Tristes Tropes: Lévi-Strauss and the impoverishment of metaphor

> The logical level (of a metaphor) is reached by semantic impoverishment (Lévi-Strauss, SM 105).

> When logics die,
> The secret of the soil grows through the eye,
> And blodd jumps in the sun.
> (Dylan Thomas, "Light breaks where no sun shines").

There is a nature, said Wallace Stevens, that absorbs the mixedness of metaphors. Such a temperament is not characteristic of our academic tradition. We do not, with bland passivity, soak up statements like "twins are birds" or "shamans are jaguars" but instead find them intriguing puzzles to be explored and analyzed. We want to make sense of the initial obscurity; to restore rationality to what is apparent nonsense; to discover the hidden logic in what appears absurd. We feel that to understand figurative language we must be able to paraphrase it, to unpack it, to translate it into literal discourse. Understanding therefore becomes associated with what we describe as "literal" and conversely, what we call "metaphorical" becomes suspect. When Evans-Pritchard (1956) in one of the most illuminating studies of a primitive religion in anthropological literature, wrote that the Nuer usually talk about their religion in poetic metaphors, he was accused of relying on a "non-explanatory notion":

> If any piece of literal nonsense can be taken metaphorically then anthropology rapidly becomes impossible ... Literal sense is as important to the temple as it is to the market place (Hollis, 1970, 223, 237).

Figurative language seems to bring sense into disrepute; metaphor seems to be wrong; and if we allow our suspicions to solidify, we soon turn to that idiom which describes metaphor as an abuse and dislocation of language, constituting an offence against the exigencies of logic. In this extremity it becomes that notion "which has scandalized philosophers, including both scholastics and semioticists" (Percy, 1958, 81).

Were all puzzles to turn so easily into scandals, anthropology would just as rapidly become impossible. When we encounter those aspects of "la pensée sauvage" that appear to abuse our canons of sense and logicality, we prefer to respond with caution, looking for a way to resolve the outrage. And it would be generally agreed, certainly in the popular imagination, that Lévi-Strauss has been one of the leaders in teaching such tolerance. A recent editorial in The Times states that his most sympathetic achievement has been...

> to question unremittingly the assumed superiority of Western logic and rationalism over the mental systems of (primitive) peoples. (May 26. 1973).

It is held that Totemism and The Savage Mind revealed the "logic" of primitive classification and associative thought processes which had

previously proved baffling and devoid of any rationality. The Mythologiques discovered, beneath the apparent absurdity of Amerindian myth, hidden logical armatures, showing that mythological thought is indeed determined and controlled by structuring principles. These are certainly intriguing claims. Furthermore, since Lévi-Strauss has a strong strain of semiology in his intellectual pedigree, and since he constantly stresses the metaphorical character of his material, it seems there could be no-one better able to dispel the scandal of the latter. It will be recalled that besides resting on a logic of oppositions, the institution of totemism is also "metaphorical" in character (T. 95). Similarly, while the Mythologiques discovers logical armatures, myth is considered a "metaphorical genre" (HN 607). It is held that metaphor is a fundamental mode of language (T. 175); that it purifies and restores language to its original nature (RC 339); and above all that

> ... metaphors are based on an intutive sense of the logical relations between one realm and other realms (RC 339).

The broad claims made for the structural method are indeed exciting and invite critical commentary and evaluation. But an examination of the notion of "structure" and a discussion of the status of the various "logiques" (concrete logic, the logic of totemic classification, and, of course, "mytho-logic") is beyond the scope of this paper. I want to look at Lévi-Strauss' use of "metaphor" firstly because it gives an opportunity to look at the metaphor/metonym distinction which commentators usually gloss over in an offhand manner, typically describing it as "that important distinction borrowed from linguistics", and secondly, because I feel that structural analysis, in its insistence on the subordination of metaphor to logic, demonstrates a singularly unhelpful approach to the interpretation and understanding of modes of discourse. This will lead to some general observations on the traditional distinction between the metaphorical and the literal, where, it seems to me, the difficulties lie more with our entrenched assumptions regarding the second term rather than with our misgivings about the first.

