Sappho's missed communications

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The premise of the study is that poets strive in their communications to convey meanings that are intensely personal to themselves, in language which is communal. The concept of love was chosen as exemplar as this is perhaps the most human of emotions, universal in experience and traditionally supposed therefore to be so in language. The study indicates the discontinuities that exist within cognition of the concept, however, synchronically and diachronically as demonstrated by the poetry of Sappho. Although theoretically a poet's communication is accessible to readers through a shared language, authors' and readers' experiences of that language are embedded in phenomena which, at their most intensely personal level, are mutually irreconcilable.

1. INTRODUCTION

Sappho was a Greek poetess who flourished in the 7th Century BC on the island of Lesbos. From that time to the present she has enjoyed an unbroken popularity, as much for her homoerotic lifestyle as for her 'supreme lyric talent' (Hallett, 1999, p. 125) as the first female poetess of Western antiquity. She was called the 'Tenth Muse' by Plato, a reputation that has been upheld by the finding in 2014 of a new poem. The single word 'love', by which the three terms of Ancient Greek are translated into English, is radically incommensurate with them. All three terms nominate concepts that as metaphors, entail source domains which are rooted in socially, culturally, and historically located value orientations and in highly idiosyncratic qualia.

Further distortion is caused by authors' and readers' hypostatisations of reality and by the continuing mediated framing of Sappho's persona. Sappho's communication is therefore eviscerated. Since all concepts are subject to these four conditions, true communication between authors and readers is not possible. The remedy lies in an idealised deep-structure alignment of experiential categories. The premise of the research is that poets strive in their communications to convey meanings that are intensely personal to themselves, in language which is communal. The concept of love was chosen as exemplar as this is perhaps the most human of emotions, universal in experience and traditionally supposed therefore to be so in language. The study indicates the discontinuities that exist within cognition of the

concept, however, synchronically and diachronically as demonstrated by the poetry of Sappho. Although theoretically a poet's communication is accessible to readers through a shared language, authors' and readers' experiences of that language are embedded in phenomena which, at their most intensely personal level, are mutually irreconcilable. Research results suggest further investigation into the cognitive structure of concepts.

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study explores the structure of Sappho's cognitive model of the concept of *love*. As a backdrop, the paper employs the theory developed by Lakoff (1987) and addressing the human cognitive processes of thinking, knowing, understanding, and of generally making sense of personal experience (Lakoff, 1987, 1993, 2016). The theory stands in radical contrast to the traditional assumption that cognition is grounded in a reality that is external to the self, and that therefore the putative reality of an author is recovered whenever a reader engages with a literary text. Instead, the theory shows that the reader's cognition supervenes radically.

3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Lakoff's theory holds that at the centre of human thinking and reasoning is the human propensity for categorisation. This is the tendency to group phenomena together according to certain criteria,

what Kövecses (2006) referred to as *'correlations of particulars'* (p. 368). In the Western intellectual tradition, the practice predates Aristotle. The Presocratics of the 6th and 5th centuries BC were concerned to understand the world in terms of various classes of material phenomena known through experience, such as Air, Fire, and Mist, to which were imputed transcendental properties of Order, Hierarchy, Consciousness, Control, etc. (Burnett, 1932). These properties were then reified. Lakoff's (1987) thesis is that the way in which we categorise phenomena is determined by our direct experiences of those phenomena and not by some so-called objective properties which they are supposed to share. By experience is meant perception, motor movement, the *'internal genetically acquired make-up of the human organism'* (Lakoff, 1987, p. 15) and the nature of its interaction in and with all its environments – cultural, personal, economic, historical, religious, etc. Of special significance is human interaction relative to the physical and social environments. Lakoff (1987) holds that most of the words and concepts we use do not designate individuals (such as 'Sappho') or particular things (as in *'all poets are romantics'*) but conglomerate segments of experience nominated by linguistic symbols. We then use these constructs, categories, as metaphors to talk about, fantasise about, lie about, wish about, and geneally compose our lives. Lakoff (2016) has shown, for instance, that deliberate categorisation of the American President

as a *Father Figure* directly underlay Trump's success in the 2017 elections.

