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METAPHOR AND THE HORIZON OF THE UNSAID

It is generally agreed that metaphors are creative events, i.e., presumably having never existed previously they first come into being during discourse, such as conversation or the writing of a poem. It is also generally agreed that metaphors have meaning. But the event character and meaning dimension of metaphors have yet to be systematically explicated as vital complements to each other. To focus solely upon the metaphor as a novel event in the history of the language would leave one with no resources to determine its meaning. To focus solely upon the meaning would so enwrap the interpreter in analogies with the meanings of other words that any innovative or creative contribution by the metaphor would be drowned in a sea of continuities.

It is the thesis of this article that by bringing to bear the notions of horizons and context borrowed from the field of phenomenological hermeneutics we may reinforce a description of metaphor that retains the dynamic tension between event and meaning. All sentences or utterances, of course, are speech-acts and may therefore be called language events. But within this broader category metaphors have a particular two stage event character: there is first the recognition that the metaphor cannot be understood readily by focusing upon the literal designations of its two terms so that, secondly, the poet or the interpreter must go to the horizon of associated connotations to determine its meaning. In doing so comparisons or analogies are drawn. The position I will be defending is that a living metaphor necessarily incorporates an analogy or comparison while still resisting attempts to exhaust its meaning by reducing it to literal reformulations.

I. THE DILEMMA OF EPIPHOR AND DIAPHOR

Samuel Johnson said metaphors give you "two ideas for one." The question is just how metaphors are able to give two ideas for one. The term's etymology takes us to the Greek rendering which suggests a carrying movement. The verb, *phero*, means to bear or carry a load; the noun, *metaphora*, means transference. Aristotle's definition of metaphor as the transference of the name (onoma) of one thing to another to which it normally does not apply suggests a carrying over of meaning. But the nature

of the movement from the two names or words to the new idea constitutes the mystery of metaphor.

In working to resolve this mystery of metaphor, Philip Wheelwright distinguishes two kinds of metaphor which he calls epiphor and diaphor.¹ Epiphors, like similes, depend for their meaning upon drawing comparisons or analogies between two things. Diaphors, on the other hand, create new meaning through the juxtaposition of two otherwise unlike things and, therefore, are not reducible to a literal reformulation of the elements compared. (Rather than calling these two kinds of metaphor, I will attempt to show they are both dimensions of the single phenomenon of metaphor.)

An epiphor extends meaning through comparison. The poetess, Elizabeth Sewall, says "metaphor in its simplest form consists in the perception and exhibition of a relationship of correspondence between two separate and diverse entities or phenomena."² This understanding of metaphor as epiphor extends through traditional rhetoric back to Aristotle, for whom a metaphor is really an elliptical simile, that is, a collapsed comparison from which "like" or "as" has been omitted. An effective epiphor pairs together two terms, the similarities between which are not readily noticed until the metaphor draws them into recognition. For example, one is not likely to assume there are common qualities between fires and questions, but with the introduction of the metaphor, "a burning question," the comparison is made.

The two terms of an epiphor do not play identical roles; rather, one tends to explain the other. The movement is usually from a more concrete and readily graspable image "over on to" what is perhaps more vague, more problematic, or more strange. What is familiar is used to explain what is strange.

The term which is relatively well known is called the "vehicle," and that which, although of greater worth or importance, is less known or more obscurely known is called the "tenor."³ Hence, in Wheelwright's example, "life is a dream," the dream is the vehicle because the experience of waking up from dreams is quite common to experience, whereas life is the tenor because it is the relatively vague and problematic concept which the vehicle seeks to illuminate.

¹ Philip Wheelwright, *Metaphor and Reality* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968). Chapter IV. A particularly clear exposition of these two positions is presented by Jay Taylor Keckley, "The Resolution of Models in the Natural Sciences as Types of Metaphors," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Florida State University, 1974.

² Elizabeth Sewall, *The Human Metaphor* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1964). P. 42.

