THE CONCEPT-SYMBOL: AN HYPOTHESIS
ABOUT THE GENESIS AND
IMPORT OF MEANING

by

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<div align="right">T. M. Mc.</div>

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The term "symbol" has in recent times become a pivotal one in learned discussions about the widest possible range of subjects. Modern interest in the symbol has been so pronounced, and has permeated so many different areas of study, that one is tempted to say with Suzanne Langer that the concept of symbol is the "new key" by which the intellectuals of today are opening the door to a greater understanding of man's relation to the world. To trace the genesis of this interest is a virtually insuperable task, for it seems to have arisen concomitantly in various fields: in the logico-mathematical critiques of language leading to symbolic logic, in the dream analyses of Freud, in the pragmatic approaches to language stemming from Peirce's theory of signs, in the "higher criticism" of modern biblical scholarship, in anthropological studies of myth and ritual, and in literary criticism.

Probably the greatest use of the concept of symbol, however, has not been in the particular fields of study through which the concept came into fashion, but in a specific philosophy of symbolism which has applied many of the findings of these fields to the construction of a new epistemology. This has come about largely through the influence of Ernst Cassirer (<u>The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms</u>) and his followers, notably Wilbur M. Urban (<u>Language</u>

and Reality) and Suzanne K. Langer (Philosophy in a New Key).
Once the philosophy of language, or the philosophical study
of meanings, is considered as a necessary step towards an
understanding of the mind's relation to the world, and
language is considered to be a complex system of symbols, then
the notion that the symbol is fundamental to cognition is
established. Under this plan, the Cartesian diad of subject-
object is replaced by a triad of subject-language-object, and
considerations about the nature of knowledge and truth are
preceded by considerations about the nature of symbols--in
this case, word-symbols. But this is not all, for there are
symbols other than the linguistic. Symbols are found in
myths, dreams, and works of art, and a study of their use
leads to considerations about kinds of knowledge and truth
different from, though related to, the kinds of knowledge
and truth which are expressed in discourse. The generative,
or heuristic, idea here is that man is the symbol-making
animal: understand his symbols and you understand him; find
the limits of his symbols and you find the limits of his
world. Kant's critique of reason is turned into a critique
of symbolism.

The possibilities of this epistemological program are
boundless, and have been exploited to only a small degree by
such philosophers as Suzanne Langer, Philip Wheelwright,
Wilbur M. Urban, and others. One of the most obvious possi-
bilities of the program is that of clearing up some of the

time-worn issues in the philosophy of art. For if man's
intellectual activity is symbolic in nature, then the arts
can be differentiated from each other and from other noetic
activities by understanding the symbolic processes involved.
This differentiation has been attempted, with interesting
results, by Langer in her _Feeling_ _and_ _Form_.

Epistemology's primary task is not to discover what
symbols there are, nor how they can be classified (though
these are necessary steps to take), nor even how symbols
originate--these tasks can be accomplished by other fields,
notably anthropology, linguistics, literary criticism, and
psychology. Rather, the task of epistemology is to discover
the nature of the relation of symbol to thing symbolized, for
it is in this relation that the answer to the problem of
truth is to be found. Moreover, this task presupposes dis-
covering what is symbolized or, more simply, what _is_, and this
is ontology. Thus, the traditional problems of philosophy
all arise the moment we begin talking about symbolism. Not
only this, but additional complexities within the traditional
problems arise as well. One should not, however, consider
this fact as detracting from the worth of the "new key":
knowledge is never obtained except as answers to problems.
Also, although the epistemological and ontological issues
which we find connected with a philosophy of symbolism are
traditional, this is not to say that we are given no new
direction towards answering the problems, for the program of

such a philosophy contains the fundamental claim that by an analysis of the systems of symbolism which man has produced-- his myths, religions, languages, and arts--we can reach an understanding of both the knowing process and what is known.

I take it on assumption that the new direction which the philosophy of symbolism offers towards the solution of episte- mological problems consists in its suggesting a new starting point for investigation. This starting point is to a large extent phenomenological in nature--that is, it consists of a description of the products of human thought which as far as possible brackets assumptions of a causal nature. However, certain causal assumptions do seem to be involved in the very concept of symbol. Foremost among these is the belief that every product of thought is the result of a process which has transformed immediate experience from a "buzzing, booming confusion" into a more or less repeatable and organized system of symbols that, in some sense, "means" reality while not being identical with it. The system of symbols, whether it be a language, an art form, a religion, a mathematics, or a mataphysics, is that _through_ which we understand reality: itself a product of thought, the symbol also shapes thought.

If it is granted that the creation of symbols is the primary mediating factor in the relation of the mind to the world, then the path of investigation is opened. What next must be done is to determine the nature of the mediation. It is at this point that most of the difficulties arise, and if

the claims for the advantages of the philosophy of symbolism
are to be justified, then these difficulties must be met. I
think that the most obvious difficulty is found in the term
"symbol" itself. Are there not many different kinds of
symbol? Also, may not these different kinds of symbol mean
in different ways and, hence, give evidence of different
patterns of thought? Also, may not different kinds of symbol
symbolize different kinds of things? All of these and many
other questions must be answered, but, to make things more
difficult, it is really impossible to answer them without
first thoroughly investigating each form of symbolism in
itself. Thus, as usual, the philosopher is in the peculiar
position of having to begin by using a word in an unspecified
sense, and, before he has a really adequate definition of a
word, he must nevertheless attempt to use it in an intelligible
fashion. This course may lead to begging the question, a
fallacy to which the philosopher is probably more susceptible
than most. However, one can avoid such pitfalls by not
claiming to know exactly what he means. The correct attitude,
I think, toward symbolism is to refrain from making such
statements as "Every symbol is such-and-such." Rather, one
should begin by taking a single type of symbol and should
attempt to describe it by itself, not pretending that what is
said must necessarily apply to all of the things which have
been called "symbols."

This, at least, is the method which I have chosen to use, and in this thesis I will examine only one kind of symbol, the word. This is a limited objective. I will not even go so far as to examine language as a whole, and will assume that particular words may have meaning outside of a propositional context. This in itself may be objectionable, but I wish to avoid confusing types of symbol, and I tentatively will hold that words and propositions are such different types. Now the primary objective in investigating any type of symbol is to reach an understanding of the relation of that type of symbol to thought and to the external world, and although I have limited my subject matter to word-symbols, thereby eliminating some of the more perplexing problems of definition, certain methodological problems immediately arise concerning the triad of words, thoughts, and things.

I mentioned above that the symbol is usually considered to be something created by the mind through which the mind interprets the world. If this is so (and I shall assume that it is), then a problem involving the relation of symbols to thought arises. For, if the mind creates symbols, and if, on the other hand, the mind operates by the use of symbols, then what sort of relationship can be said to hold between symbol and thought? Are they at all separable? Can one be explained by the other, and if so, to what extent? Surely each must presuppose the other in the sense that thought of some sort is a necessary condition for the creation of symbols,

while symbols are a necessary condition for some kinds of thought. This is a puzzle, and it is one which arises the instant we begin talking about any kind of symbolism. The purpose of this thesis is to offer a partial solution to this problem as it arises in the investigation of the relation of words to thought.

The first step to be taken in the solving of any problem is the determining of the exact nature of the problem itself. Thus, although my answer to the problem of the relation of language to thought will be highly general and oversimplified, I hope to at least outline a frame work of approach within which relevant questions may be asked. I will hold that the problem of the relation of words to thought is essentially a problem of _meaning_. Within the general problem of meaning, certain problems arise which may be classified under two headings: the descriptive and the genetic.

I will first of all be concerned with giving a logical definition of the meaning of words. An understanding of the concept of meaning in this sense is derived from a description of the meaning-relation of symbol to thing symbolized, and as such is also a general, systematic treatment of the logical relations which hold between words, thoughts, and things. Chapters I and II will be concerned primarily with such a general description. However, a description of this type can never suffice by itself, for its adequacy can only be determined

by its applicability to, as well as its derivability from, the facts of the historical and psychological development of linguistic meaning. A description of the logical relation of language to thought should be made coherent with a description of the genetic relation of language to thought: each approach should always be taken with the other in mind, for neither taken by itself is adequate.

It will be my contention that a good deal of confusion has resulted from not making clear the nature of the distinction between descriptions of meaning and genetic explanations of meaning. Thus, if we are to make a decision about the relative primacy of symbols and thought, we must first decide whether this "primacy" has to do with logical dependence or with temporal dependence. I believe that such a decision both is necessary to a complete description of the phenomenon of symbolism and is a prerequisite for any causal explanation of the phenomenon. For example, if we say that thought is a "cause" of language, do we mean that thought is actually temporally prior to language, or do we mean merely that thought is a necessary condition of language? A purely logical description will not answer such a question, for by saying what the actual relation of thought to language is it can only say that, for such a relation to exist, certain conditions must be present. On the other hand, a purely genetic approach will not alone suffice without a description of the phenomenon which we are attempting to explain, for such

a description is necessary for determining which genetic factors are relevant to explaining the phenomenon.

Of course, the subject of the nature of genetic explanation is itself of the greatest interest and importance, and is worthy of special attention. However, I do not intend to go into this subject beyond maintaining that questions of the meaning, or import, of words and questions of the genesis of the meaning of words are distinct and yet extremely relevant to one another. Cassirer agrees in emphasizing that questions of genesis and questions of logical description must be kept distinct in the investigation of symbolic forms:

> Yet here for many centuries the systematic question was overshadowed by the genetic. It was thought that, the genetic question once solved, all the other problems would readily follow suit. From a general epistemological point of view, however, this was a gratuitous assumption. The theory of knowledge has taught us that we must always draw a sharp line of demarcation between genetic and systematic problems.[1]

Nevertheless, he also says that an understanding of genesis is essential to a thorough knowledge of the subject:

> For the analysis of every symbolic form we are dependent on historical data. The question as to what myth, religion, art, language "are" cannot be answered in a purely abstract way, by a logical definition.[2]

Some proper balance between these two approaches must be maintained, and I think that the best method for reaching such

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[1]*Essay* on *Man*, p. 118.

[2]*Ibid.*, pp. 118-119.

a balance must be the dialectical. Thus, after I have given
a description of the meaning of words in Chapters I and II,
I shall turn to a genetic approach in order to test and, to
some extent, amplify the description. I have chosen to
discuss two versions of the genetic approach to language. In
Chapter III, I shall deal with the development of the meaning
of word-symbols as it occurs in the learning-process. In
Chapter IV, I shall deal with the historical development of
the meaning of word-symbols as it is manifested in the
phenomenon of metaphor.

The two types of genetic approach which I shall discuss
should be understood as only two of many possible types of
genetic explanation. As I shall deal with them, neither the
learning process nor the metaphorical development of meanings
have to do with the ultimate origins of language. A thorough
understanding of the learning process must depend on more
advanced physiological and psychological knowledge of the
mental processes involved in both perception and concept
formation, while any speculation about the historical origins
of language is limited by an overwhelming lack of data. Thus,
"genesis" here should be understood as meaning development,
rather than meaning ultimate origins of a psychological or
historical nature.

In Chapter V, I shall return to a descriptive approach in
order to determine the logical relation of the meaning of the
metaphor to the meaning of the word-symbol. This I take to

be a subject which is extremely relevant to an understanding of meaning, since a description of the meaning of word-symbols should be able to take into account the figurative as well as the literal uses of words. Thus, one question which any theory of symbolism must answer is, What is it about the meaning of words which makes metaphor possible? Chapter V, then, will actually present a test case of the descriptive theory outlined in Chapters I and II.

CHAPTER I

A PRELIMINARY DEFINITION OF "SYMBOL"

It is necessary to propose at the outset a preliminary definition of "symbol." Many definitions have been given, but the one aspect of the symbol about which everyone agrees is that it possesses meaning: "a symbol, in the broadest sense of the word, is _that_ _which_ _means_."[1] This is, of course, an inadequate definition, since it simply pushes the problem back, and we are still required to say what "meaning" is. Also, it might be said that "meaning" is that for which a symbol stands, or that to which a symbol refers. But this is too general to help a great deal, for as we shall see, there are many different ways in which reference can occur; however, it does bring out the sort of "meaning" which I am talking about. Meaning is the significance or import which a sound, gesture, thing or event has for a subject, and this significance or import is present only when the sound, gesture, thing or event calls to mind _another_ aspect of experience--this is what is meant by reference. This kind of meaning is not the sort of psychological meaning implied when people explain "what they mean" by saying so-and-so. In this use of "mean," the person is said to directly mean the object of reference;

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[1]Philip Wheelwright, _The_ _Burning_ _Fountain_, pp. 18-19.

whereas in the former sense, there is a mediating term--
called a sign--which means the object of reference for the
subject. Both of these are familiar uses and, for the sake
of clarity, need to be distinguished. Langer calls the
meaning of a term the logical aspect of meaning, and it is
this aspect in which I am interested, since the meaning of
symbols is of this sort.[2]

In the terminology to be here employed, any aspect of
experience which, for a subject either animal or human,
serves to call attention to another aspect of experience,
will be called a _sign_. The aspect of experience to which
the sign calls attention will be called the _meaning_ of the
sign; the relation between the sign and thing signified will
be called the _meaning-relation_. The primary classification
of signs is into two species: _signals_ and _symbols_.[3] This
classification is adopted, because various thinkers have
observed that there is, within the general characteristic of
significance, a fundamental difference between two kinds of
meaning-relations. In order to define "symbol," then, it is
necessary to distinguish the meaning of the symbol from the
meaning of the signal. Such a distinction between ways of
meaning depends upon two things: 1) a distinction between

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[2]Suzanne Langer, _Philosophy in a New Key_, pp. 56-57.