Lakoff (1987) avers that the American public understands itself metaphorically in terms of the human family: the country has its 'founding fathers', 'homeland security', it proudly sends its children off to war to protect its 'assets' and 'family values'. Even the contradictions within party politics and between political parties, says Lakoff, is explicable in terms of the metaphors *'the nurturant parent family'* and *'the strict father family'*. By these figures of speech, social issues and politics are related to the concrete human political constituencies because human beings are initially governed within families and are thus socialised to understand institutions of government and to function under them.

Strict families operate under the rubric *father knows best*, i.e. that he knows what is right and wrong, and has the authority to ensure by all and any means that his children and spouse obey him without question on pain of punishment. Physical force is supposed to make family members disciplined and the family itself internally strong, and thus prosperous in life. A family member who does not prosper is an indication that he or she is not disciplined, is therefore not a moral being, and thus deserves such poverty. *'This reasoning shows up in conservative politics,'* says Lakoff, *'in which the poor are seen as lazy and undeserving, and the*

rich as deserving their wealth' (Lakoff, 2016). Responsibility is seen to be personal, not social, so that one's achievements and failures are entirely up to oneself alone. Responsibility concerns only the Self; Others are responsible for themselves.

Linguistically framing Trump as the *Father Figure* – strict and beyond accounting for his behaviour – allows him to be contradictory in speech and action, and thereby to appeal to different, even antagonistic, recipient communities. He is therefore cast in the category of authoritative beings, who can exert a significant and dangerous force on humans. Such a category, traditionally expressed as metaphors of the divine, of forces of nature like Poseidon or Aphrodite, has its basis in human experience. And since such beings are to be propitiated or avoided in order to preserve one's well-being, the category embodies details of appropriate behaviour and correct attitude toward itself. The mental construct has implications which are both social and personal. Such implications are part of the meaning of the words that express the constructs. At a superordinate level of generality, a person's inventory of categories collectively represents that person's worldview and the modes of action appropriate to it.

4. STUDY AND RESULTS

4.1 Framing Sappho

Frame Semantic Theory holds that every word in a given intended meaning evokes a particular frame,

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which constitutes the structure of knowledge necessary for the understanding of that word (Narayanan et al., 2003, p. 779). *A frame* is a detail-rich, social and cultural network which is constructed dynamically throughout a person's life. As such, its contents of categories and sub-constructs overlap, i.e. share various features, continuously and to varying degrees. Things categorised as *Father Figures,* overlap with categories of things that are dependable, trustworthy, and disciplinary. Such categories can be considered as associated by contiguity in semantic space, based on the principle that experience, for the individual, is unitary relational (e.g. 'father' and 'trustworthiness' are experienced together). Literary, and political, themes constitute cognitive categories of mediated contiguity, set up by their instigators. They function as cognitive domains because they structure experiential data in particular ways (Brinker, 1993, p. 31). Trump is constructed as presidential. Sappho has throughout history been variously constructed in literature as a poet, a singer, a musician, a prostitute, the leader of a women's circle, a priestess of Aphrodite, the principal of a girls' academy, a sexual deviant, an uninhibited female, a figure of myth, and a representative of women's lot, with all of the prejudices, behaviours, and attitudes which such categories provoke in her readers. The fifty most popular portraits of Sappho produced between 1820 and 1920 similarly depict her in an erotic context – in a provocative or seductive pose, or embracing or kissing an *amante* – or as a writer or musician (see Table1).

Table 1

Sappho's themes, 1820-1920

EROTIC	WRITER	MUSICIAN	NEUTRAL	*N*
48%	6%	8%	30%	*N=50*
POSE	EMBRACE	KISSING		
62%	23%	15%		*N=24*

'By changing overlapping categories, mediated contiguity changes receivers' cognitions and behaviours'

The overlapping categories include sumptuous bedrooms, secluded arbours, partial unclothing, deep chiaroscuro, and intimate audiences. A large number of pictures show her neutrally, with no overt categorial associations, thereby forcing viewers to supply their own; the sources of them include the list above and personal, private experience.

A similar situation obtains with portraits from antiquity.

The important point is that it is not Sappho who is communicated by such constructs but, especially in the period reviewed, abstract images of prurience and voyeurism mediated by instigators who promote their own agendas in order to misinform, obfuscate, or lie outright.

