (Peregrin 2013, 30).

The state of research on the nature of meaning is fully consistent with the situation described above. The analogy with the "chaos" example is obvious, but in the case of the notion "meaning" the structure of the field of conceptions is much more complex, depending on at least three principal components – an object of cognition, a subject of cognition, and a cluster of their cognitive interrelations and interactions. Thus the process in question gives rise to a very rich variety of different conceptions of meaning. This includes, for instance, a group of verification theories of meaning stemming from Frege (based on various correspondence concepts) and the Vienna Circle; a broad type of use theories of meaning (deflationist, inflationist, other versions of pragmatism, etc.), including the trend of inferentialist theories of meaning; Putnam's causal theory of meaning; relational theories of meaning based on Peirce's semiotics; Fodor's asymmetrical causal dependency theory of meaning; picture theories of meaning stemming from Wittgenstein´s "picture theory of language"; a great diversity of contextualist theories of meaning; many stand-alone conceptions looking somewhat exotic against the general background, e. g., Mihailo Marković's dialectical theory of meaning, etc.



L. Wittgenstein

The chaotic character of this diversity naturally raises suspicions about a hidden deficit of philosophy, an indicator of which is the feeling the situation is not quite normal. The deficit becomes more noticeable when looking for ways to avoid this annoying polyparadigmality. In such cases a strong temptation arises to evade the problem, which sometimes leads to situations like this:

"Most writers on the subject seem to agree that the typical "working mathematician" is a Platonist on weekdays and a formalist on Sundays. That is, when he is doing mathematics, he is convinced that he is dealing with an objective reality whose properties he is attempting to determine. But then, when challenged to give a philosophical account of this reality, he finds it easiest to pretend that he does not believe in it after all" (Hersch 1979, 32).

It is a funny example of a serious deficit of philosophy in the system of basic principles. Precisely due to such a deficit, the problem of the essence of an object is evaded and it is admitted to the system of reasoning rather as a theoretical construct.

Another way out of the polyparadigmal situation is applying monism as a fundamental philosophical principle of organization. Monism is attractive because scientific knowl-

edge is required to be systematic, i. e. to be in some sense monistically organized. Here the deficit of philosophy is quite apparent, since there are different misunderstandings of the monistic principle. The problems resulting from this are most often related 1) to the choice of monistic rudiments (the basic concept) and 2) to the risk of reductionism. A football illustration: Let us choose a "monistic basis" to define a football team, e. g. "goalkeeper" or "forward". In fact, there is some reason to reduce the team to the chosen basic notion (the mutual "modeling" of functions of goalkeepers and forwards is possible). Continuing with this metaphor we could discuss: what exactly is a football team, eleven goalkeepers or eleven forwards. Going on in that direction, we even might, on the basis of empirical observations (there are not teams satisfying the definition), question the very existence of football teams. The example is obviously oversimplified, but in philosophy and methodology of science this kind of ideas, approaches, arguments, conclusions, etc. are not a great rarity – simply their inadequacy is not as apparent as in this case. Things look different if another basic concept is chosen, e. g. "football player". It seems trivial? But, first, *the basic element has to be elementary*. And second, the very constancy of reproducing in science the replacement of monism with reductionism and the inadequate choice of conceptual bases shows that choosing the right basic notion is not such a trivial task. Suffice it to recall the notion of set in mathematics showing to what extent „ubiquitous" differs from "trivial". The "set" example indicates that when a seemingly obvious and banal basic idea has been put to a relevant epistemological processing and turns into an instrumentalized concept, upon which can be built a system knowledge module, then respectable non-obvious results can be obtained. Yet I shall only say that the question of reduction to a proper ("football player") or an erroneous ("goalkeeper") basic notion borders on the very profound question of differences between foundational and simulative models.

