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 J. F. Ross
 Excerpt
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Introduction

Why look for a systematic account of the meaning relationships different tokens of the same word¹ have to one another (*drop*/stitch, *drop*/friend, *drop*/hint) when hardly anyone seems to have missed having one for five hundred years?

First, something with comprehensive philosophical consequences may have been overlooked. Both Aristotle's and the medieval Aristotelean writers' accounts of analogy (of diverse but related same-word meaning) affected the whole of those philosophies.

Secondly, the linguistic phenomena are pretty much as the classical writers said they were, though their explanation is not right. Such extensive data fairly beg us to probe for the hard bone of law underlying 'focal meaning', 'family resembling terms', 'systematically ambiguous expressions' and the panorama of verbal proportionality, metaphor, denomination and paronymy, remarked by philosophers of all epochs and persuasions.

Thirdly, there is no competitor for the classical account, despite its false foundations, mentioned in the Preface, and its limitations of scope and perspective, described in chapter 1. We need a competing portrayal, preferably one that construes the superficially chaotic data as the logical outcome of simple linguistic universals.

Fourthly, the analogy phenomena require revisions in the philosophy of language and probably in the philosophy of mind as well. A systematic study of same words refutes the assumptions that sentence meanings are the syncategorematic 'sum' of independent word/morpheme meanings (like a wall assembled out of varied stones) and that an ideal dictionary would have an entry for every meaning of every word in the language. Instead, the analogy phenomena and the 'software' that creates them support 'infinite polysemy' hypotheses (cf. Weinreich 1971: 322, and Lyons 1977: §13.4, 550f) and establish that one expression affects the meaning of others concatenated with it.² Further, the analogy phenomena disconfirm that sentences have truth conditions that are their senses,

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and that knowing its truth condition is necessary for knowing the sense of a sentence, and so require a reassessment of the objectives and capabilities of truth-conditional analysis (see chapter 8).

Moreover, opinions about the relationships of thought to language – like the revived Ockhamist ‘language of thought’ idea (Fodor 1975) – that suppose meaning to be affixed to inscriptions and sounds by their relationship(s) to something *else* (whether ‘sentence-like mental representations’, thoughts, or denoted things) will fail, as the medieval ‘concept’ theory of meaning did, to explain the analogy phenomena.

Instead, we have to work from the premise that *linguistic* meaning is intrinsic to acceptable expressions in natural language. It is not some extrinsic relationship of the parts, one by one or all together, to thoughts or other things, but is the contrasting combinatorial acceptability *among* the distinct words of the language.

Lastly, if analogy of meaning is even substantially as I construe it, there are consequences for what philosophical analysis can do; for instance, a philosopher cannot provide a single truth-conditional analysis of what ‘being a cause’, ‘knowing’, ‘being thought’ (and most of the other things philosophers want to know about) *really* is. Yet we can refine a practicable relationship between analysis and analysandum and we can find a place in philosophy again for fashioning ‘analogous’ definitions. So there are important incentives for reopening this old topic.

Although I use the classical account (summarized variously at pp. 17–19, 164–5, below) to identify and initially classify the data that need an explanation, I do not absorb it into the present theory. That is because it assumes, wrongly, that same-word meaning relationships do not result from linguistic structure, but from the relationships of thought to things. Yet, without the classical observations and hypotheses, I doubt that I would have found the phenomena coherent enough to demand explaining (after all, Wittgenstein’s identifying family resembling terms did not stir demands for their explanation) or have realized how much rethinking about linguistic meaning philosophers still have to do. So, I frequently mention what Aristotle, Aquinas and Cajetan said, not as ‘scholarly boilerplate’ but because their perspective upon the issues is still revealing.

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1 EXPLANATORY PORTRAYAL

This is a typical explanation, one that (i) conceptually aligns and classifies observed phenomena and (ii) identifies an underlying structure that (iii) logically (or causally) determines the observed phenomena to be as they are (in the relevant respects needing the explanation). As far as it is practicable, I describe the explanatory structure in terms of the broadest explanatory factors known in the area of inquiry.