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4.2 Value orientations theory

Dangerous things, in the sense that they influence human beings for good or ill, include what the anthropologists Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) called *value orientations*. The theory holds that:

1) there is a limited number of common human problems for which all peoples, at all times, must find some solution;

2) the solutions of all the problems are similarly limited in number and are not random;

3) all solutions are present in all societies and all subcultures, at all times, but are differentially preferred;

4) awareness of the Self is a universal ground for the development of all orientations.

The problems and their solutions – collectively, *values* – together have direct effects on both the concrete behaviour and the abstract reasoning of the people who hold them.

Like Lakoff's categories, Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck's (1961) values have ethical and behavioural implications.

Six general problems have been suggested: the relationships which human beings have with each other, with time, space, and nature (including the supernatural); with the basic human modalities of being, becoming, or doing; and with the nature of Human Nature as illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2

Summary of value orientations

VALUE	ORIENTATION	DESCRIPTION
Relationship with Others: What is the best form of social organisation?	Linearity	Society is hierarchical. Leaders make decisions. The individual must defer to authority.
	Collaterality	Society is egalitarian. An extended group of equals make decisions. Authority is vested in the collective.
	Individualism	Individual members or families make decisions independently of the Others.
Human nature: What are people like, basically?	Evil	The Other is wicked, harmful, dangerous, not to be trusted.
	Neutral	People are neither good nor bad, but some combination of both.
	Good	People are good by nature.
Nature: What is the human being's appropriate relationship to Nature?	Subordinate	Life is controlled by external forces, higher power(s) beyond the influence of humans.
	Harmonious	People live in balance with the natural world.
	Dominant	The human challenge is to control the natural (and the supernatural) world.
Activity: What is the best mode of being-in-the-world?	Being	Motivation is personal: internal and self-sufficient. The valuation by Others is not necessary for self-worth.
	Becoming	Motivation comprises personal growth and self-actualisation. Valuation by others is not required.
	Doing	Motivation is in personal achievement, which determines social worth.
Time: How is time be conceived of?	Past	Society focuses on the time before now and on the honouring, maintenance, and preservation of taditional mores, values, beliefs.
	Present	Society focuses on the present moment, without concern for the future.
	Future	Society focuses on the time to come, goal-setting, and changing ('improving') society.
Space: How is space experienced?		The area around the body into which other people may be allowed to intrude. It is determined by the individual's mood, the degree of closeness between Self and Other, and the nature of the relationship, and by cultural norms. It is experienced on a continuum between Private, an intimate space (0 – 1/2 metre from ego) or personal (1/2 – 11/2), and Public, social (11/2 – 4) or communal (4+).

Neither the problems nor the solutions are isolated. They always occur in patterns that are cohesive, which can identify not only societies but also their members. Both Lakoff's categories and Kluckhohn and Strodbeck's value orientations are analytical constructs. But, *mutatis mutandis* for different members of a society, they allow the systematisation of phenomena observable in human behaviour, and its results. This includes Trump's tweets and Sappho's poetry.

4.3 Sappho's conceptual structures

As all the poets tell us, love is a force that is significant and dangerous. The modern English word *love* loosely translates what the early Greeks carefully distinguished by three terms, *éros, philía,* and *agápé*. These are more than mere words. They represent different though related cognitive domains of human experience, which are characterised in specific ways. Their phonological difference is the most obvious pointer to their cognitive and semantic distinctions. The words and the concepts which they designate are categories in just the way outlined above. Importantly: *the structure of these categories differs significantly from that designated by the modern term*.

Equally, Sappho's categorisations differ from those of her predecessors and her contemporaries.

This entails that to an appreciable degree, what Sappho meant by each of the three terms cannot

be accurately rendered, either by comparison with her contemporaries' or predecessors' usage of the terms, or by any simplistic modern translation of them. The degree to which they differ is non-trivial, since that degree exactly reflects the distribution of her attention, over domains of experience, which were salient *to her.* Sappho's categories are unique to herself and must be taken into consideration when trying to understand the meaning of her words.

The Greek terms are similar in that they all denote the experiences and behaviour of one person, the subject, in relation to an object, which in Sappho's case is mainly but not exclusively human. *Philía* is used for people, *agápé* exclusively so; *éros* is mainly an abstract force. By contrast, the single term English collocates with animals and non-animate objects such as things, occurrences, and food: we say, '*I love flamingos/the movies/ thunderstorms/dry wine*'.

