Three Constitutive Conditions of the Revealing Metaphor

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Abstract

This article aims to show the conditions under which a revealing metaphor becomes valid and hermeneutically significant, based on the two terms that are placed in comparative balance. If the interpretation that deserves to be attached to a revealing metaphor highlights its meaning and instruments it, then the double process of adapting the common attribute of the two terms to the object of insertion can be revealed starting from this interpretation as well. We identify hence three conditions for a genuine creation of the metaphor: 1) the suitability of the host-object structure to the features of the common attribute; 2) the pre-existence of an attributive equivalent in the host-object; 3) the existence of an insertion perspective (as a possibility of equivalence). Discovering semantic bridges among contrasting linguistic entities passes through the filter of this threefold conditional package and lays the grounds for a possible methodology of terminological selection and then of metaphorical construction.

Keywords: *migration, labor force, implications, individual, family, society, integration, exclusion.*

Part of the philosophical research that targeted the literary work and the linguistic phenomenon, ever since Ancient Greece, the considerations regarding metaphor opened a field of debate that would considerably exceed the limited scope of a rigorously systematic poetics, developed minutely to its latest aesthetic consequences. They have come to reveal, in addition to a stylistic analysis, the cognitive and hermeneutical virtues of the metaphor, its possible metaphysical framework, its spiritually universal character that translates, whenever possible, a transcendence of the contextual determinations connecting it to a particular discourse. In philosophy, the metaphor is meant to build a somewhat roundabout reference, on an unusual gnoseological direction, different from any directly denominative approach that places next to the real object a conceptual correspondent mirroring it intensionally with utmost fidelity. Therefore, starting from Aristotle's definition ("metaphor is the application of an alien name by

transference either from genus to species, or from species to genus, or from species to species, or by analogy, that is, proportion. Thus, from genus to species, as: «There lies my ship»; for lying at anchor is a species of lying"[1]) and from the indication explicitly contained by the etymology of the term (the word «metaphor» comes from the Greek μεταφερειν (μετα-φερω), which means to «carry over»"[2]), Lucian Blaga made a difference within the current sense of the term, among simply plasticizing metaphors and revealing ones, seeking to demonstrate that the functional difference between the two recommends the latter to a particular philosophical destiny – of unveiling the unknown aspects of the object to which it applies. Thus, "type II metaphors [the revealing ones] enhance the significance of the very deeds they refer to ... they are meant to bring to light something *hidden*, even about the facts they target… they somehow try the *revelation* of a «mystery»,"[3] unlike the plasticizing metaphors that "do not enrich the actual content of the fact they refer to"[4] (they merely limit to a stylistic process of expressive completion having an exclusively artistic function). The revealing metaphors become instruments of a semantic-gnoseological digression bearing on a reality that escapes a direct apprehension, perhaps also by virtue of a difference that is difficult to overcome from the point of view of a logically rigorous and explicit comparison (which would assume the difficult task to bring two divergent terms closer). Their role is to indicate the cryptic nature of the object and to invite the exploratory intelligence either to speculate in a creative way new meanings or to consolidate already established significance.

Explained in its inner mechanism, the metaphorizing process consists in comparing two terms and, according to certain noted similarities, in their juxtaposition in order to reveal some hidden aspects of one of them. Comparisons use these similarities or quite often construct them to allow mediation within knowledge, for an element to emphasize, to highlight obscure features of the other element in order to allow for an obviously unorthodox (and most often paradoxical) characterization. Comparisons note one or more common attributes to develop, at the level of the semantic series of the target term, a complex of significant assertions in order to illustrate truths that would be difficult to prove in the course of a classic discourse (which operates with formal sequences and

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[1] Aristotle, *Poetics* XII 1457b 6-9, translated by S. H. Butcher, accessed February 8, 2012, http://philosophy.eserver.org/aristotle/ poetics.txt

[2] Lucian Blaga, *Geneza metaforei şi sensul culturii* (The Genesis of Metaphor and the Sense of Culture) (Editura pentru Literatură Universală, 1969), 276.

