

M E A N I N G

Introduction : Meaning is embodied or carried in human intersubjectivity, in art, in symbols, and in language. It has a structure and so is to be analysed. It can be clarified by a reduction to its elements. It fulfills different functions in human living, and it does so differently in the successive stages of man's historical development.

Hence three main divisions of topic:

1. The Carriers of Meaning: intersubjectivity, art, symbols, language. *incarnate*
2. The structure of Meaning: analysis of elements and basic exigencies of meaning
3. The functions of meaning and historical development.

Elements
 Functions
 Realms
 Stages

These important for fuller grasp of functional specialities such as interpretation and history, systematics and communication. It also offers insight into the diversity of the expressions of religious experience.

I. The Carriers of Meaning.

1. Intersubjectivity. Intersubjectivity of feeling and action is a condition of the possibility of intersubjective communications of meaning.

1.1 Intersubjectivity and Feeling: The "we" that is prior to the "we" resulting from mutual love of an "I" and "thou". It precedes the distinction of subjects and survives its oblivion; it is vital and functional. Arm rises to protect person, so one spontaneously reaches out to prevent another from falling. One adverts to it not before it occurs but while it is occurring; not deliberate but spontaneous, as if "we" were members of one another prior to our distinctions of each from the other.

Intersubjectivity appears not only in mutual aid but also in some of the ways feeling is shared. We can distinguish with Max Scheler (cf. Frings, Max Scheler, Pittsburg, 1965, pp. 56/66):

(a) Community of feeling and fellow-feeling: These are intentional responses that presuppose the apprehension of objects that arouse the feeling. In community of feeling two or more persons respond in parallel fashion to the same object.

In fellow-feeling a first person responds to an object, and a second responds to the manifested feeling of the first.

So parents grieving over their child's death, and a third party moved by their sorrow. Or worship where a community of feeling results from the worshippers' concern with God, but fellow-feeling results when others are moved to devotion by the prayerful attitude of the worshippers.

(b) Psychic Contagion : This has a vital rather than an intentional basis. It is sharing another's emotion without adverting to the object of the emotion.

One grins when others are laughing although one does not know what they find funny. One becomes sorrowful when others are weeping although one does not know the cause of grief. An on-looker, without undergoing another's ills, is caught up in the feeling of extreme pain expressed on the face of the sufferer.

Such contagion is the mechanism of mass excitement in panics, revolutions, demonstrations, strikes where personal responsibility disappears, intelligence decreases, a domination of drives over thinking emerges along with readiness to submit to a leader. Such contagion can be deliberately provoked, built up, exploited by political activists, by the entertainment industry, by religious and especially pseudo-religious leaders.

- (c) Emotional Identification has also a vital rather than intentional basis. In it either personal differentiation is as yet undeveloped or else there is a retreat from personal differentiation to vital unity.

Undeveloped differentiation has its basic illustration in the emotional identification of mother and infant. It also appears in the identifications of primitive mentality and in the earnestness of a little girl's play with her doll (she identifies herself with her mother and at the same time projects herself into the doll).

Retreat from differentiation is illustrated by Scheler in his account of hypnosis. It occurs in sexual intercourse when both partners undergo a suspension of individuality and fall back into a single stream of life. In the group mind members identify with their leader and spectators with their team; in both cases the group coalesces in a single stream of instinct and feeling.

In the ancient mysteries the mystic became divine in a state of ecstasy; and in the writings of later mystics experiences with a pantheist implication are not infrequently described.

1.2 Intersubjective Meaning: Besides the intersubjectivity of action and of feeling, there also are intersubjective communications of meaning. This can be illustrated by a phenomenology of a smile borrowed from Langer's Feeling and Form.

- (a) A smile does have meaning. It is not just a certain combination of movements of lips, facial muscles, eyes. It is a combination with a meaning. Because that meaning is different from the meaning of a frown, a scowl, a stare, a glare, a snicker, a laugh, it is named a smile. Because we all know that meaning exists, we do not go about the streets smiling at everyone we meet. We know we should be misunderstood.

- (b) A smile is highly perceptible. Perceiving is not just a function of

the impressions made on our senses; from perceptions own orientation it selects, out of a myriad of others, just those impressions that can be constructed into a pattern with a meaning.

So one can converse with a friend on a noisy street, disregarding the meaningless surrounding tumult, and picking out the band of sound waves that has a meaning. So too a smile, because of its meaning, is easily perceived despite the enormous range of variations in facial movements, of lighting, of angle of vision. Even an incipient, suppressed smile is not missed, for the smile is a Gestalt, a patterned meaning, and it is recognized as a whole.

