UNDERSTANDING SILENCE

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This thesis attempts to achieve three related aims. The initial aim is to uncover an anatomy of silence designed to draw attention to its different types, and help us understand its enigma a little better. This has resulted in a useful distinction between two types of silence which are designated the titles: Harpocratic and Larundic. Harpocratic silence is empty, mysterious and reflective. It offers no meaning of its own and therefore no fetters to reflection and creation. Larundic silence is full of meaning which it can communicate in more and less effective ways than language. The second aim of the thesis is to show that Larundic silence can communicate but only through interpretation, which leaves it open to exploitation. Thus a model is offered which is intended to preserve Larundic silences from radical readings. Finally, the thesis examines how silence is applied in the contexts of medicine, law and art. This focuses primarily on the category of Larundic silences which are more likely to arise in the fields chosen. Harpocratic silence is applied in other areas, namely music and religion.

Silence is demonstrated to be a complex and multi-faceted concept, with the capacity for meaning and reflection.

PROLOGUE

The Romance of

LARUNDA AND HERMES

Larunda was a Tiberian nymph with the gift of the gab. She loved to debate with her friends and tell stories of their adventures. So much did she love to talk that her friends gave her the nick-name 'Lala', which in greek means 'Prattle'. She had many friends, even among the gods and goddesses of Olympus. One of those who favoured Larunda was Hera, wife of Zeus and goddess of the hearth. Their friendship provided Larunda with a love for home and family, and all the things around which the hearth forms a core. It may have been because of this love of the hearth, or because she cared enough for her friends to risk her own safety, that Larunda refused to assist Zeus in kidnapping her friend Juterna so that he might seduce her and cheat on his wife yet again. Not only did Lala refuse to help the King of the gods, she also warned Juterna of Zeus' plans. This made the god angry, and he threatened Larunda with severe punishment if she continued to speak of his intentions. This frightened her, as it would any sensible person; she knew the wrath of Zeus could be fierce. But she was courageous and said: "Lord Zeus, I am aware of your strength and fury, but I cannot allow you to shame one of my friends, and break the heart of another." So she went to Hera, because she knew Hera was not afraid of Zeus, and she told the goddess of the hearth what her husband intended to do.

Hera flew into a great rage when she heard the news, and pummelled Zeus with fire until he gave up his plan. Zeus was furious and knew who was to blame. He found Larunda and before she could utter a cry for help he tore

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out her tongue and silenced her forever. Unsatisfied that his revenge was complete, Zeus then banished Larunda to the Underworld where she would be forced to remain eternally silent. Then he called his son Hermes, the messenger of the gods, to deliver Larunda to Hades.

Larunda was devastated and frightened of what awaited her. An eternity of suffering where she could never communicate with anyone again; her fate was like that of Cassandra who would never be understood. But she wouldn't allow this to defeat her. On their long journey to the Underworld Larunda made many attempts to communicate with her guide. She began by conveying minor messages to Hermes, pointing to her feet when she was tired of walking, patting her stomach to show she was hungry. At first, Hermes would not always understand. "Are you sick?" he enquired. She shook her head and picked a berry from a nearby bush and ate it, again rubbing her stomach. "Oh!" he cried "You're hungry!", and they stopped to eat in silence.

After a while she increased her silent vocabulary until she could have silent disagreements with Hermes, and entertain him with little stories. They struggled for understanding and eventually Hermes was able to interpret most of the silent vocabulary she invented, as well as understanding more complex things like emotions. He began to know when Larunda was homesick or sad, which she tried to hide behind her courage and resolve. "How brave she is", thought Hermes.

Then one sunny afternoon the pair stopped to rest under a grove of olive trees. They were only a day or so from their destination and Hermes was unhappy. Larunda, who had learned to enjoy Hermes' company, was aware of his sadness and was trying to work out a new story to cheer him up. They sat hidden under an ancient olive tree whose branches drooped to kiss the dusty earth, and Hermes embraced Larunda. "I have fallen in love with you my silent Lara." She looked at him with great softness and he could feel her thinking "I love you too, Hermes", and she put her hand on his to show him this was true.

Then her look changed, and he knew she was thinking about Hades. He said "We don't have to be separated forever, you must go to the Underworld, but I will live there with you and we will always be together." At this Larunda's face changed again, and once again Hermes knew what she was trying to say, that she loved him because he could understand her, that he was able to interpret her silence and know what she wanted it to say. They embraced again, and under the olive tree Larunda conceived the twin Lares, the Roman gods of the home and hearth.

Larunda is silent for eternity, but Hermes, the messenger of the gods, loves her and interprets her silence.[1]

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[1] I feel I ought to include an apology for the changes I have made to this story. Those familiar with Ovid's original in *Fasti* II: 583-599, will know that his telling is different in a few ways. The first difference is that in Ovid, Hermes is referred to by his Roman name, Mercury. I have changed this in order to draw the relationship between this myth of Larunda's silence and hermeneutics, named for Hermes the messenger of the gods. This is not a very big change, and not unforgivable, I hope. The second change is somewhat more important, but it has its roots in research. In the original telling, which is supposed to be that of Ovid who may have invented the tale, the story is not a happy one. In Ovid's version Mercury "prepares to offer violence; with her looks in the place of words she entreats him, and in vain with her voiceless mouth does she struggle to speak. She becomes pregnant, and gives birth to twins, the Lares, who guard the cross ways and ever keep their watch in our houses." (Ovid, *Fasti* II, 613-616; Henry Riley translation). The happier more romantic version I have used can be found in Michael Grant & John Hazel's *Who's Who in Classical Mythology* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson; Great Britain; 1973 pg. 260). I have preferred this version because I hope to join silence and hermeneutic interpretation in a useful and productive union which preserves silences from the violence of misinterpretation. However, Ovid's version may be equally appropriate if we consider how likely misinterpretation of silence is to occur, and the damage this can do.

The Mysterious Origins of
HARPOCRATES

Harpocrates is one of the names of "Horus the Child", infant manifestation of one of ancient Egypt's most important deities, Horus.

There was great love between Isis the mother goddess and Osiris the great god king. They flourished together, creating the moon and the stars and eventually the earth and all its inhabitants. Their creativity seemed boundless and they thought their joy together would never end. But a time eventually came when Osiris was challenged by his envious brother Seth, and a collosal battle ensued. Great blows thundered down from the heavens as the two gods battled for ultimate power – only one could win. The battle went on for days and nights. Tragically, Seth struck the final blow, killed Osiris and won. Seth cut Osiris into many pieces and threw them into the Nile. When Isis foresaw her husband's death in a dream, she turned herself and her sister Nephthys into kites who flew over the Nile looking for Osiris, to be with him one last time. Heartbroken, Isis also grew fearful that there was no heir to challenge Seth's claim to Osiris' position as most powerful god in the universe. With no one to challenge him, Isis would be forced to rule alongside her enemy, the murderer of her beloved husband. She knew there was only one thing to do. She had to use her great powers to accomplish what only the mother goddess could: she had to bring life out of death; to conceive Osiris' son and heir even after Osiris was dead.

There is great secrecy surrounding how Isis, the mother of all, managed to become pregnant by her dead husband. The centuries of egyptian sun have bleached the story from our minds, its sand has ground away the hieroglyphs that reveal the secret. And perhaps it is best this way, left to silence. We know

only that with her strong magic Isis was able to reassemble Osiris. Next, she used the wings of the kite she transformed herself into to create a breeze which restored breath to her cherished love. And after they lay together Osiris left his beloved and became king of the underworld for eternity. Isis, soon after lying with her dead husband, gave birth to Harpocrates, the child Horus who grew to be the greatest of all gods.

Isis held a celebration to present the new heir with great pomp and circumstance. All the stars in the universe were in attendance, each of the gods and goddesses, and even the creatures of the planets were invited to see their new king. And as each approached they saw Isis with the infant on her knee. He was small and delicate with a lock of hair on the right side of his beautiful shorn head. He wore a gold triple diadem crown, ornate with feathers and peaked with a disc of golden sunlight. But most striking, as the boy sat upon his mother's lap, was the finger which he held in his mouth. He sat silently holding a finger of his right hand up to his lips. Subsequent statues would portray him in this way, with the finger in front of his lips in a request for silence, perhaps, at the question of his origin. Inevitably, some said that Harpocrates had no right to his father's throne, as the question of his paternity was dubious. But most welcomed the little god and their honour expanded as he grew into the most powerful of the gods. The one who is the secret life and sustenance as the source of the Nile.

The myths tell that Horus' mother Isis was impregnated by her brother Osiris *after* Osiris had been killed in battle. Thus, Harpocrates has become a god of impenetrable mystery. A god of silence[2].

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[2] I have taken the liberty of fictionalizing the few accounts I was able to find of Harpocrates' birth in a way that suits the purposes of the project at hand. The information is founded on accounts in the following texts: Hart, George: *A Dictionary of Egyptian Gods and Goddesses*; Routledge & Kegan Paul; London, Eng.; 1986; Mercher, Samuel A.: *Horus Royal God of Egypt*; The Lancaster Press; Lancaster, PA.; 1942; and Shorter, Alan W.: *The Egyptian Gods: a handbook by....* Routledge & Kegan Paul; London; 1983.

INTRODUCTION

"Whereof we cannot speak, thereof we must be silent." These final words of Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus-Logico-Philosophicus*[3] caution us not to speak of the unspeakable, to be silent about what is silent. However, it is the intention of this project to perform that very paradox: to talk about silence.

Wittgenstein's closing line refers to a world which is beyond linguistic expression, where language can be seen as a whole. Understanding language, he says, must be accomplished from a perspective external to language, and hence from within the perspective of silence. Wittgenstein's claim is that we cannot speak about this silence because there are no words with which to express it, it is the silence beyond words. Nevertheless, Wittgenstein did not intend to imply that silence beyond words is empty or meaningless. In fact, his silence is full of the information about words and language that can only be learned in silence.

Wittgenstein's silence is silence which escapes translation because it belongs to the aspect of understanding which exceeds the limits of rationality and linguistic capability. He is trying to indicate a place where words have no meaning and so voices are silent. But, Wittgenstein's silence is not inscrutable. He implies that knowledge about silence can be gained through linguistic means, by pushing at the limits of language until we discover we can go no further. Once we climb to the limits of language we can kick away the ladder and enter silence, where words are no longer useful. Having reached this point

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[3] Wittgenstein, Ludwig: *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*; C.K. Ogden trans. Routledge Press; London England; 1922.

language can be understood, and at the same time silence can be experienced in its fullness. Thus, the more we push at the limits of language the more we can learn about silence. From the opposite view, then, when we begin to explore silence outside its limits, and therefore within the limits of language, we realize there is a great deal we can say about it....

Silence is a far more important element in our lives than is immediately obvious. We tend to overlook silence, take it for granted and not pay it the attention it deserves considering what it can do for us. This is an underestimation. Silence is important in myriad ways: in meditation as well as communication, its applications are almost boundless. In order to explore the depth and richness of silence we must consider that there are many different types of silence to explore. It is certainly the case that there are silences which bear meanings that cannot be translated into linguistic form. Similarly, there are silences which are vast and empty and defy language altogether. However, it is also true that some silences are acts of communication so clear that they speak for themselves. For instance, the accusatory tragic silence depicted by Southey in his *History of the Peninsular War*, where he describes "The frightful silence of depopulation prevails."[4] This haunting example illustrates how clearly silence can communicate specific ideas, such as tragedy, loss and accusation.

In general, it is true that we experience some sorts of silence all the time. Despite this, knowledge of truly pure silence is impossible to experience. In meditation, we try to still the mind, attempting to block out new thoughts and slow down our thinking processes; the tools used to accomplish this are usually the repetition of some word or the focussing of the mind upon a single object. But is this the same as the experience of pure silence? Or is it only the complete concentration of thought, more like standing still than being silent? The human

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[4] Southey, Robert: *History of the Peninsular War*, Vol. II. J. Murray; London; 1827. Pg: 339.

mind, it seems, is incapable of knowing the emptiness of pure silence. As Susan Sontag suggests, "...it would mean that the spectator was aware of no stimulus or that he was unable to make a response."[5]

Nevertheless, we can experience silences which are other than purely empty. Plotinus said that in some cases "...there would be more truth in silence..."[6]. Aeschylus claimed in the *Agamemnon* that "Sole cure for wrong is silence"[7]. In *Iphigenia in Taurus*, Euripides spoke of "the letter, that though silent will declare..."[8] And Trollope states, "There is a silence which may be more eloquent than the sounds which it follows."[9] All of these examples imply something remarkable about silence. They indicate that silences are able to bear meaning. These silences are not pure and empty. They are, rather, filled with meaning and intention which appear to be capable of communication. But how do we know silence can be meaningful? Probably because we regularly experience its meaningfulness. When they occur, silences can sometimes be hard to ignore. They can make us uncomfortable, they can make us safe, and they can convey information. When it is present, the meaning of a silence can be obviously present, even when it is difficult to tell what that meaning is.

There are many other ways in which the concept 'silence' is used, and usually these are ways which ascribe to it a certain kind of meaning. We refer, usually in political but also psychological contexts, to silence which

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[5] Susan Sontag: "The Aesthetics of Silence" in A Susan Sontag Reader. Penguin Books; London, England; 1982. Pp.: 181-204.

[6] Plotinus: "The Fifth Ennead" in *Enneads English and Greek*. A.H. Armstrong trans. Loeb Classics Library. Heinemann; London; 1966-88.

[7] Aeschylus. Agamemnon, in *The Oresteian Trillogy: Agamemnon, the Choephori, the Eumenides*. Phillip Vellacott, trans. Penguin Books; London; 1959.

[8] Euripides. *Iphigeneia in Tauris*. Richmond Latimore trans. Oxford University Press; Oxford: 1974.

[9] Trollope, A. *Orley Farm*. Oxford University Press; Oxford; 1935, pg: xxxix.

disempowers its victims or suppresses their true selves. Thus, we speak of the silenced and oppressed. There are, however, times when self-imposed silencing of the self is appropriate and useful to the situation, such as when doctors silence themselves to a degree when assuming the Hippocratic role. Hence, we speak of self-silencing as a commendable attribute in certain contexts. Other examples of the applications of silence will be seen throughout this thesis. These examples demonstrate the multifacity of silence, its ability to mean different things in different contexts and to different individuals.

To begin to illustrate the multifaceted nature of silence we can engage in a short experiment. Try reading the following sentence out loud: "the cat sat on the mat". In reading the sentence out loud the reader does not appear to be engaged in an act of silence to the extent that speaking out loud is not silent but makes some sound. However, there is a way in which silence is present even in the act of reading out loud. By having submitted to the experiment and reading what one is told to read, the reader's own sense of self and judgment is put aside to a certain extent. Complying with the suggestion to read a particular sentence causes the reader to temporarily suspend his or her own thoughts and ideas, and conform with those suggested by the author. Any act of reading is like this. There is always a degree of self-silencing which the reader undergoes in order to successfully understand the text. This is not a failure which usurps the reader's critical judgement. Rather it is a necessity, as we well know from the frustrating experience of not being able to silence the mind's stray thoughts and worries that distract us from reading. Such self-silencing is useful in most acts of understanding which require a degree of self-silencing in order to make room for the acquisition of new knowledge. This does not eliminate critical judgment. A critique of the text may follow upon the act of understanding, or may even occur simultaneously but quietly in the form of criticisms which emerge while one is reading a text. If critique does occur during the act of

understanding a text, then this marks another way in which silence occurs: there is the silence in which the activities of the mind take place. Thoughts are silent until expressed aloud, and there are degrees to which these thoughts are silent. Thoughts which are at the forefront of a busy mind are less silent than thoughts which are in the background, and finally subconscious thoughts are the most silent of all. It follows from this that silence contains meaning in certain circumstances, such as when it contains meaningful thoughts. This idea will be addressed more fully in chapter two of part I.

The above experiment illustrates only four of the many ways in which silence is an active presence in our lives. It shows that readers use silencing in order to leave room for understanding a text. From this it follows that silence is also used in preparation for knowledge acquisition. Thirdly, it also shows that there is content in the silence of readers and thinkers, even though we cannot access this easily. And finally we have seen that the activity of the mind occurs on different levels of silence, from silent thoughts to even more silent subconscious activity. Thus, we begin to see that silence *does* things in thinking, reading, and much more.