³ Wheelwright's use of "tenor" and "vehicle" harkens back to I. A. Richards's intro-

Now a strict epiphorist understanding of metaphor has been classified by Max Black under what he calls the substitution and comparison theories.⁴ The substitution view holds that a metaphorical expression is used in place of some equivalent literal expression. The writer apparently chooses not to use the appropriate word for the context and replaces it with another word employed in some sense other than its proper sense. Understanding a metaphor, then, consists in restituting the literal term for which the substitution was originally made. The comparison theory is a species of the substitution theory, and restituting consists in restating just what it is that is being compared. Through such restitution the meaning of the metaphor can be exhaustively paraphrased in literal terms. It follows from this view, therefore, that metaphor offers no new information. It is merely a decorative device or stylistic ornament whose function it is to please someone's literary tastes.

Thus, those who argue that metaphors are strictly epiphors or elliptical similes also argue that the meaning of the metaphor can be discerned through a reductive analysis of its components, that is, by invoking the literal designations of its positive and negative analogies. I suggest that in doing this they may discern meaning in the metaphor, but they do so only at the cost of losing the creative event character of metaphor. To provide an example for purposes of illustrating epiphorical interpretation, let us look at a line taken from a poem by Wallace Stevens, "Tea at the Palaz of Hoon":

I was myself the compass of that sea.

Reduced to its barest metaphorical structure, "I am a compass," it appears that "compass" is the vehicle with "I" being the tenor. An epiphorist might contend that a comparison is being drawn between the two. The positive analogy—the way in which both tenor and vehicle are alike—is that both set direction. If one wishes to know in which direction he is going he looks at the compass and takes its bearings from it; the compass is as it were the final authority on questions regarding direction. Hence this vehicle is illuminating the nature of the "I." The poem's author sets his own direction; he is his own authority when determining where he shall go.

duction of these terms in *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (London: Oxford University Press, 1936). P. 96. Monroe Beardsley aptly refers to the vehicle as the "modifier." "The Metaphorical Twist," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, XXII, 3 (March 1962). P. 293.

⁴ Max Black, *Models and Metaphors: Studies in Language and Philosophy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1962). Pp. 31 ff.

In addition to these positive analogies there are negative analogies, i.e., ways in which the tenor and vehicle are probably dissimilar. Some qualities of the compass are not transferable to the poem's author; for example, he is not likely to be palm-sized, have a round shape, metallic construction, a magnetized needle, or "made in Taiwan" stamped on his bottom. Once we have separated out the negative analogies, the strict epiphorist or ellipsist would contend that the literal renderings of the positive analogies satisfactorily restate the metaphor's meaning.

But the proponents of reducibility lose the creative event character of metaphor. In some contexts the above mentioned metaphor might mark a new stage in understanding; one might never previously have thought of himself as a compass, but now experience takes on new meaning when interpreted through this construct.

To clarify further what I mean by the event character of metaphor, let us borrow briefly from Ferdinand de Saussure's distinction between language (*langue*) and speech or speaking (*parole*). A metaphor—at least a living metaphor—belongs to speaking. Language is the institution, the conventions, and codes, the reservoir of traditional meanings, all of which are required for communication to take place. Speaking is the event; it is the creative combining of various resources within the language. It is the personal message in the act of expression. Language endures, but speech has an instantaneous existence; it appears and disappears. Metaphors are not given with language; rather, they happen. They first come into existence through the speech-act, and only if memorized or transcribed do they perdure. And in their perdurance they avail themselves of the possibility of becoming absorbed into language, i.e., of obtaining the literal significance common to dead metaphors. For example, most people are inclined to understand the phrase "hood of a car" as having a literal designation; but its birth was undoubtedly a metaphorical ascription of the hood of a coat to the as yet unnamed part of a car.

Metaphors are dependent upon their language tradition for meaning. That the elements of a metaphor have had literal meanings in the antecedent tradition is, of course, a necessary condition for recognizing the metaphor's meaning; but it is not a sufficient condition. There is more.