The Greek terms differ from each other significantly in respect of the concept of *care*, which has to do with being concerned about something or someone. It is used extensively by Sappho's predecessor Homer under many synonyms, and is called *méléma* ('an object of care') by Sappho. It was called *therapeía* by Socrates, for whom it meant the 'good and welfare' of an object. More recently it has been called *heed* by Ryle (1990), where it includes

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'being conscious of,' 'paying attention to' something, and 'maintaining a vivid consciousness of relevant features of a situation and of one's own activity with respect to it' (Ryle, 1990, p. 130).

For Heidegger (1993), *care* was the basis of Being-in-the-world. He distinguishes three kinds: *Sorge*,

the worry or anxiety arising from apprehension about one's own future; *Besorgen*, the concern, worry or being troubled about something; and *Fürsorgen*, the active caring about another person.

Sorge relates to Being itself; *Besorgen* to its activities in the world; and *Fürsorgen* to its being with others.

The concept of *care* is a *basic-level element* of the categories of *éros, philía,* and *agápé*. This means that it is a universal phenomenon, existing among all people at all times. As such it provides a method of illustrating, for Sappho, the semantic and cognitive spaces of the three terms, plus a fourth term, *melancholikós*, defined by absence shown in Figure 1 below.
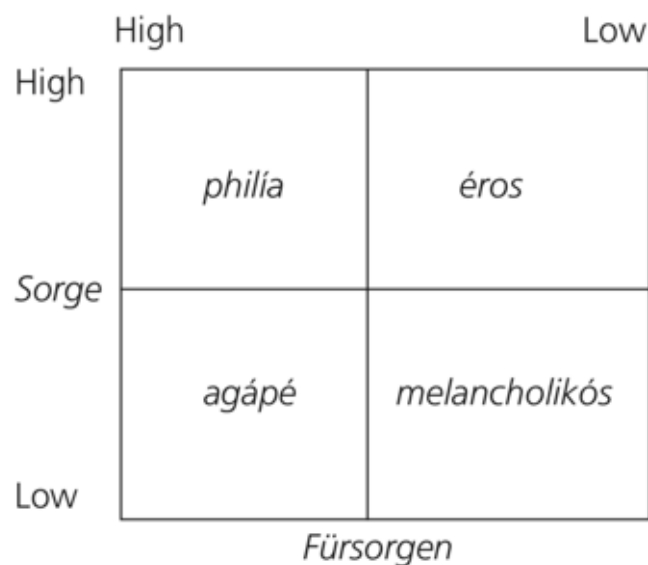

Figure 1. Generic semantic space

A distinction must be drawn between the concept of *care* and the words used to designate it. As a *conceptual category,* it is one of the most fundamental human concepts. Such concepts are what *'people around the world use in thought spontaneously, automatically, effortlessly, and often'* (Lakoff, 1987, p. 55). Prototypical concepts like this are usually coded directly into the grammar of a language. That is, the concept of care is 'contained in' or directly implied by the concepts of *éros, philía, agápé*, and *melancholikós*. The concept is a central member of the latter four categories. The words for 'care', by contrast, are reserved for characterising care which is non-central. For example, when Sappho says *'I love Cleis'*, under normal circumstances she would not need to say *'I love and I take care of Cleis.'* However, when his servant tells Odysseus that the women of the house do not look after his faithful dog, there is no implication of affection between the women and the dog. *Care* was therefore a central member of the four categories in both Homer's time and Sappho's. As a property of the categories, furthermore, *care is an interactional property, 'the result of our interactions as part of our physical, and cultural environments, given our bodies and our cognitive apparatus'* (Lakoff, 1987, p. 51). As the definition of *care* suggests, there is an intuitive correlation between the concept and the value orientations of a society and its members. Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck's (1961) values in effect constitute a network of

(sub)categories which interact with the concept in a relationship that is in part mutually implicative.

