IS A ROSE ALWAYS A ROSE ALWAYS A ROSE?

Mind and Reality

Concepts and Meaning

The Wonder of Language

By

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Abstract

Some of the questions I attempt to deal with are as follows:

What does it *mean* to *mean* something? How does *meaning* happen? What do we really mean when we say that something *means* something? Can there be *meaning* without a mind? Is *meaning* something fixed or is it more like an unstable flux?

How do concepts affect or determine the way we perceive the world?

Aren't metaphor, metonymy and other figures of speech very natural occurrences when meaning is understood more as an unstable flux than as something fixed and permanent?

Do innate ideas or concepts exist? Or is it rather that we have innate ways of creating concepts?

How do we (re) create concepts? How do concepts relate to meaning? How do concepts integrate and relate so as to create more complex meanings at higher levels? And how do they relate to grammar?

Is grammar a set of rules or is it rather a set of conventions?

How does grammar interact with the structures of our concepts?

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INTRODUCTION

This work is only in part a translation from Spanish of my treatise "LA CULPA LA TIENE EL DICCIONARIO" (2016), which I now consider to be a sort of draft. Considering that I wrote the work as an aid to help me in my ruminations, the output was somewhat unorderly, and I later found it needed many amendments. There are a lot of additions (and a lot of subtractions too), which will hopefully render an improved version concerning coherence and clarity.

I realize now that I wrote these versions for one reader, namely myself, in the hope of satisfying a need for clarity concerning the issues here dealt with, issues which revolve around the nature and creation of *meaning* within the human mind. The book, however, also addresses other related topics, which inevitably rolled into my path.

While grappling with these slippery questions, I received a lot of help from philosophers such as **Plato**, **Aristotle**, **Descartes**, **Locke**, **Hume**, **Leibniz, Kant**, **Ortega y Gasset**, just to name a few, and from Linguistics, especially Cognitive Linguistics including the findings of such figures as **Ronald Langacker**, among so many others. But as usual, all the shortcomings are on me, and there is nobody out there to blame but myself.

I am absolutely aware that many of the hypotheses stated in this work must be further developed, improved and why not, refuted.

In the first Chapter we will give a glance at the philosophical background up to **Kant**, as I deem it can come in handy when dealing with the topics to be addressed. In Chapter II we will look into the idea of *concepts* and the dynamics behind their integration. We will also try to elucidate *when* our relating abilities

are activated and rehearse some defining lines to the matter.

Chapter III deals with *meaning,* and the linking constituents concepts are made of. Chapter IV addresses the issue of how concepts can integrate in order to create meaning at higher levels of organization. In Chapter V metaphors and other figures of speech will be analysed with the terms proposed in this work, including the notion of *semantic tension* and *semantic rupture*. Chapter VI considers some Principles that govern the way, the *how,* we relate entities to each other, and finally Chapter VII dedicates some thoughts to the question of grammar.

As a brief “academic comment", I can add that I studied at Stockholm’s University (“Culture communication”) and at the University of Gothenburg (“Classical History”).

I have been working as a Language Consultant in Sweden and Argentina (it’s a long story) for more than 20 years, during which time my passion for Linguistics has been further kindled. Besides, I have an extensive background as a theatre director, actor, acting coach, and playwright both in Argentina and in Sweden.

CHAPTER I

Modernity and the Scientific Revolution
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1.1 Modernity and the Scientific Revolution

The Renaissance can be looked upon as a necessary founding period of what we today call Modernity, which spawned, developed and persistently sharpened the scientific methodologies. Great and important discoveries were made, securing the foundations that steadily led to industrialism.

The so-called Scientific Revolution took place in the 16th and 17th centuries. Most of us are familiar with names such as **Copernicus** (1473-1543), **Kepler** (1571-1630), **Bruno** (1548-1600), **Tycho Brahe** (1546-1601), **Galileo** (1564-1642), **Bacon** (1561-1626), **Descartes** (1596-1650), **Newton** (1642-1727), **Leibniz** (1646-1716) etc. These were some of the great minds that most contributed to giving science the profile and prestige it still has today.

One of the main traits of Modernity was probably the obsession to dominate and subdue nature, overstating and carrying to its ultimate consequences the concept – inherited from both the Greeks and the Abrahamic religions – that man isn't part of nature, but on

the contrary, a special being (in some versions, the only being with a soul, in contrast to a soulless universe) that at a certain moment was severed from the rest of creation to become its centre and sovereign. So, nature became objectified as something separate and alien. Thus, she could gaily be torn apart in order to see what was inside her and how she worked. Her secrets were to be uprooted, even with force and violence if necessary. However, her ultimate secrets constantly seemed to slide away and out of reach; like in the Greek myth, in which Tantalus, dwelling in hell and tormented by hunger and thirst, constantly stretches out to grab some fruits or water, and desperately beholds how these slide out of his reach each time.

Nevertheless, in the quest to subdue nature, the scientific community started to conceive her as an assembly of pieces that could be pulled apart and studied separately. Especially in the 19th century (this is, previous to Relativity and Quantum physics), the most unsubtle metaphor that prevailed in widespread circles (although exceptions are rife) stated that reality was a kind of building, an assembly of independent "bricks" arranged in specific ways. To understand nature (or maybe it would be more accurate to say *in order to exploit and make the best possible use of her*), all you needed to do was disassemble the bricks. The problem was that you then had to tear apart those same bricks so as to, in turn, scrutinize *their* components in order to discover how *they* were constituted, and then investigate the components of the components, and so on endlessly.[1] For instance, trying to under-

[1] A similar notion– albeit in the rationalist tradition–was already forwarded by Descartes in the 17th Century. His words: *"Le second, de diviser chacune des difficultés que j'examinerais, en autant de parcelles qu'il se pourrait, et qu'il serait requis pour les mieux résoudre." (The second [*rule*], was to divide each of the difficulties I examined into as many parts as possible and necessary in order to resolve them better.)* DISCOURS DE LA MÉTHODE, seconde partie. Descartes is saying that **dividing** is part of the method of reaching"evidence". In fact, to **analyse** implies delimiting, that is to say, marking boundaries, splitting and fissuring.

stand what life is, you could start with the workings of the organs of a living body, that is, with anatomy (biology); then, you could slice your way into the *smaller components* of the organs, stepping into the boundaries of chemistry, and, why not, after that you could tumble down to even further tiny depths, and end up in the realms of molecular physics. However, you would still emerge empty handed as regards to the original quest (i.e. what is life?). This "digging" conception is closely linked to the notion of *mechanical causality*. Says Schopenhauer (1788-1860), after stating that the connection between cause and effect is clearest when dealing with mechanical causality:

"…does this happen in the case of mechanical causality, which for this reason can be comprehended best of all. This led in the last century to the mistaken endeavor, which still persists in France but has recently also come into fashion in Germany, to reduce every other causality to the mechanical, and so to explain all physical and chemical processes by mechanical causes, but the life process again by the former."

(*On the freedom of the will*, translated by Konstantin Kolenda)

These commented notions belong to a tradition called **materialism,** (with roots stretching far back into pre-Socratic Greece)[2] which propounds that when the basic and ultimate unities of matter are found, these will yield the secrets of even all non material phenomena. The illusion consists in believing that, provided the elementary brick-particle is found, the longed-for secret will be unveiled, for then the manner in which these little brick-parts are connected to form the whole will be exposed and understanding

[2] On the one hand, Leucippus (5th Century BC), Democritus (460-370 BC) and later on Lucretius (99-55 BC), had a materialistic view, but were not necessarily empiricists. On the other hand, the stoics, who also have had a long lasting influence on Western thought, blended materialism and empiricism.

will be complete without having to invoke spooky non physical or non material entities. And, incidentally, the foundational underpinning that supports the whole scaffolding will also be disclosed. (Alternatively, the quest was to come across the "*substance*" (*sub*: under) of a *thing*: that which lies under the *accidents*, that which constitutes the crux or the foundation of the *thing,* that which is permanent and constant in the *thing* amid all the changes.)

Bruce Lipton (2007) in the article "*The Wisdom of Cells"* words it in the following manner:

"Science identified truths as things that were predictable. Newtonian physics perceives the universe as a machine made out of matter; it says that if you can understand the nature of the matter that comprises the machine, then you will understand nature itself. Therefore the mission of science was to control and dominate nature, which was completely different than the former mission of science under natural theology, which was to live in harmony with nature.

The issue of control in regard to biology becomes a very important point. What is it that controls the traits that we express? According to Newtonian physics life forms represent machines made out of matter and if you want to understand those machines you take them apart, a process called reductionism. You study the individual pieces and see how they work and when you put all the pieces together again, you have an understanding of the whole."

1.2 The Appearance of Dictionaries

DICTIONARY, *n* *A malevolent literary device for cramping the growth of a language and making it hard and inelastic. This dictionary, however, is a most useful work.*

Ambrose Bierce

The first versions of what we today know as *dictionaries* appeared at the end of the 16th century. And it's not a mere coincidence that it so happened when the cultural paradigms of the Renaissance and the Scientific Revolution were at their peak: words, too, were thought of as little "bricks" with which we **build** sentences, which in turn are bigger "bricks" with which we **build** discourses. And if words are like bricks, then each one, separately, "contains" a meaning. So, joining container brick-words we build brick-sentences. Prescriptive grammar and syntax would then prescribe how these bricks are to be joined, and ta-da, meaning ensues.

The cultural paradigm of Modernity in many ways still dictates the manner we see and think about reality. We unconsciously believe that words are containers (and therefore objects) in which meanings are to be found.

This is the concept behind the emergence of dictionaries, which in turn strengthened the belief that words are distinct and separate entities that contain meaning in isolation.

My intention is not to criticize the existence of dictionaries. On the contrary, I use them constantly and find them extremely useful. Nonetheless, I do wish to draw attention to the fact that, if we

are not watchful, we might fall for the belief that the isolated words alphabetically aligned in them are little brick-parts that contain meaning on their own, a meaning that can be extracted from them as if from a container.[3]

If words were like independent and isolated bricks or containers of stable and precise meanings, or alternately signs of things (and not of ideas or concepts), we would have to ask ourselves how they manage to combine and integrate to create elaborate and complex meanings and sense. Putting words together would be like putting things together, and putting things one beside the other does not generally create new meanings (sometimes it does, as in many forms of art; but then again, in art ***things*** are treated differently as they are stripped of their functional roles. As artistic objects, ***things*** become bridges to concepts, fuzzy as these may be).

In this work we will develop the notion that concepts are flexible, changing and protean and thus allow for integration and higher levels of meaning. We will also see that the way we conceive reality is to a great extent a consequence of how our minds operate with these concepts.

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[3] Referring to the 16th century (in contrast to the Classical 17th century), M. Foucault describes how language was understood, showing how rooted was the belief that the word and the thing it refers to are an inseparable unit:
"In its original form, when it was given to men by God himself, language was an absolutely certain and transparent sign for things, because it resembled them. The names of things were lodged in the things they designated, just as strength is written in the body of the lion, regality in the eye of the eagle, just as the influence of the planets is marked upon the brows of men: by the form of similitude. This transparency was destroyed at Babel as a punishment for men." : (*The Order of Things*; Pantheon Books, page 36)
Further ahead, referring to modernity, he writes:
"This is why, on the perhaps endlessly postponed horizon of language, there is projected the idea of a universal language in which the representative value of words would be sufficiently clearly recognized for reflection to be able to come to a decision with total clarity about any proposition whatever – by means of this language 'peasants could better judge of the truth of things than philosophers now do'; (footnote: *Descartes Lettres a Mersenne, 20th of Novembe, 1629,A.T.,I,p.76) "a perfectly clear and distinct language would allow for an entirely clear discourse: this language would be, in itself, an Ars Combinatoria."*

In the following part of this Chapter, I will briefly draft the philosophical antecedents and some of the main debates connected with the topic to be developed, which refers firstly to the antagonizing views on the "real" source of knowledge, and we will also look into the role of the knowing ***subject*** in its quest to gain knowledge of the ***object***. This will help us, in the Chapters that follow, reflect on the workings of our minds when dealing with words and concepts, and how these, in turn, affect the way we relate to and conceive our world.

3.1 The Greeks

We have already mentioned modernity, but haven't stressed that in practical terms two traditions came together –traditions that had been confronting each other for centuries– under its time span: on the one hand, ***empiricism***, whose champions under modernity were **Francis Bacon** (1561-1626), **John Locke** (1632-1704), **David Hume** (1711-1776) , and on the other, ***rationalism,*** whose leading figures were **René Descartes** (1596-1650), **Baruch Spinoza** (1632-1677) and **Gottfried Leibniz** (1646-1716).

The struggle between these two tendencies really derives from the period of the ancient Greeks. **Plato** (424?-348? BC) mistrusted the senses and the data retrieved from them; he felt that the essence of reality was to be found in the world of **Ideas**. He understood that to ***know*** was to remember and recognize the ***Ideas***. These, he asserted, are in some way innate; and to achieve wisdom is to access them by the employment of reason, being as they are the soul's immaterial heritage. He and **Parmenides** (active 475 B.C.), are considered to be the main initiators of the ***rationalist*** tradition (*rationalism*) within western philosophy.

Aristotle (384 – 322 BC), on the other hand, figures among the main initiators of the ***empiricist*** tradition, in which observation, that is, sensory data, is central. He asserts that reasoning must be founded on what we perceive with our senses; that is, we reach generalizations by first observing nature. However, he did also develop the syllogistic system based on deductive reasoning (which also pertains to rationalism).

We could thus arguably state that one of the Greek's main concerns consisted in discerning the legitimate source of knowledge.

According to what the history of ancient Greece has left us, we can see that before **Plato** and **Aristotle,** just before before thinking and reasoning started to spin off from mythology (from the religious background) that is, in the beginning of the *metaphysical rupture*, all in all, thinking was still impregnated with a pervading intuition that the reality our senses decode is an illusion and that the essence of the world is to be found somewhere else. This should perhaps not come as such a surprise considering that religions profess the existence of one or more heavenly worlds, and relegate the "delusive world" of our senses to a background or secondary position.

It is not difficult to imagine that in the times when mythology wasn't thought of as mythology, but was rather part of reality, when mankind was immersed in the world of gods, and to put it in Jungian terms, the collective unconscious archetypes were projected outwards, the line that divided outer reality from the interior psychic world must have been very thin indeed, or practically nonexistent. Moreover, the archetypical projections must have felt more real than the world perceived by the senses.

However, a major rupture most probably set in during the period of the **pre-Socratic** thinkers. This was the time when some bold and audacious thinkers in Asia Minor (Greek colonies) un-

dertook the colossal task of refining the tools of reason (**Thales of Miletus, Anaximenes, Anaximander** and **Anaxagoras** among others) and started to call into question the myths of how the world (the cosmos) was created. As a consequence, the distance between men and gods grew and the archetypes began a process of *introjection*. This distancing, in its early stages, would have likely generated a feeling of not belonging anywhere, rifting the inner and outer worlds from each other. Man began to consider himself as something separate and different from the rest of nature, feeling abandoned by the gods and lost; helpless and perplexed in a world he repeatedly failed to grasp.

However, the pre-Socratic philosophy didn't wholly consummate the metaphysical rupture: a shared mistrust towards what our senses perceive i.e., towards the "*things that are manifest*" (**Heraclitus** 535? – 475? BC) still lingered and prevailed. When mythology was alive and was truly religion, the world of gods, as already said, probably felt more real than the world that our senses perceive, the latter being barely a sort of faulty copy, or worse still, a pure delusion.

In his short but brilliant book, *The Birth of Philosophy*, **Giorgio Colli** writes that the ancient philosopher **Heraclitus** felt that:

"…all the multiplicity of the world, its delusive corporeality, is a weave of enigmas, a disguise of the god…"

and

"… men are mislead regarding knowledge of the things that are manifest, as they don't know what it's all about, for example, because they believe that they are real, whereas, truly, they are not/…/ Maybe Heraclitus meant that the things that are manifest, corporeal, deceive us and make us believe they exist outside our-

selves and are real, alive; above all, because we imagine them to be permanent." (Colli, 1977) (My translation)

Another important concept to be found in Heraclitus' surviving fragments regards the flow of things. Reality is not static — you cannot step into the same river twice; everything flows, everything is moving. Fire, which is never at rest, he tells us, is the essence of all things.

We now stand astride in the middle of the metaphysical rupture process, with one leg in the mythological past and the other getting the lay of the new lands that are incipiently being opened by reason and observation: not any longer totally subdued to the alleged whims of the gods, but neither entirely accepting the full existence or reality of "*the things that are manifest*", i.e., that part of reality that our senses perceive.

Around this time other sages expressed this same process in their own different ways. **Pythagoras** (560-480 BC) looked for the essence of things in numbers, which would lurk behind the physical world that our senses grasp. **Parmenides** (515-450 BC) informed that change and movement are delusive phenomena; and his disciple **Zeno** of Elea (490-430 BC)—disobeying his master— bequeathed to us some exquisite paradoxes that paved the way for the appearance of dialectics and of the sophists who rendered everything relative. After **Parmenides** and **Zeno**, came **Melissus** of Samos, who refuted the reliability of sense-perception. **Gorgias** (485-380 BC) paved the way to extreme nihilism, stating that nothing exists or that nothing can be known. **Plato** only allowed for the possibility of knowledge through the godly nature of our souls and the deducing power of reason, whereas our senses, he asserted, were deceptive. The list could indeed go on and on.

Let's also remember that both **Heraclitus** and **Plato** considered that wisdom didn't exist anymore in their days; only "love of wisdom", i.e. *philo* (love)-*sophy* (wisdom). Hence, it's not too far stretched to imagine that **Plato** thought that those old sages or wise men from erstwhile had served as bridges between gods and men. They knew how to decipher the riddles with which the gods put simple mortals to the test. The **Sphinx** that **Oedipus** had to face is likely the most emblematic expression of these riddles. And in Delphos and Dodona the god **Apollo** talked to the sages in riddles, delivered by exalted female oracles or sibyls.

Now, consider that a riddle is a challenge, and thus contains an element of cruelty or violence. Men experienced either the distancing of the gods from men or the distancing of men from the gods, as something cruel and violent, and the riddles, then, would arguably symbolize this process. "*The man-god conflict/.../found its symbol in the riddle."* (Idem, Colli, 1977)

It would so seem that mortals, developing their thinking or reasoning powers, had to relinquish the emotional support from the gods, and discern their own path: a path fraught with all kinds of dangers, the treading of which required the assistance of the sage and the hero. However, the biggest danger was reason itself. The Minoan maze in the legendary Crete was an eloquent symbol of this danger: *"as an archetype, as a primordial phenomenon, the Labyrinth can only prefigure 'logos', reason. What, if not 'logos', is a product of mankind, in which mankind loses himself, ruins himself?"* (ibid)

It must have felt like a dreadful existential earthquake; the soul deprived of any feeling of reality. On the one hand, not only were sense perceptions put in doubt, but also the bare possibility of really getting any kind of knowledge. And on the other hand, the gods — the assuring mythology, the intuitive knowledge— were

abandoning the mortals leaving them like orphans in a universe that was increasingly illegible. Under such circumstances, it's no wonder that a feeling of existential vertigo emerged.

These things considered, it seems reasonable to conjecture that **Aristotle** tried to put an end to all this "mess", dictating the principles and general procedures that would guarantee a felicitous discussion; imposing rational restraints to discourse, as *the principle of non-contradiction* and *the law of excluded middle*, and positing a theory of dialectic deduction, or ***syllogism***[4]. Furthermore, and not less important, he started observing, examining and describing the objects (and even cultural products) that make up the world our senses perceive. And although this might seem a triviality, put into context it's definitely revolutionary considering that when our surrounding objects, tangible to the senses, are studied and examined they are suddenly being endowed with dignity and thus deserve to be studied and examined, and are so reassessed on the scale of values: they are not treated as worthless illusions anymore.

In this aspect, **Aristotle** frankly opposed **Plato**; whereas **Plato** ranked abstract *Ideas* (or Forms or Kinds, or maybe we can even say Concepts?) higher than physical reality[5], **Aristotle** considered

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[4] Ortega y Gassset writes in *La idea de principio en Leibniz*: "Mi idea es, pues, que Aristóteles hace por cuenta propia, y más tarde, el descubrimiento de "algo así como principio"/…/ con motivo de su gran descubrimiento, posterior a los *Tópicos:* el silogismo apodíctico *analítico*." (pag. 169-170, Revista de Occidente). *(My idea is, then, that **Aristotle**, on his own, and later, discovers "something like a principle"/.../ on occasion of his great discovery, following the Topics: the analytical apodictic syllogism.)*

[5] As a sample we can read in Plato's *The Republic VII* (529): *"...in my opinion, that knowledge only which is of being and of the unseen can make the soul look upwards, and whether a man gapes at the heavens or blinks on the ground seeking to learn some particular of sense, I would deny that he can learn, for nothing of that sort is matter of science..."*

physical objects the ontological foundation of reality, thus conferring them a higher ranking.[6]

And this, presumably, was when the rupture with the gods was finally consummated. More than likely it isn't mere coincidence that the decadence of the ancient Greek culture started around this period— a culture that was already exhausted and dried up due to a sustained, supreme and impressive spiritual effort.

It's tempting to hypothesize that **Aristotle** set out to examine and classify the physical world with the purpose of soothing this existential vertigo by reaching out to "real" tangible things. He was dealing not only with a philosophical need, but also with a crucial existential one. There was an urgency to find a support or base on which to stand so as not to stumble and fall irretrievably into the abyss of chaos. (**Plato** too had sought for stability in his own way, or as Salvador Pániker words it in ***Filosofía y mística***: "*if stability is not found in things, it will have to be sought somewhere else"*.)

And so it was that **Aristotle**—carrying out that revolutionary idea of observing and studying "*the things that are manifest*"—gave rise to what later on would be known as the **empiric tradition,** or *empiricism***.**

Man's contemplative attention started now to turn toward physical things, events and objects that surrounded him; he started to examine his own environment.

As a consequence, the nexus to instinctive archetypical knowledge was loosened. However, this loss was compensated, on the one hand, by the refinement of reason and of the disci-

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[6] Interesting enough, not few pitfalls lie in the way of reasoning when physical objects are taken as starting points or principles. For an interesting dissertation on the subject see *La idea de principio en Leibniz,* by Ortega y Gasset.

plines of logic and discourse, and, on the other hand, by applying this enlightened reason to the study and observation of material objects.

Nonetheless, a severe difficulty arose: reason and reality don't always seem to get along so well. Examples of which are **Zeno's** paradoxes, the one of the arrow, or the one of Achilles and the tortoise, where again reason and the physical world perceived by our senses seem to collide. "*Nothing says that the structure of the Real coincides with the structure of the intellectual (concepts)*."[7]

Parmenides discovered that there is a certain necessity (*ananke*) that compels reasoning to go in a certain direction notwithstanding who the reasoning subject is, and, astounding enough, this reasoning will be identical in every man as long as reasoning is done with concepts and not with things. Ortega y Gasset puts it this way: "*This exact thinking consists in giving **things** the shoulder*."[8] Other ways of thinking are subjective and can be "*probable, persuasive, plausible or suggestive*"[9] but not unerring.

So, maybe, to be able to apply reason to material objects–and having given up the Platonic notion of unchangeable Ideas– **Aristotle** had to introduce the notion of an unchangeable and primary "substance" or essence: something distinguished from "attributes", something that is always identical to itself. Reason would operate best when applied to stable, permanent, precise and fixed things. (We are now far from **Heraclitus**' intuition that nothing is forever, everything changes and flows.)

Schematically, **Aristotle**'s classical syllogism goes: if A=B and C=A, then C=B (with all its constraints). If A, B or C are constantly changing we run into trouble. They must have a substance

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[7] *La idea de principio en Leibniz*, pages 192-193, Revista de Occidente
[8] Idem. page 187.
[9] Idem.

or essence, something unchangeable. The same goes for the principle of non contradiction.

On the one hand, all these propositions would work problem-free as long as objects were considered to be static, unchanging, fixed and to exist in isolation, or when applied to pure logic or reasoning. On the other hand, **Aristotle** felt the urge to observe and reflect on material things, and by no means was he willing to surrender the possibility to reason about the physical world. This was an annoying scenario (and **Aristotle** seems to get almost rabid when defending his *principle of non-contradiction* in *Metaphysics Book IV Ch 4*). The way out was to introduce the concept of "substance" or "essence", (heroically spurring reason to its ultimate contortions, while trying not to get trapped in its labyrinth, *Metaphysics, Book VII)*) that is to say, the existence of something that does not change, and persists behind change in order to yield to reason.[10] And in this way he could go on believing that "*logic reflects reality; words reflect things*".[11]

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[10] Ortega y Gasset understands the situation in the following way (Idem., page 214, Ch 22):
"*5. La tesis según la cual en los fenómenos sensibles encontramos la auténtica Realidad, es, junto al principio de contradicción, el otro gran principio de Aristóteles que en ninguna parte formula especialmente y menos analiza y discute.*
6. Mas, por otra parte, conserva el suficiente Platonismo para entender por conocimiento la pura relación entre conceptos o logismo. Según esto, lo Real solo puede ser asequible en el concepto, lo que parece contradecir el «principio de los sentidos». ¿Cómo cohonestar lo uno con lo otro? /…/La solución de Aristóteles consiste en degradar lo más esencial del concepto platónico: su exactitud, su logicidad, haciendo que provenga de una inducción empírica practicada sobre los datos sensibles. No obstante, pretenderá que esos conceptos ilógicos funcionen lógicamente."

("*5. The thesis by which we find authentic Reality in sensible phenomena is, together with the law of non-contradiction, the other great principle of Aristotle, which he nowhere formulates specifically and less analyses and discusses.*
6. Moreover, on the other hand, he conserves enough Platonism as to understand that knowledge consists of pure relations between concepts, or logicism. According to this, Reality can only be accessible through concepts, which seems to contradict "the principle of the senses". How can one thing be compatible with the other?/.../ Aristotle's solves this by degrading the essentials of the Platonic concept: its accuracy, its logicality, making it to come from an empirical induction carried out on the sensorial data. Nonetheless, he will expect those illogical concepts to function logically.") (My translation).

[11] Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc. 1963, Book 10 "Philosophy" p.69

"*In this view, actual reality is determinate. That is why it does not contradict itself and why we should not contradict ourselves when we talk about it. What really exists, says he [**Aristotle**], is something definite with specific characteristics. The world we live in is made up of distinct things and attributes, of distinct kinds of things and qualities."*[12]

One consequence of this was that the examined object was treated as a separate entity, isolated from its environment, and the universe was conceived as a vast sum of disconnected and inanimate fragments[13].

1.4 Hume and Kant

But let us now return to our two philosophical traditions, *empiricism* and *rationalism*, and take a leap in time. Many a century had to pass by before **Plato**'s rationalism wedded **Aristotle**'s empiricism, at least in practical terms. In the 16th and 17th centuries, Galileo and Newton, respectively, started closing the gap between these two rival traditions, giving way to stunning advances in the sciences. The philosopher **Immanuel Kant** (1724-1804) was impressed by this astonishing development. And this, thought **Kant**, was happening in spite of the rivalry between the two traditions. He noticed that the sciences seemed to employ both of them, ignoring the controversy. However, a worrisome issue was the fact that the sciences were stating the existence of natural laws and the idea that everything in the universe was governed and determined

[12] Ibid. page 69
[13] In *La idea de principio en Leibniz*, Ortega y Gassets affirms that "*Para Aristóteles, el carácter más decisivo del auténtico ser, es la soledad (*Metaph.,VII,1,1028 a 34*)"*Chapter 22, page 223 *("For **Aristotle** the most decisive feature of authentic being, is loneliness")*

by them, i.e. they had a deterministic viewpoint. Kant assented, but he also wanted to save the notion of **free will**, which in turn would safeguard the possibility of stating moral judgments. But how could you have free will if everything was strictly determined by the laws of nature? To put it very briefly, he saved **free-will** by asserting, as we shall soon see, that we can only have knowledge of *phenomena* (in short, of that which we perceive with our senses), which are subjected to the laws of nature, but not of ultimate Reality, the "*thing in itself*", the *noumenon*, which, on the contrary, is not subjected to the laws of nature (as these are part of the *phenomena*). But as the free-will does not belong to the phenomena, says Kant, we can at least **think**, without contradiction, that the free-will exists, and that it is not completely **determined** by the laws of nature. But this is not our subject matter so we will not delve into this question here. Nonetheless, we are interested in looking closer at some of the conclusions Kant arrived at during the process of his scrutiny when he began shifting his attention –putting on hold the issue about the legitimate source of knowledge– and focusing on the question of *how* it is possible that we can acquire anything like knowledge at all; that is, he started focusing not so much on the **objects** of knowledge, but on the **subject** that does the knowing.[14]

According to Kant himself, it was **David Hume's** writings (1711-1776) that made him reflect on the theory of knowledge. Hume was an empiricist, that is, he maintained that we cannot have ideas of things that we have not sensed:

"It seems a proposition, which will not admit of much dispute, that all our ideas are nothing but copies of our impressions, or, in other words, that it is impossible for us to think of anything,

[14] It would, however, be fair to remark that John Locke (1632-1704) had already started shifting focus towards the knowing subject in his *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding.*

which we have not antecedently felt, either by our external or internal senses."[15]

This means that we cannot have *ideas* of anything unless we have previously had an *impression* of that something.

But Hume found a circumstance that perplexed him, and perplexed Kant even more, and was one of the motives that spurred the latter in his research, which in part led him to pen down his *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781).

Hume, who, as we have just mentioned, firmly believed that sensorial data and direct experience were the undisputable sources of all knowledge – even though he acknowledged that reason or mind elaborates the data in different ways, creating *ideas* – found that he was unable to account for the fact that we believe we have knowledge of the relation between **cause** and **effect**. We cannot, said Hume, perceive such a relation with our senses. All we perceive is that when one element appears, another one appears almost simultaneously. When I light my lighter and see the flame, for example, I feel the heat coming forth, and unfoundedly assert a **cause/effect** relation, in which I call the flame the **cause** and the heat the **effect**. But all I can perceive is that two things appear simultaneously, or almost so. But I cannot perceive a cause/ effect relationship. Besides, the fact that those two things appear more or less at the same time, once or a thousand times, does not mean to say that this will happen eternally. We do, nevertheless, not only seem to take it for granted that it will always happen, but on top of it we assert unfoundedly, again, that one of the elements is the cause and the other the effect. And on the other hand, Hume claimed and proved that no *a priori* reasoning intervenes in the acquisition of the knowledge of this relation. So we can't perceive

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[15] David Hume, 1748, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Sect. VII, Part I, ¶49.

it, nor reason it out, and yet, we assert that it exists. We do perceive that one thing appears when another one does, but we don't, says Hume, perceive the connection:

"...we only learn by experience the frequent Conjunction of objects, without being ever able to comprehend anything like Connexion between them."[16]

Hume then concluded that our alleged knowledge of the *cause/effect* phenomenon is a product of habit and laziness: we simply get used to perceiving the appearance of one element when another one appears, and due to laziness we conclude that this will always be the case. Therefore, proceeds Hume, our knowledge of the world is fragmentary and delusive:

"Or in other words; having found, in many instances, that any two kind of objects–flame and heat, snow and cold– have always been conjoined together; if flame or snow be presented anew to the senses, the mind is carried by custom to expect heat or cold, and to ***believe*** *that such a quality does exist, and will discover itself upon a nearer approach. This belief is the necessary result of placing the mind in such circumstances. It is an operation of the soul, when we are so situated, as unavoidable as to feel the passion of love, when we receive benefits; or hatred, when we meet with injuries. All these operations are a species of natural instincts, which no reasoning or process of the thought and understanding is able either to produce or to prevent."*[17]

Kant tried to rebut him, but failed. Nonetheless, he refused to accept the idea that our knowledge is illusionary. Something wasn't right. And in order to unveil that something, Kant practically re-defined the human mind in a revolutionary manner by

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[16] Ibid. SECT. VII, PART 1, ¶ 54.
[17] Ibid. SECT. V, PART 1, ¶38.

shifting his attention from the object to be known to the cognitive subject. It is true that Hume too had done this, but it was mostly to defend the empiricist stance, and to argue against the existence of innate ideas.

Hume seems to hint at the idea that something happens in our minds, which is beyond our control, and which makes us perceive the world in a particular way. And in Section V (part 2, §41) he states that nature has imprinted an instinct in us that leads us to associate (relate) according to the principles of "***Resemblance, Contiguity*** *and* ***Causation****; which are the only bonds that unite our thoughts together*." (We will later on come back to this matter, of utter importance in this work).

This is where Kant comes up with the idea that it is possible for us to assert that everything has a cause that yields an effect due to the fact that the human mind cannot avoid but conceiving that everything has a cause[18]. It, therefore, **imposes** this *cause/effect* concept on the world instead of receiving it from the latter. But, how is this possible? How can the mind impose concepts on the world?