However, to be understood, the things silence does must be interpreted. This is a rather difficult project because silence is ambiguous by nature; it defies easy interpretation. Silence's ambiguity is what we might refer to as its slippery nature which makes grasping its meaningful content a difficult task. To help deal with silence's slipperiness, this thesis will begin with an analysis which is intended to yield a vocabulary for silence. Thus, Part I will proceed with a construction of an anatomy of silence which divides the concept into two categories and various sub-categories. These are meant to account for the different ways in which silence is understood and used. Part II of the thesis is an analysis of interpretation of silence, and suggests a model for constructing safe or non-radical interpretations of it.

Chapter 1 contains the analysis for a vocabulary of silence. Here,

silence is divided into two main categories: pure and impure silence. Pure silence is an enigmatic perfect silence which cannot be experienced except as an object of imagination. Impure silence on the other hand is the silence of everyday experience as well as extraordinary experience. Under impure silence we find the sub-categories of silence, named for the god and goddess in the myths above. These are, Harpocratic or empty silence and Larundic or full silence.

Larundic silence will be the primary focus of the thesis as I intend to explore how silence can hold meaning and how it can communicate its meaning. This implies a second category of impure silence, namely full silence which contains active meaning of its own. Larundic silence is communicative silence. This is silence which contains meaning that can be passed on to, and understood by others. Silences can communicate their meanings, but its inherent ambiguity makes silence difficult to understand. Thus, in order to communicate their meanings, silences must be interpreted by their percipients and this, we will see, is problematic. As a result, we are also concerned about the way in which they will be interpreted.

The following diagram gives a preliminary sense of the vocabulary of silence through the category analysis which will be expanded upon in chapter 1:

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                        Silence
        Pure silence                    Impure silence

            Harpocratic silence            Larundic silence
                    |                           |
            Empty/Passive silence         Full/Active silence
                    |                      /          \
        Reflective silence        Grammatical    Communicative
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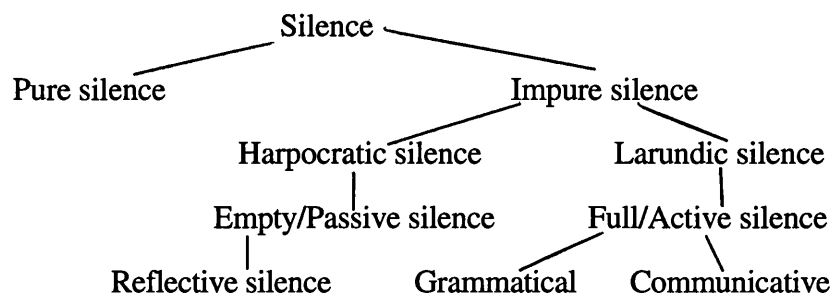
Once the vocabulary of silence has been outlined in chapter 1, chapter 2 will turn to an analysis of the possibility that silence can bear meaning. Using the works of Grice and Searle, it will be determined whether silences can be

properly said to be meaningful in the same way that sentences are meaningful. If this is so, then it will make sense to speak of a silent utterance as something which is capable of bearing and communicating meaning in a context.

Once this has been explained, it will be incumbent upon us to show how silences can communicate these meanings. To accomplish this, chapter 3 draws a parallel between silence and another indirect and ambiguous form of communication, namely metaphor. Silence will be compared and contrasted to metaphor to show that the two have similar characteristics such as ambiguity, vagueness and indirectness. It will also be shown that these characteristics can work in their favour as well as act as hinderance.

The comparison with metaphor will be followed by a discussion in chapter 4 and five on the value of silence and the continuum between silence and speech, res[ectively. It will be argued that silence has no inherent value, but acquires its valuation from the judgements of individual percipients within a given context. Because of this we tend to appreciate silence more in some contexts than in others. This is illustrated by a generally ambivalent attitude toward silence. This discussion will include an analysis of the various uses of silence.

Part II focuses mainly on the problems of interpreting silence. The inherent slipperiness of silence will be described in greater detail as the source of the difficulties of interpreting silence, as distinct from interpreting language. Silence does not offer the clues which make interpreting language a less difficult task. As a result it is necessary to institute some conditions which will make interpreting Larundic silences less likely to fail. The conditions are the eight features of the model for interpretation of silence advocated in this thesis. They are as follows: 1) The *context* of the silence will provide useful information as clues to its meaning. 2) It is necessary to be aware that we tend to resist making efforts at interpreting what on the surface appears will yield little benefit to our output. As a result we must recognize that silences which appear *relevant* to us

deserve the extra attention to be understood. 3) Relevance is important to silence in a second way. In this way interpreters must be careful to ensure that their interpretations of a silence truly *fit* with the independent meaning of the silence. This entails further that, 4) Larundic silences must be seen in their *best light* as being coherent and meaningful. Both of these restrict the interpretations that can be applied to a Larundic silence by ensuring that the interpretation remains true to the meaning the silence contains. This entails that the meaning of the silence must be taken seriously. Moreover, it dispels the belief that silences can be ascribed any meaning at all by the interpreter, because it draws attention to the silence's own meaning. This is how Larundic silences can be protected from being treated as Harpocratic silences, i.e. as blank slate silences upon which any interpretation can be applied.

Gadamer and Wittgenstein are excellent sources of material on interpretation and guidelines for language use. From them we see the necessity of using the mutual-interdependence of external and internal conditions for protecting silences from radical readings which ignore fit and best light. Wittgenstein reveals the importance of context (1); and (5) Gadamer directs us to understanding how implicit judgements, what he calls *prejudices*, are a necessary part of interpretations. He warns us that these are part of the individual and suggests we cannot escape them so we ought to include them as functional aspects of our interpretations. But, to protect the act of interpretation from the tyranny of personal caprices, Gadamer builds into his theory of philosophical hermeneutics certain safe-guards which promote balanced perspectives. 6) As such he includes the external forces of *tradition* and *history* to the act of interpretation to prevent opportunistic interpretive readings of an object, such as a silence. 7) He also reminds us of the importance of being *open* to the *thing-in-itself* which bears a meaning of its own. Any interpretation must consider and restrict itself to this meaning or it will not be correct.

Finally, 8) the concept of practical reasoning will round off the model by

permitting a degree of flexibility to the way in which the rules contained in the model are applied. This concept is loosely based on Aristotle's idea of *phronesis*, which is characterized as the ability to apply universal principles to particular situations. There are no universal principles for the interpretation of silence, only general rules which appear to make the task less prone to error. *Phronesis* permits the flexibility required for applying general rules to particular contexts without either sacrificing the particularities of the individual silence, nor contradicting the principle which supports the rules, namely to create accurate interpretations of silences.

These eight rules will be discussed in their respective chapters in part II. There will necessarily be some overlap in the chapters in order to provide continuity. An exposition of the model for constructing accurate interpretations of silence will follow once the individual rules have been discussed. Then part III will show how the model can be used in four areas of applied silence: 1) silence in medicine; 2) silence in law; 3) silence in music; and 4) silence in religion. This is not an exhaustive list of areas in which silence plays a significant role. On the contrary, silence is part of every thing and every activity. We will explore just a few of these here.

PART I:

UNDERSTANDING SILENCE

CHAPTER 1:

THE VOCABULARY OF SILENCE

1.1 Introduction:

This chapter will outline the vocabulary used to discuss silence in the rest of the thesis. Analysis of the vocabulary of silence will reveal many of the features that make silence rich and complex. Following this, the multifacity of silence will be explored and compared with different valuations of various silences.

1.2 Defining Silence:

Definitions are not easily formulated, and defining a concept so broad as the concept of silence is a virtual impossibility. Certainly there is no simple example of what silence is; we hear sounds as long as we are conscious. The dictionary definitions are helpful, but they are not complete. They only hint at the breadth of silence, and do not account for ordinary usages of the term. How does a dictionary definition such as "absence of noise; refraining from speech"[1] help us understand why 'silence is golden'? What is needed for the beginning of an understanding of so difficult a notion as silence, is what Aristotle referred to as an 'essentialist' definition[2]; a definition which explores the nature of that to which the word refers.

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[1] Collins Reference English Dictionary. William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd.; Great Britain; 1992.

[2] Aristotle, 402a25, 1030a6 - b13 & 1034b20 - 1038a35.

Adam Jaworski, in his book *The Power of Silence*[3], raises just this point, but states that we ought not to try to define silence because it is too complex a notion to be defined. He believes we cannot assert a final definition of silence because its essence is too ambiguous. Thus, Jaworski adopts a 'non-essentialist' approach according to a Popperian, anti-Aristotelian model. He chooses this approach to avoid what Popper[4] called an infinite regress of definitions or verbalism, in which one can define the object *ad infinitum*[5]. Jaworski's project is to write a theoretical account of different communicative aspects of silence from a functional rather than structural or essential perspective. In other words he is more concerned with how silence works than with what silence is. For this he uses references both in and outside of linguistics. From the beginning, Jaworski rejects any final definition of silence because he feels it is too expansive a topic to ever be pinned down to a strict definition

Jaworski's point is well taken. It seems that there are some definitive statements one can make about silence, though many of them contradict one another. For example, silence is absence of noise but one can be silent without being noiseless, such as when one talks about something to cover up not talking about something else. Also, as we shall see below, silence can be communicative even when there is no intention of using it for this purpose. However, some silences fail to communicate because they are ignored or not respected, as in silences which go unnoticed or the silences of oppressed people. So, many descriptive statements can be made of silence, which

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[3]Jaworski, Adam: *The Power of Silence: Social and Pragmatic Perspectives.* Language and Language Behaviour series vol.1, Howard Giles ed. SAGE Publications, Inc. Newbury Park, Calif. 1993.

[4] Popper, Carl. *Objective Knowledge.* Oxford University Press; Oxford; 1972.

[5] Jaworski, pg: 29.

prevents us from issuing a single definitive statement about it. Nevertheless, there is one thing that is certain

> "...silence is not just the absence of a significant piece of behaviour. It is not just emptiness."[6]

It is possible to construct a broad classification of types of silences through an analysis of how silence is used. This is the understanding of silence offered in the first part of this thesis. As a result no specific theoretical perspective will be chosen for the analysis, as Jaworski suggests, because doing so would make the approach too narrow and create the risk of obscuring important aspects of silence. Also, it is not suggested that this analysis of the different categories of silence is exhaustive, again because that might harmfully restrict the concept. "Definitions can be undesirable if they foreclose speculation."[7] So what is offered below is not a definition, it is more an exploration or an account of a truly elusive topic.

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1.3 Not Defining Silence:

We conceive of silence in two different ways: *pure* and *impure*. Like the ideas of perfection and nothingness, we have no actual experience of *pure silence,* only an idea of what that might entail, perhaps a sort of emptiness. "A genuine emptiness, a pure silence are not feasible – either conceptually or in fact."[8] We do have experiential knowledge of *impure silence*. Impure silence can be what is thought of from day to day as the lack of excessive noise, like

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[6] Samarin, W.J.: "Language of Silence" in *Practical Anthropology* 12(3), 115-119; 1965 p.115.

[7] Downie, R.S. "Definition". *Journal of Medical Ethics* 1994; 20:181-184. Pg: 184.

[8] Sontag 1984, 187.

grateful parents whose children have finally gone to sleep. The yelling has stopped, but there are still sounds of the wind outside or the flames in the fireplace. We can expect no purer silence than this passive silence, for though the sounds around us may be successfully removed there will still remain the sounds of our own breathing and the beating of our own hearts. Further still, there must always be the movement of thought through the mind making even internal silence impossible to achieve[9].

However, there is more to impure silence than mere quiet. It is also the active silence of meditation, symbolism and communication, as the symbolic minute of commemorative silence reveals[10]. Impure silence is itself subdivisible into two general forms: *passive*, which is silence we perceive as empty, quiet or peaceful; and *active*, which is not empty at all but imbued with meaning to be deciphered and interpreted. Active and passive silence may just as easily be referred to as *empty* and *full*. Passive silences contain no meaning and thus cannot communicate meaning. Active silences do contain meaning which they are able to communicate with the help of interpretation. Passive silences are empty of meaning, active silences are full.

When it is passive impure silence inspires self-examination. When it is active, it can have meaning and thus is the object of regular interpretation. So impure silence is subdivided into two general categories: passive/empty and active/full. Both are important, both have their benefits, and neither is more significant than the other. Perceived as empty, silence presents a challenge by forcing the perceiver toward self-examination; it holds up a mirror for reflection and self-determination. Where nothing is offered, the task of the

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[9] As an aside, it occurs to me that it would be interesting to know whether people who are deaf are ever completely so, or if they are capable of some hearing, as shadows are visible for people who are blind.

[10] The composer, R. Murray Schafer called these minutes of silence "the deliberate celebration of stillness, which, when observed by an entire society together, is breathtakingly magnificent." See Schafer, R. Murray. The *soundscape: our sonic environment and the tuning of the world*. Knopf; New York, N.Y.; 1977. Pg: 254.

perceiver is to create. This is an existential perception of silence, inspired by a Neitzschean[11] responsibility for self-determination; it empowers perceivers to fill silence with their own understanding of things. Such silences offer the perceiver no limitations and present no barriers. On the other hand, silence perceived as full *is* a silence of limitations and barriers. This silence contains meaning, meaning which the perceiver must interpret and often meaning which can never be fully verbalised. In this case, silence is an extra-linguistic form of communication. The limits imposed by full silences are not negative influences, but bear the positive value which any act of communication has. Thus, full silence is worthy of examination because it is a form of communication, whereas empty silence is a worthy subject for study because it is a productive form of self-reflection.

1.4 Myths of Silence:

The god and goddess in the myths above serve as powerful symbols for passive/empty silence and active/full silence. Harpocrates[12] was the god of silence as enigma, mystery and secrecy. This is most likely because of his mysterious origins and the secrecy which surrounds them. Greek and Roman statues of the god often portray him with one finger over his lips in the gesture of silence, to illustrate his connection with mysterious silence. However it is likely that this was a misapprehension on the part of Greek and Roman appropriators who saw statues of the infant god with his finger *in* his mouth to

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[11]Nietzsche, F.: *The Will to Power*; W. Kaufmann trans. Vintage Books; New York, N.Y.; 1986.

[12]Harpocrates may or may not have been the namesake of the quintessential silent hero Harpo Marx. See Arnoldy, Edouard & Dubois, Phillipe: "Harpo Marx or the mute who speaks (without uttering a word)" in *Wordlessness*. Bart Verschaffel & Mark Vermink eds. The Lilliput Press; Dublin, Ireland; 1993. Pp: 99-114.

symbolise his youth[13]. Regardless of his origins, Harpocrates serves as a symbol for the sort of silence we would call empty/passive silence, the sort of silence which is mysterious, empty or vast. We can refer to this kind of enigmatic silence as "Harpocratic silence" after the mystery which surrounds the god. Harpocratic silence evokes an enigmatic presence felt as an inscrutable and expressionless god; a void which appears impassive to our prayers; it is empty silence.

In contrast, the goddess Larunda's silence is an expressive silence, one which attempts and succeeds at communicating ideas despite its wordlessness. This may still be a mysterious silence but it is more forthcoming than Harpocratic silence. Larunda managed to reveal her thoughts to Hermes with eloquent demonstration and vivid expression. To this sort of expressive silence we give the name "Larundic silence" which represents the possibility of communicating ideas without speech. These are the silences which speak as loud or louder than words.

In keeping with the myth recounted above, we couple Larundic silences with hermeneutic philosophy. This is because Larundic silence relies on interpretation in order to make communication possible. We shall see in Part II of this thesis that hermeneutic interpretation is necessary for constructing a set of self-conscious rules for the interpretation of silence. Such rules would help prevent Larundic silences from suffering the violence of radical misreading, and create the possibility of understanding silent meanings.

The myths of Harpocrates and Larunda provide us with the beginning of a vocabulary with which to discuss silence. Henceforth, we will use Harpocratic as a label for empty silence and Larundic as a label for full silence which communicates. There will be overlap in these two categories, most

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[13]Mercher, Samuel A.: *Horus Royal God of Egypt*; The Lancaster Press; Lancaster, PA.; 1942. Pg: 132.

especially where full silence is opaque, and does not communicate in any obvious way.