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In the concluding pages of Totemism Lévi-Strauss adduces Rousseau as a precursor of his own views, attributing to him the "extraordinarily modern view" of the passage from nature to culture based on "the emergence of a logic operating by means of binary oppositions" (T 175). Coincident with the birth of the intellect and the emergence of this logic was the appearance of language — "the first manifestations of symbolism" - which, in its original state, must have been figurative:

> As emotions were the first motives which induced men to speak, his first utterances were tropes. Figurative language was the first to be born, proper meanings were the last to be found. Things were called by their true name only when they were seen in their true form. The first speech was all in poetry; reasoning was thought of only long afterwards. (Rousseau, 1783, quoted T. 175).

Since "tropes", "figurative language", and "poetry" can all be subsumed under the term "metaphor", Lévi-Strauss finds in Rousseau a clear presage of his own view:

> Metaphor, the role of which in totemism we have repeatedly underlined, is not a later embellishment of language but one of its fundamental modes. Placed by Rousseau on the same plane as opposition, it constitutes, on the same ground, a primary form of discursive thought. (T. 175).

But in Lévi-Strauss' view, as indicated above, it is not just the case that metaphor and logic are "on the same plane": the first is subordinate to and depends on the second. And just as in the analysis of myth the truth of a myth does not lie in any special content but in "logical relations which are devoid of content" (RC 240), so we explain a metaphor by revealing its logic, subjecting it to a process of semantic impoverishment (SM 105).

It is a peculiar thesis. Logic and metaphor have seldom been comfortable partners. The difficulties in the understanding and interpretation of metaphor and figurative language have usually concerned questions of semantic richness, of ambiguity, of condensation and complexity of meaning. What sort of explanation is this where the stark regimen of a logic deprived of meaning triumphs over the semantic anarchy of metaphor? The literary tradition might call it "Ramism with a Freudian twist". Peter Ramus (1515-1572) held that since the laws of logic were the laws of thought, poetry, being rational discourse, was grounded in logic. Therefore the poet must use logic in the construction of his metaphors.

> It meant that they were to learn to do this from the discipline to which Ramus said it properly belonged: dialectica. Awareness of process might vary, but given the structure of man's mind, there was but one way to "invent" or think out what one wished to say - logically, and but one way to dispose of thought - reasonably (Tuve, 1947, 340).

It is odd that this view should be resuscitated by Lévi-Strauss, complete with the structuralists interest in "fundamental structures of the mind", but refurbished in a new post-Freudian guise, adding that the laws of thought are unconscious (e.g. SA 33), thereby constituting a sublimal Ramistic instruction manual. We might ask, therefore, whether Lévi-Strauss' use of the term "metaphor" might not be somewhat idiosyncratic.

From Totemism onwards the term almost always appears inopposition to "metonym", a usage which seems difficult to justify by reference to any tradition in rhetoric, literary criticism, or philosophy, its sole authority being Jakobson's essay on two kinds of aphasia, included as Part 2 of Fundamentals of Language (Jakobson and Halle, 1956, 55-82). Lévi-Strauss uses the terms with such assurance that it would appear we are being offered a rigorous analytical distinction, but, since no definitions are offered it is necessary to go back to the source to understand what is being implied.

Having previously established that the linguistic sign involves two modes of arrangement, (i) combination (cf. Saussurian syntagms) and (ii) selection (cf. Saussurian associations and Hjelmslev's paradigmatic series), Jakobson applies these terms to distinguish two kinds of aphasic disorder. Since combination, following Saussure, "is based on two or several terms jointly present in an actual series", the constituent signs are in a relation of contiguity (61). Thus, in the first type of aphasia the ability to combine words may be preserved,

connectives and auxiliaries being particularly prone to survive, while specific nouns are replaced by vague ones like "things" or "doings". This Jakobson calls SELECTION DEFICIENCY.