Kant resumes the distinction **Leibniz** (1646-1716) had made between truths of reason, which are *a priori,* and truths of fact, which are *a posteriori.*

A priori statements are *analytic*, which means that the predicate is contained in the subject, that is, they seem obvious to us because they are **necessary** and **universal**. For example, "bodies are extended", is an *analytic* statement because the notion "extended" is contained in the notion of "body", i.e., a body is not a body if it has no extension. If it had no extension it wouldn't be a body. An

[18] This is so notwithstanding that today we are less inclined to think in terms of cause and effect, and more in statistic terms.

analytic statement doesn't express anything new; rather, it defines the concept. Another example: "a triangle has three angles". If it didn't have three angles it wouldn't be a tr-iangle. These analytic judgements are called *a priori* because their truths do not depend on experience– they are **prior** to the experience of our senses–; hence we can say that they are **necessary** and **universal**. They are founded on the identity and non-contradiction principles: a triangle has three angles. The predicate (three angles) is contained in the subject concept (tri-angle.)

The statements that do tell us something about the world are *a posterior,* that is, they are products of experience, or of the perception of our senses: this knowledge comes **after** and due to experience; that's why it's called *a posteriori.* And they are *synthetic* because the predicate notion is not contained within the subject notion, ergo something new is stated.[19] Most of the things we say are *synthetic a posteriori* statements. I can, for example, know and affirm that "it's cold outside", if, and only if, I have first had some kind of perception of "outside", be it my own direct experience, or be it because I've heard somebody declaring it to be so. But I cannot know if it is cold *a priori*, viz., only using my understanding or reasoning, disregarding any experience.

However, Kant scandalously affirmed that, besides the *analytic a priori* and the *synthetic a posteriori* statements, there is a third kind of statement: the *synthetic a priori* statements.

And what are *synthetic a priori* statements? How can I have knowledge of something that is neither *analytically a priori* nor derived *synthetically a posteriori* (from experience)? Kant an-

[19] The Cambridge dictionary (https://dictionary.cambridge.org/) defines *synthesis* as "the act of combining different ideas or things to make a whole that is new and different from the items considered separately"

swered that our minds **impose** the *synthetic a priori* statements upon our experience of reality.

1.5 Kant's Categories of Understanding

This means that our minds establish conditions upon the possibilities of experience: we have specific ways of perceiving things, which are not haphazard; rather, our ways of perceiving follow certain criteria or *a priori* concepts (that is, pardon my repeating it, concepts that exist independent of experience) that Kant named **categories.** These *a priori* concepts enable us to make *synthetic a priori* statements, i.e., judgments that tell us something about the world, or at least, 'our' world, and are, nonetheless, independent of experience. This is the case when we make a judgment of *cause* and *effect*. Due to our mental structure we simply can't conceive of anything without believing there is a cause to it, and thus we cannot but conceive it as an effect, which in turn, will likely be the cause of something else. This alleged knowledge, as we have seen when discussing Hume, can neither be derived from experience (so it is *a priori*), nor is it *analytic,* because it informs something –not contained in the sentence– about the (*phenomenical*) world, being the reason why it is a *synthetic a priori* judgment[20]. Or consider the case when we say that, on flat surfaces "a

[20] Another way of putting it can be found in Marie Louise Von Franz's book **Alchemy**: "If something falls down then one must find out why–the wind must have blown it, or something like that, and if no

straight line is the shortest (line) between two points". It is not *analytic*, because "the shortest line" is not contained in the concept "straight line". However, it is *a priori*, because reason (and not the senses) informs us that it must be so, but at the same time it involves concepts that are taken from experience (we cannot reason ourselves to the concept *short* disregarding experience), so it is also *synthetic*. Thus, it is *a synthetic a priori* judgment.

Kant's categories come in threes and are:

Quantity: Unity, Plurality, Totality

Quality: Reality, Negation, Limitation

Relation: Inherence and Subsistence (substance and accident), Causality and Dependence (cause and effect), Community (reciprocity)

Modality: Possibility, Existence, Necessity.

Now let's consider what some of these categories are, and how they act.

We receive multiple sensations through our senses, but these sensations come in a completely chaotic manner: they haven't yet been structured as objects in our minds. You get a reddish hue here, a black glimmer there, a shape, a gleam, a scent, a smooth texture and so on. Our minds organize and relate these sensations to each other and structure them into a perception (that most likely will correspond to a pre-existing concept that already belongs to our linguistic community); for example, an apple. In this sense, the object perceived as **one** *thing* is a construct (or assemblage) of our minds. And being a construct of the mind, it is rather a repre-

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reason is discovered I am sure that half of you will say that we do not know the cause, but that there must be one! Our archetypal prejudices are so strong that one cannot defend oneself against them, they just catch us." (Inner City Books, 1980, p. 33)

sentation of an object, that is to say, it is a *phenomenon* perceived by the mind as a thing which is given the name of *apple.* The torrent of sensations has been organized by a mind into an object. This doesn't mean that it's virtual or non-existing. But what that object "really" is, *the thing in itself*, that is to say, what and how that object would be if there weren't a human mind with its categories to perceive it, we cannot know. All we can say is that an *apple* is what the human mind perceives (and the fact that the concept *apple* most likely already exists in the community makes the process more fluent). But we have no idea what an ant, for instance, would perceive. Kant, as already mentioned, referred to the *thing* behind the phenomena–independent of **our** experience of it– as the *noumena***.**[21]

The apple example helps us understand how we structure a chaotic torrent of sensations turning it into a perception of a *thing*, an object (*phenomenon*) that we call **apple.** But what else have we done? By perceiving it as a *thing*, we have conceived it as a **unit** (first concept of the triad **Quantity**)**,** albeit not thanks to our perception; on the contrary, it was the *pure concept or category* **unity** that affected our perceiving experience, allowing us to conceive the apple as a unity. However, that unit, in turn, is also conceived as multiple, that is, as a **plurality** (second concept), which means to say that we understand it to be made up of parts (colours, textures, peel, pips, flesh etc.) and these parts in turn form a **totality** (third concept)**.** This means that the **totality** of the multiple parts (**plurality**) creates the **unity.** We here have the first three Kantian *categories or pure concepts,* which have made possible our experience of perceiving an apple. They go under the name of ***Quantity*****,** and make up the first triad: ***unity, plurality and totality.***

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[21] Today's science would probably interpret the *noumena* as energy.

The ability to conceive a **unity** is also a necessary prerequisite in distinguishing ONE from MANY. It is also necessary to distinguish **plurality** (the notion of various, for example) from the idea of **totality** (the notion of ALL).

These *a priori* concepts allow us as well to reason around statements such as 2+2=4. We must first be able to conceive the idea of **unity** to be able to conceive the idea of two unities, and then of four such unities. And besides, the 2+2 represent a **plurality** and the resulting 4 a **totality.** Thus, by this "simple" operation we have put the *a priori* concepts of **unity**, **plurality** and **totality** to work. Put in other words, the innate structure of our minds (which embraces the **categories**) confers the ability of conceiving these *a priori* concepts, which in turn allow us to carry out mathematical operations, among so many other things.

On the other hand, the apple has an existence (albeit a *phenomenical* one), and in order to conceive this existence we must exclude that which it is NOT the apple –**negation**–, which in turn implies conceiving that it has **limits.** In other words: the apple's **reality** has both spatial and temporal limits, beyond which it ceases to be the referred apple. This entails that we must be able to separate one object from another, and furthermore separate them from the perception of ourselves. These operations have involved the second triad (***Quality***) of the categories: ***reality, negation, limitation.***

Besides, the apple is **substance,** and our understanding can affirm things about substance, as for example that it has certain properties in determinate moments, i.e., it can be a grammatical subject with predicates that denote its properties: *the apple is green and small*, and later on we might say *the apple is rotten.* These phenomena are states, and yet we go on speaking of **the**

apple. We *a priori* conceptualize or conceive that there is a **substance** behind the changes that occur through time.

In addition, we cannot but think that its appearing in the world has a **cause,** that is, it did not appear out of nowhere, and it will also be, in turn, the cause of coming effects (e.g., new apple trees).

Furthermore, we can speak hypothetically about the apple, using conditionals, for example. We can say: *if we put the apple into a hot oven, it will cook.* We can easily notice that the conditional implies notions of cause and effect.

So here the third triad (***Relation***) is**: *substance and accident, cause and effect, and reciprocity.***

This latter concept– of **reciprocity** or community– has given way to not few debates and different interpretations (actually it is also true that **all** the categories have generated some controversy or the other).

Generally, the concept of reciprocity is interpreted in terms of the spatial relation between objects, which comprise a unified space due to the fact that they co-exist in time. If the *apple* is **in** the *oven*, both these objects (apple and oven) co-exist in time and space and establish a relation of community (or **reciprocity**) rather than of, let's say, cause and effect. Moreover, these two objects mutually delimit or exclude each other and are at the same time constituents or members of the "allness" of which they simultaneously are part of: "*the members of the division/.../ exclude each other and yet are connected in one sphere, so the understanding represents to itself the parts of the latter, as having–each*

of them– an existence (as substances) independently of the others, and yet as united in one whole."[22]

This exclusion and yet community derives in disjunctive propositions which embrace the totality of all possible knowledge: the apple is either in the oven or it's not in the oven (to our understanding it must be one or the other, cannot be both), or the apple is either a fruit or a vegetable (cannot be both). [23]

And the fourth triad–of ***Modality***– informs us that we conceptualize in such a manner that an object is either **possible** or it is **impossible, existent** or **inexistent, necessary** or **contingent.** Putting it in a simplified manner, we could say without doubt that if we understand that A implies B, then it is for us **impossible** for A to **exist** without B. That is, we understand that there must be necessary conditions for something to exist. It cannot rain (A), if there are no clouds (B), because that would be **impossible** to our understanding**.**

On the other hand, if there were clouds it *could* rain. It would be a **possibility (contingency)**, but not a **necessity**. However, we do understand it to be **necessary** that every change has a cause (e.g. something, **necessarily,** must cause the rain).

Some commentators believe that this triad deals with the relation between that which is said about something (the manner in which it is said) and the subject that says it. So it doesn't add anything to the concept, it rather just expresses the attitude of the subject. "It might rain" or "there must necessarily be clouds if it is to rain". That would explain the fact that they go under the name

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[22] I. Kant, 1787, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, (Britannica Great Books), Transcendental Logic, First Division, Sect. 2, ¶ 2.

[23] Because quantum physics is outright questioning some of our *a priori* concepts (it seems that a subatomic particle can be a wave and a particle at the same time, for example), our understanding tends to lag behind, which is why we can find it extremely difficult to follow or grasp.

modality (manner)**.** I understand, though, that the concepts of **modality** refer to the ability of our minds to conceive **possibility** and **necessity,** which is really an astounding capacity.

Be that as it may, these *a priori* concepts are part of our understanding, says Kant, and are neither derived from our senses nor from our experience. They, so to say, "come" with our minds.

1.6 Space and Time

Kant also affirms that, besides the *a priori* **concepts** –the categories– we have *pure* or *a priori* **intuitions** (which, forgive my persistence, means that they are not derived from experience) that also define the way our understanding perceives reality. They also pertain to the structure of our minds.

These are **space** and **time**. Let's see what he says about **space**:

"...the representation of space cannot be borrowed from the relations of external phenomena through experience; but, on the contrary, this external experience is itself only possible through the said antecedent representation."[24]

And about **time**:

"Time is not an empirical conception. For neither coexistence nor succession would be perceived by us, if the representation of time did not exist as a foundation a priori. Without this presupposition we could not represent to ourselves that things exist together at

[24] I. Kant, 1787, The Critique of Pure Reason, (Britannica Great Books) Introductory, Sect. 1, § 1

one and the same time, or at different times, that is, contemporaneously, or in succession."[25]

As just mentioned, Kant calls **space** and **time** *pure intuitions* when referring to what is being perceived, but when referring to them as concepts he straightforwardly calls them *pure concepts*, that is, sometimes space and time are intuitions (perceptions), and sometimes concepts. So when we refer to perceived space or time the terms will appear with lower case letters, but when they are meant to be understood as *pure a priori concepts* they will appear with upper case letters (Time and Space).

When we say that Time and Space are *pure concepts*, we are saying that nothing can be thought (or imagined) outside of Time or Space. No matter how hard we try, we will soon realize that it is impossible .Even when using our imagination, or in dreaming, we presuppose Time and Space.

Even bounded or partial intuitions or perceptions of space are considered *pure intuitions* because they are perceptions of space that are part of the *pure a priori concept* of Space: a room, a street, a garden, etc. are, though bounded and distinct spaces, part of the *a priori concept* of unbounded Space. That is to say that this room, and that street, and the garden beyond, although perceived as bounded and separate, will be conceived as parts of the same Space (as if we said the Space of the Universe, infinite or not) and conceived as being able to exist simultaneously. That is, we cannot conceive different Spaces (many universes), but can, nonetheless, conceive different specific spaces (the room, the street, the garden etc.). Space (with capital letter) is a *pure con-*

[25] Ibid. Sect. 2, § 1

cept (a priori), and the sensible perceptions are *pure intuitions,* insofar as they are conceived as parts of the *pure concept* Space.

We have now clarified why Space is a *pure or a priori* concept. The notion of a homogeneous Space[26]–infinite or not– that contains all the discreet spaces at the same time cannot have emerged from experience, because it would be impossible to traverse the whole universe in order to verify its homogeneity.

Kant also brings up the issue of Space being finite or infinite, which is equally impossible to verify. However, it would seem that there is no escaping from making a choice: we inexorably believe that one of these two possibilities must be necessary due to the fact that we cannot avoid conceiving the existence of Space –being as it is an *a priori* concept–, and the fact that we conceive that something must be **possible** or **impossible** (but not both at the same time), must be **existent** or **inexistent** (but not at the same time), and yet both alternatives seem equally problematic. Closely related is the problem of how Space and Time appeared in the beginning of times. We cannot conceive them being eternal, but neither can we conceive them arising from nothing. Just to give an example and illustrate the traumatic persistence of this problem, let me briefly quote **Victor Rydberg** (1828-1895, Swedish writer who was a member of the Swedish Academy) on the commonality of certain issues in most human religions or myths:

"*...for the human mind, the problem is insoluble. It then lies close at hand to escape this difficulty by moderately rejecting non-existence and saying: the world is eternal. But none of the ancient Indo-European bards chose this way out, as far as we can tell from the existing testimony. They stop short of the insoluble problem, which was proposed in ancient times, and confess its in-*

[26] Cf. Newton's conception of space.

comprehensibility/…/ However, when the leap from non-existence to existence must be made, a concept of space is the first condition for a conception about the origin of the world, due to our mental organization."[27]

The same happens with Time, Kant tells us, with the difference that time is given successively and not simultaneously. We are able to conceive many spaces within the same Space, but we cannot conceive many different times within Time (please remember that we are not talking about how things "really are"–cf. the Theory of Relativity–, but of how our understanding conceives them).

There is and has been a lot of arguing around the Kantian pure intuitions and categories. There is no unanimity on how they are to be interpreted or understood. But for us the important point is that Hume and then Kant enquired into the prior and necessary conditions that are rooted in our understanding and that determine the way we perceive and experience the world. These two philosophers were among the first to seriously investigate the conditions of our understanding. Until then, focus had been put on the question of what was the legitimate source of knowledge (the senses or reason), taking for granted that once that question was settled, our knowledge of the world and its objects would be "objective".[28]

It might be in place here to considerer the important distinction between the idea that some of the ancient Greeks maintained, including **Plato**, that the empirical or sensible world is false, or even worse, a delusion, unreal –some traditions even held an evil spirit responsible for the creation of the world with the sole aim of deceiving men (for example Christianity, Mazdeism, Cartesian-

[27] Investigations into Germanic Mythology, Volume II, Part 1: Indo-European Mythology, Ch. 1, sect 2
[28] A good example is the Baconian Scottish realism (late 17th Century), that continued predicating that scientific knowledge was objective, empirical, and equal for everybody, independently of the knowing subject.

ism –recall Descartes' Evil Demon–, the Upanishads, Schopenhauer etc), and the Kantian notion of the categories. Kant didn't assert that the world or the things we perceive, albeit phenomena, are false or illusory. He meant that we perceive the world, or reality, in a certain and particularly human way, and that this manner is determined by certain *a priori* intuitions and concepts, which are Space and Time and the categories. This notion – that we relate to entities as we do because our minds organize the experience of understanding according to certain principles–, which we have finally reached, is of foremost importance to what follows in this work. We will be investigating our "own categories", but we will confine our field of research to some of the Principles that are crucial to language production. That means that we do not at all claim to be exhaustive. But even though incomplete, our "list" will serve the purpose of making the points that shall be forwarded in the following chapters.

1.7 Summary and Conclusion

Since the times of the ancient Greeks, philosophers have been musing about which is the legitimate source of knowledge, the senses or reason? And thus two important philosophical schools, empiricism and rationalism, started contending with each other. The issue of the dispute could roughly be expressed with this question:

Are we to trust the senses or reason in our quest for truth?

Let's take an example. We can affirm that the senses, sight in our example, tell us that the sun rotates around Earth. We can see, every morning, how it rises over the horizon, crosses the sky and

ends up setting on the other side. According to my senses, it's the sun that orbits, and not Earth. None of my senses perceive that the opposite is the case: I cannot see or feel that it is the Earth and not the sun that whirls. But today we "know" (or have so been told) that this is the case. We could thus conclude that, on some occasions at least, our senses seem to deceive us. They cannot be fully trusted. A rationalist would tell us that only reason, as long as the premises are true or self-evident, will give us real and trustworthy knowledge, i.e. universal and necessary truths. Sometimes, however, both rationalism and empiricism can find themselves running into dead ends. Just as an example, let's consider Zeno of Elea's arrow paradox. If somebody shoots an arrow from his bow at a target, it should not, according to reason, ever arrive, because in order to hit the target, it must first traverse half of the distance, and then half of the missing half and then half of that half and so on ad infinitum. Reason informs us that everything is dividable, so we must conclude that, as there will always be a half still to be divided, the arrow will never be able to reach the target. Nonetheless, our senses tell us another story. We can *see* perfectly well that the arrow nails the target. Zeno's teacher **Parmenides** sidestepped this objection affirming that the world our senses perceive is false and deceitful, just as movement and change are. Parmenides great discovery was that certain truths are universal and necessary, and more astounding still was that this is so regardless of the subject's opinions.

Empiricists, on the other hand, advocate that we cannot have ideas of anything if not perceived first by the senses. **Hume** spoke of *impressions of sensation* (those that are perceived with our outer senses) *impressions of reflection* (inner perceptions) and of derived perceptions, which he called *ideas*.

Is it so then that we can neither trust the senses nor reason? Something is wrong here, thought Kant, so he decided to get in-

volved. But, instead of focusing on the object of knowledge (be it the sun, the arrow in abeyance, the mystery of change etc.), he focused on the knowing subject, on the mind that seeks to know.

Kant understood that neither rationalism nor empiricism, which were the most important philosophical schools at his time, could by themselves solve the dilemmas that surged in the wake of the impressive development of the natural sciences. And these, thought Kant, had been so incredibly successful because they applied their methods unconcerned about which of the two philosophical schools they belonged to.

What interests us in this work is the part in which Kant arrives at the conclusion that regardless of whether we use the senses or employ reason, we impose upon our surrounding world –or to be more accurate, our experiences of the world– certain modes of being of our minds. That is, we perceive the world according to a specific and very human mind structure. We can therefore not know, says Kant, how our world is "objectively".

The sciences, however, are possible because all humans, having the same basic mind structure, perceive the world through the same color of lenses, which is to the benefit of our survival (the structure of our minds does not obey randomness, but rather our needs). We can thus access scientific knowledge of the phenomenal world, but not of the world as it "really" is, the thing itself, (the *noumena).*

In the ensuing chapters, I will in part follow the Kantian idea that concepts and categories (Principles in our terms) affect our experience of the world; I will, nonetheless, making use of the relatively recent findings of Cognitive Linguistics, keep to the idea that our basic conceptualizing activity is ultimately rooted in our bodies and senses. However, from the roots grow a majestic trunk and spreading-crowns of endless leaves: that is, our con-

cepts become more and more abstract (or indirect). They are, nonetheless, indispensable to our human interaction with "reality".

My **Innate Regulating Principles** (Ch.VI) will in part correspond to the notion of Kant's categories or *pure apriori concepts*. Calling them "Principles" I put greater emphasis on the structuring and organizational role of the categories (and less on their conceptual bearing), and on how we manage to relate things to each other in order to create meaning.

Besides, I propose the hypothesis that our relational activity is compulsive, and consequently call the force behind it **Relational Compulsion**. This is also the force behind our conceptualizing activity, insomuch it is regulated by the above mentioned **Innate Regulating Principles**. Besides exploring how concepts integrate with each other, creating sense and meaning, we will further ahead try to understand why and how it is possible to create and constantly use metaphors and other figures of speech.

APPENDIX

The controversy between Kant and Goethe (1749-1832) is well-known. The latter couldn't accept the idea that the way we perceive reality is subject to the way our minds are structured. He believed that we are rather part of nature, her creatures, and all we do and create is also nature. I don't see why these two views necessarily have to clash, or why they would be incompatible.

I'll venture to imagine that maybe Goethe understood that Kant's notion of an inaccessible "thing in itself" (*the noumena)* would end up severing us from nature, cutting us off from any real knowledge of her, as a result of which we would find ourselves

trapped in a sort of mental bubble, and that "reality" would thus exist somewhere "outside" in an unreachable dimension.

In his book "*The Riddles of Philosophy*" (The Anthroposophic Press Spring Valley New York, 1973.), **Rudolf Steiner**, referring to **Kant** wrote:

"*If it is correct that the law of human reason refers only to the inner worlds of the mind, how do we then manage even to speak of things outside ourselves at all? In that case, we should have to be completely caught in the cobweb of our inner world. An objection of this kind is raised by G. E. Schulze (1761 – 1833) in his book, Aenesidemus, which appeared anonymously in 1792. In it he maintains that all our knowledge is nothing but mere conceptions and we could in no way go beyond the world of our inner thought pictures.*" (p. 154)

And further on, he writes:

"*One of the most consistent followers of scepticism is S. Maimon (1753 – 1800), who, from 1790 on, wrote several books that were under the influence of Kant and Schulze. In them he defended with complete determination the view that, because of the very nature of our cognitive faculty, we are not permitted to speak of the existence of external objects. Another disciple of Kant, Jacob Sigismund Beck, went even as far as to maintain that Kant himself had really not assumed things outside ourselves and that it was nothing but a misunderstanding if such a conception was ascribed to him.*" (p.155)

We suggest that "reality", regardless of how it is defined, is construed by us in a very specific way, that is, in a very human manner, and this must necessarily be so. Our specific manner of perceiving and conceptualizing our world allows us to move in it in accordance to the needs and shapes of our bodies and minds, to

feed and create myriad cultures, each adapting to diverse environments. Quantum physics seems to suggest that reality doesn't exist on its own, i.e. independent of an observer. Reality must be perceived for it to be "something". This would imply that "objective" reality, as such, is an empty notion. We could maybe say that "reality" is something flexible and mouldable: it can be organized and codified in the perception process in myriad different ways in accordance to the different needs of different organic beings. What reality "is" would depend on who is perceiving and interacting with it. No Reality would be "realer" than any other. They all coexist. But this does not, by any means, entail that there is nothing but illusion and hallucination. Nor does it imply that we are "cut off" from anything just because we are what we are (humans and not, say, snails); and we simply relate to what exists in the only manner our minds and bodies can: in a human way. So we can talk about *our* reality, our *phenomena,* and that should be good enough. The "*thing in itself*" is not "something" definable once and for all. It is rather pure potentiality, an endless supply of possibilities.

CHAPTER II

A Very Human World
Concepts
Relations, Relations, Relations
Direct and Indirect Concepts
The Relational Compulsion Hypothesis
Relational Compulsion and Creativity
Does the Relating Compulsion Have Two Aspects?

"It is evident that there is a principle of connection between the different thoughts or ideas of the mind, and that, in their appearance to the memory or imagination, they introduce each other with a certain degree of method and regularity./.../And even in our wildest and most wandering reveries, nay in our very dreams, we shall find, that the imagination ran not altogether at adventures, but that there was still a connection upheld among the different ideas, which succeeded each other."

"Though it be too obvious to escape observation, that different ideas are connected together; I do not find that any philosopher has attempted to enumerate or class all the principles of association; a subject, however, that seems worthy of curiosity. To me, there appear to be only three principles of connexion among ideas, namely, Resemblance, Contiguity in time or place, and Cause and Effect."

(David Hume, 1748*, An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, (Britannica Great Books) Sec. III, ¶ 18 and ¶ 19)

"...without our mortal human eyes travelling through the desert, there was no sun, only a vast sum of blind energy, without them no moon; without them no earth, no world at all, no consciousness of creation."

(Max Frisch, *I'm Not Stiller***,** p. 23, Penguin Modern Classics)

"The natural tendency of attention when left to itself is to wander to ever new things; and as soon as the interest of its object is over, so soon as nothing new is to be found there, it passes, ***in spite of our will,*** *to something else."*

(Helmholtz, quoted by William James in *Principles of Psychology,*, Ch.11, p. 273 (Britannica Great Books). Emphasis mine.

2.1 A very human world

Following what has been said in Chapter I, it wouldn't be imprudent to assert that the world that **we** perceive is a very HUMAN world; that is to say, the world that we interact with is to a certain point a creation of our own minds. Yet, this does not entitle us to infer that the world is an illusion or false. When asserting that the world is a creation of our minds we mean –following Kant– that we have a very HUMAN way of structuring and perceiving "things"; that our minds organize experience according to certain principles, which probably differ from one species to another. As mentioned in the previous chapter, I am not suggesting that the world only exists in our minds; I am not affirming that the objects, a chair, a table and so on, are only ideas that exist in the mind of the perceiving subject (if that were the case, we would be treading on the heels of **George Berkeley**). I am only stating that we perceive "things" in a very HUMAN manner. Only a human being will perceive a *chair;* among other things because a *chair* corresponds neatly to the shape of the human body and is conceived for exactly that shape and body. A cow will probably see or smell a set of pieces structured in a certain way, and find in that structuring a meaning different from ours, if one at all. A bird... who knows what a bird perceives when it perches on a *chair?*...but surely it will not be a *chair*. This implies that the assembled pieces that make up an object that we perceive as a *chair* will not be perceived as such if not perceived by a human being.

We can now start asking ourselves why we structure and perceive "reality" the way we do –determined by *a priori concepts* and *intuitions,* according to **Kant,**– and not in any other manner. On the one hand, it would be extremely difficult for us to survive as a cultural species without these *a priori concepts* and intuitions: if we, e.g., weren´t able to establish *cause and effect* relations (regardless if magical or not), or if we were unable to conceive *units, pluralities, totalities* etc.

On the other hand we must also consider, in accordance with most Cognitive linguists, that the assumption that the manner in which we perceive reality is closely related to our vital and basic needs, and to the shape of our bodies, is absolutely reasonable. Let's remember, for example, that we walk upright, and our heads– the alleged location of our minds, and thus superlatively rated– are the uppermost parts of our bodies. As a consequence the notion *up* usually has a positive meaning and the notion *down* a negative one. We talk about *raising* or *uplifting our spirits,* or we say that we feel *down* when we are unhappy. Hell has been imagined as *below* us somewhere and heaven as *above* us.

The world we perceive is a very HUMAN one.

2.2 Concepts

However, what is specifically human is not limited to a particular manner of perceiving the world. It also comprises the activity of creating and re-creating **concepts.** And these definitely only exist in our minds. They have a preponderant role in making up the way we perceive our very HUMAN world.

The **concept** *chair* only exists **in our minds**, and must be distinguished from the **object** (a specific assemble of pieces that we see as a thing in the world and refer to it with the **word**, that is, sounds/letters tʃɛː/C-H-A-I-R). Our concepts shape the way in which we perceive reality, and the way in which we perceive reality governs the way in which we create concepts, but this we shall explore further on.

Now let us briefly elaborate the question of what a **concept** is returning to our example with *chair.* How is the **concept** *chair* different from the **object**? Maybe the easiest answer is saying that I can think, imagine and talk about a *chair* without having my senses perceiving or touching one. I use the **word** CHAIR to refer to the concept. The concept gives the word meaning. Without the concept the word would just be a series of meaningless sounds. The **concept** "is" in my mind, notwithstanding that it can be linked to many different internal images, and even to many different words (see below).

Once the concept has been accessed, typically in childhood, the subject will thereafter not perceive only a bunch of pieces of whatever material put together capriciously, but will perceive a *chair.* Thus the concept, from now on, will affect the way the object is perceived.

And if not carrying out a specifying function, **concepts** also tend to subordinate **multiplicity** (the myriad different chairs we encounter in the experience of the world) to **unity** (the "general" concept *chair*). All specific chairs (the minimalist chair I saw at John's) must refer to the general concept, or if you will, all must be subsumed to the more general category *chair,* because otherwise they would not be considered *chair*.

And as already mentioned, we must distinguish **concept** from **word.** The easiest way to grasp this is thinking that different

words, from the same language or from other languages, can refer to one and the same concept. *Chair, silla, stol***,** *chaise,* are different **words** belonging to different languages, but refer, nonetheless, to the same **concept.**[29]

2.3 Relations, relations, relations

"By a natural consequence, we are led to suppose that at the same time that we have several sensations or several ideas in the mind, we feel the relations which exist between these sensations, and the relations that exist between these ideas...If the feeling of the relations exist in us,...it is necessarily the most varied and the most fertile of all human feelings: 1st, the most varied, because, relations being more numerous than beings, the feelings of relations must be in the same proportion more numerous than the sensations whose presence gives rise to their formation; 2nd,the most fertile, for the relative ideas of which the feeling-of-relation is the source...are more important than absolute ideas, if such exist...If we interrogate common speech, we find the feeling of relation expressed there in a thousand different ways. If it is easy to seize a relation, we say that it is ***sensible,*** *to distinguish it from one which, because its terms are too remote, cannot be as quickly perceived. A sensible difference, or resemblance...What is taste in the arts, in intellectual productions? What but the feeling of those relations among the parts which constitute their merit? Did we not feel relations we should never attain to true knowledge,...for almost all our knowledge is of relations...We never have an isolated sensation;...we are therefore never without the feeling of relation...An* ***object*** *strikes our senses; we see in it only a sensation...The relative is so near the absolute, the relation-feeling so near the sensation-feeling, the two are so intimately fused in the composition of the object, that the relation appears to us as part of the sensation itself..."*

J. J. Severin de Cardaillac, *Etudes elementaires de philosophie*, sec. I, chap. VII

(Quoted by William James in his **Principles of psychology**, chap. IX)

What has been said up to now could also be expressed in the following way: we perceive and think about the world as we do because our minds –without us being necessarily aware of it– relate

[29] This doesn´t mean that a concept is something rigid and always identical to itself. As we shall see later on, concepts are protean and changeable.

entities in specific ways, i.e., there are specifically human ways of interrelating and organizing reality.

Moreover, it would seem that nothing in our minds exists isolated or insularly; nothing can exist in our minds completely separated, abstracted from some kind of context. This implies that anything that goes on in our minds, be it images, desires, thoughts, words, dreams, ideas, feelings etc. belongs to some kind of **energetic relational network.** Why energetic? Because we are not dealing with material entities that interrelate in our brains, banging into each other like billiard balls, but with different forms of energy that interrelate and that we decode as ideas, feelings, thoughts etc.

So the mind is not a "thing" that contains other "things" (concepts, images, memories etc.), but rather a **relational process,** and could, moreover, be itself a product of the **relational** activity.

We will be talking a lot about relations, interrelating, and relational. There exist other terms such as linking, associating, connecting, uniting etc., but I have chosen to mostly use the terms **relate** as the verb, **relational** as the adjective, and **relation** as the noun, because I consider them to be more comprehensive, or at least I will use them in a more comprehensive manner. To relate is not exactly the same as to associate, for example.

Let us now attempt, with a little help from Hume, to come up with a definition of how we will be using these concepts:

We create a *relation* in our minds between two or more entities when we perceive that some of their *attributes match,* or are *shared* (attributes that include the concepts of *similarity)*, and/or when we perceive *nearness* (which includes the concept of *contiguity*), *simultaneity, contrast or containment,* which imply some kind of mutual influence, synthesis or energetic in-

teraction. We also relate two or more entities by effect of conventions and/or habits.

This definition helps us explain **when** we establish a relation, but not the **manner** in which we do it, the **how.** That is why the definition does not include the *cause/effect* relation, which goes under the **how**. The **manner** in which we relate entities is governed by what we will denominate **Innate Regulating Principles**, (kin to the Kantian categories). These Principles will be dealt with further on (Ch. VI), though with no intention of been exhaustive. I shall only delve on some of the ones I consider to be indispensable for the existence of language. So for now let it suffice to point out that we have made an attempt at defining **when** we relate, and have distinguished it from the **how** of our relational activity.

2.4 Direct and Indirect Concepts

Let us now just set forth the way in which we will use the terms **basic or direct concepts** and **indirect concepts**.