Problems arise when Larundic silence is mistaken for Harpocratic silence, or full silence misidentified as empty. This misapprehension permits the interpreter to construct radical or opportunistic interpretations of the silence which violate its meaning. The idea of a radial interpretation will be expanded upon in Part II. These are readings that are not considerate of the claim to meaning made by an intentional silence. The radical reading can occur accidentally, or it can be an opportunistic interpretation applied to the silence to satisfy the interpreter's specific objectives. To avoid radical readings, communicative silences will ideally be recognised as meaningful, and interpretations will remain within the parameters established by their meanings. This does not preclude creativity or critique in interpretations, but requires careful attention to certain restrictions when constructing interpretations of silences. Thus, a description of a hermeneutic model for silence designed to avoid radical interpretations must be considered.

1.5 Harpocratic Silence Or Passive/Empty Silence:

In *Heidegger and Wittgenstein: the poetics of silence*[14], Stephen S. Bindeman offers a phenomenology of silence in the works of Heidegger and Wittgenstein. He begins the work by describing silence as an empty phenomenon which has the result of driving the perceiver towards self-exploration. He also delineates the effects and benefits which arise from confronting empty silence with creativity. The silence to which Bindeman

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[14]Bindeman, Stephen L. *Heidegger and Wittgenstein: the poetics of silence.* University Press of America; Washington, D.C.; 1981.

refers is the type of silence which would fall under the rubric of Harpocratic silence because it is mysterious and inexpressive.

The 'empty silence' Bindeman refers to is not pure silence, but a subset of impure silence. Bindeman's notion of silence is a silence of meditation and is empty and passive, but this encourages self-exploration in those who are confronted with it. For this reason Harpocratic silence can be viewed in a positive light as 'reflective silence'. It holds up a mirror to the one who faces it, and forces that person to reflect upon what she already knows and understands. We could not call this silence purely empty because in a limited way it has content. It contains the sounds around it which may or may not influence the pattern of thought of the person who is confronted by it; such as when a composer is affected by the songs of birds singing outside a silent room. It is also full of the thoughts and ideas of the person who is driven to self-reflection by the absence of any outside influences, such as those presented by an overt act of communication. In fact, the only thing empty reflective silence lacks is direct intentional influence from an external source. Inner thoughts and sounds are present even when silence offers no overt act of communication, therefore reflective silence is not purely silent, it is only mistaken for this because it is empty of communication.

Bindeman's suggestion of a creative response to the emptiness of silence[15], demonstrates that silence can be a nothingness which compels reflection. The thinker, when confronted with an empty silence, like the absence of a reply to a question, is forced to look back upon what she does know in order to escape the void. Self-reflection can result in restructuring the question in such a way as to make it open for a reply. Alternatively it can direct the thinker to knowledge already in her possession, but overlooked. And, finally, it can point out the limitations of what can be understood or known, causing a revelation of Socratic ignorance and an understanding of

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[15] Bindeman.

one's finitude. In this sense it is possible to get something out of nothing, like Job finding faith before the silence of God. Empty silence thus compels an active response in the percipient who can use knowledge and creativity to construct a meaning for the silence.

Nietzsche writes of the death of God, an event Bindeman (and others) translates into the end of a fixed way of understanding the world. Faced with this nihilism human beings become responsible for creating their own rationale for the world; we must create our own logic because there is no longer any predetermined logic applied to the world for us. Bindeman calls the silence of the dead God "the abyss, the absurd, the nothingness"[16], which inspires dread in the observer. However, confrontation with the nothingness-silence of the dead God has the interesting effect of forcing the listener back on herself, requiring her to return to her own thoughts; otherwise she would be lost with nothing intelligible to work with. This is the nature of empty silence. The silence which acts as a mirror for the recollection of former ideas, memories of information already in one's possession, and which causes one to think about what one already knows in order to learn and understand. Thus, empty Harpocratic silence can inspire creative thought, but the creativity does not come out of nothing – it is instead the product of knowledge we already have. We do not find new information, but rearrange information which is already in our possession[17]. The dread of the abyss can therefore strengthen the observer who does not allow it to engulf her but who uses it as a mirror for self-examination and self-creation.

The passivity of empty silence inspires the observer to examine knowledge which she already owns. She can play with this remembered information and rework it in new permutations which help change her

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[16] Bindeman, pg: 1.

[17] This is a paraphrase from Bindeman who makes a similar point with reference to how Wittgenstein described the job of philosophy: "Philosophical problems are solved not by our discovering new information, but simply by our rearranging what we already know." Pg: 52.

understanding, and allow her to grow. It is like trying for hours to figure out a difficult question: you might take a break and speak to a colleague about it, and the conversation may bring in a new perspective which makes the answer clear when you return. Yet in the case of emptiness, unlike one's colleagues, the silence is passive and provides the observer with a blank slate on which to draw her own conclusions in new ways. Harpocratic silence is passive, but that makes the observer active because her mind needs something to work with – absolute nothingness is absurd to an active mind.

Philosophers cover silence with questions even though some things just cannot supply us with answers. There are some questions which when asked are met with silence; some questions to which the best reply is most likely no reply at all[18]. This is not necessarily because they have no answer, but because there is no proper fixed answer for them. It is enough to pose the question, in fact it is imperative we do so, but there need be no definite response to it. Instead the answers grow and multiply like vines until they overlap and intertwine. The silent response permits this kind of growth of ideas. Thus, when the question 'how could the Holocaust ever have occurred?' is posed, the fact that there is no definite answer permits any number of possible answers and allows the topic to be explored and thought through. It is difficult questions like this which are best dealt with in silence because they are too lofty, too ambiguous and too profound to admit only one single true reply. Instead, posing the question opens the possibility of exploring all sorts of replies and emotional responses to the issue at hand. Being met by Harpocratic silence directs the poser of the question toward discovering the various dimensions of the issue.

"Silence sets this thinking in motion"[19], but it requires that we have the ability to listen and perceive that it is actually there before we can experience

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[18]For more information on this see chapter 15 on "Medical Silence".

[19]Bindeman, pg: 1.

the effects of the emptiness of the silence. Thus, Bindeman suggests that it is incumbent upon us to cultivate the correct way of listening in order to hear silence, whether it be empty or full. This is a training few of us acquire because of the dread of confronting the emptiness of Harpocratic silence, like the ultimate silence of death. Instead we are quick to fill silences with words or sounds, and never become accustomed to, nor benefit from, the effects of silence. Ways of listening to silence so that they are not ignored or misunderstood, is the central problem of the second section of this thesis.

Bindeman says that Heidegger and Wittgenstein have tried to answer Nietzsche's challenge by defining humans as users of language. Humans as natural users of language want to fill emptiness with words to prove that we are alive, and to show that we are in control because of our superior use of a communicative tool which other animals do not possess. This partially explains why we are not comfortable in the presence of silence and so cover it with words – it is in our nature to do so.

> "Man likes to make sounds to remind himself that he is not alone. From this point of view total silence is the rejection of the human personality. Man fears the absence of sound as he fears the absence of life."[20]

But, Bindeman says, Heidegger and Wittgenstein themselves were not afraid of silence. In their work they uncovered questions but were silent about the answers. They left the questions unanswered because they wanted us to do the work for ourselves. Thus, Bindeman calls Heidegger and Wittgenstein the ultimate teachers because their silence teaches us how to think, just like the silence of God taught Job how to find his own faith[21]. The silence, or lack of response from the teacher requires the student to return to what is already in

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[20]Schafer, pg: 256.

[21]*Book of Job. A New Translation According to the Traditional Hebrew Text.* Kethubim trans. The Jewish Publication Society of America; Philadelphia, Penn.; 1980 (5740).

her possession, and ruminate upon it, allowing it to grow on its own without outside interference, *viz* from the imposition of someone else's rationality.

Bindeman says that there are two types of behaviour on the part of perceivers of silence: *passive*, which registers what is offered; and *assertive* which asserts or tells the way things are, applying order to what is presented to it[22]. With regard to silence it is clear that assertive thought belongs most readily to empty Harpocratic silence, and passive thought to full Larundic silence, but there will be overlap. Full silence sometimes requires respectful assertions, that is assertions which stay within the parameters of its meaning; whereas empty silence requires the openness and attentiveness of passive thought in order to be recognised at all – it is only in being passive and still that empty silence can be recognised. The best way to distinguish truly Harpocratic silences from difficult Larundic silences is to allow the passive mind to listen attentively and allow the silence to make itself known.

Thus, we must keep silent and be aware of what our conscience tells us. This requires the right mood. The right mood is openness[23]. But openness creates the possibility of loss of self, if one does not listen carefully to one's own conscience. Therefore, we must cultivate another kind of hearing in order to break away from the voices of others; a kind of hearing which can appreciate conscience's silent, non-verbal call. This will permit the percipient of a silence to perceive the meaning of the silence without losing critical perspective of it, as will be shown in Part II.

Bindeman uses the example of Zen poetry because it is deliberately simple, almost unfinished, for the express purpose of making the listener use her own imagination to fill it out. The symbol makes us guess at what is truly being said. Thus, understanding a poem is the gradual fabrication within the

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[22]Bindeman, pg: 48.

[23]See Gadamer for the importance of openness. A discussion of this appears in chapter two of this thesis.

emptiness until something evolves more or less complete. Zen Haiku poetry is based on intervals, pauses and silences. Thus, the poem is created by its listener, with the directions given by the poet. The poet situates the listener on a path, then allows her to find her own way[24].

Cicada's Shrill

How silent and still!
Into the heart of the rocks sinks
The cicada's shrill.   - Basho[25]

The restraint of this Haiku reminds us of the sound of a Cicada, which in turn may lead to memories of hot summer days. Upon further thought the ideas expand, perhaps toward the eternal silence and stillness of rocks, and our own deaths when we, like the shrill of the cicada, will sink into the heart of the rocks and the earth. Its meaning is revealed to us indirectly, not told to us. Leaving the meaning to silence allows our imaginations to create the rest of the poem ourselves. A similar point can be made about Chinese prints and water colours, where the edges of the work disappear into a haze, implying the rest of the world, but leaving its fullness to the assertive imagination of the spectator. This inspires spectators to create the rest of the feeling on their own, and to wander the cliffs or countryside of their own imaginations. The emptiness prompts creativity, not passive observation.

This is why we believe we can gain new knowledge in silence. Perhaps because it is only in the quiet that we are open to all the knowledge we already possess, and are able to leave room for contemplation and creation. It seems paradoxical to think that we can gain something new by examination of what is old. And yet we do not release this idea, probably because it is

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[24] Bindeman, pg: 9.

[25] Haiku from Yasuda, Kenneth. *The Japanese Haiku: Its Essential Nature, History, and Possibilities; in English with Selected Examples.* Charles E Tuttle Co.; Rutland Vt. & Tokyo, Japan; 1957. Pg: 185.

affirmed for us in the experiences of those such as Descartes and other recluses who have emerged from silent solitude with fresh insight and novel ideas. They have explored their murky silences and have emerged, not empty handed, but with all sorts of new and good ideas. No one speaks to them, they listen to nothing and yet they emerge with something new. There is something almost mystical about what the mind can do in silence, creating new ideas which lead to original thoughts. In silence we follow the paths of familiar ideas and are led into the unfamiliar terrains of knowledge. It is not just that the ideas were there waiting to be found. They are created by the joining of ideas, they are the offspring of more familiar thoughts. This is creativity similar to Aristotle's notion of *phronesis*[26]. They are concepts born of a current problem which cannot be solved by usual means and requires a sort of wisdom which creates something new by merging familiar with foreign to create novel. These ideas spring fully formed from our silences as Athena sprang from the brain of Zeus, formed deep within the silence of his mind until she broke out unable to be suppressed any longer.

We have no direct knowledge of pure silence so we must study its effects as they occur in the form of Harpocratic silence. "We cannot know silence because we cannot know what it is. But we can describe the effects of silence."[27] When we feel the effects of any silence we try to guess at it, look for its sense or order. Where no order exists we guess at nothing, as a result what we 'find' is only what we have created; the order does not exist until consciousness sees or searches for it. Thus, in an empty silence the only order which exists is the order we assert. Empty silence remains passive while we work upon it. This sums up the problem with silence nicely: where we find no limits of order we can interpret the situation any way we want. This leads

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[26] See *The Nicomachean Ethics* and *The Politics*, as well Gadamer and Bernstein on the idea of *phronesis*.

[27] Bindeman, pg: 54.

us directly to the problems of relativism and the absolute freedom to impose our will. When the silence is Harpocratic it is acceptable for us to take liberties with it because its emptiness gives the interpreter freedom to create whatever meaning she wills. The same is not true of Larundic silence, where imposing one's will violates the obscure boundaries that help build a faithful interpretation of the meaning of the silence. In full silences boundaries do exist, both externally and internally, but they are obscure. Unlike language, where words used as symbols help create these limits. Silence is more slippery so the limits are more difficult to find. The danger is in treating full Larundic silence as if it were empty Harpocratic silence by imposing one's own will upon it without being sensitive to the limits its meaning brings. Openness helps prevent this confusion. The understanding required for identifying silence at all, also shows us how to listen to the silence in order to determine whether it is empty or full. It is possible to then recognise the clues for faithfully interpreting the meanings held within the full silence.

1.6 Larundic Silence or Active/Full Silence:

Larunda's tale directs us toward an idea of silence which implies fullness rather than emptiness. Larunda's communicative silence refers to acts of silence which are types of linguistic acts; and thought of in this way silence is open to being imbued with meaning.

We call these meaningful acts "Larundic silences" as they are the expressive silences which Larunda communicated to Hermes. Interpretation of the linguistically 'unsaid' is still shared communication and a passage for information. The very idea of an *act* of silence, or the act of being quiet, implies a degree of intentional content in the silence. Thus, a Larundic silence is one that may have intentional meaningful content which the utterer wishes

to issue as a communicative expression. The significance of Larundic silence must not be overlooked, as doing so would eliminate a useful form of communication; one which is able to cross the barriers of different languages[28] and linguistic fallibility. However, Larundic communication cannot stand on its own, its content must be interpreted to be understood. Just as Larunda relied on Hermes to interpret her silences, Larundic silences depend upon hermeneutic interpretation to make their content known. In Part II we will explore how meaningful acts of silence are understood through interpretation, and the problems which this entails.

This section will first inquire into some of the uses of Larundic silences both as aspects of linguistic communication and as a form of non-verbal communication. The exploration will begin with an illustration of the problems associated with a need to use interpretation to understand silent communication. This will be followed by a description of the two subcategories of Larundic silence; 1) grammatical silence, which participates in language; and 2) communicative silence which conveys what words cannot express provided its audience can learn to value its ambiguity and interpret its meaning.

1.6.1 An introduction to the problems of interpreting Larundic silences:

Larundic silence can mean different things in different situations. A silence can mean (or stand for) anger, joy, sorrow, confusion or certainty. Larundic silences can also act as symbolic, representations or metaphorical depictions, of ideas which are not easily communicated through linguistic means, or whose force is greater when not made verbal. This situational variability entails that Larundic silence relies on its context to communicate its meaning. The primary reason for this rests on a significant characteristic of

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[28]See Benadava, Salvador: "Sens et Bon Usage du Silence" in *Le Francais dans le Monde 126*. Pp: 13-6.

silence: it is *slippery*. Silence offers very little information on its own of which the interpreter can take hold, and so the interpreter is left to try to understand the silence from the events surrounding it. This makes silence slippery because it evades the interpreter's cognitive grasp. From this it follows that silence is understood only indirectly and is dependent upon the interpreter's ability to make the effort required to respond to the contextual information surrounding the silence. Such effort helps delimit radical from non-radical readings of the meaning behind the Larundic silence. It is not always likely that interpreters will be inclined to make this effort, however, and this is probably why silence is so frequently misinterpreted. Thus, Larundic silences are variable in meaning and understood only indirectly through interpretation, which makes it difficult to capture their meanings at all.

When we make any kind of interpretation we normally carry with us our own baggage of prejudices, preconceptions, intellectual history and traditions, among other things. Where a great deal of external information is given to us by the object of interpretation, we are more likely to abandon this personal 'baggage', provided 1) we pay attention to the information given, and 2) the information is not overly obscure. Silence by nature reveals very little information to use as guidelines for interpretation. As a result, the interpreter must look to other sources for information to be able to construct an accurate interpretation. The best source of information is the context (both mediate and immediate) of the silence; but because the interpreters' own baggage is easier to grasp, in most cases they will impose their own interpretation upon the silence before paying attention to what is really going on. The problem then arises that radical or opportunistic interpretations of the silence are easily constructed. These are interpretations which do not fit the Larundic silence's own sense of meaning and as such do violence to it.