[3]This classification is taken from Charles Morris, _Signs, Language, and Behavior_, p. 24.

the kinds of things signified, and 2) a distinction between
the kinds of meaning-relations which hold between sign and
thing signified. I think it should be clear that these two
characteristics of signification are mutually interdependent.

Almost any aspect of experience can have significance,
since significance is always _for_ a subject. An exhaustive
list of signs is then, impossible; the best procedure is to
attempt a classification into broad, inclusive categories.
This is a difficult matter, though, because a single sign can
serve to signify different things and can perform different
functions. Signs have been classified into natural and
artificial, but this is not an adequate system, since the only
necessary distinction involved between the two is in manner of
origin. How a sign comes to mean and how it means are two
different things: the scent of a rabbit is a "natural sign"
to the fox of the presence of food, and he behaves accordingly;
a buzzer is an "artificial sign" to a dog of the presence of
food, and he behaves accordingly. But there is really no
difference in these two situations. The meaning-relations
are identical in both cases, even though the dog has been
artificially conditioned. As I have said, the distinction
between types of signs is not a matter of the characteristics
of the signs themselves, but a matter of the kinds of things
which the signs signify and the meaning-relations of the
sign to significandum.

A signal is often thought of as something which calls forth a disposition to respond by indicating something to which a particular response is appropriate: a traffic signal, a buzzer, a cry for help, a door-bell, a pointing gesture, are all signals in this sense. But by signal, I have in mind not only this kind of sign, but also many sorts of signs which have been called "natural" or "artificial" signs and which are not always thought of as signalling a response. Examples are numerous: a barber-pole is a sign of a barber-shop, smoke is a sign of fire, a green landscape is a sign of plentiful rainfall, fever is a sign of infection, etc. What these signs have in common with the signals to response, is that they are all _indicative_ in function.[4] Also, a thunderclap, say, may be a signal to respond or may not be, depending on the situation of the hearer. A typical signal, such as a doorbell, indicates an environmental situation, the way thunder indicates rain; the doorbell also elicits a response, and so may thunder. The disposition to respond always depends on the situation of the animal or person receiving the signal. A doorbell or traffic light always indicate the same things, but the response is contingent. A person not wishing to answer the door or an ambulance driver hurrying to the hospital, both know what the signals mean even though they do not respond. There is no essential difference, then, in the

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[4]Wheelwright, _op_. _cit_., p. 21.

meaning-relations of, say, a buzzer as a sign of food and thunder as a sign of rain: the disposition to respond is, in every case, dependent upon 1) the meaning of the signal, and 2) the special circumstances within which the meaning is interpreted, such as the hunger of the dog or the lack of shelter of the person who hears the thunder.

The meaning-relations involved in the above examples are all the same: the signs are perceived elements in the environment which, for the subject, _directly_ _indicate_ the existence of another element--present, past, or future. All signs which have such a meaning-relation are similar in this respect, and should be called by one name: __signals__. The particular nature of signals which differentiates them from symbols is this indicative function, in which there are three essential terms: subject, signal, and object.[5]

Now the question is, Are there any kinds of signs other than the kind called signals? It was already said that signs would be classified into two types: signals and __symbols__. To justify this classification, there must be found a difference in the meaning-relations of the two. Also, since I have already said that the kind of meaning-relation and the sort of thing signified are interdependent, if the meaning-relation of symbol to symbolized is not three-termed and indicative in function, there should be a corresponding difference found

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[5]Langer, _op_. _cit_., p. 64.

between the things signified by signals and the things
symbolized by symbols.

Everyone who has written on the subject, to my knowledge,
has made a distinction between the sign-functions of _words_
and the sign-functions of what I have called signals. Thus,
the word may be a paradigm case of the symbol. Let us examine
the characteristics of words that may distinguish them from
signals. The most obvious characteristic of words is that
they are artificial: they are made by man. This, however,
does not help to distinguish them from signals, since many
signals (doorbells, barber poles, etc.) are also artificial.
Perhaps the best method for distinguishing symbols from
signals is to determine the function for which symbols are
made. Charles Morris, whose terminology I have been using,
makes the distinction in the following way:

> Where an organism provides itself with a sign which
> is a substitute in the control of its behavior for another
> sign, signifying what the sign for which it is a substi-
> tute signifies, then this sign is a _symbol_, and the sign-
> process is a _symbol-process_; where this is not the case
> the sign is a _signal_, and the sign-process is a _signal-
> process_.[6]

Words are a good example of this kind of symbol, or
substitute-sign. A red-light, for instance, is an artificially
contrived signal which controls behavior in a certain way.
The words "red-light" when used while sitting in the living

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[6]Morris, _op_. _cit_., p. 25.

room may control behavior in a similar way, as when a mother
says to her son, "Don't run any red-lights on the way down-
town." Or suppose that part of my behavior pattern relative
to my dog is giving him food: I can go to the store and tell
the clerk, "I need some food for my dog, Rover."

Now there is no doubt that words are substitutes, in some
sense, for actual things or events which may be signs eliciting
behavior-responses. But this seems an odd way of looking at
the phenomenon of language, for it is difficult to think of
appropriate behavior as part of a sign's meaning. As we saw
above in discussing signals, the disposition to respond is
dependent both upon the interpretation of the sign's meaning,
and upon the special circumstances within which the sign is
interpreted. So, while a substitute-sign may function to
control behavior, it does not necessarily, and this aspect of
signs does not seem crucial to the question of meaning in its
strict sense. Thus, when I am telling a friend about my dog
Rover, it does not seem that there need be any of the be-
havioral responses connected with seeing Rover (feeding him,
petting him, etc.) elicited in my use of the word, either in
myself or in my listener. Of course, during the conversation,
I may be reminded of not having fed Rover that day, but such
responses seem contingent.

The notion of symbols as substitute-signs, however, does
point to some important aspects in which they differ from

from signals: a symbol, such as a word, may, like a signal, indicate an object, but, unlike a signal, it may do this indirectly, when the object is not present. Also, as a substitute, the symbol may serve to indicate a number of different objects on different occasions: its use is not bound to an immediate occasion of the here and now the way a signal's is. One way of putting this is to say that a symbol, unlike the signal, is "autonomous." Also, "the symbol is 'conventional' in the sense that no limit is set upon the actions and states and products of the organism that may operate as synonymous signs substituting for other signs."[7]

The question is, if symbols do function in these ways differently from signals, how is it possible for them to do so? That is, what is there about the meaning-relation of symbol to symbolized that accounts for these differences? The notion of symbol as a substitute-sign points out the differences between signal and symbol, but it also magnifies the similarities. This can be seen in Morris' behavioristic framework where the functions of symbol and signal are ultimately the same--to evoke responses. But there are also differences, and these differences become more obvious when the questions of stimulus-response are set aside as being contingent to the question of meaning. This, of course,

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[7]_Ibid._, p. 27.

need not disturb the behaviorist, who is not interested in
questions of meaning, but rather in the <u>observational</u> criteria
for deciding whether meaning is understood. Nevertheless,
this endeavor is contingent upon the assumption that substitute-
signs are meaningful, and it seems to me that if we are to
understand the behavior elicited by sign usage, questions about
the meaning of signs are relevant. Somehow, behavior-responses
to sign situations are dependent upon understanding the sign's
meaning. It does no good to claim that the sign's total sig-
nificance <u>is</u> the behavior which it elicits, for this is to go
in a circle.

Symbols, or "substitute-signs," then, are similar to
signals in that they may mean other aspects of the environment,
but different in that they mean <u>indirectly</u>. In order to
account for this difference by giving a description of the
symbol's meaning-relation, I will make use of Suzanne Langer's
treatment of the subject. In <u>Philosophy in a New Key</u>, Langer
draws the distinction between signal and symbol in the follow-
ing way:

> Symbols are not proxy for their objects, but are
> <u>vehicles for the conception of objects</u>. To conceive a
> thing or a situation is not the same thing as to "react
> toward it" overtly, or to be aware of its presence. In
> talking <u>about</u> things we have conceptions of them, not the
> things themselves; and <u>it is the conceptions</u>, <u>not the
> things</u>, <u>that symbols directly</u> "mean."[8]

Thus, a symbol can indirectly mean an object or situation in the environment because it directly means the subject's conception of that object or situation. According to Langer, then, it is to the nature of conceptualization that we must turn for an understanding of the symbol's meaning-relation. The fundamental distinction between signal and symbol is that, while the meaning-relation of the signal has three terms (see above p. 15), the meaning-relation of the symbol has four terms: subject, symbol, conception, and object.[9] Langer further distinguishes symbol from signal by naming these different meaning relationships. The meaning of the signal she calls "signification." The direct meaning of the symbol, the conception which it conveys, she calls the symbol's "connotation," and the indirect meaning of the symbol, the object indicated through its conception, she calls the symbol's "denotation."[10] The preliminary definition of "symbol" is that it is the sign of a concept. A thorough definition depends upon this aspect of the symbol's meaning, its connotation, in Langer's terms.

To reach an understanding of the symbol, it is necessary, then, to discuss the nature of the link between the symbol and the concept for which it is a "vehicle." Since we ordinarily think of words as having connotations, I shall concentrate primarily upon the word-symbol.

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[9]Ibid., p. 64.

[10]Ibid.

But it should be noted before going on that, if the
preliminary definition of "symbol" given is an adequate one,
then it should apply to all of the things which we are to
call symbols. Notice also that Langer's definition is given in
terms of concept, connotation, and denotation. It is unfortu-
nate that her discussions of works of art as symbolic in
Feeling and Form, while they do mention the conceptual nature
of the art-symbol, fail to carry through the application of
the connotative and denotative meanings of "meaning." Such
an application would seem to be required if the preliminary
definition is to be considered adequate. This application
depends upon a clearer understanding of the link between
symbol and concept: in all of Langer's works this link is
presupposed, but I do not think that it is ever made any more
explicit than when she says that "the connotation of the word
is the conception which it conveys."[11]

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[11]Ibid.

CHAPTER II

THE RELATION OF WORDS TO CONCEPTS

A. An Alternative to Langer's Description

In _Philosophy_ _in_ _a_ _New_ _Key_, Langer puts forward the
hypothesis that language as well as other forms of symbolism
such as myth and ritual spring from the basic human need to
express ideas. Speech, as one kind of symbolism, is "the
natural outcome of only one _kind_ of symbolic process."[1] Again,
she says, "Speech is, in fact, the readiest active termination
of that basic process in the human brain which may be called
symbolic _transformation_ _of_ _experiences_."[2] Speech, or language,
then, is conceived of as an overt activity which is the termi-
nus of an inner experience called symbolization. But language,
if it is the "normal terminus of thought,"[3] is also preceded by
a symbolization which makes thought possible: "Symbolization
is pre-rationative but not pre-rational. It is the start of
all intellection in the human sense."[4] The transformation of
sense experience is presupposed by all thought: "The material
furnished by our senses is constantly wrought into symbols,

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[1]_Ibid._, p. 45.

[2]_Ibid._, p. 44.

[3]_Ibid._, p. 45.

[4]_Ibid._, p. 42.

which are our elementary ideas."[5] According to Langer's
theory, symbolism occurs on the most elementary level. We do
not immediately perceive sense-data; rather (following the
Gestalt psychologists) she says we "organize the sensory field
into groups and patterns of sense-data,"[6] and in general,
symbolize our experience even before we begin to think about
it. In fact, she thinks, it is the ability to perceive forms
which alone can account for the existence of more complex
levels of meaning and which closes "the hiatus between per-
ception and mind-organ, chaotic stimulus and logical re-
sponse."[7]

By proposing levels of symbolization other than the
linguistic, Langer is able to distinguish the primarily
abstract and discursive symbolism of language from what she
calls the presentational symbolism of art, ritual, and myth,
which express experience which is "pre-rationative but not
pre-rational." Presentationalism, while it does not symbolize
abstract relations and generalizations as do words and propo-
sitions, nevertheless expresses ideas, for "no symbol is
exempt from the office of logical formulation, of conceptu-
alizing what it conveys; however simple its import, or however

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[5]Ibid.

[6]Ibid., p. 89.

[7]Ibid., p. 90.

great, this import is a _meaning_, and therefore an element for
understanding."[8]

Now this position which I have so sketchily outlined is
crucial, for it provides the basis for Langer's subsequent
treatment of the arts as symbolic of ideas of feeling; it is
also crucial to my attempt here to relate symbols and con-
cepts. I cannot fundamentally disagree with it and I think
that it is much more adequate an epistemological position
than one which reifies sense-data. Also, I am sympathetic
with a view of experience which can treat as conceptually
meaningful the apparently impractical yet valuable mani-
festations of the human spirit, the symbols of art, myth and
ritual. Yet, however much I may agree, I find in this position
a major difficulty which must be cleared up, and this diffi-
culty has primarily to do with the relation between symbol
and thing symbolized--meaning, in other words.

