

Miguel Espinoza

A THEORY OF METAPHOR

DIÁLOGOS, 54 : 165 – 196 (1989)

Knowledge is nothing but the more or less conscious expression of a physical, biological, and psychological order, and the fundamental structures of all systems of symbols, natural and formal, reflect a natural order. Metaphor corresponds to natural analogy. Thus the study of multivocal sentences is relevant both for epistemology and metaphysics. Knowledge cannot make any progress in the search for unity without the scientists and the philosopher's ability to grasp analogies.

I will describe the dynamics of multivocal sentences and I will provide a list with the characteristics which contribute to clarity or obscurity of sense in multivocal sentences and to the intelligibility or unintelligibility of the things about which we speak multivocally. This research is centered on the movement between senses and on the movement between senses and referent.

§ 1. – On multivocal sentences whose first sense is essential for obtaining the second sense

Consider the sentence "Passions are the pagans of the soul." This sentence has the following structure: passions are to the soul as pagans are to all believers. To obtain the meaning of the expression under analysis, it is necessary to know the ordinary meanings of the terms of the structure. Of course this is not all one has to know; it is also necessary to know how those terms are related. That is why the structure of the sentence is important. Just how is the conjunction "as" in "passions are to the soul as pagans are to all believers" to be understood? To be sure, not as meaning "...is exactly what..." or "...is identical with ... with respect to...". Otherwise, it would be enough to know how pagans and all believers are related to know how passions are related to the soul and, from the point of view of understanding, a multivocal sentence like the one studied here would be an awkward way of expressing a thought. But this is not so.

"Pagans" is a name for a group of people. "All believers" is also a name for another group of people. The relationship between those groups can be specified. On the other hand, "passions" is a name for a set of experiences and "soul" is a name for, say, the spiritual part of a person. Suppose now that "as" means "...is identical with ... with respect to ...". It follows that the relationship between passions and soul can be specified just as, i.e., exactly as, the relationship between pagans and all believers can be specified. Evidently this is not so since some of the relations between those groups of people are economics, etc., and not such relations exist

between states of the soul and the soul. Of course, concrete things such as passions, believers, etc., and their concrete relations cannot be identical. When we say that two things are identical, what we mean is that they are identical in some respects. To consider something in some respect, we must suspend all irrelevant respects. Can we say then that "as" means "... is identical with ... with respect to..." at some level of abstraction? Clearly not, because abstraction is not to

be carried out at random but according to the demands imposed by the sense of the words of an expression and by their relations. Abstraction, then, is already interpretation. By this I mean that in abstracting we are already interpreting, first, what meanings of the words in the expression are relevant and second, how those meanings are related. The conjunction "as" in "passions are to the soul as pagans are to all believers" means "somehow like" in an unspecified sense of "like". "As" introduces an irreducible obscurity. Such an obscurity can be the authentic unstable ambiguity of an expression and the authentic vagueness of sense.

According to the notion of distance, the figurative meaning of "passions are the pagans of the soul" can be obtained as follows: first, we have to be familiar with the language in which the sentence is uttered; here at least this step is important, namely the distinction of subject-phrase and predicative-phrase. Second we have to understand the structure of the sentence. At least these two steps are important: the placing of the elements of the structure in their proper places and the interpretation of their relations. Another way of describing this second operation is to say that we must imaginatively abstract some properties of the referent of the predicative-phrase arising in their relations to the subject-phrase, and then apply those properties to our conception of the referent of the subject-phrase.

Before I illustrate this abstract description, I must say that the application of the notion of distance to the thought "passions are the pagans of the soul" in which the first sense is essential for obtaining the second sense, shows how complex the understanding of such cases are in comparison with the understanding of sentences whose meanings have been fixed.

Let us consider the word "pagan" in the present context. "Pagan" in the expression under analysis does not refer to a kind of person (non-Christian) but to a kind of psychological state, thus this sentence can be interpreted as nonsensical. But the relation of this sentence to its verbal context (e.g., the fact that this sentence is part of a poem), to its non-verbal context (e.g., the fact that the poem is found in a poetry book in the literary section of the library) plus the "set" of our minds (e.g., the fact that our background allows us to recognize poetic languages) make us suspect that a second, non-literal meaning is intended, all of which compels us to interpret the sentence in a way such that it makes sense. Well, then, if the seemingly preposterous assertion that passions are the pagans of the soul is not nonsense, what does it mean? Since "pagan" is used non-literally, let's begin by exposing its literal meaning. "Pagan" has meant or means sundry things: (1) peasant or civilian; (2) the opposite of the Christian soldier; (3) a person who is neither a Christian, nor a Jew, nor a Moslem; (4) a person who is not religious; (5) a polytheistic person; (6) idolater; etc. In what sense is "pagan" being used in the sentence "passions are the pagans of the soul"? In all of them, unless the context restricts the number of possible senses. (This is what is meant by saying that metaphorical discourse is "rich" in meaning). What are the connotations brought by the word "pagan"? I think the more telling senses are (4), (5), and (6): I think they imply that passions are wrong. From the point of view of monotheist religious people, those who do not believe in God have failed to see that man has been created religiously, they are mistaken; they should be corrected; thus passions should also be corrected. From the point of view of monotheist religious people, to believe in many gods is to misunderstand the meaning of the concept of God; they should be corrected; thus passions should also be corrected. According to Christians, idolatry is wrong because it is paying

attention to the wrong objects; it should be corrected; thus passions should also be corrected. The connotation I can get by examining the senses of "pagan" I am familiar with is that passions are wrong and that perhaps reason alone is right, that reason alone be baptized.

As a result, "passions are the pagans of the soul" can mean several things; to some imaginary rationalist it can suggest (a) that passions should be rejected because they have no cognitive value; and to some imaginary moralists, it can suggest (b) that passions are immoral, not edifying. (Although if cognitive values are edifying, the connection is close.)

Once the above interpretation is given, we can see how the latent contribution of senses (1), (2), and (3) can become manifest.

In the present example, the second, indirect, metaphorical meaning is obtained by never disposing of the literal meaning of the words constructing the comparison. (Under "literal meaning" I include senses from (1) to (6)).

