The Structure of Complex Words
Author(s): William Empson
Source: *The Sewanee Review*, Vol. 56, No. 2 (Spring, 1948), pp. 230-250
Published by: The Johns Hopkins University Press
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/27537823
Accessed: 02-07-2015 13:53 UTC

THE STRUCTURE OF COMPLEX WORDS

By WILLIAM EMPSON

IT has often been said, in general, that a word can become a "compacted doctrine," or even that all words are compacted doctrines inherently. But the way in which a doctrine is compacted seems to be regarded as an endlessly complicated matter, one which can only be handled in terms of a particular case which is giving trouble. And yet the general theory of the thing is clearly important; if our language is continually thrusting doctrines on us, perhaps very ill-considered ones, the sooner we understand the process the better. I think one can distinguish five ways in which a word can carry a doctrine, and I will try to outline them here; the classification does not seem to have any startling consequences.

The most obvious and most irreducible type is the Existence Assertion, which says that what the word names is really there and worth naming. This of course need not be present (e.g. "astrology is false") but tends to crop up of its own accord; thus if you go on talking about astrology without positive disclaimers people will begin to say "he talks as if he really believed in it." Such an assertion may be very complex. One must read very deeply in Aquinas to know all of what he meant by God, or meant to assert when he claimed to have proved the existence of God; and yet he would claim to mean all of this complex idea even in a passing reference to God. The same of course would apply to the word "electron" in the writings of any one physicist who put forward a complete atomic theory; when you were comparing his assertions with those of a rival physicist you would have to look out for changes in the meaning of the word, but you would expect not to have to do so otherwise. And no doubt while you are reading the single consistent

author the meaning of his key words will grow in your mind, but once you have got the full meaning in such a word it is a fully unified meaning. The complexity of the word is simply that of the topic, and if the argument is consistent we cannot simplify it by examining the word. This type is therefore of no interest for my purpose here, except that the feeling it gives of simplicity and irreducibility is often borrowed by the other types, to make themselves stronger, so that they are easily confused with it. An existence assertion does not require very careful use of language; I have appealed to cases like that only to try to isolate the type. It is very common and may be found even in minor parts of speech. As to verbal fictions, which may of course require very complex analysis, I take it that so far as they deceive us they simply make false existence assertions.

The other four types are all what I propose to call "equations." Two senses of the word are used at once, and also (which does not always happen) there is an implied assertion that they naturally belong together, "as the word itself proves." After numbering the senses as if for a dictionary I write this "A = B" in figures and expect it to make sense when read as "A is B" in words. The "is" here can take the same range as in ordinary English, except that some of the uses for more complex grammar would clearly be out of place. I do not think that we interpret A clearly as a noun and B as an adjective, because they are too much on the same footing (except in quite odd cases as when Mr. Brown is expected to be brown); and a relational "is" like "A is (in the relation) B to C," which might conceivably connect three senses of one word, would again put B or C on too separate a footing. The main interpretations are "A is part of B," "A entails B," and "A is like B." By definition an equation always generalizes, because if it said only "This A is B" the effect would be merely a double use of the word, imputing both A and B to "this," and there would be no compacted doctrine. However it may presume a limited idea

of A, probably one with vague limits, and one could describe this process as saying "A's of this sort are B." In any case "A is part of B" treats A and B as two classes, not one as a thing the other as its property; they are on the same footing; though the practical effect may be much the same as making B an adjective. From "A is part of B" one could deduce "A entails B," but that is not the only way of getting it; it could cover "A is the cause of B" and even "A is the effect of B," if the thought is "We know A is here so we may presume B is here." In this way A and B can be equated even if very unlike, whereas we could suppose that A was "part of B," after extending the idea of B, merely because A was "like" B. Thus the three interpretations are connected but none of them is fundamental to both the others.