Philía is the category or metaphor which Sappho uses most to describe her conception of love. It is therefore her dominant, or *first-order*, value orientation. In general, she follows Homer in the usage of *philía*, but her belief in it as a suitable metaphor is more intense. She is interested in the partners to the relationship having an equal share of pleasure; her poem regarding walking and talking with her *amante* Gongyla shows this, as it suggests her conception of space as private and intimate. People are good, capable of conferring honour on her, and of treating her with gentleness. This is indicated by her claim to a gentle disposition in the address to her brother, by her invocation to the *'soft Graces and lovely-tressed Muses,'* (Edmonds, 1958, p. 101) and by her sharp sensitivity to personal hurts. Love entails admiration for others, but it also entails an openness to their slings and arrows.

Sappho's modality of activity is being in the world. Her temporal focus is largely with the present although she does refer with regret to the past. This is a major divergence from Homer, for whom *philía* implies the present and future while the past is an element of *éros*. Sappho's relationship to Nature and the Other is her most significant difference from the earlier poet. Her relationships are ruled by harmony. Her metaphors are taken

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mainly from the variegation of nature itself, and secondly from the social world. The natural world as a comment on the world of man has a literary history that in Sappho's cultural mindset goes back to the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* of Homer and the *Hymns* of Hesiod in the century before hers.

This historical dimension is the general erotic connection of love and Nature. Sappho was the first poet to connect Nature and love through *philía*, through care about the natural world. *Philía,* for her, represents a fusion of Heidegger's *Besorgen and Fürsorgen*. Nature is not simply a background to her main theme, as it was for predecessors and contemporararies, but a rich source of cognitive and experiential metaphors which she appropriated.

Sappho's most interesting usage of the term concerns Helen of Troy. Helen is without doubt one of the most fascinating women in history: the archetypal adulteress who left her child, parents, husband, home and homeland for another man,

thereby precipitating a war that destroyed one of the most illustrious habitations of all the known world. She was the woman upon whose name the playwright Aeschylus made perhaps his most damning word-play: *'Helen, the Hell of ships, the Hell of men, the Hell of cities'*. There is some indication that Helen was motivated in Sappho not by éros, the mania of love, but by *philía*, its more complex cousin – which is often translated by the barely adequate word 'friendship'.

Sappho's *éros* is, in general, not as exploitative as it is in Homer but has the innocence of childhood and the sharing that that period implies. Nature is not subjugated but, as with philía, is an active partner in a universal life-force. As an energy of its own it has all the positive and negative power of Nature itself. Its strongest natural power is its connection with fire, deriving from the 'desire of the sunlight' (Edmonds, 1958, p. 118). Sappho accuses *éros* of burning her; and it can make her heart *'flame up'*. It is both fire and fever or disease, and as such is related to pain. In an apparent contradiction however, people and place are held in honour. It confers on mortals the mode of both being and activity. Temporal focus is the present. The concept of space is both private and public, as is suggested by the institution of marriage as simultaneously a ceremony that is communal and an erotic celebration which is intimate.

Eros is used most strikingly in her address to her

amante Anactoria, demonstrating that the best thing in the world is one's beloved. Anactoria is fairer, says Sappho, than an army of foot soldiers, a fleet of ships, a field of chariots, and all of the armed forces of the land of Lydia. These are images of concentrated power that call up excitement and aggressiveness on a massive scale, like the films and photographs of Leni Riefenstahl. Such for Sappho was the overwhelming force of a physical attraction. It struck her without warning, like Poseidon's whirlwind rushing down a mountain-side.

The category of love as *agápé* is nominated only in Sappho's poem to her daughter Cleis. The parental affection she displays there parallels that in Homer, where *agápé* is similarly a human and not a divine emotion. Sappho's term has a wider scope however, embracing all Nature, from flowers to her own 'lovely [island of] Lesbos' and to all of Lydia. Sappho's attitude to children generally bears out her conception of *agápé*. Her relationship as mother to her child is not unlike her position vis-à-vis the exclusive coterie of young women which, from antiquity until the present, she is thought to have headed. She scolds and chastises them, quoting to them proverbs and *sententiae* and the rules of etiquette. The Other is not dominated as in Homer, albeit with kindness, but is treated with affectionate condescension. The modality of activity which this implies is being, and its temporal focus is completely in the present. The

conception of space is universalist. Compared to *philía*, in which care is defined as paying attention to the contextualisation of one's actions, Sappho's *agápé* is devoid of self.

