

Metaphor Game

The Dynamic Metaphor as an analytic Instrument of Understanding.

*"I should not like my writing to spare other
People the trouble of thinking. But, if possible,
To stimulate someone to thoughts of his own."
-Ludwig Wittgenstein¹*

A person, sitting in his room, opens a book that he has chosen to read. Not without hesitation, he leafs through the pages and looks at the form of the poem - reading the beginnings or endings of sentences until he stops, stopped as if trapped by the lines: "The hour is not clear; again / the night sober-minded leaves, that whose greenness / opposite toward inside / slowly passes / in the sign of knife's thread whose burn / is harder than the hardest of metals, and his light / not from the sun is borrowed / and eating the bread's inside; / in the true night tonight not in vain / shall suspend a smile as interior tax, shall not ease / on man's move, flower, wasp, shade or stone; the youth weary with satiety / stress the rubbish herald / the dead that finds life in those sober-minded night leaves / that never should obtain greenness from a sunbeam / but from outside streets descending as twilight / in the hour continuing over the bread's inside"²

He reads the poem once in its entirety, then again, but the poem is still unclear. He stops for a moment. He extracts familiar words from the succession, connects them to adjacent words, yet does not succeed in understanding. He says to himself, "The literal meanings of the individual words are understood": hour; night; leaves; youth. These are common, everyday words, trapped, as it were, in incomprehensible phrases: "The hour is not clear"; "the night sober-minded leaves"; "the youth weary with satiety." He stops again and thinks about the sequential acts he has performed in reading a poem without understanding it or, more precisely, understanding individual words but not understanding the phrases and their meaning. Now he asks himself: "What constitutes this gap between understandable words and incomprehensible meaning?" For a moment, he thinks of this issue as singular and specific, himself as someone who reads poetry, who has not succeeded in understanding a poem. However, he soon realizes that the person in this "story" could be anyone, anywhere there is a gap between the understanding of a "word" and the understanding of its meaning in the context of a poem. On second thought, he reflects, this gap is also the miracle of poetry, the beauty that feeds it, which seduces one to take part in the poetic

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Philosophical Investigation 1953, Preface

² Hurvitz, Yair 1986, p 8. The poem ends without a point, according to the source.

dialogue. The gap could also be described as that between the active word in its literal meaning and the active word in its figurative meaning, or in other words, the metaphor.

This research stems from a common embarrassment: reading a poem without understanding it. The gap between a reader's fluency and richness of vocabulary and a lack of understanding prompted me to examine what happens in the transition from the understanding of a word "on its own" to the incomprehension of that word in the context of a poem. It became clear in the initial stages of research that the areas which complicate understanding are the metaphors interspersed in a poem (or actually forming its backbone). In order to understand this kind of metaphor and how it works, I turned to scholarly literature, which did not provide working tools nor an understanding of metaphors in poetry. The literature was primarily preoccupied with the definition of a metaphor, the relationship between its parts, or the classification of common metaphors. In other words, an additional gap opened between the abundantly available scholarly literature and the inability to "translate" these insights into a working tool that provides understanding.

This study is meant to complement the accepted insights on metaphors (Aristotle; Beardsley 1962; Richards 1936; Black 1962; Lakoff & Johnson 1980; Lakoff 1993; Lakoff & Johnson 1999; Turner & Fauconnier 1995; Barcelona 2000; Fauconnier 2002) and the examples put forward to corroborate them—"Man is a Wolf" (Black 1962); "Love is a Journey" (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, 1999); "Sally is a block of Ice" (Searle 1993); "Time is Space" (Fauconnier 1997); "Crazy Numbers" and "The Genie in the Computer" (Fauconnier & Turner 1995)—based on the argument that these definitions cannot serve as a tool to understanding a metaphor such as "while the wall's wall talks to the body's wall" (Horowitz 1996).

Resolving the complexity of the example given above, as well as others like it, marks the metaphor as a dynamic pattern (Harshav 2007, 34) whose meaning is the activity (Wittgenstein 1953)³ and leads to the construction of a model describing various paths of interpretation—the Metaphor Game. This model is based on the logic of metaphors and exposes the sequence of the familial resemblance of a word – variants in meaning dispersed and active within a context (Wittgenstein 1953). This study's intention is to shift the focus from defining a metaphor to developing tools for the description and research of actual metaphorical texts (Harshav 2007, 32). This description will not address the figurative tangle described in the body of existing research as suggestive and false. These studies tend to see a metaphor as a false phrase (Ortony 1993 and Miller 1993) or as an irregularity (Glucksberg & Keysar 1990). The suggested model sees the

³ "look at the sentence as an instrument, and at its sense as its employment" (PI §421).

metaphor as a key to understanding. This model is a constitutive model that describes four principle narratives of the dynamics of metaphors that lead to enlightenment.