It is not explanation in the sense of finding the (efficient) cause of a happening – e.g. explaining someone's being taken sick or how an accident or fire happened; this is a structural explanation of a *kind* of happening, like an explanation of what hepatitis is in terms of what the liver is and how it functions.

I call it a 'portrayal' because the explanation's key predicates are metaphorically extended from other realms of discourse and are not yet naturalized citizens in talk about meaning, the way 'attraction' and 'force' became long ago in physics. The metaphor, as Aristotle remarked, 'puts the matter before the eyes' (*Rhetoric*, III, ch. 2 and ch. 11). It reveals the presence of law where before there appeared only disorder, just as a certain profusion of dots with the right perceptual set causes the faces of the Presidents or various animals to emerge. Thus, 'dominance', 'resistance', 'adaptation', 'contagion', 'intransigence', 'linguistic inertia' and 'linguistic force' are used metaphorically to draw a new picture of analogy.

The most important question for evaluating a new portrayal, I think, is this: What does it make us see in its subject that was not accessible to us before? In the present case it is that analogy of meaning (all the analogy phenomena including mere equivocation) is the consequence of an underlying synchronic structure, composed of (i) *linguistic inertia* (that words recur in the same meanings if nothing differentiates them) and (ii) *linguistic force* (that words resist concatenating into unacceptable expressions by making step-wise meaning-adaptations, comparatively to other occurrences, to avoid doing so.)

The judgment that one portrayal is better than another is not justified exclusively by the narrower considerations that apply to whether, *within*, say, a Kantian portrayal of knowledge, one account is 'a better explanation than another'. For, as in painting,

comprehensiveness, inventiveness, discipline and an inexhaustible revelation (in the representation) of what is represented have more to do with significance and preferability than item by item truth. 'Science . . . is willing to accept a theory that vastly outreaches its evidential basis if that theory promises to exhibit an underlying order, a system of deep and simple connections among what had previously been a mass of disparate and multifarious facts.' (Carl Hempel 1966: 132.) Besides being as embracing as the classical account, I think this portrayal of analogy meets two conditions for being preferable: (i) the more you understand the portrayal, the more the phenomena *appear* as portrayed; (Goodman 1968: 33, reports someone's telling Picasso that his portrait of Gertrude Stein did not look like her; Picasso replied 'It will'); (ii) the more extensively this picture is compared with the classical one, the more the phenomena appear to be as portrayed here *rather than* as in that account.

Some of the layers in this account have involved project-bound decisions about the predicate scheme model (to be explained in chapter 3), about how to characterize predicate modes and about how extensively to use explicit definitions as a means of conceptual alignment; these are all matters that might have been handled differently, or more successfully, without much change in the overall observations or explanation. So, one has to distinguish the details that are incidental, temporary, dispensable and entangling, from the underlying insight into differentiation, its causes, and the systematic identification and distinction of analogy, simple metaphor, mere equivocation, denomination and paronymy. These things can survive a rather considerable reformulation of the whole explanation.

2 THE GENERIC PHENOMENON

Everyone who speaks one of the relevant natural languages (the living Indo-European ones, at least), from the youngest speaking children through the least intelligent persons capable of coherent discourse and the most sophisticated masters of the language, characteristically and automatically uses the same words in different meanings, sometimes related (*see/light*, *see/point*; *collect/books*, *collect/friends*, *collect/debts*, *collect/barnacles*), and sometimes unrelated (*charge/enemy*, *charge/battery*, *charge/account*).

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The *Merrill Linguistic Readers* (Fries 1966), widely used for beginning reading, employ common words like ‘fix’ in multiple senses to achieve variety of expression within a beginner’s vocabulary: ‘Daddy will *fix* you’, ‘*Fix* my wagon’, ‘*Fix* my pants’, ‘*Fix* my dinner’, ‘*make* a bed’, ‘*make* a sandwich’, ‘*make* a mistake’, ‘*make* time for’, ‘*make* a plane’, ‘*make* an appointment’, and so on. It is *easier* for a small child to comprehend the same word with multiple meanings than it is for him to distinguish the same number of visible word forms. So the child has *already* mastered response to some semantic structure by which distinct senses for the same word are determined in context. What is that structure?