In "passions are the pagans of the soul", as in most multivocal sentences, the second, figurative intentionality influences the first, literal intentionality and, as a result, under the spell of "passions are the pagans of the soul" it becomes difficult not to see pagans as obscure, hard to control, and irrational, as passions are, according to a long tradition in Western culture. This is what I mean by saying that there is an interaction, more specifically, a movement between the many intentionalities of multivocal expressions.

Because we do not know exactly how the mind works, in all cases of multivocal sentences it is impossible to say exactly what operations and steps would allow us to cover the distance between the many intentionalities of multivocal sentences, but in some cases some accuracy is possible provided that the many intentionalities are fixed and remain so. Since the intentionalities of multivocal sentences whose first sense is essential for obtaining the second sense are not fixed, as the above example illustrates, to establish what operations and steps would allow to go from one intentionality to the other is relatively more difficult.

Throughout the analysis of "passions are the pagans of the soul" we have seen how the first sense of a multivocal sentence can be essential for obtaining the second sense. The necessity of the literal intentionality can be thought of as an historical necessity, and just as the political tendencies derived, in some way or other, from Marxism, help us to assess the reach and limitations of some of its doctrines, the figurative intentionality of "pagan" helps us to assess the reach and limitations of its literal meaning.

Now, if by "historical" is meant contingent, then I propose that the relation between the senses of an expression whose first sense is essential for obtaining the second, be thought of as a logical relation. Thus the relation between senses is both historical and logical. Seeing both senses as historically related is useful for understanding the dynamic interaction between them; seeing them as logically related is useful for understanding the necessity of such interaction.

The metaphor and its interpretation are not synonyms as they are when the relationship between senses is arbitrary. I mean that the metaphor and its interpretation are not like *definiendum* and *definiens* of nominal definitions. The interpretation can be compared to the *analysandum* and the metaphor to the *analysans* of a "real" definition because this *analysans* does not pretend to exhaust the meaning of the *analysandum*, as *definiens* does with respect to the *definiendum*. In short, when the relationship between senses is essential, the figurative meaning of a multivocal expression is open to further development and to different versions of

itself. On the other hand, when the relationship between senses is arbitrary, the figurative meaning is closed in and by its interpretation.

Sometimes one uses figurative expressions because a more direct way of speaking is not available, or for reasons of economy of words, although I do not want to commit myself to the view that metaphor is an extension of an impoverished language. But, what is more important, the example analyzed shows that there are multivocal expressions whose second intentionality (sense and referent) necessarily depends upon the first one because unless the hearer or reader understands the first intentionality of the multivocal expression, he would not understand the second one.

§ 2. – On how the second sense is implicit in the first sense when the first sense is essential for obtaining the second sense

In section (i) I have described the movement between the first and the second sense when the former is essential for obtaining the latter. In section (ii) I describe the movement between senses from a more particular point of view.

It may be said that the second, indirect, figurative meaning of a sentence is suggested by, or latent in, immersed in, arising from, the first, direct, literal meaning. I comprehend these ways in which the second sense is related to the first under the category "implicitness", asking how the second sense of a multivocal expression may be implicit in the first when the first sense is essential for obtaining the second.

Some linguistic expressions, especially some poetic linguistic expressions, suggest or evoke pictorial images. If this is all a certain expression does and since a picture does not say anything, then the verbal expression whose meaning is exhausted once the pictorial element is evoked does not say anything. In this case we do not have to consider the way in which the evoked image is implicit in the first sense because we are dealing with verbal expressions which say something. But if the evoked image is in turn verbally expressed, the discussion of implicitness becomes of course applicable.

What are the necessary and sufficient conditions for saying something explicitly? Obviously, an incomplete sentence does not fulfil all the requirements for explicitness for, in order for an incomplete sentence to be understood, it has to be completed, and it may be that the completion can take more than one form, and the sentence may be completed to mean different things. Even if an incomplete sentence can be completed in only one way, still what is explicitly said may not be clear because the verbal and non-verbal context may indicate that the sentence is ironic, or rhetorical, etc. The same holds for a complete sentence. Therefore a complete sentence in a full verbal and non verbal context should be both necessary and sufficient for obtaining the explicit meaning of a sentence.

Consider the sentence "races condemned to one hundred years of solitude did not have a second opportunity on earth." To understand the explicit meaning of this sentence we would have to find out, among other things, the explicit meaning of the word race". This word has several scientific as well as unscientific meanings, e.g., it can mean a major biological division of mankind, an ethnic group, or a geographic or national group, or group of people having the same ancestry, or lineage, family, clan, etc. Now, any of these meanings can fit in the present sentence and we do not know which one to prefer, unless we examine the novel where this assertion is made, to see what kinds of groups are alluded to or suggested; that is what I meant

by a full context. (If we do so, we will realize that it is primarily a family, and secondarily a whole town, that are condemned to such long solitude.) All of which indicates that the explicit meaning is obtained by appealing to what is implicitly said and to other things said explicitly. On the other hand, something which is implicit, e.g., that races condemned to one hundred years of solitude had a first opportunity, can be grasped without having to read the novel. Furthermore, that "races condemned to one hundred years of solitude did not have a second opportunity somewhere else" is not going to be readily accepted.

Examples such as the one analyzed above illustrate, first, that what is explicitly said is not obviously clearer nor is it obviously easier to grasp than what is implicit. Second, that what is explicitly said is obtained by appealing to what is implicit and explicit elsewhere. Third, the example illustrates that what is implicitly said may be so in sundry ways.

So far, implicit in the sense of being linguistically presupposed has been distinguished from implicit in the sense of being cognitively presupposed. A sentence is linguistically presupposed if between the expressed sentence and the sentence presupposed there is a logical, semantical, syntactical, or pragmatical connection. A sentence is cognitively presupposed if in saying something explicitly one is bound to another sentence, the presupposed sentence, in the light of what is known about reality. Accordingly, it would be linguistically unsound, given the way we properly use language, to say "races condemned to one hundred years of solitude did not have a second opportunity on earth, nor had they a first opportunity", if the verbal and non-verbal context make it clear that nothing important is lost by saying, instead, that races condemned to one hundred years of solitude did not have an opportunity on earth at all. Moreover, correctly assuming that what moves, moves at some speed or other measurable by clock time, it would be empirically unsound to say "time flies, although it is absolutely impossible to measure its velocity". Therefore the person who says something is linguistically and/or cognitively bound to the presuppositions of what he says.