[3] Blaga, *Geneza metaforei,* 279.

[4] Blaga, *Geneza metaforei,* 276.

requires a mutually validating coherence belonging to the scrupulous principle of non-contradiction). In addition, these common attributes set, within a marked difference, a subtle identity designed to reconcile, by means of wise overlooking, the mismatch of mutual reflection and to potentiate the effect of using the content transferred in compliance with a participatory mechanism whose secrets belong to the very rational structure of the world. The legitimacy of the gnoseological metaphoric miracle depends on this identity. The original speculative development – which has built a leading thread through the spiritual reality – relies on it. By means of such comparison, the spectacular assimilation of two heterogeneous domains of objectivity becomes possible. Moreover, the genuine metaphor lies where identity is hardly noticeable, where difference is more difficult to convert in likeliness, where the contrast resulting from a clear-cut difference accesses a genuine mystery by means of its polarity tension. The revealing force of the metaphor is required where normal decrypting paths fail, to the extent that merely attaching a deeply significant attribute can trigger a cognitive "reaction", it may cause a self-revealing reply of the thing. Therefore, the whole comprehensive effort consistent with the comparative moment is required to draw relevant conclusions from the set parallelism, to show which is the spiritual effect of the bridge built and how the common attribute is inserted (enriched by the unusual contribution of the first term) in the constellation of characterising determinations of the second. Hence, as Paul Ricoeur argues, although "the metaphor is formally a deviation from the current usage of words, from a dynamic point of view, it originates in juxtaposing the thing that is to be defined and the foreign thing wherefrom it borrows the name."[5] He thus emphasizes that the function of comparison is called to save the prospect of stylistic differences by sub-summative equalizing and to free the cognitive stakes from the aesthetic conditioning implied by the regular use of the metaphoric process. In a phenomenological construct, a functional order of cognitive intention – highlighted in Heidegger's definition wherefrom the rationalist canon proper to an analytical consideration transpires (i.e., an approach based on the pre-eminence of division) – is reversed: "a comparison builds equality between different elements in order to make such difference conspicuous."[6] This intensional perspective transforms the difference in a noematic preferential landmark and paradoxically subordinates the synthesising "faculty" to the result characteristic to the opposed endeavour, whereas the

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[5] Paul Ricoeur, *Metafora vie* (La Métaphore vive) (Bucharest: Univers, 1984), 46.
[6] Martin Heidegger, *Originea operei de artă* (On the Origin of the Work of Art) (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1995).

perspective typical to the metaphorical truth tends to overshadow the differential factor in support of a fertile identification (born inside the apperceptive inner core of the creative personality). Donald Davidson, an analytic philosopher, was the first to suggest the second construction and to introduce the term "insight" in the metaphor thematic context. He explained that this perception allows for the understanding of "something as something else" by "making literal statement that inspires or prompts the insight"[7] (i.e. something of aperceptive nature). He enriched with a psychological nuance (playing an argumentative role) the synthetic process deemed to define the proximity of two heterogeneous elements, thereby delimiting a particular "spiritual" area, which is responsible for the availability openness to such a figure of speech. This area doubles the rational faculty and inaugurates in the vast landscape of applicative modalities of the identity principle its own synthetic methodology, which paves the way for the cognitive leap by surprising detours and intensional creative modeling.

From here on, the elaborate result of this schematic mechanism involves a hermeneutical unfolding, a detailed presentation meant to explain where there should be founding or consistent reflections of the concentrated suggestion the metaphorical proximity contains, where the elliptical message of a simple applicative transmutation should germinate (wrapped in the polymorphic appearance of an extensively thematic discourse). Therefore, a clarifying as well as pioneering interpretation is required to suggest a flexible parallel between two constellations of ideas (one, generating exemplifying characterizations, which belongs to an integration of the common attribute – the one of the first element, and the other, which belongs to "receptive" expectations, which borrows this attribute and offers its own interpretation – the one of the second element).