The innovative aspect of the present research lies in its foundation of a model of the Metaphor Game, validating the assertion that the metaphor is an activity that always produces meaning. This is done by means of a formalized, dynamic model of the logic of metaphors, and demonstration of this model by means of four flow-charts: Fracture, Expansion, Cross-referencing and Division:

In *Metaphoric Fracture*, meaning is attained through the tracing of a metaphor (which is constructed of two terms bound within it, that in turn gain figurative elements when brought together), that fractures sequentially, while splitting the connection between the two figurative terms of said metaphor to literal meaning (or a realization of a metaphor, as defined by Formalists), with “Ma” standing for a figurative term bound within the metaphor; Ma+Mb are joined to produce a metaphor constructed by the confluence of two figurative terms (the combination of which creates the metaphor). La, Lb, Lc are all literal terms, with the metaphor described canonically as a two-term relation (A+B), where each term can assume more than a single word or sentence in a given text. The + sign signifies the connection of two figurative terms. The → sign signifies the logical process, the traceable shift which discloses the transformations of meaning:

$$\begin{array}{l} \text{Ma} + \text{Mb} \quad \rightarrow \quad \text{La} + \text{Lc} \\ \text{or} \quad \quad \quad \rightarrow \quad \text{Lb} + \text{Lc} \end{array}$$

Formalization is merely another way of expressing the explicatory process for those to whom it forges an easier path to understanding.

In *Metaphoric Cross-Referencing*, meaning is disclosed by tracing the literal elements constructing a metaphor that moves sequentially, turning its movements into a metaphor :which describes another different literal reality

$$\begin{array}{l} \text{La} + \text{Lb} \quad \rightarrow \quad \text{Ma} + \text{Mb} \\ \text{Ma} + \text{Mb} \quad \rightarrow \quad \text{Lb} + \text{Lc} \end{array}$$

In *Metaphoric Expansion*, meaning is disclosed by tracing the identical literal elements that move sequentially and expand, as it were, into two successive options of different metaphors:

$$\begin{array}{l} \text{La} + \text{Lb} \quad \rightarrow \quad \text{Ma} + \text{Mc} \\ \quad \quad \quad \rightarrow \quad \text{Mb} + \text{Mc} \end{array}$$

In *Metaphoric Division*, meaning is defined by tracing the constituent figurative elements of which are split into two new and differing metaphors :

$$\begin{array}{l} \text{Ma} + \text{Mb} \quad \rightarrow \quad \text{Ma} + \text{Mc} \\ \quad \quad \quad \rightarrow \quad \text{Mb} + \text{Md} \end{array}$$

The ability to see the changing metaphorical flowcharts that I have sketched first requires the construction of a metaphorical backbone. The backbone consists of metaphors within the poem that are scattered individually, but linked to each other by linguistic, phonetic or semantic movement. ‘Movement’ is the term I will use to describe the course along which words move and are set in new contexts. One of the metaphor’s components dangles and moves to another metaphor, and is bound to it. Metaphors that have linked, through one of the modes of movement, will henceforward be called ‘vertebrae’ and are marked as the main and most critical elements used for understanding a poem. I would also like to note that the backbone serves as an illustration and documentation of sorts, of the pragmatic route that a word takes as it moves from one context to another. This is a construct that seems to suggest itself on its own, rather than being arbitrarily imposed on the poem. This is the stage of marking. The second stage, which lends meaning to the linkage of the vertebrae, is the explicatory logical stage disclosing the rules of the metaphoric ‘game.’

This study describes a model, the foundation of which consists, ostensibly, of the isolated metaphor, which is linked by a systematic logical connection to other isolated metaphors scattered sequentially throughout the text. The model shows that, in many cases, the metaphor is not a static element, but rather a dynamic unit that breaks out of its boundaries and opens up in its subsequent contact with other elements in a poem. The model shows how a metaphor moves sequentially, and seemingly marks out the vertebrae which make up the metaphorical backbone, and how, following the logic of the metaphorical backbone, it exposes meaning.