The **basic** or **direct** concepts are the ones we incorporate in a rather spontaneous way through our senses and other sensorimotor sensations. They come to being as a consequence of the perception of the things we can touch, see, feel, taste, hear etc., for example, *heat* or *apple*. But even when these perceptions are of tangible objects, they still are the products of a relational synthesis carried out unconsciously (that is to say, we don't feel the relating activity that is going on).

What we here call **direct concepts** are sometimes called **conceptual primitives.** Ronald Langacker refers to them in the following way:

"*What occupies the lowest level in conceptual hierarchies? I am neutral in regard to the possible existence of conceptual primitives. It is however necessary to posit a number of 'basic domains,' that is, cognitively irreducible representational spaces or fields of conceptual potential. Among these basic domains are the experience of time and our capacity for dealing with two- and three-dimensional spatial configurations. There are basic domains associated with the various senses: color, space (an array of possible color sensations), coordinated with the extension of the visual field; the pitch scale; a range of possible temperature sensations (coordinated with positions on the body); and so on. Emotive domains must also be assumed /.../ However, most expressions pertain to higher levels of conceptual organization and presuppose nonbasic domains for their semantic characterization."*[30]

The **indirect** concepts, conversely, are not directly perceivable by the senses. These concepts are mental creations that the mind generates when we relate at least two concepts, regardless if they are direct or indirect, and, let me repeat myself, cannot be perceived *directly* by the senses. An *orchestra,* for example, cannot, strictly speaking, be perceived directly by our senses. Some will object that we can in fact perceive an orchestra with our senses, we can see it and hear it etc. But considered a bit closer, we will realize that what we perceive with for example our sight is but a bunch of people sitting or standing in a more or less defined closed space, bearing different kinds of instruments. We cannot perceive the *orchestra*. What happens is that we project the concept *orchestra* onto a bunch of people holding instruments and occupying a determined space at one and the same time. The projection is possible because we have more information in our

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[30] *The Cognitive Linguistic Reader*, Equinox Publishing Ltd (2007), p. 447.

minds than what our senses perceive and because we are capable of relating: we know that this bunch of people will play together following specific scores under the guidance of a director, and also, we previously know what, among other things, *music*, *people, instrument, site, group etc.* mean, and most important of all, we are capable of **relating** these entities to each other (by grouping and reification, see Ch. VI), albeit unconsciously. With this information, accessed beforehand, and our relating activity, we recreate or access the meaning of the **indirect** concept *orchestra.*[31] (See Implicit Relational Fields, Ch. III).

Another example, given by R. Langacker (*Cognitive Grammar*, p. 106), is the concept *recipe.* Ultimately, a recipe is a list of substances (ingredients) probably accompanied by some mixing instructions. The concept *recipe*, however, is a creation of our minds. Due to the fact that we list a series of substances, and have the previous knowledge that the ingredients are to be *combined* into one and the same dish –and are not just an arbitrary or whimsical list– we have created the concept *recipe*, which only exists as a concept in our minds (but is, nevertheless, extremely functional). And yet the concept feels so vivid that we believe that a *recipe* really exists in the world (independently, as it were, of a mind), and that we can see one on the page of a book, when what we really **see** –what our senses perceive– are signs and words displayed in a certain manner. *Recipe* is thus an **indirect** concept, that is, the result of relating previously known concepts (ingredients that *share* a belonging to a higher unity concept, *dish*), and not something our senses can perceive directly.

Yet another example: when we pile up a predefined quantity of cards, we unify them relating them to each other under the con-

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[31] According to our definition of the **when** we relate (see above), several conditions have been fulfilled in this case: *sharing* (a stage, all members have instruments, probably similar clothing, and so on) *contiguity, containment* and *simultaneity*.

cept *deck: a deck of cards.* A *deck* exists only in our minds, while our senses just perceive a series of x piled cards. It is the *sharing* (of shape, design, size etc.), the *contiguity* (they are all piled one on top of the other) and the *simultaneity* (they are generally brought forth at the same time) that make us relate the cards to each other and subsume them under the concept *deck.*

By the same tenet, **symbols** (and the concepts attached to them), affect us in different ways, and are charged with meanings (both intellectual and emotional) that exist only in our minds: for example, a *flag*. What do our senses perceive other than a piece of cloth of a certain size, coloured in a pre-established manner? The cloth and the colours are perceived by our senses, but the **indirect concept** *flag* exists merely in our minds. This doesn´t mean that it can´t conjure up strong emotional reactions.

Concepts and symbols, though only extant in our minds, influence and affect in considerable ways our relation with all kinds of entities and strongly determine the way in which we interact with them.

Let us end this part by just observing that not because concepts are **indirect**, such as the mentioned ones *orchestra, recipe deck, flag* do they lack functional purposes.

2.5 The Relational Compulsion Hypothesis

"Nature, by an absolute and uncontrollable necessity has determined us to judge as well as to breathe and feel; nor can we any more forbear viewing certain objects in a stronger and fuller light, upon account of their customary connexion with a present impression, than we can hinder ourselves from thinking as long as we are awake, or seeing the surrounding bodies, when we turn our eyes towards them in broad sunshine."

Hume, D., *A Treatise of Human Nature,* book 1, part IV, sec.1

"He {Freud} depicts it {the id} as a chaos, a melting-pot of seething excitations. The id, he thinks, is, so to speak, open towards the somatic, and receives thence into itself compulsions which there find psychic expression–in what substratum is unknown. From these impulses it receives its energy; but it is not organized, produces no collective will, merely the striving to achieve satisfaction for the impulsive needs operating under the pleasure principle. In it no laws of thought are valid, and certainly not the law of opposites."

Thomas Mann, *Freud and the Future.*

Having come this far, we are now almost inexorably led to propose the following hypothesis: our relational activity is necessarily COMPULSIVE. Otherwise we wouldn't be able to sustain the web of endless relations we are constantly creating and through which we perceive and understand our very human world. Likewise, we probably wouldn't either be able to sustain the feeling of our own Self.

The hypothesis proposes the idea that this compulsive force exists in every living being, but its intensity in human beings is superlative, and goes in this work by the name of **Relating (or Relational) Compulsion**. The idea is exceedingly simple but far-reaching. It states that we create relations amongst entities NOT only in a voluntary manner but mostly **compulsively** and unconsciously**.** We saw in the Introduction that Hume had already hinted at this idea without developing it any further. When dealing with relations (in the following passage of cause and effect) we end up believing, by custom, that they are "real", and this belief is...

"*... an operation of the soul, when we are so situated, as* ***unavoidable*** *as to feel the passion of love, when we receive benefits; or hatred, when we meet with injuries. All these operations are a*

*species of **natural instincts**, which no reasoning or process of the thought and understanding is able either to produce or to prevent."*[32] (Emphasis mine).

This implies that we are unable to quit relating things to each other given the conditions that are listed in our tentative definition of what we mean by the act of relating (this is, in the **when** we relate**)**. These conditions trigger the relating activity. However, an important part of the hypothesis states that this Compulsion follows "no laws of thought", as T. Mann puts it, *viz.* it links/relates entities to each other in an indiscriminate manner, and if it weren't for certain **Innate Regulating Principles**, **IRP**s, (which regulate the **how** we relate, see Ch.VI) this compulsion would create such inconsistencies that life would indeed be a most risky venture. We can postulate that it is indiscriminate because it is part of nature, and has thus to adapt to the different Principles of different species. It has to be blind regarding the **how** of relating in order to be flexible and adaptable.

We are born with this compulsion, and, as said, it is part of our nature. That is to say that when the conditions are given, we cannot quit connecting and linking (i.e. relating), even if we tried. We are incapable of thinking or conceiving something in our minds as completely isolated, insular. In other words, this **Relating Compulsion (RC)** is a force, power or energy, call it what you like, that springs up from the depth of nature, and it acts ceaselessly, but it weakens as time goes by and we get older. It works on us compulsively, and if it acted alone, without the constraints of the IRPs, we would probably be relating things in a chaotic and incongruous manner, and our perceptions and creations would not be adequate to sustain human life. The RC is regulated by the **In-**

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[32] Foucault writes that for Hume "*resemblance belonged to natural relations, to those that constrain our minds by means of an inevitable but 'calm force'*." (Foucault: The Order of Things, p. 75, Routledge)

nate Regulating Principles, (IRPs), which govern the manner or form in which we relate, that is, the **how** we do so**.** Our hypothesis includes the notion that these Principles, just as the RC, are innate.

It's this **Relating Compulsion** (RC) plus the **Innate Regulating Principles** (IRPs) that keep together and united the web or grid that ultimately is the world **as perceived by us**, and which we interact with and inhabit. However, being as we are part of this world, even the perception we have of ourselves depends on the activity of the **RC** in concert with the **IRPs**.

With the Relating Compulsion hypothesis we can avoid introducing diverse kinds of *deux ex machinas* in order to attempt certain explanations. In philosophy we may stumble over phrases that explain that *images* in our mind suddenly have **the magical power** to **launch themselves** wherever, or that memories **start moving**. In Grammar and Linguistic we can read or hear that *nouns* have **the capability** of doing this or that, or that *verbs* have **the power** of taking this or that object etc. etc. It is most dubious that the mentioned entities are endowed with such magnificent powers. These abilities pertain to a complex living being in which the innate force of a Relating Compulsion is constantly operating.

2.6 Relational Compulsion and Creativity

"In art everything is allowed
But not everything is usable"

Elmer Diktonius, from *My Poem*, 1921

Above I suggested that the **RC** is a rather indiscriminate force that is, nonetheless, bridled by the **IRPs**. This force, if left to itself, would (according to our conscious ways of understanding) relate

in a chaotic **manner**, and only due to the whims of probability would it create something barely intelligible to our minds. As mentioned above it is likely to be found in all nature but must necessarily adapt to different life forms and thus guiding Principles.

It is, however, this lack of direction, meaning and constraint, this aimlessness, which turns it into the source of what we usually call Creativity. According to this point of view, creativity is not the consequence of an autonomous emerging force, but rather the resultant of a softening of the constraints put on the **RC**, leaving it freer, allowing it to flow according to parameters different from the habitual **IRPs**. That would help us understand why art, generally speaking, constantly bids us to look at the world in a different light, i.e., inviting us to relate entities in a different way, as if trying to motivate us to take the jump and rid us from the constraints that the habitual **IRPs** impose upon us, or in any case, to at least counter or balance the "narrowness" of these same Principles.

And yet, as the quote above from the Finish-Swedish poet Diktonius states, in art "*not everything is usable*". It's not enough just to relate in an original manner, other conditions are necessary. This we will see in Chapter VI, when we look closer at the notion of *dissociation*.

It is most common that the creative relational activity– which manages to partly avoid the constraints of the **IRPs** – originates in the unconscious, precisely because in this latter sphere the **IRP**s don't seem to apply so forcefully.

Allow me here to make just a short digression: it's most convenient to treat consciousness and the unconscious as a continuum, as a gradable scale, and not as distinct and separate regions: some processes are more and others less conscious or unconscious. The language and speech process is so complex that it would be im-

possible without the assistance of intricate unconscious processes. So much is this so, that it wouldn't be too far-stretched to talk about "unconscious intelligences". In any case, as soon as our research began it became evident that there is a splendid cooperation between conscious and unconscious processes. In most cases, the processes seem to be a mix of both. It is well known that the classical Freudian psychoanalysis has rather emphasized the idea that, more times than not, unconscious processes are in conflict with conscious ones; both inveterately struggling against each other resulting in all kinds of psychological disorders[33]. We, on the other hand, will rather be witnessing the fact that if consciousness and the unconscious (and the whole gamut of the scale) didn't cooperate in a most superb manner, a great part of our skills (including speech and language) would simply be impossible.

This been said, I uphold the idea that even if we are not aware or conscious of the existence of the **Relating Compulsion (RC)**, it nonetheless constantly affects all psychic processes, making it possible to register its effects, and thus hypothetically infer its existence. It's active on different levels (or on different ranges of the scale): so some of its doings are not accessible (they are unconscious), others are partially accessible (subconscious), and yet others are –at least potentially– completely accessible (conscious). But these three levels (there is reason to suspect many more than three) work together and cooperate. If a process where new relations are established takes place on a subconscious or unconscious level, and its resultant emerges into our consciousness (it doesn´t always), we become aware of it, and we will likely feel that we have *created* something –even if not really understanding

[33] This might probably be due to the fact that Freud focused on notions of repression of certain drives that are not admitted into consciousness, and which could lead to the appearance of neurotic symptoms. Consequently, the tension and not the cooperation between the two domains was highlighted.

how it came to be– rather than having *discovered* it. But it may well be that instead we have really *discovered* that same thing, albeit at an unconscious level (i.e. *discovered* unsuspected relations between different entities). And that could be the reason why we more often than not find it difficult to decide if certain human activities or disciplines– such as grammar, music, mathematics, geometry etc. – are creations or discoveries. Have we discovered or invented (created) music? This issue is also debated within linguistics. There we have, on the one hand, the followers of Generative Linguistics, which states that we *discover* grammar (rather than learn it), conjecturing that there exists an hypothetical "universal grammar" inherent to our brains; and on the other hand, Cognitive Linguistics (among others of course), which, on the contrary, professes that grammar is *created* socially as a result of other cognitive skills.

So the bottom-line question here is: are relations created or discovered? Both, says our hypothesis. Due to the fact that we create an enormous amount of relations unconsciously, we later have to (re)-discover or re-create them on a more conscious level. This can be clearly seen in the case of many artists, scientists, and why not businessmen, when they experience *insights.* In his book *The Act of Creation,* **A. Koestler** gives a lot of examples of cases in which the artist or the scientist suddenly "understands" (gets it), obviously after having worked hard and steady on the rebellious problem in question. Or consider the poet that feels that a poem is "blossoming". His main task will be to put it into words, that is, give the unconscious bud a form accessible to consciousness. A relating activity has been carried out at an unconscious level, and putting it into words is not more nor less than a relating activity carried out at a more conscious level. Another way of putting it: unconscious relating operations become conscious when we manage to find a way of expressing them, and by doing so, sort of

crystallize them. Or as the French psychologist **Alfred Binet** (1857-1911) expressed it: "*A thought is an unconscious act of the spirit, that, in order to become conscious, needs images and words.*" In any case, what we witness is this splendid cooperation between the unconscious and consciousness.

Arthur Koestler, in *The Act of Creation,* referring to the role that the unconscious plays in creativity– whether scientific, artistic, religious etc. – writes the following:

"*...the temporary relinquishing of conscious controls liberates the mind from certain constraints which are necessary to maintain the disciplined routines of thoughts but may become an impediment to the creative leap…"*

We even keep relating in a compulsive manner in our dreams, but there the relating activity is likely guided by Regulating Principles far less strict than the ones governing consciousness, or they might even be guided by totally different Principles. In any case we do relate in a very different way than when we are awake. We have, moreover, hypothesized that in our sleep the Relating Compulsion's activity breaks away (partially or totally) from the imposed constraints of the Innate Regulating Principles, which are otherwise always active in our waking state. It's reasonable to suppose that the imposing of the IRPs on the Relating Compulsion (RC) takes up an enormous quantity of psychic energy– all in all we are really talking about "taming" a very chaotic (when not subordinated) and powerful force; and sleep would be a very necessary and welcome respite.

The **RC** also plays an essential role in our constant need for creating sense and meaning, as these are only found or created in relations. We will come back to this topic in the next chapter.

So, summing up, I have proposed the notion that a force/energy within us, which I've called the Relating Compulsion (**RC**), when activated, is guided/constrained/canalized in the waking mind by Innate Regulating Principles**, IRP**s, (we shall focus on these in Chapter VI, and explore their performance basically in the linguistic sphere). They correspond partially to the Kantian categories and pure intuitions. However, considering the research and findings of Cognitive Linguistics in recent years, we shall see that we cannot be as tidy and neat as Kant was, who –as we saw in the Chapter I– listed twelve categories dividing them in four groups: of Quantity, Quality, Relation and Modality, plus the pure intuitions and concepts of Space and Time. We have not the ambition of presenting an exhaustive list. On the contrary, we will only explore some of the Principles, particularly some of the ones that enable us, as human beings, to make use of speech and language in general.

And before putting an end to this section, it bears mentioning – though it is not the subject of this book– that there are also **External Regulating Principles**. These are provided by the culture in which we grow and live. They are, quoting the linguists M. Johnson and G. Lakoff, *"ready-made imaginative resources"*, and are equally important in supplying stability and coherence to our human worlds. They also include cultural conditions and restraints expressed as paradigms.

2.7 Does the Relating Compulsion have two aspects?

What is easily observed, once a relation has been made and its usefulness asserted, is that the bond tends to last and the relation

“crystallizes” and what has been joined keeps united. This is how, for example, concepts are formed and memorized.

So, on the one hand, we have a force that spurs us to “conquer” or create new links or relations, and by simple every day observation it is easy to confirm that this aspect is extremely active during childhood. And on the other we have a force that keeps united what has been joined.

These two forces (or two aspects of one and the same force) complement each other, and yet they are in constant tension.[34] In the child who is integrating into his community, in the artist, the researcher, the handy man, the philosopher, the scientist etc. the **RC** actively seeks to conquer or create new relations. But in our daily routines the uniting force, which preserves what has already been conquered or related, is just as essential as the RC. If this force disappeared, our human world would crumble to bits; our concepts, which are relational networks, would disintegrate, and we would have to re-learn, re-create, re-conquer everything once and again; and memory wouldn’t exist.

But is this another force or energy, or is it just another aspect of the same **RC**? We will for now leave the question open.

[34] This is due to the fact that the RC can disrupt old relations when creating new ones, while the preserving force (or aspect of the RC) tends to be conservative.

CHAPTER III

Meaning

The Imaginary

Is Reality an Illusion?

Implicit Relational Fields

Summary and Conclusion

3.1 Meaning

"But in every novel or unclassified experience this is just what occurs; we do not know what will come next; and novelty per se becomes a mental irritant, while custom per se is a mental sedative, merely because the one baffles while the other settles our expectations."

From "*The Sentiment of Rationality*," by William James.

"*...permanently, unpredictably, we do what already is.*"

From "*Filosofía y Mística*", by Salvador Pániker

What exactly do we do when we assert that we know what something *is* or what something *means*? How do we know that that four-footed animal that is crossing the street is a dog, or that the black liquid in a cup that a waitress brings to our table is coffee? And how does it come about that we can know the meaning of the words *dog* or *coffee*?

The verb *to recognize* might give us a clue. We identify the four-footed animal as a *dog* thanks to an act of **recognition**. And the same happens when we see the word *dog* written down, or hear the sounds of the word. What is certain is that we **re-cognize. To re-cognize** something is the first step towards under-

standing the meaning of that something. Secondly, we must have established a relation, a bond, between the word, the *thing* –when it is a material entity– and the idea or concept of the entity. This relation too must be re-cognized: in this way the word (acoustic and written) –say D-O-G– is given a meaning, which comes from the concept it signifies. Or put in another way, the concept makes the word –the sound DOG and the written letters *dog*– meaning-ful.

What this implies is that something must already have some kind of existence in my mind. But that something is not a "thing" occupying some hidden nook in my brain. Rather it's an **energet-ic relational web** that has been integrated into my mind, forming part of the latter (and maybe even contributing to its coming about), and thus also becoming familiar. It is a **concept.**[35] To know what *dog* means, I first have to recognize both the written word DOG –or the sounds D-O-G– and the concept *dog*, which already exist in my mind. But it is the concept that will give meaning to the word, as the word is only the code of access, or signifier (and also sometimes the unifying instance that binds several concepts into a higher level of conceptual meaning, as we shall later see).

Now, does the entity, let's say the animal dog, give meaning to the concept *dog,* or does the concept *dog* give meaning, in the mind, to the entity that is the animal dog? As we have just seen, a word gets its meaning from the concept, but what about the thing? Well, here we will advocate for the idea that we **recognize** a thing if we have previously integrated the concept of the thing. Other-wise we will likely exclaim: "What is that"?

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[35] The word **concept** comes from the Latin word *conceptus,* which is the past participle of *concipere,* whose meaning is "to conceive".

But, how do these concepts, which we will now consider as **energetic relational webs,** "get into the mind", or better said, how and when are they (re) created? The "how" has to do with the **Innate Regulating Principles** (**IRPs**) (Ch. VI) and the cultural paradigms. So let's first have a brief look at the *when.*

Concepts are created basically during the socialization stage in childhood, but it's a lifelong process. In our childhood we establish the "foundations" from which we carry out this enormous task of conquering and assimilating these **relational webs (concepts)**, which are, however, already extant in our linguistic community. As a consequence of this process, we will later be able to assert that we know the meaning of a concept and its signifier or word, that is, we will be able to re-cognize what has previously been learnt.

So something has a meaning for us (i.e. we *understand* it) insofar we re-cognize it, and we re-cognize it because the corresponding relational web has previously been created, likely in our childhood, becoming in the process part of our mind. Notwithstanding that this process is slow and laborious we create these relational webs in our childhood mostly whilst playing and quite unaware of what really is going on. One of the most critical moments is when the infant starts to discover that she/he is a being who exists independently from the mother, because that is when a "new mind" starts to develop. The child starts (re)creating the relational webs of concepts. It starts with the most **basic** ones (or **direct** concepts, see Ch. II), these being the base from which more complex ones are (re)created. The **basic** concepts are created from what is perceived by our senses and by the sensory motor body feelings: *red, pain, softness, roughness, light, darkness, movement, squeal, hunger, fear, pleasure* etc.etc. A feeling or a simple perception is related to a word, which is memorized and becomes the code of access to a **direct concept,** which has, con-

versely to the indirect concepts, been created through a body feeling or a body perception. And as the mind evolves, and experience and knowledge accumulate, the relational webs become more and more complex allowing for the creation of **indirect** concepts, which, nonetheless, are in one way or the other, rooted in the basic ones: examples of indirect concepts are *card-deck*, *justice, evil, orchestra, accident, computer* etc.

Access to **indirect** concepts requires more knowledge than what is given by simple sense-perception or sensory motor activity. Our mind relates to what is perceived and gives a particular meaning to it by supplying additional knowledge. For example, the knowledge of the rules of a card game gives a particular meaning to the perceived pile of cards that can then become a *deck*, which is the sum of all the cards needed according to particular game rules. The perception alone of a thing called *computer* cannot render any meaning if the concept is absent. And the concept is indirect because its re-creation is possible only if the mind has more information than what is given by the sole perception. (See Implicit Relational Fields below in this Chapter).

When the child is ready to link relational webs one to another, it starts (re)creating phrases and sentences. This too is a very complex process. Below we shall look closer into it, and try to figure out how these relational webs integrate to create meaning, and how these meanings can be *understood*, that is, re-cognized by somebody else.

Both the *significance* and the *meaning* of something is the resultant synthesis of a relation between at least two entities. For example, the sound [D-O-G] (or the written word *dog*), has to be related to a concept and to an entity –even if imaginary– in order to signify something to somebody. That will not happen if the person in question does not speak English, or if the concept *dog* is

nonexistent in the mind, because the word/sound DOG will not relate to anything and thus no meaning will be given to it.

We can end this section with a quote from Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), which very neatly sums up what we have said:

"Since/.../ words are the signs of ideas, and ideas the similitude of things, it is evident that words function in the signification of things through the conceptions of the intellect". (The Summa Theologica: Whether a name can be given to God).

According to this view words cannot signify things directly, without the mediation of ideas (concepts). This is the case, for us, with **indirect** concepts. In these, relations can be formed between a word (acoustic or written) and a concept, and also between a perception and the corresponding concept. However, a word cannot relate directly to a thing without relating first to its concept.

3.2 The Imaginary

"...todo ´entendimiento` es imaginación."

(...all "understanding" is imagination.)

Ortega y Gasset, *La idea de principio en Leibniz, p. 291, Alianza Editorial.*

These **energetic relational webs** –or concepts– entail the existence of the *imaginary* dimension: the capacity of referring to things that are not being perceived at the moment by our senses. It is this which allows us, for example, to talk about things that don't exist anymore (our latest holidays), or about things that don't exist yet (that coveted trip we will make in summer). In the toddler this dimension hasn't yet developed, which is the reason why it will only responds to external and body stimuli. It is not

common at all to witness young children calmly talking to each other about things that are not perceived by their senses. It would even be rarer to watch a chorus of, say, dogs, sitting composedly in a circle exchanging ideas and information by barking about things unperceivable. The Imaginary hasn't developed (yet?). So it is in part thanks to this *imaginary* capacity that the **relational webs or networks** –concepts– can be constituted.

Moreover, this *imaginary* capacity is what allows us, among other things, to speculate about the past or the future, or to generate virtual relations among distinct entities. Without this capacity, language and speech would practically be impossible. In fact, we almost always speak about things we do not perceive with our senses. We talk about people that are not present at the moment of speech, or about things that happened in the past, or about future events such as our holidays, for example. And when we do talk about things that are present to our senses, we do it mostly to add something to what we perceive (obviously, we will talk about things been perceived at the moment if they present some surprising or unexpected feature). We don't usually point at a table and cry out: "*that is a table,* or *look, that table has four legs".* We would probably say something in the way of: "*if we sandpapered that table and painted it, it would look great."* We have in this way used our *imaginary* capacity relating concepts, not things (notwithstanding that the concepts relate to things and processes).

As we already saw above, our minds develop the ability to generate complex and indirect concepts, which increasingly move away from sense perceived reality, creating a "parallel" world that is purely mental, or conceptual. Ronald Langacker (Cognitive Grammar, 2008) puts it this way: "*...mental constructions that help us deal with—and in large measure constitute—the world we live in and talk about. It is a world of extraordinary richness, extending far beyond the physical reality it is grounded in*."

3.3 Is Reality an Illusion?

Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) wrote: *"The unease that keeps the indefatigable machinery of metaphysics rolling on is the consciousness that it's equally possible that the world doesn't exist as it is that it does exist."*

Schopenhauer here refers to a feeling that "reality" might be phantasmagorical in nature.

The fact is that this feeling has emerged in almost every age and culture. We saw in Chapter I that many ancient Greek philosophers professed the idea that the world our senses perceive is some sort of illusion. The Hindus assert that the material world is *maya,* i.e. illusion. One of **Shakespeare**'s characters put forward that "*We are such stuff as dreams are made on, and our little life is rounded with a sleep"* (The Tempest). Didn't life seem a dream to **Calderón de la Barca,** in his *La Vida es sueño (Life is a Dream)* (1636). This feeling is expressed by many poets, writers and philosophers. Rimbaud wrote *"La vraie vie est absente"*; **Baudelaire**, **Flaubert**, **Kierkegaard** expressed similar feelings. The Italian philosopher **Gianni Vattimo** meant that there is no "*real world".* And the list could go on and on. And not few scientists have felt or feel that each time they reach out to grasp a "a piece of reality", it slips away, moving off a few steps, just as fruit and drink eluded and receded from Tantalus (Ch. I).[36]

But, why –and the question is justifiable– do we witness in almost every age the appearance of poets and philosophers, and even scientists, who speak of this phantasmagorical feeling, and

[36] Tantalus: mythological king that was punished due to his crimes to wade in a pool. Every time he reached out to grab some fruit or drink some water, these would recede.

of the suspicion that the world is an illusion created by our senses or by some god or demon of dubious humour?

Could it possibly be the result of our (re-)creating increasingly **indirect** concepts in our minds, i.e. concepts that have no **direct** relation with what our senses perceive, and thus start to live more and more in and with a world of "phantoms" (mental constructions)? A concept is not the *thing,* nor is it the word. A concept can only exist as long as there is a mind to (re-)create it through its *imaginary* capacity. And to make things worse, even the things we believe we perceive in a sensorial way are, to a great extent, creations of our minds (or mental constructs).

We are thus surrounded by mental constructs: on the one hand, entities that only exist in our minds (concepts), and on the other hand, things that even though they exist in the world outside our minds, are perceived in a very specifically human way, sometimes sieved, and other times augmented by our *concepts.*

On top of it all, people like Einstein come along asserting that: *"Mathematical propositions, to the extent that they refer to reality, are not valid, and to the extent that they are valid, they don´t refer to reality."*[37]

How, then, is it possible in spite of it all, that most people don't go around feeling this "*unbearable lightness of being*"[38], and feel perfectly rooted in reality and believe in it heart and soul?

On the one hand, the **Innate Regulating Principles** see to it that our perceptions and concepts wisely enough match our being's needs. It's a great thing that we can see an **apple** when we are hungry, and not only a chaotic torrent of sensations and perceptions. And moreover, thanks to the same Principles we can in-

[37] Quoted from "*La idea de principio en Leibniz*", by Ortega y Gasset (Alianza Edfitorial), p.63.
[38] This is the title of Milan Kundera's novel , published in 1984: The Unbearable Lightness of Being.

teract, affect and be affected by our surrounding world. On the other hand, we have the **body feelings** that arise in our interaction with our world: pleasures, pains, fears etc. Our bodies and minds **feel** the resistances and the pleasures offered by our world. When our body **feels** pain, pleasure, or fear, it

is reacting directly to its environment, that is, to **our world** (meaning here not that we own the world, but the world as seen through our human perceptions and understanding), and hence feels rooted in it. It's **our world** that gives us these intense pleasures or pains. But even our world –our external reality– acknowledges receipt of our actions and can feel affected, and, furthermore, can react, which is why we can state that our actions carry consequences: if I bring a lighted match near an open container full of explosive liquid, there most probably will be some kind of reaction. We can also add that if *recognizing* is a fundamental part of creating meaning, it means that we are constantly interacting with a world that ends up becoming more familiar as more concepts integrate into the mind, thus making us feel more "at home".

When we speak of the *imaginary*, of relational webs or concepts, as of something existing beyond our sensorial reality, we are speaking of a dimension where we can imagine and simulate reality, where we can integrate and combine concepts in endless ways, and we are inevitably also speaking about something that we add to the world, and which hence becomes part of the world and can, furthermore, become a study object of the same mind that created it. The mind studies its own creations: language, for example. We study its grammar, syntax, its semantic strategies and so on. And the same happens with geometry, music, sciences in general, art, literature, theatre, etc. It is most fascinating. And can it partially be why Hegel got the notion of the *Idea* reflecting upon itself?

It may now be time to briefly recap before we continue:

The meaning of something appears to us when that something is already part of a relational web acquired in an earlier stage of our lives, that is, when we re-cognize something so that something appears familiar to us , or when it resembles something already known. This would imply that we only perceive the meaning of what already exists in our minds. Besides, this perceiving of things familiar makes us also feel at home in **our world.** Thomas Mann wrote in *Freud and the future*:

"For man sets store by recognition, he likes to find the old in the new, the typical in the individual. From that recognition he draws a sense of the familiar in life, whereas if it painted itself as entirely new, singular in time and space, without any possibility of resting upon the known, it could only bewilder and alarm."

If we run into something that we cannot recognize, we might not even perceive it, or we might react in various ways: we might panic, laugh, get curious, or something of the sort and all of these reactions will probably be tinged with certain restlessness. But if we are instead surrounded by familiar elements, when "we feel as at home", we tend to feel calm and relaxed at the risk, of course, of getting bored.

So to access the meaning of something, the first step (notwithstanding that the metaphor "steps" is not totally appropriate because we are dealing with very complex processes that most likely happen in unison) is to recognize it. For example, in order to recognize a sound, or a combination of sounds, let's say a word, let's say [H-O-R-S-E], I must have memorized those sounds previously, but I must also relate them to an already known (recognizable) concept, which in turn will, in this case, relate to a series of material entities (horses) that share some common features. On the one hand I recognize the sounds or scribbled word(s) and on

the other the concept, which relates to the word by giving it meaning. Both the sounds and the concept of the word must previously "be" in my mind (in the manner of energetic relational webs) in order for me to access the meaning. Conversely, I might have heard a sound several times, MUIJOLI for example, and due to having heard it several times, might recognize it, but I still won't have the slightest idea of what it means: it doesn't match any relational web (or concept) extant in my mind. Moreover, if I had heard that sound in various similar contexts, I would probably have attempted to assign a concept to it (relate it to something), but even so, that concept would have had to previously exist in my mind.

Though we have made a distinction between the sound of the word, the written word, the concept, and the entity referred to, we can still say that the sound [HORSE], the word **horse**, and the concept *horse* are so closely interwoven and related, constituting parts of the same relational web, that it can be hard to separate them. In this paper we will be focusing more on the concepts themselves, which is to say on the **energetic relational webs**, which we understand concepts ultimately are.

Before we go on, it may be convenient to clarify a point. We will here attempt to research concepts in themselves, but also their relational webs, including the ways concepts establish relations with each another. But it's important to remember that we necessarily simplify things when trying to approach such complex matters. There are a lot of "types" of relational webs and they relate to each other in most complex manners. As an example we can mention the relation that is established between a concept and the image it evokes. Sometimes a concept triggers the appearance of an internal image (although vague, as we shall soon see). Other times a lonely image may appear without a concept. Sometimes our perception is conditioned by a concept (for example, when we

believe we perceive or think of a deck of cards). And other times we have a vague idea of something but can't relate it to the word that encodes it etc. etc. In this paper we will not research all these relations, but will take for granted that a concept establishes diverse relations with the image(s) it evokes, or by which it is evoked (be it acoustic, visual, tactile, etc.), and with feelings and emotions.