We are told over and over again by Langer that language,
works of art, etc. symbolize or express ideas--symbols are
the overt termini of thought. The symbol is always, for the
subject, one of a pair: the thing symbolized is more inter-
esting than the symbol, the symbol more easily available than
the thing symbolized.[9] A word, for instance, by being seen

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[8] _Ibid._, p. 97.

[9] _Ibid._, p. 58.

and heard is an available _expression_ for the idea which it
means. Notice, however, that Langer calls the process which
leads to the creation of the symbol a symbolic process. At
one point, she calls our elementary ideas symbols;[10] the
perception of forms, presupposed by any overt symbolism, is
itself symbolic; and also, she says, the symbol is itself the
instrument of conceptualization.[11] Now the obvious question
raised by these assertions, in terms of the meaning of word-
symbols is, _Which_ is properly the symbol, the word or the
concept which it conveys? As far as language is concerned,
the symbolic process which it presupposes is one of abstrac-
tive generalization. If the word expresses the idea which
results from this process, then why not say that the _idea_ is
a symbol--for this is certainly implied. Also, if it is the
concept which is the symbol, then why not call the word a
signal of the presence of the concept? This would certainly
seem to be a warranted hypothesis, and yet Langer, and rightly
so, prefers to call the word a symbol, because she has no-
ticed that abstract thought and language are inseparable.
This fact is not made explicit, necessary though it is for
maintaining her position. It is, however, implied by the
statement that "No symbol is exempt from the office of logical
formulation, of _conceptualizing_ what it conveys."[12]

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[10]_Ibid._, p. 42.

[11]_Ibid._, p. 97.

[12]_Loc. cit._

This way of talking changes our way of looking at the meaning of the symbol, for instead of saying that the symbol's connotation is the concept which it conveys, this statement implies that the symbol *is* the concept, and that it is the symbol-concept which has meaning. To say this seems paradoxical, for it implies the identity (in the case of language) of expression and conceptualization; in the case of art, the same position might imply the identity of intuition and expression. However, when one reflects on the role which language plays in thinking, the paradox disappears. A name, for instance, fixes our thought, pins it down so that we can reflect. The ability which language gives us of transcending particular circumstances, of comparing one thing with another, of drawing analogies, and of predicating attributes of substances, can be considered as being derived from the ability to give names to things--and this is symbolism. Consider the nature of the concept: it is abstract, it implies the union of particular qualities; it is a universal and can be applied to many individual manifestations; it is usually very complex, yet it is *one* concept. Consider these facts, and it is obvious that we might as well have been talking about any of the myriad names or words which language contains. True, a word is material, heard or seen, while a concept is usually thought of as formal or "immaterial," but had it not been for the *name*, the concept would never have come into being, for

it never could have become one thing, a universal. By the same
token, the name could never have been uttered without the
process of abstraction which led to the naming, and this pro-
cess is conceptual. The point is this: the word and the
concept which it conveys have the same meaning; both are
symbols of the same thing. It is only by saying this, I
think, that we can make sense out of Langer's position that
language is the symbolic terminus of a process which is itself
symbolic; because if the concept is also a terminus, then
language might be considered a superfluous adjunct to a
process already complete without it.

There are other reasons for saying that word and concept
are both symbolic of the same meaning. One reason is that it
allows us to speak of the concept's connotation. When Langer
says that the connotation of a symbol is the concept which it
conveys, she seems to imply that connotation and concept are
the same thing. In a way this is true, since the connotation
is the meaning of the concept, but I think this makes the
mistake of identifying the symbol with the thing symbolized.[13]
Connotation is reference to attributes, but these attributes
could not be predicated of anything were it not for conceptuali-
zation, for it is the concept which unifies these attributes.[14]
In the case of most words and concepts, there is also a uni-
fication of the connotation and the denotation, although this

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[13]See Parker and Veatch, Logic as a Human Instrument, p.57.
[14]See Urban, Language and Reality, p. 139.

is not necessary for the formation of a concept--a concept
may be no more than the union of a number of abstracted
thought-qualities, but it is the union here that is signifi-
cant; for this union is always accomplished by the use of a
word. As Langer says, it is the symbol which does the con-
ceptualizing.

Now we are in a position to say what it must mean for a
word-symbol to "convey" a concept. Insofar as a word has
meaning, it is more than a heard sound or a series of written
marks; the word is always associated with a concept, and its
meaning, or connotations, is the meaning of the concept with
which it is associated. It cannot be said that the meaning
of the word is the concept which it "expresses"; on the
contrary, the meaning of the word is the union of attributes
which the concept symbolizes. Word and concept have the same
meaning. There are several difficulties in this position
which will have to be cleared up before moving on to the
primary objective here, which is to determine to some extent
the nature of the meaning of the word or concept-symbol.
Suffice it to say that the position which I hold is that
words and concepts are distinct but inseparable: to say that
a word "conveys" a concept is to say that word and concept
have the same meaning.

B. Difficulties in the Above Position

There are at least two possible alternatives to the position I am maintaining whose objections must be met before going on. The first alternative would raise the objection that words certainly do not have the same ontological status as ideas, and even if both are called symbols, they are entirely different kinds of symbol. This alternative might point to the fact that in different languages, different words have the same meaning, such as "table" and "_Tische_," and would probably conclude that words are merely an artificial notation for writing down our ideas or for communicating our ideas to others. Since any word would serve to stand for any idea, and since usage and habit are the sole determinants of the words in our vocabularies, words are not only subsidiary to ideas logically (i.e., contingent upon ideas), but also function differently as symbols.

Langer says something similar to this in _Feeling and Form_ (though she does not follow out the implications) when she says that "a word or mark used arbitrarily to denote or connote something may be called an associative symbol, for its meaning depends entirely on association."[15] The real importance of language, she goes on to say, is not to be found in the individual words, but rather in the discursive

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[15]p. 30 (Italics mine).

complex of words, the proposition, whose form is analogous to
the form of the related concepts with which the words of the
proposition are associated.[16] Symbols and concepts are always
paired in a one-to-one correlation. The only distinction be-
tween symbol and signal is that symbols are always associated
with concepts, signals not (she calls this distinction "radical"
but does not say why).[17] Here, then, is an explicit statement
of the position given in Philosophy in a New Key that the
meaning of a word is the concept which it "conveys." I have
already shown that such a position is not consistent with
her other remarks on symbolism,[18] but forgetting Langer for
the moment, what can be said about the objection in its own
right?

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[16]Loc. cit.

[17]Ibid., p. 26.

[18]See above, p. 24. Briefly, one of the most important
reasons for the inconsistency of the position is that it really
gives no grounds for distinguishing symbols from signals; the
word could be merely a signal of a concept. Again, the dis-
tinction has to do fundamentally with the meaning-relation,
and if the word is merely an arbitrary lable for a concept,
then the relation might be only three-termed--in which case
the word would neither connote nor denote anything, but would
only signify the concept, leaving connotation and denotation
as properties of concepts only. This, of course, is not
meant as a thorough-going criticism of Langer. What I say in
this thesis does not, I think, in any way contradict her
position: I merely believe that her way of talking could be
misleading in the above way.

First of all, it must be allowed that there is truth in
the statement that words are arbitrarily associated with
ideas, and that usage determines a word's meaning. There is
nothing about the letters or sounds of a word that is neces-
sarily connected with the word's meaning: this is all quite
obvious. However, it is a mistake to conclude that the word-
symbol is merely a label for a concept, because this assumes
that the meaning of words is fully accounted for by this
"labelling" aspect. To say that a word's meaning is simply
the concept with which the word has become associated by
constant use, and hence for which the word is only an arbi-
trary label is, I think, to confuse a particular account of
the genesis of the word's meaning with the word's meaning
itself. Now there is a great deal to be learned about
meaning from an understanding of its genesis, but this genesis
may involve more than use, for the genesis of meaning involves
also the genesis of the concept with which the word is
associated. A full explanation of a word's meaning would
necessitate an understanding of the genesis of the concept's
meaning; but even this would, I think, fail to account for
the whole of meaning, since such an alaysis would be inex-
haustible (Cf. below pp. 36,53-56). Notice that use and
convention may to some extent explain what caused a word to
mean what it does, but this explanation does not go far in
saying how or what a word means. The assumption that the

meaning of words can be reduced to their conventional
assignment to certain concepts also neglects to take into
consideration the important role which words play in the for-
mation of concepts. Nevertheless, it is true that words,
insofar as they are mere sounds or written marks, do differ
in some degree from concepts; words are indeed instruments of
thought rather than thought itself--another instrument of
greater utility, if it were found, could conceivably perform
the same function as language. And, it is also probably true
that the meanings of words are learned through use. Such
considerations as these are invaluable to the linguist and
the psychologist; they are facts which the philosopher should
not contradict. But these considerations remain only facts,
are unintelligible, if attention is not paid to the nature of
meaning itself, and as far as questions of meaning are con-
cerned, other aspects of language are relevant besides those
of genesis.

Another objection to saying that words and concepts are
identical in symbolic meaning might be put in the following
way. It is nonsense to identify expression and conceptuali-
zation, for if words and concepts are no different, then they
are one thing, and we should throw out all talk of "concepts."
This is an either/or objection which, although it misinterprets
the position, is well taken. I remarked earlier that there is
something apparently paradoxical or contradictory in saying

that words and concepts have the same meaning. But when it is remembered that "meaning" here means symbolic meaning the paradox disappears, for then the identity of word and concept can be seen to be only a partial one. A thorough analysis of this overlapping of word and concept as symbols would be a thorough analysis of symbolic meaning, so I can only indicate here where the similarities and the differences lie.

In the first place, language _is_ a matter of use as well as a matter of meaning. Now, a word, when it is used, always _implies_ a connotation, but the fact is, language is an elusive thing, and the use of a word may be such that its meaning, while not entirely absent, is obscured. Meanings are both public and private, and although some degree of public agreement is presupposed by communication, I doubt that there is ever complete agreement in the majority of communication situations: meaning is usually either added to or subtracted from what the speaker intends his words to mean. Also, in the many practical situations when words are used to indicate objects and events, I should say that the meaning-function of the words is usually denotative; and in cases where the object denoted is actually present, there is no need to consider closely the full meaning of the word. In fact, in such cases it is probably not only useless but deleterious for such consideration to take place, since the context might limit the full connotative meaning which wrongly brought to

the forefront would cause, if not confusion, at least certain
boredom and inefficiency.

The full meaning of a word, or the whole conceptual
connotation which it symbolizes, transcends use while de-
termining it. Also, a word always means _for_ a subject, and
the subjective connotations of words are not to be discounted
in speaking of meaning, as they must be in day to day practical
communication. If _the_ meaning of a word were always understood
by a pair of conversationalists, if concept and word were
always identical in meaning, it would be a fine world indeed:
there would be no verbal disagreements nor any occasion for
the logical errors which result from imprecise language. Thus,
the identification which I have proposed is an ideal one, and
it serves only as a criterion of definition. The meaning of a
concept is identical to the total meaning implied by a word
for a subject: part of the meaning may be public, part pri-
vate; part may be clearly understood, part may be only vaguely
associative. It is the totality of this meaning which is the
connotation of the word. It is the totality of this meaning
unified by the word which is the concept.

Langer attempts to draw the distinction between public
and private meanings by saying that privately the word connotes
a _conception_, while publicly it connotes a _concept_: "_That which
all adequate conceptions of an object have in common, is the
concept of the object_."[19] The concept of an object, as she

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[19]_Philosophy in a New Key_, p. 71.

defines it, is an abstract pattern shared by everyone's
conception of the object. I am not sure what she means by
an "adequate" conception, but even if there were such a thing,
I doubt that there exists an abstract concept devoid of associ-
ations, nor can I imagine in what communal mind it would exist.
True, some commonality in agreement must be present for com-
munication to take place, but I do not think that it can be
isolated, much less called the meaning of a word. It could
be considered part of the meaning, but it seems to me that
there could be a large number of such patterns found in the
subjective "conceptions," with no definite way of deciding
which is the "concept." As it happens, these patterns can be
detected only in use: in propositions representing particular
environmental complexes. Only context can determine the
relevant pattern. The relevant pattern, if it is to be made
universally relevant, may be isolated by a Socratic dialectic
(e.g., the definition of "justice" in the Republic), and this
is valuable for mutual agreement and practical interaction;
but in the end, such a definition must remain only a part of
the total meaning symbolized by the word.

Thus, the distinction between words and concepts must be
maintained, even though they are identical as far as meaning
is concerned. To think of words and concepts as related in
a one-to-one correspondence would indeed annihilate the
necessity of distinguishing between them; but this objection

does not hold, because the relation is much more complicated
than a one-to-one correspondence.

It may be helpful to summarize my answers to the two
objections. (1) Although it is true that words are, from one
point of view, merely written marks or sounds which have come
through use to be associated with certain concepts, the relation
between words and concepts cannot adequately be described
solely on the basis of this material aspect. Epistemologically,
words must be thought of as meaningful, and insofar as they
have meaning (are symbols), they are identical with the con-
cepts which they "convey": that words are material as well
as conceptual objects is an important point, but it does not
detract from the necessity of treating their meaning as con-
ceptual. (2) On the other hand, the fact that words are
material objects which mean concretely in propositional con-
texts makes it necessary to retain the distinction between
words and concepts. To make the distinction an absolute one
prevents us from adequately describing meaning; to destroy the
distinction in favor of an ideal identification, however, is
to contradict empirical fact.