- (c) Natural and spontaneous. Both the meaning of a smile and the act of smiling are natural and spontaneous. We do not learn to smile as we do to walk, talk, etc. Commonly we do not think of smiling and then do it. We just do it. Nor do we learn the meaning of smiling as we do the meaning of words. We make the discovery on our own, and the meaning of a smile does not seem to vary from culture to culture, as does the meaning of gestures.
- (d) A smile has something irreducible about it. It cannot be explained by causes outside meaning. It cannot be elucidated by other types of meaning. This illustrated by comparison of smile with that of language.
- Linguistic meaning tends to be univocal, but smiles have a wide variety of different meanings. Smiles of recognition, welcome, friendliness, friendship, love, joy, delight, contentment, satisfaction, amusement, refusal, contempt; they may be ironic, sardonic, enigmatic, glad or sad, fresh or weary, eager or resigned.
 - Linguistic meaning may be true in two ways: true as opposed to mendacious or as opposed to false. A smile can be true as opposed to mendacious, for a smile can be simulated, but it cannot be true as opposed to false.
 - Linguistic meaning contains distinctions between what we feel, what we desire, fear, think, know, wish, command, intend. The meaning of a smile is global; it expresses what one person means to another; it has the meaning of a fact and not the meaning of a proposition.
 - Linguistic meaning is objective. It expresses what has been objectified. The meaning of a smile is intersubjective. It supposes the interpersonal situation with its antecedents. It is a recognition of that situation and a determinant of it; an element in the situation as process, a meaning with its significance in the context of antecedent and subsequent meanings. The meaning of a smile is not about some object, but an immediate revelation of the subject. It is not the basis of some inference; rather in the smile one incarnate subject is transparent or, again, hidden to another in a way that antedates all subsequent analysis of body-soul or of sign-signified.

From smiles one might go on to all the facial or bodily movements or pauses to all the variations of voice in tone, pitch, volume, and in silence, to all the ways in which our feelings are revealed or betrayed by ourselves or are depicted by actors on the stage. But our purpose is not to exhaust the topic but rather to point to the existence of a special carrier of meaning - intersubjectivity.

2. Art. Langer's Feeling and Form defines art as the objectification of a purely experiential pattern. Each term is carefully explained.

- (a) Pattern may be abstract (musical score, indentations in grooves of phonograph record) or concrete (in these colors, these tones, volumes, movements). Concrete patterns consist in the internal relations of colors, tones, volumes, movements; not in colors as unrelated or as representative of something else.

Besides pattern of perceived there is pattern of perceiving, this is experiential. All perceiving is a selecting and organizing; because it is patterned it is easily perceived.

So one repeats a tune or melody, not succession of street noises.
Verse makes information memorable. Decoration makes surface visible.

Patterns are especially perceptible by drawing on organic analogies; repeated variations in movement from roots through trunk and branches to leaves and flowers. Complexity mounts and yet the multiplicity is organized into a whole.

- (b) A pure pattern: a pattern is pure inasmuch as it excludes alien patterns that instrumentalize experience, where one's senses can become merely an apparatus for receiving and transmitting signals. *

Dramatic pattern of ready-made subject in his ready-made world.

Red light means step on brake, green light step on accelerator.

Intellectual pattern where sense functions at service of scientific intelligence. Sense submits to alien pattern of conceptual genera and species, of theoretical schemes and models, of judgmental concern for evidence.

Methodical pattern where sense is subordinated to and reshaped by an a priori theory of experience drawn from physics, physiology or psychology. It is divided by an epistemology that thinks of impressions as objective and of their pattern as subjective.

In all these sense is alienated by a utilitarianism that attends to objects just in the measure there is something in them for me to get out of them.

- (c) Purely experiential. In art the pattern must be purely experiential. It is of colors that are visible and not of the stereotypes that are anticipated; of shapes that are visible and so in

perspective and not of shapes as really constructed, as known perhaps to touch but not to sight. It is of the sounds in their actual tone, pitch and volume, their overtones, harmonies, dissonances.

What accrues to purely experienced colors, sounds are

- their retinue of associations, affects, emotions, incipient tendencies. So out of them may rise a lesson, but into them a lesson may not be intruded in the manner of didacticism, moralism, social realism.
- To them also accrues the experiencing subject with his capacity for wonder, for awe and fascination, with his openness to adventure, daring, greatness, goodness, majesty.

Not impoverishment but enrichment is the aim of the required purity of the existential pattern. It curtails what is alien to let experiencing find its full complement of feeling, its own proper patterns and take its own line of expansion, development, organization, fulfillment.

So experiencing becomes rhythmic, one movement necessitating another and the other in turn necessitating the first. Tensions built up to be resolved: variations multiply and grow in complexity yet remain within an organic unity that eventually rounds itself off.

(d) The aesthetically transformed subject and his world.