Further, the multiple English entries for a single Italian word in an English–Italian dictionary (J. Grassi 1933) illustrate its variety of meanings: ‘*levare*’ means ‘to raise, lift up, take away, remove, carry, take off, raise up, lift, get out, buy (a large quantity), prohibit, levy.’ (In English the words ‘raise’ and ‘lift’ pretty much divide the senses of the Italian word between them). And ‘*dare*’ means ‘to give, hand, grant, permit, commit, appoint, announce, produce, yield, show, tell, stroke, dart, incline to, sell, buy . . .’ Certainly native speakers know what ‘*dare*’ means, so something determines which sense the word has. What is it?

Other dictionaries – French, Polish, Spanish, German – yield consonant results, as do dictionaries employed in reverse to give multiple foreign-word equivalents for English words. Which meaning a word has in a given occurrence is neither random nor haphazard, and yet what determines which meaning it has cannot be the speaker’s *intentions* about what the words are to mean, either. For who, except perhaps a poet, has embracing intentions as to what individual *words* are to mean? And who knows how by *intention* to determine what a word means (except to stipulate or to distinguish)? It cannot be done by intention alone. For a string of words can mean exactly what we intended them *not* to. We are looking, instead, for a universal linguistic force – some ubiquitous causation – that is present throughout the language (as inertia and gravitation are present throughout the universe) and is variously manifested by identifiable phenomena in all extended discourse.

Aristotle and Aquinas, as I said, recognized that the meaning relationships among same words are regular, classifiable (as mere equivocation, analogy of proportionality, metaphor, or denomination) and systematically explainable; (their explanation was a

theory of concept-generation). But no succeeding mainstream philosophers, except for Locke's interest in denomination (*Essay* III, III, 171 VI, 9 and III ch.25, 2–7), paid serious attention to accounting for same-word meanings, not even Wittgenstein after he turned up 'family resembling terms' while digging for other things.

The search for what determines which meaning a word has in a given context, and what accounts for its differences from one occurrence to another, gains the prospect of success once we notice that *all* the regular cases of a word's having diverse meanings have a common feature. (That doesn't include, of course, the *initial* cases of direct borrowing from another language and of stipulation and misuse – what Boethius, and then Cajetan, called 'equivocation *a casu*' (by chance) in contrast to 'equivocation *a consilio*' (by convention.) That common feature is *differentiation* (contrasting adaptation to context), *fit* to diversity of linguistic environment. Sections of chapter 3 illustrate it and show how it is caused by 'dominance' (see below). Here I stress that differentiation has both homonymy and polysemy as outcomes. The classical writers, by failing to identify anything common to mere equivocation and analogy, missed uncovering the structural 'software' that generates the whole range of analogy phenomena and diachronically develops the expressive capacities of the language. (See sections 4 and 5 below.)

3 THE SPECIFIC ANALOGY PHENOMENA

There are five meaning relationships explained in this book. For now, I will provide examples and brief descriptions with the warning that these descriptions skip essential qualifications offered later, and that the 'examples' (e.g. *charge/account*) are shorthand for examples in complete discourse environments. In general, I ask the reader to interpret the examples as if they were in complete environments that disambiguate them as I construe them.

(a) *Mere equivocation* Examples: *charge/account*, *charge/enemy*; *watch* (time), *watch* (duty crew); *pen* (writing), *pen* (enclosure); *bank* (verge), *bank* (depository). Description: same words (the same from the point of view of spelling and sound) that are *unrelated* in meaning. As will be shown, no near synonym of the one instance is also a near synonym of the other, unless it, too, occurs merely equivocally.