I take it that the relation of "false identity" is one that we are always first imputing and then interpreting; it is a fundamental tool in the process by which we classify things. There is a good deal of evidence about this from psychologists and anthropologists; I do not want to go off onto that now, because the difficulty is in using the idea not in finding authority for it. But I am taking over from them the idea that the order of the terms equated is usually an important thing which can't be tampered with; e.g. "my psycho-analyst is my father" does not get interpreted as "my father is my psycho-analyst." Given "A is B" you can easily change the interpretation of "is" but it is much harder to make A and B change places; and the differences between the four types of equation turn on which way round they go.

We will start the four types from the opposite end to that of an existence assertion, where the word is fully unified; in the first type the word is least unified. One meaning of the word is required by the immediate setting or context, and the other forces its way in. It is then called a "dominant" meaning, but the term must not be allowed to beg any question; this mean-

ing is dominant merely because it can force its way in. In the elementary case (it seems clear) the meaning required by the setting acts as the subject, because it is "what you are really talking about," and the dominant meaning acts as the predicate, or as B. Thus when you call a mountain-saddle a "saddle" there is likely to be an idea "Such things are (shaped) like horse-saddles," but when you use the word about a horse-saddle there is commonly no idea of a mountain-saddle. "Horse-saddle" is the head meaning, which may be defined as what you would think of first if the setting did nothing to define the word. Here then the head meaning is the dominant one, and the equation only arises when the setting requires the secondary meaning. The secondary meaning was only arrived at to impute a likeness of shape, and the equation merely reminds you of it. Type I can take more elaborate forms, and all ways of interpreting "is" can be represented; and the dominant meaning need not be a head one. For instance the Elizabethans seem to have been so interested in the problems of sensuality (or fond of jokes about it) that this idea pokes itself forward in their uses of the word *sense* even when the context requires a quite different meaning, and yet it must have been clear that the meaning "sensuality" is only a specialization of the word.

No doubt one could argue that such a speaker would think of his dominant meaning if the context did not decide, so that it is the head meaning by the previous definition, so far as he is concerned. I doubt whether this follows; particularly with *sense*, because they seem to have thrown in "sensuality" as an extra idea much more often than they used it alone. One could sub-divide the idea of a "head" meaning into the most frequent or "main" meaning and the "central" meaning from which the others are felt to branch out; there are also the "root" meaning, suggested by derivation, and the "primary" one which actually came first in history—in an English word derived from Latin this is often not the root one. Which of

them people would think of first without context seems a matter for experiment, and the results would probably vary a good deal. In connected writing one must suppose that the large context or the topic has an effect on which meaning you think of first, and this may drag against the small or phrase-context, which none the less has a sort of right of way. The "probable" meaning of *saddle* may depend on all sorts of things, such as whether you are on a mountain; and it would clearly be an endless business to try to get technical terms for all the sizes and kinds of context. The dominant meaning, at any rate, need not be main, central, root, primary, or probable, but is very likely to be at least one of them. Of course I am leaving out here a large field for inquiry, as to how a meaning can become dominant for a given period or milieu.

The second type of equation calls up what is often called the "connotation" of the word, that is, the ideas that are felt to go with it without being part of the definition. I shall call these Implications, because the philosophers have staked out a claim for a quite different meaning of Connotation, and the idea that is wanted seems to be just what we mean in ordinary language when we say that a speaker "implied" something. We do not mean that it was a logical consequence, necessarily, but that it was somehow present; it is implied by the sort of way the word has been used on past occasions, and the way the present occasion recalls them. In the first stage of its growth an Implication is not a sense of the word at all, but it often becomes one later, so that the word can be used with that sense alone. It is hard to be sure just when this change occurs, and the change does not seem to affect the equation, so we must extend the idea of an equation to include the earlier stage. There seems no doubt that the head or older meaning acts as subject, and the Implication acts as predicate, that is, as B. Such a case is clearly very different from Type I. The word does not have to be used in a subordinate meaning to start with, and the extra idea need not