Caught in the midst of these complexities, it is difficult
to clearly define and use "word," for it may mean either a
symbol, or a part of speech, or merely a sound. In the
broadest sense, "word" means all three, and I shall be using
it in this sense, although for the purposes of this thesis

I shall normally stress the symbolic and conceptual status of words.

Theoretically, then, and for purposes of definition, the word is a <u>concept-symbol</u>, and we can make the same statements about words and concepts regarding the relation of symbol to thing symbolized. Otherwise, the connection between language and thought would need to be considered adventitious, and what is said of one would not need to be said of the other. But this is not to make a paradoxical identification of the two; to think that it is, is to confuse theory with practice and definition with the thing defined.

CHAPTER III

THE STRUCTURE OF MEANING

Several consequences for understanding the symbolic meaning of language result from this position concerning the relation of words and concepts. First of all, the dualism of expression and idea must be emended. The view that language is an instrument for the overt expression and/or communication of ideas, as it is put forward by Langer is inadequate, since it fails to answer the crucial question of the meaning of concepts. Also, the expression-idea dichotomy fails to take into consideration the close connection which word usage has with conceptualization. Although this connection is present in the genesis of meaning, an attempt to define the nature of meaning, or the import of words, should not contradict what is known about the genesis: the relation of thought to language should not be considered a transitive, but a symmetrical, relation.

But perhaps more important to the definition of meaning, the position outlined in Chapter II suggests that there are two questions which may be asked about the meaning of a particular word: (1) What does the word mean in the context of a particular sentence? and (2) What does the word mean independently of the sentence? It is the second of these questions which I think is the most important to answer in connection with defining the concept-symbol, and as I have mentioned,

this question goes beyond actual use. Now, it must be remembered that actual meaning appears only in propositions. Questions of how a proposition means are certainly important to answer. But if we are to define the meaning of the symbol we must think in terms of the total meaning of words. One way of putting this distinction is to differentiate between actual meaning, or meaning as it appears in propositions, and potential meaning, or the entire conceptual meaning of the word, which covers every particular way in which the word can be used. It is this potential meaning which I consider to be the connotation of a word, and this whole meaning is never entirely absent from particular use.

Under this schema, the act of predication is conceived of as functioning to specify the conceptual meaning of the word, to delimit it so to speak, so that the word denotes in a particular context. This is possible because language has evolved to various degrees of abstraction. The total or potential meaning of every word comprises a number of possible acts of predication. What actually occurs in use, then, is that part of the word's total meaning is selected out for emphasis, either by virtue of context only or by stipulation as well. If a special attempt at clarity is to be made, a word's conceptual meaning is purposefully limited to usage in particular contexts only. Where clarity is not at a premium, the word may be used in contexts which bring into play many

aspects of the word's total meaning--this is especially true of
the poetic use of language. Whichever of the two extremes of
function is predominant, however, the meaning of the word re-
mains constant, if we consider the total or conceptual meaning.
This makes the notion of meaning very complicated, of course.
It is perhaps impossible ever to give a complete definition of
a word, even if we limit such a definition to the conventional
meaning. If the subjective connotations are included, the
problem increases even more. Nevertheless, for every human
being who uses it, the word-concept symbolizes such a multi-
tude of connotations. All that can be done, outside of
actually using words in propositions to illustrate their
various meanings, is to sketch the general characteristics of
the relation of concept-symbols to the things which they
symbolize.

This is the point to which we have been brought by the
question, How is it possible for words to function as substi-
tute-signs? The first tentative answer, which is that given
by Langer, is that words convey concepts. This answer being
inadequate, a second tentative answer is in order. I suggest
that a word can be a substitute-sign because, as co-extensive
with a concept, it is an abstract unification of a multitude
of particular qualities, the word's connotation. "Qualities"
is perhaps not the best descriptive term here, since it refers
to many different sorts of thing. A word's connotation may

include, for example, perceptual qualities as well as emotional associations. The connotation may also include the connotations of other words, so that if we say the connotation of "man" (concept or word) is "a rational animal" then "man" means what "rational" means and at least part of what "animal" means--part, since the concept of animal is limited by "rational"--and so on. The fact that every word is a more or less (since there are degrees of abstraction) abstract unity of multifarious qualities, accounts to some extent for their being used in a variety of circumstances, in a number of different propositions--in other words, for their being "substitutes." But this really only suffices to push the problem back another step. If the applicability of a single word to a number of concrete circumstances depends upon the word's abstractness, the question remains as to the nature of its connotation, a question upon whose complexities I have managed only barely to touch. Since the position I have been maintaining is that every word or concept is a universal, and since, if this is true, universality is a part of the definition of the concept-symbol, this position should be further amplified. I think that the best way for such an amplification to proceed is in terms of the actual genesis of concepts.

I shall assume that the genesis of language and the genesis of concepts are one and the same process, but the process itself may be approached from many different points of view. In

inquiring about the nature of the genesis of linguistic meaning, we may be asking questions about (1) the historical origins of language; (2) the development or evolution of language from hypothetical primitive roots; or (3) the actual process of individuals, beginning in early childhood by which the meanings of words are learned and, hence, concepts are formed. These topics of inquiry are different, to be sure, but they are not unrelated. Evidence about the learning process (3) may, with justification, be speculatively applied to an understanding of the historical origins of language (1); likewise, the evidence gained from philological research concerning the development of language (2) may be applied to a theory of origins. However, in the final analysis, the questions remain distinct, especially regarding the kinds of evidence we have as grounds for speculation. Because it is highly unlikely that any theory about the historical origin of language will ever pass beyond a level of speculation, I will concentrate on questions (2) and (3).[1]

Of these two questions, it seems to be that (3) is of primary importance, because a description of the ways in which meanings are learned should more directly apply to the definition of meaning than a description of the historical evolution

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[1]For a discussion of the various theories of primitive origins and development of language, see Urban, Language and Reality, pp. 71-82 and pp. 731-735.

of meanings. This is so because historical development
presupposes individual understanding; in order to say anything
at all about the evolution of language, we must first of all
have some knowledge of the characteristics of language which
make the evolution possible.

However, the information which has been gathered about
linguistic development is highly relevant to the subject of
meaning, and it should provide important clues for subsequent
investigation. Various linguists and philosophers have
noticed that language develops by analogous predication or
"radical metaphor" as Urban calls it.[2] Also, a general
tendency of language to move from the physical to the
spiritual,[3] and from names of individual things to class
names, or abstract universals, has been observed.[4] That
metaphor, or analogous predication, plays a fundamental role
in the development of language I do not doubt; however, the
beliefs that language as a whole follows "laws" or tends in
one specific direction (i.e., "moves upward" or "progresses")
are highly dubitable. These are all important issues, and I
will return to them in Chapter IV. I have mentioned them now
because the observation that metaphor plays a role in the
evolution of language should be kept in mind, since any

[2]Ibid., p. 178.

[3]Ibid., pp. 183-185.

[4]See Grace A. DeLaguna, Speech: Its Function and Develop-
ment, pp. 355-357.

analysis of meaning should be able to take into account the possibility of this metaphorical development.

The suggestion that words are (1) universals, and (2) have meanings which transcend particular contexts of use was made on a purely theoretical level, but it should find more concrete justification in further speculation on how words, or concept-symbols, come to have the meanings they do for subjects. Human beings are born into a society whose language is already highly developed, the words of which have already acquired their conventionally shared meanings. Children learn the language of their parents by hearing the words, imitating their sounds, and noticing how (in what perceptual contexts) they are used. It is difficult, if not impossible, to say at what point a word becomes meaningful for the child--he may learn more or less what it means prior to using it himself, or the word's meaning may be gradually acquired through the child's own use of it. There is probably no cut-and-dried answer to this, although it is safe to say that using a word or hearing it used and learning to understand a word's meaning are correlative phenomena. The point at which the child's learning of language becomes relevant for a theory of meaning is the point at which we can actually observe the way he uses words. The interesting fact is that the child uses single words long before he utters complete sentences, and that he uses these words as sentences. The implications of the phenomenon of

of the sentence-word for a theory of meaning are manifold,
but I will only go into those which are relevant to what I
have said about the concept-symbol.[5]

A great deal of discussion has gone on as to whether the
naming process is fundamental to conceptualization or not.
This discussion has developed into an argument over the primacy
of names or propositions. Thus, the fact that infants utter
one-word sentences has led some to insist that the name is an
analytic abstraction from a prior proposition or group of
propositions which is a sort of Gestalt; this distinction, it
should be noticed, amounts to saying that there is an extreme
difference between the sentence-word and the name which is
eventually abstracted from it. Thus, De Laguna says:

> There are two respects in which the sentence-word
> of the child differs from the true words of adult
> language: first, in their capacity to function alone
> without the aid of other words; second, in the loose-
> ness and fluidity of their significance.[6]

This statement is true to some extent. The way a child uses
"mama" as a sentence-word (e.g. "I want mama," or "There's
mama!" or "That shoe is mama's," etc.) seems to be a more
unspecific use than the use of "mama" in a complete sentence.

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[5]The discussion which follows is based upon the findings
of De Laguna in Speech: Its Function and Development. To my
knowledge, the first to insist upon the primacy of the sentence-
word was Jeremy Bentham (Works, Vol. VIII, p. 322). It was
also propounded by Philip Wegener in Untersuchungen uber die
Grundfragen des Sprachlebens, Halle a/S, 1885 (as quoted by
Langer in Philosophy in a New Key).

[6]op. cit., p. 89.

However, I will hold that this difference is more apparent
than real, and that the notion of the name as the result of an
analysis from one-word sentences is an oversimplification.
Also, as far as meaning is concerned, the difference between
names, however abstract they may be, and the sentence-word
should be considered only as a matter of degree--the re-
lationship serves mainly to illustrate two of the various
levels of conceptualization.

First of all, a sentence-word such as the child's "mama"
already shows evidence of naming, for "mama," unless it is
the product of mere babble is, if it is anything, a name.
The distinction is based upon the meaning of this name as
opposed to the meaning of the name as it appears in a sen-
tence, and not upon the fact that "mama," as a sentence-word,
is not a name at all. Also, I cannot see that such a word
differs in its flexibility from "the true words of adult
language": it is an obvious fact that adults utter sentence-
words as readily as infants. The distinction, then, is not
one of child vs. adult or primitive vs. civilized or flexi-
bility vs. inflexibility. The sentence-word simply means in
a different way than the word in a sentence.

There are several things to be noted about the sentence-
word which will serve to distinguish its meaning from that of
words as used in sentences. First, the full meaning of the
sentence-word is determined to an almost complete extent by a

specific context which, for the infant, is primarily a
perceptual one. Because of this, the sentence-word does not
merely denote an object, but an object in connection with a
particular act, in a particular setting, and with particular
qualities—all of which are present as a single complex for the
child. De Laguna's description is as follows:

> A child's word, does not, as we have seen, designate
> an object or a property or an act; rather it signifies
> loosely and vaguely the object together with its inter-
> esting properties and the acts with which it is commonly
> associated in the life of the child. The emphasis may be
> now on one, now on another, of these aspects, according
> to the exigencies of the occasion on which it is used.[7]

Now, it is difficult, it seems to me, to establish that
there has been no naming prior to such usage, for it is an
object which is always being talked about—"mama," always in
a particular context to be sure, but "mama," nevertheless.
However, the concept with which the word is associated seems
to be of a very low order of abstraction. That "mama" is a
familiar, desirable object is perhaps all that the word can be
said to mean apart from a particular context: the connotation
is fairly narrow. Mama's particular qualities and the acts
with which she is frequently associated have not been
thoroughly (though perhaps partially) abstracted from various
contexts. Perhaps the fundamental reason for this is that
the child has learned only a few other words, since learning

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[7]Ibid., p. 91.

to perceive the world analytically is probably coextensive with
using words analytically.

If I am right, the development of meaning is a process of
selecting various qualities and contexts with which the object
has been often associated. Eventually, the word comes to
symbolize _types_ of qualities and contexts, so that the genesis
of meaning may be considered as a complex dialectic of analysis
and synthesis. The analytic side of the process is what I
have been calling abstraction, in which the various properties
of an object and the contexts in which the object appears are
conceived of separately from the object. The synthetic side
of this process may be called universalization, in which
particular qualities of observed similarity are all symbolized
by the same word: the word itself, thus, is usually called an
abstract universal. This is to say that every word is a
class name (words, that is, other than formators like "the,"
"and," "of," etc.), but it is to change somewhat the notion of
class. Usually, it is said that a class name symbolizes a
number of objects having similar properties. But this only
indicates the way we use words in a subject-predicate language.
Strictly speaking, it is impossible, save metaphysically and
in sentences to separate objects and qualities: an object is
nothing more than a number of qualities conceived of as forming
a single whole. It is this whole which is symbolized by the
word, and the qualities are the _meaning_ of the word.