The category of *melancholikós* in Sappho's thinking is not simply a negation of the previous categories, but is a complex of its own. In antiquity, it was associated with ill-temper, incontinence, impetuousness, insanity, fits, madness, and blindness. Today it is known as psychological depression. Sappho says the feeling is bestowed by Aphrodite. Its essential psychodynamics include a deep sense of loss of what is loved or valued, and a conflict of mixed feeling of love and hate toward those people or things. The most famous poem in this regard is *Odi et amo* ('I hate you and I love you') by the later Latin poet Catullus (Catullus, 1990, p. 130-131), although Sappho does admit in one fragment to being in 'two minds' (Edmonds, 1958, p. 52). Her longing and yearning occur often, as in such anthology pieces as *The Moon is Down* (Edmonds, 1958, p. 111), with its complaint of insomnia. The loss of friends is also a major theme. All such feelings have for Sappho both a general and a specific focus: generally, they concern the frequent departure of her *amantes* to be married, and more specifically they mourn her separation from two in particular, Anactoria and Gongyla. The categorical relationship of general to specific is metonymic. The category reveals that Sappho's conception of

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the Other is one of betrayal – human nature is fickle, as is shown by her brother Charaxtus' behaviour over a prostitute, and the falsity of certain *amantes*. Her friends sometimes contract unstable relationships with women who are no better than provincial ingénues; and whoever one loves most will do most injury. Time is conceived of as present hurts which stem from past events and the actions of others. Her modality of action is being-in-the-world to the extent that her pain and anguish are salient experiences; nor does she withdraw from them. Space is metaphorised as nature, which is the force separating her from her beloved, as the sea separates her from Atthis.

4.4 Qualia and the hypostatisation of reality

The third influence, and the one which arguably has the most profound effect on the Self's category-formation are *qualia*, the accumulated aspects of an experience which are the most deeply subjective and, therefore, unique to the individual. They comprise the Self's perceptual information stored in long-term memory, and although usually included in semantic memory, it is information that *'is not (and in some cases cannot be) encoded in words'* (Colman, 2003, p. 544).

Qualia concern physical sensations such as the smell of fresh bread, the taste of a lemon, the pain of a pinprick, the redness of roses, or the memory of someone's face, which we are aware of instantly and before being conscious of them. They are the attempts to contain the ontology of the world by the phenomenology of language, in an intimate and highly personal way (Dews, 1988, p. 115).

Qualia are part of the source domains of a speaker's and hearer's metaphoric sets. They are irrevocable, indubitable, explicit, immutable, automatic, and invariant in construction, design, and function (see Ramachandran & Hubbard, 2001).

Qualia are quintessentially private and ineffable; language is par excellence public and intersubjective. The epistemological paradox dissolves when the research focus is shifted from philosophy and linguistics to neurobiology, from where, contra-Wittgenstein, people are seen as cognitive beings who possess real information about their inner states but are unable to communicate it to other equally cognitive beings (Loorits, 2014). Sappho herself was aware of the dilemma: *'My words are of air', she wrote – they have no substance, like qualia – 'but they are necessary for well-being' for herself and her audience'* (Edmonds, 1958, p. 112). In another fragment, she says that extracting meaning is like pressing honey: something is left behind.

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The effect of qualia on Sappho's communication is that, in using the relevant words, she and her readers are invoking fundamentally different constructs for encoding and decoding the message. This is because the construction of the ancient metaphors differ in profound and significant ways from those employed in modern languages. Insofar as their mappings from source to target domains are determined by *culture*, all metaphors in modern languages are historically discrete; insofar as they are determined by the *individual's life experiences* (cf. Lakoff, 1987, p. 281), all mappings are idiosyncratic in the same way (and for the same reason) as are qualia. They are personal constructs.

Mappings that are most intensely personal, such as Sappho's, may be considered *'poetic'* (Lakoff, 1993, p. 209). But reductively translating the Greek terms as 'love' is more than simple shorthand for an emotion considered to be universal and timeless. Intellectual reduction is an example of hermeneutic *Verstehen*, the mode of conceptualisation considered necessary to understand contemporary human affairs. A speaker's *Verstehen* is his or her understanding of everyday social phenomena such as rituals and activities, permissions and prohibitions, rights and obligations, and the individual's feelings and beliefs which are related thereto. It includes also the positivist faith in the steady progress of mankind. But such understanding is pernicious when applied retrospectively because it is both misleading and an obfuscation, projecting the writers of ancient Greece, for instance, as lacking in expressive precision despite a vocabulary which is at least equally as precise as any modern word-hoard. Sappho's emotions are therefore seen as primitive in some way: curious but not engaging.