When the relationship between senses is a necessary one, the second sense is both linguistically and cognitively implicit in the first. Suppose that (A) "passions are the pagans of the soul" is interpreted as (B) "passions enjoy a low status in the hierarchy of the soul". (B) is semantically related to (A) because it presupposes that we have understood the literal meaning of (A), as we saw in section (i). (B) is also cognitively related to (A) because (B) presupposes, among other things, knowledge of pagans and of their relations to all believers.

The examples in sections (iii) and (iv) will also illustrate the necessity of the assertion that, when the relationship between senses is a necessary one, the second sense is both linguistically and cognitively implicit in the first.

But a sentence can not only be presupposed by another sentence: it can also be suggested. A suggestion is not close to the surface of a text as is a presupposition. The relationship between the sentence that allegedly makes the suggestion and the suggestion is not as clear, not as tight, as it is with presuppositions. Thus, whether a meaning is implicit in the sense of suggested can, at times, be problematic.

In his novel, *Abel Sánchez*, Miguel de Unamuno says:

"In this book, *Memoirs of a Doctor*, Joaquín would paint the definitive portraits — their names slightly altered in fictional guise — of Abel and Helena, and these portraits would be the ones to stand for all time. His portrait of the pair would be worth all the portraits Abel would ever paint. And Joaquín savored the satisfaction of knowing that if he were successful in creating this

literary portrayal of Abel Sánchez he would immortalize his subject more surely than Abel's own painting would do, so that critics and commentators in a remote time would discover the actual person of the painter only when they penetrated the thin veil of fiction."

Suppose someone says that this passage suggests that Unamuno believes in the supremacy of literature over painting to describe the depths of the soul. Another reader may object to this by saying that, in the first place, the one who talks here about paintings and literary portrayal is not Unamuno but Joaquín; and, secondly, that such a general assertion is not suggested because Joaquín says these literary portrayals will be better than Abel's paintings. The first reader can reply by saying that Unamuno himself has held Joaquín's view somewhere else, which makes his interpretation plausible, etc. These two readers can argue much longer: this much suffices to show that whether something is implicit at all is sometimes quite problematic and rests in the wider context.

What the first reader claims to be implicit is not close to the surface of what is explicitly said to be easily and readily accepted. What is claimed to be implicit is neither linguistically nor cognitively presupposed. What the first reader claims to be implicit is brought forth mainly because the reader knows that what seems to be said implicitly is related to or adds some information to what has been said explicitly somewhere else by the same author or by somebody else. Thus, the meaning suggested complicates, complements, or alludes to what has been said before, and it is possible to use some or all of these terms, complement, complication, and allusion, to name the modes just analyzed.

There are other senses in which a meaning can be suggested. Suppose that a novel narrates the life of a hedonist. Once this "fact" becomes clear to us, we think we can predict his major decisions. Our predictions will be suggestions made not by one single sentence but by a whole series of them constituting a pattern or structure, and the suggestion is then made by this structure, and the hearer or reader can obtain it by comparison and by drawing analogies. Let us call this type of suggestion "suggestion by a textual pattern". In either case now, that is, whether a meaning is suggested by allusion, complication, or complement, or whether a meaning is suggested by a textual pattern, the author may legitimately deny some of the suggestions which hearers or readers may obtain, on the grounds that those rejected suggestions are incompatible with the context he may envisage or because of some other good reason he may have. Returning to the story about the hedonist: suppose that our predictions are sometimes wrong. This may be so because, after all, the author is creating the life of a complete person including his conflicts, and these are not likely to be accounted for by our schema of what it means to be a hedonist.

Therefore, to the previous duality of implicit in the sense of being linguistically or cognitively presupposed, it is possible to add now another duality: meaning suggested by allusion, complication, or complement, and meaning suggested by a textual pattern.

When the first sense of a multivocal sentence is arbitrary for obtaining the sentence's second sense, this second sense is implicit in any or all of the modes of implicitness mentioned here, with one crucial exception: it can never be both linguistically and cognitively presupposed. It is only when the relationship between senses is a necessary one that the second sense can and must be both linguistically and cognitively presupposed.

Diachronically, that is, from the point of view of the development of language and science, these distinctions within implicitness are not clear cut distinctions. For instance, a personal association may be "sedimented" and become part of the semantic or pragmatics of an expression, or it may

even become part of our knowledge of reality. Synchronically, however, that is, considering language and our knowledge of the world at a given moment, those modes of implicitness do recognize boundaries which are sharp enough to say, in short, that those distinctions are distinctions.

§ 3. — On multivocal sentences whose first sense is arbitrary for obtaining the second sense

When the first sense is arbitrary for obtaining the second sense, the double sense does not arise out of the movement at the heart of the sentence. It is not enough to understand what a sentence says to realize that one is in the presence of a multivocal expression: it is necessary to consider its verbal and non-verbal context. Even before the figurative meaning of a multivocal sentence is interpreted, it is by our awareness of its full context that we suspect that a second meaning is being intended through an apparently odd sentence. In this manner we are led to realize, for instance, that the referent of an expression is not its proper referent but something else; or that a given expression is allegorical or rhetorical; or that an expression must be interpreted as meaning exactly the opposite of what it actually says.

By "arbitrary to obtain the second sense" I mean that the second sense could have been arrived at by some other means; that the second sense could have been obtained through other expressions in a direct way. Once the second sense is obtained, the first sense can be disposed of; the latter is like an angel bound to become superfluous once his message is conveyed.

When there is an arbitrary relation between the senses of a multivocal expression, it is possible to specify with some accuracy the grounds and the number of steps leading us to the second sense. For example, if the expression is used to mean the opposite of what it says, we are on logical grounds and one step — negation — would suffice to arrive at the second sense. If the second sense is the exaggeration of an image which comes from perception, then we are mainly on perceptual and imaginative grounds, and the number of steps would depend on the number of imaginative combinations necessary to get the exaggerated image, and so on.

Somebody says to us: "I am like a roach", and when we ask for an explanation, he says: "Last night I realized, with passive curiosity, that of all the things struggling to mirror me, a roach, urgently alert as a man in a shipwreck, was the most successful." What he means is that he feels always (always rather than just at a given moment because he realized it, in part, with a passive curiosity) in danger of ceasing to be, much like a roach fleeing from a shoe.