Philosophers such as Wheelwright and poets such as Elizabeth Sewel insist that metaphors offer something fresh and new. They have what Monroe Beardsley calls "emeEgent meaning." By insisting that metaphors are reducible to literal equivalents based upon meanings belonging to the past, strict epiphorists close themselves off to the creative dynamic of

metaphor as event. This view inadvertently presupposes that there can be nothing new under the sun; so in their haste to be certain they possess the metaphor's meaning they deny its innovative and inventive nature.

Turning then to the creative event side of metaphor, we might best present it in terms of diaphor. According to Wheelwright, diaphor is the creation of meaning by juxtaposition and new synthesis. "Here the movement is through certain particulars of experience (actual or imagined) in a fresh way, producing new meaning by juxtaposition alone."⁵

The concept of juxtaposition draws our attention to the way in which the terms in the metaphor are dissimilar rather than similar, i.e., it draws our attention to their negative analogies. Strict diaphorists seem to neglect the dialectic between positive and negative analogies, usually postulating that there is a "radical" difference between the terms. Colin Turbayne and I. A. Richards refer to it as sort-crossing. Turbayne develops the notion of sort-crossing using Gilbert Ryle's definition of category mistake: the presentation of the facts of one category in the idioms appropriate to another.⁶ Metaphors are crossings of sorts or categories; something belonging to one sort is understood in terms of something from an entirely alien sort. (As we proceed I hope to show that overemphasis upon sort-crossing puts up a smoke screen, which temporarily makes us unable to see that metaphor relies upon comparisons between the two terms at the connotative level where sorts in fact are not crossed.)

I. A. Richards, the father of the interaction theory of metaphor, suggests that in the juxtaposition it is the momentary merging of the vehicle sort with the tenor sort that produces metaphorical meaning. The nexus of qualities or properties originally predicated of the vehicle is now predicated of the tenor when it is being treated as being in the same sort as the vehicle. Richards writes, "When we use a metaphor we have two thoughts of different things active together and supported by a single word, or phrase, whose meaning is a resultant of their interaction."⁷

⁵ Wheelwright, *Metaphor and Reality*, p. 78.

⁶ Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (London: Hutchinson's University Library, 1949). P. 8; cited in Colin Murray Turbayne, *The Myth of Metaphor* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1962). P. 12. Turbayne's purpose in this book is not so much to develop a comprehensive theory of metaphor but rather to rescue readers and listeners from becoming the "victims" of metaphors. A victim of metaphor fails to see the pretense in sort-crossing and ends up sort-trespassing, i.e., taking the metaphor literally. Instead of using the metaphor he becomes used by the metaphor. Turbayne's goal is to keep us aware that sort-crossing has taken place. Pp. xiv, 3, 13, 22.

⁷ Richards, *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, p. 93.

It is important to diaphorists such as Richards to stress that this interaction is not based upon any comparison or analogy between the two terms; "... the peculiar modification of the tenor which the vehicle brings about is even more the work of their unlikenesses than of their likenesses."⁹

One addition to the interaction theory offered by Max Black is the suggestion that the meaning of both juxtaposed terms undergoes modification, not just that of the tenor. Being uneasy with the "tenor-vehicle" nomenclature, Black substitutes "focus" and "frame." In a metaphorical expression one word, or at most several words, are used metaphorically while the remainder are used literally. The words which retain their normal literal designations constitute the frame, within which we focus on one principal subject. For illustration, Black uses the metaphor, "Man is a wolf," in which "is a wolf" provides the frame for the focus, "man." But both terms undergo transformation. "If to call a man a wolf is to put him in a special light, we must not forget that the metaphor makes the wolf seem more human than he otherwise would."¹⁰

Where the diaphorists wish to take us with all this stress on juxtaposition and interaction across sorts is to the thesis that metaphors are irreducible. Metaphors cannot be adequately or exhaustively translated into literal equivalents because they have themselves introduced new meaning. Black states that a literal paraphrase "fails to be a translation because it fails to give the insight that the metaphor did."¹⁰

One of Wheelwright's examples of diaphor drawn from poetry is the following:

My salad days,
When I was green in judgment.