be a dominant meaning, in fact it need not be a meaning of the word at all. A notorious case of the growth of Implications is provided by the word *native,* in itself able to arouse sturdy patriotism, which came to be felt as insulting when applied to the natives of (say) India. The empirebuilder's use of the word was naturally limited to the persons native where he worked, and acquired stock emotions (contempt touched with fear, perhaps) and Implications such as "inherently subjected," which could easily become "racially inferior." So far the word merely does what the speakers want; their opinion of the natives in view colors the word and may then be asserted as a piece of common knowledge, with the equation "Such people are"—"inherently subjected," or whatever less stark view the speaker might entertain. There have been a series of uses of the word in which the context positively asserts the Implication; but the interesting case, which is worth calling an equation, is when the context no longer demands this extra idea but it comes up by habit.

This process in itself does not call for any change in the head meaning of the word, or in the group of referents actually in view, and I think that the historical change did not arise till the empirebuilders' dialect began to affect the talkers at home. There were now two clear groups of referents, the natives of England and those of India etc., and the elaborate structure of the new set of Implications could not be handed on unchanged. Various alternatives were open; the primary use of the word in English had indeed been "bound to the soil," held to labor as a serf, and a vague idea of inferiority seems to have clung to the word through the Eighteenth Century, though the feelings of local patriotism fought against it. On the whole, the type of speaker who would want to imply that the colonial peoples were "inherently subjected" would not want to imply that the English working classes were natural political leaders either. But, from the point of view of people who had stayed at home, the na-

tives he was talking about were "non-European"; this was the most definite fact that could be elicited about them; and also it was the least emotional or highly colored, which was an advantage to those who were now to adopt the slang use because they could not express these feelings as if at first hand. The new head sense therefore became "non-European," a choice which was made from liberal rather than illiberal motives. But the effect of putting the new subject into the equation was a startling one—"All non-European persons are racially inferior and fit for subjection." The interesting point here, if I am right, is that this massive assertion was not what anybody had tried to make the word mean; it was an unexpected and rather embarrassing result of the working of a few simple laws of verbal structure.

In an equation of Type II the various meanings are normally felt to converge on one referent which has complex properties, and I call such a word more "integrated" than those with equations of Type I, where the different meanings are felt to be very distinct. In Type III the meanings are felt to be distinct but yet are so integrated that the head meaning acts as the subject: the case is similar to Type I but with the opposite order of terms. As in Type I the context has to demand a secondary sense (or the head meaning will appear alone); but the head meaning appears as the "essential" meaning of the word, or the "only real" meaning, or something like that, so that the word can only be used in its secondary meaning by a kind of metaphor. This head meaning might also be called a dominant meaning, if indeed it does not need some new title of its own. I am not anxious to claim that straightforward cases of Type III are at all common; the point is rather to get clear under what conditions the rules of Type I can be broken. It seems to me that many of Shakespeare's uses of the word *fool* are an example of it; he takes the symbolism of the clown so far (as I find myself reading him) that in effect he treats the word as

meaning "clown" and nothing else; when he uses the word about ordinary people they are not called foolish but described metaphorically as clowns. And the equations of the word have only accidental connections with the person so described; they are simply the standard doctrine about the Shakespearean clown —that he is foolish, mysteriously wise and so forth. No doubt in any particular case other readers would disagree with me, but this has the advantage of bringing the alternatives clearly into view. To arrive at Type III requires a distinct performance with the word, and if you are interpreting a given case as an example of Type III it is fairly easy to recognize that you are doing so, if only because it gives a feeling of metaphor.

This at least is true of the simple version in which the two senses are easily distinguished; but the important use of equations of Type III, I think, is for making assertions of a more subtle kind, which would not ordinarily be considered as proceeding from a double meaning of the word at all. To put it briefly, one part of the range of the word is treated as the key or "typical" part of it, in terms of which the others are to be viewed. It is thus analogous to Type II rather than Type I. The use of *sense* for "good judgment" seems to me an illuminating example because it has been interpreted in various ways; it is therefore not a striking example of Type III, but it brings out the contrast between that and other types. The straightforward use of *sense* for "good judgment" appears to be merely a sleeping metaphor; but one must say "appears" because the actual history of the word is much more complicated—what seems to have happened is that speakers around the time of the Restoration took to regarding this use as a simple metaphor, in the course of a general simplification. The type case would be "Use your sense, man, which *looks* the right one?" said of two plans of campaign already outlined. There is nothing to look at, and what is demanded is some elaborate act of judgment; the purpose of *sense* and *look* is to imply "Good judgment here