(b) *Analogy of proportionality* Examples: *collect/pension*, *collect/books*; *create/time*, *create/trouble*; *establish (verify)*, *establish (demonstrate)*. Description: same words, taken in pairs, that differ but are related in meaning. Some near synonyms, (say ‘picked up’ and ‘received’ for ‘collect’, ‘make’ for ‘create’, and ‘prove’ for ‘establish’), of the one instance are also near synonyms for the other. Further, the difference in their meanings is marked by a difference in the group of meaning-related *other* words that can be substituted for the two instances. (I circumscribe the conditions for being meaning-related and for being substitutable later on). For now, it is enough to note that if we listed the near synonyms, the contraries, hyponyms, determinables, determinates, and the like, for each instance, they would differ, even though there would be a definite overlap of common words. I call such a difference a ‘predicative’ difference and model it (chapter 3) with predicate schemes.

(c) *Simple metaphor* Examples: *sow/seeds*, *sow/dissension*; *creep/child*, *creep/disease*; *flow/water*, *flow/conversation*. Description: same words, taken in pairs, that differ but are related in meaning, that satisfy the analogy conditions in (b) above, and also satisfy an additional condition of *asymmetry*. Roughly, certain meaning-related words substitutable for the non-metaphorical occurrence are not substitutable for the metaphorical occurrence, even though other words ‘implied’ by those very words *are* substitutable and are part of what is meant.

There is really no single statement adequate to convey this asymmetry until one sees it mapped out with examples (chapter 4). In any case, metaphorical occurrences are probably the most easily identifiable of the analogy phenomena, and meaning asymmetry with non-metaphorical instances is obvious even to persons who have not yet found a way to describe it.

(d) *Denominative analogy* Examples: *brilliant/book*, *brilliant/writer*; *play piano (habit)*, *play piano (ability)*; *hat (object)*, *hat (picture)*; *plow (tool)*, *plow (activity)*. Description: same words, taken in pairs, that differ but are related in meaning, and (whether or not they differ in ways already mentioned, predicatively), differ in predicate *mode*. That is, they differ in so far as what is predicated *inheres* in what it is predicated of. For instance, ‘He plays the piano’ can *attribute* a pro-

clivity, an ability or an occupation, and so forth. Because this sort of differentiation involves the mode of attribution, sometimes it is called ‘analogy of *attribution*’, (e.g. by Aquinas, Cajetan and others).

These phenomena are based upon ‘relational naming’ (denomination), characterizing something by way of relationships it bears to other things: *Victorian/manners*; *brilliant/book*, *judge*, *husband*. The denominative phenomena are astonishingly varied, ranging from interdefinable pairs, analogous by attribution (*brilliant/book*; *brilliant/man*) to ‘representative analogy’ where the representation gets the differentiated name of what is represented: ‘the appellant’ (his lawyer), ‘the court’ (the judge), ‘the United States’ (its ambassador) and ‘the hat’ (portion of a picture). (Cf. Plato, *Par.*, 131; *Rep.*, 596a; and Aristotle *N.E.*, 1096a, 17ff; *Meta.*, 1003a 33–1003b, 10; *Cat.*, 1a ff).

Comprehended within these four classes of same-word relationships are countless millions of same words, taken in pairs, in the contemporary corpus of the relevant natural language(s). Yet there is still another class of words, as impressively large as these, the morphological variants of one another: paronyms.

(e) *Paronyms* Examples: *healthy/healthful*; *explain/explanation*; *conceal/concealment*; *smoke/smoker*. Description: paronyms are not same words but are variants upon the same root with meaning differences that correlate in a law-like way with the morphological variation. The meaning relationships among paronyms parallel the analogy phenomena among same words and are explained in the same ways.

That is to be expected, because analogy in one language (*sana medicina*, *sana complexio*) may be paronymy in a cognate language (*healthful/medicine*; *healthy/complexion*).

The predicates of the analogy theory [is merely equivocal/is analogous by proportionality/is metaphorical/is analogous denominatively] differentiate, by analogy of proportionality, to encompass paronyms. ‘Is univocal’ drops out of the classification.