Selection "connects terms 'in absentia' as members of a virtual mnemonic series" (61), the signs being in a relationship of similarity. Thus in the opposite type of aphasia, words with purely grammatical functions - conjunctions, prepositions, pronouns, articles - are the first to disappear and only kernel subject words (the first to be affected in the other type) are retained. This can be called COMBINATION DEFICIENCY.

Put in this way the argument is clear, but the further examples of the disorders are difficult to understand. In SELECTION DEFICIENCY, although specific nouns tend to be replaced by vague ones, the "gift for combination may nevertheless be preserved", the subject perhaps producing the word "fork" for "knife", "table" for "lamp," "smoke" for "pipe", "dead" for "black". Following Goldstein, this is characterized as "grasping the words in their literal meaning but failing to understand the metaphorical character of the same words" (69). Thus:

> From the two polar figures of speech, metaphor and metonym, the latter, based on contiguity, is widely employed by aphasics whose selective capacities have been affected (69).

Selection deficiency therefore uses metonym and can be called SIMILARITY DISORDER.

In combination deficiency, where specific words survive at the expense of the connectives, "to say what a thing is, becomes to say what it is like", for example, "spyglass" for "microscope", "fire" for "gaslight". On the authority of a few articles written in the 1860's and first published in Brain, 1915, these identifications can be called "metaphoric". Thus combination deficiency uses metaphor, and can be called CONTIGUITY DISORDER.

The following terms have now been incorporated into the opposition:

(a)	(b)
selection deficiency	combination deficiency
connectives survive	subject words survive
metonymic	metaphoric
similarity disorder	contiguity disorder

but the propriety of the last two pairs is suspect. If we look at the examples of metonym in similarity disorder we find (a) that they are subject words, and (b) that they could just as well be described as "saying what a thing is, becomes saying what it is like", since all that is meant by "like" in the metaphoric context is "associated with". We might just as well claim from the examples given that the subject was suffering from contiguity disorder. The production of "fork" for "knife", and "spyglass" for "microscope" seem to indicate the same disorder rather than the distinction that in one case specific nouns are lost while in the other the auxiliary connectives disappear. Similarly, if we look at the examples of metaphor in contiguity disorder we might just as well say that the subject "fails to understand the metaphoric character "of the words he is using, and suggest he was suffering from similarity disorder.

These last oppositions are both superflous. It is acknowledged that the distinction similarity/contiguity is borrowed from Frazer's description of homeopathic and contagious rites, and it seems nothing is gained by trying to relate them to the linguistic principles of combination and selection of units. There is also no justification for metonym being taken as the "polar opposite figure" of metaphor. If anything it is a particular kind of metaphor. One should say that the classifications of figures of speech produced by classical rhetoric are of little use as analytical terms in the study of language and thought. Yet Jakobson goes on to conflate both oppositions under the Saussurian distinction syntagmatic/pardigmatic, thus metonym is the contiguity of two distinctive features of language (the characteristic of prose); metaphor is based on the substitution of one distinctive feature of language for another (the characteristic of poetry) (76-82).

While it was an interesting insight to apply the original distinction (combination/selection) to two types of aphasia, the following accumulation of opposition after opposition into that distinction makes the argument obscure and leads to an unnecessary confusion of terminology. The argument does, however, make somewhat clearer Lévi-Strauss' use of the metaphor/metonym distinction, which is taken to imply the entire set of Jakobson's oppositions and a few more besides.

Its first use occurs in Totemism in considering the Ojibwa myth (T. 87-88), which shows that there can be no direct relation based on CONTIGUITY between man and totem (since the god looked at the man and the man died). The relationship must be "masked" (the god wore a veil) and is thus metaphorical. Similarly, the Tikopia evidence shows that contiguity between gods (in the form of men) and totems

> ... is contrary to the spirit of the institution: the totem becomes such only on condition that it first be set apart (T. 95).

Totemism is therefore held to be metaphorical not metonymical.

