

Metaphor, types of: The exhaustive diaphor

Before getting to the point of this Thinksheet, I'll use the S. of S. reference to illustrate it. For convenience of those not using the Hebrew text, I've chosen a fairly close translation, viz. NIV (New International Version).

1 DATA of 5.10-16, one of the 23 lovesongs constituting this "book" of the Bible. The song has one **tenor** ([Lat.] "holding" idea), viz. that expressed in this Thinksheet's title's first line: the girl (woman) is overwhelmed with love for the boy (man) & exhausts her verbal power in trying (unsuccessfully, of course, as language is inadequate to overwhelming human feelings) to express her adoration. The song has 16 **vehicles** (images, including one of them 3x), 9 **metaphors**, & 7 **similes** (1 using "as," the rest "like").

2 TECHNICAL NOTES (which, if you please, skip):

(1) A "vehicle" is for conveying something. What a vehicle-image (of one of the five physical senses) conveys is some angle on the tenor-idea. In a ditty from my childhood--"I love you, peaches and cream"--the delightful taste of the latter (the vehicle) is conveyed to the beloved through the lover's affirmation (the tenor). The terms "tenor/vehicle" provide you with a way of analyzing metaphorical speech/writing, thus becoming more conscious/appreciative/critical/competent in metaphor, "the best gift of the poet" (Aristotle)...I've found this tool helpful ever since it first appeared (1938 [Harcourt,Brace], THE MEANING OF MEANING, C.K.Ogden & I.A. Richards).

(2) When a metaphor is introduced by "as" or "like," (a) it's called a simile, which (b) has less **power** than a metaphor (narrow sense, in distinction from simile). Feel the difference: What if Jesus had said "I'm like a door" instead of "I am the door" (Jn.10.7,9)? Feel this as you notice the 9 metaphors & 7 similes in our song (S. of S.5.10-16). And if you've written something you were proud enough to save, peruse it for metaphors/similes, & feel the difference.

(3) Sometimes a speaker/writer is satisfied to let a tenor-idea be "carried on" a single vehicle-image by a single instance (as "I love you, peaches and cream"). That's like a still photo, a "shot." But sometimes the vehicle is verbally held onto, explored (as Door Jesus in Jn.10): that's like a movie. (Read Mt.13 for Jesus' movie-"parables.") Whether the "carrying on" is static (still pic) or dynamic (movie), this type of metaphor is called an **epiphor** (Gk. "carry-on"), to distinguish it from a **diaphor** (Gk., "carry-through"), in which a tenor-idea is "carried through" multiple vehicle-images drawn from various areas of human experience.

I like to picture those areas of human experience as arcs on a circle which has the tenor-idea as its center. Each section (or piece of pie) has a vehicle-image name suggesting its area of experience. The exegesis (Gk. "leading-out") of the meaning is by oscillation between each arc & the name of its sector.

I'll not leave you long panting for a for-instance, but I should attribute this useful epiphor/diaphor distinction first to Philip Wheelwright (METAPHOR AND REALITY, U.of Ind.Press/62).

3 "How do I love thee? / Let me count the ways...." In this familiar diaphoric poem, Eliz. Barrett Browning gushes all over husband Robert. She knows she cannot fully express her love in words, & says so; but nevertheless she strives to exhaust her image-range in the effort. So, the woman who wrote S. of S.5.10-16.

In this Thinksheet's second line, I've added "exhaustive" to "diaphor," as a further distinction. One could dispassionately display several images to illumine an idea with no intention to be exhaustive. That is one form of exposition of a scientific fact or theory. But in religion, we have to do mainly with the hot or passionate form of diaphor: in our text (S. of S.5.10-16), the female goes all out in praise of her male, gushes all over him, adores him as a devotee should adore a deity. Indeed, the Song of Songs wouldn't have made it into the canon (the restricted number of sacred books in TANAKH, the Jewish [& then the first part of the Christian] Bible) if it had not been viewed as a vehicle for the adoration of the LORD God.

4 In our Christian Faith, this adoration carries over to **Jesus**, especially in many

hymns & sacred songs. NT titles for Jesus are in the exhaustive-diaphor mode, their semantic domains (meaning-areas) corresponding to the full circle of arcs of common human experience. Christian worship thus "magnifies" him (the first word of many Hebrew prayers [e.g. kaddish] being *yithgadal*, "Let be made great"), as also in telling (counting) the many benefits of his Cross (views of the reconciliation-atonement drawn from many areas of life). (Indeed, it is only in Christian worship that all these images/views fully cohere.)

5 Back to this Thinksheet's lovesong. It ends (v.16), after a profusion of images, with this tenor: "All of him [my beloved] is **delightfulnesses!**" Why the plural in the literal Hebrew (to which the Jewish TANAKH translation is close: "All of him is delightful")? Because she's just finished listing (with appropriate metaphors & similes) ten (count 'em) physical attributes she experiences as delights. CEV catches the feeling: "I desire him so much!" The Septuagint (Gk.) has "He, the whole of him, is desire [i.e. desired, longed for; the word means also passion, lust]." (But some Eng. translations of this Gk. have "altogether lovely.") The Vulgate (Lat.) has *totus desirerabilis*, "totally [entirely] desirable" (RSV & NRSV, "altogether desirable"). In the same vein, Knox's translation of the Vulgate has "Nothing of him but awakes desire." Rotherham: "Altogether he is delightful." Spurrell: "Himself--the concentration of loveliness!" NAB (New. Am. Bible): "He is all delight."

6 More than a score of Bibles in print have KJV's "**altogether lovely.**" TEV is closer: "Everything about him enchants me." "Lovely" meant "lovable" but has come to mean "beautiful," beauty being one aspect of attraction. So "Fairest Lord Jesus," in THE NEW CENTURY HYMNAL bowdlerized by dropping "Lord": "Beautiful Jesus."

6 The Hebrew root C^{HMD} (to "desire, take pleasure in") is the central clue to the song. We are to desire God more than any of his creatures, & delight in our Lord Jesus Christ today, tomorrow, & forever. This is the core of being "in Christ," a Christian. In this joy we are to live as a light & blessing, in love.

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