Among the attempts to determine the meaning of "meaning", some cases analogues to the "football" example can be found. In a considerable part of the conceptions of meaning monism is recognized as a desirable principle. But it is typical for the determining basis to be chosen from among determinants of meaning (i. e. representation, inference, and context) without taking into account that they may have the same level of generality (as "goalkeeper" and "forward"). A theory corresponding to the chosen determinant is then developed and a program of reinterpreting alternative conceptions in terms of the chosen basis is set forth. The program gradually "grows over" with philosophical and methodological arguments justifying it as necessary and with techniques showing that it is possible (at least partially and relatively). It is also usual in this process for a significant amount of scientific results to be produced some of which might prove to be really important. But usually these advances are also interpreted automatically as a confirmation of the basic thesis, though the latter may not be correct. Actually, in the present case the most natural candidate for general basic concept is the notion "determinant of meaning". Moreover, this concept is meaningful even for those who believe the very term "meaning" is more or less devoid of sense (at least in a substantial aspect). Such choice of a monistic basic concept for the field of views on the essence of meaning may seem as trivial as the

"football player" example. But it gives a new perspective, in which there is a general framework, the irritating polyparadigmality becomes a normal diversity of conceptions (of determinants of meaning), and the field as a whole can start its transformation from a chaotic "cloud" containing accumulated tensions and incommensurabilities into a more systematically organized knowledge module. The methodological situation thus becomes different: the assumption that there are various determinants of meaning is no longer controversial. It is no longer so relevant to argue whether the inference or the correspondence relation is *the* genuine determinant of meaning or whether inferentialism or representationalism presents *the* true interpretation of our intuitive notion of meaning. This elementary step shifts the point of view and makes possible to switch from the model of competition among existing conceptions to a model of assembling a jigsaw puzzle in meaning investigations and to understanding these conceptions simply as theories of different determinants of meaning.

Quite often, however, this does not happen – I mean the choice of an adequate conceptual base rarely comes out at the very beginning of a program for monistic organization and justification of an empirical array of knowledge, views, methods, arguments, etc. Usually the process, described above, of divergence of different theoretical derivatives of the initial intuitive notion goes in another direction: from alternative theories built upon these theoretical concepts via the study of their interrelations on metatheoretical level, towards forming corresponding philosophical trends and schools („-isms") and arguing about the question as to: "exactly which one of all derivatives is *the orthodox* theoretical interpretation of their intuitive predecessor?" Putting the question this way means that the opposite problem is now the topical – the problem of coordinating, harmonizing and fitting together those conceptions in order to obtain satisfactory explication of their prototype essence.

Seeking for an adequate explication of meaning also reproduces this sort of situation. In connection with the practical requirements of using language as a means of communication, three basic types of means for determining meaning and ensuring monosemanticity and proper understanding gradually take shape: reference, inference, and context. Respectively, corresponding concepts of meaning are formed. The main views on the meaning of "meaning" can be grouped primarily into three schools: referentialism,[2] inferentialism, and contextualism; these argue with one another and produce a considerable amount of interesting and important results in the philosophy of logic and language. In their mutual contradistinction they face serious problems due to 1) the very nature of categories they are based on and 2) the attempts made to generalize their basic conceptual apparatus beyond its limits of validity.

Referentialism or referential realism (Kripke, Salmon, Soames, etc.), the view that the meaning of 'meaning' is referentially connected to real objects and properties in the

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[2]An important view in the recent cohort of referentialism is representationalism, or indirect realism (C. I. Lewis, Hintikka, Fodor, Stalnaker, etc.) – a school explaining the correspondence relation between world and language in terms of representation.

world, gets into trouble precisely with the interpretation of the correspondence relation mainly about its limits of validity, where the idea of reference becomes fuzzy. It faces difficult problems with interpreting objects that are unsuitable to be referents, and with terms that appear to have no referent; problems with ontological relativism (how to explain differences in the mode of existence of the "participants" in reference relation); problems with the "holism – elementarism" interrelation (how to interpret cases and situations of non-atomic and non-additive correspondence), etc. So that referentialists give essentially different answers to the question: "what kind of referential relations and what kind of referents can be considered admissible?"

Inferentialism (Sellars, Brandom, Peregrin, etc.) belongs to the large group of (deflationist) use conceptions of meaning[3]. It is launched as "… a recent approach to semantics based on the thesis that *to have* (*such and such*) *a meaning* is *to be governed by* (*such and such*) *a cluster of inferential rules"* (Peregrin 2008, 1208) (see also (Peregrin 2012)). In other words, the meaning of words and expressions is limited to their use in language in accordance with the relevant rules (Wittgenstein 1953, §43). Inferentialism also faces obstacles when the notions of rule and inference become fuzzy and the inferential structure of language becomes incoherent. Problems arise at the point of reconciliation of collective and individual language use (e. g. the Wittgenstein-Kripke paradox, see "Kripkenstein" – (Kripke 1982)), from cases of polysemy, in interpreting situations when breaking rules improves communication and understanding (in everyday linguistic practice exceptions to the rules are abundant), with respect to permanent changes of language itself, in explaining the link between an object and its name set by ostensive definition,[4] as well as in the interpretation of pictograms, icons, and graphic languages that rather "show' than "say", etc.