In the first use of the opposition we can note its imprecision. There is no justification in the Tikopia myth for the totems being said to be "set apart" from men. The contrary is the case: the god lets fall the totemic vegetables and men succeed in retaining them. Why might we not say that among the Tikopia contiguity is the spirit of the institution? The rather convoluted argument we must accept consists of the following steps: (a) the Ojibwa god's being veiled and the Tikopia god dropping the vegetable totem both constitute "setting apart"; (b) "setting apart" is the opposite of "contiguity"; (c) (c) "contiguity" is the characteristic of "metonym"; (d) the opposite of metonym is "metaphor"; (e) thus, totemism is metaphorical.

This established, the same pair of oppositions - contiguity/resemblance, metonym/metaphor - can also be seen to distinguish totemism and religion. It would be tedious to rehearse another similar argument, but briefly, the difficulty is that in Tikopia thought the four important vegetable foods are held to be sacred because they represent the four gods (the totemic relation), but there is the further complication that the gods are believed to be fish (the religious relation) (T. 95). The metaphorical character of the totemic relationship is therefore confirmed against the metonymical

religious relationship.

There is one further opposition to be incorporated: since the Tikopia god is believed to enter the animal only intermittently, and since that god is permanently represented by the vegetable,

> ... one might almost say that metonymy corresponds to the order of events, metaphor to the order of structure. (T.95-6)

A footnote refers us to Jakobson and Halle.

From this point on, metaphor and metonym become a familiar part of the analytical vocabulary. Among the more notable examples is the discussion of the lace collar in Clouet's painting (SM 24-5) where science is described as metonymical, art as metaphorical. Totemism and sacrifice are distinguished in the same way (SM 224-227). The opposition is found useful at various points in the Mythologiques, for example, in the analysis of M 149a where at one point in the myth the vultures cover the hero with excrement, and later the hero visits their village to be seduced by their daughters. The hero is said to be "conjoined to the metonymical ordure of the vultures (they produce it)" and later is said to return to that ordure "metaphorically" in allowing himself to be seduced by their daughters (OMT 113-4).

Finally, almost ten years after its first appearance, the distinction is still accruing oppositions. In the "Finale", metaphor and metonym distinguish the genres of myth and ritual. Ritual is metonymical. It takes each relative totality and breaks it down into its parts. Each part then constitutes another totality which in its turn is broken down and the process goes on, producing the infinitesimal oppositions which we find in ritual discourse. Ritual decomposes the syntagm, breaking up the cultural order; produces confusion; suppresses differences tries to create the continuous; and moves towards nature. Myth is metaphorical. It subsumes individualities under the paradigm. Thus concrete details are at the same time reduced and enlarged: reduced in number but enlarged by their incorporation in the paradigm. Myth makes distinctions, contrasts, and oppositions, creates the discontinuous and moves towards culture (HN 607-608).

There seem to be no limits to what can be incorporated into this bundle of oppositions; but looking over the ground covered, we can reconstitute the following group.

Metaphor	Metonym
resemblance	contiguity
paradigmatic	syntagmatic
classification (into paradigm)	segmentation (of syntagm)
selection (from paradigm)	combination (into syntagm)
structure	event
synchronic	diachronic
poetry	prose
art	science
totemism	religion and sacrifice
myth	ritual
discontinuous	continuous
order	disorder
culture	nature.

A table like this illustrates an irritating characteristic of the structuralist method which consecrates imprecision and vagueness of terminology as a methodological principle.* Having made the original distinction between metaphor and metonym, instead of the perpetual attempt at a more precise definition of the terms, the development of the idea consists only in the accretion to the first distinction of an indefinite number of increasingly vague reflections of the solitary principle that was given as a definition of the distinction in the first place: opposition. That is to say, it is originally stated that metaphor and metonym are "opposite figures", but if we ask what is meant by each term and why they are in opposition, we have no further information other than the list of oppositions which they characterize. The result is simply to trivialize the original distinction and invite the conclusion that we are dealing with no more than an idle, obscurantist jargon.