Consider this true life example regarding going beyond what is most readily evident for making accurate interpretations of a situation. Medical diagnoses are acts of interpretation. In this case an emergency room physician, Dr. R, received a female patient, Ms. B, who was complaining of dizziness, nausea, headache and a loss of co-ordination. She also said she felt a strange tingling feeling throughout her body. The patient had previously undergone treatment for breast cancer and was concerned this might be related. After performing a basic physical upon Ms. B, Dr. R concluded that she was suffering from a flu virus which was epidemic in the city and had in some cases affected the inner ear of its victims thus causing dizziness. He recommended rest and that Ms. B consult her family physician if the symptoms persisted over a week. Ms. B, unconvinced that her symptoms could be this severe without being serious decided instead to consult a neurologist immediately. The neurologist, Dr. L, saw a completely different diagnosis in the patient's symptoms. He ordered a CAT-scan which revealed a large tumour pushing on Ms. B's cerebellum, causing the dizziness, loss of co-ordination etc. Dr. R's failure to make an accurate diagnosis of Ms. B's illness was due at least in part to his knowledge of the flu epidemic which he was certain was the source of Ms. B's symptoms *as he saw them*. The fact is, his preconceptions set up certain expectations which led him to the wrong conclusion. But, the same might have been said for Dr. L who, trained as a neurologist, saw a set of familiar symptoms which led him to an accurate diagnosis. It could be said that it was almost mere coincidence that he was right. For had Ms. B really been suffering from the flu virus the CAT-scan would have revealed nothing and would have been a waste of time and resources, though with less serious consequences to Ms. B than Dr. R's mistake.

Illnesses supply diagnosers with clues to their identity through the presence of symptoms. Symptoms suggest certain possibilities and collected

together make some, or preferably one particular diagnosis the correct one. It is not so simple with silence. Larundic silence is slippery. It offers few 'symptoms' if any to act as clues for the interpreter, at least not in any direct way. It is not surprising, then, that ordinary interpreters are more likely to disregard the information which surrounds the silence as this information takes greater effort to find. Instead the interpreter is more likely to rely on information which is closer to hand, namely the information from their own baggage or obvious external information. Larundic silence's slipperiness requires the interpreter to make greater efforts to find relevant information for constructing non-radical and non-opportunistic readings.

Once again we are directed to the context of the situation to help interpret the meaning of the Larundic silence. And silence can be meaningful. It can tell us about the person responsible for the silence. It can show us things we do not already see. It is a tool for communication, for education and for realisation. When it is interpreted it can cause events; when it is misinterpreted it can cause tragedies – see for example the events in *A Man For All Seasons*.

1.6.2: Grammatical and Communicative silences:

Larundic silence is divisible into two subcategories: *grammatical silence* and *communicative silence*. The grammar of silence is used in conversation or writing to put forth concepts which do not need to be expressed verbally, or which it would be uneconomical to make explicit. These are linguistic devices which allow the speaker time to prepare the next sentence, and allow the listener to reflect upon what was previously said. Grammatical silences always take place within linguistic communication, like the pause in a sentence. They are frequently interpreted, as the passage in "Silence in the Court" below demonstrates with regard to witness stammers during court-room cross-examination. Grammatical silences are frequently

perceived as an attempt on the speaker's part to carefully formulate a thought. In this way silences punctuate speech like commas do written language in that they provide a pause without intending the thought to end, the speaker has more to say on the subject. Silences may also act as semi-colons do; in this case the idea expressed has come to an end, but the speaker wants to reserve the space to continue speaking, and be uninterrupted while she gathers her thoughts or allows the listener time to consider the idea. Silences may also act as question marks? Thus, leaving room for the listener either to respond with an answer, or to ponder the rhetorical nature of the question. Sometimes, silences are used as exclamation points! The impact of the preceding statement only sinking in during a pause in the conversation. Finally, silences can act as periods, completing the thought and letting the listener know that it is time to turn to another idea.

Economy of speech renders a great deal of significant information silent. This is another way in which Larundic silence performs a grammatical function. We cannot afford to say all there needs to be said on a given subject or it would take an eternity to communicate even the simplest idea. Thus, silence assists grammar by permitting to be left silent information which is implied by sentence structure. Consider, for example, the sentence "I want a glass of water". It is taken to be understood who the referent 'I' is in the sentence, and what it is for this 'I' to desire something; it is also understood what a 'glass' is in the sentence and how it differs from other things we call a 'glass' such as mirrors; furthermore it goes without saying that water is the liquid with the chemical breakdown H_2O... and so on. Without this silent communication of ideas no conversation would be able to take place. It would take too long to express every idea, and define every word before a sentence could be constructed. This may be said to be the most useful form of silence because of its practical nature. It is grammatical only in a very loose sense

that it serves a function in linguistic activity unlike communicative silence which is separate from linguistic applications.

Without Larundic silence, we would miss the colour of language: humour, sarcasm, sadness... all would go unnoticed because the emotional content of a conversation is often expressed silently instead of directly. Take for example the long pause which follows an ironic joke, in that moment of silence the hearers sort out whether the utterance is meant to be taken seriously, then detect the irony of the statement and eventually find the humour in it. The teller of the joke need say no more to clarify (unless it was a really bad joke). The understanding happens silently, and neither has to be prefaced with "this is a joke", nor followed with a rim-shot and a "get it?". When the joke is written down we seldom find any indication that the sentence is meant to be humorous. We have no punctuation mark to indicate a joke has been told, nothing like what we have to indicate a question has been asked. The humour is implied; that it is funny is expressed silently and understood only from its context[29].

The same is true with most of the emotional content of our conversations. Recently, open communication of feelings has become more acceptable. Statements which begin with "I am feeling..." are more common than they have been in the past. Instead we tend to convey our emotional responses silently, where this silence can indicate a spectrum of feelings and emotions. Often feelings cannot be expressed verbally anyway. In such cases Larundic silence is far more eloquent than words which only express the surface of what needs to be understood. Of course such words as 'anger', 'confusion', 'frustration' are all good labels or indicators of what the person is trying to convey, and using these will help the interpreter of the emotional

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[29]In scripts we sometimes have indications that a line is meant to be delivered in a particular way indicated by a bracketed term such as (*sarcastic*), or (*joking*). Literary texts will also indicate when a character has said something ironically or with some other emotion. Interestingly, this is never the case in prose (academic writing) where jokes do sometimes occur (see Hankinson's article on the humour in Aristotle), nor in poetry as far as I know.

silence to take the right path when building an understanding. Without such labels the emotions listed above could be easily confused one for the other, and the interpretation would come out wrong. However, these are merely labels which are unable to fully express the feelings they point to[30].

Communicative silence is the broad category of full silences which can take any number of forms. They are familiar to us because we experience them all the time. We are all familiar with moments of unexplicable insight into a situation, like the immediate feeling of warmth we sometimes feel for people we have only just met. Before the conversation goes far enough to make the judgement through ordinary means of finding like tendencies and preferences, we experience a profound knowledge that this is a person we will like. It is not the artificial feeling Oscar Wilde parodied in *The Importance of Being Earnest* when Gwendolyn tells Cecily "I like you already more than I can say, and my first impressions of people are never wrong"[31], which is proven false later in the play when she discovers she was wrong about who her own fiancée really is. It is instead some insight we gain in the empty spaces between the conversation which passes on some meaningful information about the other person. There is no need for verbal communication to accompany such Larundic silences, their wordlessness communicates enough on its own. Information manages to be transmitted despite the lack of verbal discourse.

It seems we are programmed from birth to acquire knowledge in this way. The paradigm example of this type of silent communication occurs between a mother and her new born child. The baby trusts the mother and learns to love her not through an exchange of words, but through an unspoken bond between them. This bond is equally forceful for the mother who grows to love her baby even before she sees it, while the child is still in her womb.

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[30]See Pinter's *Betrayal*; Grove Press; New York, NY; 1978,.and Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day;* Faber; London; 1989; for good examples of emotions conveyed indirectly, and the tragedies which occur when they are misinterpreted.

[31] Wilde, Oscar; *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Grey Halls Press; London; 1948.

The bond of affection between mother and child need not be spoken. It need only be felt; it is experienced through silence. The same silent growth of affection later occurs between the child and its father, grandparents, aunts, uncles and siblings. Nothing need be said to the child about this affection, rather it is understood by the quiet knowledge that the other has feelings for one which are as strong as the feelings one has for them. This information can be silently demonstrated without being spoken.

From this early lesson in silent communication we learn to perceive information without it being verbally communicated to us. "Discovering that one has nothing to say, one seeks a way to say *that*."[32] This is information which exists *between the lines*, and is capable of transferring huge amounts of knowledge without which we would lack a great deal of understanding. The example above about wanting a glass of water illustrates this kind of silent transmission of information, but there is the other kind of transferral, like the mother-child bond, which actually communicates new information through the silence. The information passed on in the space of Larundic silence can be novel in the way we sometimes know we will like or dislike a person just by meeting them. This is true transferral, whereas the knowledge communicated in the water example is not new but merely recalled for the sake of convenience. True transferral of information does take place without the spoken words.

An observer may enter a room and find a person sitting and thinking. The person is not speaking so the observer may experience impure silence as they would hear only the sounds in and outside the room. Additionally, there is a full silence in the room, because the person is thinking about something which they may or may not wish to convey to the observer. Still, there is something active and meaningful taking place. The observer might respond to the silence by trying to figure out what it means because of an intuitive

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[32] Sontag 1984, 188.

recognition that silence can be meaningful. Constructing an interpretation of the Larundic silence can convey a great deal of information to interpreters. It can tell them about the person responsible for the silence. It can show them things they do not already see. In this way, silence is a tool for communication, for education and for realisation. Furthermore, silences can communicate to the listener a thought which the speaker either is incapable of expressing or chooses not to express aloud.

1.6.3 Gestures:

A great deal of this silent Larundic communication is performed through gestures, facial expressions and what has overall been referred to as 'body language'. Nodding heads, searching glances and folded arms are all readable forms of Larundic silence and fit both subcategories of grammatical and communicative silence. Body language is part of grammatical silence because it is often used to enhance verbal conversation. Hand gestures are examples of grammatical silences when they accompany speech, such as pointing and saying "it's over there". However, gestures involve an overlap between grammatical and communicative silence. Besides providing clarity and emphasis when associated with words, as grammatical silence does, body language can also replace or confound linguistic conversation. For example, an ironic facial expression can change the meaning of a verbal statement, such as when rolling one's eyes while saying "I'm so looking forward to this". Gestures can also denote the opposite of a linguistic statement, for example when a child crosses her fingers while making a promise. This childhood superstition illustrates how words can say something different from what is silently meant. Moreover, body language can be an unconscious transmission of contrary or different information from what is being said. We can transmit the truth of our feelings about someone by the position we sit in; sitting

sideways and looking over a shoulder at someone gives them a different message from facing that person directly. Thus, gestures can silently put across what words are not saying.
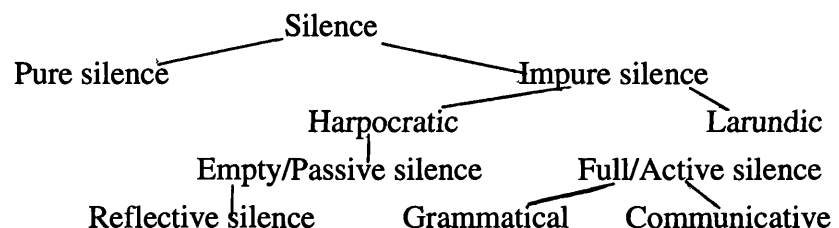
Gestures can also replace words altogether. Hand gestures, such as a wave, are still effective means of communication because, like words, they act as symbols for intentional meanings. The ultimate usage of communication by gesture is sign-language, but it is not clear that this is really silent communication in any more than a very superficial sense of silence. There is no doubt that speakers of sign-language are not making sounds when they speak. However the signs they use are symbols of concepts just as words are, so they cannot be described as silent in the Harpocratic sense because they are not empty. Sign-language does seem to fit the Larundic rubric as these are the sorts of gestures that Larunda might have used to relate her stories to Hermes. But, the main difference lies in Hermes' need to interpret Larunda's silent gestures because they were not formalised in a linguistic system – sign-language is. The gestures of sign-languages are standardised and repeatable. They act, for all intents and purposes, in the same way words do; namely as symbols for concepts which can be strung together to transmit complex ideas. Signs differ from words primarily by virtue of the fact that they are soundless. Signs are words without sounds so they cannot be pronounced, but this does not mean that they cannot be easily transmitted to anyone who knows sign-language. And knowledge of sign-language is like knowledge of English or French, it has a system that can be learned and understood. So, by the same token, words are signs with sounds instead of actions. Furthermore, signers can be described as talking loudly or softly depending upon the size of their gestures and perhaps the degree of enthusiasm with which they are delivered. And even persons who are deaf sometimes need a respite from the 'noisiness' of conversation[33].

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[33]Dolnick, Edward. "Deafness as Culture" in *The Atlantic Monthly*, September 1993. Pp: 37-53.

The Heart is a Lonely Hunter, by Carson McCullors[34], is about a deaf and mute man living in an all hearing community. The character ironically but respectfully called Mr. Singer, is ascribed by the other characters to possess an almost mystical ability to 'hear' everything. They describe feeling that Singer knows things about them and about life which they cannot know. The author endows Singer with messianic qualities of holiness and eyes that seem to see into the soul. His silent world becomes even more silent when he looses his only deaf and mute friend to an institution. The poignancy of this loss is further elaborated by Singer's habit of keeping his hands, which he uses for signing, in his pockets when he is not speaking. It is as if they needed to be shielded, as though his thoughts needed to be buried in the depths of his pockets, either from shame or more likely for protection. His decision to keep his hands in his pockets, thereby deepens his silence by concealing his primary means of communicating. Thus, illustrating how a user of sign-language can be silent beyond the soundlessness of their form of speech[35].

Does this mean that there is a silence more profound than the silence of soundlessness? The project of this chapter has been to show that there is. Mere soundlessness does not adequately express the richness of silence which can be meaningful and communicative or purely empty. For the purposes of the project of understanding silence, we divide silence into two general categories with some sub-categories. Thus, we have:

Silence

Pure silence   Impure silence

Harpocratic   Larundic

Empty/Passive silence   Full/Active silence

Reflective silence   Grammatical   Communicative

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[34]McCullors, Carson: *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*. Cresset Press; London; 1943.

[35]Dolnick, 1993. Pp: 37-53.

The second part of this thesis will be about interpreting Larundic silence and the problems surrounding the interpretation of such a slippery subject. In order to make a discussion of interpretations of silence make sense it is necessary to first address the question whether silence can be meaningful. The following chapter addresses the issue of meaning in silence.

CHAPTER 2

SILENCE AND MEANING

Is there meaning in silence? The intuitive answer to this question is probably the correct one: Yes, silence can be meaningful. We have first hand experience of meaning in silence; through our own silences we are familiar with times when we have intended a silence to stand for surprise, anger, sorrow..., and we have successfully conveyed that meaning to others without resorting to verbal explanations. But, what does it *mean* for silence to *mean* something? To answer this question it is worth examining what philosophers have said about what it means for words and sentences to have meaning, and then try to apply the results to silence.

2.1 Grice and Searle on Meaning:

H.P. Grice[1] has attempted to define meaning in a linguistic manner. He says meaning is related to intention because it is tied to the outcome intended by the utterer of the meaningful speech act. That is, a speech act derives its meaning from the intention of the utterer to make someone understand her desire. Thus, meaning is part of speech acts composed of utterances which convey to the audience whatever the utterer wishes the audience to understand by the utterance. As an example, I say "Patrick, please take out the garbage". By this I intend for Patrick to know, not only that he

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[1]Grice, H.P.: "Meaning" in Philosophy of Logic, P.F. Strawson ed. *Oxford Readings in Philosophy.* Oxford University Press, Oxford; 1967. Pp: 39-48; and "Utterer's Meaning, Sentence-Meaning and Word-Meaning". Philosophy of Language, J.R. Searle ed. *Oxford Readings in Philosophy.* Oxford University Press, Oxford; 1971. Pp: 54-70.

ought to take out the garbage, nor only that I want him to take out the garbage. I also intend him to understand by my utterance, that intend him to understand that I want him to take out the garbage. The intention is not only specific to the action referred to in the utterance, but also indirectly and more subtly, my unspoken desire that Patrick understand what it is I wish to say to him and have him do. Thus, in issuing the utterance *I intend my audience to understand my intention,* and that forms the meaning of my utterance. This is especially interesting in regard to more opaque utterances such as when I say "Whew, that garbage is starting to smell strong!", by which I may have the same intention that I had in the previous, more direct statement "Patrick, please take out the garbage". If my intention is the same, then given certain conditions it will be taken to mean the same, ie. my unspoken desire that Patrick understand that I wish him to take out the garbage. There are two things taking place here: 1) intending to utter 'U', and 2) intending the utterance 'U' to be taken to mean something 'm'[2]. Grice's definition of meaning is an intended intention successfully conveyed to an audience via a speech act.

