

The Analogy between Artistic and Linguistic Meaning — The Linguistic Model of Intentionalism Revisited*

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ABSTRACT: Generally, the analogy between artistic and linguistic meaning has been an assumption among those who defend intentionalism in the interpretation of art. In this paper, I aim to show how some arguments against this analogy arise from a misunderstood view of the nature of language and meaning, which has been assumed even by intentionalists. In addition, I will propose that a pragmatic view of language allows us to fit some true intuitions about artistic meaning of the enemies of the analogy without ruling it out.

1. Introduction

Traditionally, intentionalism takes as its ground the analogy between artistic meaning and linguistic meaning. By this analogy, intentionalism claims that insofar as the relevance of intention for determining the meaning of the natural language is warranted, the relevance of intention for determining the meaning of a work of art is justified too. This premise has been shared by almost all kinds of intentionalism. For example, in the frame of moderate intentionalism, N. Carroll has instantiated this analogy by the resemblance between our experience in the reception of art and a conversation¹. On his behalf, R. Stecker has developed the analogy in a more

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¹ Carroll, N., (2001), “Art, Intention, and Conversation” in *Beyond Aesthetics. Philosophical Essays*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

specific term by considering that artworks are analogous to linguistic utterances². However, the analogy is problematic inasmuch as it puts face-to-face two opposing intuitions that, paradoxically, seem to be equally compatible with common sense:

- (1) Supporting the analogy, we often talk about art in linguistic terms. For example, we usually use expressions such as ‘an artwork means’, ‘expresses’, or ‘transmits a message’.
- (2) Against the analogy, we think that the experience of art *exceeds* the experience of communication. For example, we consider that art is related to value and certain complex affections, such as aesthetic experience; characteristics that ordinary language does not display.

Thus, whereas (1) has been defended by intentionalists, the analogy between artistic and linguistic meaning has been criticised by some anti-intentionalists, giving preference to (2). For instance, in the frame of the philosophy of literature, Peter Lamarque and Stein Olsen have developed one of the main criticisms to the analogy. They have tried to dismantle the analogy by refusing certain similarities between artistic and linguistic meaning. For example, Olsen has considered that: “The status of an utterance is necessarily (according to the communication intention theory) the means to an end. The status of a literary work is that of being an end in itself”³ and that “[...] literary works do not possess meaning-producing features analogous to those possessed by metaphors, sentences, and utterances”⁴. Moreover, Lamarque and Olsen have protected their position by an argument that goes beyond: even in the case that some similarities could be justified, the analogy would not be useful in order to explain precisely what must be explained about literary meaning, namely, what makes

² Stecker, R., (2003), *Interpretation and Construction: Art, Speech, and the Law*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, and Stecker, R., (1997), “Meaning and Interpretation. The Role of Intention and Convention” in *Artworks: Definition, Meaning and Value*, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press.

³ Olsen, S. H., (1973), “Authorial Intention” *British Journal of Aesthetics*, n° 13, p. 228.

⁴ Olsen, S. H., (2004), “The ‘Meaning’ of a Literary Work” in Peter Lamarque and Stein H. Olsen (eds.) *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art: The Analytic Tradition - An Anthology*, Malden: Blackwell Publishing Ltd. Stein H. Olsen, “The ‘Meaning’ of a Literary Work”, p. 179.

language becomes literature. For the analogy leaves out the very aspects that do account for literary language as art. For instance, according to Olsen, the analogy encourages to apprehend “a literary work of art as being independent of its valuable qualities”⁵. Hence, they denounce that this analogy involves a reductionist notion of what art is⁶. Ultimately, we could summarize Lamarque and Olsen’s view by quoting the closing sentence of Olsen’s article “The ‘Meaning’ of a Literary Work”: “[...] literature is not merely language: literature is art”⁷.

However, the analogy has not been criticised just by anti-intentionalists, but even by a non-canonical intentionalist like Richard Wollheim. Wollheim represents a heterodox intentionalist approach because he maintained the notion of ‘artistic meaning’ but, unlike most of the intentionalists, he refused its analogy with linguistic meaning. I will rebuild his argument as follows: linguistic meaning and artistic meaning are not analogous because the former is *independent* of any experience that it could prompt, whereas in the latter the prompted experiences are *constitutive* of meaning⁸. In that way, Wollheim claims that the very nature of artistic meaning is to be *experiential*. Wollheim developed his thesis about the *experientiality* of artistic meaning mainly in the frame of pictorial meaning considering that: “[...] what a painting means rests upon the experience induced [...]”⁹. That is, the way of grasping the meaning of a work of art is for the interpreter to undergo a particular experience: “[...] my claim is that, equally, when he (the artist) aims to produce content or meaning, which is his major aim, he also paints so as to produce a certain experience. He does so because this is how pictorial meaning is conveyed, and this is so because of what pictorial meaning is”¹⁰. Furthermore, he argued how

⁵ Ibid., p. 180.