The only twist of complexity in the terms is that it is the metaphor column that is the markedly "structural" side. Diachrony in Saussurian linguistics is subordinate to synchrony as the syntagm is to the paradigm. Structure takes precedence over event; while "totemism, classification, myth, and culture" is an apposite summary of Lévi-Strauss' later work (ritual being confined to a few occasional essays). We might also recall that totemism is "true" while sacrifice is "false", a kind of discourse "denue de bon sens" (PS 301-2). Why do relations of resemblance conceal a logic of oppositions while relations of contiguity remain relatively uninteresting?

It will be recalled that in Saussurian linguistics "relations between terms" consisted of the principle of differential opposition - "Each linguistic term derives its value from its opposition to all other terms"; "In language there are only differences WITHOUT POSITIVE TERMS" (Saussure, 1959, 84, 120). But in this account there was an area of doubt where semiological approach seemed to falter. In the establishment of linguistic "value", as well as the factor of the opposition of dissimilar things, there is also the factor of the comparison of similar things (ibid. 115). Saussure could not give a systematic account of this latter factor. In the distinction between "syntagmatic and associative relations" (ibid. 122-7), the principle of differential opposition operates only with respect to the first. The axis of associative relations involving the comparison of similar things is characterized as "of indeterminate order and indefinite number" (126). It would be difficult to claim otherwise.

> We could go on picking out resemblances forever, inexhaustibly; and to some extent we do, as we perpetually extend the vocabulary of our language, or as we learn to move from one language to another, each recording different resemblances in vocabularies which do not always translate each other (Hampshire, 1959, 31).

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* cf. "I am conscious as anyone of the very loose senses in which I have employed terms such as "symmetry", "inversion", "equivalence", "homology", "isomorphism", etc. I have used them to refer to large bundles of relations which we vaguely perceive to have something in common". (RC 31)

Yet it is on to these unbounded possibilities that Lévi-Strauss wishes to fit his semiological model in order to demonstrate "the logical subordination of resemblance to contrast" (SM 106). The rich ambiguities of semantic analogy will be reduced to the stark outline of structural homology. The semantic complexities of metaphor can be reduced to the jolting pluses and minuses of a logic of oppositions. In my view, the result demonstrates a 'reductio ad absurdum' of the semiological model.

In the examination of texts and discourse, if we want to understand what is being said, what sort of credibility are we going to give an analysis which proceeds by a technique of "semantic impoverishment" to produce a structure of "logical relations which are deprived of content"? Is it an increment to our understanding of the "profound analogy which people throughout the world seem to find between copulation and eating" to learn that the union of the sexes and the union of eater and eaten both effect a "conjunction by complementarity"? (SM 105-6). Do we understand any better the immense pedigree of honey metaphors (MC 12) when we find that honey is " logically opposed" to tobacco? (MC 22). Do we really understand the figures and fancies of Amerindian myths after they have been reduced to the logical oppositions of empirical categories such as raw/cooked, fire/water, noise/silence, and all the rest?

The significance of the discoveries of structural analysis has always been difficult to assess. This was reflected, for instance, in the early discussions of Lévi-Strauss' analyses of myth where a question which perplexed the commentators was whether the structures were really "there", in the material, or simply an organizational device in the mind of the analyst. The difficulty lies in the status we are prepared to grant such logical analysis and its related technique of semantic impoverishment. What sort of questions is the procedure trying to answer?

> What do we do when we paraphrase a sentence by introducing logical symbols and truth functions? ... I find the phrase "logical analysis" misleading, in its suggestion that we are exposing a logical structure that lay hidden in the sentence all along. This conception I find both obscure and idle ... I mentioned the analogy of the computer; but essentially the same thing is happening in a more moderate way when in natural history we switch to the Latin binomials for genera and species, or when in relativity physics we paraphrase our temporal references into a spatial idiom using four dimensions. No one wants to say that the binomials of Linnaeus or the fourth dimension of Einstein or the binary code of the computer were somehow implicit in ordinary language; and I have seen no more reason to so regard the quantifiers and truth functions.
>
> (Quine, 1972, 451)

The claim that the material one is analyzing rests on a "logic of oppositions" does not make sense. The logicality is to be imputed to the method of analysis and one should not be misled into taking it as a property inherent in the material and revealed by that analysis. This is not to claim that logical analysis is in itself idle. There are clearly conceptual and heuristic advantages in having at one's disposal some sort of technique by which one can organize one's material. But these advantages are not measured by the degree of formal elegance which such analyses can produce, but by the degree

to which such organization renders the material intelligible.

