The defeat of radical singularism in Russian, English and French literature

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The fracture between a sender's intent and a receiver's actuality in the communication process is the result of a radical singularism, which maintains that meaning is not communicable at the level of deep structure. This, in turn, is the result of idiosyncratic cognition, a function of the value orientation sets, qualia, and hypostatisations of reality inhabited by the parties to the communication. It is a platitude, however, to point out that humans do in fact communicate at some level. The question addressed in this paper is how radical singularism has been defeated in selected works of English, Russian and American authors, supported by works of other figures in literary history. The conclusion is that the singularist interpretation of a word, text (or indeed the universe), which results from knowledge by acquaintance, is strongly mediated by its mode of presentation and description. In particular, counterfactuals are ensured despite experience. In conclusion, persuasion – the ancient method of successfully associating the systematised philosophical positions of speakers and hearers – is shown to proceed by abandonment, explanation, or assumption. The latter process may lead to exploitation, as the American singer Bruce Springsteen reveals of US President, Donald Trump.

KEYWORDS: *singularism, semantics, semiotics, qualia, hypostatisations of reality, literature, novelists*

1. INTRODUCTION

The fracture between a sender's intent and a receiver's actuality in the communication process is well-established (see Bebbington, 2017, p. 109). Specifically, the failure in domain-mapping between the parties to that process has been indicated, the relevant semantic mappings being functions of the idiosyncratic cognitions of sender and receiver. Cognition includes perception, intuition, reasoning, and reflection. In general, cognition is metaphoric: all human thinking, including mathematical, logical, and 'scientific' conceptualisation, is thinking in metaphors (Lakoff & Núñez, 2000, p. 4). Disposed cognition is defined as that 'mental act or process by which knowledge is acquired' (CEDT, 2007, p. 217) which is derived from the 'composite … psychological make-up of a person' (CEDT, 2007, p. 584). Idiosyncratic cognition refers to the degree of uniqueness motivating the semantic mappings of individual persons. Idiosyncratic cognition differs from cognitive bias, of which Haselton et al. (2015) write: *'Using faculties of social perception, humans construct images of the*

social world in similar ways' (Haselton et al., 2015, p. 2). It is not social perception which forms cognition that is idiosyncratic, but intensely personal, private experiences that are necessarily not directly communicable. Although the process of constructing images of the world may be the same (because of the common physical makeup of human beings), at a deep-structural level the content of those constructions, and therefore the constructions themselves, are not.

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

This study focuses on the work of a number of leading historical literary figures, including Russian novelists Boris Pasternak and Mikhail Lermontov, British novelist Lewis Carroll, and French novelist Marcel Proust, and analyses how they use the concepts of qualia, value orientation and hypostatisations of reality to communicate meaning.

3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Value orientation sets

Semantic mappings are functions of lived experience upon pre-lexical structures. These structures comprise three closely interrelated elements: value orientations, qualia, and the hypostatisations of reality. The value orientation sets of senders and receivers are their idiosyncratic subsets of the universal set of human values, which anthropologists have identified as manifest in all societies. Even though every society has a

uniquely configured subset of values, the values themselves are limited in number. They have as a collective objective the provision of practical and moral solutions to the existential problems of human beings relative to time and space, to nature and the supernatural, to other human beings, and to basic human motives and the nature of human nature (Hills, 2002, p. 3). Neither the problems nor the solutions are isolated. They always occur in cohesive patterns, which can identify not only societies but also their members.

The problems and their solutions have ethical and behavioural implications, and together directly affect both the concrete behaviour and the abstract reasoning of the people who hold them. Finally, although value orientations are analytical constructs, they allow the systematisation of phenomena observable in human behaviour and its results, including literary works of different writers, periods, schools, and genres, and less structured communications such as those considered as speech acts more generally (Bebbington, 2017; Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961).

Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck's (1961) analysis of contemporary American society found that citizens valued domination over the natural environment, as against being in harmony with it or subjugated by it. They were oriented toward present time, as against the past or the future, and lived actively for

the moment, as against striving for goals or thinking. They considered other people as both good and bad, as against inherently one or the other. They took individual responsibility in interactions with others, as against a group or a hierarchical distribution of responsibility. They inhabited a physical space that is private, as against a space that is public or a mixture of public and private. With minor regional geographical variations, similar values have continued into the 21st century (cf. Hackett, 1989; Woodard, 2011). To compare, an assessment of Russian culture in 2013 found that domination of nature was valued, as was a traditionalist and future orientation to time, a mode of being as striving, other people considered as both good and bad, group-oriented responsibility, and a public conception of space (Ivanova, 2013).