Since metaphorical conceptualisation is not only a way of talking about something but also of thinking and reasoning about it (Lakoff, 1993, p. 233), Sappho's target domain of love was conceptualised differently than it is at present because it was experienced differently and is in essence therefore different from what we call 'love'. This is so because we have known for a long time that *'experience and reality come to the same thing'*: our knowledge of sensible reality is made *'inside the tissue of experience'* (James, 1912, p. 171). Love as experienced by any person therefore cannot,

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except in the grossest of terms, be universal. Although the emotion itself seems to be so, its particular instances are unique, and thus incommensurable.

The result is a failure of communication between Sappho and her readers. It is manifest as failure in two ways: of Fauconnier's *access principle*, which holds that *'an expression that names or describes an element in one mental space can be used to access [or identify] a counterpart of that element in another mental space'* (Fauconnier, 2006, p. 41); and of the *axiom of punctuation* (Watzlawick et al., 2011), whereby the perceived linguistic structuring of information directly determines the behaviour of communicating participants. Failure of the first type entails a curtailed, incomplete interpretation of Sappho's message, which ensures an inability to sound the depths of her terror when she says, for instance, *'love shattered my heart'* (Edmonds, 1958, p. 54). The second type closes understanding between author and reader exactly as does mis-taking in conversation,

ensuring the entire message is false.

But the reception of Sappho's communication in the beneficient way in which she intended it is rendered impossible not only by the inaccessibility of qualia to direct enquiry. Qualia are underlaid by a more generalised bias, a cognitively motivated distortion of reality that is described by Watzlawick *et al* as the *'very deep-seated propensity to hypostatise reality'* (Watzlawick et al., 2011, p. 259). This is a peculiarly human proneness to appropriate reality as essentially a benevolent friend or a malevolent foe. It is a transfiguring idealisation, the abstracting, internalising, and divinising of an object such that it *'serves a private mythology'* (Bonnecase, 2006, p. 101), akin to those of Poseidon, Aphrodite, and American Presidents. The dimensions of the mythology are one's value orientations. As a dichotomous hypostatisation, it is an ancient and cross-cultural phenomenon, attested to in modern theories of childhood development (Holmes, 2010) and in ancient Chinese theology (Slingerland, 2014).

In the theory of Watzlawick *et al*, hypostatisation is structured as a hierarchy. At the lowest level is the knowledge that something exists; second is the knowledge that what exists has meaning in terms of human well-being. The third level consists of the individual's premises about the relationships between things and their meanings; this is the level at which the individual constructs a unified

view and a set of beliefs and values about 'reality', with concomitant behaviours. At the fourth level the individual is able to question all or parts of this construct. Distortion of the individual structure so instantiated is motivated by what Crawshay-Williams (2011) calls the *comforts of unreason*, the *'natural preference'* for unreason to prevail over reason as a self-protective mechanism (Crawshay-Williams, 2011, p. 136). The analyses

of Watzlawick *et al.* (2011) and of Crawshay-Williams (2011) suggest that, as personal constructs, idiosyncratic to the individual, concepts such as *éros, philía*, and *agápé*, *melanckolikós* and 'love' are radically unrelated. At the most general level of human verbal communication, therefore, meaning is not a transferable phenomenon because all conceptions of sender and receiver are contaminated by qualia.
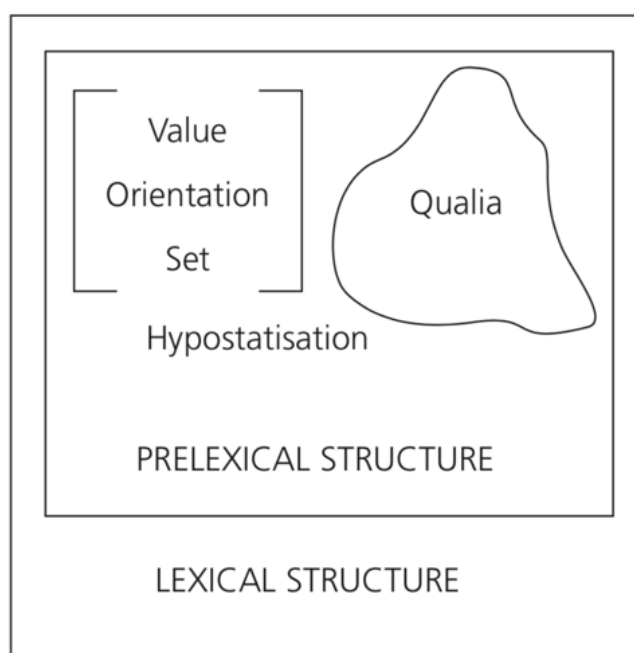