is as easy as using your senses." The equation goes "a reaction is like a reception," in being direct, intuitive, not needing special powers, and so on; and it is the same whether you regard *sense* here as a metaphorical use of a word which really means "the faculty of receiving sensations" or as a direct use of a word which in this place means "good judgment." In the second case the equation is of Type I; in the first I suppose it does not yet belong to the word at all. In either case the sensations come in as the predicate, that is, as B. It should be noticed that you already have to select the right attributes of B; you are not meant to deduce that reactions are often painful and commonly outside your control, though this is true of sensations—the sensations appear as sources of knowledge not of pleasure or suffering. Now on the basis of such a word you could hint at a whole theory about how men should or do interpret their experiences, and it seems clear that the rise of this use of *sense*, in history, went with a rise of sensationist or plain-man philosophies. The suasive power of the word seems to come from treating all reactions or good-judgments as of one sort, though in fact they presumably range from the highest peaks of imaginative insight to the fundamental processes like recognizing a patch of color as a table. *Sense* tells you to concentrate on the middle of the range, the man-size parts where we feel most at home; and it can do this because the simple use of the trope is an appeal to you to show a *normal* amount of good judgment, "like anybody else." A full-blown use of the word will appear to treat the word as meaning *only* "good judgment," and indeed good judgment of a rather narrow sort; but the idea of sensation is not forgotten, in fact it is having an important effect by suggesting the wide range of the field in view. The common uses of the word for an "inner sense" or a "sense of" imagination or what not can meanwhile extend the range in the other direction. The equation is something like "Good judgment is the typical specimen of the whole confused field," the thing you should

think of first, the right handle to take hold of the bundle. Good judgment is still acting as subject, as it was in the simple case of metaphor; the order of terms is not altered, but the equation is given an entirely new type of interpretation. It is important I think that the idea of "likeness" has disappeared. In the simple case the reaction and the sensation are admitted to be quite distinct, though they are compared; but in the philosophical case they are seriously included in one vast kingdom, and good judgment is made king of it. I am not sure whether "A is typical of B" or "of the A-B group" need be regarded as a distinct way of interpreting the false identity "A is B"; you might call it a combination of "A is part of B" and "A is a cause of B." But whether or not it can be analyzed it appears regularly as a unit, and I think that it always goes with an equation of Type III. Also I doubt whether equations of Type III occur without it, and if each requires the other that would simplify the thing. Shakespeare's use of *fool* as if it only meant "clown" (if he does sometimes use it like that) is clearly like the use of *sense* as if it only meant a narrow kind of "good judgment"; in both cases the effect comes from the other meanings which are not officially admitted but appear as predicates in the equation, like the Implications of Type II. But to do this I think that Shakespeare must also take the clown as the "type" of all foolish people, the case that somehow explains this large and confusing class, the right handle to take hold of the bundle.

An equation of this sort, I think, is regularly put into the key word of a controversy, or rather two such equations, because the opposing sides use different ones. Professor I. A. Richards gives a full treatment of a typical case of this process in his "Interpretation in Teaching"; the part about a passage from the Regency grammarian Campbell. It seems to me that he says all that could be said about the complexity and deceptiveness of the play with language on which the passage relies,

but that after expounding and indeed solving the problem he fails to show the simplicity of the answer. The essential part of Campbell's argument is this:

> It is not the business of grammar, as some critics seem preposterously to imagine, to give law to the fashions that regulate our speech. . . . For, what is the grammar of any language? It is no other than a collection of general observations methodically digested; . . . modes and fashions . . . no sooner obtain and become general, than they are laws of the language, and the grammarian's only business is to note, collect, and methodise them.