It is difficult to see how any sort of restoration of intelligibility is possible by a technique of semantic impoverishment which involves a quite candid contempt for meaning. Structural analysis does not attempt to translate or interpret the discourse it analyzes since its initial assumption is that the content of that discourse is in the first place trivial. Content does not require interpretation; it requires reduction. This indifference to the cognitive content of discourse is justified by appeal to the "phonological revolution" where Jakobson, Troubetzkoy, and others, applying Saussurian principles, succeeded in giving a systematic account of the sound systems of language. The "revolution" consisted in the discovery that meaning always results from the combination of elements (phonemes) which are not in themselves significant. Hence,

> ... le sens n'est jamais un phénomène premier: le sens est toujours réductible. Autrement dit, derrière tout sens il y a un non-sens, et le contraire n'est vrai.
> (Reponses, 637)

Whether or not this peculiar "non-sens" of a logic of oppositions and contrasts tells us anything about the constraining structures of the mind (RC 10) is a question beyond the scope of this paper. What is clear is that if such an analysis presupposes that the material being analyzed consists of "un discours qui ne dit rien" (Ricoeur, in Reponses, 625), it is therefore not surprising to find that the results offer little with regard to the interpretation of that material. If we start from the assumption that what we call figurative language or symbolic discourse is indeed saying something then we must look for some other approach which does not reduce that discourse to the formal caricature of bundles of oppositions. Semantic impoverishment, the reduction of analogy to homology and of resemblance to contrast, whatever else it may be, is not an interpretative technique. Revealing the "logic" of a metaphor does not, evidently, help us understand it. Consequently we might well look for the beginnings of an approach to compensate for this one-sided diet of structuralism.

Ricoeur, in his discussion of structuralism, suggests, it seems to me, a quite adequate response. Arguing that it is a semantic of content that is required, not a syntax of arrangements, his vocabulary of "hermeneutic" offers an interpretative approach which overturns the main structuralist principles mentioned above. Firstly, and most obviously, instead of approaching the material as "un discours qui ne dit rien", hermeneutic involves a "plunge into the circle of understanding and believing" in an exercise of reinterpretation and understanding (Ricoeur, 1963, 596 ff). Secondly, in place of the arbitrary sign, devoid of significance, he substitutes the idea of the polysemic symbol. The great themes of Hebraic thought, for example, are not seen as empty signs, the debris on which the bricoleur goes to work, but as symbols which carry a surplus of meaning (ibid. 614). Because of this overdetermination of meaning it is not arbitrariness that is appropriate to symbolism but "la polysemie est sa loi" (ibid. 624). He quotes le Père Chenu:

> Le feu réchauffe, éclaire, purifie, brûle, régénère, consume: il signifie aussi bien la concupiscence que le Saint-Esprit (Théologie au XII^{e} siècle, cited 624).

Thirdly, instead of the empty sign being invested with meaning by its incorporation into a system, the task of the system is to stem the polysemy of the symbol, and, by limiting it, articulate its meaning (ibid, 626).

In a later essay, making a distinction between univocal (what we might provisionally call "literal") and plurivocal or symbolic discourse, he substitutes for system the idea of CONTEXT. It is the work of contexts, not of words, which establishes univocality or plurivocality In univocal discourse, which will only tolerate one significance, context must reduce and hide the semantic richness of words. This is what Wheelwright (1954) calls "stenolanguage" - a form of discourse where the inherent ambiguity of words is as far as possible suppressed. Symbolic discourse, on the other hand, in Ricoeur's figure of the palimpsest (1967, 819), allows several dimensions of meaning to be established at the same time. This is not to say that symbolic discourse is simply performing the task of the obliteration of polysemy in a less successful or less complete way, thereby requiring a further process of reduction in order to extract the cognitive content of that discourse. What is being stressed is that cognitive content can be established by making use of the polysemic character of words - and it is this process that we describe as metaphor.