Under semiotic analysis, value orientations are instantiated and communicated in texts as the term refers to any assemblage of signs which together constitute a coherent whole. Such texts comprise literary works, verbal utterances, films, paintings, music, historical events, human relationships, and even the sense of self (cf. Martin & Ringham, 2006, p. 199).

American values are expressed perhaps most clearly in the poetry of Frost, Whitman and Crane, the short stories of Willa Cather, the novels of Steinbeck, the music of Aaron Copeland, and the paintings of Winslow Homer. Russian values enliven the works of inter alia Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Repin, Surikov, Tchaikovsky, Borodin, Mussorgsky, and Rimsky-Korsakov. Pushkin valued individual responsibility, which was the major reason for his vilification by the tsarist authorities immediately following his death (cf. Feinstein, 1998, p. 275). Boris Pasternak provides a parallel case (De Mallac & Šilbajoris, 1981, p. 267).

As questions of praxis and morality, value orientations involve not only strictures concerning behaviour, but they also invoke a dynamic complex of speakers' and hearers' beliefs – philosophical, religious, factual, and fanciful. Value orientations are revealed in the metaphors of conduct that is socially deemed to be right/ correct/acceptable, and the converse of these, that permeate ideologies of all political conviction. This is so because all metaphors comprise source domains, which are rooted socially, culturally, and historically.

Singularisms grounded in value orientations are not so much defeated as transfigured. The Russian and American value of dominating nature, for instance, is equivalent because both cultures possess it. Any given reference within a communication to that particular value can therefore be translated directly from one language to the other. The value of responsibility, however, is contrary as regards each culture: while Russians

value group orientation, Americans think of themselves as individualists. Translation from one to the other language would foreground an anomaly.

3.2 Qualia

Metaphors and their source domains are also functions of the qualia of the parties to a communication; these comprise the second component of lexical structure. Qualia are the most deeply subjective, unique, and therefore non-communicable aspects of experiences, feelings, and physical sensations that accompany awareness (Edelman, 1992, p. 66). They concern physical sensations such as the smell of fresh bread, the feel of silk, the blue of the sea, the taste of vinegar, the pain of a headache, the redness of roses, and the recognition of a face (Nelson, 2011, p. 41). Visual shapes such as the oval also have qualic reference in art and in life, being predicated on such structures as the shape of the human eye and recognisable in everyday utensils such as plates and bowls seen in perspective (Rawson, 1969, p. 32). Qualia also concern the 'transition points in [one's] life history' (Holmes, 2014, p. 88), such as the first contact with one's caregiver, one's first experience of solitude, and one's first sexual encounter (Winnicott, 1990; Phillips, 1994; Barnstone & Barnstone, 1992). The initial formalisation of the events underlying a quale, with their causes, constitutes a semantic primitive, a record as a physical memory trace. Qualia are

stored in long-term memory and are usually included in semantic memory, but they consist of information that is not, and often cannot be, encoded in language (Colman, 2003, p. 544). They are quintessentially idiosyncratic. They are neutral as regards positive or negative, joyful or distressing, noble or shameful experiences. They possess an immediacy of apprehension in which awareness precedes consciousness. We are aware of a particular sound or taste, feeling, or sight before being conscious of its significance.

Singularisms underlain by qualia are the most resistant to defeat. This is of course because they are *sui generis* unique to each party in a communication. There is simply no basis on which qualia can be compared. So, for instance, the emotion motivating Pushkin's *'Я вас люблю'* can be appreciated, sympathised with, taken to be warning to others in a similar predicament of regret, sorrow, guilt, rage, etc., or to be the initial statement of a reported experience. But it cannot be known as its writer knows it. It is understanding without cognition; the kind of anomaly that exercised Socrates and caused Jesus Christ to despair (Gospel of Matthew 8.26). The depth of feeling is unique to Pushkin as a human being (the expression is unique to Pushkin as a poet). Similarly, Burns's revelation that *'My love is like a red, red rose'* depends completely on its qualia, as emphasised by the repetition of its affective essence.