3.4 Implicit Relational Fields

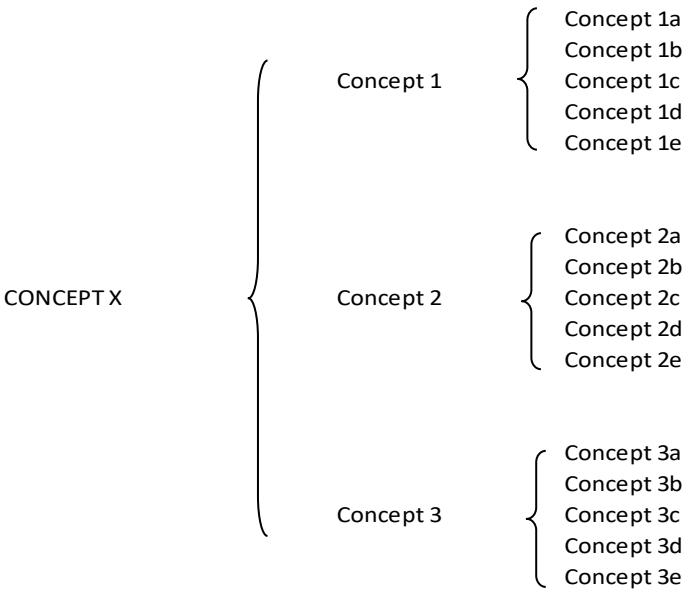
"Many ideas require others, are necessary to their existence or conception, which yet are very distinct ideas."

(*Concerning Human Understanding*, Ch. XIII, John Locke)

"...constitutive entities are grouped and reified to form a unitary entity at a higher level of organization."

(Ronald Langacker, *Cognitive Grammar, Grammatical classes)*

We will now look a bit deeper into what these energetic or conceptual relational webs are and how they are constituted. A concept is constituted by a relational web, but is at the same time part of other relational webs that constitute other concepts. Schematically:



The term ***concept*** can also stand for ***conceptual knowledge***, i.e. the concept can be encoded by a phrase and not only by a word.

What the schema shows is that in order to access the meaning of ***concept 1***, we must first have accessed the meanings of ***concepts 1a*** to ***1e.*** And to access the meaning of ***concept X*** we must in turn first have accessed the meanings of ***concept 1,2,3...*** In other words: ***concept X*** has issued from of the relational web constituted by ***concepts 1,2,3...***and each of these by ***concepts 1a*** to ***1e***, ***concepts 2a*** to ***2e***, ***concepts 3a*** to ***3e*** respectively.

Let's take the indirect concept *concert* in order to illustrate the same schema instantiated by specific concepts, or conceptual knowledge:

			C1a	Instruments can produce sounds					
			C1b	People gather intentionally to produce sounds on instruments					
	C1	Orchestra	C1c	People share and gather in a common place such as a stage					
			C1d	People can combine sounds harmonically and create music.					
			C1e	People share a schedule to gather					
			C1f	People produce music for other people to listen to.					
			C1g	Etc.					
			C2a	People gather to listen or watch something					
C X:			C2b	People gather in a previously agreed site and time					
Concert	C2	Audience	C2c	People gather intentionally					
			C2d	People expect to share an unusual experience					
			C2e	Etc.					
			C3a	Sounds from different sources can combine in specific ways					
			C3b	These sounds can be enjoyed					
	C3	Concerted Music	C3c	Sounds can arouse feelings					
			C3d	Sounds are not always music					
			C3e	Instruments and voices can produce musical sounds					
				Etc					

So, for example, to access the meaning of *orchestra* (C1) we must previously have accessed the meanings of concepts (or conceptual knowledge) *C1a* to *C1f* +n and to access or understand the concept *audience* (C2) we must previously have accessed the

meanings of *C2a* to *C2d* +n and so on. We consider *C1a to C1f +n* **the relational web** of C1; *C2a* to *C2d* +n as **the relational web** of C2 and so on. C1, C2 and C3 constitute **the relational web** of Cx.

But how and why does this come to be? How and why do a series of concepts, or conceptual knowledge, integrate to generate a new concept? Well, we can see that *C1a* to *C1f* relate to each other because there is, among other things, *sharing*, *similarity*, *nearness, simultaneity*, and these, according to our relating definition (see p. 49), are the conditions needed to trigger our relating activity.

So, as said, all the concepts, or conceptual knowledge, *C1a* to *C1f* smoothly relate to each other: music relates to instruments, people relate to each other sharing a stage and a schedule etc.

When concepts integrate so effortlessly they call for a more complex (and more indirect) concept that can subsume all the different elements under a higher unity concept. In our example three new concepts are (re) issued when previous conceptual knowledge is related, synthesized and grouped: *orchestra, audience, music.* These three concepts (plus others), in turn, also relate effortlessly to each other and synthesize into an even higher unity concept (or more indirect concept), *concert.*

This happens because we tend to group entities that relate in one way or another to each other, (see Ch VI, Innate Regulating Principles) which leads to the (re)creation of a new concept with its respective symbol (or sign) or name (a word).

This is probably a splendid place and occasion to refer to a concept Arthur Koestler coined in his book *The Ghost in the Machine*: the **holon**. Notwithstanding the fact that he used it above all to refer to living organisms, it suits us perfectly in our endeav-

ours. A **holon** is something that belongs to something bigger than itself (like an individual to a community, or a cell to a body), but retains, however, a substantial level of autonomy, being in itself some kind of a whole. On the one hand it is a **part** of something else, and on the other hand, it is a **whole** in itself. Koestler states that it is possessed by *self-transcending* drives (a tendency towards integration) in order to function as a part of something larger, but also by *self-asserting* drives in order to conserve its own individual autonomy. (Koestler, 1983)

We can also add that by being part of something, by belonging, something is ***shared*** with the other parts of that same something. And sharing is a way of relating (see our definition of relating).

By extrapolating the concept **holon** to our realm, we say that concepts, or conceptual knowledge, function as **holons** inside its relational web. The concepts that are part of a relational web conserve at the same time their own autonomy. They are part of the web, but are likewise something more than bare parts, so much so that each concept adds something new to its relational web. In the same way an individual that is born into a community becomes a part of it, he/she concurrently conserves his/her own relative autonomy, becoming thus an addition of something new, a plus.

A concept is a **holon** within the relational web to which it belongs. And it is crucial to remember that a concept only exists in a mind (and again, it is different from the word ,which in any case represents it, or is its label, according to the taste of some people, or as Saussure preferred, is its signifier, and it is definitely different from the "thing" that it refers to).

From now on we will refer to **the relational web** that constitutes a concept as its **Implicit Relational Field** or IRF. This **relational field** will be defined in the following way:

The IRF of a concept represents all the previous knowledge or beliefs (which can include experiences not yet conceptualized, such as feelings, sensations etc. but of which we are aware) that we must possess (and thus re-cognize) in order to be able to give the concept in question a relative meaning in a specific context. [39]

We acquire that "previous knowledge" step by step, as we mature. It is nonetheless likely that the process never really ends. The IRFs exist and function in the subconscious, but it is possible to consciously access them.

The IRF of a concept should neither be confused with those things which we are capable of consciously associating to the term, **nor** with the **definition**, which refers to the entity, process, event, time, space etc. that that same concept denotes or represents.

And most important of all is that, as we shall soon see, the IRF of a concept (the constituting concepts that make up its relational web) will determine with what other concepts it can interrelate and consequently integrate.

Let us now try to illustrate some aspects of what has been said by taking an example before we go on. Let's look at the concept *doctor.* In our above shown schema, it would be Concept X.

We can associate a large variety of things to this concept, some of which might be part of the IRF and others not. I can associate *hospital, syringe, nurse etc.* However, these terms will not necessarily be part of the concept's IRF, as it is not a determining requirement to know what a *hospital* or a *syringe* is in order to access a meaning of (or give a meaning to) the concept *doctor.*

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[39] John Locke (1632-1704) refers to this idea in the following way: "For all our complex ideas are ultimately resolvable into simple ideas, of which they are compounded and originally made up, though perhaps their immediate ingredients, as I may so say, are also complex ideas." (Chap. XXII, Book II, 9.)

We have re-created the concept *doctor,* most likely in our childhood, by building up, step by step, its IRF, i.e., after having acquired the necessary previous knowledge. We can access the concept *doctor* (re-create in our individual minds the concept already extant in the community) if we previously know (but as we will see further on, we don't need to activate all this knowledge every time we face the concept) some things, such as, for example, the following:

> What a physical object is, i.e., a visible entity, or an entity that can cast a shadow.
> What a living, animate thing is.
> What an organism is: a living being that has (or can develop) the ability to act or function independently.
> What a person or human being is.
> What an adult is (a mature person).
> What a profession and a professional are.
> What a health profession is.
> What healing is.
> What an injury or a disease is.
> What a diagnostic is.
> What a patient is.
> And so on.
>
> (Taken in part from Wordnet 2.1)

All these and other components *can* be parts of the IRF of *doctor.* This means that in order to incorporate and understand the concept *doctor,* we most likely, in earlier stages of our lives, have had to incorporate at least some of the above listed notions (or others), which are themselves concepts as well (in our schema above they would fit into the numbered Concepts 1a etc.). And let me just repeat that all these elements...*physical entity, human being, profession, patient etc* are not usually evoked consciously.

This would be going from the Many to the One, from Multiplicity to Unity. We could also turn the hypothesis "upside down": we could affirm that the infant first is introduced to the sound/word *doctor,* and only afterwards and slowly integrates the IRF of the concept. That would be the inverse path: from Unity to Multiplicity. But that wouldn't invalidate the core idea of the hypothesis of the IRFs.

Each of the components that pertain to the IRF of *doctor* has its own IRFs and the components of these, in turn, have their own (this idea is represented in our schema above) and so on successively until the most basic or direct concepts are reached, which are taken in by the senses or by body feelings.

The components of the IRF of a concept are ranked in a foreground/background gradient, where the foregrounded components are more activated or emphasised, and thus have a bigger share in the meaning given to the concept in question, and the backgrounded a more dormant participation (yielding less to the overall meaning but not disappearing). Moreover, and besides the gradient, different people will give slightly –or not so slightly– different IRFs to a concept. Many children will probably not yet have accessed the meaning of *profession,* but they still can, however, access the meaning of the concept *doctor,* in which case the meaning of the concept *doctor* will vary somewhat from the meaning given to it by an adult since the IRFs will be somewhat different. As we shall soon see in the next chapter, the IRFs are alterable, flexible and protean. Different contexts etc. call for the unconscious activation or emphasis of different components of the IRF of a concept; and different individuals, social groups, historical periods etc. can simply employ different components of an IRF.

This gives us a slight idea of the enormous, not to say unfathomable, quantity of information that lies behind each concept we use. The more indirect the concept (as *doctor* : we cannot see nor touch a *doctor*, even though we can see or touch the **person** that is a *doctor*), i.e., the more distant the concept's meaning is from the raw data perceived by our senses or from some or other corporal sensation, the more complex the IRF of the concept will be, and conversely, the nearer a concept's basic meaning is to a direct corporal experience (be it through our senses or through corporal sensations) the more directly will it be understood and less complex will its IRF be, since the apprehension is taken up immediately and directly.

Some direct concepts like *light,* are, says John Locke in his "*Essay Concerning Human Understanding*", so direct (Locke use the term *simple*), that they cannot even be defined. No definition exists that can make a man blind from birth really understand what light is. The necessary experience to understand what *light* is can only be acquired strictly through the visual sense. We need no previous knowledge to know what *light* is. All we need do is open our eyes, and that knowledge is more than enough in our social-communicative contexts.

A concept like *light* is not explicable. But even though we do not need to have any previous knowledge in order to know what *light* is, it too must have an IRF to be able to integrate with other concepts (or, conversely, to create **semantic tension** or a **semantic rupture**) and create a higher level of meaning. Consider the following phrase:

They are eating half a kilo of light.

It makes no sense, because the IRFs of the concepts (*half a kilo* and *light*) have no common components and so do not integrate

and can't relate meaningfully to each other (how this happens we will see further ahead).

On the one hand, as already mentioned, to know what light is, it is enough to open our eyes and experience it. On the other hand, if we have the intention of enquiring into the nature or the multiple features of *light,* we will suddenly face an extremely complex and bulky IRF, which will include not few indirect concepts (not directly perceived) such as *atom, nucleus, electron, photon etc.* which will require quite a lot of previous scientific knowledge.

The same can be said about concepts such as *pain* or *red*. In order to understand these concepts it is necessary to feel or perceive. No definition would be able to "explain" them. And yet they necessarily do have IRFs, because one thing is to feel or have felt *pain*, and another to make use of the concept *pain* linguistically (as when we talk about *pain* without feeling it at the moment of speech).

To make use of the concept and word *pain,* it must have some kind of IRF; otherwise it wouldn't be able to integrate and interrelate with other concepts, or conversely, resist doing so. Its IRF could possibly include concepts such as *body, parts of the body, painlessness, normal, not normal, well being* etc.

Now consider the following phrase:

The cement of pain

A very odd phrase, but why do we feel it's odd? Grammatically it's impeccable. We feel it's odd because it produces a **semantic rift,** which means that no relevant components of the IRFs of the concepts of the phrase integrate (see next chapter), not even as parts of a possible metaphor.

All concepts -including the most basic (or direct) ones, which practically don't admit explicative definitions- have an IRF, because otherwise they wouldn't be able to integrate and relate to other concepts in order to create higher level meanings (as phrases or sentences). Reversely, neither could **semantic rifts** occur. We will delve deeper into this in the next chapter, and hopefully make it clearer.

3.5 Summary and Conclusion

Let us now imagine we are sitting in our favourite armchair under twilight, leafing through a magazine or sliding our finger on the screen of our cell phone when we suddenly hear a noise coming from the garden or the yard. The sound is new to us, never been heard before, so we cannot identify it. We don't know what emitted it, we don't know what it means, and we are incapable of **relating** it to anything. We are immediately invaded by some sort of uneasiness, a certain discomfort, and maybe even fear. When we are unable to establish *relations* or are unable to refer something to previously created relational fields, that is, when our relational efforts fail, we feel an overly discomfort that can sometimes turn into panic. We just can't go on leafing through the magazine as if nothing had happened. We feel compelled to find out what emitted that noise, we must know if it is threatening, or if it pertains to some other less strenuous relational field (it could well be a branch scratching against something, or a wounded bird). But what is for sure is that we feel we have to know. Our mind frenetically "scans" our memory trying to recall a similar episode. It creates an endless list of conjectures, i.e., it tries to provide the episode with some sort of meaning (recognizing it) locating it in

some *relational web* capable of explaining it. We then walk out to the garden, and unsuspectingly see our neighbour's cat rubbing its back against a metal sheet. We might smile relieved or we might feel annoyed by this feline invasion, but we will for sure feel reassured: the noise has been identified, in other words, it has become familiar, and in still other words, we have been able to relate the noise to something that is already part of one of our *relational webs.*

As has been said, when we feel that we understand the meaning of something, what we really do is find a similarity to something already known. When we see something and don't know what it is, the first thing we do is scan our mind in order to find something similar, and then ask ourselves (though unconsciously): what does it look like? It's the process of *re-cognizing.*

Something similar happens when we try to access the meaning of a linguistic term or concept. The issue is not the word per se. Consider the word *buy.* In Spanish you say *comprar,* in Swedish *köpa* etc. Yes, very different words, but the **concept** is the same (though they may eventually have slightly different IRFs. Nonetheless, if someone has accessed the meaning of the concept *buy*, he won't have to make a significant effort to learn the word in another language. It would only be a memory issue.) More demanding is to try to explain the concept *buy* if the concept hasn't been "created" in the language or in the culture of another person. It would be a hassle to try to explain the concept to someone from a culture in which the trading practice of buying and selling didn't exist.

It is arduous to acquire new indirect concepts –i.e. concepts that have not aroused from our senses or body– and a great part of our childhood energies are dedicated to this process, even though it generally happens ludically. One of the reasons why the process

of acquiring new indirect concepts is so toilsome is that we must first generate or create the IRF of the concept; that is, we must first become familiarized with the **Implicit Relational Field** from which the concept will be "born". The IRF of the concept *buy*, for example, is quite complex (try to teach a dog to sell and buy). In order to access the meaning of this concept we must first be acquainted with a long list of other concepts, and manage to relate them to each other: concepts of property, of value, exchange, possession, proportion, equity etc. These concepts must have been acquired previously. Once we are in "possession" of the concept *buy* (after a long training that we have likely forgotten), and of the skill to use it, we incorporate it in a schematic manner (in a *more or less* way, see next Chapter).

We have thus seen that in order to access the meaning of a concept (or *give* it a meaning), we must re-cognize it, i.e., it must already be in our minds. We have also seen that, as from childhood, we have slowly been conquering one concept after the other, building in all the elements that comprise their IRFs, going from the basic and direct to the more indirect. I have used the term "incorporate", and its right up to a certain point, because the concept already exists in a linguistic community to which the individual belongs, but we could also say that the concept is *re-created* in each individual mind, as if it had to be "re-born" in the minds of the youth as a cultural heritage. And making the best of our "birth" metaphor, we could also assert that a concept is "born" from its IRF, contributing (just as a new individual to its community) something new that wasn't there before, and which in turn will contribute to the creation or re-creation (that is, it will be part of an IRF) of a more complex and indirect concept. It will become a **holon**.

As we shall see in the next chapter, the IRFs have a curious way of behaving: they vary and change constantly according to the

contexts in which they appear, and furthermore, they also vary from individual to individual. This also means that the meanings of concepts are not so “fixed” as dictionaries might induce us to believe.

CHAPTER IV

The More or Less Hypothesis

Foreground and Background

The IRFs are Partial and Alterable

The Explicit Relational Fields

Kinds of Meaning

How Come We Understand Each Other?

Appendix

4.1 The More or Less Hypothesis

Let's remember that we referred to the IRF (Implicit Relational Field) of a concept as all the knowledge or beliefs previously needed to access at least part of its meaning. We also mentioned that we don't normally activate all of the IRF when we come across a concept.[40] Due partly to a question of economy of means, we only activate a very small part of the IRF, leaving the rest in a background blurry, yet present and accessible if need be (later on we will insist that the components of the IRFs are in addition alterable and protean). The understanding of a term that has already been incorporated occurs instantaneously but partially; it is not necessary to elicit the whole IRF but just a "rough out". It would otherwise require overmuch energy and time, making the whole process very clumsy and inefficient.

[40] These are processes of which we are not totally aware, they are mostly unconscious.

Similar ideas –with somewhat different nuances and making no reference to the Relational Compulsion– have been put forth by, among others, Vyvyan Evans and Allwood (2003). In the paper "*Towards a cognitive compositional semantics: An overview of LCCM theory*", Evans writes:

"Allwood provides an account of what he refers to as meaning potential (see also Zlatev's 1997, 2003 related notion of use potential). He explicitly argues that a word's meaning potential is

all the information that the word has been used to convey either by a single individual, or on the social level, by the language community...A consequence of this approach is that no attempt is made to distinguish between lexical and encyclopedic information in terms of the kind of information that is contained in the meaning potential. Meaning potentials contain both kinds of information – information deriving from use of language and information deriving from other experience with the world. (ibid., p. 43)

Central to Allwood's proposal is the position that a word's meaning potential is 'activated' providing a situated interpretation. Thus, meaning is always contextually determined, and is selected for from among the knowledge 'potential' that a word provides access to. To illustrate, consider the following examples drawn from Allwoood (2003: 45):

(7) A carburetor is a part of a car.
(8) A car need not have a carburetor since gasoline can be directly injected.

Allwood makes the point that the use of carburetor in (7) probably activates less detailed information than the use in (8). Moreover, precisely what is activated is subject to individual language users, as different individuals will have different encyclopaedic knowledge structures, and thus different meaning potentials which can be both accessed and activated."

In our terms we would say that we activate different parts of the IRF of a concept according to the context.

What Allwood does not tackle is the question of **how** and **why** meaning potentials are "activated", "triggered" or "selected" by context. In my terms, "activation" and "triggering" are a consequence of the Relational Compulsion, which (bridled by the IRPs) is the force that constantly urges us to seek for sense and meaning. Allwood does, however, refer to some kind of process:

"...even if there is no selection, there is a process of activation which functionally resembles selection in that it only highlights certain parts of the information that is available in the meaning potential."

Some lines below, he writes:

"...activation is not merely seen as a passive selection of already available meanings or semantic features but also as an active construal or shaping of the activated information."

(J. Allwood, **MEANING POTENTIALS AND CONTEXT: SOME CONSEQUENCES FOR THE ANALYSIS OF VARIATION IN MEANING** 2003, p. 20)

And this is probably the moment to introduce the *more or less hypothesis*. Most of the times, we understand and comprehend vaguely, roughly, that is, in a **more or less** manner. We generally activate very small parts of the IRFs: we just establish a kind of hasty flickering mental contact, which consequently makes our notions of things utterly vague, blurry, approximate and indefinite. L. Talmy suggests something in the same tenet. He writes:

"...in language and cognition it appears that virtually nothing is rigidly absolute but rather that virtually everything is fuzzy or plastic to at least some degree."

*(*Talmy*, The Relation of Grammar to Cognition, in The Cognitive Linguistics Reader)*

If someone tells us, for example, that he went to see a film in a cinema in a village unknown to us, we will, obviously, understand

him –provided we speak the same language. But this understanding is first of all a *more or less* comprehension, albeit sufficient. We might elicit a vague image of a village in our minds (likely an image closer to some memory of our own than to the referred village), and we will faintly and briefly "see" with our inner sight some vague traces of some or another building that will represent the term "cinema", because we understand that in order to go to a cinema we usually need to enter into a building. It might even happen that our acquaintance corrects us and specifies that he went to an outdoor cinema, so we will then have to change our vague images for other images not less vague, once again evoking in a *more or less* manner.

This might sound somewhat derogatory to our skills; however, it is extremely important to the general functioning of all our cognitive or epistemic system. This includes, for example, our daily communicative interaction, in which we need information to flow quickly and fluently. Let's for a while imagine the opposite, and go back to our example of our acquaintance telling us his story about the cinema in a village. The dialog could sound something like this:

A: I went to X village yesterday.

B (interrupting): How?

A: By car.

B: What car?

A: My car. Why?

B: And how is your car?

A: It's a Y model of Z.

B: What colour? How many doors does it have? How's the upholstery?

A: Who cares? The point is that I got to this village and...

B (interrupting): How was the village?

A: A small village with a main street and...

B: Did it have side-walks and if that's the case, how were they? Were there any trees and if so what species?

A: Oh-oh, I've gotta go. Tell you about it some other time. Bye bye...

As seen, the attempt to communicate the most trivial information while activating more parts of the IRFs than needed would become very tiresome, clumsy, boring and pedantic.

On the other hand, when dealing with academic contexts or any discipline that requires accuracy and precise terminology, we must obviously make a constant effort to activate all the aspects of the IRF that are called for. Descriptive and other literature might also call for the activation of a lot more of the IRF than necessary for practical or communicative purposes, in a likely attempt to make the reader recall as vividly as possible the described scenario.

Understanding concepts in a *more or less* manner confers fluency and dynamism to many aspects of our daily communicative acts. We can metaphorically say that the minimum possible components of the concept's IRF "emerge or surface" in order to relate to the minimum possible components of the other concept's IRFs, and that suffices to satisfy our daily communicative needs. It is enough for me to have a *more or less* notion of a kilo and of a tomato in order to go to the groceries and buy a *kilo of tomatoes*. I don't need to activate too much of the IRFs of *kilo* and of *tomato*

in order to do my shopping. But if I happen to be a biologist and am about to discuss the properties of the tomato in order to classify it taxonomically or something in that order, it might be convenient to activate all the IRF that I have at my disposal, and be as less *more or less* as possible.

4.2 Foreground and background

The superficial *more or less* communication confers the necessary flexibility to let us interpret a situation or an event from different points of view, for example –as R. Langacker has spotlighted in his *Cognitive Linguistics*–, alternating the **foreground/ background** relationship, This is what we do when activate or highlight a component of an IRF of a concept and relegate or demote others according to our needs or desires. If we were to activate all the IRF at our disposal each time we encountered a concept, the latter would be so "heavy", inflexible and fixed that it would take a lot of time and energy to alternate the emphasis from background to foreground, or vice versa.

Let's imagine we are sunbathing on a beach, enjoying an exquisite and refreshing drink. We could conceptualize the beach as made out of **sand**, or we could opt to conceptualize it made out of **sand grains.** Normally we would probably perceive the beach as made out of **sand,** i.e. we would **foreground** the notion of a homogenous and continuous substance, and not as a set of separate infinite particles that we call **sand grains;** we would push this latter conception to the **background.**

We have the ability to alternate our perceiving modes of what we want to see as background and what as foreground, that is, the

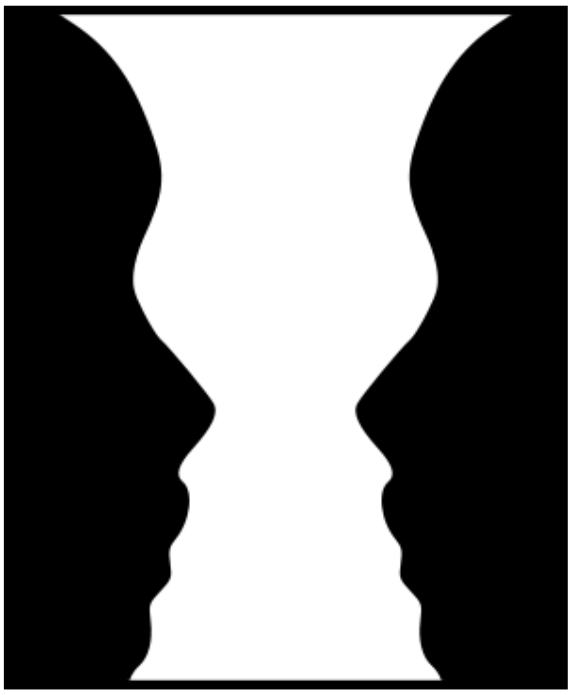
ability to emphasize one aspect of the foreground/background relationship to the detriment of the other. If we choose to see the beach as a substance that has a determined extension, we will have emphasized (perceived as foreground) its homogenous and continuous aspect, and pushed into the background (relegated) the fact that it is composed of an uncountable quantity of tiny grains. But if we are so pleased, we can invert the roles and quit perceiving the sand as a substance and see it as a set of similar small unities and push into the background the perception of it as a homogenous and continuous substance. This we would probably do if we wanted to do some research on the formation process of the beach. But being on holidays we will likely conceive the beach as a homogenous mass, because that would meet our intentions of lying down on it in order to sunbathe, for example. This flexible ability of switching the way we perceive something is possible because we conceive in a *more or less* manner.

Though we may not be aware of it, we are constantly making use of this ability to switch between foreground and background. This ability (which is one of the Innate Regulating Principles, see Ch. VI), **also allows us to emphasize or deemphasize the components of the IRFs allotting them foreground or background status** (we can also conceive backgrounded items as *dormant*, and the foregrounded ones as *active*). This ability is of superlative importance. Without it language as we know it would be impossible, not to mention figures of speech such as metaphors or metonyms (see Ch V).

The *more or less* way of accessing images, concepts or things is also a requisite to be able to perceive something and identify it regardless of the point of view or perspective. If I had a too stiff, too precise, or "frozen" notion of, let's say, the concept *dog,* and when trying to recall the image of the concept in my mind managed only to see it from one "frozen" perspective, let's say from

the side, and of only one colour, let's say black, and of only one size, let's say the one of a Labrador, and only one shape, it would be absolutely impossible for me categorize a Chihuahua under the concept *dog*.

Now let's look at the already classical drawing of Edgar Rubin, in which we can either see a jug or two faces:



Or at the following, in which we can either see a young lady or an old woman:

In these figures we will see different things depending on which elements we set as foreground and which as background.

But besides, the fact that we don't need to perceive all of a figure's details in order to recognize or identify it, and that we can equally well identify or recognize it regardless of the perspective, is due to a needful **perspective plasticity** (or flexibility). This plasticity also allows us to recognize schematic figures or figures created with just some hinting strokes. The same happens with concepts. We don't need to activate all the available IRF of a concept. We access its meaning in a *more or less* manner, and **what we lose in accuracy we gain in flexibility.**

Our hypothesis states that, in our quest for meaning, the **Relational Compulsion** (see CH II) pushes us to constantly relate, highlighting certain components of the IRF at the expense of others according to context, to our needs or to our wishes. This is possible due to the flexibility that the *more or less* way in which we access and use concepts bestows (including the shifting of the foreground/background emphasis). Without this relational flexibility verbal communication would practically be impossible or at least very tiresome.

We access our concepts and notions with *more or less* precision, so as not to activate unnecessary information and waste energy

and time with what is exceedingly familiar. We can, in this way, use our energy to focus on things we assess to be important or relevant. Just to illustrate this let's go back to the invented dialog we saw above, and imagine the character that narrates his trip to a little town wasting energy and time in details which are overly familiar to us and which would sully the fluency of the narration, as informing that the car had a steering wheel, brakes and four wheels etc. When something is excessively familiar it feels obvious and it generally bores us, making the RC spur us to look somewhere else for novel relations, or things that could be of interest to our survival or well-being.

4.3 The IRFs are partial and changeable

"…two speakers seldom if ever have precisely identical conceptions of any notion"

(R. Langacker 1987a: 136)

The idea that concepts are flexible and mutable can sound scandalous to some ears considering that during more than two thousand years we have lived and thought partially under the steadfast influence of Plato's Doctrine of Ideas. Rudolf Eucken wrote in 1910:

"Now in Plato's mind it is incontestable that, distinguished from shifting and uncertain opinions, there is such a thing as knowledge by permanent concepts: hence he concludes that there certainly exists in the All an invisible, immutable world, a realm of thought-entities beyond the fleeting world of sense."

(R. Eucken, *Great Thinkers, Charles Scribner's Sons,* p. 19)

Maybe the most important significance of the *more or less* use of our concepts and the consequent flexibility is that it allows the components of the IRFs of concepts to be activated in different ways, modifying the salience of the components, or put in other words, the figure/ground (or foreground/ background) organization.

The notion that the IRFs are flexible and that its components constantly shift position in the foreground/ background scale, or hierarchy, is essential to the understanding of how concepts integrate and create meaning, and explains some figures of speech such as metaphors, metonymy etc. Every time our Relational Compulsion changes the IRF of a concept –unconsciously for us– we also change the way in which we understand the concept. This happens most frequently.

If I say, for example:

He touched the ball with his hand

…the IRF of *hand* will have a substantially different organization from the IRF of the same concept in:

Please, lend me a hand.

The hierarchical structure IRF of the concept *hand* has changed considerably in this last example. For the phrase to be understood the IRF will necessarily foreground the notions of *aid* or *help*, not being the case in the first example, in which the component *five fingered ending of arm* would probably have a salient position. But, and this too is essential, their IRFs are NOT completely different. They still have most components in common; what differs is their positioning on the figure/ground scale.

Homographic homonyms are a completely different question. Consider:

*She could feel the fragrance of the **rose***

and

*She **rose** from her bed.*

These are homographic homonyms and their IRFs are completely different from each other. It is a different topic altogether and has nothing to do with what we are dealing with here.

In the following section we will further corroborate that the IRFs are alterable and flexible, and we will consider how they integrate *inter se* and create meaning. To that end we will introduce the notion of **Explicit Relational Field** or **ERF**. We will also see how we manage to use and relate concepts notwithstanding that their IRFs are utterly protean and alterable and how we nonetheless succeed in communicating and understanding each other.

It can be interesting enough to finish off this section by briefly looking at what Socrates, according to many of Plato's texts (e.g. *Laches,* a dialog on the idea, or concept, of courage), was obsessed with. With all the new thinking going around in ancient Greece, there was an understandable urgency to create new concepts, but foremost to **define** them so as to render them stable and immutable. As much of the thinking revolved around the question of what *change* is, and thus also with what doesn't change, there appeared an urge to find the *essence* of things: that which is unalterable and behind, or under*:* the ***sub**stance* of the changing entity. The essence of something would be non-changing, fixed, eternal, necessary, and universal. And that would be what Socrates seems to have been seeking. He was after the *definition* of concepts, pursuing that which doesn't change: the universal that is common to all the instances of the concept. This must have felt necessary at the time considering the general context. And all through the cen-

turies, this notion that a concept must have a fixed and eternal meaning has influenced Western thought up to our days.

Socrates *only knows that he doesn't know anything.* His obsession had to do with showing others that they didn't know anything either, and that they used certain *ideas* or concepts, such as the concept *courage*, without really knowing what they were talking about. Thus, **Laches** is interrogated on the concept of *courage.* Socrates manages to make him feel an utter fool, and miserable Larches is plunged into confusion and depression. Poor Larches, it wasn't his fault, he merely used the concept as we mostly use any concept in our daily life, in a *more or less* manner, being as they are protean and alterable, not eternal and fixed.