Meanwhile, one feels the need to further value the revealing potential of metaphor, a sustained strengthening of its "exploratory" core, namely *côté penchant* toward the fecund application (creating new meanings and new contextual determinations), implying that an appropriate interpretation can push the unusual meaning far beyond the boundaries within which the first conclusive definitions of the final "insertion" (the common attribute) place it.

Still belonging to interpretation is the translation of the essence of metaphor under many guises corresponding to the initial "situation," which have a special charm, the more so as it symbolizes more cryptically the configuration-paradigm, the more so as, being at a considerable distance from the ideational context of the

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[7] Donald Davidson, "What metaphor means," in *Inquiries into truth and interpretation* (Oxford University Press, 1984), 263.

first element, they confirm, by the "phenomenology" of their organization, the significant insertion mechanism of the common attribute. Finally yet importantly, interpretation is further responsible for building explanatory bridges meant to connect the metaphor (and the newly established significance) to other truths with which it forms a comprehensive whole; it contributes to clarifying some sectors of reality that may not have so much in common with the two constituent elements or with the mystery thus revealed. This clarification emerges from the initially revealing corpus in a unusual explanatory endeavor that may form a spectacular reflection of the original creative significance, highlighting a paradox Paul Ricoeur noticed and brought to light: the creative combination of terms in a metaphor still generates significance, which has a revealing character (inferring thus that "«paradoxical» metaphors are not metaphors as exceptions, but par excellence").[8] This also means that it is, sooner or later, likely to be subjected to checking, i.e. testable on behalf of a correspondence specific to reality (able to be validated in its direct relationship with the admissible limits of assimilation and with the applicative legitimacy of the determinants of the first element). This is why there is a grain of truth in the (analytically-oriented) somewhat clear-cut position, which admitted the existence of some validity semantic conditions (liable to general consensus) that were to account for the truth value of a metaphor, which could be expressed by mapping all respects according to which the two terms are resembling or similar ones. Such a criterion could be at the basis for verification of an interpretation, for the confrontation of the result of the creative endeavor with the actual state considered, as the reference the set of similar attributes constitutes may condition in itself, under semantic clarity circumstances, any explicatory development, which starts from it. Thus, despite counterarguments constructed later on by Donald Davidson and Max Black (who claimed that metaphors cannot function as referential expressions), the deep meaning of the concept of truth (freed from too strict formalist constraints) allows for testing the validity of a metaphorical expression, both directly and in the extended version made up by the implications of its "putting to work".

Moreover, there are grounds to support a subtler and more difficult to perceive relationship of justifying the metaphor via the interpretation it occasions, meaning that, had it not been for the interpretation and analogies that spring from it, the metaphor would lack substance, credibility, safety. The interpretation makes the essence of metaphorization viable; it highlights the validity of the metaphor, it empowers it, it gives meaning to it. It is the illustrative materialization of the

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[8] Ricoeur, *Metafora vie*, 52.

establishment of a simple similarity and sufficient rationale of the associative construction. Becoming thus necessary, it translates into conceptual language what remains a mere suggestion in the figure of speech, claiming the intensional conversion of the aperceptive intuition into thinking and discursive explanation (of an *insertion* attributive phenomenon requiring also a validating recognition of a significant reflection of the metaphorizing mechanism into realness). Moreover, replication into realness of the common attribute equally pertains to a unifying hermeneutical principle and to a sharp ability to adapt the contextual detail to the general task of the transferring process. Moreover, the main task of interpretation consists in revealing the two-fold process of adapting the common attribute to the object of insertion and vice versa, i.e. in the characterization of a combination of two determinant complexes, proper to the two terms. The manner the host object "receives" the common attribute accounts for the legitimacy of the entire metaphorization, for its validity, of how justifiable an established revealing association is; whereas the rules of constructing a metaphor should imply a conditional basis derived from a complete coverage of the valid circumstances of attributive insertion.