⁶ Lamarque, P., and Olsen S. H., (1994), *Truth, Fiction, and Literature: a Philosophical Perspective*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. vii: “Ours is a non-reductionist account, it (unfashionably) acknowledges the autonomy of literature and literary criticism, it does not seek to reduce the study of literature to rhetoric, *belles-lettres*, philology, ethics, civic studies, or whatever.”

⁷ Olsen, (2004), p.187.

⁸ Wollheim, R., (2011), “On Aesthetics. A Review and some Revisions” *Literature & Aesthetics*, no 11, 11, pp. 28-9.

⁹ Wollheim, R., (1987), *Painting as an Art*, London: Tames and Hudson, p. 22.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 44 (my parenthesis).

this feature –to be experiential– can be extended to other kinds of artistic meaning, such as literary meaning¹¹. In literature, linguistic and artistic meaning meet each other, but the analogy is not justified even in this case, because the linguistic meaning of a novel, for instance, is also independent of any experience that its literary meaning could prompt¹².

To sum up, the debate has offered two main objections to the analogy:

1. To consider that the analogy between artistic and linguistic meaning involves a *reductionist* view of art because it rules out precisely the artistic aspects of the artwork.
2. To deny that artistic meaning and linguistic meaning are analogous because artistic meaning has special features –to be *experiential*– that linguistic meaning does not possess¹³.

2. The Analogy as a Common Sense Intuition

As we can see, the debate has not made progress in order to reconcile the two opposing common sense intuitions –(1) and (2)– that I mentioned above. However, insofar as we can say truly that both arise from a common sense intuition, it must be possible to find a piece of truth in each one, that is, there must be one way to make them compatible. Defending certain analogy between artistic and linguistic meaning and their interpretation –idea (1)– does not commit us to an absolute identification, it does not prevent us to recognise some differences –idea (2). As Kalle Puolakka has pointed out¹⁴, D. Davidson, in his late philosophy of language, did not find a substantial discontinuity between literary and ordinary language¹⁵.

¹¹ Wollheim, (2011), p. 28.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Wollheim's reasoning against the analogy is not limited to say that artistic meaning has features that linguistic meaning does not have, but he also shows how artistic meaning lacks proper characteristics of linguistic meaning, such as to be conventional, arbitrary, and bounded by rules. Wollheim, R., (1993), "Pictures and Language" in *The Mind and Its Depths*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, p. 186.

¹⁴ Puolakka, K., (2011), "From Humpty Dumpty to James Joyce: Donald Davidson's Late Philosophy and the Question of Intention" in *Relativism and Intentionalism in Interpretation. Davidson, Hermeneutics, and Pragmatism*. Plymouth: Lexington Books, p. 72.

¹⁵ Davidson, D., (2005), "Locating Literary Language" in *Truth, Language and History*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

This approach is in coherence with (1), and the key that Davidson offered in order to justify the differences demanded by (2) is that these possible differences are not relating to the *type* of activity that linguistic meaning and artistic meaning involve –art and communication–, but relating to the *degree* of complexity of these activities¹⁶. Therefore, artistic and linguistic meaning would not be different kinds of meaning, in the same way that artistic and linguistic interpretation would not be distinct types of interpretation.

My point in this paper is that it is necessary to preserve the analogy, considering that it arises from a common sense intuition. As we can see in (1), talking about meaning of artworks is natural in our discourse about art. From a common sense approach, it is relevant as an argument the fact that intentionalists, anti-intentionalists, philosophers from different traditions¹⁷, artists, authors, spectators, readers, and interpreters had expressed themselves in these terms. Besides, we do not need to take artistic interpretation as a radical different process than interpretation of natural language, since the skills required to grasp meaning in both cases and the achieved results are similar. Indeed, as we will see, there are many usages of ordinary language where in order to interpret the meaning it is necessary to put into operation our imagination or creativity, and where apprehending the meaning is connected with an experience.