Epistemological problems are numerous here, especially on the level of perception, but beyond perception the problems become even more numerous, for language is composed of many levels of abstraction, and I have mentioned only the simplest. There is one problem, however, which concerns the above discussion directly and which should be gone into here. What about the status of the hypothetical first "object" named in the sentence-word? If the sentence-word "mama" names an object as well as numerous other things, then the most primitive of word usages must be considered to involve a universal. This seems paradoxical to say the least, since the discussion has so far indicated that meaning develops from the particular to the universal. A further distinction, then, must be made between the concrete universal and the abstract universal. Both the sentence-word and the hypothetical "name" which designates an object without implied predication, in a particular context and for the first time, are tied to a perceptual situation: in this sense, they are concrete. However, they are also universals in the sense that the word unifies and, by unifying, individuates a particular area of experience.[8] This is fairly clear with respect to simple names, but with the sentence-word it is more difficult to see, since here the meaning is not an object but an entire context. The dilemma of

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[8]See Urban, Language and Reality, pp. 116-120 and pp. 141-143.

Which came first, names or propositions? arises here, and the only solution which I can see is to go between the horns and say, neither.

This denial of the dilemma may amount to a heresy, but it is required if symbolic meaning is to be understood. The notion of name implied in the dilemma is an inadequate one, since it assumes that the meaning of words can be totally abstracted from the contexts in which they are used. I mentioned before that the total meaning of a word implies numerous possible acts of predication, and that each act of predication delimits the total meaning to the context. This should now be clearer, since the sentence-word is both a single word and an act of predication in a particular context. One may speculate that, as the meaning of a word becomes more abstract, or broader in its application, the original context(s) of usage are retained as part of the word's meaning. Thus, a child may originally say "Chair!" (or a facsimile), meaning "put me in my chair," and as he learns to use "chair" in a more general way, it is safe to say that the act of sitting will always be part of the meaning of "chair." It is dangerous to press this point too far. It would probably be inaccurate to think that the meaning of a word involves every specific context in which it was ever used; though this is true in the sense that the use of words seems to presuppose that they symbolize types of contexts as they symbolize types of qualities.

The point is that words and propositions cannot be thought of as genetically distinct. If we ask what are the necessary conditions for a word's existence, one answer is that there must first of all be a concrete, perceived context of usage which, as it is apprehended, is a rudimentary form of proposition: it is rudimentary in the sense that it is still vaguely undifferentiated, but propositional in that predicative relations, however vague, are apprehended. A name presupposes a proposition, because it presupposes abstraction, or analysis of the context. On the other hand, if we ask what makes a proposition possible, one answer is that there must be objects, which are perceived more or less distinctly within a context, and between which relations are perceived. Word and proposition merge in the sentence-word, where both appear at once in a primitive state. Language, as it emerges from this primitive state, is easily differentiated according to more or less fixed word meanings and complex grammatical structure. But it is only on this highly abstract level that words and propositions can be meaningfully distinguished, and even then not absolutely.

The disagreement over the primacy of names and propositions is a special case of the confusion caused by the expression-idea dichotomy, if we consider the disagreement as it focuses on the sentence-word. Analysis of the context, or abstraction, is a propositional activity, and as such, is a typical thought

process. To say that the name presupposes the proposition is simply to say that it presupposes thought. The perception of an object as distinct from its context, as something in itself, is accomplished through the act of naming, or universalization. This also is a typical thought process (synthesis) which is, even in its most primitive form, symbolic in nature and dependent upon the use of words. To say that the proposition presupposes the name is to say that it presupposes symbolism. Thus, if we trace the development of speech from complex back to simple, we find that the simple already contains the elements of the complex, and that the simple is already linguistic in nature. Language cannot be explained wholly by reference to separate perceptual or conceptual processes--it must also be explained by itself: language is an Urphenomen.[9] If it is asked what language presupposes other than itself, we may reply sensation and abstraction, and leave this problem for further speculation. But language and its correlate conceptualization cannot be traced exhaustively to these two phenomena, for a concept, however primitive, is a synthesis, and the synthesis is not accomplished without the word.

It may appear from what has been said that every concept-symbol has a clear-cut connotation of greater or lesser degrees of complexity, depending upon the symbol's abstractness. However, this would be a misunderstanding. The processes of

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[9]Urban, op. cit., p. 83.

analysis and synthesis contained in the development of the
meaning of words from particular contexts towards greater and
greater autonomy and generality is simply a way of describing
the genesis of meaning. This is not to say that every time a
word is used a clearly understood concept is immediately
present; nor is it to say that every concept's connotation is
consciously structured according to my outline of it. Rather,
it should be understood that this structure is only _implied_
by the concept.

If the total meaning of a word is only implicit in actual
usage, then it _may_ be a moot question as to whether a person
ever actually has a concept or not. Indeed, people may use
words and not seem to know the full implications of what they
are saying; but this does not mean that they are uttering
nonsense. It is one thing to have a concept, another to have
one that is clearly defined. Suffice it to say that the
necessary modicum which must be present for a word to be at
all understood is an _intuitive_ grasp of the word's total
meaning. For purposes of communication, this intuitive grasp
alone is much too vague--otherwise, a sentence-word would be
sufficient in every case. Explicit predication is the device
used to achieve clarity; but notice that predication pre-
supposes that there be something to predicate, the concept.

The higher the degree of a word's generality, the larger
is the word's implied connotation. Also, it is safe to say,

at any given moment of thought and/or utterance, the higher
the degree of a word's generality, the vaguer is the meaning
of the word. Of course it is obvious that generality is of
great practical utility--to have a separate concept for every
single object of perception would be not only an impossibility,
but also a detriment. However, the price that language pays
for its generality and autonomy is lack of clarity. Now, it
is possible to achieve clarity, and this can be done on two
levels: (1) as we have already seen, through predication in
a concrete context (by using the word); and (2) by determining
the structure, or pattern, of the symbol's potential conno-
tation. Notice that this structure is itself abstract and
never the whole meaning, but an understanding of this structure
is nevertheless a step towards eliminating vagueness.

This structure, whose nature is always logical, can be
determined by examining usage, for it is implied in use. I
have already mentioned that Langer calls this structure the
concept and have indicated that this is not an adequate way of
defining the concept. The reasons for the inadequacy are now,
I think, more apparent, since if this structure is anything,
it is the connotation of the concept and not the concept it-
self. Also, this connotation is never the complete meaning,
but merely one form or structure implied by usage. Several
such forms may be abstracted from a concept's total meaning,
and which form is actually selected is determined by many

factors. In a dialogue, for example, the form or definition
arrived upon may be determined by factors of relevance about
which the disputants are able to agree.

In cases of this sort, when we are actually trying to
determine the meaning of a word (an example of which would be
the attempt of this thesis to define "symbol"), it is the
entire discussion which is the structure of meaning. Thus,
insofar as Plato's Republic is an attempt to define "justice,"
the Republic is itself the definition. But no such attempt
is ever the whole story, even though the practical need for
intelligibility is met. A rubric of meaning is always left
over between the lines, so to speak, and even if the definition
is successful, the chances are that in the meantime, someone,
somewhere, has used the word in a new way: language is ever-
changing.

The concept is one thing which symbolizes many things;
it has the same kind of meaning as the class name.[10] This
may seem an obvious truth to some, but, as I have shown,
though it may be obvious, it is far from simple in its

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[10]Someone might raise the exception of proper nouns, say-
ing that these symbolize one thing, not many, and are neverthe-
less conceptual. However, the proper noun may be compared to
the primitive name or concrete universal which, as we have
seen, unifies a number of abstracted qualities. The mistake of
thinking proper nouns symbolize one thing is a confusion of the
symbol with the symbolized; it is like saying that because we
have one word for justice there is only one thing which may be
truly called (symbolized by) "justice." For an amplification
of this position regarding proper names, see Urban, Language
and Reality, p. 142 and pp. 151-153.

implications. For if the concept-symbol is a universal, its
meaning not only transcends particular use but also defies
complete definition in any abstract sense. Because of this,
De Laguna is wrong when she says that the sentence-words of
the child are more loose and fluid in significance than the
words of adult language: if anything is true, it is the exact
opposite. What she says is of course true as far as actual
use is concerned, but as far as the full meaning of words is
concerned, the abstract concept-symbol is tremendously loose
and fluid in significance. Not only is this true, but the
symbol actually _increases_ in flexibility as it becomes more
general in significance.

Conclusion

The foregoing analysis of the meaning of the symbol was
made necessary by the inadequacy of Langer's identification
of connotation with concept. Although I have only touched
upon the subject, and although I have left many epistemo-
logical and metaphysical questions unanswered, I believe that
a few things about the nature of symbolic meaning can now be
justifiably taken for granted. First of all, the concept-
symbol is an abstract universal; as such, it symbolizes levels
of a lesser degree of abstraction than itself. These levels,
taken as a whole, are the symbol's connotation. Second, I
attempted to justify my statements about symbolic meaning by

a discussion of the processes which lead to the formation of the concept, and it was found that the symbol's meaning is capable of clarity and definiteness, but is at the same time highly flexible because of its complexity. Notice that, although this was said in connection with the genesis of language, it is not actually proved by the genesis. Indeed, whatever has been said about genesis is itself highly theoretical. The point has been to show that the speculation of others about the nature of linguistic development is not in conflict with, and to some extent suggests, my position regarding the meaning of the concept-symbol.

It is important in this connection to reiterate the distinction between genesis and import, and before going on, to make explicit the method I have been using. I have said that no amount of definition can ever completely exhaust the meaning of a concept: this is to maintain that the whole is more than the sum of its parts, and that the concept is not reducible to the process which led to its formation. In this respect, import and genesis always remain distinct. However, in order to understand the import of the symbol, or what it symbolizes, it is necessary to understand what led up to its formation. What I have said about this genesis is dependent upon two sets of presuppositions: (1) those presuppositions conditioned by empirical observations, such as those of the child's use of the sentence-word; and (2) those presuppositions

conditioned by a prior understanding of symbolic import. Now this might seem to admit to a _petitio principii_, but it is not going in a circle, it is, rather, dialectic. Certain things about concepts are taken for granted: they are complex, they are abstract, and they transcend particular usage. The question is asked, What do concepts presuppose? and the answer is given in terms of genesis and is conditioned by what is already known about the genesis. I believe that such presuppositions must be present in any such undertaking--it is impossible to say how something has evolved unless we first know to some extent _what_ has evolved. With respect to intelligibility, genesis and import are necessarily connected. It is because questions of genesis and import must be approached as connected while at the same time kept distinct that great care must be exercised to maintain a correct balance.[11] A position that regarded language as sophisticated animal cries

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[11]The distinction between genesis and import is one which applies specifically to the theory of meaning. However, it is merely a specific case of a more general distinction between logic (or perhaps, philosophy) and science. Many modern philosophers make the distinction absolute; in fact they often use it as a critical weapon (Cf, for example, Isaiah Berlin, _The Age of Enlightenment_, pp. 13-14, p. 44). I agree that philosophical questions have their own peculiar nature different from that of empirical questions. However, I think a dogmatic attitude toward the distinction's absoluteness is unhelpful. Somehow, logic and explanation, philosophy and science, genesis and import, are _in fact_, related; and I believe that (as far as the theory of knowledge is concerned) to disregard the relevance of each to the other would be a mistake.

would thus be highly suspicious, as would be a position which regarded language as an inexplicable miracle.

I have mentioned this because the subject which I wish to discuss in Chapter IV, that of the relation of metaphor to symbol, is connected intimately with both questions of genesis and questions of import, or meaning. We have already witnessed two specific examples of the chicken and egg problem. First, the dilemma of Which came first, the expression or the idea? Second, Which came first, the name or the proposition? Now we are faced with still a third, Which came first, the metaphor or the symbol? We can expect that this dilemma is also misleading, and simply a bad question to ask. The primary reason for these dilemmas' having arisen, as well as the reason for the fact that they are misleading, is a thoroughgoing confusion of genesis and import. If the questions asked were all of historical fact the situation would be different. As it happens, however, the questions are really theoretical, and what is being asked is What do these phenomena presuppose? Hence the obvious perplexity is arrived at, as with the chicken and egg, that each presupposes the other, and we remain in a perpetual historical muddle. Now there is nothing wrong with such speculation, as long as it does not confuse logical with temporal priority. But as long as we expect an answer such as "The egg did!" no advances will ever be made in any direction.

In the actual development of language, questions of genesis and import are inseparable, and it should become clear that this is true regarding metaphor and symbol. In keeping with the method so far used, the first step toward determining the relation of metaphor and symbol would be a preliminary definition of metaphor. However, I will not begin with metaphor as such, but will discuss first of all what is meant by the metaphorical development of language.

There are two reasons for going into the subject of metaphor: (1) if the genesis of the symbol is metaphorical, then our knowledge of symbolic meaning should be increased by a knowledge of this genesis; and (2) if language changes according to metaphorical progression, then we should be able to say what it is about the meaning of words that accounts for this progression. That these two questions concern (1) genesis and (2) import is obvious; that the questions are inseparable should become apparent.

CHAPTER IV

THE RELATION OF METAPHOR TO THE CONCEPT-SYMBOL

Many theorists have stressed the role of metaphor in the evolution of language.[1] Our question here is What is the significance of this role? To answer this, we must first of all understand what these theorists have meant by metaphorical development, and second, we must try to relate this development to the meaning of the symbol.