Professor Richards falls with gusto on this sophistry because he holds that it has prevented grammarians from being useful, and also that classes in grammar ought to be used to teach students how to think. He points out that when *grammar* is used in the first sentence of the quotation it must be supposed to mean something which some people think might give laws, and they could not think this about a collection. Campbell must therefore be changing the meaning of the word, and indeed "giving laws" about it, when he says it means "no other than" a collection. Besides, it might be the duty of a grammarian to do things which were not defined as his business; doctors have to. The question is therefore merely one of why the passage appears to be convincing. Now, most people would think that the word *grammar* has one simple meaning, but they have learned to talk as children and now think they talk all right, so they are in possession of two ideas of what grammar is about, "how people ought to talk" and "how people actually talk." The question at issue is what decides how they ought to talk, so that an equation of these ideas as they stand does not settle it; though I think the equation feels rather in favor of Campbell whichever way round you put the terms. For a more real assertion some idea of an external standard seems to be required first, and then the Usage doctrine denies it; this equation is

something like "correctness is merely usage." No doubt a reader could pick the idea up in this form and go on reading smoothly, but I do not think he would be a serious convert; he is not equipped to repeat the sophistical argument of his own accord. For he is still taking some kind of correctness as the subject of the equation, and Usage is only a predicate of it. A logical reader, on the other hand, giving full weight to "no other than," could make the equation "what is defined as what sums up usage is also what teaches the rules," and here Usage is at any rate the subject. But this need not imply the Usage doctrine at all, because what grammar "also" does may be much more important than its defining property. A convert has to feel that the new defining property is also the only *real* property. He need not abandon his past experience of the meanings of the word, and indeed if he does he will no longer be able to argue sophistically with it; but he must feel that the other possible conceptions of grammar form a confused class, and that the new definition is the typical or essential part of the class, in terms of which the other parts are to be examined. We can indeed arrange phrases in which the old Authoritarian and the new Usage doctrine appear as the same equation in the two possible orders; "a locution that keeps a rule is the typical specimen of a usage" for the Authoritarian doctrine and "a locution in common use is the typical specimen of a rule" for the Usage doctrine. But these are rather artificial, because the strength of this type of equation is that the predicate does not have to be definite; it is merely all the other meanings of the word. This makes the equation much easier to remember and keep in play; the Usage convert has only to remember "how people actually talk is the typical specimen of what grammar is about," and then to deny whenever convenient that it is "about" anything else.

I am afraid that this looks rather elaborate when written out, whereas I wanted to claim that my solution was much simpler

than Professor Richards'. But this process of typifying is really a very common and familiar one; nearly all political propaganda, for instance, consists of trying to establish in the reader's mind your own "type" of Worker or Business Man or what not, the sort of man they are to imagine when they think about the Worker or the Business Man in general. And I do not mean to imply that the process is necessarily fallacious; one really does need a handle to take hold of a bundle. It is for this very central process of thought that the third type of equation is required.

The third type broke the rule for the order of terms in the first type, and the fourth type breaks the more fundamental rule that the order is always important. We have now to consider what kind of case can occur in which the terms can go either way round. No doubt cases can easily be found in which B is like A as well as A like B, or in which each entails the other, but it is not at all usual to find cases in which this idea is enshrined in a word. I have an impression that equations of Type IV are to be found in individual theorists and stylists rather than in common use, because if the doctrine that is implied becomes accepted it settles down into a more comfortable linguistic form. This type clearly implies a very high degree of integration of the meanings of the word, so that we have nearly worked our way back to the Existence Assertion. I do not think you get examples of it unless the A and B are in a similar relation to a third meaning of the word, which may be only vaguely conceived. This at any rate makes them symmetrical, so that the two orders do not conflict. To take a logical and clear-cut example, Hooker maintained (as I learn from the *N.E.D.*) that there is a sense of *law* meaning "both human and divine law," and undertook to give the conditions which such a law must satisfy. This is merely a new sense of the word, and might seem to outface any claim that there is any confusion between the old ones. But in ordinary discourse it will commonly