His instinct of preservation causes him to be urgently alert. This is a possible interpretation of his assertion "I am like a roach" with the necessary help, of course, of his own explanation. Our interpretation may not cover all he wants it to mean, but it does cover what he explicitly wants it to mean. Thus, for the moment (and perhaps forever, if he does not care to exploit the comparison any further) we can say that the meaning of the sentence "I am like a roach" is covered by the above interpretation, so that the phrase itself is superfluous both to express and obtain its figurative meaning.

No question of synonymity needs to be discussed when the first sense is arbitrary to obtain the second sense because it is not the case that all which is comprehended in the expression's straightforward meaning has to be comprehended by the expressions which would capture the figurative meaning. The meaning of the expression interpreted, and the meaning of the

expressions which make the interpretation, are synonyms in the uninteresting form in which the definiendum and the definiens of a nominal definition are synonyms. Thus,

"I am like a roach" = df "I am fearful of ceasing to be".

The interpretation defines the aspect in which the metaphorical subject is to be considered because, indeed, other aspects of "I am like a roach" could also be imagined; for instance, it could be asked that one be seen as always reacting by running to the presence of other people. Therefore, the interpretation functions like a folding bridge which is closed by language once the interpretation is complete. (The rigor of scientific, univocal language is, in part, due to this effect.)

Roughly and artificially, the following operations and steps must take place to go from the literal sense of "I am like a roach" to its non-literal sense. First, there is a linguistic operation consisting of four steps: (1) separation of the subject-phrase ("I") from the predicative-phrase ("am like a roach"); (2) suspension of the subject-phrase and concentration on the predicative-phrase; (3) within the predicative-phrase, separation of the connective ("I am like") from that which it connects ("a roach"); (4) suspension of the connective and concentration on the carrier of properties (a roach). Second, an operation occurs which is done mainly by the imagination, in which perception and/or memory may participate, consisting of the following steps: (1) perception of a roach or construction of an image of a roach; (2) collection of its properties; (3) recovery of the subject-phrase and connective, concentrating on the characteristics of the referent of the subject-phrase, ("I"); (4) imaginative construction of the referent of the subject phrase, molding it according to the new ideas provided by the interpretation of the predicative-phrase.

Optimism may account for the beginning of the process just described since the interpreter must believe, naively or critically, that a literally awkward sentence may be non-literally meaningful. But what accounts for the direction of the entire process? An explanation in terms of habits simply postpones the problem. There has to be a pre-predicative feeling of the final outcome of the interpretation of a multivocal sentence both before and during the interpretation. But what are the relationships between a felt pre-predicative meaning and its discursive interpretation? It is so difficult to examine such relationships because, in thinking, we find ourselves imprisoned within predicative meaning.

The role of the will in the process under analysis is not always the same: sometimes something can be seen as something else only as long as I want to see it that way; such is the fate of false multivocal sentences as "a leafless tree is a broom". On the other hand, the fate of all true multivocal sentences as "intelligence is a lantern", is such that I cannot avoid seeing something as something else after seeing it the way I was once asked to see it. (The truth-value of a multivocal sentence can be inferred from the truth-value of the sentences it presupposes and suggests.)

§ 4. — On how the second sense is implicit in the first when the first sense is arbitrary for obtaining the second sense

The taxicab driver was already tooting the horn, but Oscar was not ready yet. Why should he be? He did not want to go. "Take your time!", shouted Ethel. To understand the meaning of her command, Oscar has to understand the utterance, grasp the tone, know the person who utters it, etc. It is not enough to know what the sentence says — that could lead him to miss the whole

point. "Hurry up... how can you be so slow!" is suggested mainly by the non-verbal context. This last expression (A), since it is obtained from (A) "take your time!" according to our knowledge of reality, is similar to those cases in which the relation between senses is a necessary one. (A) and (B) differ from those cases in that (B) is not linguistically related to (A). The same is true of "I am fearful of ceasing to be" with respect to "I am like a roach". Of course, nothing prevents "fear" from becoming part of the semantics of "roach", as nothing prevented time from passing by, running, and flying; from being something we give and take, invest and spend, and finally kill.

On the contrary, when the relationship between senses is a necessary one, no awareness of the general circumstances is necessary to realize that a sentence is multivocal. The reason is a simple one: when the first sense is essential for obtaining the second, the two senses actually overlap, so that the second sense is presupposed by the first, and vice versa. When the first sense is arbitrary for obtaining the second sense, however, the two senses do not overlap, they are connected, thus they need a connective element; such is the role played by the full verbal and non-verbal context. This is what I meant by saying that when the first sense is arbitrary for obtaining the second, the latter is suggested by the first.

Furthermore, both senses of implicitness, presupposition and suggestion, can be found in one and the same multivocal sentence, as one and the same interpretation of multivocal sentence can be both presupposed by its literal meaning and suggested by its circumstances, and/or as one of its interpretations can be suggested and another presupposed.

§ 5. — On multivocal sentences in which the expression which carries the first sense is necessary for expressing the second sense

Sometimes our experience produces cases of a rare kind when it is impossible to say something directly, so that the only way left to express ourselves is by using expressions whose indirect meanings are used to express that which is directly ineffable. The impossibility I have in mind is not a social impossibility, the kind of impossibility which ordinarily gives rise to literary allegories. Now, it is mainly the circumstances which determine the interpretations of allegories. May I mention in passing, then, that they can be treated as expressions whose senses are arbitrarily related. The kind of impossibility I have in mind in this section is both linguistic and metaphysical. Linguistic, because the verbal description of a thing or event is stubbornly indirect and figurative. Metaphysical, because such indirect verbal description cannot be made direct due to the mode of presentation of the thing or event described.

Consider the sentence (A) "God is an artisan." To understand it, we have to draw the comparison between God's skills relevant to the creation of the world and craftsmanship. Yet we immediately realize how awkward this is since God, according to our well known myth, is not a man, nor does He have bodily skills. "In fact," He is not material at all. Therefore, "God is an artisan" is literal nonsense and, figuratively, we are asked to see God as an artisan.