The best way to understand what is meant by metaphorical development is to discuss some of the examples that are often used. These examples are usually taken from the Latin, Greek, Arabic, or Anglo-Saxon roots of words which are common today but whose meanings are related only metaphorically to the meanings of the roots. The fund of these kinds of roots is enormous. Our word "subtle" comes from the Latin subtilis, which in turn is derived from subtextere, which means "to weave beneath."[2] The rationale for this development is fairly obvious, and it is connected to our ways of talking such as "weaving a plot," "spinning a yarn," etc. Another example would be "supercilious," from the Latin "to raise an eyebrow." Another favorite is the word "spirit," which originally meant

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[1]Max Muller, Philip Wegener, Otto Jesperson, Ernst Cassirer, Wilbur M. Urban, Suzanne Langer, among others.

[2]This example from Wheelwright, The Burning Fountain, p.118.

wind or breath (*spiritus*). The list of such examples would probably be endless. Even the word "be" is thought to have metaphorical roots in Sanskrit words meaning "to grow" and "to breathe."[3]

One does not have to go as far as historical roots, however, to find examples of what is called metaphorical development, for it is obvious in everyday language: the "mouth" of a stream, the "leg" of a chair, a "sharp" tongue, a "sky-scraper," a "cold" reception, a "warm" heart, etc. And the expressions of slang are full of wildly metaphorical meanings. Indeed, A. H. Sayce says: "Three-fourths of our language may be said to consist of worn-out metaphors."[4] Everyone, I think, will admit that this statement has a high degree of probability, once it is seen what the statement means. However, this is not as easy to ascertain as might be expected, for it is clear that "metaphor" is being used here in a very broad sense. It is used to cover all kinds of figurative usage, or any kind of analogous predication whatever.

It is difficult to see, for example, in what way the word "supercilious" is metaphorical in any strict sense. The fact that a proud and haughty demeanor is usually associated with

[3]*Ibid.*, p. 120.

[4]*Introduction to the Science of Language*, p. 181, as quoted in Wheelwright, *The Burning Fountain*, p. 119.

a raised eyebrow is enough to explain how "supercilious" came to mean "proud and haughty"--the word originally symbolizing part of a context simply became a symbol for the whole. To say that "leg of a chair" is metaphorical is merely to say that because of an analogy of function and appearance between the human leg and a part of a chair, the meaning of "leg" was transferred from a particular usage to a more general one. Again, one notices a similarity between plotting and weaving, and in order to being out this similarity one talks of "weaving a plot."

That this transfer of meaning should occur is hardly surprising, since any word, as its meaning is learned, becomes more general in its application. The child, for example, may use the word "toy" to mean a single object, but gradually learns to use the word to mean all sorts of things which are analogous in that they are to be played with. There is a distinction, however, between learning the meaning of a word and using it analogously. The kinds of expression which have been called "metaphorical" are expressions which are used in order to symbolize new objects or situations or relations which, to date, have no name. To solve this problem, an already existing word whose connotation suggests aspects of the novelty is used to symbolize the novelty. Thus, the word comes to have a broader meaning than before. The word "plow," for instance, may be predicated of a ship: the ship "plows"

the ocean in a way analogous to the plowing of a field.
Eventually, the word "plow" may come to have a very general
meaning which covers any analogous activity: no longer does
it mean merely "to cultivate land," but it means "to force a
narrow path through." A better example, perhaps, is the word
"run." Say, for argument's sake, that "run" first meant
"rapid forward movement of the legs." Now when this word is
applied to streams, fences, stockings, etc., the meaning of
"run" becomes very broad, so that it means "to describe a
course."[5] It is obvious that many, if not all, words have
developed their meanings in this fashion.

Notice that in the process of analogous predication the
original naming of new things also always involves giving some
information about the thing. This is simply because an analogy
is drawn. To say "He is weaving a plot" tells us something
about the activity insofar as it is compared to weaving in the
literal sense. When a word ceases to do this (or if it at
least ceases in any important way), we say that the word is
a "dead" metaphor. This means that the word as it is used no
longer implies an analogy. A good example of this would be
"supercilious," for although I may have known from an early
age that it meant "proud and haughty," I certainly made no
connection between the word and the act of raising an eyebrow!

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[5]This example from Langer, _Philosophy in a New Key_, p.
140.

Thus, the use of "metaphor" to describe this mode of development really means analogous predication, or simply word transference. This is certainly a much broader sense than that which we have when we speak of a poet's use of metaphor. Also, the process is considered by most to be a "natural" one and is largely unconscious, as opposed say, to the poet's manipulation of metaphor.[6] The general tendency of this natural process is thought to be from the particular to the general, although this does not seem to be a "law" of any sort: any person or group of persons could easily reverse the process by stipulating that the word shall mean one thing rather than another. Also, as in our example of "plow," the word's original meaning may remain predominant with the more general meaning being seldom used, or perhaps only as it is used in its original figurative context does it have a broader meaning, as in a "cold" reception.

In general, then, by metaphorical development is meant the tendency of words to acquire new meanings through analogous predication, and the general direction of this development is toward words which have a wider connotation than beforehand. If one could say that this more or less natural and unconscious process had a function, that function would be to (1) name the novel by the use of an already existing word,

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[6]See Urban, op. cit., pp. 174-188.

and (2) to form concepts of a more and more abstract degree.
Now, this really teaches us nothing new. The same general
process, as we have seen, is present in the formation of con-
cepts even when the concept already has a conventional meaning,
so that what was said in Chapter III seems to have received no
amplification.

Notice that, although there is a distinction (See p. 58)
between a child's learning of a word and the word's acquiring
a new meaning, this distinction so far can only be conceived
as one of degree. The child, when he hears both his teddy
bear and his rubber ball called "toys" and adopts this usage
for himself, is actually giving the word a "new" and broader
significance. And, of course, he understands this significance
only if he understands the way in which teddy bears and rubber
balls are analogous. Also, when our child, for example, is
walking through the dime-store with his mother, sees a toy
truck for the first time and calls it "toy," he is performing
an act of name transference no different in kind from calling
a ship a "plow" or part of a chair a "leg."

Now this, as one can immediately perceive, is a highly
suspicious conclusion to draw, and it needs a great deal of
qualification. It seems absurd to say that the language
learning of a child is equivalent in kind with, say, a poet's
perception of similarity such as "Love is like the wild rose
briar." But this is not exactly what I mean. As far as

natural language is concerned, there is no difference, because
the processes are both more or less unconscious and function
for the broadening of meaning. The primary goal of analogous
predication in both the learning process and in the develop-
ment of language is more efficient communication and conceptuali-
zation. The first person, I would say, who used "leg" to name
a part of a chair was not interested particularly in the way
humans and chairs are analogous--he simply observed that they
were and used the name accordingly: so with the child. Even
granting that this first person was an amateur poet, it is at
least safe to say that, in a very little while, the "metaphor"
was sacrificed to utility. The very fact that "metaphors"
die such an easy and natural death indicates to me that the
function of metaphor, or figurative predication, in ordinary
language differs considerably from that of metaphor in poetry,
where it is purposefully used.

The goal of analogous predication in natural language is
broader, or more abstract, conceptualization. Therefore, the
relation of the concept-symbol to the metaphor is precisely the
same as the relation between the concept and its genesis as it
was outlined in Chapter III. The concept implies, as part of
its meaning, the processes which led to its formation. The
word "run," for example, always implies the analogy between the
movement of a human body and the movement of a stream, but this
is more or less unconsciously presupposed in usage. Also, we
can say of symbol and metaphor what we said of names and

propositions: each presupposes the other. Every concept presupposes analogy. At the same time, the drawing of analogies presupposes a concept, since in order to say two things are alike we must also know what each thing is like. The metaphorical development of language can, then, be construed as a process of analysis and synthesis in which similar qualities are abstracted from a context and synthesized by a word into a single concept. That every word is potentially capable of analogous predication is accounted for by the flexibility of its implied, or potential, connotation.

So much, then, for the "metaphorical" development of language. The reason why this process is so easily subsumed under the general schema of the relation of concept-symbols to their genesis is that in all of the discussions concerning the process, "metaphor" simply means "name transference" or analogous predication. Also, insofar as metaphor is conceived of as a part of an ongoing process, it is merely one step in the growth of language, and is, thereby, pragmatically subsidiary to the formation of abstract concepts. If, however, metaphor and other kinds of analogous predication are attended to, not as they actually function within the total context of linguistic development, but as they are in themselves, as particular kinds of predication, we may find a totally different relation between metaphor and symbol. This is possible since metaphor, as it occurs in natural language, only relates

to the concept as a "dead" metaphor; that is, once a word comes
to connote two things which were once separate (e.g., the
running of a man and the running of a stream), those two things
are no longer separate--the original "living" analogy is lost
to the extent that it is implied rather than explicitly
stated.

It is also a possibility that the metaphor, apart from
its function in ordinary language, is more than an analogy
and, because of this, defies subsumption under an abstract
concept-symbol. This possibility is suggested by two facts:
(1) the metaphor is a kind of proposition, and is thus
specific in itself; it is only when the similarity expressed
by the metaphor is <u>abstracted</u> from the specific context of
predication that it becomes at all related to the concept-
symbol; and (2) there are several different kinds of figura-
tive propositions which have been called "metaphor"; it may be
that these kinds, because they are different, are related
differently to the symbol.

CHAPTER V

THE METAPHOR AS SUCH

A. The Meaning of the Metaphor

For the time being, I shall continue to treat metaphor in
terms of analogous predication, since the element of comparison
is certainly an obvious part of the metaphor. The first ques-
tion to be asked, then, is, What sort of comparison does the
metaphor make? As we saw in dealing with the metaphorical
development of language, most theorists fail to make any
distinctions within the general phenomenon of name transference,
and therefore any time a word's meaning is carried over by
analogy from past usage to apply to a novel context, this
application is called "metaphorical." But, as we saw with
the word "supercilious," this is simply an over-generalization.
Consider, for example, that I am exploring a new land and eat
a fruit, hitherto unknown to me, which tastes a good deal like
watermelon. If, for want of a better name, I call it "water-
melon," have I then uttered a metaphor? Clearly not, although
I certainly have drawn an analogy between the new fruit and
watermelon. Or take the word "hippopotamus" which in the
Greek means "river-horse." This is a true case of name
transference by analogy, although one would hardly call it a
metaphor. Examples are numerous, but the point is this:
although language certainly develops by name transference, not

every case of name transference can correctly be called
metaphorical. Metaphor, then, is only one _kind_ of analogous
predication, and not _the_ principle by which language evolves.

Metaphor is a particular kind of analogy in which the
subject and predicate, though stated to be analogous, would,
in conventional discourse, be considered disanalogous. This
fact has been noticed by many writers, the disanalogy being
described as "paradoxical"[1] or as creating an "energy-tension."[2]
The metaphor is striking or "fresh" because it unites in a
single proposition words whose meanings had never been so
united; more than this, the word are from two different uni-
verses of discourse, so that their unification on the basis
of conventional usage is absurd or contradictory when the
conventional usage is strictly adhered to. Thus, the person
who interprets "Man is a wolf" as meaning on the same level
as "Man and timber-wolves are wolves"[3] is said to take the
metaphor literally: for him, the metaphor is not a metaphor
at all--it is merely nonsense.

One important qualification of this definition of metaphor
as an analogy within disanalogy is that the definition is
somewhat relativistic. It is difficult to stipulate exactly

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[1]Cleanth Brooks as quoted in Wheelwright, _op. cit._, p. 101.

[2]Martin Foss, _Metaphor and Symbol_, pp. 59-62.

[3]This example from Colin M Turbayne, _The Myth of Metaphor_,
p. 15.

how many elements of the meanings of the words must be dis-
analogous before we say that the analogy is metaphorical (Cf.
below, pp.83-89). Compare, for example, "Mute as a mouse in
a / corner the cobra lay" (Ralph Hodgeson, "Eve") with "Her
smiles are lightning, though her pride despair" (Samuel
Daniel, "Sonnet"). Although "Her smiles are lightning" is
clearly a metaphor, it is not easy to say with "Mute as a
mouse," for although "mute" may imply some degree of personi-
fication, there is nothing very unusual about predicating
"mute" of "mouse." The real metaphorical tension in the two
lines comes not with the connection of "mute" with "mouse" to
describe the silence of the cobra, but in the juxtaposition of
"cobra" and "mouse," which are clearly disanalogous. Thus,
in any given context, it is no simple matter to decide whether
a metaphor is present or not: it depends to a great extent
on whether or not we consider implied metaphors to be counted
as true metaphors, and this in turn may be a highly subjective
matter. On the other hand, it is much easier to say what is
not metaphor, and on this point the distinction must rest.
"Quiet as a mouse" or "Tastes like watermelon" imply, as they
stand, no disanalogies whatever: there is no disruption of
conventional speech patterns and, hence, the statements are
either true or false in a quite literal sense.

    Given, then, that a metaphor always combines disanalogous
elements, what is the significance of this fact for under-
standing the way a metaphor means? First of all, as a type of

analogous predication, the metaphor is always a description.
"Man is a wolf," for instance, says something about man; it
implies, at least, that men are like wolves in certain ways.
In a context of discourse the speaker may go on to expand his
metaphor; he may say in what ways men and wolves are alike,
or he may give examples of man's wolf-like behavior. But, as
I have said, the metaphor, because the analogy is only a
partial one, must be more than an analogy: an indispensable
part of its meaning must be in the disanalogy. Otherwise,
one could substitute "Man is ferocious, greedy, and cruel" for
"Man is a wolf," or "Her smile was bright and influenced me
greatly" for "Her smile was lightning." The fact that such
substitutions occur only with loss of meaning suggests that
the juxtaposition of conventionally disanalogous words is
all-important to the metaphor's meaning.