From this common sense approach, by which I am trying to make (1) and (2) compatibles, we find an advantage, namely, we can recognise a piece of truth in Lamarque, Olsen and Wollheim's objections without abandoning the analogy. On the one hand, Lamarque and Olsen are right in claiming that the analogy art-language can lead us to a reductionist view of art. But we run the risk just in case we are handling a naïve analogy, which can be amended by adopting a more complex one, as we will see. On the other hand, Wollheim is right in defending that the nature of artistic meaning is to be *experiential*, but this does not necessarily implicate that the analogy is false, if we are able to show that linguistic meaning is *somehow* experiential too. Thus, the argument that I suggest against the objection (i) is that it is not true that the analogy between linguistic and artistic meaning leads

¹⁶ Puolakka, (2011), p. 73.

¹⁷ Including structuralists and post-structuralists thinkers.

necessarily to a very simple view of art. The thought that I will develop following Stanley Fish¹⁸ is the opposite: the anti-intentionalists think that way because they have a reductionist view of natural language. Likewise, the argument that I suggest against the objection (ii) is that it is not true that linguistic meaning cannot consist in prompting an experience, and it is not true either that this experience is independent of meaning, but they are also connected.

These two arguments are strongly related to each other because the truth of the first one depends on the truth of the second one in the following way: if there can be room to the possibility of conceiving language as having more complex features, such as to be *experiential* –the argument that I have suggested against Wollheim’s objection– then language is not something as simple as we can think at first glance, and the analogy art-language will not bring about a devaluation of art –the argument that I have suggested against Lamarque and Olsen’s objection. That is, insofar as we will be able to show that natural language can be experiential, we will have shown that the analogy does not involve a reductionist view of art, because what we will have shown is not merely that art is similar to language, but that language is also, so to speak, similar to art. Therefore, as long as we will be able to reply to Wollheim’s objection (ii), we will at the same time have replied to Lamarque and Olsen’s objection (i). Moreover, the most important thing that the two arguments reveal is that both objections against the analogy have a common origin: they are equally wrong because they share a misunderstood view of natural language and meaning, but what is such a wrong view?

3. The Misunderstood View of Language of the Enemies of the Analogy and Some Friends

What I take as a reductionist view of natural language and meaning is, firstly, the one that considers language as a mere conventional-rule-governed-combinatory system, such as Wollheim considered:

¹⁸ Fish, S. E., (1973), “How Ordinary Is Ordinary Language?” *New Literary History*, n° 1 vol. 5, p. 49.

For, if it is right to think of language as inherently rule-bound, it needs to be observed that language is bound by rules of a very special kind. Linguistic rules are layered or hierarchical, and this we can see by now contrasting how the word ‘bison’, and the sentence, ‘The bison is standing’, gain their meaning. In both cases the appeal is to rules, but, in the first case, the rule is of a sort that ties words to the world, and, in the second case, the rule is one that ties well-formed sequences of words to the world and does so in virtue of two things: the meanings of the individual words (fixed by the first sort of rule), plus the principles governing their combination into phrases, clauses, and eventually sentences. It is the presence within language of this hierarchy of rules that ensures that linguistic meaning is essentially combinatory, and it is the combinatory nature of linguistic meaning that permits us to learn a language, and places the grasp of an infinite number of sentences within the capacity of a finite mind.¹⁹

According to this quote, for Wollheim, language is an activity perfectly well governed by rules and conventions, which have to be learnt in order to use it. Under this view, the meaning of a whole –a sentence– is determinable by the meaning of its atomic elements –words– because the meaning is given by a system of general rules, which speakers are able to apply to particular cases²⁰. Under Wollheim’s view, there is no room for any innovation, invention, creativity or imagination in our usage of language, neither in its interpretation, much less for any *experientiality*. Thus, even talking about ‘interpretation’ could sound odd, since interpreter seems to carry out a *mathematic* exercise of applying rules in order to obtain a result: the meaning. For example, no *Charity Principle* is required to do such an exercise if all the operations that the elements can do are defined by rules and conventions.

¹⁹ Wollheim, (1993), p. 186. He maintained the same idea in Wollheim, (1987), p. 22: “Another way of putting the account that I am against is to say that it is one that assimilates the kind of meaning that pictures have to the kind of meaning that language has. For it is right to think that, very broadly speaking, linguistic meaning can be explained within some such set of terms as rules, codes, conventions, symbol systems. But pictures and their meaning cannot be”.