Contextualism (Blome-Tillmann, M. Williams, Cohen, DeRose, D. Lewis, etc.) comprises a very large variety of conceptions of meaning in logic and philosophy of language. Generally speaking they are united by the view that the meaning of words and expressions is (in some way and to some extent) context-dependent. Recently in literature (especially in actively developing branch of epistemological contextualism) the notion "contextual sensitivity" is preferred. In principal the problems of contextualism arise mainly from the fact that context determines *the essence* of meaning implicitly, so it cannot be very helpful in "making it explicit" (Brandom 1994). Referentialism and inferentialism can easily define the meaning of a word or expression as "the other end" of the corresponding reference or inference, but what about "the other end" of context? Pre-

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[3] Which are a kind of pragmatism, i. e. they derive meaning from one notion of linguistic practice or another, and are not generally based on a cognitively processed and instrumentalized concept (such as inference). Deflationism is a cluster of views 'minimizing" or outright rejecting the assumption that there is any such entity as meaning.

[4] That is the point where it is necessary to extend the concept of inference so as to include the external world in its scope. This is not "…an inference in the standard sense (from language to language), but an "inference", as it were, from the world to language. (Similarly, at the other "end" of language, there are "inferences" from language to action.)" (Peregrin 2013, 30)

cisely the determining ability of the latter is very difficult to explain.[5]

This is not the only asymmetry in the triangle "referentialism – inferentialism – contextualism" creating problems for the latter at the point of defining its basic category. Here are some of its peculiarities: 1. "Contextualism" proves to be placed (chronologically and logically) „before" "context" in the process of their development; 2. Contextualism has not yet determined its basic thesis; 3. The basic category in the most numerous trend of contextualism, epistemological contextualism, is not even "context" – it is "knowledge attribution"; 4. The definitions of the concept "context" are not satisfactory.

As mentioned above, "-isms" arise in philosophy when postulating that a category explicating a given philosophical "item" (object, method, property, relation, state, substance, structure, situation, process, aspect, criterion, etc) is the foundation, the basic element or at least the leading dominant in the interpretation of a significant (global or regional) philosophical theme. In other words, a given "-ism" starts from that category and then evolves as a kind of research program for studying possibilities and limits of validity of the conceptual apparatus built upon the chosen categorial basis. The development of contextualism does not follow this model: here events have moved in the reverse order. The term "contextualism" was introduced in the 1940s in a philosophical study (Pepper 1942) and became established in various areas – ethics, psychology, political science, music, architecture and other arts, etc. – as the name of relevant schools. The reason for contextualism to arise as a school in logic and philosophy of language was Moore's famous argument on the existence of the external world and the ambition to counter the philosophical skepticism by showing that the truth value of knowledge propositions is "sensitive" to the context in which they are made. Hence the so called epistemological contextualism[6] has acquired a dominant position among the other variants and context as a general determinant of meaning is studied from a somewhat odd angle in the contextualist research program. In the variety of conceptions, different formulations have been given of the basic thesis of contextualism[7] but most generally the formulation is of the type:

"… the proposition expressed by a given knowledge sentence ('$S$ knows that $p$', '$S$ doesn't know that $p$') depends upon the context in which it is uttered… As a result of such context-dependence, utterances of a given such sentence, made in different contexts, may differ in truth value" (Rysiew 2009).

Respectively, the central concepts in the category basis of epistemological contextualism are "knowledge attribution" and "knowledge attributor" and the notion of context itself falls under their shadow. Actually, the task of clarifying the essence of context as a general logical philosophical category that determines meaning has remained outside the scope of interests of contextualists. In accordance with the prevailing instrumentalist atti-

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[5] May be it is because of what some authors are reluctant to recognize the context as a determinant of meaning, e. g. (Bach 2005)

[6] Which deals more with statements about knowledge, rather than with epistemological issues.