"Artisan" has in this context a double intentionality: the first consists of the literal sense of the word — artisan = worker skilled in the mechanics of his art — plus the set of people properly referred to according to this definition. The second intentionality consists of the same definition plus its peculiar referent, God. Thus, the second intentionality is built into the first one. To understand the double sense, one has to grasp the movement between these two intentionalities; it is by understanding the first intentionality, then getting away from it, then coming back to it again, that one can grasp the half-revealed "truth" or indirect meaning of (A)

which compels me to say that the first, literal sense of (A) is magnetic, for the second sense is understandable only by the constant attraction imposed on it by the former. We may try getting away from the literal intentionality emphasizing, say, the spiritual character of craftsmanship, although, like crabs, we would do so with our eyes fixed upon the point of departure, that is, on the literal intentionality. As a result, the point of departure would be less visible at every step, while we would not know where we were going.

As soon as we stop considering God as a craftsman, we stop knowing the positive characteristics of God. This is important because a referent made up of positive characteristics (e.g., "x is..." rather than "x is not..."), not borrowed from the literal set of sense and referent, would make it possible for us to measure the distance between the two intentionalities in operations and steps other than logical, as well as in logical ones. If we stop knowing the positive characteristics of the referent as soon as we get away from the literal meaning, then the constant attraction imposed on the figurative meaning by the literal meaning does not give us a chance to measure the distance between them in operations and steps other than logical ones.

Thus we must not believe that all multivocal expressions are the result of a tension, or contrast, or interaction between two things, whatever they may be, because there are some cases, such as the present one, in which there is only one clearly distinguishable element, namely artisan. Of course these theories which presuppose two elements can be amended by saying that the tension or interaction is not between two (or more) nonverbal things, but between verbal sets.

Even though the God of the Jewish myth is not really like an artisan, one can wonder if it is possible to conceive him as being so. It is possible to argue that such a God, at least insofar as he is an artisan, is nothing but a literary character. If this is the case, then it makes a difference as to his intelligibility, because then the problem in understanding him is reduced to the problem of understanding a series of verbal expressions. Nevertheless, with regard to the notion of distance, that is, with regard to what is involved in going from one sense to the other, no improvement is made with this shift from reality to verbal imaginative conception because it is impossible to trace a distance other than a logical one between two real things, a real God and a real artisan, one of which is and is not of a certain kind (God is and is not material, etc.), as it is also impossible to trace a distance other than logical between the pictorial image evoked by the literal intentionality ("artisan" evokes an image in the sense of a picture) and the image (made up, for instance, by a series of verbal expressions) evoked by a figurative intentionality.

Whether the figurative interaction is between non-verbal things or between verbal sets, if a multivocal expression is such that the expression carrying the first sense is necessary for expressing the second sense as well, then there is no distance between senses to be measured other than a logical one.

Cases of the "God is an artisan" type are much more difficult to interpret than all the cases studied thus far because in those cases there were two intentionalities, either fixed, or in motion. In the present case, however, one of its intentionalities disappears when we turn around to see it.

When the expression carrying the first sense is essential for expressing the second, the expression carrying the first sense is like a sticky substance, for the interpreting expressions cannot keep an easy distance from the words expressing the first sense. These cases are to be found at the level of lexical semantics where language has perhaps its best chances of being creative. A multivocal expression is creative when it calls attention to, or uncovers for us, some

aspect of reality. While the multivocal expression is doing this, expressing, or trying to express, what it says otherwise (through other words) can be, at worst, misleading. For instance, "wall" is not a good interpretation for "curtain", and vice versa, because "curtain", suggests, say, temporariness, concealment, and the hands of man; it suggests, for instance, that man wants to conceal something for protection against nonhuman events, whereas "wall" suggests division, permanency, it could easily be natural; it may have a door, which suggests communication rather than concealment, etc.

Once a new aspect unconcealed by the figurative expression has been integrated to our knowledge of reality, it may become possible to refer to what the figurative expression refers to by other means, although whether its sense can be properly translated will remain an open question, and at this moment we are faced with the problem of synonymity. I am inclined to believe that if an expression is truly revelatory, then there is absolutely, i.e., regardless of its context, no way of rendering the same sense through other words.

One last example. Often in philosophy the insight is the result of the transposition (metaphor = transposition or translation) of an image to a different area of experience. For example, the concept of truth has a metaphorical name in Greek: "discovery", "unveiling", "unconcealment". And Heidegger, who has made this sense of truth his, speaks of untruth in terms of dissimulation and concealment; and since every time we uncover something we conceal something (as we uncover something and cover something else by digging a hole in the ground and throwing the dirt around the hole) every time we tell the truth about something we do not allow other truths to appear. I am not familiar with the way the Greeks exploited this transposition, but Heidegger explains it in indirect meanings: e.g., the essence of truth, freedom is the ex-sistent, revelatory "letting-be" of what-is. This is a case where the insight is a transposition of an image which, as all images, is produced by perception, and then the imagination transfers it to a nonphysical region of experience. Furthermore, its written expression and explanation are carried out in indirect meanings, so that the first, literal meaning of "unconcealment" is necessary to express and obtain its figurative meaning.

§ 6. — On multivocal sentences in which the expression which carries the first sense is arbitrary for expressing the second sense

In saying that the words which carry the first sense are essential for expressing the second sense, I do not mean that every word carrying the first sense is essential, but only the key ones. What words are important is decided by consulting a sentence's verbal and non-verbal context. Upon analysis of its meaning, every key word engenders a set of ideas. For instance, "artisan" implies that somebody produces something material in a definite period of time, etc. In saying that the words which carry the first sense are essential for expressing the second sense, what I mean is that the same set of ideas is expressed in both senses. On the other hand, when the words carrying the first are arbitrary for expressing the second sense of a multivocal sentence, one set of ideas is obtained by analyzing the words carrying the first sense, and another different set by analyzing the words carrying the second sense, as happens, for instance, with rhetorical sentences in which what is said is, in fact, denied.

I am not now in a position to present a list of the necessary and sufficient conditions for deciding whether or not the words expressing the first sense of a multivocal sentence are necessary or arbitrary for expressing the second sense, but I can mention two central factors which must have a bearing on such a decision.