Consequently, one can infer three constitutive conditions of the revealing metaphor according to the specific rules of harmonizing an attribute with an intensional and determinative complex manifestly conflicting its comparative "partner". The conditions we refer to are: 1) whether the host object structure is suitable to the common attribute characteristics and to the rule imposed by the original meaning of interpretation; 2) whether there is any pre-existent attributive equivalent in the host object (represented by the similar components, which occasions comparison); 3) whether there is any insertion prospect, any founding framework offering the opportunity to establish an equivalence (i.e. taking some of the characteristics of the first term).

The appropriateness of the structure

The objectual structure is the validating reference of any metaphorizing juxtaposition and a hermeneutical principle of replicating the common attribute into realness. This structure must be made in such a manner that the attribute, once inserted, should preserve and embody the original meaning, should enable both the revelation of mystery and the suggestive application of the interpretation that develops the attributive significance; and should do all the above in an coherentist agreement that reflects the intensional harmony of the host-term concept. If all the properties of the concept of the second term are organized appropriately and from

a formal as well as functional viewpoint, then the construction of the revealing meaning and the entire system of inferences hence generated from it will gain the mark of authenticity and will appropriately meet truths that claim they pertain to the unusual metaphorical significance. Thus, everything is reduced to the image of a semantic concordance that should be established between the foreign intensional body and the similar acquisition identified in or taken from the primary term according to a model suggested by the preliminary interpretation developed that it "brings along". Otherwise, this preliminary characterization outlines on its own the overall guidelines mirroring the structural skeleton of the host-object according to a principle that stems directly from the common attribute concept, the varied addition creating the local color of each application, being to some extent one of its consequences, oriented toward it and made up according to prescriptions deduced from determinations that belong to it.

The salience of a structural consistency between the preliminary interpretation that announces the constitutive intention of a metaphor and the target configuration, which receives the unusual significance guiding any analogical juxtaposition and paves the way for the ingenious variation of possible concrete forms, the attributes may take throughout the preparing or illustrating course of the main revealing endeavor. One might say that a comprehensive standard of characterizing propedeutic is an accompanying example in searching a term appropriate to a revealing metaphorization to the same extent that an intensional configuration may be the reference mark of the heuristic folding of an interpretative complex endowed with expositive virtues. Therefore, in this direction, the peak of symmetry, initially "forbidden" by the differential distance defining an authentic metaphor, is reached, but which later on is supposed when the conclusions of the intended revelation are established. One cannot go beyond the abstract structural parallelism, to the extent that novelty of a creative materialisation should be provided, to the extent that the exigency of the problematic situation requires a concrete intensional distancing, a notional content differentiation. Hence, as Blaga pointed out "the revealing metaphors amalgamate or conjugate two analogous – disanalogous facts."[9] It is in this duality that their typically structural condition lies, which makes the transfer of similarity not a merely suggestive equivalence, but a fruitful and evocative borrowing that allows for a cognitive leap. If limited to schematic affinity, the analogous juxtaposition allows for the establishment of a spiritual tension and offers to the hermeneutic

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[9] Blaga, *Geneza metaforei,* 310.

discernment matter for the distinctive circumscriptions such a huge explanatory endeavour cannot lack.

The identification of consistent structural characteristics leads to the principle of discovering an ideal equilibrium of both sides that form the conditional duality of the metaphor, as a fair measure defining the concrete analogous equation. In the creator's project, this principle should pre-exist and brought up to the level of discursiveness by the hermeneutist. The common attribute is an element of the constitutive task and a feature of the already formed figure of speech, showing clearly the boundary that separates the similarities sector from the "region" where there is nothing else but difference. Starting from this, one can establish at the most that structural symmetry translates into identifying a new common attribute, to the extent that possessing a certain structure can acquire an attributive definition. Symmetry is the common "linking" attribute, which makes the transition from similarity to difference. It is a prerequisite of constructing a metaphor.