J.R. Searle is critical of Grice's definition because it relies too heavily on communication, but he does not reject the criteria for meaningfulness altogether. Generally, Grice's position looks like a good description of a conversation where meanings are conveyed and communication takes place, but it is not a satisfactory definition of meaning. Searle is more concerned with the idea of meaning as isolated from language. It is possible to conceive of having a meaningful thought without it being uttered as a speech act and so, as Searle argues, meaning in fact preexists speech acts. He actually goes as far as to say that we are biologically predisposed to formulating meaningful intentions, thoughts, ideas, before we acquire language; thus, infants may have

[2] Searle, J.R.: "A Taxonomy of Illocutionary Acts". Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science, Vol.VII: Language, Mind, and Knowledge; Kieth Gunderson ed. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, Minn.; 1975. Pp: 344-369.

the intention to grasp or hold even though they do not have the language with which to express these meaningful intentions. It is possible to find examples of extra-linguistic meaning without relying on biological predispositioning (which has problems of its own). The best examples are feelings. Not only do feelings preexist the speech acts which describe them, but they seem to defy verbal description altogether. A statement can express joy "oh this is fabulous!", but it cannot do so sincerely unless the feeling is present to be spoken about. Nor can it actually convey what it is to feel the joy expressed. Yet it does not follow from this that feelings of joy are not meaningful,; it is just that their meaning is not purely linguistic. This will be relevant for determining whether silence can possibly be meaningful.

Searle does not reject Grice's criteria entirely,. Rather, he maintains that meaning and intention are interrelated. However, Searle's explanation of meaning differs from Grice's in that it is based partly on a weak form of verification and on psychological states. Searle's position is as follows. One primary difference between just making noises and actually uttering a speech act is that the utterer is trying to make an audience understand something. This effect is produced when the audience recognizes the intention of the utterer. This is the twofold criteria for meaningfulness, the intention to utter and the intention that the utterance be understood to mean something. There is here, a close relationship between meaning and intention. But for Searle the intention to communicate an utterance entails that the intended utterance must have meaning; it is not enough to intend people to understand something, *there must be something for the utterer to intend to be understood.* This is where Searle diverges from Grice by separating language from meaning: language is the tool with which utterers attempt to make an audience understand their intentions, meaning is what they intend them to understand. These are not the same things, intention to communicate is different from that which one intends to communicate, namely the meaning. Thus, it is possible

to say something meaningful without fulfilling the second part of the meaningfulness-two-step, *viz.* without intending anyone to understand it[3]. For example, it is possible to produce a meaningful utterance in an empty room, or silently and secretly to oneself. But that still leaves unanswered the question, what is the meaning?

Searle says meaning is tied to validity because it is the representation of the conditions for a state of affairs. And to this end Searle introduces the notion of 'fit'[4].

> "Statements are supposed to represent how things are, and thus they can be assessed as true or false. Orders and commands do not represent how things are, but roughly speaking, how the speaker is trying to get the hearer to make things be; and such speech acts cannot be assessed as true or false, but rather as obeyed or disobeyed.... To mark these distinctions, I say that statements have the word-to-world direction of fit; promises, orders, commands, etc. have the world-to-word direction of fit."[5]

Human actions, such as utterances, are expressions of intentionality, but meaning is only a special form of intentionality. Meaning involves the "intentional imposition of conditions of satisfaction onto conditions of satisfaction"[6]; thus, meaning is one of two layers of intentionality: the intention of fit and the intention of intending. The second layer, where meaning exists on its own, can be achieved without the utterance of a speech act, thus we can have wishes, beliefs etc. without speaking them. Meaning can therefore exist independently of language.

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[3] Searle, J.R.: "What is a Speech Act?". Philosophy of Language, J.R. Searle ed. *Oxford Readings in Philosophy.* Oxford University Press, Oxford; 1971. Pp: 39-53.

[4] This is different from, but not unrelated to, Dworkin's notion of fit discussed below.

[5] Searle, J.R.: "Response: Meaning, Intentionality, and Speech Acts". John Searle and His Critics, Ernest Lepore & Robert Van Gulick eds. Basil Blackwell Inc., Cambridge, Mass.; 1991. Pg: 82.

[6] Searle 1991, pg:83.

"...The very bare bones of the intention to state are the intention that one's utterance should be *meaningful* in the quite specific sense that it should be a *representation* of a state of affairs."[7]

Meaning is the intention to represent a state of affairs through an utterance; and representation is tied to intentional content, direction of fit, and conditions of satisfaction[8].

Searle has been criticized for this one-sided description of meaning where meaningfulness is determined solely by the issuer of the utterance, the one who has the idea in the first place. Habermas, among other critics, declares meaning is a cooperative effort determined by mutual negotiation between the utterer and the audience. He is critical of Searle's approach, which he describes as an attempt to derive "... the semantic notion of meaning from the cognitive intentions which are supposedly not only more basic than language but are also independent of the interaction situation."[9] Habermas says that persuasion and decision must be involved in meaning, which eventually culminate in the agreed upon understanding of a meaningful utterance. Habermas sees as contentious Searle's assumption that meaningfulness can preexist a linguistic structure primarily because Habermas believes the conditions for recognizing facticity, the truth validity of ideas, are dependent upon linguistic structures. He says, with reference to the usefulness of drawings as representations for communication, that we need language in order to be able to describe and understand:

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[7] Searle 1991, pg: 83.

[8] Searle 1991, pg: 84.

[9] Habermas, Jurgen: "Comments on John Searle: 'Meaning, Communication and Representation'". John Searle and His Critics, Ernest Lepore & Robert Van Gulick eds. Basil Blackwell Inc., Cambridge, Mass.; 1991. Pg:18.

> "The interpreter could not *see* at all that the drawing, by imitating a certain object, in fact represents a certain state of affairs if he did not already know a language and from this language use knew how states of affairs are linguistically represented."[10]

So, for Habermas, meaning is closely tied to language because it is in understanding how ideas are represented through symbols, and in communicating ideas that meaning is understood. To know the meaning of a statement then, is to know its validity; it is to communicate the statement and find agreement about it with others.

Searle does not completly disagree with Habermas. Searle also claims that validity and meaning are closely tied; he says that to know the meaning of an utterance is to know the conditions under which it is accepted as valid. However, he also believes that meaning is independent of linguistic structure because the states of affairs utterances represent exist independently of their being uttered. Utterances are meaningful because they are valid or invalid (true or false, accurate or inaccurate) representations of states of affairs. It follows then that we can understand an utterance if we know the state of affairs required to make it true. But Habermas claims we cannot understand the validity of an utterance without some kind of linguistic structure.

> "The hearer must be able to have the opportunity to anticipate the reasons for accepting a statement as true, an order as legitimate, a promise as binding, an avowal as authentic and sincere (or alternatively for questioning such a claim). The hearer cannot understand the speech act if he does not know the conditions for taking a yes/no position. The illocutionary meaning of a statement, an order, an avowal or a confession would remain hidden from the addressee if he could know only that the speaker has a certain intentional state...or that he wants to reveal the content of a belief, a feeling, a desire, an intention, etc."[11]

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[10] Habermas, pg:20.

[11] Habermas, pg:25.

In other words we cannot know the meaning of an utterance without knowing how to use that utterance to communicate with someone in literal terms, and ultimately reach an agreement about it in rationally motivated consensus. Habermas is wary of giving meaning priority over intention because he takes the position that meaning is not independent of a linguistic structure[12].

> "The priority of meaning over intention can be reversed in any case only under the premise that communication within a community of speakers is secondary to the capacity for representation possessed by the individual mind or brain...."[13]

Habermas' position has a serious flaw according to Searle's idea of meaning. The flaw is the same one Grice's position suffers from, namely it makes the counterintuitive claim that there can be no meaning without shared meaning. In other words, there is no meaning without communication. Habermas relies too heavily upon mutual decision about what something may mean without taking into account that there must be something which is being decided upon, namely the initial utterance itself. And, what is this thing called the utterance, but a statement made by someone for the purpose of conveying some meaning to them (á la Grice); and what is the statement but some meaningful idea which came to the utterer in the first place, either as a representation of a certain state of affairs, or the representation of the way the utterer wishes the world to be: a psychological state. Thus, we return to the notion of a meaning which preexists its symbolic manifestation in language, and which belongs to the speaker before it is conveyed, shared and agreed upon in conversation. There are good reasons for accepting Habermas' theory of mutual agreement, but not as a complete description of meaning, only as a

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[12] Have I made a mistake here? Or is it that Habermas uses the term 'meaning' as 'general meaning', like a dictionary meaning or a platonic ideal, or a previously agreed upon by the community meaning; and intention as what the individual intends by the specific utterance. In which case he is missing the important element Searle raises namely the the meaning that the individual has before intending to utter it.

[13]Habermas, pg:21.

partial one which explains how meaning is used in a conversational context. Searle does not reject Habermas' intersubjectivist view completely, he merely wants to point out that successful communication is not the definition of meaning.

Habermas and Searle debate about the place in which meaning exists. Habermas says meaning is in the agreement between speaker and listener as it is negotiated between them; Searle locates meaning before the act of speaking, because there must be something the two parties are agreeing upon and that is the meaning extrinsic to any speech act. Searle rightly points out that meaning must be separate from language, being present before humans acquire the ability to speak. It would follow then that meaning can exist without linguistic communication, and therefore *does not exclude meaningful silences*, or the possibility of communicating meaning through silence. Words are not the only way meaning is conveyed.

Searle's arguments direct us to two important points about silence and meaning. The first is that, if Searle is right about meanings which preexist linguistic utterance, then it follows that silence can have meaning because silence is prelinguistic or extralinguistic. Secondly, it also follows from Searle's argument that meaning is formed in silence before it emerges in linguistic form, and thus silence is the birthplace of meaning.

Considering the part of Grice's theory which Searle does accept, it can be put that silence fulfills the two part criteria for meaningfulness in that a) one can intend to 'utter' a silence, and b) one can intend for that silent utterance to be understood as meaning something specific. The term 'utterance' can be used in a very broad sense to include any act of communication whether by language, gesture, music or anything else; and it will be shown that it is possible to include silence among the category of utterances, however unorthodox, because it shares many characteristic traits

with other utterances. Our working definition of an utterance is: a sound or sign which can symbolize or represent some meaning, and which is made by a person sometimes with the intention of communicating that meaning. Silence can fit this category description. Silence is a sign, though not a sound unless we count the lack of noise as a sort of sound. When it occurs in the midst of a sentence it is a place holder, otherwise it can be a symbol, which represents an idea (later in this work examples will be shown of the various ways silence is used in many different areas. It will be demonstrated that they are used in the same ways and to do the same things as utterances, eg in law and politics etc.). Larundic silences are often used in the effort to communicate. Silence can also be said to hold propositional content like the silence which says "I am angry with you", or "I don't know". Furthermore, these propositions can have meaning in the way that Grice suggests, as the Larundic silence can be interpreted as its utterer intending the silence to be understood by its audience in a particular way.

Searle's criteria of meaningfulness can also be fulfilled by Larundic silence. Larundic silence satisfies the criterion of intention as described in the above paragraph: one can intend a silence to represent some meaning in communication, and one can successfully transmit this intended meaning to an audience. So, a given act of silence can convey intentions of sympathy, anger...; we will see later how this is done through the interpretive act. Larundic silence also satisfies the second part of Searle's criteria that meaning is independent of language. The ideas conveyed through Larundic silence grow independently of language and can be the paradigm of extralinguistic meaning in that the ideas of Larundic silence can sometimes be ideas which cannot be expressed verbally. Emotional and aesthetic ideas often evade language completely, and cannot be expressed except by a silence; and if it is true that their meaning exists without linguistic expression, then silence is where these meanings are expressed.

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Finally, it is not entirely obvious whether silence can satisfy the last of Searle's criteria, namely the validity conditions of word/world fit. And the difficulty silence has in fulfilling this criterion is telling. Initially it looks as if silent utterances must be restricted to emotive and aesthetic statements of the sort that depend on judgement, and not empirical evidence, for their validity. But this is not the case. Silence is restricted to types of belief statements which can have internal logic, but which are also externally bound by empirical conditions. For example, the intention to utter the statement "this is beautiful (beyond words)" can only be true if the utterer sincerely believes it to be true; like any aesthetic utterance it relies on personal beliefs and not external proof for its validity. However, an interpretation of the meaning of that Larundic silence would have to fit with the feelings of the utterer. Thus, from the perspective of the interpreter there are certain facts which must be attended to when constructing an interpretation of the silence.

In order to demonstrate that Larundic silence can fulfill the conditions of validity in Searle's theory of meaning, it would have to be shown that silent utterances can be made which have the shape of statements of fact, commands, promises, etc.. This can be done, but only given the right conditions. These conditions are supplied by context, which will be the focus of the second part of this work, where a link will be drawn between the interpretation of silence and the need to consider the context in which the silence occurs. From the example about putting out the garbage raised above, it is simple to see how context can affect the audience's understanding of the utterer's intentions. The second part of the example "Whew, that garbage is starting to smell strong!" can have several appropriate silent meanings; it may mean that the utterer believes she ought to put out the garbage, or alternatively that we ought to leave the area of the garbage, for example if we were planning to use it as a pic-nic spot. So, given certain empirical conditions, such as context, utterer and audience, the intended meaning will be different and the meaning

understood by the audience will be different as well. What this is supposed to show is that silence relies on surrounding conditions for its sense and reliable interpretation of its meaning even more than ordinary utterances do. In this respect they both resemble and differ from ordinary speech acts. So, in Larundic silence, as in any other utterance, conditions of validity depend upon the intentions of the one issuing the utterance and the context thereof. Commands such as "pass me the salt" or the silent scan of the table top which is understood to mean the same thing, have the world/word fit required by Searle for a meaningful fulfillment of truth conditions.

According to the criteria raised in the theories of Grice and Searle, silence can have meaning.

It is interesting to note from these theories how often the presence of silence arises. Grice's two criteria describes a second order intention of the speech act, that is the intention of the utterer to have the audience understand an intention. It could be said that these second order intentions are part of the silent element of meaning. They are hidden intentions, intentions not even addressed by the utterer, who does not usually think about what she intends to achieve by the speech act, but merely performs it with the assumption that it will achieve the desired effect. If the speech act fails to do this, the utterer may then seek recourse in trying to say out loud what was previously communicated silently. Thus, she may say: "by uttering x I meant for you to do y." But even that does not quite reveal the Gricean formulation "by uttering x I intended for you to understand that I meant you to do y." Thus, according to Grice's description of how speech acts contain meaning, this second order meaning is virtually always transmitted indirectly through a silent medium of communication. That thing which the utterer intends to have understood, exists in silence.

Searle's declaration of a meaning which preexists language is the silent meaning, completely extra-linguistic, and independent in the way Habermas

and Grice's theories of meaning are not. Nevertheless, Habermas and Grice are not in total conflict with Searle's position, but actually offer possibilities which may occur further down the road of meaningfulness. Searle is not talking about meaning in language and conversation, but meaning in itself, and this is meaning outside language: it is the meaning in silence. So silence can be meaningful, and meaning evolves in silence.

2.2: Silent Speech Acts?:

Having established that silence can be meaningful, it is a fairly direct step to proving that silence can be a kind of speech act. This will not be true of all silences. It must be remembered that we are referring to the active/full category of silences which are communicative, like the silent condolences offered at a funeral. Some silences will not fit the description of a speech act, while others will.

Once again, we turn to Searle for an account. He says that "speech acts are characteristically performed in the utterance of sounds or the making of marks."[14] However, speech acts must be associated with meaning in order to be something more than just a noise or a mark. Clearing one's throat does not always count as a speech act, for example, unless it is performed for the sake of calling attention to oneself. So we can say about speech acts that "one is characteristically said to mean something by those sounds or marks."[15] The first point is problematic for silence because it is not a sound or a mark. This problem could be solved by expanding the description of a speech act slightly, and in a way that would not harmfully affect it. A characteristic could be added to the ones already outlined, changing the definition to:

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[14] Searle, 1971. Pg: 44.