A strict diaphorist position would contend that such a line requires a take-it-or-leave-it attitude. It is absolute. It is a radical crossing of sorts that produces a new meaning and it cannot be reduced to a literal reformulation based upon the antecedent meanings of its constituting words. There is a radical break, as if the new meaning were created *ex nihilo*. If the metaphor does not communicate its meaning, one can only repeat the metaphor; he cannot translate it.

But, we might ask, how does this explanation of metaphor account for its meaning at all? What distinguishes a metaphor from nonsense? If the

emergent meaning is solely the product of the juxtaposition of alien sorts, independent of any comparison between the antecedent literal meanings of the two terms, then the metaphor seems forbidden to draw upon the reservoir of meaning embedded in its language tradition. Brute or radical sort-crossing is simply that, sort-crossing. It produces only nonsense. Its meaning is oblique. In itself it is insufficient to account for new or emergent meaning. The logic of a strict diaphoric view of metaphor recognizes the creative event dimension of metaphor, but in denying the important role of comparing its two terms on the basis of past meanings, it has lost connection with any meaning whatsoever. The strict epiphorist view retains meaning to the exclusion of creative event, whereas the strict diaphorist view retains creative event to the exclusion of meaning.

In summary, it appears that the strict epiphorist view contends that all metaphors are based upon comparisons or analogies and, therefore, are reducible to literal equivalents. It appears that the strict diaphorist view contends that all metaphors are not based upon comparisons or analogies and, therefore, are not reducible to literal equivalents. But are these the only two alternatives? Does the presence of comparison necessitate reducibility? Is it not possible to say that metaphors do utilize comparisons or analogies and still say they are not reducible to literal equivalents? Perhaps such a formulation would better retain both the creative event and meaning dimensions of metaphor.

It seems to be a fact that pure diaphors—when they can be distinguished from nonsense—do not occur so purely; they are always accompanied by epiphors. Perhaps each is dependent upon the other. Even in Wheelwright's example of diaphor given above a comparison can be drawn. The force, and perhaps even the humor, of this metaphor hinges on an analogy already built into the equivocal word, "green." Like a salad made with lettuce, cabbage, endive, celery, cucumber, or whatever, the poem's author is green. If "green" refers purely to color, then the metaphor is nonsense, except of course in the context of the "I" having just taken a bath in green paint. But "green" also means young and as yet unexperienced in the harsher mechanics of living in a complicated world. To speak of a green banana is to register concern not for its color but rather that it is not yet ripe enough to eat. A green person by analogy, then, is not yet ripe, not yet fully developed. His "judgment" is somewhat immature.

Such an attempt to draw out a comparison does not imply that now the meaning of the metaphor has been exhausted by the analysis. I agree with Black that the metaphor is "not expendable."¹¹ But it is equally destructive

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Black, *Models and Metaphors*, p. 44.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

to metaphor to deny the presence of analogy when it is present and, more importantly, to deny that the analogy is a necessary resource for the construction of the metaphor's new meaning. Both epiphor and diaphor belong together. Wheelwright concludes,

The take-it-or-leave-it attitude that is implicit in all good metaphor is in itself, so far as it goes, diaphoric: the sense of an invisible finger ambiguously pointing is epiphoric. The role of epiphor is to hint significance, the role of diaphor is to create presence. Serious metaphor demands both.¹²

II. CONTEXT AND HORIZON

Because metaphors consist in the juxtaposition of words or names they require a larger context to have meaning. The smallest unit of discourse to carry meaning is the sentence. The French philosopher of hermeneutics, Paul Ricoeur, points out that the word is both "much more and much less than the sentence."¹³ Words are much less because prior to their appearance in a sentence they have only potential, not actual, meanings. By themselves words are only lexical units, having a variety of meanings drawn from various uses in the past tradition and listed in the dictionary. Their potential for future meaning is dependent upon their use in past contexts. Words belong to language but not yet to the event of speech.