3.3 Hypostatisations of reality

The third component of the pre-lexical structure of words as they are used by senders and receivers is ultimately the residue of the hypostatisations of reality which the parties inhabit. The hypostatisation of reality is the human propensity to appropriate reality as essentially benevolent or malevolent. It is a process of abstracting the experience of an object in order to generate a private mythology, on which one's conduct in the world proceeds (Watzlawick et al., 2011, p. 259; Bebbington, 2017). The concept is closely interlaced with qualia and value orientations, and is therefore not a simple dichotomy of fortune and misfortune, or enabling and disabling fate.

Reality hypostatisation is related more generally to the concept of reification, the innate tendency for human beings to simplify experience in order to enhance the constency and predictability of the social world. It stems from the 'deep aspiration for security and longing for truth' which characterises human life (Naugle, 2002, p. 179), and therefore has epistemic significance. We know the ways of the world and how to behave accordingly. The reified world is 'a dehumanised world … experienced as a strange facticity, an *opus alienum* over which [a person] has no control rather than as the opus proprium of his own activity' (Berger & Luckmann, 1991, p. 89).

In the light of Karl Jasper's conception of

Weltanschauungen (worldview), reality hypostatisation can be understood both subjectively and objectively. For Jaspers, the worldview of an individual – but also of a society, philosophy, or a religious system – is constituted by the combination of 'attitudes' (*Einstellungen*) and 'world pictures' (*Weltbilder*). Attitudes are 'the formal patterns and structures of mental existence by means of which the world is experienced in active, contemplative, rational, sensualistic, ascetical, or in other ways' (Naugle, 2002, p. 121). *Weltbilder* are 'the entire objective mental content an individual possesses' (Lefebre, 1981, p. 489). It is by means of the basic attitudes produced by innate ideas and childhood experiences that an individual 'encounters the objective world and forms a mental picture of it' (Naugle, 2002, p. 122).

Hypostatisations take many forms. Deep pessimism and a negative hypostatisation of reality characterise the poet Lermontov, as suggested by his known early biography (lonely childhood, ill-matched parents, the death of his mother, alienation from his caregiver) and of his own writings such as *Demon* and *Hero of Our Time*. The Scottish Gaelic poet Sorley MacLean was initially attracted to Marxism through his disgust with the hierarchical structuration of Calvinism. To MacLean, Marxism suggested a more egalitarian society. His hypostatisation of reality, however, was that society in general was inimical to human

well-being, and it turned him away from utopianism despite his life-long commitment to a socialist philosophy. At the age of 21, Sylvia Plath was highly sensitive to the jealousy and envy of her friends at her modest successes in life, while simultaneously undergoing agonies about love and marriage (Plath, 1979, p. 113; Kukill, 2000, p. 180-185). By contrast, St Francis of Assisi revealed a positive hypostatisation following an illness at the age of about 20, in his poem *The Canticle of Creation (Laudes Creaturarum),* in which fire and the sun are his brothers, water and the moon and stars are his sisters, and the earth is his mother (Robinson, 1906, p. 150). Hypostatisations of reality can exist and co-exist at varying levels of severity.

Value orientations and qualia are stable, but only to a degree. They can be altered or destroyed by successive life-experiences: for instance, the memory of a face can change if the person is met with again later in life, a phenomenon which Aristotle called *anagnorisis*, 'recognition' (Lucas, 1968, p. 168). Dickens's Ebenezer Scrooge undergoes a change of value orientation from negative to positive during the course of a chain of dreams. Goethe's Faust changes from fervid philosophe to narcissistic hedonist, to social benefactor who does Good Works. Hypostatisations of reality, however, have tenacious stability. A character who starts out or who is born with a given orientation usually will

continue so. Thus, Shakespeare's Macbeth begins in scepticism at the prophesies of the witches and dies in the process of testing them: fate, for him, is no kind mistress. Similarly, Voltaire's Candide begins his career with unbounded optimism, and tempers it, but does not reverse it, after undergoing excessively many disasters of fortune. Of all the pre-lexical elements, reality hypostatisation is beyond the defeat of, or by, the participants in a communication.