appear that one is discussing either a human or a divine law; if while discussing a human law Hooker implies that it is also a divine law he can put an equation into the word *law* "Human laws *of this sort* are also divine laws," and precisely the same the other way round, and the effect will merely be to say that this law falls into the narrower class which satisfy the conditions for both. A good use of the trope would also serve to remind you what the conditions were. But the same process can be used when we merely have a vague idea that there is such a third concept, and are not worrying at the moment about just what it may be; and it seems clear that people can go on like this for a long time. An equation of Type IV thus claims to make an existence assertion, but the claim is not always justified. It may be that our ordinary use of *law* is often of this kind, but I should have thought that the standard simpleminded equation was fixed in order, and of Type I, and said "The laws of this country are underwritten by God."

A striking and worthy example of the equation of Type IV which makes a false claim is I think provided by Wordsworth. The word *sense* is used in "Tintern Abbey" and *The Prelude* whenever his view of the growth of the imagination is expounded or recalled, and, granting that what is intended is a profound double meaning, it is often hard to decide whether it even "starts" by meaning the faculty of receiving sensations or the Sense of Imagination. He invented a peculiar form "the sense," in which this doubt is maintained particularly sharply:

> . . . I have felt,
> Not seldom even in that tempestuous time,
> Those hallowed and pure motions of the sense
> Which seem, in their simplicity, to own
> An intellectual charm; that calm delight
> Which, if I err not, surely must belong
> To those first-born affinities that fit
> Our new existence to existing things . . . (I. 550).

I said loosely that "the sense" was a new form, meaning that the form had previously been given a different meaning; "the wanton stings and motions of the sense" (Lucio in *Measure for Measure*) also uses the word in the singular with a definite article but without reference to any sense previously named. Wordsworth, I think, realized that he had to use hidden devices so that he might talk as if he had never heard of the meaning "sensuality"; the chief function of "pure" here is to keep it out of view. "The sense" was a convenient form for this purpose, in spite of Lucio; consider "well pleased to recognise, In nature and the language of the sense, . . . the soul Of all my moral being." Even Wordsworth could hardly have got away with saying that the language of *the senses* was the soul of all his moral being. (There is one use of *sense* for sensuality in *The Prelude*, when the monks of the Chartreuse are praised for their "conquest over sense"; it was inserted later than the 1805 version, and I suppose was one of the betrayals of the younger Wordsworth by the older.) But apart from this hidden denial of a meaning (a common and important process), which adds obscurity to the uses of the word, it has a curious blankness even about the meanings allowed. "That tempestuous time" was when Wordsworth was about ten, and the next sentence begins "Yes, I remember" at that age taking "a pure organic pleasure" in the scenery. But the beginning of the long sentence about the "calm delight" makes a clear distinction between this delight and his love for the forms of Nature: even as a child, it says, he had "joys Of subtler origin" than Nature's "forms sublime or fair." I am not saying that there is a real contradiction in this obscurity (indeed it is made rather clearer on the next page) only that it is hard to decide what *the sense* may be here. If the child was enjoying the scenery we would expect the term to mean "the senses," but our attention has been directed away from them so that it is some "inner sense," and then *the* makes it the supreme Sense of Im-

agination. But the next sentence pushes it back to the sensations from the scenery again. (The child seems to have felt a gush of well-being from far within, apparently without cause, but marking some profound adjustment to life; but Wordsworth goes on to say that he remembers attaching it to the scenery.) Though Sensation and Imagination appear as the two extreme ends of the scale in view, so that one might expect them to be opposites, the word is regularly placed so that it might apply equally well to either; and the middle of the scale, the idea of ordinary common sense, is cut out from these uses of the word as firmly as the idea of sensuality. That is, instead of falling into the usual fallacies about good sense, you are forced to keep the whole range of the word in view, and there is a claim that the whole range of the word has been included in one concept. At least, I do not see what else the claim can be; and I suppose most people would agree that the word is made to echo Wordsworth's doctrine somehow.