The most obvious difference between saying "Man is
ferocious" and "Man is a wolf" is that in the former, a certain
property is predicated of the class "man" while in the latter
a relationship of identity between man and wolves is predi-
cated. In the metaphor, properties are asserted to belong to
the subject by implication only, and only insofar as these
properties are understood to belong to the predicate. This is
also true of such propositions as "Man is an animal," wherein
the class "man" is said to belong to the class "animal." But
it is clear that nothing of the sort is being asserted in "Man

is a wolf," for although the forms of the two propositions are identical, man cannot literally be said to belong to the class of all wolves. The fact that the metaphor actually does assert a relationship of identity, coupled with the fact that this relationship is impossible on a literal interpretation, causes the reader or listener to look for a figurative meaning in the metaphor. That is, the reader or listener is forced to look for possible ways in which it could be said that "Man is a wolf."

Now, the writer or speaker may provide clues as to what these ways are. He may say "Man, like the wolf, is relentless and unscrupulous in attaining his goals," or something of the sort. This type of proposition is called a simile, or explicit comparison, in contradistinction to the metaphor, or implicit comparison. However, the element of disanalogy is nevertheless present in the simile, and to this degree the simile is a kind of metaphor, for the very fact that "man" and "wolf" are juxtaposed causes the reader or listener to look for analogies which may be only implied. Otherwise, the intended meaning could be communicated by simply saying "Man is relentless and unscrupulous in attaining his goals." To be sure, there are differences between saying outright that "Man is a wolf" and merely saying "Man is like a wolf," and later I shall have to discuss these differences. For the present, however, I shall treat metaphor and simile as

different in degree only; that is, whatever is said of metaphor
in the narrow sense (e.g., "Man is a wolf") will be assumed to
apply, with qualifications, to simile as well.

The fact that a metaphor is contradictory in a literal
sense but meaningful in a figurative sense leads us to ask
what this figurative sense consists in. First of all, notice
that a word means figuratively or literally depending upon the
proposition in which it appears. Compare a proposition like
"Man is a wolf" with one like "A wolf often travels fifty
miles a day in search of food." In order to understand the
metaphor's meaning, one must understand by "wolf" something
other than the meaning of "wolf" in the second proposition.
In the second, the meaning of the whole proposition is
grasped sufficiently if by "wolf" is understood simply "a
dog-like carnivorous mammal," which is far from being the full
connotation of the concept "wolf." On the other hand, the
metaphor cannot be understood at all if one takes the meaning
of "wolf" in that context as being merely "a doglike carni-
vorous mammal," for men are simply not doglike in appearance.[4]

In ordinary predication, the total or potential meaning
of a concept is limited by the predicate to an actual meaning
within a specific context. Thus, if we are talking about the
feeding habits of wolves, we need not be talking about a dread,

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[4]Beardsley calls such a metaphor, when taken literally,
an "indirect contradiction." Aesthetics, p. 14.

rapacious beast, etc. But in a metaphor, the disanalogy
between subject and predicate--the contradiction, in fact--
necessitates conceiving of "wolf," say, in its broadest
possible sense. It is, of course, possible for a person to
have a concept of "wolf" which might not imply any connotations
that could be predicated of "man." In this case, the metaphor
would remain a mere contradiction; for this person it would
be meaningless. Nevertheless, the metaphor would initially
force the person to attempt to reconcile the disanalogy.
If the attempt is successful, the metaphor is understood and
the predicate is said to have a "figurative" meaning for the
interpreter.

Now, the real problem in understanding the nature of this
figurative meaning is that it is especially difficult to
place any objective limitations upon it. Although one may
hypothetically say that the metaphor initially causes the
hearer or reader to consider the total meaning of the predi-
cate, the meaning in the metaphor is not this total meaning.
"Wolf," for instance, would not mean "a doglike carnivorous
mammal," even though in order to understand the metaphor, this
part of the meaning has to be grasped. In a metaphor, the
meanings of both the subject and predicate are limited to
connotations which are analogous. However, this totality of
analogous connotations is not capable of specification because
the intuitive grasp of a word's total meaning is itself

unspecific. This is why any attempt to translate a metaphor's
meaning can only partially succeed. Such a translation, or
paraphrase, would have to predicate the subject in a way
congruent with conventional usage, and this entails limiting
the meaning of the subject, which is exactly what the metaphor
does _not_ do. This situation is comparable to that which arises
in the attempt to fully define a concept, an attempt which, as
I mentioned before, is never completely successful.

Thus it seems that the best definition of "figurative"
that can be offered is "meaning other than the literal,"
where "literal" means the conventional definition of ordinary
usage. Obviously, this best is not very good, and this indi-
cates (if what I have said so far is correct) that the dis-
tinction between literal and figurative is far from absolute.
The distinction actually depends for its existence upon the
assumption that we can say what the conventional meaning of
a word is; and this, I think, never amounts to much more than
a rough approximation, of the sort to be found in the dic-
tionary. It is, then, probably better to talk about literal
and figurative _uses_ of words, rather than literal and figura-
tive meanings. It is obvious that no one would ever understand
a metaphor unless the "figurative" meanings of the components
were public to some extent, and thus the only way to distin-
guish between figurative and literal is in terms of unusual

as opposed to usual types of predication, rather than in terms
of differences in import.

Now it is true that meaning and use cannot be separated.
If there is a literal use of a word, then there is, because of
this use, a meaning which is predominate in usage. But as we
have seen, this predominate meaning is not the meaning. Thus,
the "contradiction" in metaphor between subject and predicate
is not a real one; it is apparent only, and is a contradiction
in the rather loose sense of "contradicting" familiar usage.
However, this contradiction is all-important to the metaphor,
for it causes certain connotations of the predicate to become
more prominent than usual. Insofar as these connotations are
asserted of the subject, they are attended to, not as merely
associative nuances of the predicate, but as independent
qualities which can characterize numerous other types of
experienced reality. This is the sense in which I said
earlier that analogous properties are abstracted by virtue
of the metaphor (p. 69) and may, by a further act of synthesis,
become the predominate meaning of a word which had formerly
meant a more specific level of experience. This occurs quite
frequently, and is exemplified by such words as "run," where
the concept has been extended from meaning simply "rapid
forward movement of the legs" to meaning "to describe a
course." The second meaning, once figurative, is now literal;
but notice that, even when this figurative meaning was first

brought out metaphorically, it was already part (though not predominate in usage) of the meaning of "run."[5]

It is extremely important, however, to notice that this conceptual process which presupposes metaphor should not be confused with the metaphor itself. In the first place, the newly emphasized connotations of the predicate, once they have become the predominate meaning of the word in use are specified in a way which is not consistent with the metaphor: "To describe a course," for example, is virtually equivalent to an attempt to translate the meaning of "run" in a metaphor such as "the stream runs swiftly." In the second place, the metaphor is a particular proposition whose meaning is contingent upon the juxtaposition of disanalogous terms: take away the element of contradiction and you destroy the metaphor. Also, the function of the metaphor is not merely to call attention to certain connotations of the predicate which usually pass unnoticed in usage, but to assert these connotations as part of the meaning of the subject. It is, in other words, essential to the metaphor that the subject and predicate be conjoined in a proposition--the meaning can neither be conveyed nor understood in any other way.[6]

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[5]For further discussion of this point in terms of metaphorical development from physical to spiritual meanings, see Owen Barfield, "The Meaning of the Word 'Literal'," in Metaphor and Symbol, ed. L. C. Knights and Basil Cottle, pp. 48-63.

[6]See Urban, op. cit., pp. 179-180.

Before going on, it may be helpful to summarize what I have said so far about the metaphor. (1) A metaphor always contains disanalogous meanings. Subject and predicate are disanalogous insofar as their conventional or "literal" meanings are concerned. (2) The fact that the subject and predicate are disanalogous forces the hearer or reader to look for ways in which they are analogous. This process entails a recognition of the complete meanings of both subject and predicate, but at the same time these total meanings are limited by the proposition to an unspecified level of analogy. The result is that a part of the predicate's connotation other than the conventional connotation is asserted as part of the meaning of the subject, although in the metaphor this connotation is implied rather than explicitly stated. Because the analogous connotations are only implied and remain unspecific, the attempt to paraphrase or expand the metaphor's meaning can never completely succeed. (3) The distinction between the literal and figurative meanings of a word is not absolute and is actually a distinction between meanings which are primary and secondary in conventional use. Thus, although in the metaphor we speak of the predicate as being used figuratively, both figurative and literal meanings are already parts of the word's total connotation--it is this which makes metaphor possible. (4) The primary function of the metaphor is to assert something about the subject which could be asserted in

no other way. The broader conceptual meaning of the predicate
which may result from the metaphor is contingent upon the
abstraction of specific analogous connotations from the meta-
phor proper. Hence, although metaphor may play a role in the
genesis of concepts, the meaning of the concept and the meaning
of the metaphor are distinct from one another. This relation-
ship may be considered a special case of the general position
asserted in Chapter III, that names (concept-symbols) and
propositions (in this case, metaphors) are genetically
inseparable but distinct as far as import is concerned.

I mentioned above (p.73) that it is easier to say what is
not metaphor than it is to say what is. The criterion of
definition so far has been the disanalogy in metaphor between
subject and predicate. Thus, if we are presented with the
proposition, "Her smile was lightning," we can say without
hesitation that the proposition is a metaphor. By the same
token, "It tastes like watermelon" is definitely not a metaphor.
But between these two extremes there are many degrees of dis-
analogy, and it is often difficult to say whether or not
certain propositions are metaphorical. This is especially
true of similes. Since what has been said about metaphor so
far has been derived from such obvious examples as "Man is a
wolf," it is necessary to see whether the same things hold
true of figures of speech which are not of the same form. The
simile, at least, appears to be a possible exception to the

definitive criteria of metaphor which I have outlined so far.
In order to meet the objection that the characteristic of
disanalogy, and, hence, the whole of what has been said about
metaphor, applies only to the special form "X is Y," it is
necessary to discuss briefly the reasons for and against
classifying both direct figurative comparisons ("X is like Y")
and indirect comparisons ("X is Y") as metaphorical expressions.
It is to this problem that I shall now turn.

B. Degrees of Disanalogy

It would seem safe to say that there could be (in
principle) as many metaphors as there are possible combinations
of disanalogous names in any one language. It is probably
impossible to give any strict criteria for determining exactly
whether one particular metaphor contains more disanalogous
elements than another. My purpose here is simply to show that
there are such differences and to set up a rough scale for
classifying metaphors into types according to their varying
degrees of disanalogy.

First of all, let us take the simile and ask to what
extent it differs, if at all, from the metaphor which asserts
a relation of identity. The most obvious difference is that a
simile presents a directly stated comparison, while a metaphor
like "Man is a wolf" only implies such a comparison. Also, the
simile usually states in what respects subject and predicate

are alike; if these respects are not stated in the simile
itself, then the context will suffice to indicate in what way
the comparison holds.[7] The question, then, is How important
is the difference between implicit and explicit comparison?
Some thinkers believe this difference to be extremely impor-
tant.[8] Others believe that the difference is primarily
rhetorical, and that the metaphorical tension is dependent
upon the meanings of subject and predicate, rather than upon
the directness or indirectness of the comparison.[9] I think
that neither of these two positions is wholly correct, though
I think that both are true to some extent.

An example may help to both clarify the differences as
well as point to the similarities. A simile which makes an
explicit comparison would be "Her brows like bended bows do
stand" (Thomas Campion, "Cherry-ripe"). In order to change
this simile into an implicit comparison, one would say "Her
brows _are_ bended bows that stand." Now, are there any dif-
ferences in these two propositions? First of all, we might

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[7]Beardsley makes a distinction between the _open simile_ and
the _closed simile_ (_Aesthetics_, pp. 137-138). The open simile
states merely that X is like Y, while the closed simile states
that X is like Y in such-and-such a respect. However, I can see
no real distinction between the two, since the effect of the
open simile in a context which goes on to state in what re-
spects X is like Y would be the same as that of a closed simile
which by itself stated these respects.

[8]_Ibid._

[9]Wheelwright, _The Burning Fountain_, p. 94.

say that the implicit comparison is a "stronger" statement
than the explicit: because there is a statement of identity,
one expects that "her brows" are like "bended bows" in a
great many, if not all, respects. The explicit "Her brows
like bended bows do stand," on the other hand, would be true
even if subject and predicate were alike in only <u>one</u> respect.
Thus, if the image is grasped in the explicit simile, the
comparison is justified: "Her brows are simply shaped like
bended bows." In the statement of identity, it is implied
that brows and bows are not only shaped similarly but also
alike in other ways: a "bow" is a weapon; also, if the bow
is bent, it is ready to fire the arrow, and if her brows are
bows, then they may be weapons about to be used. All this
and more is implied. However, is this not also implied in
the simile? Not perhaps as strongly, but in the poem from
which the simile is taken, the poet goes on to make the
implication explicit: "Her brows like bended bows do stand,/
Threat'ning with piercing frowns to kill."