[7] E. g., "…the "semantic" contextualist thesis put forward by Keith DeRose and David Lewis, and the "inferential" contextualist thesis advanced by Michael Williams." (Pritchard 2002)

tudes the leading concept here is "contextual determinacy", not "context" itself. The notion of context is still used not as an explicitly defined *general* category but rather in its intuitive, metaphorical, everyday sense. Yet when the reference is to substantial characteristics of contexts concrete kinds of contexts are taken into account – mainly those that define conditions of language communications[8] and the so called BIVs[9] – a special category of skeptical contexts related to the concept of epistemic standards (DeRose 1995). I am sure the notion of context itself deserves greater attention and I find it very promising as a general category; below I shall try to explain why.

Context in its primary meaning is a category of linguistics, but we are all witnesses to the intense growth of its use in non-linguistic sense - not only as a banal metaphor in everyday speech but as a specialized term in a growing number of areas that are far from linguistics. The scope and dynamics of this phenomenon is a serious enough reason to study it, and makes topical the questions as to what sort of needs are met by the non-linguistic use of "context" and what characteristics of context as a linguistic category adequately spread into other areas; in other words, what is it about the notion of context that makes such use *legitimate*, and what makes it *necessary*[10], why this notion is so convenient and preferred. This sort of questions sound even more intriguing if we pay attention to the obviously paradoxical situation: possibilities and facilities (including instrumental) provided by the non-linguistic use of "context" are recognized and used extremely broadly, studies directly connected with non-linguistic contexts are ever more numerous, but the question as to what context is (as a *general* category, not as concrete sorts of contexts), and from which of its characteristics these possibilities and convenience stem, remains in fact unasked in literature. The primary conceptual source of all contextual considerations and instrumentalizations remains little noticed. I am convinced that this phenomenon is not just a curiosity, that it is not accidental either. It is a logical effect resulting from certain contemporary attitudes to the doing of science (methodologism, functionalism, instrumentalism, formalism, etc.), so I shall try to point out some characteristic features of context which give me reasons to raise the above questions and to attempt to show why this ubiquitous, but invisible, concept deserves notice.

There are three natural starting points for studying the essence of context and its category potential: 1) linguistics (where "context" really functions as a general theoretical category), 2) the practice of non-linguistic use of contextual concepts and ideas, and 3) the theoretical non-linguistic consideration of context as a determinant of meaning in juxtaposition to other determinants. What is happening as regards the third point has been already outlined above. For contextualism and other schools context, taken as a general

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[8] "I defend an intentionalist account, according to which the truth conditions of a knowledge attribution are determined by the speaker's intention." (Montiminy 2003)

[9] "BIV" stands for "brain in a vat" – the concept has being introduced in (Putnam 1982) and has become very popular.

[10] "Necessary", not in mathematical or logical sense, but rather in the sense that such a kind of object meets certain real needs.

category, still remains uninteresting and hence almost invisible.

With regard to the first starting point, linguistics, about the middle of 20th century, context began to move from peripheral positions to the centre of theoretical interest. The analysis of its nature has followed the model of the "chaos" example – the syncretic intuitive notion of context has broken down into a chaotic and inconsistent "cloud" of theoretic concepts and corresponding conceptions, where can be found some "condensation nuclei" of basic opinions. The developments are important and very interesting, but I do not have enough space here to consider them in more detail. So I shall confine myself to emphasizing three characteristic elements in this variegated picture of building the category "context": 1. The idea that context is not just an environment, but represents active linguistic surroundings; 2. The understanding that context is not only a factor-mono-semantizer, but has other functions as well, e. g., it is an active connotator. 3. The observation that even within linguistics, the notion of context ceases in a sense to be a purely linguistic category and acquires psychological, sociological, cultural, and also logical and philosophical features.

The second starting point reveals a boundless variety of forms and modes of practical use of context ideas (and concepts) borrowed from linguistics into many fields, some of which being quite distant from it. The range spans from the use of the word "context" in everyday speech to the introduction of strictly defined contextual concepts in formal logic. In this empirical diversity there is a full spectrum of degrees of conceptual processing of (non-linguistic) context ideas – from metaphorical to strict categorial use within scientific theories. From all this empirical material I shall focus briefly on two important cases of non-linguistic use of contextual notions: 1) in studying the effects of contextual dependence and determinacy as a factor of scientific knowledge development; 2) in logic and metalogic (logical semantics) where contextual concepts are in use as categories within formal logical systems.