[15] Searle, 1971. Pg: 44.

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Any utterance of a sound, making of marks *or the conspicuous lack thereof*, is characteristic of a speech act.

The element of conspicuousness extends the description slightly to include full, active, communicative Larundic silences, without harming the natural usage of 'speech act' in any fundamental way. With this addition, speech acts can now accommodate any act of communication even if it is wordless. This is important because previous to this, speech acts could not account for meaningful looks, pregnant pauses and Larundic silences of other sorts because they had to include words or sounds either uttered or written down. Larundic silences can account for the times when words simply cannot express what the utterer intends to communicate, but is able to convey silently. We would not describe the condolences offered at a funeral as meaningless or even as not being an intentional act of communication. Including Larundic silences as speech act allows us to include silences which 'speak volumes' to the category of meaningful utterances.

The second part of Searle's explanation of speech acts require that the act be meaningful, and that meaningfulness can be ascribed to the utterance or mark. This is not impossible for Larundic silence as we have seen above. Silences can contain intentional meaning, Larundic silences are meaningful, so silent 'utterances' can have meaningfulness ascribed to them.

Searle enforces the idea that there is an important link between meaning and intention in speech acts, and this is interesting in the case of Larundic silence. Larundic silences can have intentional meanings. One can intend a silence to mean "I am not speaking to you because I am angry with you", and the silence will successfully communicate this to the percipient. But it is more interesting to look at Larundic silences which are unintentional, something which occurs far more frequently among silences than among any

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other sort of speech act. Most people are silent more often than not, and usually this is simply a resting place, not an act, but a refraining from action or an act of omission. But these everyday silences can be meaningful without being connected to any intentional meaning that the utterer (in this case non-utterer) intends to share with anyone. This follows from Searle's account of meaningfulness, as discussed above, meaningfulness which preexists linguistic formulation. In other words, it is possible to have a meaningful silence which communicates nothing to observers. It would be wrong to call this something other than meaningful, because it is full of the coherent thoughts of the silent individuals who make them. It is also possible for a Larundic silence to be noticed as being meaningful, but where its content is not understood by observers; for example where a member of a meeting is asked why she is being so silent. So, we have two kinds of Larundic silences, those that intend to communicate and those that do not.
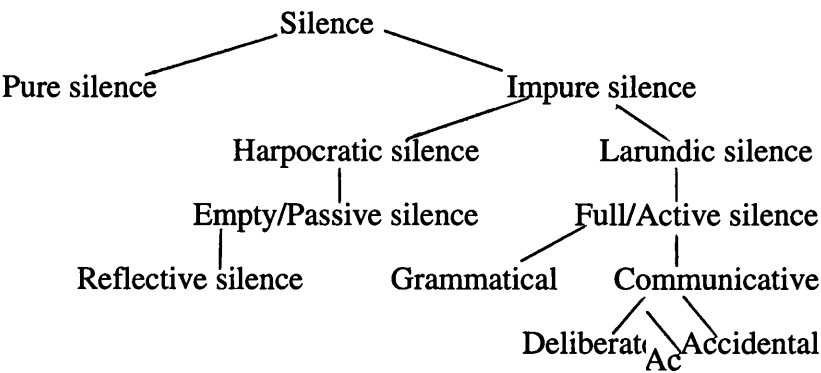
Sometimes the full Larundic silence which does not have communicative intentions can be interpreted, and communicate to the interpreter even though the silent person has not intended this to happen. Someone might describe a silence as 'sulking' or 'concentrating', and ascribe all sorts of accurate meanings to it. This can be very important as, for example, when an unintentional silence or pause is interpreted as preparation for a lie[16]. We must not overlook the possibility of a silence which communicates without any intention on the part of the silent to do so. Thus, it is possible to have communication without intention – like a slip-of-the-tongue, and like unintentional slips-of-the-tongue, such silences are meaningful nonetheless.

Silence can be described as possessing all the criteria of a speech act; it fulfills the necessary conditions. Is it therefore a speech act? Or is it something more? Because it does things that speech acts cannot do, it is

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[16]See section on "Silence in the Court".

somehow a larger concept than simply a type of speech act. This may be a very powerful aspect of silence – its ability to be used in communication – but is not all silence does. Take for example its role in music. Silence is the body from which music emerges, it is the space left open for the sound. This is why it is necessary to divide our understanding of silence between silences which are full and silences which are empty, then further subdivide full silence into grammatical and communicative. And finally we add a new subdivision below communicative. Communicative silence can be deliberate or accidental/incidental in order to account for unintended silent slips-of-the-tongue as different from the more intentional silence of direct speech acts; like the silent member of a meeting not wanting to say anything, but caught by the fact that her silence is conspicuous. Deliberate communicative silences are silences which are speech acts performed in a specific way; incidental communicative silences are more general.

Silence
Pure silence   Impure silence
Harpocratic silence   Larundic silence
Empty/Passive silence   Full/Active silence
Reflective silence   Grammatical   Communicative
Deliberate   Accidental

CHAPTER 3

METAPHOR AND SILENCE

3.1 Introductory Remarks:

It was established in chapter two that silences can be considered meaningful. It remains to be shown how silent meanings can be shared. In other words, is it possible to perform a communicative act through silence? In order to settle this question I contend three things:

1) that Larundic silence can communicate, but that

2) it does so indirectly and ambiguously, and that

3) it must therefore be interpreted to be understood.

Some linguistic theorists argue that all language is to some extent ambiguous, so that any linguistic utterance must be interpreted, not just silent ones. But silences are even more opaque than most literal statements and hence requires greater efforts at understanding than literal statements do. That is, silent utterances require greater effort than most literal statements require. Nevertheless, there are some linguistic utterances that require interpretation to be understood, most especially metaphor. In this sense, Larundic silences closely resemble metaphorical acts of communication as opposed to literal acts of communication. The resemblances do not stop with interpretation. In fact, there are further similarities which can be drawn between silence and metaphor, some of which will be described in this chapter. These are:

- both use ambiguity and vagueness.

- both do more than their transliterations can do.

- both can do things literal language cannot do.

- both induce reflection due to the strain of their presence in literal language.

- this reflection is creative and educational.

- both refer to context for interpretation.

- both transcend the rules for literal language.

- both can substitute for literal language.

- both can produce infinite and finite numbers of accompanying ideas.

Because these similarities are so strong, I suggest that silence can be considered a class of metaphor, which is not just a metaphorical statement.

To begin with we shall examine an overview of some of the historical attitudes toward metaphor which are relevant to this argument. This will be followed by an exposition of the similarities which support my contention that silences can act as metaphors do.

3.2 Historical Overview of Metaphor:

Mark Johnson refers to the traditional attitude toward metaphor as:

> "a metaphor is an elliptical simile useful for stylistic, rhetorical, and didactic purposes, but which can be translated into literal paraphrase without any loss of cognitive content." [1]

However, he points out that this claim reduces metaphor to nothing more than a form of stylistic embellishment. Unfortunately, the popularity of this

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[1] Johnson, Mark: "Introduction: Metaphor in the Philosophical Tradition" in *Philosophical Perspectives on Metaphor*; Mark Johnson, ed. University of Minnesota Press; Minneapolis Minnesota; 1981, pg: 4.

attitude has left metaphor with diminished status for centuries. The detractors of metaphor tend to hold the same central tenet, that truth content can (and ought) only be conveyed through direct literal language free of embellishment and imagery. Statements of truth are statements of fact, and ought to be made through the language of fact; thus, those who disfavour metaphor tend to favour the language of science which is believed to be embellishment-free and value-neutral.

Still, as Johnson points out, the expectation of a language which does not contain metaphor, even a less than ideal language, is unfulfilable. This is because all linguistic acts, even scientific ones, contain some usage of metaphor. Metaphor is often used to clarify statements of fact, but even the statements themselves are sometimes metaphors we take for granted. For example, the language of computer technology is full of metaphors of mice and windows, etc. Less conspicuously, doctors refer to heart murmurs, physicists refer to 'Black Holes' and chemists look for 'bonding' among cells. So why is it that metaphor has been debased for so long?

Johnson cites the irony that Plato, whom he calls the "master of metaphor", was the source of the suspicion of metaphor which grew out of "the old quarrel between philosophy and poetry"[2]. Plato rejected poets as mere imitators and inflamers of passions, who were uneducated in true knowledge. However, this was not intended to be a complete rejection of figurative language. Johnson says it only shows that Plato knew how powerful and enticing figurative language could be. There was fear that the often emotive embellishments would be abused, for example where emotive metaphors are used to persuade and mislead the listener into agreement for false reasons. "Plato's attack is directed against the poet or sophist whose misuse of language leads others away from the truth"[3]. In fact, Plato's critique

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[2]Plato: *Republic*, X, 607b. See also Johnson p.4.

[3]Johnson, pg: 5.

is directed at poetry and sophistry, not at metaphor in general, although it has been mistaken for such in spite of his own use of metaphor. This is especially ironic given that the *Republic* is considered to be one long metaphor for the soul, and the metaphor of the cave is one of the most famous in Western history.

Aristotle, on the other hand, did not criticise metaphor. He acknowledged its usefulness for constructing persuasive arguments and achieving insights. According to Johnson, Aristotle's position on metaphor can be characterised as,

> "(i) [the] focus on single words that are (ii) deviations from literal language, to produce a change of meaning that is (iii) based on similarities between things."[4]

This is technically difficult to achieve, and requires insight and effort to ensure the metaphor is correct for the situation. It is not surprising then, that Aristotle, and later on Kant, believed that metaphor was an indication of genius in its users[5]. For Aristotle, this was because it revealed an incisiveness to detect hidden and obscure similarities between things.

> "The greatest thing by far is to be the master of metaphor. It is the one thing that cannot be learnt from others; and it is also a sign of genius, since a good metaphor implies an intuitive perception of the similarity in dissimilars."[6]

Following this, a great number of theories emerged which attempted to explain how metaphor works. Essentially there are two general approaches, each of which is elaborated upon by many theorists. No one of them has been

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[4]Johnson, pg: 6. See also Aristotle 1457b7.

[5]Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, section 49 p.157.

[6]Aristotle: *Poetics*, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*. Richard McKeon ed. Random House; New York, N.Y.; 1941. Line 1459a.

designated as better than any other; they are equally accepted and rejected in their own camps. The first approach is the descendant of the traditional medieval logical-positivist tenets. This traditional view holds that if metaphors could transmit knowledge of truth claims, then these claims could necessarily be translated into literal language without in any way affecting the truth claim itself. Johnson refers to this attitude as "general downgrading of the epistemic importance of metaphor..."[7], where metaphor is considered to be nothing more than mere embroidering. Others of this group said that metaphors

> "...can make no truth claim at all. Instead, it was claimed, they function only emotively to express feelings, moods, or attitudes."[8]

The first general approach has been challenged by a prevalent attitude toward metaphor. This attitude is the descendant of the Aristotelian and Kantian appreciation for metaphor. Thus, the second coterie believed that metaphor could contribute more to language and thought than mere embellishment. To this perspective metaphor provides a vehicle for expressing ideas with greater richness, and for transferring knowledge which cannot be transferred in any other way.

Nevertheless, in spite of these, and other positive attitudes, metaphor became mistrusted by thinkers who required plain clarity for expressing truth. This is the main charge metaphor has had to confront over time: whether it can really be a sound device for the discovery and transmission of truth. The three basic premises of this position are summarised as follows:

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[7]Johnson, pg: 35.

[8]Johnson, pg: 35-6.

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1) Language is literal, thus literal language is the only way to clearly express truth-claims, and thus the only way to reason properly.

2) Metaphor is improper use of words therefore it confuses and deceives.

3) "The meaning and truth claims of a metaphor (if indeed there are any) are just those of its literal paraphrase."[9]

These pejorative connotations of metaphor were accepted by the majority of thinkers up to the present century. Those who rejected metaphor[10] claimed it was nothing more than flowery embellishments designed to lead listeners astray of the truth which literal language alone was believed to be able to express. This is a continuation of the medieval view that metaphor transforms truth into what it is not and thereby misleads us.

On the other hand, in the *Critique of Judgement*, section 49 p.157, Kant refers to metaphor within the context of his respect for genius and imagination. He held that creative activity is capable of novelty, and that what is created inspires creative responses and understanding in the observer. This set the tone for a more positive reception of metaphor, one which acknowledges the creative power of metaphor in understanding and explaining, and which shows us that metaphor can communicate ideas beyond what literal language can communicate.

> "Kant's fresh insight here is (i) that our metaphoric capacity is one expression of our general capacity for creativity and (ii) that such imaginative metaphoric representations generate more

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[9] Johnson, pg: 12.

[10] Philosophers such as Locke (13; *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, bk. III, chap. X, 34), Bishop Berkeley (13, "Of Motion"), and Hegel (*The Philosophy of Fine Art*, pp: 40-41).

thought than can be reduced to or captured by any literal concept(s)."[11]

In "On Truth and Falsity in Their Ultramoral Sense"[12], Nietzsche also rejected the separation between metaphoric and literal language, because he saw metaphoric understanding as essential to all knowledge[13] (15).

> "What therefore is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomophisms: in short a sum of human relations which become poetically and rhetorically intensified, metamorphosed, adorned, and after long usage seem to a nation fixed, canonic and binding; truths are illusions of which one has forgotten that they are illusions; worn-out metaphors which have become powerless to affect the senses."[14]

Thus, according to Nietzsche, there are no fixed truths, only personal experiences which by metaphorical understanding we have conventionalised into culturally accepted 'truths', grown used to, and forgotten the 'metaphoricity' of[15].

Nietzsche, Kant and others brought the pendulous attitude toward metaphor back to the appreciation Plato and Aristotle showed for it, and it has been swinging back and forth ever since. What follows is an exploration of how metaphor has been said to work in hope of demonstrating that metaphor relies on silence and that silence is very much like metaphor. It is with this in mind that a relationship between metaphor and silence can be said to exist in two senses: 1) much of what metaphor does occurs in silence

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[11]Johnson, pg: 14. Still, Kant did not accept metaphor fully because he said it was not a rule-governed activity so it could not produce definite knowledge through determinate-concepts.

[12]Nietzsche, pg: 180.

[13]Johnson, pg: 15.

[14]Nietzsche, pg: 180.

[15]Johnson, pg: 16.

(communication, creative understanding...), and 2) sometimes silence acts as a metaphor for speech.

3.3 Three Assertions:

This section contains three assertions regarding the relationship between metaphor and silence. The first assertion is that silence is the vehicle for much of what metaphor does, especially if we accept the admittedly controversial claim that the cognitive content of a metaphorical statement exceeds any translation of the metaphor into literal language. If this is the case, then metaphor transmits some, if not most of its detail in silence. The second assertion follows from a demonstration that silence can be seen to possess many of the same qualities as metaphors, and therefore it functions in much the same way as metaphors do except that it lacks verbal statement. The third assertion demonstrates that silence and metaphor rely on contextual strain to be recognised. Given that these similarities can be satisfactorily demonstrated, it will be possible to claim that *silence is an extension of metaphorical speech.*

3.3.1 First Assertion:

When Kant expounded on his assertion that metaphor is a creative act of genius[16], he placed the activity of constructing metaphors among the internal intellectual acts of thought. This internalism is the most obvious way in which metaphor relies on silence. Metaphor is part of thought, not just part of language. The information conveyed by the making of a metaphor is made clear in silent thought, and it is in even deeper silent imagination and subconsciousness that the images come together. Thus, understanding a

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[16] Kant, pg: 157.

metaphor does not require literally stated thoughts about the information the metaphor is intended to convey,. Instead it is in feeling and image that the information comes to one, and one makes sense of the metaphor. This occurs in Larundic silence, it need not be verbalised. In fact to verbalise it would involve losing the point of using a metaphor in the first place.