It is not obvious how this equation ought to be translated into a sentence. "Sensation is Imagination" is a possible slogan, but both this and its inverse seem very open to misunderstanding without making the real point. "Sensation and Imagination are included in a larger class" is merely dull; besides, the important thing may well be that they over-lap to form a narrower class. "Sensation and Imagination interlock" seems the best way to put it. But I think it is fair to say that Wordsworth had not got any translation ready; he was much better at adumbrating his doctrine through rhetorical devices than at writing it down in full. These uses of *the sense* make good poetry and probably suggest important truths, but I think they must be classed among those equations of Type IV whose claim is false.

I should claim that these four types, and the existence assertion, cover all the possibilities for a word which is to imply a doctrine. The fourth deals with the case where the terms have

no order. If they have an order, there may be a minor sense required by the immediate context and a major sense intruding; then the major sense may act as predicate (Type I) or subject (Type III); or there may be a major sense required by the context and a minor one intruding; then the minor sense may act as predicate (Type II) or as subject, but this last case requires an intentional trick with the context and could not be "taken for granted." I am only dealing here with the kind of suggestion in a word which seems to cling to it and can affect opinion, so that nonce-equations by jokers and poets are not what I am looking for. But I can give an illustration (from Pope) of the fifth type which is to be rejected:

> Where Bentley late tempestuous wont to sport
> In troubled waters, but now sleeps in port.

The drink and the harbor are perhaps simply two words, but if we regard them as one there seems no doubt that the harbor is the major sense, the drink the minor, and that the only plausible equation is something like "This placid afterdinner drink is like having reached harbor," where the minor sense acts as subject. The immediate context clearly demands the major sense, so that *port* here is an equation of the aberrant type. But of course the reason is that the meaning "drink" is intentionally hidden; you are meant to plume yourself on your cleverness in seeing the joke in spite of the obstacle of the equation form, or perhaps to feel that the dangerous Master would not be able to see it, so that you could say it to his face tittering behind your hand. An equation of this type, it seems to me, is not likely to impose upon us its doctrine without our noticing it.

It may be objected that this approach leaves out of count the Emotions, which are in reality the deciding factor for these rich uses of words. I do not deny that the emotions supply the driving power, but I think that normally (that is, except in

swearing or raving) they call out senses of the word which correspond to them, and the structure to be examined is that of the resultant senses. Some theorists have said that the Emotion belonging to sense A is often called out when the immediate context only demands sense B, and we then get a wrong impression that the word has some profound or complex meaning. This is roughly true, but I should go further; when you have both the word itself and the emotion attached to it which corresponds to sense A, it seems to me, the actual sense A is almost certain to be evoked, even if only "at the back of the mind." What feels like a special meaning of the word is therefore simply an equation of A and B. In print this Emotion not required by the immediate context has normally to be supplied by the remoter context, or perhaps your opinion of the writer's style as a whole, or what not; and I should then say that the Sense corresponding to it is supplied by the remoter context. But in speech it can simply be put in by the tone of voice, and to fit this case onto the Types I need a rather *ad hoc* definition; from the point of view of the listener, the tone of voice which imposes a special Emotion on the word is its "most immediate context" (otherwise quite simple cases in talking would have to be classed with more strained ones in print). No doubt there are puzzling borderline cases; a knowledge of style feels like the knowledge of the spoken voice, and at the second reading we often simply imagine the thing as spoken, but it is a delusion to suppose that we can do it at the first reading without a fairly elaborate performance. Of course a novelist who puts "she said proudly" or what not after the quoted sentence is telling you how to imagine it straight away. But apart from a possible doubt about the immediacy of an Emotion I do not think that bringing in Emotions does anything to complicate the types. A simple underlining of a stock emotion in the word, as "what the things really deserves here," is I think only a kind of existence assertion.