Pre-existence of an attributive equivalent

The significant common attribute is more or less explicit, in a more visible or encrypted form, present within the metaphorized term and instruments both the initial comparison and the equivalence of meanings and implications implied by the extensive interpretation. From the point of view of the target term, it bridges with the metaphorizing element and it is the concentrated principle of the entire conceptual development that follows, taking most often a specific form (which belongs to the semantic universe proper to the second element of the comparison). It must pre-exist in the intensional composition of the concept for the transfer to be possible from the very beginning, although the paradoxical mechanism of metaphorization implies a creative input and often gives the impression that an addition, a way of incorporating in the composition of the target term was operated. In reality, what was really inserted is the explanatory mechanism, the revealing principle whose task is to uncover hidden aspects of the host-object, the innovative significance transforming the latter's image from a common representation (deemed as such) into a transfigured concept (vested with unusual determinations which open up new paths of understanding). Thus, associative flexibility is left to continue to reuse and applicably develop the attributive "beginning", everything depending on a harmonious organization around this thematic core, of wrapping the kernel of analogical truth in conceptual clothes.

The fundamental condition of an anticipatory attachment of the semantic acquisition is secured by the pre-existence of this common attribute as it laid the foundation, with the title of possibility, of any transfer of a spiritual content onto an object called to reveal itself.

Without this minimum predetermination, any metaphorizing act would become projective, forced, and basically invalid (as a juxtaposition that institutes resemblances *ex nihilo* cannot be construed). This predetermination conveys a character of rationality to the entire endeavor and denies a too radical assertion which could claim that any spectacular juxtaposition of terms is worthy of the status of a metaphor by virtue of ensuring a paradoxical condition. The latter should always be accompanied by a subtle assimilation, by a prior unifying stretch underneath which both the terminological orientation and the subsequent hermeneutical development rely upon. In this sense, Paul Ricoeur says that "it [the resemblance] is not only what the metaphorical enunciation builds, but also what guides and produces this enunciation,"[10] emphasizing a truth of conditional foundation, which connects everything to this equivalence, and does not leave to a third party's contribution (of an exterior character) the associative process that has constitutive mechanisms pertaining exclusively to the making of the two terms..

Often, the common attribute, enriched with the determinations that borrows from the "situation" of the metaphorizing term, strengthens an already existing feature in the intensional dowry of the metaphorized term, it extends it in a clarifying manner, and it develops a potentiality of meaning (finding a spiritual "solution" for it). The common attribute finds here favorable grounds for its semantic "mission" and combines its revealing and expressive force with an already given tending – in prior viewing yet insufficient for a critical cognitive leap – toward the discovery of properties of the latter term. Neither has the borrowed attribute, in itself, the power to reveal the target mystery, nor does the metaphorized object contain in its elementary definition all the directions of interpretation necessary to pursue such the revealing endeavor. Their combined action (more precisely, the contribution of the main attribute) is therefore required to indicate an explanatory path meant to bring light to the conceptual world of the second term (within its family of terms). Hence, by means of this already existing feature, the juxtaposition becomes possible and its close connection with the attribute of insertion proves that the pre-existing of an attributive equivalent is a constitutive prerequisite to any metaphorization.

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[10] Ricoeur, *Metafora vie*, 301.