²⁰ According to this view of language, Wollheim would be an intentionalist for artistic meaning but he would not for linguistic meaning. This is another reason to consider him as a non-canonical intentionalist, since canonical intentionalists defend intentionalism as much for linguistic meaning as artistic.

However, Davidson challenged such a strict view of language when, in the last paragraph of “A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs”, he speaks in Wollheim’s opposite way: “We must give up the idea of a clearly defined shared structure which language-users acquire and then apply to cases”²¹. For Davidson, although there are many cases where we violate or ignore the conventions, make mistakes at uttering (malapropism) or are simply originals in our usage of language, in the end, interpretation is still possible, understanding stays afloat. This is due to the fact that interpretation is not a question of learning, knowing, and sharing a theory (a *prior* theory), but a question of being able to create a theory (a *passing* theory) in each case²². This is one of the reasons why skills such as imagination, creativity, inventiveness, originality, etc., are exploited in a communicative relation, not merely our capacity of applying rules²³.

Secondly, it is also a reductionist view of natural language and meaning the one that supposes that language cannot exhibit, so to speak, *proto-artistic* features. Lamarque and Olsen seem to have supposed this at conceiving language as unconnected with value, experience, appreciation, etc., and at separating literature as an art of its linguistic nature. However, even before that Olsen had defended it, Stanley Fish already questioned this approach by claiming that “the very act of distinguishing between ordinary and literary language, [...] leads necessarily to an inadequate account of both”²⁴, in particular, it leads to “the reduction of language to a formal system un-attached to human purposes and values”²⁵. Therefore, Lamarque and Olsen can just denounce a trivializing of art at the expense of trivializing language. But, according to Fish, the commonly considered ‘ordinary’

²¹ Davidson, D., (2005), “A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs” in *Truth, Language and History*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 107.

²² Ibid., p. 101. This idea is very well illustrated by the experiment of radical interpretation where, in an absolute absence of shared rules and conventions, communication is possible.

²³ Thereby, Davidson denied the very conventional nature of language because knowing the conventions grant neither being interpreted correctly nor interpreting correctly, the same way that ignoring conventions does not prevent the understanding. Thus, conventions are not either necessary or sufficient for communication, which does not mean they are useless or irrelevant. Davidson, D., (1984), “Communication and Convention” in *Inquiries into Truth & Interpretation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

²⁴ Fish, (1973), p. 44.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 49.

language is not something ordinary at all:

[...] What philosophical semantics and the philosophy of speech acts are telling us is that ordinary language is extraordinary because at its heart is precisely that realm of values, intentions, and purposes which is often assumed to be the exclusive property of literature²⁶.

Fish embraces the speech act theory – the pragmatic view of language – as the one that allows us to recognize language as something more complex. The non-pragmatic view of language is characterized by considering language as a means to describe how the world is, giving priority to the descriptive function of language²⁷. The advocates of the pragmatic view denounced this approach and gave language a new power: the power of not just to say how things are, but the power to make things be in a certain way. Lamarque and Olsen seem to overlook that the very purpose of language is not always to *say* something merely, but by saying it, to *do* something; including to prompt experiences, to generate something valuable, or to make something to be appreciated. Thus, we cannot think that art is *always* made with the intention of communicating something, but neither that we *always* use language with this same purpose, as it is distinctive in the speech act theory.

Additionally, it is necessary to notice that not just anti-intentionalists, as Lamarque and Olsen, and a non-canonical intentionalist, as Wollheim, have maintained a misunderstood view of language and meaning, but even the very supporters of the analogy: canonical intentionalists. Even intentionalism has forgotten to consider the possibility of language to exhibit complex features. Although from the very beginning intentionalists have considered themselves as taking as their ground the pragmatic view of language, indeed, they have not taken advantage enough of such a view. Generally, the strategy that intentionalism has followed to justify the analogy has consisted in looking for the elements of communication (speaker, recipient, message) and meaning (intention, convention, context) in art²⁸. But this is just one of the two possible routes for the analogy justification.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 51.

²⁷ Austin, J. L., (1976), *How To Do Things With Words*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 1.

²⁸ Robert Stecker has successfully developed this strategy. Stecker, (2003).