Interest in the contextual considerations and representations in the philosophy of science arose and grew in the last century. In a very short period of history there appeared at least a dozen significant contextual conceptions considering different aspects of the essence, structure, and dynamics of science and scientific practice. They are based on notions of context situated at different levels of conceptualization. Some of these conceptions have underlying them the intuitive potential of some metaphor, some image focused on universality and continuity (Bachelard's scientific spirit, Popper's "third world", van Fraasen's scientific image etc). Others are formed by analogy with contextual apparatuses approbated in other fields (Vernadsky's "noosphere" as an analogue to "biosphere", Born's and Pauli's "thought style", analogous to "art style"). Others still are contexts generated by specially constructed conceptual apparatuses (Foucault's episteme, Kuhn's paradigm, Lacatos's research programs, Duhem-Quine's thesis, Reichenbach's context of discovery and context of justification, etc.). They may be classified under three groups: 1) external context determinacy of scientific cognition (Foucault's episteme, Schrödinger's concept of cultural determinacy and cultural background of science, Schlagel's contextual realism, etc.), 2) concepts of internal (with respect to science) contextual determinacy of

the sense and meaning of scientific facts (the views of Reichenbach, Quine, Duhem, Lacatos, etc.), and 3) mixed types of contexts ("paradigm", "thought style", etc.). All these views, no matter how diverse, have in common a strange feature. The appearance of most of them coincides with the boom of the research in system theory. It is puzzling that, against the background of the slogan "everything is a system", preference for the idea of context is distinctly present in these significant trends in philosophy of science. It definitely makes sense to ask in what respect the vaguer notion of context is more attractive than that of system.

Logical conceptualizations of non-linguistic contextual notions are of particular interest, because in contemporary logic the wave of studies related to interpretations of contextual determinacy and their importance is growing. And this is the scientific area where the non-linguistic category use of contextual ideas has reached the highest instrumental level. The most famous example of such a conceptualization is the semantics of possible worlds. It was first introduced in relation to modal connectives, quickly developed, and soon became commonly accepted in logic and philosophy. By its application a large amount of scientific product has been obtained in logic, metalogic, and philosophy of logic. But at the same time certain limitations began to show under the impetuously growing diversity of logical systems. Against that background, the semantics of possible worlds (which are, so to say, conceptually closed, maximal systems) has gradually turned from a universal into an insufficient (as regards giving an adequate interpretation of part of the new content accumulated in logic) semantic conceptual context in cases where the object of study are logical types of determinacies that do not meet certain requirements of "size" and consistency. This has led to attempts at essential and instrumental working out of new more flexible interpretative context: D. Lewis and Stalnaker's "nearby possible worlds", "impossible worlds", Barwise and Perry's situational semantics, Scott-Montague's "neighborhood" semantics, Hintikka's "states of affairs", Austin's "events", Seligman's "infons", Fillmore's frames, etc. Different versions of contextual calculi (some defining context as "a term with a hole" (Gabbay 2005)) have been launched in programming as well. All these semants, upon which corresponding conceptions are built, actually change the principle of global integrity ("worlds") into various principles of regional continuity as factors of contextual determinacy. Again, it would be reasonable to ask why the fuzzier notions are preferred as determinants.

Finally, having made this overview of the diversity of aspects, functions and conceptualizations of various types of contextual ideas working in linguistics and mainly outside it, which shows their semantic richness, I should like to point out some specific features of the notion of context which determine its potential to function as a logical philosophical category and which usually do not fall into the focus of attention. My position, of which I shall mark some key points here (for more details see (Tasseva 2011)) is known mostly to a narrow circle of colleagues and is likely to provoke objections and disputes. Yet I am convinced that it would be useful to draw attention to the philosophical content and possibilities related to the general notion of context and to properties underlying the wide active use of contextual ideas and of conceptual apparatuses built upon them.