The "metaphor as mistake" view alluded to at the beginning of this paper is the result of the presupposition that meaning in language is constituted by relations among discrete semantic categories, hence metaphor constitutes an interference with the boundaries of those categories. It is to be taken as a category confusion; an abuse and dislocation of language. But this view rests on a misconception. Because of the polysemy of words such boundaries are never clear in the first place. Words have blurred edges. Semantic boundaries are not established by rigorous distinction among words, since those words and the ideas they represent characteristically shift their contours from one use to another (Black, 1968, 90). The extension of a semantic or cognitive category is therefore not limited by the word used to denote it. One word suggests another, thereby extending its meaning beyond itself and transferring its meaning to other words. "Meta" (in the sense of "change") and "phora" (meaning "movement" or "carrying across") describe this process of semantic transformation where the categories of our thought are, not interfered with, but extended and redefined. One category can slip into the next, outreaching and extending the meaning of the first - that type of semantic movement called by Wheelwright "epiphor", movement "over on to". Or the original category is transformed by its juxtaposition with another, thought to be discrete and unrelated, that is, by "diaphor" - movement "through" the other category (Wheelwright, 1962, 71ff).

Although there is a risk here of escaping from one obscurantist jargon only to be seduced by another, there is an advantage in Wheelwright's distinction. Most accounts of metaphor are diaphoric - Richards' "tenor/vehicle" (1936), Black's "focus/frame" (1962) - accounting for expressions like "policemen are pigs" where the focus (policemen) is viewed through the frame (pig) and seen in the light of the associations brought to the latter. Their juxtaposition alters the conception of the focus. Epiphor, on the other hand, accounts for those instances where the unfamiliar focus is seen by its being grasped within a familiar frame, as the metaphors of religious language try to "express the inexpressible": "God is the rain", "God

is the sky". Epiphor accounts for much of the practical application of metaphorical insight - definitions are epiphorical, as are models, diagrams, maps, formulas, paradigms. All are ways of "seeing-as".

It should be stressed that these terms do not attempt to isolate types of metaphor. Extension and juxtaposition describe aspects of that process described by Hampshire (above) as the perpetual picking out of resemblances, which allows us to extend our vocabulary and enables us to move from one language to another, translating and interpreting other categories of thought. At the same time the metaphorical resources of language allow us to extend, modify, and change our own categories of thought, giving us new opportunities of "ways of seeing". Reality, to quote again from Wallace Stevens' mine of aphorisms, is a cliché from which we escape by metaphor.

Such an account, giving central prominence to the metaphoric process in the establishment of meaning in language, casts some doubts on the propriety of the traditional distinction between the literal and the metaphorical. In the foregoing account univocal discourse or "stenolanguage" is not given any priviliged status, but is rather a highly specialized derivative from "normal" usage, where the greatest possible degree of restraint is exercised on polysemy. It is, of course, an idealization, since outside the contexts of mathematics, the propositional calculus, and other systems of signs, we do not possess a form of discourse whose constituent units can be defined univocally. The production of a "stenolanguage" involves a perpetual struggle to define the blurred edges of words which will not stay still. Polysemy can be controlled and used, but cannot be obliterated. But the literal/metaphorical distinction does not admit this. Literal, in a commonsensical way, suggests clarity, precision, and most significantly, normality. It is the second term of this distinction which suggests a deviant and difficult use of words, hence the distinction always insists on the subordination of the second term to the first. The metaphorical is taken to be a cipher of the literal - a crypto-utterance which condenses or confuses meaning but which nevertheless has some sort of cognitive content. However, this crypto-sense appears like any other non-sense and the problem becomes one of how to distinguish the counterfeit from the true jewel of absurdity. This is done by reconstituting, reflexively, the steps of the condensation to see that the rules of sense, the laws of identity and non-contradiction, have not been violated. If there construction is successful the metaphor, with its appended gloss, is vindicated as "intelligible". If not, then it becomes a "piece of literal nonsense".

