



The Aesthetics of Communication: Pragmatics and Beyond (Library of Rhetorics)

H. Parret

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AESTHETICIZING PRAGMATICS The Gamut of Pragmatics Pragmatics emerged among the sciences of language at the end of the 1960's in reaction to certain totalizing models in linguistics: structuralism (primarily in Europe) and generative grammar (initially in the United States). Certain disciples of Chomsky became dissatisfied with autonomous syntax and later with generative semantics: they decided to break away from their mentor. Whereas Chomsky continued to talk a lot about very little, they defied him by speaking very suggestively about an excessively broad range of phenomena. Pragmatics -which Bar-Hillel considered as a 'wastebasket discipline' in the fifties - nevertheless gained respectability. The history of pragmatics spans, of course, much more than three decades. The Stoic conception of language, in the shadow of the great Greek tradition and therefore intensely subversive, had in fact a pragmatic aim. The term *pragmatisch* appears in Kant: it expresses a relation with a human goal, this goal being only determinable within a community. This characterization naturally inspires the pragmaticism of the Neo-Kantian Charles Sanders Peirce. It is this Kant-Peirce lineage that led to Morris and Carnap's rather bland conceptions of pragmatics, after the heavy losses incurred by positivism and behaviorism. In any case, despite the constant presence of a pragmatic approach in the history of thought, this reassessment of pragmatics (against the triumphs proclaimed by structuralism and generativism) was experienced as a significant breakthrough. A whole range of pragmatics came to the attention of linguists.

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