A classification, of course, can cover a field without telling us anything useful about it; and there is room for a great deal of confusion about what a major and a minor sense may be, also about what an immediate context requires. But it seems to me that this is the natural way to go at the matter, and that these four types (or at any rate the normal versions of them) are in a way real objects in that they have other properties beside the defining ones. Also I think that some advance in the theory of these compacted doctrines is needed, even if it does not go very far, because you find sociologists and anthropologists going ahead rather too cheerfully with the idea that any double meaning in the language of the speakers examined can be taken as evidence of an opinion held by their society. It seemed to me that I found examples of this, for instance, in *The Chrysanthemum and The Sword*, an excellent book by Ruth Benedict about the Japanese. She gives an interesting examination of *giri*, a word for something like "personal honor." There is a separate word *gimu* for the unlimited duties to the Emperor and one's parents, but *giri* covers (or covered) the limited duties to one's feudal superior, less close family relations, persons who have done one favors, etc., and then also the duty to clear one's reputation of insult (e.g. by vendetta), and to fulfill the proprieties (e.g. by giving respect where it is due). The reason why the Japanese welcomed the American occupying troops, we are told on p. 173, is that "Giri had always meant equally the use of aggression or the observance of respect relations, and in defeat the Japanese turned from one to the other, apparently with no sense of psychic violence to themselves. The goal is still their good name." Undeniably this is a neat point, but it is not clear how much weight Ruth Benedict meant it to carry. Did she prophesy, I wonder, when she was an official wartime adviser on such matters, that the Japanese were sure to welcome the G.I.'s, and could she have made a confident forecast from examining this word in the Japanese dictionary alone? It seems to

me that a good deal more information is needed before you can make such important deductions from the mere range of a word, and according to the method I am using here you would have to show that a definite argument was commonly based on an equation of two of its meanings at the period in question. I don't deny that a quite different line of deduction is conceivable, from the whole structure of moral ideas in the culture, and the book seems to contain an argument of that sort. But, if I understand how it goes, one would still have to ask what reason there is for supposing that *giri* reflects the actual structure. To do this, one would think, its various meanings would have to seem closely related. Actually it looks like a rag-bag word, which has been extended piecemeal to cover a variety of minor duties; so that a Japanese would find it only a trivial pun to argue that both these actions were *giri*. (And on the face of it they were not done out of *giri* at all but out of *gimu*, obedience to direct orders from the Emperor.) We know that in English the suggestions of this sort in a moral word have altered every two generations or so, whereas the range of its meaning has been pretty stable. When applied to remote or primitive languages the method tends to give a false impression that nothing can change. This would be prevented, and the method I think would become much more reliable, if it was recognized that in any given period some of the possible equations in a word will be in common use and others used rarely if at all, while some could not affect opinion anyway.

Indeed I think that the main literary function of an adequate equation theory would be to clear up the feeling of a "period" style. At present our skill in feeling this is far in advance of our understanding of it; it is quite a usual examination question to give a list of quotations and say "spot the periods," and this can be made very easy, and yet it is hard to explain to those who have failed why they ought to have known the answer. I think it is largely a matter of recognizing the stock assumptions

of the period, which are carried by simple equations in its pet words. On the other hand, the double meanings used by an individual stylist tend not to be equations at all, or only of a peculiar sort. I have written two books largely concerned with literary double meanings, and I looked through them for examples useful in testing an equation theory, but I hardly found any. In an ordinary literary use both the meanings are imposed by the immediate context, which has been twisted round to do it, and the suggestion is not "as everyone admits, so that language itself bears me out" but "as I by my magic can make appear." We need, I think, to separate this kind of double meaning from the compacted doctrine, which I am calling an equation, where the word itself seems to put the doctrine into our minds. Of course a single writer can put an equation into a word, but he needs to bring it out steadily as a way of recalling his doctrine, not only make a nonce-use of it for a special effect. And no doubt there are permanent equations which are more important than the period ones, but the period ones are more easily noticed and allow one to examine the machinery of change. Besides, there is more need to notice them if you are to get the right reading.