I think that fixity or lack of fixity of the intentionalities involved is one central factor. When the thought contained in an expression has been clearly connected to other thoughts within a linguistic system, it is possible to express the second sense of that expression with words other than the ones expressing the first sense, as in "a thought has been born". Suppose that according to its context, "a thought has been born" can be put thus: "A thought has just been logically obtained from two thoughts." The ideas obtained from the analysis of the meaning of the key words of the above paraphrase are different from the ideas obtained by analyzing the meaning of birth, which includes offspring, child, etc. But when the thought contained in an expression has not been clearly connected to other thoughts within a linguistic system, it is not possible to express the second sense in words other than the ones expressing the first sense without arbitrarily imposing restrictions on the full meaning of a multivocal sentence. This would happen if I insist, for instance, that "passions are the pagans of the soul" means nothing but that passions are wrong.

Another central factor is the fixity or lack of fixity of the properties of the referent of a multivocal expression. If the properties of a given referent are not very fixed, as happens with the properties of passions in general, and the God of the Jewish myth, then it is relatively easy to form and deform images according to the demands of figurative sentences. Thus, useful multivocal sentences whose referent's properties are not very fixed, are likely to make difficult the separation of the referent as it is in itself, as it really is, from the same referent as it is to be seen according to the multivocal sentence which says something about it. On the contrary, when the properties of a referent are very fixed, as those of a fallen leaf hit by the rain, then it is relatively easy to see it as it is and as something else, thus facilitating our saying the second sense of an expression as "the rain humiliates the fallen leaves" in a different way.

§ 7. – On multivocal sentences according to their ambiguity

Ambiguity is a property of the meaning of an expression: it is the multiplicity of meaning in and of the expression either because the word itself may have several altogether different meanings, or because the context may give it several meanings, or both. If it is also a property of the intention of the user, or of the reaction of the hearer, it is so because the expression suggests it. If it is maintained that a term is ambiguous because there exists a plurality of referents, this plurality is made possible by the multiple meaning of the expression.

The word "fire" and other verbal forms derived from it, can refer to physical objects, to properties of objects, to states of mind, etc. It is the ambiguity of "fire" which makes this plurality of referents possible. On the other hand, it is also true that the ambiguity of an expression which has a semantics echoes the many aspects or functions of a thing. This transit between ambiguity of expression and manifestations of the referent can be described as "the circle of ambiguity". The above description applies to all ambiguous expressions which have a semantic value, thus it applies also to multivocal expressions.

Although all multivocal expressions are ambiguous, and vice versa, not all multivocal expressions are ambiguous in the same manner. A look at ambiguity is particularly interesting when studying multivocal expressions because the meanings which constitute them can be very peculiar.

How to proceed about distinguishing kinds of multivocal sentences according to their ambiguity depends upon one's purpose in studying ambiguity. I am interested in clarity and intelligibility. Now, with its many intentionalities, a multivocal sentence asks us to see something as something else, and when we are asked to see two things as one, the compatibility of characteristics of the elements involved in intentionality facilitates such an act of seeing, having a positive bearing on clarity and intelligibility, whereas incompatibility makes such an act difficult or impossible, having a negative bearing on clarity and intelligibility. I do not claim that compatibility or incompatibility is the only point of view from which the ambiguity of multivocal sentences can be considered, but it is, I think the widest useful concept.

To establish whether or not two sets of sense and referent are compatible, one has to disengage senses from referents, language from metaphysics, to compare the thoughts expressed and the referents described. This disengagement allows to distinguish linguistic and metaphysical compatibility or incompatibility. Thoughts are compatible if they are not contradictory. Referents are compatible if their essential structure or set of essential properties is not violated by seeing the referent as it is (referent within the first intentionality) and as something else or from a new perspective (referent within the second intentionality).

For instance, the intentionalities involved in "the artist must be like a cloak" are linguistically and metaphysically compatible. Linguistically, for any accurate definition of artist is compatible with "the artist dare not fail to see the whole. He must fall evenly on all sides". Metaphysically, for nothing prevents us from seeing the artist as he is and as having an accurate and profound assessment of the whole which allows him to fall evenly on all sides, like a cloak.

On the contrary, it would be incompatible to see the artist as artist and as a race horse, and it would be a contradiction to say, for instance, "the person who creates works of beauty must be trained to run and win on already laid out tracks."

Multivocal sentences whose many intentionalities are incompatible are usually used to refer to mysterious events and things which are allegedly absolute, ultimate, unconditioned, infinite, etc., and since our language seems to be adequate only to predicate about relative and preliminary and finite events, we have to suggest that something is the case by saying that it is and that it is not like things finite and conditioned. It is in an awkward way that we are able to refer to the infinite unconditioned — maybe because nothing in our experience has such extraordinary properties. But to the extent that even a curious ambiguity refers to something, it may be positive despite its weak appearance.

By considering the distance between the intentionalities of multivocal sentences we can get a fairly accurate idea about the degree of clarity and intelligibility displayed in those sentences. The higher the number of properties the referent as it is has in common with the referent as it is to be seen according to a multivocal sentence, then (a) the smaller is the number of mental operations and steps needed to go from one intentionality to the other, (b) the closer is the metaphysical distance between intentionalities, and (c) the clearer is the sense, the more intelligible is the referent. This criterion allows to assess immediate clarity and intelligibility. It says nothing about mediate clarity and intelligibility because an expression can be immediately obscure and mediately clear, that is, clear after many operations and steps; or an expression can be immediately clear and mediately obscure.

On the other hand, the smaller the number of properties the referent as it is has in common with the referent as it is to be seen according to a multivocal sentence, the opposite situation obtains.

Two referents may share no properties at all, in which case two intentionalities have nothing in common from a metaphysical point of view. But bridging the distance between such intentionalities is not an impossible task for language, as in the "God is an artisan" example, because even if it is impossible for me to see God both as an absolutely immaterial being and as an artisan, I can say "God is and is not an artisan."

But a multivocal sentence whose referents share too many properties could hardly be said to be an interesting multivocal sentence. (Suppose that we are asked to see a rat as a rabbit.) An extreme or a limit would be, then, the scientific ideal: to see something as it really is, which is what an exact univocal sentence should do. This would amount to absolute linguistic and metaphysical clarity. The other extreme would be to see something as its exact opposite. This would amount to absolute linguistic and metaphysical obscurity.