Thomas Mann, in his essay on Schopenhauer, gives us an eloquent idea of how Plato conceived his eternal *Ideas:*

"The Greek philosopher taught that the things of this world have no real existence/.../They are of no avail as objects of actual knowledge/.../The only things that have real existence, that always are and never pass away, are the actual originals of those shadows, the eternal ideas, the primeval forms of all things. These are not multiple, being by their very nature each unique, each the archetype, the shadows or imitations of which are merely like-named, ephemeral, individual things of the same kind. Ideas do not, like these, come up and die away, they are timeless and truly existent, not becoming and passing like their perishable imitations. Of them alone, then, can there be actual knowledge, as of that which always and in every respect is."

(Translated by H.T Lowe Porter.)

It is not difficult to understand Plato and Aristotle in their quest for something definite and real in those tumultuous days of the beginnings of philosophy. We could, however, on the one hand,

hypothesize that this binding and "stiffening" of concepts[41] has led to not few dead ends and aporias in Western thought. On the other hand, Plato, in our view, felt strongly that *Ideas* were something essential to our thinking and feeling. In our terms we could say that Plato understood that **indirect concepts** (for him, though, only certain "special" **indirect concepts**) don't correspond directly to sense perceptions. However, this led him to believe that they exist somewhere "beyond" perceived reality, and are so "out of this world" that he even gave them a divine status. He also believed that by remembering and reasoning we could access the "real" (or fixed) meaning of concepts.

Husserl, on the other hand, just as we are doing in this inquiry, understood that concepts are not so stiff and unchanging:

"...different contents can give acts the character of being directed toward the same object, although those contents will represent that object differently. Oedipus' desire for the Queen, for example, has a content that represents Jocasta but represents her "as" the Queen. This desire is not the same as a desire for his mother – but not because that desire would have a different object; rather, it would have a different content – one that represents the same person, Jocasta, but represents her "as" his mother rather than "as" the Queen./.../These features of linguistic reference, which ***Husserl*** *discusses in Investigation I, lead him to conclude about reference essentially just what he concludes about mental representation or intentionality: the referential or representational character of linguistic expressions is not dependent on the objects*

[41] Obviously our notion of *concept* and Plato's *Idea* are not identical; but they do have some things in common. Though not all concepts qualify as Platonic *Ideas*, all Plato's *Ideas* are concepts.

to which they refer, but on something else. And what is this "something else"? Their meanings."[42]

In our terms we would say that the IRFs of *Jocasta* would exhibit at least different hierarchical orders (that is, different emphases) in the different representations.

4.4 The Explicit Relational Fields

Let's now see what we refer to by the expression **Explicit Relational Fields**. Every time two or more linguistic entities (concepts) can be integrated, an ERF is created, which means that some kind of new *meaning* is accessed. The entities, notwithstanding that they might be distinct and separated in the "real" world, can relate *inter se* in different manners in our minds, creating complex energetic webs which we decode as meaning. Using language, we establish relations in our minds among entities that are not necessarily related in external reality, and which sometimes even are counterfactual (e.g. some second and almost all third conditionals).

Some of the components of the IRFs of different concepts integrate (or relate/link) *inter se* and so create ERFs. These can be compound words, phrases, sentences etc. and refer to a new unity of meaning, which does not necessarily match traditional syntactic blocks. This linking/synthesis/relating of the different IRFs constituents happens unconsciously and at enormous speed, al-

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[42] Ronald McIntyre and David Woodruff Smith, "Theory of Intentionality," in J. N. Mohanty and William R. McKenna, eds., *Husserl's Phenomenology: A Textbook* (Washington, D. C.: Center for Advanced Research in Phenomenology and University Press of America, 1989), pp. 147-79

ways finding the energy source in the Relational Compulsion. In order to integrate, some components of the IRFs of the different concepts must have something in common, that is, they need to **share** something. To belong to a higher unity of meaning an entity must share some features with the other entities that belong to the same Unity.[43] Concepts need to share some of their IRF constituents in order to create a higher unity of meaning (that is, an ERF). Sharing is a way of relating, connecting, and cohering. Concepts need to *cohere* (be coherent) with each other in order to create ERFs and thus higher level meanings. This is also valid for already created ERFs[44]: they too need to *cohere* with each other.

In the sentence

Peter kicked the ball

all the terms integrate perfectly well: there are components of their IRFs that match the components of the other IRFs.

This means that there must be some necessary previous common knowledge that applies to all the terms (but which is also knowledge needed to access their meanings separately). For example, we must know what a *leg* is: ***Peter*** must have a body with *legs* in order to be able to kick (so *legs* is part of the IRF of Peter); in order to ***kick*** you need *legs* (so *legs* is also a part of the IRF of *kick*); and a ***ball*** is usually made to be *kicked* and in order to *kick* the kicker must have *legs* (consequently the IRF of ***kick*** will in-

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[43] In our daily lives we see this constantly. Consider what is peculiar to the constituents of a *team;* for example players of a football *team*. People from the *team* will **share** a series of features, such as the outfit, the target, maybe the competition spirit etc. A political party too implies **sharing**. To be a member of a political party, you need to **share** some basic beliefs with the other members, and so on. The concepts *team* or *political party* have a higher level of meaning than just *people.*

[44] Cohere comes from the Latin *co* (together) + *haerere* (to adhere, stick, connect). Coherence has nothing to do with truth value; rather it has to do with consistency, integration and relational possibilities.

clude *legs*), and so on. The IRFs of the terms to be integrated share some relevant components among which we find the component *legs.* This sharing is what allows the terms to integrate and create a higher level of meaning (i.e. the meaning not only of the terms separately but of the sentence as such.)

So, the understanding of any of the three terms separately (*Peter, kick, ball)* of our simple sentence, presupposes the understanding of the components of their IRFs, and in order for the terms to integrate the IRFs of the three terms must share some relevant components (for brevities sake we just mentioned the component *legs*).

When we say that some components of each of the IRFs match, relate or integrate, we mean that the same previous knowledge –or beliefs– will be required for the understanding of these shared components (it is important, though to point out, once and again, that not all components match or integrate, because if they did we would be dealing with *synonyms*). This partaking in the shared knowledge is what allows them to integrate in order to create new meaning. We can also say that the event of *Peter kicking the ball* is perceived in reality as a gestalt, as a whole. Language dissolves this unity and then must again unite it through the sharing or matching of some of the components of their IRFs.

Now let's consider this other simple sentence:

The doctor cured my shoulder.

Some components of the IRF of *doctor* relate to some components of the IRFs of *cured* and *shoulder* and vice versa, thus creating an Explicit Relational Field or ERF, expressed in this case by a simple sentence. In the chart below we can see simplified some possible components of the IRFs of each term and see which match. In order to facilitate, I have ignored the article and

the possessive pronoun, notwithstanding that these terms have their own IRFs, the components of which relate to the IRFs of the other terms. Let's just refresh that the IRF of a concept consists in that which I must previously have knowledge of (which can include experiences not yet conceptualized) in order to access the meaning of the concept/term in question, in a given linguistic context.

IRF of *DOCTOR*	IRF of *CURED*	IRF of *SHOULDER*
Animated body	Animated body	Animated body
Person		
Adult		
Profession		
Health		
Cure/Heal	Cure/heal	Cure/heal
Illness/injury	Illness/injury	Illness/Injury
Relief	Relief	Relief
Pain	Pain	Pain
	Change of state	
	Past (conjugated verb)	
		Part/whole
		Sensitivity
		Flesh/skin etc.

Being as they are, flexible and protean, the IRFs vary from person to person and from context to context. So the chart is just a "sample". Depending on the ERF, our Relational Compulsion

(RC) will determine which components of the IRF will be foregrounded and salient. In our example, the component *pain* is relevant as a component of the IRF of *shoulder*, because a *shoulder* can give *pain*– and this must be known– and if it gives *pain,* it surely is injured. In some other context, the component *pain* would not necessarily be relevant and wouldn't be a foregrounded component of the IRF of the concept as in, for example,

They walked shoulder to shoulder.

The coloured rows show some of the components of the IRFs that match, that is, they highlight components that are *shared* by the IRFs of the different concepts, thus allowing the concepts to relate and integrate and create meaning. The non-coloured rows show possible components that the IRFs of the concepts might have but which are not shared. It is important that the IRFs of the integrating concepts, though they share some components, are not identical, because if they were they wouldn't contribute to the creation of new meaning, and they would simply beget a tautology, an *a priori analytical* phrase.

Some components of the IRF of *doctor* are shared by the components of the IRFs of *cured* and *shoulder* and vice versa. So the three concepts can interrelate, creating an integrated ERF, bringing about a unitary apprehension, a **gestalt**: the three terms integrate with each other calling forth a higher level **of meaning.**

I will here allow myself to again bring up what we saw about analytic judgments *a priori* in Ch. I. They are judgments in which the predicate is contained in the subject, and thus nothing new is said. In the statement *"a triangle has three angles"* nothing new is said about the triangle. It is rather a definition. The predicate is already contained in the concept that is in subject position. The concepts *three angles* are part of the IRF of the concept *triangle*. I'm just recalling the notion of analytic judgments

as an illustration of statements in which the correspondence of the components of the IRFs is practically complete, so complete that nothing new is expressed. We can accordingly reflect that for a phrase, clause or sentence to state something other than what is already affirmed the IRFs of the concepts should not correspond in an absolute manner. They must correspond partially (but in a relevant and somewhat specific way). However, if the correspondences are sparse or very unspecific, we get **semantic tension;** and furthermore we might even face the "danger" of a **semantic** or **relational rupture** if the correspondences are insufficient**.** Let us now look at a case in which no correspondences can be found among the components of the IRFs of some concepts and which therefore leads to a **semantic or relational rupture.** For now we will only consider literal readings (we will consider metaphors later on). Let's consider this sentence:

Roots grew out of the doctor.

It doesn't make much sense, does it? The term *doctor* doesn't relate successfully to the terms *roots grew* (there are no relevant correspondences between their IRFs). There are, however, correspondences between *roots* and *grew:* in order to understand or know what a root is, surely I must previously have an understanding of the notion *grow.* If I say:

Roots grew out of the stalk

the IRFs will correspond in a relevant, albeit partial, way, creating an ERF and bringing about integrated **meaning** as a result, or alternatively, we could also say bringing about an interpretation possibility.

Now, this does not necessarily mean that the sentence *Roots grew out of the doctor* is incapable of generating some kind of **meaning.** Our **Relational Compulsion** acts constantly in us and

will insist in unconsciously pushing us to find some link (some kind of relation) among all the terms in its sense-making quest. In our example, we might let us be carried into a fictional world, one of a comic for example, in which a doctor could grow roots. If this were the case, the IRFs of the terms would be greatly affected: both *doctor* and *roots* would probably include the notion of something like *fictional anomalous world* in their IRFs. Both concepts would share the belonging to some kind of fictional reality –which doesn't strictly follow the laws of non-fictional existence– and so relate and integrate; and the receiver would have to possess the previous knowledge of what is meant by fiction in order to find some meaning. Besides, together they manage to beget an image in our mind, which also helps the integration. We can easily imagine something like roots growing from a body. Langacker (1986) wrote that the relating activity can be also be expressed by an *"interplay and compatibility of images"*.

What this example shows is that sometimes the IRFs of concepts not only shift their internal structure (modifying the foreground/ background relationship of its components), but also manage to add new components from domains extraneous to the prototypical IRF components of a concept. This can probably be done if there is *"a compatibility of images"*: roots can grow from a solid body, such as is the body of a doctor. We will come back to this topic when we look closer at metaphors.

So we must conceive the IRFs as changeable, dynamic and protean. Not only do the components of an IRF change according to the context and diverse circumstances, but also to the person who is using the concept –i.e. the same concept is understood in slightly or not so slightly different ways by different people– and also according to the IRFs of the other concepts with which it integrates. This is necessarily so: **what we lose in accuracy we gain in flexibility.**

Let’s look at another example and consider the following sentence:

I ate salmon yesterday.

And now let’s consider this one:

I saw a salmon jumping in the river yesterday.

Both sentences include the word **salmon**. And both use the same concept *salmon* –the definition of the word would be the same in both cases–, but the arrangement of their IRFs differ. The *salmon* of the first sentence will most likely foreground *food* within the components of its IRF*,* whilst the *salmon* of the second sentence will likely foreground *swim, fish, fins, air, water etc.;* components which in the *salmon* of the first sentence would be shifted to the background.

So far, then, we have seen that the IRFs aren't fixed. They vary and are modified depending on which other concepts they relate to, they also vary in conformity to the discursive context and the circumstance of the discourse, they vary from one individual to another, and they vary according to cultures and historical periods. An example of the latter case is the concept *moon.* Its IRF has certainly varied along different historical periods in spite of being the same **object** perceived by identical or at least similar human senses. The name and the perception of the object haven’t changed. If we just take as a case the Sumerian period of history, the IRF of *moon* at that time would very likely have included the concepts of *divinity, animated being*, and *divine powers*. Those concepts are not part of the IRF of *moon* for most contemporary minds. Today the IRF of *moon* will most likely include such notions as *orbit, satellite, desert* etc.: here we see that the IRF of a concept corresponding to one and the same object can also be

subjected to alterations according to historical and cultural contexts.

We need now observe the following: the more specific or relevant the corresponding or overlapping constituents of the IRFs are, the more will they tie together, **cohere**; and the less specific they are, the less will they integrate. The constituent *physical entity*, for example, is scarcely specific, and it is hardly ever activated as a constituent of an IRF, but if it were, being the only corresponding component, the integration would be minimal. Consider:

The doctor cured my shoe.

Both *cured* and *shoe* could have among their IRF components the notion of *physical entity*, thus creating a correspondence, but the meaning of the sentence would still be obscure since the correspondence occurs at a very low specificity level. On the other hand, as there is, however, a correspondence, our **Relational Compulsion** will strive to find a way of linking the terms to lead us to some sort of interpretation. In the process of seeking a relation with the term *shoe* the RC could prompt us to modify the IRF of *cured* making it include the notion of *fixing.* In that case the knitting together of the IRFs would be tighter and would create an ERF, albeit a metaphorical one (see next Chapter).

The doctor ***cured*** (includes the notion of fixing) *my shoe*

So, in opposition to the correspondences of low specificity we have highly specific or **relevant** correspondences. The more relevant the correspondences are, the greater the integration, which makes the processing of information and the creation of sense and meaning much easier and more fluent.

For the time being, we will consider the ERFs without referring to grammatical structure. We can most likely elicit some meaning from the following sentence in spite of its ungrammaticality:

* *Shoulder of I cure the doctor*

We manage to elicit some kind of meaning out of this sentence because the constituents of the IRFs of the words correspond, even if the word order, the inflections etc. are ungrammatical. V.Evans puts it this way:

"However, and crucially, it is important to emphasise that what licenses these processes, providing coherence to the integration, is compatibility of the lexical concepts involved (rather than, for instance, semantically 'blind' syntactic processes, as in many formal approaches)."[45]

So, with what does grammar really contribute? It provides **conventions** (which are ultimately **External Regulating Principles),** which facilitate and optimize the processing of information contained in an ERF, and among ERFs, which can become very complex from a cognitive point of view. We will delve deeper on this in Chapter VII. We can advance that grammar conventions create expectations that demand to be fulfilled in order to achieve the most efficient manner of processing the contained information.

But let's go back to our sentence:

**Shoulder of I cure the doctor*

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45 Vyvyan Evans*, Lexical Concepts, cognitive models and meaning-construction (2006).*

Grammar convention would lead me to interpret that *my shoulder cured the doctor,* turning the phrase incongruous with my world experience (it's most unlikely that a shoulder can cure anything). My world knowledge –of my human world– would lead me to contradict grammar and denounce the sentence as incorrect, and, later, in spite of it all, I would spontaneously try to interpret it and would assert that the speaker of such a monstrosity probably had intended to say: *The doctor cured my shoulder.* In any case some kind of interpretation is possible because some constituents of the IRFs of the concepts match even if the grammatical structure is incorrect. As said, the grammatical structure in itself would probably prompt me to interpret

Shoulder of I cure the doctor

as

My shoulder cured the doctor

And this would probably be so because, as we saw with Hume and Kant, we can't quit conceiving the notion that everything has a cause and an effect (notwithstanding if this is true or not), and following English grammar conventions (and many other languages), we make the first phrase (*Shoulder of I=my shoulder)* correspond to the first term of the *cause/effect* duo, i.e., the *cause,* and the predicate (*cured the doctor*) to correspond to the last term of the duo, *effect.* In other words, grammar convention creates the expectation of conceiving the subject of a sentence as the agent (the "causer" of something) and the accusative (or direct object) as what is affected, making them correspond to the logic of the *cause/effect* duo. And as the cause is conceived as coming before the effect, so in English the subject precedes the verb and the latter precedes the object. So the first reading English conventional grammar structure would lead us to would be:

My shoulder cured the doctor

where *Shoulder of I* =subject, *cure* =verb, and *doctor*=direct object. We will find this sentence rather awkward and will try to accommodate it to our world experience (but we still manage to understand it), and will probably end up interpreting that *the doctor cured my shoulder.*

And now let us go back to our example with the salmon:

I ate salmon yesterday.

The ERF in this case is a sentence: a relational field that expresses something by bringing forth some integrated meaning. Some of the IRF's relevant constituents match and thus the concepts can relate to each other smoothly. Very simplified, the chart below shows some possible constituents of the IRFs of every term.

Shared or non-shared components of the IRFs	IRF of ***I*** 1	IRF of ***ate*** 2	IRF of ***salmon*** 3	IRF of ***yesterday*** 4
Action (A)	A (1)	A (2)	A (3)	_
Food (F)	F (1)	F (2)	F (3)	_
Temporality (T)	T (1)	T (2)	T (3)	T (4)
Subject (S)	S (1)	S (2)	_	_
Aquatic Animal species (AS)	_	_	AS	_

The chart shows shared and thus relatable previous knowledge or beliefs (part of the IRF of each term) required to create an ERF i.e. to understand the phrase or sentence.

What must be known is:

A (refers to the A of the chart): what an action is,

because

A (1) carries out an action

A (2) is the action of eating

A (3) is affected by the action of eating

F: what food is

because

F (1) consumes food

F (2) is the action of consuming food

F (3) is food

T: temporality

because

T (1) is part of an organic body that is subjected to time

T (2) is a verb conjugated in the past which pertains to the notion of temporality

T (3) has changed in time, was once alive in the past, but is now lifeless and has become food.

T (4) refers to the day before, that is, to the past, which is an aspect of temporality.

S: what a subject is

because

S (1) is a subject referring to himself

S (2) is the action carried out by a subject.

We see that we have found that the IRFs of *I, ate,* and *salmon* have corresponding constituents and integrate just fine. But with *yesterday,* we've only found one feeble integrating constituent. And this is interesting because *yesterday* is an adverbial adjunct, and as such it is only lightly knit to the rest of the sentence. It relates mainly to the verb (after all, it's an ad***verb***). This might also be a reason why many adverbs and adverbials, being less "knit" or tied to the rest of the concepts and thus more flexible, can with ease change position in a sentence: I can perfectly well say: *Yesterday I ate salmon.* And though considered incorrect, the sentence *I ate yesterday salmon* is perfectly intelligible (and fully acceptable in languages such as Spanish). Adverbs of time must first of all relate to the verb, because it will want to agree with its tense. Compare: * *I will eat salmon yesterday.*

Let us now turn our attention to a sentence with a similar structure to the one just seen, but where the meaning is dubious to say the least:

* *I ate idea yesterday*

And the chart:

Shared or non-shared components of the IRFs	IRF of ***I*** 1	IRF of ***ate*** 2	IRF of ***idea*** 3	IRF of ***yesterday*** 4

Action (A)	A (1)	A (2)	_	_
Food (F)	F (1)	F (2)	_	_
Temporality (T)	T (1)	T (2)	_	T (4)
Subject (S)	S (1)	S (2)	_	_
Abstract entity (AE)	_	_	AE	_

There are no correspondences with the concept *idea,* and consequently it cannot integrate with the other terms: no ERF is generated, that is, for me at least (as the reading subject), no linguistic meaning is created and we therefore face a **relational or semantic rupture.**

But the semantic rupture is not due to the fact that something is incongruous with reality, and this is a most important point.

Certain linguists refer to relations of opposition and incompatibility among certain terms. *Cat* and *dog,* would be incompatible because of "mutual class exclusion": if something is a dog, it cannot be a cat and vice versa. These linguists seem to refer to the possibility or the impossibility of an expression according to its concordance with reality. They reason: to say that a dog is a cat is false, ergo the terms are incompatible.[46]

In this work, on the other hand, we understand that meaning and sense do not derive from such a direct relation with "truth". We are here mostly concerned with the meaning and sense that our minds create and are less worried about if what is expressed con-

[46] This perspective might be an inheritance from the extreme rationalism that reached its peak with Leibniz (1646-1716), who thought that "understanding" was simply to perceive an identity, which on the other hand, was his criterion of "truth". So "understanding" and "truth" seem to have come so close to each other that they got confused.

cords or not with "reality" (a term that has become increasingly problematic).

In our minds we can connect things that are not connected in reality. Metaphors are good examples of this. G. Harrison's *"My guitar gently weeps"* is obviously a metaphor. Guitars don't weep, do they? We have the skill to connect things in our minds that are not connected in reality (we just connected g*uitar* and *weep* in our mind, notwithstanding that they are never connected in reality), and by connecting (or relating) them conceive a union and confer meaning to that union. The concepts integrate in our mind instead of breaking down into disconnected parts. (More about metaphors in Ch.V)

And what to do with the following phrase?

This cat is a dog

According to the above mentioned linguists, the terms are incompatible, and thus the sentence is to be considered an abomination, a contradiction in which the lexemes belong to the same semantic field. On the other hand, our hypothesis states that if some constituents of the IRFs correspond, they should be able to connect and integrate and create meaning. *Dog* and *cat* share many constituents of their IRFs; so, in fact, for us they DO create meaning, notwithstanding that they do not describe a "real situation" (understood as a "truth").

There are several factors in play here. One is the verb *be,* and its conjugate *is,* which in this particular sentence probably refers to **identity** of the sort A=A, where the predicate is included in the subject (the copula value of *is,* i.e. the notion of one concept being in the other). If we were to read the phrase in this manner, we would create a **semantic tension** because the IRFs of *dog* and *cat*

are not identical (=) –though very similar– and don't comply with the requirements of the "identity verb" *is.*

Thus the **semantic tension** compels our Relational Compulsion to find another reading, a metaphorical one (see Ch. V), by changing the IRF of the verb, shifting its constituents in the foreground/background scale, or adding components and subtracting others.

Somebody saying:

This cat is a dog

…could be meaning that the cat is behaving more like a dog than a cat. The IRF of the verb *be* is thus modified and the identity notion is pushed to the background, while the component *behavior* is included in order to give it some meaning[47]. The IRFs are flexible and protean, and what is lost in accuracy is won in flexibility.

Conversely, we can imagine a context in which a cat has been disguised as a dog, and somebody detects this and cries out *this cat is a dog.* In this case once again the IRFs will change and probably foreground the notion of *identity.*

Well, talking of dogs: if we compare the nature of a concept with the bark of a dog, we might deepen our insight into this matter. A bark can express a feeling, so it can be considered a kind of language, but it is mostly a reaction to some kind of direct excitation. It has no conceptual dimension, thus no IRF, and therefore cannot integrate with other barks to convey higher degrees of conceptual meaning. There is no way a bark can "hook onto" (relate or integrate) another bark to create a more complex meaning than the

[47] The Relational Compulsion, guided by certain Regulating Principles, will take the context, intentionality, voice, pitch etc. into account when adding, subtracting or shifting components of the IRFs in order to create or find meaning.

meaning of the bark itself. Repeated barks do not integrate. At most they might intensify what is already there.

4.5 Kinds of meaning

As my reflections advanced I found myself in the need of distinguishing at least two acceptations of the concept *meaning.* One, I mused, is the *linguistic meaning,* and the other is what I shall call the *existential meaning.* The former refers to the understanding of a word, proposition, phrase, sentence etc. I can, for example, perfectly well understand the *linguistic meaning* of the following sentence:

There is a policeman at the corner.

That is, it has *linguistic meaning,* but the phrase would lack *existential meaning* uttered in certain contexts.[48] Let's imagine a person greeting another while entering the cabin of a train, and the other answering: *there is a policeman at the corner.* Most likely the former subject would feel perplexed and confused. He would have understood the *linguistic meaning,* but not the *existential meaning,* expecting, as he would, a more amicable reply to his greeting.

The notion of *existential meaning* is associated to that of functionality or purpose. When we wonder about the *existential meaning* of something we are generally inquiring into its **usefulness**, or its **purpose**[49]. We are, in other words, asking what **value (or per-**

[48] The *logical empiricists,* with their verification principle, contended that a proposition has meaning if it can be verified, i.e. when it is possible to state what operations must be carried out in order to prove its veracity. So even if they did differentiate meaning from truth, *meaning* for them is still much knitted to the idea of being true or at least verifiable. The first Wittgenstein asserted that the only propositions that carry any meaning are the ones that refer to facts. This makes it very difficult to explain the workings of, for example, metaphors.

[49] Husserl contended that meaning was given by the **intentionality** of the conscious mind.

sonal interest) something might or not have for us. We thus find *existential meaning* in something when it is related to the satisfaction of our needs, be they biological, social, psychological, spiritual etc.

However, we manage to create or find **meaning**, of whatever kind, only after we have successfully created relations. The meaning of something resides not in a thing, but in a relation, e.g. we understand the meaning of a word if it is related to a concept already extant in our mind, or going back to our example, *There is a policeman in the corner*, lacks existential meaning because we cannot relate it to anything in the context given.

With regards to the *linguistic meaning,* we can come across expressions in which we understand the meaning of each of the words, but nonetheless fail to create or find the meaning of the expression, and vice versa. Let's recall Chomsky's famous example:

Colorless green ideas sleep furiously.

Or let us consider the following expression:

The dog murmured blue migraines and its feathers exploded.

I understand all the words but the IRFs match partially only in a very unspecific manner, and thus fail to create an ERF, that is, *linguistic meaning.* The sentences are grammatically correct, and yet I fail to relate its constituents so as to create meaning (at least in my mind). We therefore here have a **semantic rupture[50].**

So, when **no** components of the IRFs of the concepts of a sentence correspond or match (or correspond in a very unspecific manner), we have a **semantic rupture** (absence of *linguistic*

[50] As already mentioned, semantic **tension** must be distinguished from **semantic rupture.** (More about this in Ch. V)

meaning), and experience the expression as nonsense. Similarly, if an expression is uttered out of context, we too perceive it as nonsense, but this time due to a lack of *existential meaning.* We can also experience an utterance as nonsense when we perceive that what the utterance asserts does not agree with our knowledge of the world or with the way we conceive reality.

Let me here repeat the examples from above:

- Lack of *linguistic* and *existential meaning* (semantic rupture):
  The dog murmured blue migraines and its feathers exploded.

- *Linguistic meaning* but lack of *existential meaning.* Indifferent to context (e.g. answering a greeting):
  There is a policeman at the corner.

And here a new example:

- *Linguistic meaning* but lack of *existential meaning.* Non-agreement with my experience of reality:
  Every three days wings grow on the cat.

In this last meaning we find that the constituents of the IRFs do correspond, and thus we can *understand* the sentence (it has *linguistic meaning*), and furthermore, even imagine the event it depicts: I can imagine wings growing on a cat. So there is nothing wrong with the relating of the IRFs. However, we would consider it nonsense if somebody uttered such a statement claiming to be describing our world or reality as we perceive it. The statement creates meaning because some constituents of the IRFs match, and it could very well depict an event in a science fiction comic or movie. So, even if a statement does not concord with reality it still

can render *linguistic meaning*, and this point is of utter importance to us.

As already asserted, we can consequently observe that both kinds of meaning here discussed are created due to a *relating activity.*

Before dropping this issue, allow me some more words about the *existential meaning*. We could also call it *practical* or *immediate meaning.* In order to perceive/feel it I must manage to **relate** what has been uttered or done to some benefit for someone or something, and thus bestow it with some kind of *purpose* (which consequently gives it a *value*). Maybe that's why, for example, many people feel that philosophical reflections have no *meaning.* Let's consider, just as samples, Copernicus', Kepler's, or Galileo's reflections, which might have been felt meaningless to their contemporaries. Or the slow research on the phenomena of electricity when nobody was able to conceive its value besides getting electrocuted. When we can't perceive the **immediate value**, that is, some kind of benefit, then we find it difficult to find any clear existential meaning. Nonetheless, an immense quantity of achievements, both artistic as well as scientific, came to be despite the fact that the *immediate or practical meaning* wasn't clear to most (or anybody). It might take centuries for the meaning to "appear". Very few people showed any interest in the book "*De revolutionibus orbium coelestium",* by Copernicus, when it was published, and the heliocentric ideas there exposed had to wait two centuries to be accepted by the layman.

4.6 How come we understand each other?

Before we leave the subject we must face a problem we have been postponing. We have hypothesized that the IRFs (and consequently the ERFs) of concepts are changeable and protean; and yet we somehow manage to use them in order to communicate and understand each other. How is this possible?

In Chapter II, we referred to the idea that the Relational Compulsion has two sides: roughly speaking we can say that on the one hand there are relations that while creating linguistic meaning (ERFs) become "frozen" or "crystallized" as a result of reiterative usage in similar contexts, and on the other hand, there are flexible or/and novel ERFs. The meanings that become "frozen" guarantee certain IRF stability, or as Vyvyan Evans puts it they become *"well-entrenched mental routines consisting of conventional pairings of form and meaning"*[51] (they will, however, be constantly submitted to all kinds of tensions imposed by historical, cultural, social changes and fashions.)

The quotidian and reiterative usage of expressions in similar contexts and situations take on specific meanings by force of association and habit. That is, when concepts, or an expression, occur repeatedly in a social/cultural environment, its IRFs, and the ERFs they constitute, "freeze". Some of these expressions are referred to as *common phrases, set phrases, sayings, idiomatic expressions, platitudes, trite remarks, commonplace banalities* etc. (maybe we should even include recurring notions or ideas that become part of a culture as components of some paradigm, but this we will leave for a possible future discussion). Furthermore, when

[51] *Lexical Concepts. Cognitive Models and Meaning-Constructions.*

a new idea, notion or concept (be it in the arts, the sciences or even religion) tries to battle its way into a linguistic community, it will probably have to break through or disrupt some previously frozen IRFs or ERFs, which, history has shown us, can be quite a complicated matter.

What has just been said implies some curiosities. We generally deem these commonplace phrases with dubious respect, if not with outright disdain. This might be justified to a certain degree, but at the same time we are now obliged to concede them their true, albeit ignored, value. These platitudes would seem to be essential to the process of stabilizing (by way of "freezing") the otherwise protean and changeable IRFs, and consequently allowing us to communicate and understand each other (even though in a *more or less* fashion).

Another way around this theme is –following the findings of Cognitive Linguistics –to refer to **prototypical meanings,** and subsequently to semantic extensions, whether metaphorical or not. Let's once more take the example of the word/concept *hand.* This concept's IRF is at first sight rather stable as it refers to something perceivable, and its prototypical meaning is quite straight forward: it refers to that part of our body that emerges from the end of a human arm and has five fingers (its IRF constituents could include, among others: arm, extremity, finger, body, bone, skin etc.). However, we do use the concept in ways that wouldn't adhere to the prototypical IRF gradient. These uses are called semantic extensions, but have, nonetheless, the prototypical meaning as their source. We hypothesize that the foregrounded component of the prototypical IRF will still be present, though shifted from its foreground position, in other uses of the concept. This is what would keep the meanings of the different uses of the term related. When we, for example, ask someone to "*lend us a hand*", we are not activating the prototypical IRF of *hand*. We

will not expect the interlocutor to cut off his hand and give it to us. We obviously mean something else. The IRF of this *hand* is different from the prototypical IRF, and most likely foregrounds the notion of "help". Nonetheless, the constituents of the prototypical IRF do NOT disappear, but are relegated to the background (a vague trace of them still present, hinting at the notion that we generally make use of our hands when we give another person help), and the constituent "help" or "assistance" is foregrounded.

So, summing up, we have hypothesized that the reiterative usage of concepts in resembling contexts stabilizes the IRFs, bringing out the idea of a prototypical meaning (even if it is a relative stability not immune to the passage of time).

Appendix

A structure that has been widely discussed is the so called *causative* structure. We can find different and opposing theories about these structures. And this is maybe due to the fact that they do not fit in among the terms of traditional grammar. Basing ourselves on what we have seen in this chapter we will try to analyze some causative verbs applying our point of view.

In the causative structures we will deal with here are ones in which the subject is the causer but not the agent of an event. For example:

1. *He had her order some coffee.*

The problem arises when we try to define the syntactic role of *her.* It is obviously not an accusative (or direct object) in this sentence, though it is in the following one:

2. *He had her.*

What then is the syntactic role of *her* in (1)?