Only in the context of a sentence do words have actual meanings. Consequently, the particular metaphorical meaning of a word is nothing that could be found already in a dictionary. But this is due primarily to its lexical isolation rather than, as the diaphorists might prematurely contend, to the innovation brought on by the metaphor. If then, we claim that the metaphorical sense of a given word is more than any of its previous literal definitions, the emergent meaning is necessarily the result of contextual action.

But the individual word is also "much more" than the sentence. The sentence is an event; as such, its actuality is transitory, passing, ephemeral. But the word goes on to survive the transitory instance in which it is spoken and holds itself available for new uses in the future.

Now what if the word should undergo an expansion of meaning in a creative event of metaphor? When it returns again to the language system it adds to the system and, thereby, gives language a history. Words can do

¹² Wheelwright, *Metaphor and Reality*, p. 91.

¹³ Paul Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974). P. 92.

this, Ricoeur says, because they are polysemic. Polysemy is readily defined as the property of words in natural language of having more than one meaning.¹⁴ In the history of language, this makes the word a cumulative entity, capable of acquiring new dimensions of meaning without necessarily losing the old ones. Consequently, one metaphor may contribute to the contextual meaning of a subsequent metaphor, which in turn fuels a succession of such speech-events that results in a language that is constantly growing and changing. Language, then, is not only a system of rules but also a historical tradition, a warehouse of meanings indigenous to its concomitant culture. It supplies the material for creative reformulation while still providing continuity.

The dynamic of linguistic history is fueled by interpretation, i.e., by wrestling with the problems of hermeneutics. The hermeneutical problem arises when we become, so to speak, caught between contexts of meaning. It is the problem of what to do when one is caught between the familiar and the strange. It is the problem of interpretation. Whenever the meaning of a text, for example, is not immediately obvious, the reader must commence to interpret it. Sort-crossing in a metaphor is a form of context conflict, I argue, and hence it becomes a problem of interpretation.

At this point I would like to suggest that the notion of horizon of meaning found in hermeneutical philosophy sheds some light on the dynamics of contextual action in metaphor. The concept of horizon in hermeneutics is an application of the concept of life-world (*Lebenswelt*) in Husserl's phenomenology. For Husserl, all beings given in one's world of experience stand within the intentional horizon of consciousness, that is, within one's life-world. To be conscious, he says, is to be conscious of something, and that something is called the intentional object or phenomenon. A *cogito's* act of consciousness (*noesis*) is always already directed towards an intentional object (*noema*).¹⁵ There is no consciousness which is not consciousness of something. We do not begin with a situation in which a conscious subject existing for itself merely chooses its objects.

Further, and more important for us here, Husserl points out that there are also anonymous intentionalities called "horizontal intentionalities" (*Horizontalintentionalitäten*). If I focus my attention in a definite object, the picture on the wall for example, everything present—the entire room—is simultaneously there for me, like a corona of intentionalities. Even though I

¹⁴ Paul Ricoeur, "Creativity in Language," *Philosophy Today*, XVII (Summer 1973).

¹⁵ Edmund Husserl, *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology* (London: Collier-Macmillan Ltd., 1969). Pp. 235 ff.

can remember subsequently that at the moment I concentrated on nothing other than the picture, all the rest was also present and somehow coincided.¹⁶

The concept of horizon undergoes some modification in the hermeneutical philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer. Here it is to be understood not so much as the intentional structure of consciousness, as it was for Husserl, but rather as the tradition-situation in which one's understanding presently resides. "Horizon" describes that tacit perimeter of a viewpoint which circumscribes and includes everything within it, including the particular object upon which we focus our attention. One can never be fully conscious of horizon, for then it would cease to be a horizon but a focal object. The event of understanding, hermeneutically described, is one in which a person opens himself up to new experiences and thereby extends or broadens his horizon to include the new.