Metaphor helps us construct and understand ideas by use of *comparison*. The act of comparison happens in silence. To lose the silence of the comparison would be to lose the point of using metaphor instead of literal language to convey information. It is the difference between the statements 'p is q' which stands for some metaphor, and 'p is q in that r' where 'r' is a list in literal language of the similarities to be drawn. It is fairly obvious that the second statement is not as efficient as the first. The long list of literal terms loses the economical character of the more simple metaphorical statement 'p is q', and all the connotations it implies (implication is important in discussing vagueness and ambiguity). Therefore, losing the silent aspects of the statement is equivalent to not using the metaphor at all. Furthermore, in the second statement, some will say that the metaphor is hardly even necessary because the literal statements that follow it say what was intended anyway. To illustrate these two points, one may say 'Henry is heartless', or 'Henry is cruel, ruthless, nasty, etc.' The first statement is succinct and manages to convey what the second statement conveys, only with less effort because the list of literal information remains economically silent. The second statement says more or less the same things the first says only less economically. As a result the actual metaphorical statement can be seen as unnecessary for conveying the information the comparison will draw; thus, it is redundant to state the metaphor and then explain it in literal terms. This, of course, follows from the logical-positivist attitude, which sees metaphor as mere embroidery of literal language. It ignores the possibility that metaphor can be more than its transliteration. Johnson and others, on the other hand, suggest that there is

something crucial lost in making literal what was previously metaphorical. They claim we lose cognitive content which cannot be verbalised in the transliteration. Poetry is an excellent example of the kind of metaphors which lose a great deal of texture and freedom when transliterated.

Two significant consequences follow from this. The first is the degree to which metaphor depends upon silence, because without the silent work of comparison and reflection the metaphor would hardly be needed at all. It is what occurs in silence that gives the metaphor a different value from the literal statement. The second consequence follows as a response to the first, and suggests that metaphor is more than the sum list of literal statements into which it can be translated. By transliterating a metaphorical statement we lose some very important aspects of the intended communication. We lose the sense or the feeling inspired by the image of the combination of the two concepts being compared. So, i) metaphorical meaning happens in silence, and ii) metaphors do more than their transliterations can do.

3.3.2 Second Assertion:

Considering these two points, it requires little effort to draw our attention to the striking similarity between silence and metaphor as it has been explained by Johnson and others. Metaphor can do things literal language cannot do. This is not to say that it is better than literal language, only that what it achieves is different. Metaphor can help us communicate more effectively and therefore is valuable. Silence can be described in the same way.

Point (i) above has been covered in the section on meaning already discussed; silence is meaningful, and it bears its meaning without verbalisation in literal language. Metaphor does the same. Both metaphor and silence leave their literal meanings silent, so they require interpretation to be understood. If we grant that silences and metaphors can be meaningful, we must admit that

they do not convey their meanings in the direct way literal statements do. Some people claim that metaphors and silences can be translated into a list of equivalent literal statements, and that they communicate these literal statements indirectly and in an ambiguous way. It can be said then that the literal statements metaphor and Larundic silence are said to represent remain silent, that they are thought but not said. The claim that metaphors are transliteratable is a contentious one, however; so I will say that the above claim can be true of any meaning ascribed to silence and metaphor, not just literal meaning (indeed, what is conveyed through the silence of a silent or metaphorical utterance is what cannot be literally put). Their silent meanings requires us to interpret what the intentions of the utterer are, even if we cannot verbalise the intentions in the end. Thus, a silent look of despair can be interpreted as meaning so much which cannot be literally translated, and the translation (if one is possible) or the meaning is left silent.

Also, like point (ii) above, silence can be used to express ideas which are not expressible in literal language; for example, the expression of emotions such as compassion. Transliterations of metaphors lose the creative element, the texture and richness which the imaginary comparison implies; nor can silences be readily transliterated without loss of content, depth and richness. It is as if literal substitution for a silence or a metaphor would trivialise the significance of the utterance. This notion is put best in the following highly evocative passage from Maeterlinck.

> "As soon as we give utterance to something, we render it valueless in some strange way. We believe we have plunged to the uttermost depths, and yet when we come back to the upper surface the drops of water on our pale finger-tips no longer resemble the sea from which they came. We imagine we have discovered a hoard of wondrous treasure, but when we emerge again into the light of day we see we have brought only false stones and chips of glass, while the treasure shimmers unchanged in the darkness beneath." (Maeterlinck)

Silence and metaphor can be functional substitutes for literal language when literal language fails to express what it wants to. This follows from what was said in the first point, that silences and metaphors are more than the sum list of literal statements which they are said to represent. As a result, silence and metaphor are often more economical than literal language, and can express ideas through them that cannot be expressed literally.

3.3.3 The third assertion:

(iii) When we do come across a metaphor or a silence we may recognise them because they represent an absurdity within the context in which they arise. For example, when asked to describe another person you might say "she's an angel", by which you do not mean she is dead, resides in heaven, wears a halo, has great fluffy wings and plays a harp. So there is a contradiction between what is said and what is meant. This causes a strain in the context which requires the audience to reflect upon what was said and creatively construct a meaning to go with it. The same is true for silence where the strain of not receiving a literal answer to a question, for example, causes the percipient to turn in on the information she has in her possession and reflect upon it in order to creatively construct an interpretation of the silence. The strain of the absurdity appearing within the literal context causes recognition and this leads to creative understanding. Metaphor and silence both rely on a contextual strain for recognition and indication that something important is being said without literal language. A silent or metaphorical utterance may not be as efficiently noticed if the strain to the literal language is not present. So, for example, when a question is met with a silence instead of a literal statement, the audience leaves room for the answer and may give it longer consideration. There is a sense of greater importance around a silent answer than an immediate literal reply which may seem facile and unconsidered. Likewise, a metaphor causes the audience to consider and

reflect upon the statement with an effort not necessarily afforded a simple   .
literal statement. We lose the tension to literal language which cues the
existence of a metaphor or silence, and like a false note in a concerto draws
our attention to the focal idea.

This marks a third point of similarity between silence and metaphor:
both silence and metaphor causally induce a state of reflection in utterers and
their audiences due to the tension of their presence among literal language.
First the strain of their presence within literal language causes the listener to
notice that a (significant) point is being made. This logical absurdity gives
pause to the utterer and the audience, who consider the statement with a care
they might not have given it if the strain had not indicated the need to do so.
The utterer and the audience reflect on the comparison being made in the case
of the metaphor, or in the case of silence may consider previous or
forthcoming statements or some other thing. What is important is that silences
and metaphors, like vocal intonation, can indicate emphasis placed on an
utterance or an idea. And the emphasis causes reflective deliberation in those
affected.

It is based on these similarities that I suggest that silence is a type of
metaphor which replaces literal speech. There are numerous other
comparisons to be drawn between silence and metaphor which arise from
various theoretical accounts of what metaphor is and how it works. The three
points observed above are likely to be the most general of the similarities,
crossing many of the accepted approaches. Others are more specific to
particular theories but deserve some attention here because they help elucidate
the relationship between metaphor and silence.

3.4 Other Similarities:

Context and Relevance: In creating metaphors, relevance is of utmost importance, as it is when constructing interpretations of silences. "Metaphors must be drawn from things that are related to the original things."[17] In a similar sense, interpretations of Larundic silences must be relevant to the contexts which surround them. As we will see in Part II, the only restrictions for the proper construction of metaphor will be very much like the rules for the proper interpretation of silence: 1) the construct must be relevant, and 2) if kept within appropriate bounds the construct will bring new understanding and insight.

The above comparison is somewhat clumsy because with silence we are referring to relevance in interpretation, whereas the point above refers to constructing metaphors; there is a before and after distinction to be made, because we construct interpretations after a silent utterance whereas metaphor is constructed before its utterance. However, the similarity can be drawn to the understanding of metaphors, and by this we mean intellectual interpreting. This requires the same kind of care involved in interpreting Larundic silences where context and relevance help limit interpretations to (presumably) correct ones. Metaphor is like a riddle in the same way silence is, it must be figured out. In fact, sometimes it forces us to try to figure out what we might ordinarily have avoided trying to understand. Identifying a metaphor will require the observer to take into account some knowledge known by the speaker beyond the knowledge regarding the linguistic symbols themselves[18]. This is relevant for silence too. Larundic silence relies on its context for adequate interpretation, and it involves consideration on the observer's part of

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[17]Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1412a.

[18]Johnson, pg: 22.

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the knowledge possessed by the utterer regarding the silent non-linguistic utterance.

We can take a concept apart and study each of the parts separately, but it is only when seen as a whole that the meaning of the initial concept can be seen clearly. "In short, meaning emerges at the level of experiential *gestalts*, which give coherence and structure to our experience."[19] The meanings of two *gestalt* structures are placed in relation to each other during an act of metaphor, and the resulting combination constructs its own *gestalt* through a 'restructuring of experience'. This is like the context required for making sense of silences. If we fail to consider the entire *gestalt* it may affect the ultimate interpretation we construct of the silence. This will be examined more closely in Part II.

Furthermore, extrasentential context is important for the reason mentioned previously, that the identification of metaphor and silence rests strongly on knowledge of the context and a tension indicated. This includes not just linguistic falsity but any kind of tension, which draws our focus to the text and signals the presence of a metaphor or a silence. It is like noticing something has been omitted. We are drawn by the tension to recognise the nonliterality of the utterance[20], and this leads to reflection and understanding. Thus, context is important to interpreting both silence and metaphor.

In *Learning and New Insights:* I.A. Richards claims 'thought is metaphoric'[21], because we understand concepts through a combining of two thoughts which are linked by a similarity, and the result of this is the meaning of the metaphor and a new idea. We learn through metaphor because the words are used to direct our focus elsewhere, then fiddle with the literal meanings to produce new ideas. The metaphor indicates to us the presence of

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[19]Johnson, pg: 31.

[20]Johnson, pg: 23.

[21]*The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, pg: 94; Johnson p.18.

new ideas that we might have overlooked. Johnson called this "the focus on the *Gestalt* switch or flash of insight induced by a good metaphor."[22] The strained presence of a metaphor within a literal context causes reflection and the reflection entails learning and understanding.

> "actions, events, and objects are understood by us in terms of 'experiential *gestalts*', i.e., structured meaningful wholes within experience. Each *gestalt* consists of various recurring sub patterns of the whole structure and can be analysed into these patterns, though to do so destroys the relationships that make the *whole* structure meaningful for us."[23]

It could be that the 'epistemological and ontological significance' of metaphor is precisely "a device for reorganising our perceptual and/or conceptual structures."[24] Johnson claims:

> "metaphor creates novel meaning by giving modified senses to various concepts. If [this] is correct, metaphor is a principle device for altering or restructuring our concepts or categories."[25]

This may require some form of category-crossing among the terms used in the metaphor. "A metaphor is an assertion that..."[26] something from one category has some claim to fit within another category. This requires imagination to study the surrounding context, the connotations inherent in the two terms, and finally to grasp the superimpositions of the *gestalts* entailed. Creative effort is necessary for dealing with silence as well. When confronted by Harpocratic silence we act upon its passivity and creatively manipulate

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[22]Johnson, pg: 30.

[23]Johnson, pg: 30-1.

[24]Johnson, pg: 31.

[25]Johnson, pg: 31.

[26]Johnson, pg: 33.

knowledge of our own. Larundic silence requires creative efforts at interpretation in tandem with analysis of context. Creativity creates new information. Thus, the result of the effort to understand a metaphor or a silence is fruitful because it offers new information or insight into ideas previously not understood.

The act of understanding silences and metaphors is creative. We recall that metaphor incorporates genius and imagination. The creative activity of using metaphors is capable of constructing novelty, and what is created inspires creative responses and understanding in the observer. When we compare silence to this notion we find some very striking similarities to metaphor. 'The created object', normally the metaphor but in this case the Larundic silence, inspires its percipient to use imagination in order to form an understanding of the (un)intended meaning of the silence. The hearer of the metaphor is required to do the same thing. Both require an act of imagination or intellectualisation which can be novel, and in fact the novelty of a metaphor requires silent space for thought on the part of the one who constructs it. Silence is not identical to metaphor in this way because it does not offer the clues that the predicate term in a metaphor offers; the only clue we get for silence is its presence as recognised by the strain in the context. What silence can do is offer the space for reflection required for discovering new information through the metaphor. A conspicuous silence can indicate the need for creative reflection upon the ideas presented and in this sense operates more like a metaphor does. This is a kind of ostensive indication that thought is warranted in a particular case.

In any of the cases described above the acts of uttering and understanding a metaphor or a silence can and does produce learning in those affected. This may not be the same kind of straightforward information acquisition involved in literal communication, but it is nonetheless productive and active.

Renegades from the Rules of Language: Both silences and metaphors are utterances which go beyond the rules of literal language. Silence goes beyond the rules for ordinary language use and so it is difficult to make a definitive statement of what a silence means. As a result, there is no adequate conceptual way of demonstrating that the percipient's understanding matches the (un)intended meaning of the Larundic silence. The same can be said for metaphor, which uses words in unusual combinations in order to construct meanings, an activity which is deliberately outwith the ordinary rules of language.

> "In other words, the artist creates an *original* representation of something (in paint, tones, language, stone, etc.), but this activity is not a mere mechanical following of rules for producing a thing. Furthermore, the created object gives rise to a play of imagination and understanding in the perceiver that is *felt* as being adequate to the thing represented, although there is no conceptual way to demonstrate its adequacy."[27]

Johnson follows on this with Kant's idea of reflective judgement,

> "...in which the imagination freely plays with (reflects on) a series of representations in search of a unifying principle. I suggest that the comparative (or what I call the 'canonical' or 'rule-governed') level functions analogous to Kant's aesthetical reflective judgement. In such 'judgements of taste' the imaginative act of reflection is *felt* as adequate to the representations it organises, even though there are no concepts (or rules) governing that reflective activity."[28]

The same occurs in silence, only in this case the metaphorical antecedent is silent or unspoken and creative reflection must find some adequate and appropriate match for it. In silence too there are no rules which govern the use or interpretation, at least no obvious ones (there will be some such as

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[27]Johnson, pg: 14.

[28]Johnson, pg: 39.

observing context etc.). Thus, the adequacy and informativeness of a metaphor as for a silence must be felt rather than known because neither subscribes to the rules, least of all those of literal language.

Using metaphor or silence to express a meaning goes beyond rules for speaking and language use; in fact, silence is beyond those rules which are unable to fulfil a communicative need at the time, so the utterer resorts to silence to express what the rules of ordinary communication have failed to express. In this sense, silence leaves literal language silent the same way metaphor does. Johnson insists that metaphors are not rule governed, "and therefore not reducible to a set of rules, or a systematic procedure of understanding."[29] Making metaphors is therefore a free act of originality. Thus, the use of metaphor happens partly in silence and this part cannot be translated out of the silence. The silence of a metaphor and the silence of a silent utterance transcend the rules for literal language.

Sentence Meaning and Word Meaning: As with metaphor, there is a difference between what is said and what is meant by the utterance of a silence. We are drawn to the utterance meaning through the reflection upon the sentence meaning, where the sentence meaning triggers for us a creative act of imagination by the presence of a logical absurdity. Silence itself acts as this kind of logical absurdity, like the absurdity of a wordless reply, we are cued to reflect upon the *absence* of speech trying to *replace* speech (in the sense of trying to be a reply). This triggers reflective imagination and finally understanding of the silence or metaphor as a substitute for a literal speech act. This may actually create meaning where there was no meaning before (in the case of Harpocratic silence), or it helps resolve the tension caused by expectation of literal meaning in a case when none is offered, yet where the

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[29]Johnson, pg: 39.

meaning is still present. The newly created meaning or understanding of meaning can help us acquire knowledge and novelty.

Substitute for Literal Language: If we conceive of metaphor as an effective substitute for literal language, then it is possible to draw the final similarity between silence and metaphor. Silence is substituted for language at times when language cannot achieve its intended goals. Metaphor does the same for literal language when the latter fails. So metaphor and silence could be elevated to the position of effective substitutes for literal language and hence be seen as having equal status to it. This admittedly is a contentious position to hold, mostly because of criticisms made against metaphor and silence that they are ambiguous and do not fit the requirement of clarity and distinctness so prized by post-Cartesian logical-positivists (a point worth pursuing in greater detail, as I shall do below). There will be times when silence is clearly more appropriate than speech for communicating without confrontation or with greater satisfaction. Likewise, metaphors often make better explanations or descriptions than literal statements do. Furthermore, granting increased status to silence and metaphor will have the added benefit of explaining why we hold poetic language in such high esteem, and say that speech is silver while silence is golden.

3.5 Ambiguity:

So far we have addressed three major resemblances between silence and metaphor:

i) Metaphor and silence both leave their literal meanings silent, so that they require interpretation to be understood.

ii) Metaphor and silence are both functional substitutes for literal language when literal language fails to express what it wants to.

iii) Metaphor and silence both rely on a contextual strain for recognition and indication that something important is being said nonliterally.