3.4 Systematised philosophical position

A language user's idiosyncratic cognition can be said to underlie his or her systematised philosophical position. This is a proposed receptionist paradigm of reading that is generalisable to a broader model of communication. The characteristic of the systematised philosophical position is that it mediates the visibility of the literary text. It exists in various degrees of sophistication, completeness, coherence, richness, and depth among individual readers; it is approximate in content and degree of systemisation but is sufficiently systematised to serve uniquely the purpose for each person. It is dynamic throughout the individual's life, open to restructuring and is unstable to that degree; it is reasoned, operating interactively with social, cultural, economic, and political orders; it is idiosyncratic. The systematised philosophical position is dialectical, because its *telos* is a change in the structure of understanding (of text, of Self, of

social relations), and therefore of consciousness. It is dialogical, because it is inhabited by the many voices of Self, and indeed by any 'meaningful phenomena' (Bakhtin, 1994, p. 399). It is a-rational, because the motivating force of the relationships it encompasses is the human capacity to reason approximately in the face of vague, ambiguous, and imprecise reality, which is neither entirely rational nor entirely irrational. The dynamic dialectical-dialogical interaction constitutes the appropriate hermeneutic circle that is necessary to the 'unreflective involvement' of everyday human lived existence (cf. Heidegger, 1971; Matthews, 2010, p. 88).

When reading or otherwise traversing a text, the leaps of faith to the aesthetic and to the imagined occur during a-rational navigation within that circle, across perceptual, functional, encyclopaedic, and taxonomic cognitive categories. This entails that the systematised philosophical position is existentially terrifying, because it discloses the abyss between different and perhaps rival experiences and (therefore) realities (Bebbington, 2018).

The fuzzy boundaries and variable content of idiosyncratic cognitions ensure their mutual incommensurability, which entails that at their deepest level, they are largely in mutual opposition. Some content, namely the 'dictionary' meaning of words, is held in common, and these

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collectively constitute a shared encyclopaedic knowledge.

At the deep level of semantic mapping, however, communication is defeated because words mean radically different things to senders and receivers (cf. Grice, 1957; Levinson, 2010).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Qualia and qualic referencing in the works of Proust and Pasternak

Qualic referencing is an indispensable requirement of literature. This is because of the intensely personal and incommunicable – almost mystical – deep-structure nature of experience. Proust exactly describes the qualic process in his famous passage on the Madeleine biscuit dissolved in tea. The process is intricate: from an initial pleasure which, he says, *'invaded my whole body'* (Proust, 1954, p. 45), through iterative interrogations of the feeling as a *qualic protoform*, to a liberating revelation of self. The process

involves an act of *kenosis* in which *'I feel something shift within me,'* he says, *'something that wants to rise, something that wants to undock itself from a great depth'* (Proust, 1954, p. 46). He realises that this unknown entity is *'the image, the visual memory, which being linked to that taste [of the tea-soaked Madeleine], is trying to follow it into [his] consciousness'* (Proust, 1954, p. 46). At the lowest point of his despair, the memory suddenly reveals itself in its complete detail, going back to a family ritual in his childhood. The meaning of the whole episode, he then tells himself, is that, *'when from a distant past nothing subsists [in memory], after the people are dead, after the things are destroyed, then alone, more fragile but more indestructible, more insubstantial, more persistent, more faithful, their smell and taste remain long, like souls, remembering, waiting, hoping, amid the ruins of all the rest; and they bear unfaltering, in their almost impalpable droplet, the vast structure of recollection'* (Proust, 1954, p. 47).

Qualia are individual attempts to contain the ontology of the world by the phenomenology of language in an intimate and highly personal way (cf. Dews, 1988, p. 115; Lyotard, 1971, p. 38). As Proust demonstrates, a quale that is trivial to other people may have revelatory implications for oneself that are terrifying in their scope. Pasternak's appropriation of Proust's image for his description of Venice, that the city was *'swelling like a biscuit soaked in tea'* (Pasternak, 1961, p. 32), presents a highly complex realisation. The reference to the Madeleine imagery superficially repeats the cliché that emotions intrinsically cannot be communicated, and Pasternak conveys this by constructing a new emotional protostructure, a new quale. This is Pasternak's insight. His appropriation of Proust asserts that the insight is a necessary condition of the imagination, and that it can be communicated only by reference to another kind of consciousness, a non-conversational consciousness, a literary consciousness – one that pays attention to detail, which relentlessly unpacks the relevant quale, as against Pasternak's own poesis of describing it. The literary methods of Proust and others reveal the process of bringing qualic awareness into an everyday consciousness, of achieving the homeostasis following resolution of the existential anxiety felt when meeting a phenomenon in the world that is – simultaneously – known and not known. Pasternak's poetic method is to emphasise precisely both the idiosyncratic nature of a quale by foregrounding its unique, almost mystical, character and its strange quality of somehow being instantly recognised, and known.