Figure 2. Generic semantic structure

For both sender and receiver of a message, a word comprises lexical and prelexical components.

Prelexical structure comprises the socially and culturally ordered set of value orientations and the contingently ordered qualia cloud. The VO matrix

is indexed by reality hypostatisation. *Lexical* structure comprises the term's surface structure information. Prelexical structure cannot be transmitted during communication.

The total picture appears in Figure 3.

High   Low

High			

philía | | *éros* | |

Others   *Modality*   *Others*   *Modality*
Equality   Being   Attraction   Being
Admiration   Friendship   Doing
Vulnerability   Mutual pleasure
                                  Innocent
                                  Child-like

Human Nature *Time*   *Human Nature* *Time*
Good   Present   Honourable   Present
Gentle   Past   Attractive
Honourable   Dangerous

Nature   *Space*   *Nature*   *Space*
Harmony   Private   Partnership   Intimate
Omnipresent   Intimate   Universal power Communal
Variegated   Conflagrational

Self

agápé | | *melancholikós* | |

Others   *Modality*   *Others*   *Modality*
Selfless   Being   Betrayal   Being
                                  Yearning
                                  Mixed

Human Nature *Time*   *Human Nature* *Time*
Affectionate   Present   Fickle   Present
                                  Insincere   Past

Nature   *Space*   *Nature*   *Space*
Child-like   Universalist   Submission to   Public
                                  force

Low

Other

Figure 3. Semantic space of love in Sappho

A mapping of Sappho's value orientations into *éros, philía, agápé*, and *melancholikós*. The vertical axis represents the degree of concern a person may have for the Self (*Sorge*). The horizontal axis represents *Fürsorgen*, caring about the Other. Both scales are continua, of unknown extension, represented arbitrarily as High and Low.

Eros Other comprises (relatively) high concern with Self and low concern with Other. *Philía* comprises high concern with the Other in relation to one's own selfishness. *Agápé* is concerned with

the Other to the exclusion of the self. The fourth quadrant, low concern with both oneself and other people, corresponds to psychological depression and was known to antiquity as *melancholikós*.

The domains of experience are clearly different, for even today we feel differently about, and behave differently toward, our spouses or significant others, our children, and our friends. But as the Figure shows, the intensely personal nature of all experience causes a failure in domain-mapping that is bridged only superficially, at surface structure level, by recourse to constructing categories and metaphors. That is, by using language tout court. What is needed is the kind of deep-structure alignment of experience that Sappho tried with all her art to invoke.

5. CONCLUSION

Of all the communicants who choose writing as their medium, none are so concerned to transmit their message to the finest degree of understanding as are poets. The objective of this study was to

point up the fracture between poetic intent and an understanding compromised by failing to consider the motivating cognitions of the poet. Poets themselves encourage and demand such an understanding, by the sheer effort of writing poetry. Their cognitions are at least partially recoverable through a multi-disciplined convergence of Lakoff's (1993) theory of metaphor, Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck's (1961) early theories of socially and culturally determined reasoning, and Watzlawick et al.'s (2001) thoughts on experiential conditioning. The results offer to students of literature a methodology for a finer understanding of the processes of why and how and what writers write and readers read. Students of language may be better equipped to decode usage at a level below the conscious, where both meaning and misunderstanding originate. To students of culture is made available a methodology for bridging the relativities of culture and for reconciling the differences they cause. But what is needed first is a detailed knowledge of how we structure our thoughts at their deepest level.

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