The Metaphor Game research -- which proposes another possible narrative of understanding in the constitution of a logical procedure through practice, as well as another option of possible logical familial relation – manifests itself in Harshav's description of dynamic patterns together with Wittgenstein's mobile meaning, based on the view that Harshav's productive metaphor is entirely in line with Wittgenstein's ‘meaning as use’ model. The present model is an application of these insights in the sense that it is a particular expression of the fact that meaning stems only from use.

In other words, the Metaphor Game model, which is a departure to a new path, gains its validity from the way we use it, in keeping with the ideas of Harshav and Wittgenstein: "If a metaphor is a two-term relation, any of its terms may cover much more than a word in a text. It is often an open-ended relation rather than a fixed unit." (Harshav 2007, 34); "We must observe metaphors in literature not as static, discrete units, but as context-sensitive, dynamic patterns, changing in the text continuum." (Harshav 2007, 34); it is necessary to track the changes taking place in the relations of a word that is planted in a different context each time (Wittgenstein, BB, p 9-11), to observe the generality of the word as it is used in our language (Wittgenstein, BB p 108), and to uncover the course of changes which is the array of constitutive rules (Wittgenstein PI, §82) of the language game being played (Wittgenstein, PI §13, §50, §83). In Wittgenstein's words: "The language is itself the vehicle of thought" (Wittgenstein, PI §329), and "One cannot guess how a word functions. One has to look at its use and learn from that" (Wittgenstein, PI §340), "I know what a word means in certain contexts" (BB p 9), "We must do away with all explanation, and description alone must take its place... by looking into the workings of our language" (Wittgenstein, PI §109).

Let us return to the poem "Night Truth the Night" in order to demonstrate how the text of a poem can be clarified and explained with the help of the Metaphor Game.

The poem opens with a statement, "The hour is not clear". However, the following sentence connects this unclear hour with "the night sober-minded midnight leaves." From this moment on, the reader is drawn into continual and intensive figurative frameworks that are linked to each other: "The hour is not clear; again / the night sober-minded leaves, that whose greenness / opposite toward inside / slowly passes / in the sign of knife's thread whose burn / is harder than the hardest of metals, and his light / not from the sun is borrowed / and eating the bread's inside." These metaphors are not closed and static⁴ but dynamic and open: "... the youth weary with satiety / stress the rubbish herald / the dead that finds life in those sober-minded leaves / that never should obtain greenness from a sunbeam / but from outside streets descending as twilight / in the hour continuing over the bread's inside". The sobriety of the aforementioned night is hugely important in contrast to one's inability to understand it.⁵ The use of "again the night sober-minded" gives the feeling of something that is ritualistic and familiar, like using the

⁴ Like the familiar metaphor found in research: George is a gorilla.

⁵ On the emotional level, the reader is apparently invited to feel the activities involved in organizing the materials, i.e., to "feel" the activities of sobriety.

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common phrase "It's raining again," and contradicts our ability or inability to understand the feeling at this stage.

Upon first reading the poem, the metaphor "night sober-minded leaves" is not comprehensible, just like the other metaphors, and there is no clarity to "the bread's inside". The feeling of linguistic disorder and the inability to understand stand in stark contrast to the organization of the poem, which is built from four sentences—two of them literal and two of them figurative.

I will 'extract' the metaphorical backbone from the poem in order to properly establish the Metaphorical Game:

First vertebrae: "again / *the night sober-minded leaves*, that whose *greenness* / opposite toward inside/"

Second vertebrae: "in the *true night tonight*."

Third vertebrae: "stress the rubbish herald / the dead that finds life *in those sober-minded night leaves* / that never should obtain *greenness* from a sunbeam."

The first vertebrae pass through a Metaphorical Division.⁶

The first division is the component "leaves" from "again / the night sober-minded leaves", which for a fleeting moment acquire the quality of reality through their genuine leafy green color, thus constituting a metaphorical break, but only for a moment, because they soon become a figurative component in a different sense—"that whose greenness (of the leaves) / opposite toward inside /". In other words, the metaphor "night sober-minded leaves" ($Ma + Mb$)⁷ creates a metaphorical break by constructing the figurative component of the picture into a literary meaning, "greenness of leaves" ($Lb + Lx$).⁸ The movement $Ma + Mb \rightarrow Lb + Lx$ goes back to being a different figurative metaphor with a different meaning through Metaphorical Division. In other words, "night sober-minded leaves" ($Ma + Mb$) becomes greenness (of the leaves) / opposite toward inside /", or ($Mb + Mx (+Mc)$).⁹ The complete flowchart is: $Ma + Mb \rightarrow Mb + Mx (+Mc)$.