That enormously extends the theory’s descriptive power, in effect, to *all* occurrences, taken in pairs, that are not distinct words, and powerfully demonstrates the *truth* of the theory’s key premise: (roughly) that words take on different presuppositions (different affinities and oppositions to other words) depending upon what words you combine with them. For the key words of the analogy

theory itself, when applied to paronyms, automatically adjust and no longer presuppose that the things classified are same words, but now presuppose on the contrary that the things classified are morphologically *variants* of one another. (Chapter 8 shows that differentiation does not, as a rule, generate a *disjunctive* meaning, as one might at first suspect.)

4 SOME BROAD BACKGROUND CONSIDERATIONS

Words differentiate because some words dominate others. One's interchanging contrasting completion expressions (say, the words 'eyes' and 'paint can' printed on little cards) in the same sentence frame (printed with an appropriate blank space) – 'She *dropped* her . . .' – will show that. No word dominates all other words and all words are dominated some of the time. Some words are dominated in a great variety of ways, especially common words like 'make', completed with 'time/trouble/way/appointment/bed/money/merry/haste/cake/dinner/love/war'.

Dominance and indifference, illustrated extensively in chapters 2 and 4, are the observable, generic causes of the specific analogy phenomena (sketched in section 3 above) that are modeled and distinguished in chapters 4 and 5. Explanation at greater depth, though more conjectural and metaphorical, postulates that universal forces are manifested by the whole range of analogy phenomena. I describe that briefly, and then explain the principle that linguistic meaning determines the expressive capacity of sentences, that relative meaning (see p. 14 below) is logically antecedent to absolute meaning and that changes in absolute meaning can come about only through changes in relative meaning.

(a) *Inertia and linguistic force* A word, recurring in the contemporary corpus of the language, without regard for time order, has the same meaning as any other given token unless something differentiates them. That is *linguistic inertia*.

Nevertheless, the undeniable fact – the one to be explained – is that the same word, far more often than one would initially expect, has different meanings when it recurs. For instance, recall the many meanings of the Italian *dare* listed above and the corresponding ranges for the English 'give' and 'take'.

A second fact: the meaning differences among *distinct* words

supervene upon their differences of combinatorial possibility, with the logical consequence that not all grammatically complete and correct strings of words are acceptable in a given environment, and almost every (perhaps every) such string is unacceptable in some environment.

Generally, *words resist combining unacceptably in the linguistic environment, until forced to*. That is *linguistic force*. In other words grammatical strings will not go together unacceptably (as ‘not English’) if there is any step-wise adaptation of word meanings (comparatively to their other occurrences in the corpus) which would result in an acceptable utterance and is not prevented by the environment. And those step-wise adaptations are the specific kinds of differentiation described in this book: analogy of proportionality, metaphor, denominative analogy, and mere equivocation. (Paronymy simply replicates those relations for morphological variants of one another.)

For the time being, think of contrasting adaptations as involving the suppression of affinities and oppositions to *other words*, relations that, if maintained, would make the resulting string unacceptable. Think of it as the suppression of which ones, among other words, are its synonyms, opposites (etc.). For example, ‘collect’ in ‘collect/pension’ and ‘collect/garbage’ suppresses some affinity in each, for ‘received as owed’ and ‘was paid’ are near synonyms of the former and not of the latter. Suppressing affinity and opposition to some words is typically equivalent to acquiring such relations to still other words.

Diachronically, linguistic force has dramatic manifestations in continuously new senses of words as new combinations, new patterns of dominance, happen to occur. The automatic differentiation of the analogy predicates, when I applied the classification to paronyms, illustrates that.

The resistance I speak of is not all of the same kind and strength. Sometimes, when the concatenated meaning is inaccessible – such as ‘Night sings posts’, ‘He lubricated his fallacies’ – the string is unacceptable in a given environment and sometimes not, as with ‘Cone No.6 doffed its tip in the peephole’ (Updike 1980: 191) and ‘I image December’s thorn screwed in a brow of holly’ (Dylan Thomas 1934). Unacceptability, then, has various bases, and concomitantly, *unacceptability variously based is variously resisted*.

Although I do not investigate the bases of unacceptability or the