To recover the genealogy of a quale, as Proust observes, is to engage in a search of a lost self. The archaeology of a quale raises anxiety or outright terror, as Henry James illustrates in his autobiographical essay on the World War I. He

describes how news photographs of soldiers at Passchendaele invoked *'a sudden leap back'* to his experiences in the American Civil War which *'broke upon us … fifty-four years ago',* almost to the day (James, 1918, p. 19).

During the process of excavating the connection, James claims that his previous being was devastated and changed beyond recognition: his *'house of the spirit'* was transformed from an *'inhabited, adjusted, familiar home … into I scarce know what to call it, a fortress of the faith, … an extravagant, bristling, flag-flying structure'* (James, 1918, p. 19-20). All qualia are idiosyncratic readings of experiences in their entirety. They are elements of deep-structure cognition and therefore of deep-structure semantics. As such, the most terrifying aspect of excavation is the sheer contradictions that a quale can comprise, confrontation with which can permanently change one's self.

As a final instance of qualic import, Rimbaud's poem *Voyelles* can be read as a statement of the vowels of everyday speech as personal qualia, precisely because their analogies defy logical analysis. For him, vowel sounds are born of his experiences in the world, and they retain latently the images of their original stimuli. *A*, for instance, has a nightmarish association with a black velvet garment that encloses the body, made of brilliant flies that buzz-like bees around cruel, stinking

chasms of darkness. *I* recalls to him red-purple things: spat blood, and the smile of beautiful lips in the intoxications of anger or of penitence (Bernard, 1960, p. 110). Rimbaud, here, is communicating both his sub-conscious self and the qualic triggers that recall it.

4.2 Hypostatisation of reality in the work of Edward Lear

A negative hypostatisation of reality can be discerned in the work of Edward Lear (1812-1888), a polymath and the *'Laureate of Nonsense'* in European literature (Jackson, 1947, p. 11). He is perhaps most famous for his poem *The Owl and the Pussycat* and his joyous and hilarious exploitation of the limerick form of poetry, together with comical but pointed illustrations. He was at one point teaching art to Queen Victoria. In his writings, he was fond of neologisms such as the *Owl and the Pussycat's* 'runcible spoon', and of 'fantastic verbal adventures' (Jackson, 1947, p. 26), once introducing himself by an extended pseudo-title which comprised an imaginative and essentially nonsensical combination of words from several languages and the name of a Sicilian town which he visited and painted many times over 20 years. In words and syntax, he nonsensified flora and fauna, geography, natural history, botany, anthropology, and himself.

But Lear considered himself physically ugly and

socially inept. He wrote in his bitterly ironic self-portrait *How Pleasant to Know Mr Lear!* that *'his visage is more or less hideous, his beard it resembles a wig', 'that crazy old Englishman'* who *'weeps by the side of the ocean [and] weeps on the top of the hill'* (Jackson, 1947, p. 27). Throughout his life, he was prone to epileptic fits, which he kept secret and prior to which he would withdraw into isolation. His epilepsy made him feel unworthy and fearful of marriage. He always considered himself an invalid. He had asthma and chronic bronchitis, from which he eventually died. He showed signs of clinical depression at seven years of age and suffered from periods of severe melancholy from then onwards. At the age of 15, he was selling drawings of 'morbid diseases' (his phrase) to hospitals and medical doctors, and in his letters sometimes refers to himself as 'being morbid'. His most-used adjective is 'sad', referring to illness, death, and the misfortunes of himself and others (Strachey, 1909, 1911).

According to his earliest critic, Holbrook Jackson (1874-1948), an activity which appeared to begin and end as the casual amusement of children was in fact a diversion of himself:

'His occasional excursions into the realm of nonsense … pervaded the whole of his life, ultimately becoming a continuous as well as formal medium of expression. Nonsense was the safety-valve of his consciousness responding to

most of his approaches to himself and his environment. It became a world in itself specially created by him as a refuge from the trials and irritations of life: ill-health, lack of means, and, above all, an over-strung sensibility. … It was as though he lived a double life, one in the realm of sense and the other in the realm of nonsense; and he had the power of transmuting himself one to the other at will' (Jackson, 1947, p. 12).