Before we go on, let's just observe the other strange phenomenon that occurs with this type of construction with the verbs *have, made,* and *let*: the complementary clause takes a bare infinitive. Almost all other verbs take a to-infinitive in these kinds of constructions, e.g.:

*He forced her **to** sing.*

Why is this so? R. Langacker's hypothesis asserts that an event that takes the bare infinitive is processed by means of *sequential scanning,* that is, we conceptualize the event as a sequential succession and not as a gestalt whole. Conversely, when the verb is a to-infinitive, we conceptualize the event as a gestalt whole (*summary scanning*). Not all Cognitive linguists agree with this hypothesis. It has received strong criticism by, among others, Cristiano Broccias and Willem B. Hollman. On the other hand, I don't believe their explanation to be much more convincing. In "*Do we need summary and sequential scanning in (Cognitive) grammar?"* they write the following:

"Hollmann (2003: Chapter 5) offers a possible explanation that makes no reference to a difference between scanning modes. Whilst this is not the place to go into a lot of diachronic detail we note that one factor in the regulation process may have been the relative frequency of the constructions. It is widely accepted in the usage-based model and grammaticalisation theory (see e.g. Bybee and Scheibman 1999), that high token frequency constructions will tend to get reduced more than low frequency ones. Soon after its rise in the Middle English period causative make with an infinitive became the most frequent causative, which may

help explain why it ended up with the relatively compact bare infinitival pattern as against the longer to-infinitive complement. (For periphrastic causative have, which has always been less frequent, the explanation must rely more on the semantics of the construction.)"

As said, to me at least, it is quite unconvincing. But then, can this phenomenon be explained using our terms?

Let's look at our examples again:

1. *He had her order some coffee.*

and

2. *He had her.*

Let's start by looking at the verb *had.* The IRFs of the first *had* and the second are different. In sentence 2, the IRF of *had* includes a focalized or fore-grounded component of **possession.**

By adding the word *order* to *her* in sentence 1 (*her order)*, the IRF of *had* is affected and modified, but the **possession** component does not completely disappear, rather it is relegated to the background, while *her* and *order* are knitted closer together, expressed by the leaving out of the *to.* That is, the subject (*He*) caused *her order*, not *her.*

Conversely, in

He forced her to sing

the subject exerts his will on *her,* and not on *her to sing.* The *to sing* event is rather a consequence of the subject's exerting his will on what would be the accusative, in this case *her.*

So *her* and *to sing* are not knitted together in the same way as *her* and *order* are. The *to* of the infinitive has a "separating function."

We have two very similar constructions (in both, the subject impels someone else to do something), but at the same time quite different: *her* is the accusative in the to-infinitive construction, while it is not in the constructions with *have, made* and *let* (we will not take up the case of *help* here).

The verb *have* (prototypically a verb of possession) in causative sentences is frequently used when the subject exerts some kind of control over the other person (the material agent of the action). And this interpretation is possible because the possession component of *have* does not totally disappear. In order to control something it must be in my sphere of control. **My** sphere. That is, a sphere that is **mine**, i.e. one that I possess, even if only metaphorically. At the same time, however, this notion of possession has been weakened, only irradiating its influence from the background. We will be returning to this most interesting issue when we look closer at metaphors (Ch. V)

So we have seen that the causative structure has modified the IRF of the verb *have*. Yet there is another phenomenon we must observe before deciding upon the syntactic roles. But first let's recap what has been said.

The causative constructions with the verbs *have, made, let* (and *help*) take a bare infinitive. Other verbs take the to-infinitive in the complementary clause. For example:

a) He had/made/let/helped her sing.

*b) He forced/got/begged/ordered her **to** sing.*

In (b) the subject exerts his influence –the forcing– on *her,* and not on *her to sing etc.* (the singing is rather a consequence), thus *her* is the accusative in the (b) construction. But it is not in the (a) construction. We have two similar constructions –in the sense that

both contain a subject that makes somebody else do something–, and at the same time quite different syntactically: *her* is an accusative in the construction with the to-infinitive (b), but not in (a).

Let's also recall that we said that the possessive IRF ingredient of *have* was weakened –or backgrounded– but did not disappear. So we can interpret that in (a) what the subject controls, and metaphorically possesses, is the event in which she (*had her sing)* sings, orders etc. Metaphorically, the subject possesses (controls) the **event** *her sing or her order* etc. and consequently the accusative is not *her* like in the (b) construction, but *her sing/order etc.*[52]

We can apply the same logic to the *made* and *let* cases. Let's illustrate looking at a construction with *made:*

c) *He made her order some coffee.*

Obviously, the accusative is not *her.* If it were, as in *He made her*, the component *creation* would be fore-ground in the IRF of *made.*

Again the accusative is *her order.* The question is: what happens to the IRF of *made?*

The prototypical IRF of *made* includes the notion of **creation (**or **production)** as fore-grounded or salient. But in (c), even if this notion is weakened (relegated to the background in the IRF), it does not disappear completely: the subject *He* has **created** an event, one in which somebody *orders a coffee.* But the salient constituents of the IRF will now have changed their hierarchical position, and other potential constituents will be added or shifted to the top of the hierarchy. The constituent *force* (or *induce*)**,** for

[52] It is a non-typical Direct Object. It can take subject position in passive voice if the subject is replaced by *the event* or by *it*, and *have* by one of its possessive IRF constituents, for example: ***The event*** (she singing, ordering etc.) *was possessed/controlled by him*, or ***It*** *was possessed/controled by him*.

example, may be activated and prompted by the construction to rise to prominence**.** This means that in order to properly understand this causative (c) I must previously have incorporated the notions (accessed their meanings) of *force* or *induce* or similar notions, but also the one of *create.*

The same construction can be used with some perception verbs: *see, hear, watch, feel, look at, sense,* and *listen to.* And they follow the same logic regarding the accusative (the accusative includes the action, for example *her sing*), but the IRF of the main verb is not affected in the same manner as the causatives with *have, made, let* and *help.* The reason being that the verbs of perception integrate smoothly with the rest of the sentence (there is no **semantic tension**): perceptions are straightforward in the sense that no "re-interpretation" (IRF component shifting) is needed in order for them to relate to what is perceived and create meaning. Besides, the *hearing*, for example, is not of *her,* but of *her sing*:

I heard her sing.

Her and *sing* are nicely knitted together (together they form a grammatical unit, that of the object), and don't need the "separating function" of the *to.*

CHAPTER V

Semantic Tension and Metaphors

Metaphors are exaggerated

Conventional Metaphors

Some More about Metaphors

Metonymy

*"Even lexical concepts that are potentially dissonant and can be said to **clash**, need not result in the failure to form a conception/.../ Indeed, this is the strategy that prevails in so-called figurative language use."*

V. Evans, *Lexical Concepts, cognitive models and meaning-construction (2006)*

5.1 Semantic Tension and Metaphors

The line that separates a metaphor from an inconsistent, absurd or senseless phrase is not very thick. Both generate some kind of **semantic tension.** If the tension is excessive you will end up with a **semantic rupture,** in which case no meaning or sense will be found or given to the phrase. In our terms this implies that no relevant correspondences will be found among the IRFs of the concepts involved: the less the components of the IRFs match –or if the correspondences are not relevantly specific– the higher the tension and vice versa. However, when we face an ERF within a phrase or a sentence –assuming it's in our native language– with high **semantic tension**, before discarding the phrase as pure hogwash we usually shift our literal point of view, and our Relational Compulsion (RC) induces us to go for another kind of reading,

that is, one in which we carry out a more complex way of linking (relating) the concepts in order to find (or give) some kind of meaning. Let's remember that the IRFs are protean and flexible, and it is this flexibility that, partly at least, allows for the existence of, among other figures of speech, the metaphor. Our **RC** will “dig up” less obvious components of the IRFs, which will in turn modify the normal or prototypical foreground and background pattern of the components. The usually foregrounded components of the prototypical IRF might be relegated to the background, but won't disappear, and will, so to say, be "dragged" along. Thus, less obvious components will be “dug up” and given a salient place in the hierarchy of the IRF (as an attempt to link the concept to other concepts) and this is what gives the metaphors that piquant plus. The way in which the components of the IRFs arrange themselves in the **foreground/background** hierarchical pattern is essential, because that will determine which components will be focalized and which relegated.

Before continuing, I would like to refresh our definition of an IRF:

The IRF of a concept represents all the previous knowledge or beliefs (which includes experiences not yet conceptualized, such as feelings, sensations etc.) that we must possess (and thus recognize) in order to be able to give the concept in question a relative meaning in a specific context.

Let us now consider the following sentence:

a. *I got lost in the maze of my thoughts.*

Without needing to draw a chart, we can assert that there are components of the IRFs of *lost* and *maze* that match with a high specificity level (for example, the notion of getting *lost* would be

a foregrounded component of the IRF of *maze*). Moreover, given that no semantic tension is issued, the linking is strong, and most people would make a literal reading, instead of a metaphorical one, of the following phrase:

b. *I got lost in the maze*

It is in the last part of the second phrase of a. where the **tension** appears:

...in the maze of my thoughts.

It wouldn't do to make a literal reading here. Literally there are no *mazes* through which *thoughts* move, or no *thoughts* that move through a *maze*. So, in order to overcome the **semantic tension** and prevent it from becoming a **rupture**, we must try a metaphorical reading. This means that our Relational Compulsion will "dig up" a less obvious component of the IRF of at least one of the concepts and foreground it: at first sight the matching components might not be obvious.

The IRF component *mislead /confuse/disorientate* of *maze* is rather obvious, but may be less obvious in the case of *thoughts.* Nonetheless, in order to understand the metaphor, we must previously know that *thoughts* can "tangle up" (another metaphor) and thus *mislead* us, making us feel *lost* on our way to our quest. So, in order to access the meaning (possible meaning) of our metaphor, we unconsciously (by means of the Relational Compulsion) dig up, activate and foreground the otherwise backgrounded component *mislead* in the IRF of the concept *thoughts*, and so manage to discover a relevant link or match between *maze* and *thoughts***,** which will prevent the **semantic tension** from turning into a **semantic rupture**. Other possible IRF components of *thoughts*

such as *cerebration, cognitive process, mental life* etc. will be likely backgrounded, but will not disappear.

This means that in order to integrate two or more concepts that are in a state of semantic tension–which could lead to a semantic rupture if read literally– we must discover at least one relevant (but generally non-obvious) correspondence among the components of their reciprocal IRFs. This "discovering" is what partly provides the aesthetic pleasure of creating or understanding a metaphor.

But what else does a metaphoric reading imply? It implies various things simultaneously. Once we have discovered the hidden (or non-obvious) element that the IRFs have in common, we continue to operate on the phrase by unconsciously modifying and/or emphasizing some of the other components of the IRFs.[53] In our example, we emphasize (foreground) certain components of the IRF of *maze* and relegate (background) others: so accordingly, the term *thoughts* affects the term *maze* prompting the latter to background the component concept of *materiality* and emphasize the abstract complexity of its labyrinthic system in order to be able to relate to the former (*thoughts)*, and so strengthen the correspondences of the components of its IRF with those of the IRF of *thoughts*. The component *complexity* is thus shared by *maze* and *thoughts*, strengthening the integration of the two. As seen above, we have also focalized the components *confuse/ disorientate in finding a way out/mislead* and the concomitant idea that mazes are built with the intention of *disorientating*, and have relegated (back-grounded) other components of the IRF of *maze,* such as the material the maze is made out of, its size, possible ornaments etc. (however, these latter constituents of its IRF, though relegat-

[53] This unconscious modifying of the canonical hierarchy of the IRFs is carried out by the Relational Compulsion.

ed, do not disappear). On the other hand, we know that *thoughts* cannot, literally, take the form of a *maze.* So, *maze* conversely affects the term *thoughts,* prompting, in turn, a restructuring of the IRF of the latter. Thus, *thoughts* relegates its thoroughgoing abstractedness when finding some component of the spatial dimension of *maze* that it can share, such as the notion of *not finding the way out,* and in this manner manages to strengthen its compatibility with the IRF of *maze.* Once the concepts have connected, i.e. once a relation is created between the concepts thanks to the matching of some components of their IRFs, the conditions are given so as to 1) create meaning, and 2) to form a mental image with all its new associations– that spicy creative "plus" that many a good metaphor offers–, which more often than not calls on our feelings and/or emotions, and not only on our reason or intellect. A phrase appealing only to our thinking would be something like: *my thoughts are confusing/ confused.* Rather dull and boring. Most metaphors (especially novel ones) spawn some kind of image in our minds, and let us now see how this is accomplished.

Even though we focalize (foreground) some components of the IRFs in disregard of others (and furthermore, sometimes add or subtract components in order to achieve sufficient semantic integration of the concepts), I will once again repeat that the components that have been relegated to the background do not disappear completely. And this is what, in part, gives a metaphor its emotional richness. Some relegated parts of the prototypical concept *maze,* for example, keep "radiating" its influence, and provide the "substance" for generating a mental image, which *my thoughts are confusing/confused* hardly does. A maze is a material construction, something concrete and perceivable by the senses (regardless if only in a drawing) and thus provides what is needed to create a visual, albeit mental, image. However, as we saw above, some part of the prototypical meaning of *thoughts* keeps active,

affecting the IRF of *maze,* taking away some of its concreteness. It no longer is a "real" or tangible maze; it rather has been tinged by the abstractness of *thoughts,* and has thus turned into a purely mental maze. Yet it conserves its form, which permits it to sustain the image we are able to create in our minds, albeit in a fuzzy and blurred manner. Its IRF has been modified or restructured. It no longer has the same IRF structure as *maze* in for example

This town is a maze.

Many metaphors, on the one hand, embed some or another element pertaining to the perceivable by the senses (in our example *maze*), which will be the element that will sustain the mental image; and, on the other hand, they incorporate an abstract non-tangible element (*thoughts* in our example) that will be "subjected" to the shape of the former (*thoughts* is subjected to *maze*).

We can, in this way, think, imagine, talk about, manipulate etc. abstract entities. We will look deeper at this in **the conventional metaphor** section (they are called **conventional** because they have been "worn out" –another metaphor– by everyday use, though that doesn't mean that they don't have a vital communicative function). The novel metaphors, on the other hand, manage to generate some kind of *aesthetic pleasure,* topic to be addressed in the next sections.[54]

These reflections on metaphors show once again that there is much to gain when concepts are thought of as unfixed and unstable, understanding their IRFs as protean and flexible, and capable of mutually affecting, conditioning and defining each other.

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[54] Lakoff & Johnson (1980:14 ff.) present the notion of three kinds of metaphors: 1) **structural**, which we use when dealing with abstract concepts, as for example when we talk of time with the same notions used to talk about money (*spend time, save time, borrow time* etc.) 2) **orientative**, as for example *get your spirits up,* and 3) **the ontological**, as for example *to be in ecstasy.*

5.2 Metaphors are exaggerated

When we contemplate a **caricature,** we can easily notice that one or several features have been exaggerated. The caricature of a face, for example, can have an exaggerated chin, nose, or whatever other part, which thus will stand out from the rest of the face. This misshaping appeals to humour and activates our ludic or playful sense: it's an aspect of the comic. As it were, it seems we derive some kind of ludic pleasure when we deform reality (maybe some kind of "revenge" on reality's otherwise rigid inflexibility– expressed for example in the so called laws of nature).

P**arodies** also use exaggeration in order to create comic effects. Its humour is often tinged with certain maliciousness, that is, with a critical humour. And if there is criticism then there is some kind of opinion. To parody is to opine. And in every opinion, there is a value judgement. When **parody** is used, certain values are denigrated and others enhanced.

To exaggerate is to magnify. When we put something under a magnifying glass, the image shown in the glass is automatically focalized, while what is not shown in the glass is relegated to the background (but does not disappear).

These exaggeration procedures, which are typical of **parody** and **caricature**, are also to be found in **metaphors**. Exaggeration appeals to our sense of humour (in order to appreciate a good metaphor, we probably have to have some sense of humour); makes us focalize on some particular features, and conveys some or other value judgements. Nonetheless, a metaphor can also ex-

press a value judgement that isn't necessarily malicious or critical. And, just as images, exaggerations tend to produce some kind of emotional impact, which is why metaphors usually become intensive carriers of emotionality.

Let's look at some examples:

While my guitar gently weeps (G. Harrison)

Your teeth are pearls

I am a volcano and you are the dark night in which I shall glow
(From the poem *Till*, by Arthur Lundkvist)

I've got birds in my head

My soul is overflowing with tenderness

Your eyes are as dark as oblivion

(From *Malena*, by Carlos Gardel)

As mentioned above, even where there is **semantic tension,** we still strive to find relevant corresponding elements among the IRFs of the concepts involved (though not necessarily among the concepts themselves). Furthermore, the pleasure we feel when confronting an accomplished metaphor is that it creates a non-obvious novel relation between at least two concepts, which we manage to discover. When Lundkvist writes…

I am a volcano and you are the dark night in which I shall glow

...I am sure that he didn't choose the image of a volcano because he realized that the *I* of the poem and the *volcano* were very similar and comparable. We can, nonetheless, find corresponding elements in their IRFs, which could be, for example, *overwhelming*

force. Both a volcano and an intense emotion can be adjectivized as carrying an *overwhelming force.* And this could be the corresponding element of both IRFs. To understand the metaphor, we would have to foreground in the IRF of the *I* of the poem the notion that a subject is capable of experiencing an emotional *overwhelming force*, which becomes a component of the IRFs of both *I* and *volcano.*

Even if we do not want too many correspondences, so as not to be prompted to a literal reading (there would be no semantic tension), *I am a volcano* is so exaggerated that we are in jeopardy of a semantic rupture. The similarity between *the volcano* and the *I* of the poem is not obvious. We avoid the rupture as long as we manage to find some relevant correspondence among the the components of the IRFs (which might require an acute adaptation of the IRFs).

When the poet writes *I am a volcano*, he does not intend us to be interested in volcanoes. The volcano is used to refer, in an exaggerated way (that is to say, expressing a value judgement and/or intense emotionality), to a particular aspect of the *I* of the poem. What the poet is interested in is conveying what is happening to that *I***,** not to the volcano.

At the same time the poet has created an image whereby an integration of the abstract concept *I* and the concrete image concept *volcano* has taken place; so if the concepts have related successfully in the reader's mind, not only has meaning been created, but also an image that expresses an intense emotion..

In

My guitar gently weeps

a sort of "replacement" of a concept by another has taken place (*weeps "*replaces" *plays sad music*). However, for the replacement to be successful (i.e. in order to avoid a semantic rupture), we must discover some matching elements of the IRFs of the replacing concept *weep* and *guitar*. We must know beforehand that a *guitar* can play music and that music can be *sad*, and that *weeping* usually expresses *sadness*. So a relevant matching component of the IRFs of *guitar* and *weep* is most likely *sadness.* It is thanks to this "discovery" that we can replace one concept- or more- with another/others (*weep* for *sad music)* without bringing about a semantic rupture, which, for example,

my guitar gently eats ravioli

would, at least for me. And, last but absolutely not least, as a result of the successful integration one or more emotionally loaded mental images surge. We have in this way integrated (or successfully related) the image of a guitar gently weeping with the meaning of sad music being created. Besides, the idea of sadness has been given a more concrete image or expression, which is that of weeping.

This replacing mechanism is shared by other figures of speech and cognitive processes. When we create a **symbol,** we once again replace one thing for another, the replacer becoming the **representative** of the replaced; for example, a flag represents a country. And unlike a **sign,** a **symbol** generally drags with it the "venerableness" of the thing represented. A **sign,** on the contrary, merely indicates something and has no special value in itself; even its form is unimportant. We don't really care too much if

the arrow that is a traffic sign is painted on a metal sheet, if it's carved on a piece of wood, or if it is the arm of a policeman.[55]

Metonymy is a figure of speech that also replaces one thing for another and, just as with **metaphors** and **symbols**, the representative is tinged with the values of the represented. **Metonymy** refers to one thing or concept with the name of another thing or concept. Examples:

Can you give me a hand? (*Hand* is used for *help*)

To smoke a pipe. (*Pipe* is used for *tobacco*).

We'll talk some more about metonymy at the end of the present chapter.

5.3 Conventional Metaphors

Up to now we have been talking about metaphors in general. As is well known metaphors are not used only to create poetry or literature. In the book *Metaphors we live by*, 1980, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson showed clearly, among other things, that our everyday language is brimming with metaphors and that without them we would be at a loss trying to cope with abstract concepts such as TIME. **Conventional metaphors** are ones used very frequently and have thus become part of everyday language. We tend to forget that they are metaphors. They have usually lost their emotional impact, and barely conjure up any images anymore. They are, however, crucial to our communicative powers,

[55] More often than not a symbol replaces something that is not entirely definable, linked as it may be to the emotional realm.

and without them we would certainly be at a loss when trying to handle some very elusive concepts such as TIME, as we shall soon see.

Before going on, let's just refresh what we said about **direct** (or **basic)** concepts such as *green, pain, heat, sweet, etc*. We know what they mean because we have **experienced** them with our body or body senses. They are thus easy to access: if we have previously experienced them, we understand (recognize) them immediately.

So what we do when dealing with slippery abstract concepts, such as *time,* is treat them as if they were direct or basic concepts when combining them with other parts of speech. We treat them as if they were basic, tangible, and everyday concepts. In this way we manage to refer and manipulate more complex and indirect concepts that are not accessed directly with our bodies or senses. We can clearly see this in the following conventional metaphor:

To lose time

I can, indeed, lose money, or some object, but I cannot, literally, *lose* time. It's a metaphor. Bills and coins, on the other hand, are tangible, palpable; I can smell, touch, lose them, or put them in my wallet. *Time*, by contrast, at least for us humans, is something not easily grasped (being as it is, according to Kant, a *pure (or a priori) intuition*, see CH I). It is impalpable and imperceptible, I can't see, touch, or smell it. And yet we are constantly referring to TIME in our lives. So, in order to bring *time* "down to earth", we refer to it using terms we usually use when talking about concrete and tangible things. Thus, we use terms taken from a concrete domain like MONEY to refer to more abstract notions, such as TIME. So we say things like: *lose* time*, waste* time*, save* time*, give* me 5 minutes etc. These terms- the ones in italic- are used

metaphorically, which allows us to manipulate and structure an otherwise most elusive entity.

We use terms from a variety of domains to refer to TIME. We also apply, for example, SPACE terms (space being much more tangible) to talk about TIME. We say things like: *Christmas is approaching, time flies by,* etc.

We may ask ourselves why it is that we use terms belonging to the MONEY or SPACE domains to talk about time, and not terms taken from, let's say, the kitchen domain. Why is it okay to say *I lost some time* but not *I cooked some time* (referring to quality time for example?) Well, let's see.

The concept *time* must have an IRF to be able to combine or integrate with other concepts, that is, to create an ERF.

Let's turn to John Locke for a little help: he understood that the flow of successive internal thoughts and feelings would be the source of our idea or conception of the concept *time*. Thoughts come and go, and give us a feeling of something flowing. If so, then we could hypothesize that this flow gives us a feeling of things that come and things that pass, that get "*lost"* in the time flow.

Thus, in the expression *to lose time* the IRFs of both *lose* and *time* share the conceptual component "presently ignore the whereabouts of something's location in time or space previously known." We can thus see that, even if *time* cannot be lost literally, it can nevertheless integrate with a metaphorical *lose,* create meaning, and avoid a semantic rupture.

But what components do the IRFs of *cook* and *time* share? Maybe *duration*? However, this concept is so unspecific (just as *physical entity* is, considering that whatever we conceive we do so

in TIME and SPACE). To integrate with *cook* you need a concept whose IRF includes the conceptual component of something that can undergo a change of state, such as food. *Time* can change the state of other entities but cannot itself be changed by another entity or process.

Let's consider another example of a conventional metaphor:

A green idea

We know that *green* is a colour and as such requires something that supports it, something pertaining to the spatial dimension to which it can "adhere" to, as for example a fruit. Consequently there is no semantic tension in *a green fruit,* and for the same reason it isn't a metaphor. But the concept *idea* does not entail the notion of support, and neither does it exist spatially. That is why the combination of the terms *green* and *idea* bring about **semantic tension**. When we say *a green fruit,* we conjure up knowledge that experience has endowed us with: we know that when certain fruits are unripe they are *green*, or in other words, the fruits are not ready to be eaten. And it is perceptible, something we can SEE. The concept *not ready* (to be eaten) is thus a likely component of the IRF of *green* in the phrase *a green fruit.* This component, *not ready*, which is an attribute of a palpable and spatial thing (a fruit), is nevertheless also part of the IRF of *green* in the phrase *a green idea*, but the temporal dimension is foregrounded and the spatial backgrounded, preventing the **semantic tension** from becoming a **semantic rupture.** The component *not ready* (or *not ripe*), is shifted to the foreground within the IRF of *green*, emphasising the temporal dimension over the spatial one. To be able to understand the phrase, that is, for the concepts to integrate, we must know that an *idea* might require time in order to *be ready*, and consequently an *idea* can be *not ready* , so *not ready* is also a potential component of the IRF of *idea*. It is now easy to

see that the component *not ready* will be shared (and thus match or correspond) by the two concepts *green* and *idea*, thus avoiding a semantic rupture.

Once again we see that we have taken and used a term from a perceptible and spatial domain, the fruit domain, and applied it to the abstract and intangible *idea* domain.

5.4 Some More about Metaphors

It can here be convenient to mention that in some generally non-conventional metaphors the concreteness level of the domains is similar or equal. As examples we could mention most of the Norse *kennings*. Examples:

The house of birds refers to the air.

The path of the whale suggests the sea.

The snake of battle means the sword

Regarding the first example, *the house of birds,* we may assert that there is practically no semantic tension at all. It could almost be read literally, understanding *house* as *nest* (a nest seen as a kind of house. *House* can replace *air* because their respective IRFs share the relevant conceptual component "*a spatial dimension where you grow and live"*) To interpret it as a metaphor, i.e. to bring out that semantic tension that characterizes a metaphor, we must be told beforehand that the term *house* refers to something else, that is, to *air.* And only then can we feel the metaphoric power of the phrase.

However, metaphors that we use on a daily base, that is, when they don't aspire to be novel or literary, tend to make concrete the abstract –many times by referring to our body or body functions– and thus help us handle concepts that would otherwise be difficult to grasp. This tendency is likewise very widespread in the use of popular scatological phrases likely to be found in all languages. I invite each one of my readers to go over the repertoire of scatological phrases in his /her language and he/she will realize that the terms used to make a concept graspable can be VERY corporal, that is, palpable.

We can now venture to posit that when we perceive a **semantic tension** in a phrase**,** we will likely feel we are facing either a nonsense phrase (which would bring about a **relational rupture**) or a metaphor (bringing about a relational **tension**). And as mentioned above, the dividing line between both figures is very thin. However, the **Relational Compulsion** will push us on to find ways of linking the tensioned terms even if they don't seem to make sense at a first glance. Without this **Relational Compulsion –**most of which is unconscious– it would be most difficult to explain the existence, among other things, of metaphors. This compulsion makes us shift our usual and literal point of view, so as to seek another reading, i.e., so as to seek another way of relating the terms involved, in order to find some meaning or sense. If we fail to find sense, we usually discard the phrase as pure nonsense.

On the other hand, it is true that we don't feel or perceive this **semantic tension** when coming across many conventional metaphors. This happens generally when we don't realize that we are using a metaphor (which frequently occurs when a metaphorical phrase has rooted itself deeply into a linguistic community and has consequently been conventionalized). When this occurs, the semantic tension is attenuated or simply disappears and the phrase

becomes a common phrase, an idiom or an idiomatic expression. Likely all languages are packed with these kinds of phrases and often the metaphorical origin has been forgotten and the reiterative use has ended up installing the expressions in the language. Yet, in some cases, at least, and in some people, the metaphorical aspect can still be felt. Examples of such phrases are:

Fall in love

Time is running out

Hands of a clock

Break a heart

Metaphors are very useful in our daily lives. They allow us to access very high levels of abstraction without losing contact with our basic and direct bodily and sense experiences. We can thus manipulate abstract concepts and so further develop our reflections. However, we must proceed with some caution, and not forget that we are using metaphors: just as metaphors can help us extend our thoughts, they can also lead us astray (as we saw in the introduction, the metaphor *words as containers* can be functional, but can mislead when deeply reflecting on the nature of language).

5.5 Metonymy

As pointed out above, metonymy is a figure of speech in which one thing is named in replacement of another. Some examples are:

The glass is overflowing. Meaning: the liquid in the glass is overflowing

My nose is running. Meaning: the mucus in my nose is dripping.

The tomatoes went up. Meaning: the price of the tomatoes increased.

Uncork the wine. Meaning: uncork the bottle of wine.

Though we see here that one term is used instead of another (activated by the **Innate Regulating principle of Reference**, to be seen in the next chapter), we sometimes name the whole to refer to a part, as in *lock the flat*, meaning *the door;* sometimes we name a part to refer to the whole, as in *the boss' right hand,* and sometimes a part of the body refers to a personality feature as in *he has a good heart* etc. Just as metaphors, metonymy eschews literal readings, but not necessarily for the same reason. A literal reading of a metonymy does not so much bring about semantic tension, but rather a strange statement that doesn't relate to the communication context because of its irrelevance or simply nonsense. If in the case of *he has a good heart* somebody is talking about the moral attributes of another person, a comment on the health state of a body organ is irrelevant (but, contrary to metaphors, no semantic tension necessarily arises). Consequently another reading will be necessary. In our terms it means that the foreground/background order of the components of the IRFs will be restructured. Let's have a look at our other example:

The boss' right hand

A literal reading could induce me to think that somebody is talking about the right hand of a person, and not the left one. We can imagine a context in which somebody shows somebody else a photograph of a right hand while exclaiming: *the boss's right*

hand. However, if we add a proper noun or a pronoun this reading will not be possible: *John is the boss's right hand.* In this latter case we have a clear **semantic tension** in a literal reading (why it is also a metaphor, see below). John, we suppose, is a person and a person is not the same as a hand. The linking verb *is* (understood as a copula verb) between two nouns tends to denote equality, identity or correspondence. So our Relational Compulsion sets off to seek another reading (modifying the IRFs) before discarding the phrase as senseless (this, however, will probably not happen in this case, because the phrase is very used and has been conventionalized).

It is not always easy to distinguish metonymy from metaphor because both figures are created by replacing one thing by another, both eschew a literal reading, and in order to create meaning the IRFs must be manipulated (mostly unconsciously). Sometimes a figure of speech is both things at the same time. In the case of *John is the boss' right hand,* I would say that it is both a metonymy and a metaphor. It's a metonymy because it refers to a part of the human body, the hand, which then replaces the whole (the person that is understood as indispensable for the boss). And it's a metaphor –a structural one if we follow Lakoff– because it creates a **semantic tension**, on the one hand, and on the other, provides a concrete image while referring to something more abstract, such as the idea that somebody is indispensable to someone else.[56]

CHAPTER VI

[56] In the referred expression, the potential component *help* or *assistance* of the IRF of *hand* will be foregrounded. *Help* or *assistance* is a potential component of *hand* because, more often than not, hands become the natural tools by which help or assistance is delivered, and hadn't the expression been conventionalized, without this previous knowledge we wouldn't be able to give meaning to the phrase.

Innate Regulating Principles of the Relational Compulsion

External Regulating Principles

The Resulting Dissociation

6.1 Innate Regulating Principles of the Relational Compulsion

We have been talking a lot about relating, associating, linking etc. And we have also come up with the Relational Compulsion hypothesis (Chap. II). Now, we have to ask ourselves **what** regulates the R.C. and **how** is it regulated.

We have posited the existence of an energy we have called the **Relational Compulsion.** We said (Ch. II), citing T. Mann, that this energy follows *"no laws of thought*", that if it weren't regulated somehow, it would make a chaotic hodgepodge out of everything, linking and associating in a whimsical and arbitrary manner, making life, as we know it, quite implausible. There must be something that governs and regulates it: something capable of modulating the way (the how) in which we link or relate different entities to each other.

So, we posit the idea that there exist **Regulating Principles** that govern the way in which we relate things to each other. These Principles –which work from the unconscious, but which, nonetheless, can be accessed consciously– are absolutely essential to

the survival of the individual and the human species.[57] They are indispensable in determining the particular way in which we, as a species, interact with our world and the world with us. They are related to the Kantian categories, as interpreted in this work. They are not acquired, but innate; however, they are not to be confused with innate ideas or concepts. They are rather the necessary innate conditions for a mind to be capable of conceiving concepts, and are thus crucial to the possibility of language.

We can also posit the hypothesis that certain activities of our unconsciousness, like the creation of dreams, are regulated or governed by **other** Principles, which relate and link things in a completely different way, and which are not so easy (maybe impossible) to access.

Before continuing, let us refresh our attempt (in Chap. II) to define what is meant by **relating**:

We create a relation in our minds between two or more entities when we perceive that some of their attributes match, or are **shared** *(attributes that include the concepts of* **similarity** *and* **difference***), and/or when we perceive* **nearness** *(which includes the concept of* **contiguity***),* **simultaneity, contrast or containment***, which imply some kind of mutual influence, synthesis or energetic interaction. We also relate two or more entities by effect of* **conventions** *and/or* **habits**.