1. In order to understand the nature of context as a general category, it is important to show that "context" is more than a purely relational notion without a conceptual content of its own, and that it has essential substantial aspects in which its ability to determine is rooted. A context is generally comprehended as the "surroundings" of the "target" of contextual determinacy, and more - in linguistics, for example, it is not unusual a context to be understood as a "piece" of language seen as a substance. The view that language is a substance is broadly accepted in linguistics, what corresponds to the natural genesis of language as a whole, and to the complex texture of connections and relations supporting its continuity (intuitively grasped as unity and connectedness as well) as a source of the very possibility for contextual determinacy. Language is given a priori as an independent substance existing before it is learned and used, and by virtue of this it is conceived of as a substratum of meaningful communication. Context, considered as a "piece" of such a substance, "inherits" those properties of the latter. Contextual determinacy is, of course, a relational concept, because it expresses a relation (of determinacy) - but is it justified to consider the notion of context itself as a determinant absolutely devoid of substantial aspects?

2. A reasonable approach to revealing the essence of contexts is the juxtaposition of their category with other relevant categories of objects – some that are similar, such as systems, and others that are opposite, e. g., lexicons (a lexicon is a catalogue of words and stereotypic expressions, constituting the lexical basis of a language; by contrast with contexts lexicons determine meaning explicitly). "Context" is often used as synonymous with "system" and the two are in fact similar (a system *is* a context of its components), but there are also essential differences between them. A dominant of the essence of a system is its integrity as a global characteristic; a dominant of the essence of context is its continuity as a local or regional characteristic. A system is determined by its substratum, structure and function, yet it is "holistically closed", being something discrete and separated from the environment. Context in general may not be sufficiently determined to be a system, it may be an "open neighborhood"; determining of its boundaries and its separation from the environment are not necessarily required. Fuzzy boundaries are the area where arguments of the type and "size" of admissible contexts arise. In that respect contexts, being halfway between systems and environment (without certain limits of the systems), could be seen as a generalization of systems. In my opinion, the border vagueness is a very important distinction between contexts and systems, and precisely because of this, contextual ideas and the corresponding conceptualizations happen to be preferred – where "degrees of freedom" are needed, indefiniteness may become a tool.

3. Contexts function as determinants in a characteristic way. They determine implicitly (by virtue of interaction of combination of factors), conditionally (contextual determinacy is not directly causal, it is conditional), and indirectly by "neighborhood" (by virtue of their local properties – continuity, the set of local dependencies).

4. Under certain conditions these features of context can turn it into an instrumental resource for control of some kinds of contradictions in problematic knowledge structures in which there are conceptual tensions and which, in some way, do not meet the require-

ments of consistency. When contradictions cannot be removed directly, one may resort to the approach of compartmentalization (dividing the problematic module into zones, between which access is restricted, so that the contradictory assertions are logically "isolated" from one another) (Stalnaker 1984). This works in paraconsistent logic. Seen more broadly, it can be said that reductionism is counterproductive with respect to the control of contradictions – it intensifies the tensions and incommensurabilities in the knowledge module, and "processes" some of the heterogeneities and structural transcendences into contradictions. Compartmentalization is a possible answer to the very profound question: "Is the reverse procedure possible, is it possible under certain conditions for contradiction to be taken under control by reconstructing it into structural transcendence?" Precisely at this point the retreat from global integrity of systems to local continuity of contexts enables the latter to function as a tool for such reconstruction in which their border indefiniteness serves as a "buffer".

5. The main function of context is to be a determinant-monosemantizer (due to its local continuity), but it can also perform other functions: e. g. that of a regional *ad hoc* substitute for systematic underlying philosophical views (because of its substantial features); that of a "buffer" (by virtue of its border indefiniteness) in non-trivially inconsistent knowledge modules with distributed contradictions; that of a "background" (because of its resemblance to the environment) when knowledge units are juxtaposed, compared, and interacting; that of a "transporter" of senses and meanings (in the role of a context-mediator between contexts such as metaphors (Tasseva 2004)); or that of a natural limiter for system foundationalism together with the category of lexicons.

The foregoing discussion certainly does not exhaust the topic of context, the "ubiquitous invisible". It is rather an attempt to present a short introduction to the study of context as a type of object and as a conceptual tool with a very broad application beyond the linguistic field. The above considerations suggest that it makes sense, behind the various interpretations of context determinacy, to seek the context itself, whose nature and potential for functioning as a logical philosophical category remain hidden due to the extremes of specialization, and the excessive application and instrumentalist attitudes. Thus this object, rich in content and potential, in logical (in a broad sense) conceptual resource, will certainly continue to receive interesting and significant answers to the key question: "*What makes the non-linguistic use of the category of context **legitimate**, and what makes it **necessary**?*"

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