Throughout his life he was genuinely puzzled about himself, his talents, and his status in society. He was conscious of *'being influenced to an extreme by everything in natural and physical life, i.e. atmosphere, light, shadow, and all the varieties of day and night'* (Strachey, 1909, p. 234). Given the circumstances, it is hardly surprising that his personal reality hypostatisation was negative. But he was able to sublimate his experiences into his work. Other poets and authors similarly situated were moved to suicide, or worse.

5. DISCUSSION

The intended communicative act is to bring receivers to imagine the scenes or the facts described therein, either perfectly if the intentional object is within the shared encyclopaedic knowledge of sender and receiver, or adequately if at some point that knowledge is aporetic. Encyclopaedic knowledge is what one knows about the world, and in general it is shared by one's speaking community. Perfection, the first

condition, is impossible because of the idiosyncrasy condition of that shared knowledge, and the second condition is only approximate for the same reason.

We do understand each other at some level of dialogical adequacy, however, if the sender's knowledge by acquaintance, knowledge gained by experience, is mediated and its singularism is ameliorated by the mode in which that knowledge is described or presented. Conversational presentation allows for a reciprocity that more formal communications deny. The paradox lies then between the systemic failure of the deep-structure communication which emanates from the sender's systematised philosophical position and its reception with an understanding that is adequate to the success of the sender's intention.

This seems to be true even if the object is inscribed in a counterfactual. Zhivago's *Varykino*, for instance, is modelled on the village of Vsevolod-Vilva, in the Perm region where Pasternak worked in 1916. That is, 'Varykino' has experiential validity and results from the author's internal dialogue (cf. Bakhtin, 1994, p, 398). Exactly so is St Theresa's *Interior Castle*, which has its factual correlate in her family's traditional palace, as impregnable and imposing as any fort in 16th century Spain, where she was brought up. Shakespeare's storm at sea at the start of *The Tempest* is taken from pre-existing literary

descriptions supplemented by conversations with seafarers in the pubs of Deptford. All these literary constructs have the truth of knowledge by acquaintance and not merely of knowledge by description (DePoe, 2013). However, while their status as counterfactuals is protected (if they existed, their descriptions would be true), they are not considered to be the incommunicable phantoms of distant singularisms.

For any given text (verbal, written, symbolic), then, there is a presumption of the intention to communicate. That is, no text is produced as a vacuum. This is so even with such phenomena as Leonardo da Vinci's mirror writings which, although functioning as an encryption device (White, 2000, p. 131), were intended to communicate with himself. In another context, the articulatory gestures engaged in Celtic *puirt à beul* and scat-singing in jazz are self-referential communications of melodic and rhythmic ideas.

Successful communication entails a particular relationship between a text and the parties to the communication. Since lexical structures have idiosyncratic components, the attention of both sender and receiver must be directed toward the non-idiosyncratic, 'dictionary' meanings of the words they use if a common understanding is to be achieved. The influences of value orientations, qualia, and reality hypostatisations must be suppressed, non-trivially, in some degree. Three

processes are available for this suppression: abandonment, explanation, and assumption.

Abandonment is the process of transferring all or most of the responsibility for communication to the receiver. It occurs in the use of neologisms by Sappho and Velimir Khlebnikov, in the syntax and sound nexuses of Stéphane Mallarmé, the distortions of sense by Lewis Carroll, and the portmanteau words and created language of Gerard Manley Hopkins (Campbell, 1990; Marchal, 1996; Tenniel, 2003; Gardner, 1966; Milroy, 1977). Sappho's characterisation of love as 'sweet-bitter' *(γλυκύπικρον),* for instance, was her invented word to describe correctly the trajectory of a love affair. Klebnikov's grasshopper flies 'like golden writing' *(золотописьмом),* a similarly coined word.

The meaning of words and phrases with which the hearer is not familiar – be they standard usages of the language or not – is discovered by inspection of the immediate context in which they are embedded. This is how children learn vocabulary. In the *Jabberwocky* we guess that *'slithy toves'* has sinister connotations because, first, we are warned authoritatively to *'Beware the Jabberwock',* and then we associate *'slithy'* with English words such as slime, slither, sly. Unknown words are often left to the receiver's ingenuity: according to its author, *'slithy'* is pronounced with a long, not a short vowel.