Let's once again take the example, already referred to above, of a card and its relation to its pack/deck. Any individual card obviously shares some attributes with the rest of the cards of the pack.

We perceive a *sharing or matching of attributes*: the cards, for

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[57] These Principles could cautiously be conceived as **abilities,** as many Cognitive Linguists do; however, we will here emphasize the idea that they determine the manner –the how– in which we relate. Besides**,** to be able to conceive of the notion ***ability*** we must presuppose, according to our point of view, the pre-existence of the here mentioned Principles.

example, share the same rectangular shape; they will likely have the same design on the back, will surely be made of the same thick paper (*similarity*) etc. But it does not share ALL the attributes (if this were the case there would be absolute identity). The individual card relates to the rest of the pack in various manners: besides the *sharing* of some attributes, its *nearness* affects the whole set of cards (if it gets lost, the pack will be considered incomplete), and in turn the pack affects the sense of the card (without the pack the sole card is useless). Important is also *simultaneity*: for the card and the pack to be useful they must be brought to the table simultaneously. At the same time, we conceptualize the card as *contained* by the pack. We can thus see that, through *sharing, similarity, nearness, simultaneity, and containment* (the attributes mentioned in our definition of relating), occurs a *mutual influence.* Consequently, according to our definition, the card and the pack are related. But, is this really so? Yes and no. They are related IN OUR MINDS. And this is essential: it is our mind that establishes the relation between the card and the pack. This relation would not exist without a mind. Neither would it exist if we only had the ability to perceive with our senses and lacked the innate ability of linking or relating entities.

Up to now, we have briefly reviewed "the **when**" we relate. Now let's start looking at the "**how**".

But let me just repeat a gentle "warning": the inventory of the Principles is not comprehensive, and does not intend to be. The Principles we will be looking at here are perhaps some of the most apprehensible:

Innate Regulating Principle of Grouping and Reification

This Principle regulates the way we relate allowing us to GROUP, and consequently also to INDIVIDUALIZE (see Langacker below). This is a most important ability, relevant to all aspects of our lives. The idea of the existence of GROUPS does not derive from our senses. We cannot ***see*** groups. The only things we see are similar entities relatively near each other, but we need something more than our senses in order to be able to conceive GROUPING concepts.

Let's imagine we bring a bag with 5 fruits from the greengrocers. When we arrive home and dump them on the kitchen table, we automatically create the conception of different GROUPS. If we brought three oranges and two apples, our minds will create the idea of two groups of fruits, one of oranges and the other of apples. So, we will likely "see" two GROUPS of fruits rather than 5 isolated fruits. Let´s also recall our example of the pack of cards. Here too we activate our grouping ability when conceiving the concept of a "PACK" of cards. Our visual sense does not SEE a PACK, but rather many cards piled one on top of the other. The concept *pack* is a creation of minds in a determinate cultural context. This conceptualization occurs already at levels "of basic perception", which does not mean that we perceive groups, but rather create them at very early stages of perception.

In his book "Cognitive Grammar", Ronald Langacker offers us a more schematic example, but very illustrative:

"Our capacity for grouping is readily demonstrated at the level of basic perception.

Let us first examine figure 4.5(a). In viewing it, we automatically perceive a group of two black dots, on the left, and another group of three, on the right. So strong is this grouping tendency that we cannot just see the five as a bunch of dots with no particular clustering. Nor, without special mental effort, can we see them as being grouped in any other way (e.g. a group of three dots on the left, and one of two on the right).”

And he offers a sketch similar to the one below:

Langacker states that the basic factors that induce us to GROUP in this way are *contiguity* and *similarity.* These two factors are present in our provisional definition of relating. Nonetheless, let us remember that our definition refers to the **when** we relate (i.e. when the relating activity is set in motion), but the Regulating Principles to the **how** (refers to which Regulating Principal is activated once the relating activity is initiated).

We follow Ronald Langacker when he maintains that what Cognitive Grammar calls a prototypical noun, is the conceptualization of a **thing,** and that the capacity of conceptualizing it depends on certain cognitive abilities which are based on the capacities of GROUPING and REIFICATION. Langacker writes in ***Cognitive Grammar: a basic introduction, (2008) page 107***: *“A **thing** is a set of interconnected entities which function as a single entity at a higher level of conceptual organization.”* To illustrate, he gives the example of a *recipe* (which we have already mentioned). A *recipe* is a thing whose constituent entities are the successive steps that must be taken in order to prepare a meal. These steps are interrelated (interconnected) and are conceived as a GROUP, given that they occur in a specific order. They are REI-

FIED because they are conceptualized as a singular and unified process, submitted to the purpose of creating a meal.

All the ingredients appear **contiguously**, **simultaneously**, and **share** the belonging to the process of preparing a meal. These latter attributes corresponds to the **when** we relate. The **how** is given by the Innate Regulating Principle of GROUPING which allows us to (re)create them as *"a single entity at a higher level of conceptual organization"*. This is one of the ways in which we (re) create indirect concepts, in this case *recipe*, conceiving the abstraction as a thing, that is, as a noun.

So, what about the prototypical nouns, those that denote physical objects, such as *rock, potato, table, cat,* etc.? The perception and conception of these physical objects can be described as a result of a sum of different constitutive perceptions that our GROUPING ability groups together, thus allowing us to conceptualize A THING that occupies a particular spatial extension (we're not at all far from **Kant**).

This means that in order to conceive the idea of a noun not only have we had to assimilate its relative and protean IRF, but we have also unconsciously canalized our Relational Compulsion according to the Regulating Principle of Grouping and Reification: every entity that our Relational Compulsion, guided by this Principle, manages to REIFY, can be understood as a noun. Or putting it the other way around: a noun is something we can conceive as a THING.

We can now see with certain clarity how words –and the concordant concepts- help us unite utterly complex meshes of relations. Words help us GROUP. We saw this distinctly with the example of the word/concept *recipe*. Once certain entities have been GROUPED, and a name- i.e. a word - has been given to the group, the complex mesh of conceptual relations "crystallizes"

and a new concept is generated and stored as if it were the concept of an **object** or **thing.**[58] Words keep the constituent entities related: in this case united. This, says our hypothesis, is due to one of the aspects of the Relational Compulsion. As we saw in Ch II, one of the jobs of the RC is to keep bound what is has previously united.

We can likewise mention that this Innate Principle of Grouping and Reifying, aided by inductive reasoning, allows for the formulation of the general laws of science. Here goes a classical example:

Premises:

A black crow has been observed

Another black crow has been observed

A third black crow has been observed

Etc.

Conclusion:

Probably all crows are black.

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[58] John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book III, chap.5 No.10:
"10. In mixed modes it is the name that ties the combination of simple ideas together, and makes it a species. The near relation that there is between species, essences, and their general name, at least in mixed modes, will further appear when we consider, that it is the name that seems to preserve those essences, and give them their lasting duration. For, the connexion between the loose parts of those complex ideas being made by the mind, this union, which has no particular foundation in nature, would cease again, were there not something that did, as it were, hold it together, and keep the parts from scattering. Though therefore it be the mind that makes the collection, it is the name which is as it were the knot that ties them fast together. What a vast variety of different ideas does the word triumphus hold together, and deliver to us as one species! Had this name been never made, or quite lost, we might, no doubt, have had descriptions of what passed in that solemnity: but yet, I think, that which holds those different parts together, in the unity of one complex idea, is that very word annexed to it; without which the several parts of that would no more be thought to make one thing, than any other show, which having never been made but once, had never been united into one complex idea, under one denomination. How much, therefore, in mixed modes, the unity necessary to any essence depends on the mind; and how much the continuation and fixing of that unity depends on the name in common use annexed to it, I leave to be considered by those who look upon essences and species as real established things in nature."

What have we done? We have ***grouped*** the **group** *crows* under a wider **group:** one of *black birds*.

This principle is also at the base of much of mankind's political and social organizations: *"...neither supra-individual organizations nor collective consciousness are entities in themselves, they cannot be subjected to empirical verification nor do they allow for an ontological explanation. They are the consequence of the combination of wills, of a multiplicity of individual actions that interact. From that complicated net of mutual relations emerges a general result that is reified, nominalized, personalized, and appears to be an independent entity, which frequently turns oppressive for the same men that created and sustain it.*" [59]

This "*general result that is reified*" can emerge thanks to the Innate Regulating Principle we are currently discussing. It is a result that can only be achieved by a mind that has certain innate abilities or Principles.

So this Principle allows us, among so many other things, to categorize and classify, which is really nothing more than a GROUPING process (in the case of the crows, the **similarity** and **sharing** of attributes triggered the relational process and the Grouping Principle allowed for the classifying and categorizing process) . It also allows us to generate abstract concepts, which can help us reflect about ourselves as social beings, as shows the quote above.

We have now had a look at one of the Principles that govern **the manner** (the how) we relate. This principle, which refers to our GROUPING capacity based on the relational criteria of *sharing, contiguity* and *similarity*, is innate, independent of any social or cultural paradigm. It is one of the multiple ways of

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[59] Juan José Sebreli, *El malestar de la política,* Ed. Sudamericana, 2012, p.264, (My translation)

relatng/linking/combining/uniting with which our minds interact with the universe (as has already been mentioned, I will not intend to put forward an exhaustive list of the Principles, but just a few illustrative ones).

We have also seen that very intimately related to our GROUPING capacity is the innate ability of REIFICATION, which too regulates the way in which the Relational Compulsion is to be channeled. Ronald Langacker defines this ability as the capacity of manipulating a group as if it were a unitary entity. Stretching this point of view we could hypothesize that our capacity of perceiving whatever object as a unity is the result of this Principle regulating the Relational Compulsion. Unconsciously guided by this Principle, we relate/link/combine/unite etc. heaps of sensations, and grouping them, we reify them, prompting the perception of *objects.*

Let's imagine we are on an airplane that is approaching the landing strip. We look through the small side-window and see some trees which are displayed in a certain manner. Our GROUPING and REIFICATION Principle will make us (or allow us to) group and reify the trees into, for example, one or more rows. We now see a line, and not only trees. We have unconsciously **grouped** various entities (trees) into a single entity (a line or row). Furthermore, if we see not only one line but let's say two or three, we might notice that the lines are parallel, thus additionally endowing the OBJECTS (the lines) with properties such as the aptitude of being parallel to each other, and of having different lengths, widths and so forth.

This Regulating Principle gives us the ability to generate concepts that do not exist but in our minds. Concepts such as: *group, collection, team, orchestra, constellation, list, bookstore, herd, pack, choir, line, crew, colony, fleet, audience etc.* (these exam-

ples are taken from Langacker's *Cognitive Grammar*). These concepts exist only in our minds and are the result of the action of the Relational Compulsion, which is guided by the Regulating Principle just considered.[60]

Just to give a sample of the complexity of these processes, we must consider that the Regulating Principle of GROUPING presupposes – which we have already mentioned when dealing with **Kant** – the existence of many other abilities or Principles, which correlate and interact with it. For example, to be able to GROUP, we must also be able to delimit, to fragment, to split, and to separate non-physical entities with our minds (without these abilities we wouldn't be able to *analyze*). Besides, we must also be able to distinguish what is grouped from what is not to be included in the group.

Innate Regulating Principle of Causality Relations

Another noteworthy Principle that regulates our Relational Compulsion is the one that enables us to discern or "create" relations of cause and effect.

Even though the classical *causality* notion may currently be called into question due to the implications derived from the findings of the Relativity Theory and of Quantum physics, we humans– as was mentioned in the Introduction– cannot quit project-

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[60] Locke gives another example, that of *procession* : *"Because they being the workmanship of the understanding, pursuing only its own ends, and the conveniency of expressing in short those ideas it would make known to another, it does with great liberty unite often into one abstract idea things that, in their nature, have no coherence; and so under one term bundle together a great variety of compounded and decompounded ideas. Thus the name of procession: what a great mixture of independent ideas of persons, habits, tapers, orders, motions, sounds, does it contain in that complex one, which the mind of man has arbitrarily put together, to express by that one name*?" (Concerning Human Understanding, Book III, Ch. 5, No. 13)

ing onto reality the *causality* mode of relating. This is likely due to the fact that in order to carry out the tasks of everyday life, we need to establish relations of *cause* and *effect.* We will thus, for example, relate fire to boiling water in our minds, understanding fire to be the cause of the boiling. But why should we have to think that this **relation** is a product of the activity of our minds? Is it not so that we "see" that the one thing is a consequence of the other? In fact, we don't. We talked some in Chapter I about the cause-effect relation when referring to Hume, so here we will only address it briefly. We said that the information offered by our senses does not inform us about the *causality* concept. We cannot perceive the relation of *cause* and *effect* with our senses. It is rather the consequence of a way of relating regulated by the Regulating Principle of Causality. We project this notion onto the world, we don't find it there. Without the existence of a mind and this Regulating Principle, the *cause-effect* idea cannot exist. The data retrieved from our senses only inform us about the presence of fire and later about the presence of the boiling process. The connection (the causality relation) exists only due to the presence of a mind that has the ability to relate entities in different ways, one of them being that of *causality*. Only a mind that has the capacity to look for "explanations" or "answers to why questions" (the meaning of Aristotle´s αἰτία or cause term) can conceive of a *causal* relation between two or more entities, processes etc.

This Principle is crucial to the possibility of (re)creating languages. It allows, for example, for the construction of conditional sentences. A zero conditional such as

"*If you heat metal, it expands"*

would be impossible if we couldn´t conceive a *cause/ effect* relation.

Innate Regulating Principle of Focalization

This crucial Regulating Principle enables us to highlight certain aspects to the detriment of others. It allows us, among other things, to alternate between figure and background. This capacity has been treated at length by Cognitive Linguistics. We will call it Innate Regulating Principle of Focalization. It has been referred to considerable times in this work. Let us briefly look at some more examples.

Let's suppose we walk out of a building onto a very busy street in the middle of a big city, with the determination of finding a cab. All the while, millions of different sensory stimuli pour over us simultaneously with stunning force. Among the confusing surge of chaotic stimuli, we must try to focus in order to distinguish a taxi. We strain to focalise our search on a taxi, thus turning it into **figure** (or foreground) of our search**,** and we push into the **background** the rest of the tumultuous sensorial stimuli. If, on the other hand, we were looking for a policeman, taxies too would merge into the chaotic **background**, and a blue uniform would become our **figure.**

It is a curious fact that this Focalization Principle allows us to consciously switch the relation between **figure** and **background** (see Chap. III). If we are not urged by need, we can choose with relative ease which entity shall be **figure** and which will be relegated to the **background.**

This faculty is a necessary condition for ambiguity, metaphor and other figures of speech like the following one:

John believes he is Messi

The phrase does not really mean that John has an identity issue. The phrase is not meant literally. What we do, when using these

kinds of expressions, is to focalize one component of the IRF (turning it into **figure**) and push the rest of the components to the shadows, i.e., to the **background**.

In this case, in order to understand the phrase properly, the interlocutor would have to be familiar with the notion *football skills* and have it included in the IRF of *Messi,* and foregrounding it turn it into **figure.** The rest of the components of the IRF *(colour of the hair, of the eyes, person, competition, team, family etc*.) would constitute the background or simply be absent by unfamiliarity. Thus, one component of the IRF has been focalized to the detriment of the rest, highlighting it as **figure,** leaving the rest as **background (**this being possible thanks to the flexibility with which we are able to manage the IRFs, see Chap.IV: *The more or less hypothesis*). What the speaker in all likelihood is trying to convey is the idea that John believes he is as good as Messi at playing football, or at least, that he thinks he is a very good football player, i.e. comparable to Messi. The rest of the components are kept in the background (though they do not disappear): the speaker is not trying to say that John believes he walks, or combs himself, or dresses like Messi. The highlighted component (*football skills*) has been in such a manner focalized that it has practically become a synonym of Messi: the speaker could have almost meant the same by saying:

John believes he is very skilful at playing football.

However, it is important to realize that the known or familiar background components do not disappear. They are merely pushed to the background. *Messi* the person, the father, the way he walks and speaks etc, linger in the fringe, and makes the IRFs of the phrase more complex, providing the pungency that the paraphrase lacks entirely.

This principle is vital to many other aspects of our daily life, including our use of language. We could include the Principle of Saliency in this principle. Our attention is driven towards what is most important and relevant at a certain moment. We focus to assess if something is dangerous or not. We will talk some more about this in Ch VII.

Innate Regulating Principle of the Combining Activity.

The capacity of **combining** is deeply linked to the previous Principles. To **combine** is nothing more nor less than to relate things in a specific manner.

We can combine spatial or temporal entities, whether they are real or imagined.

We conceive that certain entities are **combined** when the result is more than the sum of its parts. It's what frequently happens when we relate: something new is engendered, born or created. A sort of feeling of UNITY, which is more significant than the heaping up or sum of parts, is brought about. Many times the combining activity is stimulated by the urge to reach an objective, a purpose. If I were to randomly pile together the disassembled parts of a bicycle, I would end up with a pile of pieces, but not with a bicycle. The pieces must be combined in a very specific way in order to become a **bicycle,** because a bicycle is not just a topsy-turvy gathering of pieces, but the result of a specific combination of those pieces. And once we have a bicycle we conceive it as A THING, a UNITY, the result of having combined certain pieces in a certain manner.

And, as is well known from everyday experience, our combining faculty is also essential to aesthetic experiences.

This faculty, however, is likely dependent on other Principles, such as the Grouping Principle and the Unity Principle, so it is still an open question whether it should be considered as an autonomous Principle or as a derivative of the just mentioned ones.

Innate Regulating Principle of Reference

This Principle allows us to establish reference points.

R. Langaker (1991) refers to this principle as *Reference point ability* and describes it in the following way:

"*…our capacity to invoke one conceived entity (a reference point) for purposes of establishing mental contact with another (the target).*"

And he gives the following example:

Your dog bit my cat.

"...we use the dog and cat as reference points for accessing some of their subparts (e.g. the dog's jaws and teeth and the cat's tail)."

In our terms we would say that the IRF of *dog* would undoubtedly have to include the concepts of *jaw* and *teeth,* among others, and the IRF of *cat* would necessarily include *tail,* among others. These concepts–*jaws, teeth, and tail*– are highlighted, i.e., they are focalized and become **figure,** leaving the rest in the background. The notions *dog* and *cat* become the referents that allow us to access the notions of *jaw, teeth* and *tail*. (Consider how the Regulating Principles overlap and depend on each other.)

We constantly use the capacity to establish reference points when employing a language. As an example, let us considerer

prepositions. We can use familiar objects as reference points to find other objects, and when using language prepositions convey the spatial relation between the reference point and the object to be found (the *target* in Langacker's terms). When we say that our eyeglasses are *on* the table, or *in* the drawer of our desk, we use the table or the desk as reference points to access those blessed eyeglasses that are always getting lost. And as Talmy (1983) points out, due to this spatial relations are rarely symmetrical (one entity works as a reference point of another but not the other way around). It's not the same saying:

The bicycle is by the statue

as saying:

The statue is by the bicycle.

In the first sentence, we are obviously using *the statue* as a reference point so as to locate the bicycle. Even though the second sentence is understandable, it would be hard (but not impossible) to find a context in which someone would use a bicycle as a reference point to locate a statue. We can also turn back to our previous example:

John believes he is Messi.

Messi is used as a reference point to access various ideas and/or value judgements, as for example, the idea of a very skilful football player, and/or the idea of a very famous and /or rich person etc.

This Innate Regulating Principle also allows us to have an idea of our bearings, both temporarily and spatially. We are constantly consulting our watches referring to minutes and hours, or our calendars with its days, weeks and months, using them as reference points in order to orientate ourselves in the flux of time. Probably

most units of measurement take on this reference point role, whether they be kilograms, centimetres, miles, Celsius or Fahrenheit degrees, dollars, Euros, pesos, etc.

What we do, unconsciously, is relate/associate at least one entity with another, or as Langacker writes *"invoke one conceived entity (a reference point) for purposes of establishing mental contact with another (the target)."* This means that the reference point acts as a sort of medium. If I find myself in the middle of a forest and choose to put a red ribbon around the branch of a tree at the forking of the path so as to know which of the forked paths I should take when going back on my steps, I am using the red cloth as a reference point. I won't be interested per se in the red ribbon, I'll rather be interested in accessing another kind of knowledge: which of the paths is the right one. The ribbon is just a means, a reference point. It is a most remarkable ability we possess, even though we scarcely think about it, and is copiously used in language, as we have seen with our examples.

This principle also draws on our ability to activate dormant knowledge or information. When we see the ribbon, we activate the knowledge that there is a path to be trodden and a destination to be reached.

In the same way, when we carry out the action of walking into a coffee shop, which we probably think of as a very simple action, the background knowledge unconsciously activated is enormous. The coffee shop is the reference point/frame that activates this immense amount of information, which in turn will affect and guide our behavior. To start with, I have to **know** that the premises across the road is a coffee shop, and that a coffee shop is a place I can walk into without having to neither ring a bell nor knock on the door nor ask permission to enter. I **know** I can just walk in. What then? I **know** I can just sit down on any of those

empty seats arranged around a table. And I **know** I must order something, and I **know** I must later pay etc. I **know** what kind of behavior is expected from me, and I **know** it's socially acceptable to take a pause from whatever activity, to look absentmindedly out of the shop window while slowly sipping my coffee. On the one hand, the concept *coffee shop* can be considered to be the reference point through which all this IRF information is activated, and on the other hand, all this information can be considered to be part of the IRF of *coffee shop,* some of which will be activated when the concept is used in speech or text, as for example in:

John entered the coffee shop and read the paper that he found on the table.

Some of the IRF of *coffee shop* will relate specifically to the IRFs of *enter* and *table.*

Was John allowed to sit down to read the paper? Who would ask such a question? Well, probably nobody, because the *sitting down* must be part of the IRF of *coffee shop,* if one is to understand the notion.

Time and Space as Innate Regulating Concepts

As we saw in the Introduction (Kant's *pure concepts*), the concepts of Time and Space are part of the structure of our minds, and are not derived from experience; they are thus innate and deeply impinge upon the way we conceive reality. So they are Regulating Principles in the sense that they too affect the way (the how) we establish relations between entities, and thus between concepts.

It is for us impossible to conceive, imagine or perceive anything outside of these dimensions, disregarding if they are "real" or not: they can pertain to fictional narrations for example, or to our dreams, in which we might feel time and space behave in weird manners, but that doesn't mean that they cease to be there for us.

Just as a caveat, I will here focus on how these concepts –time and space – are conceived by us and thus how they operate in language, and will not incur into philosophical controversies around them (for example, Heidegger's being in time etc.)

Today the most popular theory concerning the beginning of the universe is the well known Big Bang Theory, which posits the unfathomable idea of an enormous explosion that spawned who knows how many universes and after which both Time and Space began to exist. This would seem to indicate that these dimensions didn't exist before the explosion. But no matter how hard we try, it is impossible for us humans to imagine the anteroom of the explosion. Try to imagine something out of time and space. Notwithstanding the degree of probability of this Theory, our understanding finds it unimaginable, no matter how hard we endeavour (which doesn't mean we might nevertheless accept it as the most acceptable theory to the day). That is how our minds are structured, and that's why to our minds the Theory has a whiff of miracle mongering. "But it is a difficult idea to accept", writes Ilya Prigogine referring to the *Big Bang* idea.[61]

Anything we manage to conceive is framed by the time/space dimensions, which is to say that any relational activity must take place within them. However, our abilities in manipulating these dimensions are astonishing. We can conceive and conceptualize events in minuscule spaces, or on the contrary in enormous ones,

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[61] I. Prigogine, *El Nacimeinto del Tiempo*, ed. Metatemas, p. 67.

near or far, real or imaginary etc. We can conceive time as past, present and future. Besides, we can speculate with temporal subtleties, conceiving, for example, an event in the past of a past event, or we can speculate about the consequences of events that **didn't** occur, and we can express all of this in language. So even though our understanding is "trapped" in these dimensions, we can feel compensated when considering our fantastic abilities in manipulating them. And as is quiet straightforward, language has umpteen ways of referring to time and space.

Imaginativeness as an innate ability

Even though **imaginativeness** is not to be considered a Regulating Principle, it is, however, a crucial innate capacity, essential to our lives in general and a necessary condition for the creation and re-creation of concepts and language (being this the reason why I mention it in this section). When imagining, we are, once again, relating. Or put differently, we wouldn't be able to relate if we lacked the capacity to imagine.

We won't go into details here concerning this capacity, which is superlatively developed in human beings and probably present up to a certain degree in other species.

6.2 External Regulating Principles.

Some External Regulating Principles (ERPs) are part of a period's or a culture's paradigms (they are social and conventional), others are simply rules (including game rules).

They are different from the Innate Regulating Principles, particularly because they are, as the name indicates, external and not innate. They are imposed on us from the "outside" i.e. our environment, and are most of the times imperative. They are neither experienced as necessary nor universal, which is best shown by the endless amounts of different social cultures that exist and have existed, each with its own socializing and cohesive pressures. On the other hand, they are absolutely dependent on and possible thanks to the Innate Regulating Principles, which are a necessary condition for the existence of any human culture.

What the ERPs have in common with the IRPs, is that both regulate, or attempt to regulate, the specific ways we relate entities to each other and to the whole of which they are part.

We have indeed invented myriads of games, each with its own set of rules, regardless if we refer to card games, computer games, sports and so on. If we consider card rules (which are of course ERPs) as an example, they are ultimately principles that govern the way in which different entities are to be related to each other and to the whole. The relationships are established through the values given by the rules to each card, and the way those values relate to the whole pack. The Regulating Principles of games – the rules– come to us from our environment (no one is born knowing how to play poker), but the ability to bring about meaning and sense through the relating activity is innate.

6.3 The Resultant Disassociation

"Every act of action, when duly considered, gives us an equal view of both parts of nature, the corporeal and the spiritual."

John Locke

"Man has been called "das kranke Tier" (the sick animal) because of the burden of strain and explicit difficulties laid upon him by his position between nature and spirit, between angel and brute."

Thomas Mann, *Freud and the Future.*

We are both cultural and biological beings. Our hypothesis posits that our cultural aspect has been brought about in part due to the Relational Compulsion constantly guided by the Innate Regulating Principles, some of which we have been considering in this Chapter.

Culture can be understood as a product or a spin-off of nature, in the way we understand a spider web, or a bee hive. Or we can consider culture as something opposed to nature (a stance taken by many religions including the Abrahamic ones).

We can also, for example, consider setting reason and duty (allegedly representing culture) against desires and physiological needs (pertaining to nature), thus understanding *morality* as the path by which one part (the cultural) becomes victorious over the other (the biological). This would be the Kantian stance, which emphasizes the conflictive aspect of the disassociation, which we will not consider here. (I will, on the contrary, try to highlight the remarkably collaborative aspect of the disassociated parts instead of the conflictive aspect, which doesn't mean that I deny it).

If we reflect somewhat on the manner in which we dwell in the world, we will realize that our relating activity sets off constantly in at least two directions.

One of these responds to our biological nature and the other to our cultural one. We could say that the Relating Compulsion meets the needs of both aspects of our existence. And we can thus tentatively say that everything we perceive is interpreted at least in a dual manner:

i) in a biological or "sensorial" way[62], due to the fact that our perception organs are part of our biology, and thus respond to our biological structure and nature, and

ii) in a conceptual or cultural way. This entails that our perceptions, possible due to our biological sensorial organs, are almost always affected by our conceptual systems and by the Innate Regulating Principles.

Both manners alternate between being foreground and background. Nonetheless, we humans seem to be constantly driven to make the conceptual or cultural reading prevail (as if it were a *conquering* or *colonization* process). We incorporate the data provided by the senses into our conceptual world, and thus transcend a mere biological reading. This is the same as saying that we carry within us the tendency to impose conceptual readings upon our sense perceptions.

Let's imagine we're looking at a statue, let's say Rodin's **The Thinker** (from 1904). When contemplating it, I can focus on and foreground (or activate) my perception of the material

[62] With this term I refer to the idea of a "pure" sense perception, unaffected by any meddling on part of the conceptualizing mind. Such a "pure" sense perception might not exist, but the notion will allow us to refer to sensations that are **more** or **less "**contaminated" by concepts, i.e. refer to them as part of a gradient.

out of which the statue is made: the hardness, colour, texture etc. of the bronze, and leave in the background (or dormant) the concepts through which I would otherwise contemplate the piece (the body of a man in a posture that suggests a thinking activity). I can likewise do the opposite. Just concentrate (foreground or activate) the conceptual reading, that is just "see" a man tensely thinking, and background (or leave dormant) what we here are calling the biological reading (the "pure" data of the senses).[63]

But most important of all, I can combine both readings. Moreover, it is, among other things, the combination of both readings that confers the aesthetic experience. Let's take another eloquent example: the statue **Nike**, by Paionios, from 420 B.C.

Nike, by Paionios

[63] This does not correspond strictly to what is generally referred to as the duo *matter/form*, because this duo can pertain solely to the biological reading.

Part of the aesthetic experience is the perception of the contrast between the fragility of what is **represented** (the flying drapery and the body in movement) and the hardness of the marble it is made from, or put in other words, the represented – thus conceptual – airy movement conferred contrastingly to the stiffness of the compact material that my vision sense perceives (biological reading). If just one of the readings is highlighted (or activated) and the other left in the background (or dormant), a great part of the aesthetic experience will probably be lost. If the spectator, due to distance or some other factor, does not perceive that the figure is a statue, the artistic/aesthetic experience disappears and would become a life experience, with life emotions, which could be terrifying. And if the spectator only perceived the marble, leaving out the cultural reading, the aesthetic experience would probably again be lacking.

Referring to the Greeks (Plato specifically) Rudolf Eucken puts it this way in *The Problem of Human Life:*

"Finally, the beautiful becomes a connecting link between pure spirit and the sensuous world, inasmuch as order, proportion, and harmony dominate both worlds, and gives also to the latter a share in divinity." (p. 29)

In a similar fashion, when attending a theatre play, I can alternate between "seeing" a **person** trying to represent something (the actor), or conversely, "seeing" the **character** that is being represented. But in order to feel aesthetic pleasure it is necessary that certain conditions be given that will allow me to subordinate the biological (or sensorial) reading to the conceptual (or cultural) one: the artfulness of the cast must be such that the characters and the plot are convincing enough to activate the cultural/conceptual reading. However, the sensorial/biological reading (e.g. the per-

ception of the stage, its settings and lighting, the painted scenography, the theatre hall itself with its rows of seats etc.), must not disappear totally; because if it did, the spectator could be compelled to believe that what he is experiencing is "real", and not fiction, and if that occurred, we wouldn't speak of **art,** but of life. Our ability to synthesize both readings into a higher unity is what makes what we call art possible.[64] The conceptual reading will, of course, include all the corresponding conventions linked to the cultural event.[65] We can thus say that the aesthetic experience occurs when what is disassociated (the sensorial and the conceptual) becomes associated at a higher level of synthesis (but where the biological reading remains, nonetheless, at the disposal of the conceptual one). In a successful theatre play, the theatergoers are captivated by a world that responds entirely to the mandates of the conceptualizing mind. Besides, only a conceptualizing mind can relate events to each other and create a narrative or story.

Thomas Mann hints at a similar view. For him the artist

"…is he who may owe his bond to the world of images and appearances– be sensually, voluptuously, sinfully bound to them, yet be aware at the same time that he belongs no less to the world of the idea and the spirit, as the magician who makes the appearance transparent that the idea and spirit may shine through. Here is exhibited the artist's mediating task, his hermetic and magical role as broker between the upper and the lower world, between idea and phenomenon, spirit and sense."[66]

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[64] This ability could also be conceptualized as an Innate Regulating Principle.
[65] It's interesting to compare this point of view with the ideas professed by Frierdich Schiller (1759-1805), who believed that we can only transcend the conflict between the sensorial and reason (or in terms used at that time, between appetites and duty, and in our terms, between the biological- or sensorial- and the cultural- or conceptual) through art. (*Letters on the aesthetic education of man*).
[66] Mann, Thomas, *Schopenhauer (1938),* London Secker & Warburg.