Horizon is the range of vision (*Gesichtskreis*) that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point. Applying this to the thinking mind, we speak of narrowness of horizon, of the possible expansion of horizon, of the opening up of new horizons, etc.¹⁷

As stated before, the hermeneutical problem arises when one becomes aware of an incongruity between two horizons, as occurs for example when reading an ancient text which at first seems strange and not readily understandable. Interpretation is the process through which we seek to resolve this incongruity. The two horizons—the one of the ancient text and the one of the interpreter—merge in the event of understanding, and this Gadamer labels the "fusing of horizons" (*Horizontverschmelzung*).¹⁸ In

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 91 ff, 105 ff. The notion of horizon underwent a broadening in the development of Husserl's thought. In his earlier work, it signifies primarily those concomitant elements in consciousness that are given, without being the direct object of the act of consciousness under consideration. In every act of consciousness there are aspects of the object that are not directly intended but which are recognized, either by recall or anticipation, as belonging to the object intended. These aspects constitute its horizon, as described above. In the later essay, "Philosophy and the Crisis of European Man," the notion is broadened to include the sociocultural community in which every man finds himself. "The community as horizon" signifies the framework in which experience occurs, conditioning that experience and supplying the diverse aspects of subjectivity that are not directly intended in any one act of consciousness. *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy*, translated by Quentin Lauer (New York: Harper, 1955), p. 150.

¹⁷ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), p. 269. The development of the concept of horizon from Husserl to Gadamer is presented by Richard E. Palmer, *Hermeneutics: Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969).

¹⁸ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, pp. 271-74.

the initial stage of an interpretive event, the two horizons are recognized in their distance from each other. Although one's own horizon can never become an object as such, it may take on a definitiveness of a sort when focused upon in relation to the other horizon. Because one's own horizon is not closed or fixed, but capable of movement and expansion, understanding the strange horizon is possible. One cannot simply leave his own horizon of meaning behind in order to enter totally into the horizontal context within which the texts stands; rather his own horizon must be broadened so that it eventually fuses with that of the text. Through the interpreter's encounter with the text a new more comprehensive horizon is formed. To place oneself in the strange situation which is to be understood results finally in "the attainment of a higher universality that overcomes, not only our own particularity, but also that of the other."¹⁹

Borrowing somewhat from this interpretation theory for the purpose of our discussion of metaphor, let us use the term "horizon" to refer to that corona of associations and meanings that a word has accumulated in the linguistic tradition. Such associations—though in the background—are present whenever a word is used literally. It is this horizon that makes punning and joking possible. In a living metaphor there is a more fluid interchange between the literal focus and its corona of associated meanings, a pulsating give and take between the background and the foreground.

Perhaps the reading and interpreting of a metaphor differs from the reading and interpreting of other texts due to the addition of one more horizon. Whereas there are ordinarily two horizons, that of the text and that of the interpreter, in the case of the metaphor there are three: the horizon of the vehicle, the horizon of the tenor, and the horizon of the interpreter. Because of the apparent sort-crossing, the metaphor is not yet an integrated text with a single horizon.

The metaphorical context—the poem, the historical or psychological situation of the interpreter, etc.—will have considerable influence on determining just which of the horizontal meanings will be brought into focus. This influence on metaphorical meaning we call contextual action.

To speak metaphorically of old age as the autumn of life, for example, would mean different things in different contexts. In one context old age would be like autumn in the sense of being a time of decline and decay, standing between the zesty life of spring-summer and the death of winter. In another context old age would be like autumn in that it is the crown of the

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 272.

year, crested with golden beauty and russet richness. As long as the metaphor lives new contexts might draw out still other meanings. Metaphors escape literal reductions not because they are comparisons but because they are events, and the context in which they happen is the indispensable element in determining their meaning.