The artistic Meaning, when fully developed, intends something meant. But the meaning of an experiential pattern is elemental. It is the conscious performing of a transformed subject in his transformed world.

The world may be regarded as illusion, or regarded as more true and more real. We are transported from the space in which we move to the space within the picture, from the time of sleeping and waking, working and resting, to the time of the music, from the pressures and determinisms of home and office, of economics and politics to the powers depicted in the dance, from conversational and media use of language to the vocal tools that focus, mould, grow with consciousness.

So too the subject is transformed. He has been liberated from being a replaceable part adjusted to a ready-made world and integrated within it. He has ceased to be a responsible inquirer investigating some aspect of the universe or seeking a view of the whole. He has become just himself: emergent, ecstatic, originating freedom.

- (e) Objectification. The elemental meaning of the transformed subject in his transformed world can be set within the conceptual field. But this reflects without reproducing the elemental meaning. Art criticism and art history are like the thermodynamic equations, which guide our control of heat but, of themselves, cannot make us feel warmer or cooler.

The proper expression of elemental meaning is the work of art itself.

That meaning lies within the consciousness of the artist. At first it is only implicit, veiled, unrevealed, unobjectified. Aware of it, the artist has yet to get hold of it; he is impelled to behold, inspect, dissect, enjoy, repeat it; this means objectifying, making explicit, unveiling, revealing.

The process of objectifying involves psychic distance. Where elemental meaning is just experiencing, its expression involves detachment, distinction, separation from experience.

The smile or frown expresses intersubjectively the feeling as felt
Artistic composition recollects emotion in tranquillity.

- It involves insight into the elemental meaning, a grasp of the commanding form that has to be expanded, worked out, developed, and the subsequent process of working out, adjusting, correcting, completing the initial insight.
- Result is idealization of the original experiential pattern. Art is not autobiography, not telling one's tale to psychiatrist. It is grasping what is or seems significant, of moment, concern, import to man.
- It is truer than experience, leaner, more effective, more to the point. It is the central moment with its proper implications that unfold without the distortions, interferences of the original pattern.

The proper apprehension and appreciation of the work of art is not any conceptual clarification or judicial weighing of evidence. Work of art is an invitation to participate, try it, see for oneself.

As mathematician withdraws from the sciences that verify to explore possibilities of organizing data, so work of art invites us to withdraw from practical living to explore possibilities of living in a richer world.

- (f) The point to above is that there exist quite distinct carriers of meaning. For further application to drawing and painting, statuary and architecture, music and dance, epic, lyric, and dramatic poetry cf. Langer's Feeling and Form.

3. Symbols.

Definition: A symbol is an image of a real or imaginary object that evokes a feeling or is evoked by a feeling.

We shall discuss (1) feelings, (2) objects and images, (3) symbolic evocation, (4) some attempts at explaining symbols.

3.1 Feelings : are related to objects, to one another and to their subject.

(a) Feelings are related to objects: one desires food, fears pain, enjoys a meal, regrets a friend's illness.

(b) They are related to one another:

- through changes in the object: one desires the good that is absent, hopes for the good that is sought, enjoys the good that is present; one fears absent evil, becomes disheartened at its approach, sad in its presence. (cognitive self-transcendence felt)
- through personal relationships: so love, gentleness, tenderness, intimacy, union go together. Similarly alienation, hatred, harshness, violence, cruelty form a group; so too sequences as offence, contumacy, judgement, punishment or offence, repentance, satisfaction, forgiveness (felt moral s.-tr.)
- feelings may conflict yet come together: one may desire despite fear, hope against hope, mix joy with sadness, love with hate, gentleness with harshness, tenderness with violence, intimacy with cruelty, union with alienation. (felt religious s.-tr.)

(c) Feelings are related to their subject: they are the the mass and momentum and power of conscious living, the actuation of his affective capacities, dispositions, habits, the effective orientation of his being.

3.2 Objects and Images: The same objects need not evoke the same feelings in different subjects and, inversely, the same feelings need not evoke the same symbolic images.

Here two points: difference in affective response and how this affects the symbols as image of real or imaginary object.

(a) Difference in affective response:

- this may be due to difference in age, sex, education, state in life, temperament, existential concern.

(a) Difference in affective response (cont'd):

- more fundamentally, there is in human beings an affective development that may suffer aberrations. It is history of that process that terminates in the person with determinate orientation in life and with determinate affective capacities, dispositions and habits.

What these latter are in any individual can be specified by the symbols that awake determinate affects and, inversely, by the affects that evoke determinate symbols.

(b) Undifferentiated and Transformed Symbols:

- Affectively undifferentiated symbols result from the same affective orientation and disposition. They are interchangeable and may be combined to increase their intensity and reduce ambiguity.