§ 8. – On multivocal sentences according to their vagueness

Whereas ambiguity is a property of an expression, vagueness is a property of a sense of an expression. Vagueness of sense is the result of the overlapping of some or all senses of an expression. The overlapping of senses has, as consequences, both our confusion as to what things are the referents of an expression and our diffuse response to an expression. But vagueness of sense may, in its turn, be a consequence of our confusion as to what things are the referents of an expression. The transit between the overlapping of senses and the obscurity of the boundaries of the referents of an expression occurs in the "circle of vagueness", as the transit between multiplicity of sense and manifestations of a referent occurred in the "circle of ambiguity".

Senses which are alike in what they say are more likely to overlap than those which are dissimilar, and incompatible senses cannot overlap peacefully. If some senses are incompatible, then, to overlap, they have to be shaken violently, as salad dressing ingredients. But then, when the shake ceases, some elements give up their purity and get mixed, while some others silently go back to their places. Similarly, when our intellectual hand relaxes, each sense goes back to its historical context. It is in the moment of pressure that the suggestions of some multivocal expressions arise.

From the point of view of vagueness then, there are two kinds of multivocal sentences: those whose senses lend themselves to the overlapping, such as "falling leaves hit by the rain" and "fallen leaves as conscious things humiliated by the rain" in "the rain humiliates the fallen leaves" and, second, there are multivocal expressions whose senses overlap but only reluctantly, such as "passions are states of the soul" and "passions are inferior to reason" in "passions are the pagans of the soul".

I have divided multivocal sentences according to their vagueness and ambiguity, according to the necessity or arbitrariness of the expression carrying the first sense for expressing the second sense and, finally, according to the necessity or arbitrariness of the first sense for obtaining the second sense. This has been done thinking of the question: what characteristics contribute to

the clarity or obscurity of the meaning of a multivocal sentence? (This question is actually answered in section (xii)).

In sections (ix), (x), and (xi) the emphasis of this investigation is shifted from sense to referent, from our expression and description of reality to reality, from language to metaphysics.

The aim of these sections on referents is to distinguish some central kinds of multivocal sentences according to their referents. This end is also a means towards the fulfillment of one of the intentions of this investigation, namely, to establish what characteristics contribute to the intelligibility or unintelligibility of things as referents of multivocal sentences.

§ 9. – On the referent of multivocal sentences

What will here be said about intelligibility concerns not things in general, that is to say, no matter how we may be in contact with them, but things as referents of multivocal sentences. When pointing to a cloud I say, "That is a proud cloud," the cloud referred to can also be seen by me without my having to say anything about it, and still be intelligible. This is so because I do

not have to think discursively about it to know how to react to its presence. Thus I may keep going on my way to the beach without worrying about a possible rain because I may realize, prediscursively, that that proud cloud will not water this area.

The mode of being of some things may be such that they are insofar as they are referents of multivocal or of any linguistic expression. Macondo, the town in García Márquez' *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, comes to life only when we think of it. When the mode of being of a thing is like that of Macondo's, then what I say here about intelligibility concerns the entire thing. Of course the mode of being of some things is not equivalent to their being referents of multivocal or of any linguistic expression. In other words, obviously, there are things which in no way depend upon consciousness to exist, as were the things which existed before mankind appeared, as will be those things which will exist after mankind disappears. In most cases, the referent of a sentence is an aspect of a thing, namely, the aspect referred to by the sense of an expression. Thus in most cases what will be said about intelligibility will not concern things in their entirety but only some of their aspects.

For the sake of clarity, it has been necessary to keep the elements of multivocal expressions as far apart as possible; thus it has been necessary to mention a first and a second referent of multivocal expressions. It is crucial that the referent is not intended as one, otherwise it would be impossible to consider something as something else, to "see" something in another thing. If this were impossible, almost our entire mental life would be impossible, for at least in imagining, thinking, and willing, we can consider things as not obeying the laws of identity and individuation.

Although the intention of regarding the referent of a multivocal sentence as one is always fulfilled, even if only linguistically, to consider something as something else, or, to "see" something which is not ordinarily in a thing as part of that thing, may require different amounts of efforts. (Try to "see" passive sadness as gloom, leafless trees as rakes, and an absolutely immaterial power as an artisan.) The kind and amount of effort needed to consider something as something else, or to "see" something which is not ordinarily in a thing as part of that thing, depends upon whether or not the referent involved lends itself to such act of "seeing". Exactly

what determines whether or not a referent lends itself to such act has to be a function of its characteristics, its structure, its context, and the "set" of the reader's mind.

§ 10. – On multivocal sentences according to the relationship between thought and referent

This discussion is centered on things in their relationship to thinking. Of course, things are also related to consciousness in several other ways, for instance, in pre-reflexive perception, and imagination. Since I am not dealing with things in an unqualified way but as objects of multivocal expressions, and since the sense of these expressions is a thought, I have to focus on the object's relationship to thought. But as soon as images and perceptions acquire a verbal dimension, they fall within the jurisdiction of what is said about thinking. To the extent that any activity of consciousness is verbal, to that extent the name "thought" is here applicable. (For convenience, by "thought" I mean here an explicit linguistic event, although of course there can be thought without language as it happens in intuitive thinking and in animal thinking).

There are people who do not believe that the things which thoughts are about are touched by the thinking directed towards them. But is it not true that the way we verbally express a feeling, for instance, can actually alter the feeling itself? Would the feeling of passive sadness be the same were it not understood as "gloom"? I do not think so. When the verbal expression of something helps to constitute that something, what the former says does alter the latter, and the thing or event thus altered can be, in its turn, altered by other experiences, etc. Therefore, I cannot agree with those who say that the objects to which thoughts refer are always beyond thoughts, always transcendent to them.

Furthermore, it is only in a superficial and uninteresting sense that physical objects of sensory perception are not sensitive to my thoughts. A corpse continues to be an object no matter how clearly I say: "I want you to live." But a corpse is an entity constructed in part (of course, only in part) by me, a consciousness. In this construction there is an explicit or implicit participation of verbal thinking. A corpse is a terrible entity. Yet what is terrible about it is not what is there, inert and pale in front of me, for I can be inclined to kiss its forehead. What is terrible is that it, the corpse, cannot do what the person used to do; it cannot do what the person had chosen to do. This we know in part by making inferences many of which are verbal. An objective relational property, like terribleness, is what it is in part due to my thoughts. A non-relational property, like paleness, is insensitive to my thoughts. But paleness as such is a superficial and uninteresting color, in sharp contrast to the depth and moving aspect of terrible paleness.