The role of contextual action has not gone unnoticed by the diaphorists mentioned above, but its potential has gone undeveloped. In I. A. Richard's *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, for example, he recognizes that each word is dependent upon its immediate literary context for meaning. He demonstrates how the immediate context of the sentence or book might be extended to include the circumstances under which anything is written or said; wider still to include all the writings of a given author; wider still finally to include the climate of the period in which it is written. All of these contexts come to bear on the meaning of a given word in use.²⁰ Richards goes on to show how words may become "abridgements" for entire contexts, or better, horizons of meaning.²¹ As suggested above, when the word recurs later and in another context it may carry with it—in unsaid form—all the baggage of its previous context. It is this ability for representing in an unspecified way the word's previous contexts, that makes both analogy and sort-crossing in metaphor possible.

It is important to note that past contextual meanings are present yet unspecified in a word's horizon. A word being said always carries with it its own horizon of that which is unsaid. In reference to assertions, Gadamer points out that the meaning of what is said (*das Gesagte*) is held together by the wider context of what is unsaid (*das Ungesagte*).²² It is the as yet unarticulated range of potential meanings in the horizon of the unsaid in which the metaphor will plant its seed and watch new meaning grow.

Max Black's concept of frame makes almost explicit use of horizon through what he calls the "system of associated commonplaces." In his example, "Man is a wolf," the metaphor draws upon the wolf-system of related commonplaces through which we view and understand "man," e.g., he preys on other animals, is fierce, hungry, enraged in constant struggle, a scavenger, and so on.²³ Because any one of these otherwise literal predications of "wolf" are available but as yet undeclared in the unspeaken horizon brought to the metaphor by the frame, any attempt to translate the

metaphor into an exhaustive literal paraphrase would be arbitrary. Prior to analysis, all the past meanings of "wolf" are there to provide that corona of potential meaning from which we may draw in extending our understanding of man.

Similar to Black's system of associated commonplaces, Monroe Beardsley's verbal opposition theory of metaphor relies upon what he calls the "potential range of connotations" of a word.²⁴ In Beardsley's theory, the interaction of a metaphor's juxtaposed terms depends upon logical absurdity, i.e., a clash between literal meanings within the same context. How does logical absurdity function here? Logical absurdity (or apparent nonsense) directs our attention to the wider horizon of potential connotations. The clash of the literal senses of both the subject (tenor) and the modifier (vehicle) leaves us with the choice between either preserving the literal meanings of the separate elements and relegating the entire sentence to meaninglessness, or else attributing another meaning to the modifier so that the whole sentence makes sense. Whence does this new meaning come? From the potential range of connotations. It is the ascription of new meaning to the modifier in this strange context that constitutes "metaphorical twist." (Note that whereas the attention of Richards and Black was directed towards the change in the meaning primarily of the tenor or focal subject, for Beardsley it is directed towards the modifier.)

Beardsley seems to be an ally for the case I am making, but he makes one assertion that appears to weaken the thrust of even his own position. He claims that he does not tie the "potential range of connotations" to past contexts of meaning. For him "potential" means pure potential, i.e., meanings which a given word may never have had previously in any context.²⁵ But, in my judgment, this is where the theory does not inherently want to go. Insofar as the new sense, the twist, is independent of any previous connotations it is in radical discontinuity with its own history; its new meaning must be purely arbitrary. As subject to such arbitrary designation it must be strictly stipulative or else indistinguishable from nonsense. Beardsley seems to end up with creative event but no meaning. Over against this, I maintain that the word must retain continuity with its past contexts in order to bring any substantive resources to the new meaning emerging from the metaphorical event. Modified in this way, Beardsley's "potential range of connotations" becomes a useful designation for the horizontal meanings brought by a word to the metaphor.

²⁰ Richards, *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, pp. 33 f.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

²² Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 426.

²³ Black, *Models and Metaphors*, p. 41.