They have neglected the idea that it is possible for language to exhibit the features that have been considered exclusive of art. Intentionalism has not rejected these features for language, simply they have not been considered. However, here is embedded the very possibility of the non-naïve analogy that intentionalism needs to face Lamarque and Olsen's objection of reductionism.

Traditionally, intentionalism has found their model in Grice's intentionalist conception of meaning, whereas, in general, has refused Davidson's intentionalism²⁹. However, Davidson's intentionalism allows us to reclaim some special properties of language, what I called *proto-artistic* features. Which features of natural language –denied by Lamarque, Olsen and Wollheim and forgotten by intentionalism– does Davidson's approach acknowledge? Mainly, his view recognizes for language the capacity to grow up, to be invented, to be used and interpreted with originality, to be a tool for providing emotions, experiences, and feelings, to be related to creativity, imagination, and value. Searching for these *proto-artistic* properties in linguistic meaning opens a second route for the analogy justification. Thereby, I defend that the justification of the analogy that has been carried out by intentionalism is necessary but not sufficient. It must be completed by a complementary argument: the proper characteristics of artistic meaning can also be found in certain usages of ordinary language. And this is, precisely, the idea that we need against Wollheim's objection and, in turn, against Lamarque and Olsen's objection, because it contains the very possibility of language to be experiential.

4. 'Experientiality' in Ordinary Language — Perlocutionary Acts and Metaphors

The view of language, to which I affiliate above, lends us a ground over

²⁹ For example, Stecker has considered that Davidson's intentionalism is not useful in order to justify a moderate version of intentionalism because "he does not distinguish between intended meaning and utterance meaning", Stecker, (2003), p. 12. In contrast, recently Puolakka has defended that the problems of moderate intentionalism can be sorted by appealing to Davidson's philosophy of language. Puolakka, (2011), p. 41: "[...] I think a modest intentionalist theory of interpretation should be built on a Davidsonian foundation."

which seeing the possibility of natural language to be experiential. But in order to consider language as experiential it is necessary to make clear what being *experiential* means exactly. As I said in previous lines, claiming that artistic meaning is experiential means, according to Wollheim, that grasping the meaning consists in having a certain experience, in other words, understanding a work of art is to have an adequate experience of it³⁰. Therefore, the prompted experiences in grasping the meaning of an artwork are *constitutive* of meaning, that is, meaning and experience do not appear together in a merely concurrent way. On the contrary, grasping linguistic meaning does not involve necessarily having an experience, so the possible experiences prompted by the linguistic meaning are not inherent to or constitutive of the meaning. This is the main difference that Wollheim found between artistic and linguistic meaning, in virtue of which he denied the analogy.

However, we can think that linguistic meaning is *somehow* experiential too, since we can find some usages in ordinary language where the meaning is connected with a certain experience. Intention of producing certain response takes part in our way of using natural language, in particular, there are speech acts whose aim is to prompt an experience. From Austin, this *experiential* dimension of ordinary language has been known as the *perlocutionary* aspect of speech acts³¹. It is in this sense that the experiential nature of artistic meaning may be compared with the perlocutionary acts of ordinary language. The problem is that according to Wollheim, artistic meaning is experiential not just because meaning can bring about an experience, but because meaning and experience are connected in a special way. Then, in order to consider that both elements –experiential and

³⁰ In Wollheim's proposal the adequate experience of the work is the one that is in accordance with the author's fulfilled intentions. Wollheim, (2011), p. 29: "[...] when the reader can and does react in conformity with the novelist's intentions, the experiences that he has are his way of grasping the narrative, hence of understanding the novel. Now the reader's experiences, like the correct perceptions of the suitably sensitive, suitably informed, spectator in front of a painting, act as constitutive of the meaning of the work with which he is engaged."

³¹ Austin, (1976), p. 101: "Saying something will often, or even normally, produce certain consequential effects upon the feelings, thoughts, or actions of the audience, or of the speaker, or of other persons: and it may be done with the design, intention, or purpose of producing them [...]. We shall call the performance of an act of this kind the performance of a 'perlocutionary' act, and the act performed, where suitable [...] a 'perlocution'."

perlocutionary— are analogous in the relevant way, we must find, not just some experiences prompted by speech acts, but such a special connection between prompted experiences and speech act meaning.