I can distinguish now at least two kinds of referents. (1) There are those which are not directly affected by thought because they are thought-independent, as are the things which existed before the appearance of mankind, or as numbers, and, in general, as all the mathematical entities. (2) There are also referents which are partially affected by thoughts, as terrible things are, because they are partially thought-dependent.

The second kind of referent suggests the question: Are there referents which are totally affected by thoughts? I believe there are. Suppose that I were to comment on the thoughts expressed in this investigation. My comments would definitely affect the investigation itself, for instance, by suggesting to the reader how to interpret what has already been done, and by suggesting to myself how to continue it. Feelings and thoughts, among other events, are not massive rocks on

the seashore; they are more like the ocean's skin, folded and unfolded by the rumors of the wind.

It is possible to add, then, a third kind of referent, namely (3) those that may be affected by thought both totally and directly.

I do not know if the referents of this third kind are totally or only partially thought-dependent. Perhaps there are opaque corners in a referent which remain so after it has been transformed into something else by a thought, and these opaque spots may become manifest at a later time. But there are moments in which it is evident to us that a thought, or a series of them, can change some things completely, as happens with feelings and wishes and also with thoughts.

Mathematical entities deserve here a special mention because they are transparent and remain identical to themselves. These properties account for the fact that they are the most intelligible referents. Transparency is important because to know something we have to manipulate it. If some thing is wholly transparent, our manipulations of it will not change its value or meaning.

Identity is also important because it allows us to examine an object as it is for as long as we need to. All of which facilitates agreement as to what people say with respect to an object. This is crucial because it allows us to verify what we say, to revise our results in light of the knowledge of others.

Among the least intelligible referents we find some of those which belong to kind (1), real, thought-independent things, to the extent that they may have a substratum not reachable by consciousness. Think of objects which are either infinitely small or infinitely large. They are conceived only indirectly through our knowledge of the things available to consciousness. Language and mathematical formalisms are here very useful as they allow us to have a hint of a world which will remain forever out of our vision.

§ 11. – On multivocal sentences according to the recurrence of the referent

It is the verbal and non-verbal context of a multivocal sentence which indicates what is its referent. For instance, it is the circumstances and the mythic-symbolic language surrounding the expression "God created the earth in six days" that allows us to know immediately that "God", for instance, does not refer to an ordinary artist or craftsman, but to an extraordinary one. The referent's access to the understanding, or, in other words, its intelligibility, largely depends upon its context's access to the understanding, which in its turn largely depends upon its recurrence.

To know whether what is said about something is fair or unfair, considerate or inconsiderate, etc., we have to go back to the referent and its context, but if either or both of them are not available any longer, then what is said is condemned to remain uncertain, or at least unconvincing: it would have no more validity than gossip. Without uniform repetition of the referent and its context, understanding and knowledge are bound to become weaker and weaker, as an oath without renewal.

Whether the referent and context which are available again in the future will be more or less like the ones that appeared in the past has to be a function of several things, such as the degree of particularity or generality of a referent and its context, whether they are concrete or abstract, and our point of view or purpose.

According to the recurrence of the referent there are, then, five kinds of multivocal sentences: there are those whose referents appear (1) repeatedly and with uniformity, (2) repeatedly and without uniformity, (3) seldom and with uniformity, (4) seldom and without uniformity, and finally (5) there are those multivocal expressions whose referents appear only once.

Multivocal sentences of kind (1) have referents whose intelligibility may be maximal. On the other extreme, sentences of kind (5) have referents whose intelligibility may be minimal.

§ 12. – On clarity, obscurity, intelligibility, and unintelligibility

We are now in a position to bring to the surface the characteristics of multivocal sentences which contribute to clarity, obscurity, intelligibility, or unintelligibility.

Each one of the following characteristics constitutes a type of clarity of sense or intelligibility of referent:

- (1) The first sense of a multivocal sentence has to be arbitrary for obtaining its second sense.
- (2) The second sense of a multivocal sentence has to be suggested, for instance, by allusion, complication, complement, or by a textual pattern.
- (3) The expression embodying the first sense of a multivocal sentence has to be arbitrary for expressing its second sense.
- (4) The intentionalities of a multivocal sentence have to be fixed.
- (5) Any ambiguity the sentence has must be made up of compatible senses.
- (6) Whatever vagueness there is has to be the result of the "voluntary" overlapping of the several senses of the sentence.
- (7) The referent of the multivocal sentence must be transparent and remain self-identical.
- (8) The referent of the multivocal sentence has to appear repeatedly and uniformly.

The higher the number of characteristics contributing to clarity found in an expression, the clearer such an expression is.

The clearest multivocal sentence possible combines all the characteristics contributing to clarity and intelligibility.

Each one of the following characteristics constitutes a type of obscurity of sense or unintelligibility of referent:

- (1) The first sense of a multivocal sentence has to be necessary for obtaining its second sense.
- (2) The second sense of a multivocal sentence has to be both linguistically and cognitively presupposed by the other sense.

- (3) The expression embodying the first sense of a multivocal sentence has to be essential for expressing its second sense.
- (4) The intentionalities of a multivocal sentence have to be in a constant state of movement.
- (5) Any ambiguity the sentence has must be made up of incompatible senses.
- (6) Whatever vagueness there is has to be the result of the "reluctant" overlapping of the several senses of the sentence.
- (7) The referent of the multivocal sentence must be opaque and change all the time.
- (8) The referent of the multivocal sentence must appear neither repeatedly nor uniformly.

The higher the number of characteristics contributing to obscurity found in an expression, the more obscure such an expression is.

The most obscure multivocal sentence possible combines all the characteristics contributing to obscurity and unintelligibility.

As I said early in this investigation, understanding and knowing are considered as transparent with respect to clarity and intelligibility. Therefore, a clear sentence is one I, or any consciousness, understands, whereas one does not understand an obscure expression. Likewise, one knows an intelligible referent, whereas one does not know an unintelligible thing.

* * *