²⁴ Beardsley, "Metaphorical Twist," p. 300.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

One of the first things we notice in diaphor is the strange way in which it combines things. In extreme cases it is appropriate to speak of logical absurdity. This is due to the sort-crossing, the apparent conflation of two incompatible networks of meaning, when the terms are understood with their ordinary literal designations. The theories of Black and Beardsley suggest that we not stop at this literal incompatibility but rather look beyond to the range of associated commonplaces until we locate those that are compatible. I agree here with Ricoeur who describes the dynamics of metaphor as consisting in the confusion of the logical boundaries for the sake of detecting new similarities which previous categorization prevented our noticing. In the event of metaphor we break through previous categorization and establish new logical boundaries on the ruins of preceding ones. What precipitates newness in meaning is not a denial of connotations drawn from use in the past contexts but rather the interaction between these in the present context in which we find their juxtaposition, the event in which the metaphor creates its new and more comprehensive horizon.

The textual or experiential context acts upon the juxtaposition to draw out meaning that was not present previously. Take for example the metaphor mentioned above, "the burning question." If the interpreter's first inclination is to assume a literal designation to "burning," he may test to see if any positive analogies with "question" may be drawn from predicates associated with fire's burning. Upon seeing that questions cannot be characterized literally as possessing yellow or blue flame, filling the sky with smoke, heating meals, or lighting cigarettes, one must seek out positive analogies from its horizontal range of connotations. In a certain context, for example, we may observe that there are unasked questions, which seem to consume the passion of the questioner in a manner analogous to the way fire consumes its fuel. This interpretation itself depends upon another metaphorical twist, that of consuming, but it demonstrates that comparison does take place. What is new is the event of a question being understood in this context as burning. However, the meaning of burning does retain continuity with its past meanings. As long as the metaphor lives, new experiential contexts will draw forward different elements from the range of horizontal associations of each term resulting in still other events of new meaning.

Or, let us look again at "Man is a wolf." At the first level of sort-crossing, it can be seen that man is not literally a beast of four legs with fur covering his entire body. But if we are not willing to let the metaphor remain in its strangeness, i.e., to dub it as nonsense, then we reexamine it to

find a level where sorts in fact are not crossed. In Mary Hesse's terms, we explore (consciously or unconsciously) possible neutral analogies from amongst the store of associated commonplaces to see if they could possibly become positive analogies.²⁶

And from time to time they must become positive analogies in order for the metaphor to be meaningful. If the content of our experience with man, for example, is that of a Don Juan who attempts to seduce every attractive woman he meets, then "Man is a wolf" becomes meaningful because we see him in the way that he is like a wolf: craftily stalking his prey in order to satisfy his own appetites. On another occasion, the context of our experience with man might be that of a Cub Scout who is a Wolf, and who wears a badge bearing that sign, because like the wolf he has mastered certain skills in dealing with nature. Beyond these the horizon of associated commonplaces provides a wealth of other possible future associations that will make the metaphor live in different circumstances. What prevents a metaphor from being reduced to literal equivalents is not the presence of comparison or analogy, but rather the rich store of associated potential meanings brought to it by its respective terms which makes the metaphor resonate with a whole range of applications. Douglas Berggren emphasizes this need to retain continuity with past language in contextual action: "... while the poet certainly re-contextualizes the conventional meanings of the words he uses, those conventional meanings cannot be altogether lost."²⁷

Insofar as we look for compatible connotative meanings from the reservoir of associated commonplaces, we are in effect looking for implicit comparisons or analogies, and specifically positive analogies. Finding such positive analogies need not necessarily involve the laborious interpretive exercise indicated by my examples. More than likely it is an intuitive grasp. Aristotle said that to have command of metaphor is to have an "eye for similarities."²⁸ The point to observe here is that the analogies are to be drawn from resources in the terms' horizons rather than in the initially obvious literal designations. In their haste to protect metaphor from literal reformulation, Black and Beardsley unnecessarily jettisoned epiphor. But epiphor refuses to be excluded and hence has sneaked in again through the back door.

LOYOLA UNIVERSITY, NEW ORLEANS.

TED PETERS.

²⁶ Mary B. Hesse, *Models and Analogies in Science* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1970). Pp. 8 f.

²⁷ Douglas Berggren, "The Use and Abuse of Metaphor, I," *The Review of Metaphysics*, XVI (1962). P. 247.