What kind of special connection between experience and meaning did Wollheim have in mind? I think that it is one related to the very way by which meaning is transmitted by art. The meaning is experiential because of the very way by which it is implemented in a work of art, that is, the apprehension of the meaning occurs in an experiential way thank to the very way in which meaning is performed. According to Wollheim: “The transition from the mere telling of a story to the construction of a narrative is effected when the agent, in carrying out the intention of telling a story, forms further intentions about how to tell the story”³². As Fish has pointed out, it has been a common place in the debate that the difference between ordinary and literary language is that the former communicates meanings that could be communicated in a different way, whereas the latter communicates meanings in a special way³³. However, although it is true that in literature the form of the expression is important, it is not true that in speech acts just what it is expressed is important. In some speech acts, against Wollheim’s view, there are not “different ways of doing the same thing”³⁴ either. The meaning of a speech act and what is done by it are also connected by the very *way* in which the speech act is performed.

As I said above, some speech acts aim to prompt an experience. In these cases, fulfilling the purpose depends on the very mode by which the speech act is performed because the intention of prompting such an experience *regulates* this mode; that is, depending on the intention, one choose an expression form or another. The speech act cannot be carried out in any way, but in a specific one, because the success or failure depends on this specific way. In general, we speak in order to produce a verbal or non-verbal response from someone. Even if the response is just to be believed,

³² Wollheim, (2011), p. 27. The quote continues as follows: “And, note, his concern with how to tell the story is not a subsidiary motivation, as it would be if he were concerned to impress the reader with the size of his vocabulary, it is now for him an integral aspect of telling the story. Different ways of telling the story no longer amount for him, as they did for the mere storyteller, to different ways of doing the same thing: they are now different things to do. This is because his concern is now with *the story as told*.”

³³ Fish, (1973), p. 43.

³⁴ Wollheim, (2011), p. 27.

or taken in consideration, it depends on the way in which we express ourselves. In fact, there are usages of ordinary language where the meaning cannot be transmitted if we replace their specific expression form for another because something is *lost* in the transmission. What it is lost is the experiential aspect, which cannot be thrown away since we run the risk of unfulfilling our intentions. In some cases, you want to *do* something in such a way that the speech act cannot be translatable to another kind of speech act –such a description for example– because the very way that they are formulated is relevant, not just their content. If we translate the speech act to another way, simply the speech act does not work, does not succeed anymore.

In a worldly example we can think the following: if I *explain* you a joke, instead of *telling* it to you, surely you will not find it funny, at least, not as funny as if I respect the expression form that is proper for a joke –to *tell* it instead of to *explain* it. In this case, you will have lost the experience that the joke could have provided you. Thus, the property of being funny and the experience of finding it funny are *intrinsically* connected with the way in which the speech act is carried out. That is why the meaning and the experience do not appear together in a merely concurrent way, but the expression form structures them in a causal relation³⁵. Now, we can say that, in the same way that in a work of art the content or meaning cannot be separated from the experience that it provides, in certain speech acts, separating the meaning from the experience or the effect that they want to produce can bring about a failed speech act.

³⁵ In a more general sense, we can take into account a neuron-linguistic research, carried out by a group of researchers of Radboud-Nijmegen University in Holland, that is investigating the power of language over the brain. This experiment suggests that when we utter an insult the areas that are activated in our hearer's brain are the same that are activated with physical pain, that is, "insults hurt, literally". Martínez Ron, A., (2013), "Los insultos duelen. Literalmente" <http://www.finanzas.com/xl-semanal/conocer/20130224/insultos-duelen-literalmente-4781.html>. These neuron-physiological affections trigger some mental events related with feelings and emotions. Thereby, the prompted experience is obviously connected with the expression form, because with another expression form, the experience would not be prompted. Besides, sometimes we choose some words over others due to the mere fact that they *sound* better than others. For example, some tropes, such as paronomasia, have their point in their phonic dimension. Here, there is embedded an aesthetical interest, an interest over the very sensorial experience of hearing and uttering sounds.