The second Metaphorical Division is the component "night" from "the night sober-minded leaves" ($Ma + Mb$), which adds three metaphorical qualities: "night that slowly

⁶ In other words, the metaphorical meaning is built up by a metaphorical picture that divides into two different metaphorical pictures, $Ma + Mb \rightarrow Ma + Mc$

$\rightarrow Mb + Md$

⁷ Ma = sober-minded, Mb = leaves.

⁸ Lb = leaves, Lx = their greenness.

⁹ Mb = leaves, Mx = their greenness, Mc = opposite toward inside.

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passes... and burns like a sharp knife” (Ma + Mf)¹⁰; night whose “light not from the sun is borrowed (Ma + Mg)¹¹; and “night that eats the bread's inside” (Ma + Mh (+Mm)).¹² This dynamic and sensitive picture describes movement (slowly passes), a feeling (which burns harder), and existence (bread's interior). The dynamic is:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Ma + Mf} &\rightarrow \text{Ma + Mb} \\ &\rightarrow \text{Ma + Mg} \\ &\rightarrow \text{Ma + Mh (+Mm)}^{13} \end{aligned}$$

The complete Metaphorical Division can now be described: the aforementioned metaphorical picture made up of Ma + Mb —“the sober-minded night leaves”—is divided into two metaphorical pictures, the first of which refers to the leaves " that whose greenness / opposite toward inside," while a second metaphorical picture refers to night "in the sign of knife's thread whose burn / is harder than the hardest of metals":

$$\begin{aligned} &\rightarrow \text{Mb + Mx (+Mc) Ma + Mb} \\ &\rightarrow \text{Mh (+ Mm)}^{14} + \text{Mg Ma + (Mf} \end{aligned}$$

At this stage, we have disclosed only a fraction of the dynamic understanding which can be facilitated by the Metaphor Game.

The second vertebra is identical to the poem's title, with the addition of "In the true night tonight". This is the first time that the voice of the speaker's experience is heard-not in vain (I) shall suspend a smile; (I) shall not ease on man's move. The true night refers to a period of time of deep insight and realization of the world. "[I] shall not ease" implies an investigation and its relation to an object, which includes the animal, vegetable and mineral worlds—“flower, wasp, shade or stone.” This vertebra will reach a different stage after understanding the meaning of "this night sober-minded."

The third vertebra is the core of the poem, referring back to the other vertebrae for further meaning. Consisting of "...the rubbish herald / the dead that finds life in those sober-minded night leaves", it also undergoes Metaphorical Division. The first Metaphorical Division, "the dead that finds life" (Mm + Mk),¹⁵ and the dead that have a limited ability to live only in the nighttime, during “sober-minded night”. The second metaphorical picture is an implication of this

¹⁰ Ma = night, Mf = sharp knife.

¹¹ Ma = night, Mg = his light not from the sun is borrowed.

¹² Ma = night, Mh = bread, Mm = inside.

¹³ The movement can also be described as follows, following “reduction” of the term “night,” which is subsumed in all three of the poem’s descriptions:

Ma + (Mf + Mg + Mh (+ Mm))

¹⁴ The metaphorical division can also be described in the following expanded fashion:

Ma + Mb → Mb + Mx (+ Mc) + (Mf + Mg + Mh (+ Mm))

¹⁵ Mk = dead that finds, Mm = life.

metaphorical insight. When the two metaphors are set beside each other—“dead finds life” and “night sober-minded leaves”—they betray a structure of parallelism like the common phrase, "I'm exhausted, I can't walk another step". The night is sober life, like active life, in the sense that to know death is an ability that belongs to the living. It means to seize the moment, to live in the present, whereas in the second it is sharp and burns an impression of deep sobriety. An alternate meaning of "life" carries on to two meanings from the same sentence: (1) the dead who live for but a second, or (2) the dead, who are able to live, do so only at the behest of a living person. Death gives the living the option to live, while giving momentary life to the already dead. In other words, “the dead that finds life” is a fulfilled life at “night sober-minded leaves, which fulfills life”, or else “the dead who finds life” is an activity of “sober-minded night leaves, fulfills life”:

$$Mm + Mk \rightarrow Mm + [Mb + Mx (+Mc)].^{16}$$

The second Metaphorical Division, “those sober-minded night leaves that never should obtain greenness from a sunbeam”, forces us to relate to that specific night. The specification of that sober-minded night sends us back to the understanding of the first vertebra. What it means is that this is not just another night, which may be apprehended in the capacity of "again", but a night that involves that particular sober-mindedness an action. Or else, sober-minded night leaves is a continuation of deep perception emanating from that sober night; the description of the wide metaphor of the night- Ma, those sober-minded night leaves-Mb + Mx (+Mc).¹⁷ And in that way:

$$Mb + Mx (+Mc) + Ma \quad [$$

Immediately afterwards, the component “leaves” divides into another metaphor through the greenness of the leaves that emanates from the sun—a metonymy for the abilities of living leaves—by means of metaphorical fracture. Unlike the first vertebra, however, here the fracture does not extend for only a moment. The metaphorical fracture gives back to the green leaves a quality of reality, but upside-down: the leaves receive life not from the sun but from the bread's inside. In other words, the component leaves become figurative again, but in a different way, through Metaphorical Division: "Those night sober-minded leaves," Mb + Mx (+Mc) + Ma becomes "that never should obtain greenness from a sunbeam", Mb + Mx (+Mg),¹⁸ while the dynamic step is:

$$Ma + Mb + Mx (+Mc) \rightarrow Mb + Mx (+Mg)$$

¹⁶ In other words, (fulfilled) life on a night [of] sober-minded leaves: Mm + [Mb + Mx (+ Mc)].

¹⁷ Unlike sober-minded leaves, Ma + Mb.

¹⁸ Mb = leaves, Mx = greenness, Mg = not from a sunbeam.

This upside-down quality again qualifies the likeness: ‘Night sober-minded leaves’ is ‘night sober-minded life’. The leaves are the living whose life emanates not from the sun but from the bread's inside, from the interior source. In that night, there is a deep understanding that the source of the living is interior, thus returning to the first vertebra— “night sober-minded leaves / that whose greenness/ opposite towards inside”.

Now, we can make sense of the logical game that is constructed through a reading of the poem. The night-Ma, which refers to that particular night-is the “night whose green leaves opposite toward inside”, Mb + Mx (+Mc), divided into another variant of the same night “whose green leaves never should obtain greenness from a sunbeam”, Mb + Mx (+Mg). This means:

$$Ma + Mb + Mx (+Mc) \rightarrow Ma + Mb + Mx (+Mg)$$

If we reduce or take out the common component, the green leaves, we are left with night (Ma) + opposite toward inside (Mc); and with night (Ma) + never should obtain greenness from the sun (Mg). This means night which is interior—and night which is light interior. The process should be: $Ma + Mc \rightarrow Ma + Mg$.

The reduction of the component is a temporary step (that emphasizes the quality of the night) pending the broadening that will show the framework of the parallels utilized. “Truth night” is “night sober-minded leaves” is “night fulfills life” is “that night that revives the dead”, through the analogy to the leaves which need the sun’s nutrition for their existence, and in contrast to the ‘I’ that exists in the poem: in order to exist themselves, the leaves needs nutrition from an interior light, which is the bread's inside. This means that the leaves are life, which in turn are the interior. Through our understanding of it, the poem can also be described in this manner: night sober-minded leaves, which is night sober-minded life, which is night existing as life from a light which is interior, which is the bread of nutrition. Alternatively, night sober-minded night, life sober-minded life, through leaves sober-minded leaves.

We might add that the unknown hour becomes an exact time of action (“in the hour continuing over the bread's inside”). There is no importance to the particular time (day, hour, season), rather simply to the action, which is described as occurring at a particular time. “Again” refers, it would seem, to many unknown hours in the sense of time, which is sober-minded, with understanding “transforming” the normative relationship of time. The quality of the night, whose

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light is not borrowed from the sun, and which eats the interior bread, is parallel to the quality of the leaves, whose greenness is not from the sun, turning it upside down.¹⁹

Hurvitz, in his complex poem, reverses many common truths. He revives the dead, transforms linear time in its action, and makes it possible for leaves to grow (exist) without the sun. All these insights were made possible by playing the Metaphor Game.

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¹⁹ We can say more about "the time of action" that refers to "that action" through the appearance of time in the poem "night", "that night", "hour continuing", "as twilight", "slowly passes"; and the interior time – "youth weary with satiety"; I shall add more, so that sensitive readers can reach the analogy between leaves and life and through that lead them to understand the meaning of the poem without giving them a report on the interpretive activities of the Metaphor Game. But such success proves the existence of the dynamic cognitive process that this model exposes.

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