The following example will allow us to see how strong is our tendency to make the cultural/conceptual reading prevail: I grab a thing we call *book*. I look at it and according to the "pure" sense perception (the biological reading, which is never really "pure"), it is merely a bunch of thin and fragile rectangular things we call *papers* piled one on top of the other, and these thin things are filled with a mishmash of ink jots.[67] That's what my senses perceive. But the cultural reading will, nevertheless, prevail, and the **concept** *book,* which has already been accessed by my understanding, will condition the way I relate to the object making me perceive it as a unity, that is, as a *thing,* as a *book.*

I now look at a phrase in the book that is in a language I know. Focusing hard, I attempt to see the ink jots as mere black jots, but I fail, and fall back to seeing *words, words, words* and NOT ink jots. This means that the cultural reading imposes itself and will be foregrounded while the biological one will almost be imperceptible. And I now hear someone utter in a clear manner a sentence in the same language. I try to uncouple sound from meaning as to just feel the quality of the sound (biological reading), but I definitely fail. It is practically impossible to make the biological/sensorial reading prevail. The sounds as such are back-grounded and the meaning fore-grounded. But the sound is still what conveys the meaning and must thus be heard; that is, the sensorial reading is back-grounded but in no way does it disappear. On the other hand, if we listen to the sounds pertaining to a language we are not familiar with, we will unavoidably fore-ground the sensorial/biological reading and will manage perfectly well to feel the quality of the proffered sounds (that is why we sometimes can feel the beauty of a for us unknown language, as we are able to *hear* the sounds). By the same tenor, it is easier for

[67] In trying to describe the event, it is practically impossible not to refer to concepts, as *paper, rectangular, thin, thing, fill etc.* When using words we instantly fall into the conceptual domain.

us to *see* the forms and designs of the letters, or what it may be, that belong to an alphabet we ignore: there will be a minimum of cultural/conceptual interference.

We can also find the disassociation followed by a higher synthesis in the domain of food. Eating is an extremely biological activity. We have, nonetheless, made enormous efforts to "decorate" this activity and thus integrate it into the cultural aspect of our being. To begin with let's just recall that nowadays we can easily walk into a supermarket, or whatever grocery, to buy all that is needed to feed ourselves, and so avoid the unpleasantness of having to get all smeared up with blood while causing the death of another being. Let's also consider the rituals we carry out before eating (ranging from prayers to the previous appetizer or drink etc.), the energy and time we have dedicated to develop diverse and remarkable culinary arts with endless flavour combinations and the intense use of spices, the proliferation and diversity of all kinds of restaurants – each with its own ceremonies, including dress up requirements– , the specific behaviour expected from guests (which is, besides, categorized as good or bad manners) etc. etc.

In many cultures in which hunting and fishing are part of everyday life, the eating activity is also framed by a series of rituals and ceremonies, which include begging for forgiveness and thanksgiving. In many western cultures, hunting and fishing have become **sports** (a most cultural activity), which too are regulated by all kinds of "rules" and ceremonies; and by having these they become automatically part of a conceptual or cultural system.

This approach helps us also explain why mankind, since the beginning of the use of concepts, that is, since we started becoming cultural creatures, has showed a strong tendency –I would even

dare say an obsession– to **decorate.** I will be using this term in its broadest sense (including our relation with food referred to above).

When we paint the walls of our houses, our furniture, our crocks and jars, or carve figures on our doors, or when we design an object, we constantly attempt to transform things so as to better integrate them into our mental world, that is, into our conceptual systems. All the stuff we use to build, or create, becomes integrated to our human conceptual world. Thus, we don't merely hang a piece of wood– or whatever material– from some chunk of metal in order to protect ourselves from harsh weather or from annoying predators. What we do is hang *a door* on *hinges* (these being very cultural concepts). And in addition, we paint it, and then embellish it with a beautifully designed door handle. We have decorated it in order to conceal its natural origin, as if we tried to snatch it away from nature so as to **take control** of it and **domesticate** it (again the *conquering* or *colonizing*). This allows us to easier background the biological reading (the perception of the material, for example) and foreground the concept *door*. We conceive ourselves not as hanging pieces of wood on metal chunks, but as hanging *doors* on *hinges.*

By decorating we can untroubled shift from the biological reading to the cultural/conceptual one. Our surrounding objects begin to be part of our conceptual human world (they start "**belonging"** to us), which makes us feel "more at home". Subjecting what surrounds us to a cultural reading also gives us the feeling of being in control.

It's interesting to consider the ancient civilizations from this point of view, so allow me briefly to go back in time and recall that as from the Neolithic Age (and even before, if cave paintings are considered), mankind frenetically set about decorating any-

thing it got it hands on. Everything was decorated: walls, tombs, swords, temples, jars, jewels, bridles, shields etc.etc.

Referring to the palace of Cnossos of the ancient Minoan culture of Crete, which emerges around 4000 BC, Will Durant writes the following in "The Life of Greece":

"*To the complex interiors the artists of Cnossus add the most delicate decorations. Some of the rooms they adorn with vases and statuettes, some with paintings or reliefs, some with huge stone amphorae or massive urns, some with objects in ivory, faience or bronze. Around one wall they run a limestone frieze with pretty triglyphs and half rosettes; around another a panel of spirals and frets on a surface painted to simulate marble; around another they carve in high relief and living detail the contests of man and bull. Through the halls and chambers the Minoan painter spreads all the glories of his cheerful art: here, caught chattering in a drawing room, are Ladies in Blue, with classic features, shapely arms, and cozy breasts; here are fields of lotus, or lilies, or olive spray; here are Ladies at the Opera, and dolphins swimming motionlessly in the sea."*

Remarkably, it would seem as if the Cnossos artists had passed on their enthusiasm to the author. W. Durant, 6000 years later, seems yet to feel the same decorating passion.

To decorate is, then, to put a human stamp on things; a way of integrating matter into the world of concepts; a manner of conquering perceptible things with the embodied mind in order to "snatch them away" from nature. It's the **cultural or conceptual being** struggling to displace or to take control over the **biological** or **sensorial being.** It will even go for death. Apart from the Egyptian pyramids, consider the treasures found in the tombs of ancient civilizations. Will Durant's enthusiasm does not cease while describing Schliemann's archeological findings at the tombs of Mycenae:

"Near the Lion Gate, in a narrow area enclosed by a ring of erect stone slabs, Schliemann's workers dug up nineteen skeletons, and relics so rich

that one could forgive the great amateur for seeing in these shafts the burial chambers of the children of Atreus. Had not Pausanias described the royal graves as "in the ruins of Mycenae"? Here were male skulls with crowns of gold, and golden masks on the bones of the face; here were osseous ladies with golden diadems on what had been their heads; here were painted vases, bronze caldrons, a silver rhyton, beads of amber and amethyst, objects of alabaster, ivory, or faience, heavily ornamented daggers and swords, a gaming board like that at Cnossus, and almost anything in gold-seals and rings, pins and studs, cups and beads, bracelets and breasplates, vessels of toilette, even clothing embroidered with thin plates of gold. These were assuredly royal jewels, royal bones."

Why such luxury and ostentation at the tombs? A common explanation states that all these lavish objects – and sometimes food– were placed in the tombs to ease the journey to the realm of death, or in order to appease the gods or to pay due toll to the guardians of the underworld.

Religion too is one more of mankind's attempts to "humanize" (that is, to create concepts) or "culturize" the mystery of life and the mystery of death. The objects placed in a tomb are products of human activity, and it is yet a way of trying to withhold the corpse in the human world of concepts and not to give it up to the sensorial/biological world of nature.

This could also explain why the tools of death –weapons–, were also richly decorated and adorned. It was an attempt to –even though it might sound paradoxical– "humanize" or "culturize" war itself: bring it into the realm of human concepts.

The concept itself of *life* has journeyed from the biological/sensorial reading to the conceptual/cultural one. Michel Foucault in his book "The Order of Things", tells us about the appearance of the concept *life* in the 18th Century as an abstraction in opposition to the "life" of concrete beings, which are "*no more than passing figures".* Distinct living beings can be perceived by

our senses (can have a biological reading), but the concept *life* is an indirect one.

CHAPTER VII

7.1 And what about grammar?

I referred to games and rules as External Regulating Principles in the previous chapter; but when considering grammar the issue becomes somewhat more complicated and more difficult to grasp.

It is not even easy to get a unanimous answer to the question: what is grammar? A classical or typical answer would be: grammar is a set of rules, generally yielded to unconsciously, that govern the structure of a language, i.e. rules and relations. Closer to our musings is the definition given by Janice Neuleib (quoted by Patrick Hartwell). She says that grammar is "*The internalized system that native speakers of language share".* We also share Langacker's notion that "*grammar provides the speaker with an inventory of symbolic resources" (*Langacker 1986). But even if we share these words, it does not bring much closer to a graspable insight.

Some linguistic schools affirm that we are born with a sort of innate knowledge of a Universal Grammar, from which all languages are spawned (or derived). Other schools, like Cognitive Linguistics, sustain that it is not necessary to assume the existence of a universal grammar, as it would suffice to invoke the cognitive abilities we have in order to explain the language phenomenon. [68]

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[68] Yet, not so long ago (2018) Ronald Langacker, expressed a more balanced view of this issue. In `Interview with Ronald W. Langacker`, by Diego Pinheiro, Langacker commented: "*In rejecting the strong modular view of language (an innate "universal grammar" basically separate from other aspects*

Well, I will slowly try to move onward with these ticklish questions. I have hitherto proposed a hypothesis about how concepts relate and integrate through their IRFs in order to generate meaning, but we haven't yet investigated how this interacts with grammar. So to begin with, let's return to our first question: what is grammar?

Is grammar a series of rules? On the one hand, it is affirmed that grammar is a series of rules, and on the other, it is stated that it is not necessary to know the rules in order to communicate successfully. In fact, most people don't know or don't remember what they learnt at school of their own grammar, and yet they manage to talk and write with fair fluency. So this begs the following question: can unconscious rules exist? This is our first doubt. Accordingly, while approaching this topic we will try not to talk about "rules", but rather of tendencies and conventions.

We have seen that the concept's changeable IRFs enable the formers integration with each other. But this is, obviously, not the whole story. It's easy to see that it's not enough; there is something more. Let's look at the following example:

Ball John the kicked.

We can certainly guess the meaning of the sentence because the terms integrate (their IRFs have correlating elements). Now let's look at the following version:

John kicked the ball.

This one was easier to understand, right?

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of cognition), cognitive linguists perhaps tend to go too far and "throw the baby out with the bathwater". We are clearly born to learn language, and general abilities (memory, attention, perception, etc.) are obviously involved. The question is whether anything specific to language is also involved. I believe so, based on both the strength of the drive to acquire language and the degree of universality it exhibits (which is not to deny or minimize the extent of its diversity).

But why is this so? The answer seems to be obvious: because the first version is ungrammatical. Yes, even if obvious, the truth is that that answer really doesn't explain anything at all. It doesn't help us in our quest to understand what grammar is.

What can be remarked is that it is more difficult to process the information in an ungrammatical sentence.

Right, we seem to be getting somewhere: a grammatical sentence makes it easier and quicker to process the "contained" information. But we still haven't answered why this is so. How does the "system" work? Or rather: how do the systems work?

It has frequently been observed that a language is a system of symbols, functioning at various levels. We have auditory signs, and a predetermined combination of these yields a word (which in turn refers to a concept). And we also have the graphical sign, that is, the written word, which codes the auditory sign that denotes the concept. Regardless if auditory or written, the word is called a *signifier*, and it has been said (**Ferdinand de Saussure** and others) that this *signifier* is **arbitrarily** and **casually** associated to a concept (I am not at all so sure that it is so arbitrary, but let it be). What we should notice is that this association is, above all, a **convention.** A linguistic community finds itself in agreement when making an auditory sign (a signifier) correspond to this or that concept. In English the sounds D/O/G refer to the concept of a four-legged domesticated animal, and the English-speaking community adheres to that convention. The Spanish-speaking community uses other sounds to refer to the same concept: P/E/RR/O.

Fine, but this is the most basic level of linguistic conventions. These become more and more complex as we start accessing higher structures: phrases, sentences, paragraphs etc.

But before we continue, let us look a little closer at the notion "**conventions"**, and ask ourselves what they are and how they affect us.

Some conventions are consciously adhered to, but probably most are unconsciously or half-consciously followed: as when we, for example, shake hands when greeting each other. We don't usually stop to think what has to be done, we just do it. It's a mechanical convention. Or when we enter a theatre building to attend a play, we behave conventionally in a different way than when we enter a football stadium or a church. Every place imposes its own conventions, and it is **expected** from the members of the same community to respect them. If some kind of punishment must be delivered in order for them to be respected, then they aren't conventions, but **rules** or **laws,** depending on the context. If somebody cheats in a game and is found out, he or she will receive some kind of fine or penalty: a **rule** has been infringed (a yellow or red card in a football match will be handed out, for example). In a social or community context we would most likely be facing a **law** infringement**.**

So, what we are saying is that a **convention** is not the same as a **rule** or a **law.** In the case of conventions, no punishments or fines are delivered when not followed. However, and this is essential, they bring about **expectations** that this or that will happen, or **expectations** of some specific sort of behaviour. If I stretch my arm to shake hands with somebody, I unconsciously expect the other to do the same. If he doesn't, I will probably be perplexed or confounded; but I cannot, nonetheless, demand the other to be fined or punished, because not a rule nor a law but a convention has been ignored.

There are different kinds of logic behind laws and rules, and even so behind conventions. Etymologically, the concept *conven-*

tion has to do with *agreement* and *uniting*. And you can reach an agreement as long as there a sharing of some kind of logic. So we can assuredly affirm that conventions are not arbitrary, and that they respond or have responded to some kind of logic. For example, it is said that in greeting we shake hands because in early days it was important to show that the hand was not carrying a weapon. That would be the logic lying behind the convention of shaking hands when we greet. But the greeting itself, the notion and not the form, could, for example, follow the logic of acknowledging another person's existence, instead of just ignoring her or him, and stirring up unnecessary tensions. On the other hand, a collective habit or some behavioural tendency in a community may also derive into a convention. This habit or tendency will probably have appeared because of its positive impact on the community.

Let's now look closer at this notion of considering grammar not as a system of rules, but as one of conventions. Not a few people will probably ask: and what difference does it make? My hypothesis states that if grammar is understood as a system of conventions, we can explain certain issues that are difficult to explain if grammar is considered a system of rules.

We have up to now come across two key concepts in our reflections:

i) **conventions,** as an expression of some kind of logic (though not always a clear-cut one), which implies that there is some kind of motive or reason behind it, and

ii) **expectations,** considered here as a consequence of convention.

Conventions bring about expectations, and that's the way, suggests our hypothesis, grammar works. Grammar is a system of

conventions, expectations and relations, rather than one of rules. And it being a system of conventions and expectations, it is no wonder there are so many different grammars. Each language has its own conventions, i.e. its own grammar. Conventions can of course coincide, be borrowed or derived etc.

Let's also keep in mind that in a linguistic community different tendencies of grammar usage appear constantly. These tendencies might be the consequences of, among other things, diverse social, regional, idiosyncratic causes. Finally, when a linguistic tendency predominates in the community it can turn into a grammar convention.

I will now consider some examples taken from English and Spanish, in order to better shed light on how conventions can vary in different languages.

In English there exists a convention by which the attributive adjective generally precedes the noun. For example:

The black cat

What is here implied is that when an adjective appears, automatically (or unconsciously) the expectation is created that sooner or later a noun will be following. The expectation "prepares" the mind of the receiver allowing her/him to be a step ahead, helping process the information more efficiently.

In Spanish the convention is the inverse:

El gato negro

though

El negro gato

is not incorrect, though it might sound somewhat unnatural. Spanish allows a more flexible word order regarding nouns and adjectives.

Let's have in mind that a convention is the product of a tendency or some logic, and not of a rule. In Spanish the tendency inclines toward the convention in which the adjective follows the noun. However, the reversing of the order can also create different meanings. It's not the same saying

La dura cabeza (the hard head)

as saying

La cabeza dura (the hard-headed)

where the whole phrase *cabeza dura* becomes unified in one concept (by the reversing of the order another convention is referred to, and thus a different expectation arises). The adjective is not in its common (conventional) adjective slot, so the expectation is changed and the interpretation too changes. The same happens with:

Un hombre grande (a big man)

and

Un gran hombre (a great man)

Creating meaning through the order of words is common to many languages, though differing as to what degree this happens. In our terms we would say that the order of words has a stronger or weaker bearing upon the IRFs of the concepts involved.

Being an expression of some type of logic, a convention can affect various aspects of a language system. We can illustrate this going back to our example of the *adjective- noun* order. This convention affects other categories of words too. In English the ten-

dency is that any open class word (not prepositions, articles, pronouns etc., which are closed class words) that precedes a noun tends to become *adjectivized,* notwithstanding if the word is a "real adjective" or not. So *sleeping or hunting* are not "real adjectives", but tend to act as such if they precede a noun:

a sleeping/hunting cat

Furthermore, the logic of this convention is what allows the English language to produce so many compound words as for example:

doorman, jarlid, lifetime, bullfrog, sunflower, football, railroad, grandmother, bookstore, notebook, waistcoat etc.etc.

...where the first word becomes *adjectivized* and the second stands as a noun. When we talk of a *jarlid*, we refer to a *lid*, not a *jar*. But the *jar* word tells us what kind of *lid* is referred to. It turns into a sort of adjective. And here too the IRFs of both words *jar* and *lid* will be affected.

As the *adjective- noun* convention does not apply in for example Spanish, this language's compound words follow different conventions and thus respond to different logics. Examples of compound words in Spanish are: *abrelata, telaraña, aguaviva, girasol etc.* The thing referred to in these expressions is not the noun of the *adjective- noun* order, as it would be in English. In *abrelata*, we are not referring to the second term *lata* (a can), but to a can **opener** (*que abre*). Compound words in English refer (denote) in general to the second term. The expression *can opener* does not refer to the first term *can,* but to the second one, *opener.* And as *can* fills the adjective slot, it functions more as an adjective than as a noun (it is *adjectivized*). That is why some expressions would not make sense in Spanish: *lata-abre* sounds unnatural and makes no sense, it is not supported by any convention in

the Spanish language: nouns in the English adjective slot do not *adjectivize* in Spanish, because the *adjective-noun* order convention does not exist:

* *un inglés coche*	an English car
* *una metal cuchara*	a metal spoon
* *un futbol jugador*	A football player

Consequently, these expressions are considered ungrammatical or incorrect in Spanish.

Unconsciously, we adhere to the logic of the *adjective-noun* convention in order to create and access the meaning of compound words in English. Non-native speakers (intermediate levels) can find this difficult as they're not totally familiar with the convention.

As mentioned, Spanish has an inverse tendency (the common word order being *noun-adjective*) in which the word that **follows** a noun tends to become *adjectivized*. Compare:

El hombre araña

and

Spiderman

The *adjectivized* noun is underlined.

Let us now see how, when we consider grammar made up of conventions rather than of rules, we can account for cases that the notion of rules cannot.

Different conventions can compete with each other in ways that rules or laws cannot without being considered contradictory and thus useless. Different co-existing conventions in one

and the same language can give rise to ambiguity (ambiguous sentences or phrases). Consider the classical example:

Visiting relatives can be boring.

On the one hand, as the verb *visiting* precedes a noun, it tends to *adjectivize* according to the convention we have just been considering (it occupies the *adjective* slot). This means it creates the expectation that it will say something about the noun *relatives,* in which case we will understand that relatives **that visit us** (*visiting)* can be boring. On the other hand, if we stick to the convention that an -ing word is frequently a present participle verb, we will unconsciously process the information in a different way, because the upraised expectations will be of another sort, i.e. if we opt for the verb reading, then the following word will not be modified by it, but rather be the object of the action *visiting.* The meaning has thus changed radically: we will regard the **action** of visiting relatives as boring.

What we see here is how grammar and the IRFs interact. We can observe how different conventions (that is, grammar conventions) affect and modify the IRFs of the concepts involved. In the first reading, following the *adjective-noun* convention, the IRF of *visiting* must include the notion of people arriving at a place which is not their own, whiles in the second reading it must at least include the notion of oneself going to a place which is not one's own. Without activating this previous knowledge, the meaning of the phrases cannot be fully accessed.

Now let's look at another convention, which is active in Spanish. As an example, consider:

Fue un ataque al hombre que había amenazado.

(*It was an assault on the man that had threatened.*)

This sentence is unambiguous in English, due to the fact that no competing or conflicting conventions appear in it. But in Spanish we have two possible readings (two competing conventions).

On the one hand, the *que* word (*that*) upraises the expectation that a relative clause is about to be introduced (that is, a clause that is used to identify the term that precedes it: what man?). This reading would render the meaning that the man that had threatened had been assaulted (this is also the English reading, due to the same convention). On the other hand, if another convention is heeded, it will upraise a different expectation and engage a different reading. In Spanish there is a convention by which the verbs are so conjugated that it is not necessary to add a personal pronoun (it can be tacit). So the auxiliary verb *había* (had) can have as subject either *el hombre* (the man) or a tacit external third person singular (a she or a he that is not *el hombre*). If the latter were the case, the reading would be: The assault was on the man that another he or she had threatened. A completely different interpretation. In English the ambiguity disappears, because pronouns are almost "obligatory" if one is to convey the information of who the agent is.

We could then define an ambiguous phrase or sentence as one in which at least two different conventions, which conjure different expectations, compete with each other, and thus render at least two different possible ways of processing the information, that is, two different readings or interpretations.[69]

Now, let us consider another example of how conventions and the expectations they give rise to can affect the structure of a language.

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[69] The question is: can different **rules** compete in this way?

In English there is a convention by which one should avoid introducing an adverb of manner between the verb and its direct object.[70]

We can say:

They played passionately for the audience.

Here the adverb *passionately* can follow the verb, because the latter lacks a direct object.

But in:

They passionately played Stairway to Heaven.

The adverb precedes the verb, because the latter has an object. Putting the adverb between the verb and the object makes it sound very awkward:

? They played passionately Stairway to Heaven.

Conversely, the adverb can come after the direct object:

They played Stairway to Heaven passionately.

This convention, which is not as strong in Spanish (or: Spanish has a weaker tendency towards it), can explain a rather bizarre behavior of the so called phrasal verbs.

Most phrasal verbs, as is known, can be, on the one hand, conceived as a unity –a gestalt– in which the verb and the adverb form one single concept (the action is conceived as one)[71] or, on the other hand, can be conceived as two unities, i.e. as verb + adverb where the verb often denotes the action and the adverb the

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[70] Likely this convention rests on the logic of contiguity: both the adverb of manner and the direct object seek to be as close as possible to the verb that acts on them or by which they are affected. This competition is solved by putting the adverb before the verb and the direct object after it. In this way both get to be near the verb.

[71] Many phrasal verbs have one word counterparts. E.g. sort out = solve; put up= construct and so on.

direction, metaphorical or not, of the action. If I choose to regard the two words as two separate unities, then the convention – mentioned above– that pleads the adverb to come after the direct object will be activated, and the result will be, for example:

*I **pulled** my socks **up**.*

…where the adverb *up* comes after the direct object. When the object is a pronoun, the convention turns strong and admits no competition, as in:

*I pulled **them** up.*

**I pulled up them.*

Perhaps this is so because if the direct object is not palpably present (that is, it is "only represented" by a pronoun), the convention of not putting an adverb between the verb and the direct object turns stronger.

On the other hand, if I choose to regard the phrasal verb as one concept, as a gestalt unity, then the result will be:

*I **pulled up** my socks.*

...where *pulled+ up*, together, function as one unit, as a gestalt. This convention is plausible due to the tendency English verbs have: they tend to state manner of action, but not the direction of the action, so the direction has to be given by a particle (the tendency is the reverse in Spanish, where the direction is usually stated but not the manner, which usually has to be stated with a gerund). As we are talking about conventions and not rules, we can freely talk about tendencies without having to despair over encountering yet another exception to an alleged rule.

An **article** –just to mention another example– upraises strong expectations. After an article we expect a noun, because the con-

vention (as an expression of logical demands) goes that articles (or determiners) precede nouns or nominal concepts. And something similar to the "*adjectivizing*" process seen above happens here: when an article precedes a word that is not a prototypical noun, it nevertheless tends to nominalise the word that follows if the latter refers to qualities of a noun, though it is not a noun in itself, as, for example, in

the rich.

Adverbs, on the other hand, tend to refer to qualities of an action and not of a "thing"; and that is why the following phrase sounds odd :

...the quickly...

On the one hand, this phrase doesn't satisfy the expectation of a coming noun that an article creates; on the other hand, *quickly* can be the quality of an action but not of a thing, so the article and the adverb fail to integrate.

But conventions too may be complex, not to say complicated. Let's look a bit closer at the definite article *the* in English and *el/la* in Spanish. These little words will of course create the expectation that a noun is imminent; however, it can also affect the way a noun will be conceived, or in our terms, the IRFs of the noun concepts:

i) Though the conventions regarding definite articles are quite similar in Spanish and English, there are, nonetheless, some differences. In Spanish, one of the conventions lets the article introduce a noun whose meaning is to be conceptualized as a unified entity, such as *el tiempo, el espacio, la materia, el azar, etc.* This is not the case in English, which means that we are facing a somewhat different convention: *time, space, matter, chance* etc. do not require the article. This is so be-

cause the denoted unified entities can only be one – we conceptualize that there can only be one *Time,* or one *Space* etc.– and are not confusable with other similar entities (which is why it doesn´t need to take a definite article, see convention ii). We conceive cosmic *Space* to be ONE SPACE (though modern physics may be challenging this idea, our minds still cling to the conception). Nonetheless, we may put an article in front of *space, time* etc. if we are referring to a particular *space, time* etc. as for example, *the space between these two chairs,* the article then referring to a specific space, be it definite or not, as in *there is* ***a*** *space between these two chairs.*

ii) The article might introduce a noun that is to be conceptualized as a specific or particular entity among many others of the same kind. For example, *The neighbour's cat.* (A specific –identified– cat is referred to, and not any cat). English and Spanish conventions concur on this point.

iii) The article can also refer to a generic noun: *the tiger is in danger of extinction.* English and Spanish conventions concur on this point.

iv) The article can point out that the noun in question has been previously introduced, i.e., has already been mentioned, or there is common knowledge of its existence, as, for example, in *Could you pass me the salt?* English and Spanish conventions concur on this point.

And so on.

It is also most interesting to analyze the South American Spanish clitics like *lo, la, le,* and confirm once again how conventions bring about expectations, which will in turn align our minds in the right interpretative disposition.

Let us look closer at the kind of expectations these small words conjure. Consider the following examples:

i) ***Lo*** *he visto* *(I have seen him)*

And let's confront it with

ii) ***Le*** *he gritado* *(I have shouted at/to him/her/it)*

When facing the clitics *lo, le,* our Relational Compulsion – guided by an external and well known convention– anticipates the appearance of a verb, invoking the concordant expectation. Our mind is thus ready to process information about an action, an event or a state. However, in the case of *lo* (i) we are additionally predisposed to expect the existence of "something" that has been affected or referred to by the action, event or state (by the verb), that is, in traditional terms, of a Direct Object (**somebody** was *visto* (seen)).[72] Additionally, the expectation that that Direct Object has been referred to previously is also created. For example:

-*¿Has visto* ***el avión****?* (Have you seen **the plane**?)

-***Lo*** *he visto.* (I have seen **it**)

And even more, it creates the expectation of a masculine Direct Object. All this, amazingly enough, happens unconsciously. (Probably, one of the reasons these clitics are so difficult to learn, when studying Spanish as a second language, is that they respond to many different conventions and thus create many different kinds of expectations.)

Now, let´s look closer at the *le* clitic from our second example

Le he gritado.

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[72] Though most interesting, I will not consider the case of *lo* as an article in this work (as in *lo hermoso,* for example). Another case is when *lo + verb* takes a tacit direct object, as in *lo siento (I am sorry)* or *lo pego (I glue it).* Even if the direct object is not explicit, *lo* still refers to something.

In what is this *le* different from *lo?*

Well, *le* creates the expectation that there is a person or a thing that received *something* (the *something* would be designated by the Direct Object if present; in this case it is tacit because what was shouted –the content of what was shouted– is not mentioned), in a way described by the verb (in this example: by shouting). *Le* correlates with the Indirect Object. So

***Le** he gritado*

recalls and anticipates an Indirect Object, but

***Lo** he gritado*

anticipates and prepares the hearer to relate to the content (the words that were shouted) or the kind of content (an insult or a warning etc.) that was shouted, that is, to the Direct Object.

Apart from what we have been considering, I must also mention that the effect these clitics have on the meaning of the verbs with which they appear is enormous. Consider:

***Le** he pegado (un sopapo)* (I have gave **her/him (**a slap)) (Words in bold are the Indirect Object)

and

***Lo** he pegado* (I have glued **it/him**) (Words in bold correspond to the Direct Object)

We can here immediately see how the clitics determine and alter the meaning of the verb *pegar* (a good example of how words affect and are affected by other words). *Le* prompts the IRF of the verb *pegar* to include the notion of *hitting*, while *lo* prompts it to include the notion of *gluing* (both senses have a common origin: latin *picare*).

The clitic *le* sometimes appears simultaneously with an explicit Indirect Object, being the cause why some consider it redundant. In

Le he gritado al niño.

both *le* and *al niño* refer to the same entity and are both considered as the Indirect Object (or dative).

Is this a whimsical redundancy of the Spanish language? Not necessarily if regarded from the point of view of our conventions and expectations. It is not really redundant, because if gives a hint of what will be following, making it easier and quicker to process the information for the hearer by creating a specific and well identified expectation. Let's consider:

Le dije. (*I told her/him*)

And contrast it with

Dije. (*I said.*)

The *le* in the first example immediately creates the expectation that there is a specific receiver of what was said, and prepares our attention accordingly, while in the second example the speaker is not interested in conveying who the receiver is.[73]

Another aspect of grammar is punctuation. Well used it allows us to process the conveyed information in an efficient way, but if used incorrectly it will, on the contrary, make the process more difficult. However, it can also alter the meaning of a sentence, and

[73] We can now say that, even if it might be strenuous to define the meaning of words such as articles, determiners and clitics, they do have IRFs, and they definitely create expectations, being as they are involved in different conventions. And maybe most importantly, they affect the IRFs of the words they co-appear with.

can definitely alter the hierarchical structure of the IRFs of the concepts.

Consider the following amusing example (quoted by René Díaz H. in *"On the Questionable Utility of Grammar: a Viewpoint."*):

Woman, without her man, is nothing.

And:

Woman! Without her, man is nothing.

The only formal difference is in the punctuation, and even so, the meanings are practically opposite.

The different punctuations in these two sentences have created different expectations by making us shift from one convention to another.

The word *her*, in English, can be either a pronoun in object case, or a possessive pronoun. The conventions that create the different expectations state that if *her* is followed by a comma, it is not a possessive pronoun, but an object case pronoun; however, if there is no comma or some other punctuation, the created expectation is that what follows will designate something or someone possessed by a female individual.

As we have seen, expectations raised by grammar conventions modify the IRFs of concepts. So we can say that grammar conventions affect the IRFs of concepts, just as the IRFs of concepts impact on the grammar; that is, grammar structures have to adapt to the fore-grounded (or profiled) constituents of the IRFs, as in the example given of the different roles played by the word *her*: a comma has to be introduced if we don't want the constituent of the IRF of *her* to profile the idea of *possession*.

And to finish off let's just take a look at one last sample. The word *that* in English can adhere to eight or nine different conventions. We will here just consider two examples of them: as a relative pronoun, and as a demonstrative pronoun/ adjective. In order to process it as a relative pronoun, the expectation created by the convention is that it will appear after a noun:

*The house **that** she bought was full of rats.*

As *that* appears after a noun, the invoked expectation, in accordance with the convention, is that something will be said about *the house*, so we are unconsciously anticipating (or unconsciously prepared) to receive what comes as something referring to the noun, enabling us to process the information with increased efficiency and fluency.

If, on the contrary, it appears in front of a noun, it will create a different expectation:

***That** house is full of rats.*

Here it is expected to point out something, whether temporal (e.g. ***that** year*), spatial (***that** house*), state (***that** feeling)* etc.[74]

Due to the fact that the word *that* pertains to so many conventions, sentences as the following are quite common in English:

*She said **that that** wasn't what she meant.*

The first *that* is a **conjunction,** and as it comes after a communication verb it creates the expectation of anticipating the content

[74] What Leonard Talmy (in *The Relation of Grammar to Cognition)* calls the "*component notions"* can be considered parts of the IRFs. Talmy analyzes "*this"* and *"that"* as deictic demonstrative pronouns (as in *this/that chair*) and clearly proves that they too have IRFs. In order to understand what *this/that* imply, we need to know, among other things, that

- space can be divided into regions or sides (*this side/ that side)*
- a point can be located within a region
- a side can be "the same as" or "different from"

of what was *said,* and the second is a **demonstrative** pronoun, which points toward something previously mentioned in the wider context. This means that, because they obey different conventions, each *that* is processed in different ways.

We have thus seen that grammatical conventions create expectations, or put differently, they prepare us to receive some specific kind of information in a particular word sequence. These sorts of conventions, then, function as clues, hints, or signs, consequently creating clear cut expectations.

What we have ultimately pointed out in this chapter is that grammar (understood as a set of conventions) and semantics are tightly weaved together, and both interact and thus influence each other. The IRFs of concepts are protean, changeable and have an unstable hierarchical structure, which permits the conventions of grammar –with its concordant expectations– to act on these IRFs and modify them. Besides, and maybe most importantly, a specific grammatical structure might be unconsciously chosen because it foregrounds certain components of the IRF of a concept and backgrounds others; and conversely, the IRFs of concepts can influence the choice between competing grammatical conventions, yielding different and/or ambiguous meanings.