Nevertheless, it could be objected that this proposal is not comprehensive enough, as long as these cases could be considered exceptional or anomalous. But, although it is true that ironies, jokes, puns, proverbs, tropes, and so forth, are special linguistic resources, if we pay attention to our usage of natural language we will notice that they are special indeed, but not uncommon at all. Following Fish's motto, we can claim that ordinary language is *extraordinary*. However, this does not happen just with these special –although frequent– cases, but this scheme is also reproduced in less complex speech acts. For instance, if I want to appear kind to the bus driver, if I intend to produce an impression on the audience, if I need to be believable, if I want to make you cry, etc., I will say different things in different ways. Likewise, when we want our words to be understood we try to speak clearly, when we intend to be taken as wise we use phrases in Latin, when we look for sympathy we try to speak friendly. So our words are experienced as transparent, erudite or affable. Thus, there is an intuition supporting the thought that grasping linguistic meaning in some cases has a *plus*, something that goes beyond the mere words used, something that has to do with the very way of bearing the meaning, and with the mental events that this way produces. There are cases where the mental events are not a mere consequence of the speech act, but even the very purpose of the speech act. As a consequence, if understanding a linguistic utterance includes the appreciation of the way, –the point of view, the attitude towards, etc.– in which the content is presented, then linguistic meaning is somehow also experiential.

Moreover, it could be certainly objected that the fact that linguistic meaning provides the experiences that I mentioned above is not identical to say that the very nature of linguistic meaning is experiential. Probably, perlocutionary acts are found in a place in the middle of *being constitutive of* meaning and *being merely concurrent with* meaning. As a result, the experiential dimension of some speech acts allows us to establish a parallelism between artistic and linguistic meaning related to their grade of *experientiality*, but not an identity³⁶. In order to get the resemblance between

³⁶ I prefer not to try this strategy taking into account the following Austin's words: "Now, however, I must point out that the illocutionary act as distinct from the perlocutionary is connected with the production of effects in certain senses: (I) Unless a certain effect is achieved, the illocutionary act will not have been happily, successfully performed.

linguistic and artistic meaning go beyond a mere parallelism, it is necessary to find some usages of ordinary language where understanding the meaning consists in *-is-* having an experience. And we can find a case where language is experiential in a strict sense: the metaphor.

The debate about the nature of the metaphor is one of the most extended and discussed in Aesthetics and Philosophy of Language. But, in order to justify the experiential nature of grasping a metaphor, we just need to take into account some features of the metaphor that are usually shared by everyone. In general, there is an agreement about the fact that metaphors prompt some *effects*, although there is no agreement on *how* these effects are prompted³⁷. But, precisely, what is important in order to say that a metaphor is experiential is the fact that metaphors prompt some effects, independently of how these effects are prompted. In addition, it is also a shared thought that the effects produced by metaphors are strongly related to perception, since in metaphors we find a special connection between word and image. In some previous lines, I said that language is not just a means to communicate; in metaphors, language works as a means to perceive, in particular, it could be considered, to perceive a resemblance. In this sense, Davidson claimed, “a metaphor makes us attend to some likeness, often a novel or surprising likeness, between two or more things”³⁸. Metaphors constitute the case where meaning (understood as what is grasped when a metaphor is grasped) and perception appear together in an intimate way because understanding a metaphor *is*-consist in-*seeing* something *as* something else. For example, when Romeo says “But, soft! what light through yonder window breaks? It is the east, and Juliet is the sun”³⁹, by grasping the metaphor what we are doing is *to perceive* Juliet

This is not to say that the illocutionary act is the achieving of a certain effect”. Austin, (1976), p. 116. Nevertheless, this quote is still showing that there is a special connection between performing a speech act successfully and the effect that it wants to produce.

³⁷ For example, this was the point that separated Davidson from the traditional view of metaphor. Davidson, D., (2006), “What Metaphors Mean” in *The Essential Davidson*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 262: “I have no quarrel with these descriptions of the effects of metaphor, only with the associated views as to *how* metaphor is supposed to produce them”.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 247.

³⁹ Shakespeare, W., (2012), “Romeo y Julieta” in *Obras completas, Tragedias*, vol. II, Barcelona: Debolsillo, p. 118: “Pero, ¡oh! ¿qué luz asoma a esa ventana? Viene de ori-

in certain way in virtue of the relation that the metaphor establishes with a second element: the sun.

As a consequence, if metaphors make us perceive something –for instance a resemblance– and if perceiving something is considered as having a certain *experience*, then we already see how the metaphor is an *experiential* item in Wollheim’s sense. But, in order to justify the experientiality of linguistic meaning through the case of the metaphor, it is necessary to check how metaphors fulfil the conditions in virtue of which Wollheim considered artistic meaning as experiential. If we remember, these conditions were mainly two: firstly, grasping the meaning consists in having a certain experience, which is *constitutive* of the meaning, and secondly, there is a special *connection* between the experience prompted at grasping the meaning and the *way* by which the meaning is implemented.