The existence of a prior outlook of insertion

The very possibility of a strengthening determination of the type described above is linked, however, to the existence of a founding framework, of a preceding perspective that provides the conditions for such appropriateness. Something in the existential status of the target term should allow for the semantic "absorption" of the common attribute, while the latter may be *regarded* from a certain angle, to the extent that a legitimate and defining vision can be projected. Accepting a certain attribute in the semantic horizon of a term means casting a specific light on it and, at the same time, integrating it in the intensional dynamics of this vision, borrowing it into an element proper to an interpretation. In this sense, the final development any authentic metaphorical juxtaposition deserves extracts its descriptive power from this essentially conditional element, which can be defined as a principle of targeting the common attribute by the existing characteristic feature (placed in a semantic interdependence relationship with the other features of the metaphorized term). And the translation into practice of the meaning the common attribute brings along is prepared and determined by this perspective, to the extent that within the conceptual family of the target term semantic "acts" pre-exist matching the model derived from the metaphorizing term. In fact, the entire revealing endeavour involves, besides the possibly certainly unusual consequences, an explanatory contribution connected to these "acts" (their unprecedented determination). Thus, a natural process of targeting the metaphorized term is doubled and prepared beforehand by an attributive "targeting" derived from the latter, which offers a referential opportunity and intensional grounding.

A correct interpretation will always reveal the mutual targeting, it will highlight a phenomenon of dual participation, where a more profound reply of the object (more difficult to notice) is present as well, which comes from the metaphorized part and without which, in the prospect of a minutely detailed explanation, the first form of targeting is not possible. In other words, without a prior system of semantic *expectations* one cannot conceive a legitimate metaphorical determination (which does not remove the original character, satisfying the creative exigency).

Together with the revelation of this subtler condition, an image is obtained that is required to complete the explanatory portrait of any metaphorical association and of the interpreting implications that might derive from it, as on the synthetic image the game of the two perspectives offers the authentic step the revealing endeavour makes is built. This step is made toward reaching truths with

an extensive scope beyond the initial circle of the two terms. This step represents the last philosophical extension of the initial task, pertaining to the figure of speech and often crowning the creative effort, meaning a significant integration of the revealed mystery, with a view to correlating it with a system of ideas (and perhaps, eventually, to an entire conception). It does make it useful and conveys to it the theoretical dignity of belonging to a coherent conceptual ensemble.

Conclusion

This three-fold conditional set belongs to the status of the metaphorized term and can constitute, therefore, an explanatory bridge connecting the analogous situation itself with possible revealing valuations that push, by means of interpretation, the unprecedented significance beyond surface suggestiveness. To this end, Lucian Blaga pointed out that "taking the immediate to a symptomatic relationship with a «beyond» means placing oneself within a «mystery» as such,"[11] hence setting a direction to the cognitive path, direction that starts from the potential significance bank of the metaphorized term, continues with the transfer onto the metaphorized term and ends with a clarifying reference in an area of implications and consequences. Following this path means hermeneutically assuming all presuppositions included in the semantic universe of the three conditions, namely borrowing, element by element, the vision generated from their just achievement and giving it back to a systematic comprehensive whole. Thus, in knowledge, the "how" of the path may be related to a conditional determination, may pertain to meeting requirements related to constitution, i.e. may claim the applied sampling of the linguistic given with a view to selecting the most appropriate terminological "representatives" for the task of a revealing metaphorization. Here, the subtlety of a kind of thinking developed at the school of discovering similarities and structural affinities can contribute, by means of a correct administration of a methodology pertaining to this three-fold conditional, to building the bridges that connect saliently contrasting semantic territories.

Therefore, trying to free the structural references of such a methodology is not an endeavor related to excessive formality, and it can guide, in a manner that does not diminish the contribution of the creative effort, any attempt to construct a figure of speech whose mission is highly cognitive. Thus, there is room, in any attempt to "poetically" approximate the real and we can also find a place for a systematic regularity, for an articulate ordering of the constituting stages succession, for a regulating mechanism leading to discovery and to a detailed

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[11] Blaga, *Geneza metaforei,* 364.

hermeneutical explanation. The optimal dosage of the methodological factor and of the heuristic side in the metaphorizing process also pertains to the mastery of each creative personality, defining their style and engaging them on an individualizing metaphysical path.

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