Certainly this view of metaphor has had a prestigious history. Its most typical form is to regard the original metaphor as a condensed simile: A is B = A is like B. If the points of resemblance can be justified, the metaphor stands as meaningful. The Encyclopaedia Britannica held this view for two hundred years, the entry in 1963 being essentially the same as the first entry in 1771. But, following Wheelwright, we can agree that the best we can do with the metaphor/simile distinction is to ignore it. Regarding metaphor as "metamorphosis", the transmutation of meaning in semantic movement, he concludes:

> The test of essential metaphor is not any rule of grammatical form but rather the quality of semantic transformation that is brought about (Wheelwright, 1962, 71).

In an entry under "Figures of Speech", the 1968 edition of Encyclopaedia Britannica produces a hesitant reappraisal, describing metaphor as an integral part of language, the development of consciousness and sensory perception, and of the earliest thought processes, but insists, nevertheless, that it is a "deviation" from the "literal". Valuable though this step is in the rehabilitation of metaphor it still leaves us with the problem of giving sense to the notion of "literal". It cannot be said to be "normal usage" since metaphorical expression is normal usage:

> Most sentences in free and fluid discourse turn out to be metaphors (Richards 1936, 120).

We cannot appeal to grammatical criteria, pointing out that "twins are birds" is an ellipsis; that "are" is not to be taken as indicating identity but is a condensation of a comparison: "twins are like birds because...." We are asking what the phrase means, not what are the intricacies of its syntax. Do we mean simply that when we find an utterance intelligible it is "literal" but when we confront an initial difficulty in its interpretation it is "metaphorical", indicating that it is to be taken "in a different way"? This is probably a better account of the matter, but it would then follow that when "twins are birds" becomes intelligible to us, as it no doubt has always been for the Nuer, the expression will cease to be a metaphor. We will now understand what has always been "literal" Nuer usage.

The distinction certainly seems to reflect something of our own prejudices:

> We have our neat distinctions between metaphor and fact, and we are bound at first to assume that the assertion "Some men are lions" is an assertion of one or the other kind, either figuratively or literally accepted. We have to learn that often, in translating primitive languages, it is not possible to make just such sorts of distinction between the literal and the metaphorical; and we have to be content to recognize that such statements made by primitive people cannot really be said to be of the one sort or the other. They lie between these categories of ours. They do not properly fit ... The study of primitive thought, then, reminds us that it is not always appropriate to suppose that metaphorical and literal interpretations of experience are, in the very nature of thinking, distinct; it is only when we, unlike most primitive peoples think about thought, that we begin to make such distinctions. (Lienhardt, 1954, 98-9, 106.)

But why do we need the distinction at all? Should we not conclude from this example that it is our thinking about thought that is misguided? If we regard metaphor as an integral, essential, and normal part of the constitution of meaning in language, establishing, by the relation and juxtaposition of categories, a way of seeing appropriate to a particular universe of discourse, the category "literal" becomes superfluous. To insist on it represents just that capitulation to the compelling undertow of logic mentioned at the opening of this paper. We find that logic provides formal criteria for deciding between truth and falsity and go on to mistake these for

criteria of meaningfulness in language. But where are these rules applicable when we find that language does not consist of a system of truth functions?

> The familiar, inherited forms of language turn our attention towards certain kinds of resemblance and we cannot easily see through them and past them. We cannot return to a state of nature and to an innocent eye and, by a new social contract, start to build the institution of language again upon some rational principles. (Hampshire, 1959, 31).

It may be only an accident of history that we are best with the assumptions of empiricism and positivism which lead to our impoverishment of metaphor and our suspicion of other "ways of seeing". The stylistic metaphors of Old Norse poetry were called "kennings", the word being present in the vocabulary of Middle English and surviving in some Scottish dialects with the sense of "knowledge" or "mental cognition". It is indicative of our own prejudices that the Oxford English Dictionary makes a travesty of the word by defining it as "a periphrastic expression used instead of a simple name."

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