One can conceive (perhaps to the detriment of the poem)
of this second line following either the simile or the meta-
phor. The difference seems to me to lie in the fact that the
simile's interest centers in the particular ways in which
subject and predicate are analogous. By stating these ways,
the poet may even cause the disanalogies to pass relatively
unnoticed. There are, to this extent, specific limitations

placed in the simile upon the ways in which subject and
predicate are analogous: this is the effect of "like." There
are no such specific limitations implied by a statement of
identity. This is what is meant by those who say that the
metaphor is "richer" than the simile.[10] Nevertheless, the
juxtaposition of "brow" and "bow" in the simile is figurative,
in spite of "like"; the disanalogy is present, even though its
effect is not as strong as the metaphor's.

The primary difference, then, between explicit comparison
and implicit comparison is in the degree to which disanalogies
are stressed and, correspondingly, the degree to which analogies
are specified. I think it is obvious that this is more a
difference of degree than of kind: in general, the ways in
which the grammatical metaphor and the grammatical simile mean
are the same. Because both depend for their effectiveness
upon the disanalogy between subject and predicate, both are
metaphorical. Actually, the choice between using "like" or
leaving it out, when it is made by the poet, may depend upon
a great many factors, of which rhythm and meter, I suspect,
are not the least in importance. A possible criterion for
choice might be the disanalogy between subject and predicate:
if it is too great, or if it leads to a suggestion of analogies
which the poet does not intend to draw, the effect of the

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[10]Beardsley, op. cit., p. 138.

disanalogy is appropriately lessened by "like." Regarding
this point, Wheelwright gives the following example:

> Compare, for instance, Burns' line, "O my love is
> like a red, red rose," with the abbreviated statement,
> "Love is a red rose," which is grammatically a metaphor;
> probably it will be agreed that there is more tensive
> life, more metaphoric vitality, in the former than in the
> latter. Although it is often the case that a metaphoric
> comparison can be made more effective without explicit use
> of a word such as "like," it is not always so.[11]

I'm not sure what is meant by "tensive life" or "metaphoric
vitality," but it does seem that the simile is more effective.
The reasons for this are not clear from Wheelwright's account,
but certainly one reason is that "Love is a red rose" lacks
the rhythm of the simile. To this extent, Wheelwright's
example begs the issue, but even if one could construct a
line of the same rhythm as the simile's, the effects would
certainly be different. It is not the point that, in this
example, the direct comparison is more "effective" than the
indirect--"effectiveness" is hardly a criterion of judgment.
Rather, the point is that the effects are _different_. I don't
think it is possible to make generalized value-judgments about
implicit versus explicit comparisons: whether one or the
other is used depends both upon the context of use and upon
what the speaker wants to say.

Thus, if we take two propositions which are identical in
every respect except that one makes a direct comparison, the

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[11]_Metaphor_ _and_ _Reality_, p. 71.

other an indirect, both may be called metaphorical as long as
both contain disanalogous elements. The difference between the
two is that the direct comparison calls attention more ex-
plicitly to analogous elements and thereby focuses less on the
disanalogies than does the indirect comparison. This difference
may be thought of as a matter of emphasis.

Still another reason for saying that similes are
metaphorical is that many actually contain more disanalogous
elements, or create more "tension" than do some implicit
comparisons. A stereotyped metaphor such as "He's an old
fox," while it still may deserve to be called a metaphor, is
much less striking than a simile such as Byron's "She walks
in beauty, like the night." Hence, one must consider not only
the grammatical structure of a proposition, but also the
meanings of the subject and predicate, before one can decide
to what degree the proposition is metaphorical. The fact
that metaphors may differ from one another in the degree to
which the subject and predicate are disanalogous serves as a
necessary qualification to the theoretical description of
metaphor given earlier (Chapter V, A.). One can easily see
that this qualification, while it provides no exception to
the general characteristics of metaphorical expression, be-
comes extremely important on the practical level of literary
criticism, where one is attempting to paraphrase the metaphor,
or where it is desirable to show in what manner the effectiveness

of the poem is increased or limited by the disanalogies in a particular metaphor. This, however, is another subject.

My purpose here has been to show the ways in which metaphorical, or figurative, expression as a whole is related to the concept-symbol. In general, I have indicated two primary types of relation: (1) the genetic relation, which was found to be a special case of the genetic relation of names and propositions (Chapter IV); and (2) the relation of import. Regarding this latter point, I have intended to indicate that the possibility of figurative language is accounted for by certain characteristics of the concept-symbol which were outlined in Chapter III. Thus, the fact that metaphor can be accounted for only if we consider the meaning of concept-symbols as transcending particular use serves to some extent as a justification of this definition of conceptual meaning.

CONCLUDING NOTE

In this thesis I have attempted to outline a few of the considerations and methods of procedure which I consider relevant to the understanding of one kind of symbol. This symbol, though it is linguistic, is necessarily connected with conceptualization, and an understanding of its meaning-relation presupposes both epistemological and psychological considerations. I began by distinguishing signal and symbol as two fundamentally different types of sign, the general criterion of difference being the indirectness of the symbol's relation to objective reality as opposed to the signal's direct indicative function. This distinction in turn led to an investigation of the nature of the symbol's indirect, or connotative, meaning, and I found that this meaning, if it is always symbolized by a word, must also be considered as symbolized by a more or less abstract concept with which the word is correlative.

As a prerequisite for defining the meaning-relation of the concept-symbol, I proposed a distinction between meaning, or import, and genesis. This distinction is, of course, not a novel one, but what I hope to have demonstrated to some degree, or at least to have illustrated, is that this distinction, while methodologically sound, must not be thought of as absolute. The genesis and import of symbols, when observed from this point of view, can now be seen both as posing certain

kinds of questions not ordinarily asked and as suggesting certain kinds of answers not usually given. While the question of the definition of the meaning of symbols is usually taken to be a question of what symbols presuppose (their genesis), we have seen that this question itself requires prior assumptions about the nature of symbols, since meaning cannot be completely reduced to factors of genesis. Also, a relevant but rarely asked question which I have asked is What does the genesis of meaning presuppose? When these questions are taken together, the answer, in general terms, is that genesis and import presuppose each other. Thus, from one point of view, one of the factors in the genesis of the meaning of a symbol is a prior symbol whose own meaning made the genesis possible. From another point of view the meaning of a symbol can be considered the terminus of a genetic process the elements of which the symbol implies.

The readily observable difficulty with an attempt to reconcile these two points of view is that, taken together, they seem to imply an infinite regress. Two kinds of explanation of the genesis of concepts were taken up: one was the explanation by the sentence-word of the process by which humans come to learn the meaning of pre-existing concepts; the other was the explanation by metaphor of the process by which new concepts with new meanings are evolved on a cultural level. In both cases it was found that it was necessary to

explain language by language: names and propositions pre-
suppose each other, as do concepts and metaphors. Both types
of explanation are extremely relevant as far as they go, but
notice that both reach a point at which a choice between either
an infinite regress or another kind of explanation is made
necessary. As far as the two explanations considered are con-
cerned, we stop the regress by simply saying that language is
an Urphenomen, and that the origin of conceptualization as we
know it is correlative with the use of words.

Seen from this perspective alone, however, symbolization
takes on a miraculous quality, and unless we are willing to
accept a miracle, another type of explanation, which this
thesis has not attempted to consider, is needed. Such an
explanation would involve again asking what symbolization
presupposes, only asking the question in non-linguistic terms.
The answer, I think, would be a theory of perception or
epistemology which would necessarily be grounded in a meta-
physics, but it would be a metaphysics having a strong
empirical justification in the study of meanings. None of
this is, of course, possible until the philological, linguistic
and psychological data at hand have been accumulated and made
intelligible. Such data would need to be sufficient to sepa-
rate the conceptual and perceptual presuppositions determined
by language from the perceptions which language itself pre-
supposes. Language, I believe, is both the key and the
stumbling block to an adequate epistemology, and to separate

the chaff from the wheat is perhaps the primary task of modern philosophy.

Thus, if this thesis can be thought of as attempting to make a single point of importance, it is this: in order to understand conceptualization, we must think in terms of symbolization, for the two are one-in-the-same process; the complexities of meaning must be understood first of all in terms of linguistic development and its correlative, abstract thought. But this understanding, if it is possible, is only preparatory to an explanation which avoids presuppositions as far as possible and which can explain (and by "explain" I mean causally explain) thought and language by the noncognitive and the non-linguistic. The point is that one cannot explain language by thought or vice-versa, for such an explanation begs the question entirely. Now, the complex study of meanings may be only a preparation for a more adequate epistemological hypothesis, but it is absolutely necessary, for one cannot explain something unless he knows to some extent what he is trying to explain (this is the problem of modern psychology--there are plenty of answers available, but very few intelligible questions). A theory which accounts for some aspects of experience while it vigorously avoids others is merely suffering from a case of hasty generalization, caused by an inability or refusal to describe the phenomena which need to be explained.

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THE CONCEPT-SYMBOL: AN HYPOTHESIS
ABOUT THE GENESIS AND
IMPORT OF MEANING

by

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The philosophy of symbolism is an attempt to analyze the relation of the mind to the world through an understanding of the meaning of symbols. The purpose of this thesis is to examine some of the problems that arise when one tries to describe the meaning of one kind of symbol, the word, in its relation to thought, and to offer a solution to these problems primarily through a distinction between the genesis and the logical structure of meaning.

I begin with a preliminary definition of "symbol." This definition consists of distinguishing the logical meaning-relation of the symbol from that of the signal. The primary difference in the two is that, while the signal signifies its object directly or immediately, the symbol's meaning entails the mediation of a concept of the object which it denotes. The first difficulty which must be met concerns the relation of the word-symbol to the concept which it "conveys." Suzanne Langer calls the concept the word's "connotation," but is unclear as to the exact nature of this meaning-relation, for she thinks that the concept is a symbol. If it is, then what does it symbolize? If the word symbolizes a concept, then the concept must symbolize something else. The real problem is that the idea of "conveyance" is too vague to give any adequate understanding of the relation between words, concepts, and connotation.

I propose that to eliminate this vagueness, we should think of words and concepts as possessing identical connotations, and we should speak of word and concept as being united as far as meaning is concerned. I call this meaning unit the concept-symbol. This way of talking eliminates the expression-idea dichotomy, a dichotomy which stultifies investigation by neglecting to define the meaning of the concept, and which is genetically unsound, since it ignores the necessary role played by language in conceptualization. Although by this method the problem of the relation of symbol to concept is eliminated, the question remains as to the nature of the concept-symbol's connotation. I describe the concept-symbol as being the abstract unification of a multitude of particular thought-qualities, the symbol's connotation. A concept-symbol is, then, a universal which, by implication, symbolizes qualities of a lesser degree of abstraction than itself. In order to determine the structure of the abstract universal's connotation, I turn to the genesis of the concept, since an understanding of this genesis, by disclosing the processes which lead to the formation of the concept, increases our understanding of the logical structure of the concept's meaning.

The first aspect of language genesis which I discuss is that of the child's learning of word meanings. The earliest type of word-usage by the child is the sentence-word, in which propositional meaning is expressed in a specific perceptual

context by the utterance of a single word. Eventually, the
child learns the abstract meanings of words (forms concepts)
by hearing and using the words, abstracting their meanings
from particular contexts, and synthesizing their connotations
into universal concepts. However, elements of the word's
abstract meaning are inherent in the first use of the word
(sentence-word). This first use itself is a rudimentary
form of both name and proposition, each of which presupposes
the other. Language cannot, then, be thought of as having
developed from a primitive kind of proposition toward a more
sophisticated and stable level of conceptualization: all of
the elements of adult language except for grammatical
structure can be discovered in the child's first usage. A
concept-symbol's connotation is composed of the levels of
meaning which the symbol logically implies, and can be
considered as the structure of meanings which emerges from
past usage. This meaning determines future usage, but
because it is the totality of particular meanings abstracted
from particular usage and synthesized into a single concept,
this meaning always transcends in total significance any
particular meaning which might occur in contextual predi-
cation.

The second aspect of language genesis which I discuss
is that of the metaphorical development of meaning on a
cultural level. However, the principle of this development

is simply analogous predication, and the new meanings of words which result from this process can be considered as identical in kind to any level of meaning of an abstract degree: the principles of analogy, analysis, and synthesis were found to be operative in language learning, and they apply equally to metaphorical development, which is merely a specific type of concept formation.

However, if we consider the meaning of the metaphor as a particular type of proposition, we find that it is different from that of the concept which may result from the metaphor's use. The meaning of the metaphor is unspecific, and it results from the juxtaposition of disanalogous terms. This disanalogy causes the total connotative meaning of subject and predicate to be brought into play, the figurative meaning of the metaphor as a whole being the unspecified level of analogous elements as predicated of the subject. Because the analogy is unspecified, the metaphor is not capable of complete translation, and its meaning is not reducible to that of the new concept of the predicate which results from the figurative predication. Although some would claim that the direct comparison of the simile ("X is like Y") differs from the indirect comparison of the grammatical metaphor ("X is Y"), the difference is only a matter of degree. Since metaphorical meaning is made possible by the fact that the concept-symbol's meaning transcends particular usage, the discussion of metaphor serves to reinforce this definition of conceptual meaning.