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The process by which the sender assumes responsibility for communication is *explanation*. It is characteristic of pedagogic and theistic texts, such as those of the French Encyclopédistes of the 18th century and of the Greek, Latin and Russian Apostolic Fathers of earlier times. However, the process can be deliberately subverted for reasons of rhetorical or humorous effect by authors who purport to provide an explanation. In the *Cratylus*, for instance, Socrates plays in the realm of fantasy with derivations of words. The word 'man' *(ἄνθρωπος),* he writes, was once a whole sentence which through small phonological changes became a noun, as follows: the word ἄνθρωπος carries the implication that other animals do not consider *(ἀναθρεῖ)* what they see, but that man not only sees *(ὄπωπε)* but also considers what he sees; man is therefore the only animal correctly called ἄνθρωπος, which means ἀναθρῶν ἃ ὄπωπεν, 'one who reflects on what he sees'. Less tediously, Lewis Carroll offers an explanation of the *Jabberwock* as deriving its name from the Anglo-Saxon word *wocer* or *wocor*, meaning 'offspring or fruit'. Taking *jabber* in its ordinary acceptation of *'excited and voluble discussion',* this would give the meaning of *'the*

result of much excited and voluble discussion' (Tenniel, 2003, p. 328). The *Jabberwock* is usually taken to be some sort of prehistoric monster. *Wōcen* is attested.

The limiting case of defeated singularity is that of political persuasion, and this uses the process of *assumption*. The objective of political discourse is to influence the behaviour and beliefs of a targeted constituency. The Sophist philosopher Gorgias is credited with the idea that the art of persuasion was greatly superior to all other arts because it subjugated all things not by violence but by willing submission. Hearers consent to what speakers tell them more by conation than by conquest. Socrates pointed out that there are two forms of persuasion, one producing belief without knowledge, the other producing knowledge, and that it is the function of statesmanship to decide whether, in any given communication to 'the general mass of the population', to persuade them by telling stories or by giving them formal instruction. Most crucially, it was generally believed that legislators rely for persuasion on the mass's lack of education.

Cynically, the most effective form of political persuasion would therefore seem to be that which inculcates a belief in but not a knowledge of social realities, relies upon the audience's ignorance and is based upon an economy of truth. To be persuasive, such a communication must construct a space of discourse from elements of the hearer's worldview; i.e. it must reach into its audience's systematised philosophical position. For instance, the popular singer Bruce Springsteen has shown how Donald Trump used the language, imagery, and general belief systems of a particular segment of the American public to gain his votes. According to Springsteen, Trump addresses the same blue-collar, working-class population as does he himself, both emphasising its prevailing sense of economic insecurity and instability. But Trump deflects the emotions of that group by overt references to racial groups within America and to wage competition from Mexico (Rufford, 2018). Trump's strategy was to engage a Barthean code of belligerence and insult, which framed the hearers' perceived frustrations in contemporary society, and to profit from that to his own advantage (Tohar et al., 2007). Similarly, the Brexit movement in Britain was strengthened by prior extensive analysis of social concerns as they were expressed on social media platforms. A number of issues of concern to the general public were identified, and these were used to persuade an audience that is now recognised to have been deeply unfamiliar with those issues. Moreover, the issues themselves, together with the poor understandings associated with them, were quickly broadcast exponentially into wider populations outside of the Internet ecosystem through *virality*, the tendency of any image, video, item of information, or meme to enter public discourse instantaneously. Successful

communication, the defeat of singularism, on the political front is therefore achieved by the speaker's suppression of the proprietary cognitive set of reality hypostatisation, qualia, and value orientations, and a deliberate assumption and exploitation of the hearer's set.

6. CONCLUSION

The major function of one's systematised philosophical position is to make sense of one's world. It is systematised to the degree that it can serve as a *philosophy of life*. The process of persuasion interacts with it in a way that is particularly important for the well-being of speakers and hearers and of their societies. Assumption, for instance, is an extremely

pernicious method of persuasion because it reinforces the hearer's existing position, with all that position's prejudices, biases, and false consciousness. This makes the method ideal for deception and exploitation. Abandonment results in the incorporation of the communicated topic into the hearer's philosophy provided there are no contradictions with his or her pre-lexical structures. For those who have never experienced a love affair, for instance, Sappho's coinage has no meaning. Explanation makes the communicated topic, and thus an alternative philosophical position, available for consideration. Socrates's circuitous method of drawing explanations out of his interlocutors themselves did just this – and civilisation progresses.

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