On the one hand, with respect to the first condition, grasping a metaphor consists in having an experience because grasping a metaphor consists in perceiving something as something else. But in order to check why the experience is *constitutive of* the meaning, and not merely *concurrent with* the meaning, we can compare the case of the metaphor with the previous case of speech acts. The radical difference between perlocutionary acts and metaphors –that allows us to go beyond a mere analogy– is the fact that in the understanding of a speech act the speaker’s intended experience is contingent, whereas in the understanding of a metaphor the experience is necessary. For example, someone can grasp perfectly well the meaning of a speech act such as an insult, without feeling insulted at all. In this case, the understanding takes place without taking place the intended experience. On the contrary, if someone grasps a metaphor, then he or she has the intended experience necessarily. In this case, we cannot say that the understanding has taken place if the intended experience has not taken place. As Manuel Hernández Iglesias has pointed out⁴⁰, in contrast with speech acts, in the case of the metaphor it is not possible to understand what the speaker intends us to do and not to do it, because what the speaker wants us to do is to see something as something else and

ente, y Julieta es el sol.”

⁴⁰ Hernández Iglesias, M., (1990/91), “Todas las metáforas son mortales” *La balsa de la Medusa*, n° 15, 16, 17, p. 104: “en el caso de la metáfora no es posible entender lo que el hablante pretende que hagamos y no hacerlo.”

understanding a metaphor is to see the thing as the other one. That is why the experience is *constitutive* of the meaning, because in absence of this experience there is no understanding of meaning either.

On the other hand, in order to justify the second condition it is necessary to make explicit the relationship between the experiences produced at grasping the meaning and the way in which the meaning is performed. The relevance of the way in which metaphors do what they do can be recognized by demonstrating that the experiences prompted by metaphors cannot be prompted if we change the specific way by which metaphors are performed. For example, the idea of resemblance is in the core of metaphors as well as similes, but a simile does not prompt a constitutive experience as a metaphor does. According to Davidson, a simile *declares* a similitude⁴¹, *tells* it, but it does nothing to make you see it. Unlike the simile, I would say that a metaphor does not declare a similitude, but *shows* or *points* to it, make you see it. If someone can say truly that he or she understands a metaphor is because he or she is able to see the similitude, if someone is not able to see it that is because he or she did not grasp the metaphor at all. On the contrary, you can be able to understand the meaning of a simile without being able to see any resemblance. If the simile declares –tells, reports, etc.– a resemblance, then someone can perceive it or not independently of understanding its meaning. For example, if Romeo says “Juliet is like the sun”, he is saying that Juliet is similar to the sun under a certain aspect. But understanding the meaning of this utterance does not require to perceive in what sense Juliet is like the sun. Here, *understanding* does not consist in *seeing*. On the contrary, when Romeo says that “Juliet is the sun”, *understanding* the meaning (grasping the metaphor) is identical to seeing the resemblance. Ultimately, what demonstrates the special connection between what is done by a metaphor and the way by which a metaphor is performed is the fact that, generally, it is a shared intuition that a metaphor cannot be paraphrased or translated without *losing* something. And this is the second reason why, in the case of metaphors, linguistic meaning is, in a strict sense, also experiential.

⁴¹ Davidson, (2006), p. 255.

5. Conclusion

Although it demands to commit to a view of language that is not exempt of its own problems, we can conclude that this second route opens a new way for the analogy justification. The analogy between *experiential* in artistic meaning and *perlocutionary* in linguistic meaning allows us to talk about linguistic meaning as having an experiential scope. Likewise, the experiential nature of the process of grasping a metaphor allows us to talk about language as being experiential in a strict sense. As a result, if language is also experiential, comparing art and language does not mean to devalue art, in other words, the analogy does not entails any reductionism. An explanation based on the analogy does not have to leave out the proper features of artistic meaning, because linguistic meaning also possesses them in a certain *degree*. Besides, the analogy is not incompatible with recognizing that the experiential nature of artistic meaning can be more enriching or more complex; it just involves recognizing that it is not a different *type* of meaning. Perhaps, it could be thought that all I said is nothing more than an obvious remark, but if so, then I will have found what I had been looking for: basing the analogy on a common sense intuition. Finally, it could be thought also that this paper is about language more than art or aesthetics, but it would not be a problem, if I had contributed to consider, in Davidson's words, language as a social art⁴².

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⁴² Davidson, (1984), p. 278: "Language is, to be sure, a social art".

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