Such combination and organization reveal the difference between the esthetic and the symbolic - the monsters of mythology are just bizarre.

Compound affects call for compound symbols, and each member of the compound may be a conglomeration of undifferentiated or only slightly differentiated symbols.

So St. George and the dragon present at once all the values of the ascensional symbolism and all the disvalues of its opposite.

- A transvaluation and transformation of symbols is involved in affective development, or aberration. What before was moving no longer moves; what before did not move now is moving. The symbols change to express new affective capacities and dispositions.

Thus conquest of terror replaces the Dragon as insignificant fancy with the meaning of Jonah's whale : a monster that swallowed a drowning man and three days later vomited him unharmed on shore.

Inversely, symbols that do not transvaluate and transform seem to point to a block of development. It means one thing for a child, and another for a man, to be afraid of the dark.

3.3 Symbolic Evocation. Symbols obey the laws of image and feeling, not of logic.

(a) Difference of logic and symbol:

logical class.....	representative figure
univocity.....	wealth of multiple meanings
rigorous proof.....	overwhelm with manifold of images that converge in meaning
principle of excluded.....	<u>coincidentia oppositorum</u>
middle	
negation	rejects by overstatement
linear	condenses into a bizarre unity all its present concerns.

(b) Power of Symbol: to recognize and express what logical discourse abhors; the existence of internal tensions, incompatibilities, conflicts, struggles, destructions.

A dialectical or methodological viewpoint can embrace what is concrete, contradictory and dynamic. Symbol did this before either logic or dialectic was conceived, and still does it for those unfamiliar with logic or dialectic.

Finally, it does this in a way that fills out logic and dialectic, it meets a need that these refinements cannot.

(c) Internal Communication.

- Organic and psychic vitality must reveal themselves in intentional consciousness and, inversely, intentional consciousness has to secure collaboration of organism and psyche.

Apprehension of values occurs in intentional responses, in feelings. Need for feeling to reveal objects and objects to awaken feelings.

It is through symbols that mind and body, mind and heart, heart and body communicate.

- Proper symbolic meaning in internal communication.

It is elemental meaning, not yet objectified, as smile prior to phenomenology and purely experiential pattern prior work of art.

It is meaning that fulfills function in imagining and perceiving subject as his conscious intentionality develops and/or goes astray, as he takes his stance to nature, fellow men, before God.

Proper context of this meaning in process of internal communication in which it occurs. To this context with its associations, memories and tendencies the interpreter has to appeal if he is to explain the symbol.

3.4 Interpretation of the Symbol.

(a) This is going beyond symbol, a transition from elemental meaning in an image or percept to a linguistic meaning.

- Context of linguistic meaning involves possible relations, clues, suggestions in the construction of the elemental context of the symbol.
- Such interpretative contexts are many - which reflects the many ways human beings can develop and suffer deviation.

(b) Therapeutic interpretative systems:

- Originally the psychoanalysis of Freud, individual psychology of Adler, and the analytic psychology of Jung.

- Initial oppositions are diminishing:

C. Baudouin's (L'oeuvre de Jung, Paris, 1963) psychagogy in which Freud and Jung are complementary. Freud in reverting to causal objects and Jung in attending to subjective development.

P. Ricoeur's long study seems to support this. Freudian thought is an archeology of the subject that necessarily implies but does not explicitly acknowledge a forward-moving teleology.

Those who develop own systems of interpretation and use them as art to be learnt in therapy.

- Finally, those who want therapy but withdraw from symbol interpretation.

C. Rogers aim to provide patient interpersonal situation in which client gradually comes to self-discovery.

At opposite pole Frank Lake gets his theory from Pavlov and administers LSD 25 to clients, enabling them to recall and confront traumata suffered in infancy.

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(c) Non-therapeutic Interpretative systems: Freud's extension of the therapeutic context over whole of human concern has been met by non-therapeutic systems of interpretations of symbols.

- G. Durand proceeds from physiological basis in three dominant reflexes (maintaining balance, swallowing food, mating) to organize vast masses of symbolic data, to balance this with contrary organization, and effect synthesis by alternation of the two.
- M. Eliade collects, compares, integrates, explains primitive religious symbols.

Herzog
From

V. J. G.

-Northrop Frye: cycles of day and night, four seasons, the course of organism's growth and decline to construct a matrix from which symbolic narratives of literature might be derived.

- Psychologists have turned from sick to the well with their life/long growth. Is mental illness merely a medical issue, does it not include possible real guilt?

- The most significant from a basic viewpoint: the existential approach that thinks of the dream, not as the twilight of life, but as its dawn, the beginning of the transition from impersonal existence to presence in the world, to constitution of oneself in one's world.

Marlow
Mowrer
Bowen

Berenson

Ries Man

Logothetis

Frankl