To this shall be added a further major similarity which is founded on a common criticism that they are both ambiguous: iv) metaphor and silence are ambiguous and vague which has led to their diminished status in language. The question arises why these are considered to be negative qualities, and, moreover, why it is that we favour obviousness over ambiguity, certainty over vagueness, clarity over opacity, fathomability over inscrutability, facility over enigma.

Because neither metaphor nor silence make direct literal statements of truth, they may cloud their intended meanings and require great efforts of interpretation. As a result, they have been decried by seekers after truth who favour scientific models of understanding for their clarity and distinctness. To recount, the traditional belief is that metaphor and (by extension and for the sake of argument) silence are ambiguous and therefore cannot adequately express truth-claims in any direct way. They are accused of causing confusion and being deceptive. Furthermore, they are treated as having no more to say than their literal paraphrases do, limiting them to ornamental nebulous appendices of rhetoric. This attitude has led to their diminished status in language. But this attitude overlooks the benefits of being indirect. Sometimes ambiguity is exactly what is needed in a given situation, for example in conversations about religion, or at times when doctors have to break bad news to patients. Silence can be a metaphor for boundless receptiveness on the part of the utterer, and this leaves space for the other to think, speak and feel. Metaphors can be ways of gently putting something that

would be too blunt and injurious if it were stated literally; so you might say someone's child was a little monkey rather than comment on its funny looks. Johnson rightly draws our attention to the fact that metaphor often facilitates transferance of knowledge rather than obscuring it, and the same can be said for silence. Both have the power to communicate where literal language leaves off. If there are no words to express a thought or emotion, silence and metaphor can accomplish communication where literal attempts might fail and in fact obscure matters.

It would remain for us to ask why we favour literalness when we so clearly rely on non-literal ambiguities so much of the time. Johnson says that the reply to this is to challenge the belief that "literal assertions are better or more obvious bearers of truth"[30] than metaphorical or silent ones. Why is a literal statement more right, clearer, or to the point than a metaphorical or silent statement? It may be unnecessary to answer this question directly. Rather,

> "The point is not to put metaphor on par with literal statements but to explode the myth that they are radically different and that metaphor is cognitively inferior."[31]

So why do we value metaphor and silence as a means for communication. Because, much of our regular communication relies on metaphorical elements, and it is a myth that these only embellish and confuse our thinking and speaking. Language is filled with metaphors. These facilitate, not obscure, communication. Sometimes silence and metaphor are even more appropriate for the situation than literal language is. Ambiguity can be tactful, discreet, non-confrontational and can trigger the kind of thoughtfulness that can create and understand new information. Metaphor and

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[30]Johnson, pg: 37.

[31]Johnson, pg: 37.

silence say things indirectly, but this can be seen as productive and functional. Therefore, rather than diminish their standing we ought to raise them to the level of literal language.

3.6 Fancy and Imagination:

A final similarity between metaphor and silence rests on a theory of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's regarding the difference between fancy and imagination[32]. The distinction Coleridge draws constitutes an appreciation of the finitude and infinitude of ideas behind poetic or metaphorical language. He states that fancy implies a finite set of allusional claims, but that imagination is open to infinite possibilities only suggested by the metaphor or poem. Coleridge's distinction is a useful one for understanding the levels of metaphor; and the distinction and its implications readily apply to silence as well.

According to Coleridge, the difference between fancy and imagination rests on the difference between finite and infinite creative capacity. Fancy is limited and imagination is infinite. Imagination is divisible into either primary or secondary types. Primary imagination is the infinite and all-powerful ability to create from nothing. It is the domain of God [33], the ultimate creator. Secondary imagination is a weaker version of primary imagination, an "echo of the former....and different only in degree"[34]. It involves human will, in that "it dissolves, diffuses and dissipates in order to re-create: or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events if struggles to idealise and to

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[32]Coleridge, Samuel Taylor: *Biographia Literaria.* Everyman's Library, No.11. J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd.; London; 1906 (reprint 1952).

[33] Coleridge, pg: 145.

[34] Coleridge, 146.

unify."[35] This is a form of thought that most resembles the infinite in that it is open ended in its capacity to create. It is best understood through the process of writing a poem. Poetry "dissolves" the factual subject in order to recreate it, unified with other ideas. The juxtaposing of two distinct ideas creates a novel unity. This is unlimited, so that the meaning of an imaginative creation is open to any understanding of it, and in fact encourages new imaginative creations on the part of its audience. Thus, imagination stimulates creativity.

Fancy is a far more limited concept. It is attached to "fixities and definites. The fancy is indeed no other than a mode of memory emancipated from the order of time and space..."[36]. It involves choice, but not creation of the sort imagination is capable of. Instead, fancy is limited to association. In other words the one engaged in fancy can chose to change ideas which are part of her memories, but cannot create anything new or different from those memories. The metaphors of fancy are not infinite, but place limits upon the potential understandings of them. Thus, flights of fancy never travel very far as they are limited to the memories of factual knowledge the percipient possesses.

The limitless nature of imagination is advantageous to metaphor and poetry where the aim is to inspire creativity. It is also ideal in situations where a message is better left ambiguous. Thus, imagination is probably better suited to areas of expression that require ambiguity and freedom of creativity. For instance, imagination will be well suited to art and religion, two areas where specificity can be more confounding than vagueness. The limited nature of fancy, on the other hand, is more advantageous where a greater degree of specificity is preferred. Bearing in mind that this is in the context of metaphorical or poetic language, which is not usually considered specific, fancy is still more specific than imagination. So fancy can portray a

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[35] Coleridge, 146.

[36] Coleridge, 146.

metaphorical idea accurately and perhaps more succinctly than literal or imaginative language can. The limitations of fancy make it more direct than imagination and therefore more advantageous in situations where ambiguity is not desirable. Thus, fancy lends itself better to advertising or slogans which want to be direct, unambiguous and evocative.

Imagination and fancy are, in fact, interlined and do not exist independently[37]. They overlap so that images are both newly imagined, and reflective of reality and memories[38]. Imagination takes the "old and familiar" memories used by the fancy, and turns them into something novel[39]. In metaphor, imagination takes the limited ideas of fancy and interposes them with reality in order to create a growing imaginative concept which is limitless. For example, the imagination juxtaposes the realities of a horse and a goat, and the fanciful memories associated with them, in order to create a unicorn. In the fanciful image we merely have a horse with a horn on its head; in the imagination we have a mythological creature with limitless roles in stories, poems and parables. Thus, imagination moves from the limitations of fancy and reality into the realm of infinite possibility.

3.6.1 Finity, infinity and silence:

Coleridge's distinction between the finitude of fancy and the infinity of imagination apply well to silence. The two main categories of silence fit the description of finite and infinite. Harpocratic silence is infinite in that it leaves the percipient with limitless space for creativity. Yet, like imagination, Harpocratic silence uses memories as the ingredients for the limitless creativity. Mortals cannot create without foundation. So, although they are

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[37] Brooks, Cleanth: *The Well Wrought Urn.* Cleanth Books. Dobson Press; London; 1949. Pg: 26.

[38] Brooks, pg: 134-5.

[39] Brooks, pg: 230 and ff.

limitless imagination and Harpocratic silence do employ finite content. Working from memories and knowledge the percipient of a Harpocratic silence can create infinite ideas and imaginings. Thus, both imagination and Harpocratic silence rely on fancy and reality to supply the material for creativity.

Larundic silence is more like fancy in that it is limited. A Larundic silence is one that contains a meaning, and this meaning restricts the possible interpretations a percipient may apply to it. Anything outside the limits of this meaning is considered radical and violates the Larundic silence. Thus, Larundic silences are finite, and must not be greeted with the same limitless creativity that is appropriate to Harpocratic silence.

There is also a sense in which overlap occurs between Harpocratic silence and Larundic silence. Fancy merges with imagination to the extent that fancy provides the basis for more creative imaginative ventures. In the same sense, Larundic silence can be the stepping-off point for Harpocratic silence. Where a Larundic silence occurs it brings with it a specific meaning, but it has difficulty restricting interpreters to that meaning. Rather, interpreters tend to elaborate on the meaning present in the Larundic silence, and in some cases ignore it altogether. Two possibilities may cause this reaction. Either the Larundic silence is being mistaken for a Harpocratic silence, in which case a misunderstanding has taken place and must be rectified to obviate a radical interpretation of the silence. Alternatively, it may be that the Larundic silence in fact says more than its limited meaning entails. In this case, the Larundic silence imparts its message, and causes the interpreter to move on in an imaginative way. Coleridge's notion of imagination functions in the same way with fancy: it overlaps with the limited content of a fanciful idea and then goes beyond it with greater creativity. In the same way, the Harpocratic silence can begin by overlapping with a

meaningful Larundic silence and then move from there to more creative realms of imagination.

The comparison of Coleridge's understanding of the difference between fancy and imagination with our understanding of silence, is by no means a trivial one. The comparison highlights the distinction between Harpocratic and Larundic silences, and introduces the concept of finity and infinity to silences. Having a sense that some silences are finite and limited to specific meanings, as Larundic silences are, provides a clearer means of differentiating them from Harpocratic silences. And it is sensitivity to this difference that helps to obviate the possibility that Larundic silences will be violated with radical readings.

3.7 A Difference:

Having said all this, there are differences between silence and metaphor. Most importantly, silence does not require speech whereas metaphor is usually linguistic. This leads to a predicament. We must ask whether this difference is significant enough to dispel the claim that silence can be a metaphor. The dilemma is this, either silence is a metaphor for speech, or this statement is itself a metaphor.

To reply, there are certain kinds of silence which act as a type of metaphor. The claim of identity between the two may be false because it is too strong. But this ought not to preclude the existence of a silence which acts as a metaphor for speech: a metaphorical silence or silent metaphor. An obvious example of a silent metaphor occurs when the student asks the teacher a question and the teacher does not reply, but intends the silence itself to be a meaningful reply. In this case the silence stands for the answer, and its ambiguity and inscrutability are a deliberate part of the answer given. In the

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same situation the teacher may reply with an extended metaphor with the same intent. The result of both forms of reply are virtually identical. The silence and the metaphor are stand-ins for a literal reply; they do the same sort of thing the literal reply would do (namely answer the question), only they do it less directly. The reason for the ambiguity of the reply will likely be the same; either there is no adequate literal statement in which to frame the answer, or the teacher wants to provoke thought and inspire a more creative response from the student. The enigmatic answer of silence or metaphor causes the tension which indicates to the student that she must consider what is before her. It causes reflection and creative aesthetic judgement in the student who wades through the density of the enigma beyond the surface of the simple literal reply. The silence and the metaphor do the same things by being a meaningful substitute for speech, and this is why it is possible to say that silence is a metaphor in this situation.

Cases where a silence could not be adequately described as being metaphorical are most likely to occur when empty Harpocratic silence is present. Here, the silence is not intended as a substitute for a linguistic utterance. Harpocratic silence is not an utterance, not an absence-presence, but an absence. There is no intended meaning present in the empty silence so it is not a substitute for communicating some meaningful idea. Empty silence is not a metaphor for speech, except possibly in some metaphorical way.

The difference between metaphor and silence is primarily one of sound. The utterance of a traditional metaphor involves sound, but as we will see below, silence can involve sound, as in speech which says nothing or omits saying something. There is no reason to suppose that the reverse may be true, that metaphor can be present when there is no sound just as silence can be present when there is sound. We simply replace the speech with no speech and yet accomplish the same things as stated above. Sometimes a silence can be an outright act of metaphorical comparison, at least to the

understanding which receives the silence and processes it in the same way as it would a spoken metaphor.

3.8 Conclusions:

Neither silence nor metaphor have been afforded the recognition they deserve, mostly because we tend not to appreciate or recognise the amount of use we make of each and the reliance we have on them – we take them for granted. Johnson claims we have a prejudice against metaphors based on a lack of observed presence of metaphorical communication in our day to day activity; if we realised how much we do use metaphor we would likely lose the prejudice. The same goes for silence. These are not cases of linguistic deviance, but communicative tools that we rely upon and make frequent use of.

Moreover, there are many ways in which we make use of silence during the act of constructing and understanding metaphor. The *gestalt* comparison, the creative reflection occur in silence and for the great part remain there. But even more interesting are the comparisons which show how silence functions as a metaphor does. The four primary reasons are: i) meaningful content is present in metaphor and silence, ii) silence and metaphor can be used to express ideas which are not expressible in literal language, iii) strain within literal context draws our attention to the silent or metaphoric information, and iv) silence and metaphor are ambiguous. There is further support for the similarities which can be drawn from the reasons described above.

The following chapter is about the possibility of further similarities between silence and forms of speech. It will also cover notions regarding subdivisions of silence along the lines of the Coleridge distinctions of finite

and infinite. However, in the section that follows we will be more concerned with the degrees to which silence occurs in acts of communication, leading to some surprising conclusions.

CHAPTER 4

CONTINUITY AND DEGREES

4.1 Jaworski and the Continuum Between Silence and Speech:

In the previous chapter, we showed how silence can be linked to metaphoric language. In this chapter the connection between silence and language will be developed further, based partly on the work of Adam Jaworski on silence and speech. By far the most noteworthy contribution Jaworski makes to our understanding of silence is his theory that there exists a continuum between silence and speech. Significantly, the continuum entails a fuzzy border between both of its ends. "Can I say something without speaking? Can I remain silent when talking?"[1] Jaworski answers "yes" to both these questions and pursues the further question of whether it is possible to have absolute silence and absolute speech. He applies various theories to silence that are normally associated with parts of speech such as politeness and taboo; and ultimately recognises silence as part of or equal to speech. We shall examine Jaworski's notion of the continuum between speech and silence, after which we will expand upon a concept which emerges from the continuum, namely that there are demonstrable degrees of silence.

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[1] Jaworski, pg: 28. I make a great deal of use of Jaworski's book in the following chapters. It should be noted however that his project differs from mine for the primary reason that his is a linguistic project whil my application is a philosophical one. Jawroski's examples and the conclusions he draws have been invaluable, but they are distinct from my project in the following ways. First he dwells more on applications of silence while I have tried to stress the details of the concept. He does not systematize the idea of interpreting silence in the way I do. And finally his project is linguistical analysis so he does not make the philosophical points that I make through comparison to the other theorists discussed in this thesis.

We cannot make a clear separation between what speech does and what silence can do because there is overlap between them. The presence of this overlap defies our expectations, and indicates that silence may not be as distinct from speech as we might previously have thought. For instance, silence is part of communication, although it is not usually acknowledged to be so. One way in which silence helps us do this is by keeping the channel of communication open whereas speech often closes it, although we usually expect the opposite to be true. For example, silence is better suited to leave-taking, where speech might prolong the farewells and not actually permit the leaving. Silence is also a more apparent means of showing willingness to let another speak, and hence is useful in counselling situations where the object is to encourage the client to talk. These ideas enable us to understand why it is that Jaworski draws parallels between speech and silence.

Jaworski is anxious to stress that silence is not the pure absence of speech[2]. The idea of a continuum between silence and speech allows for the possibility that there are elements of each in the other, and that their existence is not mutually exclusive. This implies that at the heart of the continuum there is silence in speech and speech in silence, both extremes merging at the centre. It follows from this that there are communicative and non-communicative silences depending on where they occur on the continuum[3].

The farthest end of the silent extreme is what we have labelled empty Harpocratic silence, the silence which does not communicate nor intend to communicate. To illustrate this non-communicative silence, the most extreme type of silence on the continuum, Jaworski gives as an example two strangers passing one another on the street. Nothing happens. They merely pass,

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[2] Jaworski, pg: 33.

[3] Jaworski, pg: 34.

ignoring one another, and no communication occurs[4]. This example is helpful, as it appears that a Harpocratic silence has passed. However, this is not *pure* Harpocratic silence because it contains at least the meaningful content that these people do not know one another, which can be important in some instances. We must keep in mind that the extreme of the continuum which is pure silence cannot be experienced, as we have already seen in section 1.5.

Somewhere in the middle of the continuum there is an overlap between speech and silence where speech becomes nothing more than sound. This is empty speech which overlaps with Harpocratic silence. To understand this idea we must consider that not all noise is speech. Some speech is silent in that it has no immediately graspable meaning. For instance, it can be filler with no more significance than the sound of pneumatic drills. This is speech merged with silence. Glossolalia, or speaking in tongues, is a good example of speech which overlaps with silence in this way. Glossolalia could be considered a form of *silent* worship on Jaworski's continuum in that nobody understands what, if anything, is being said by it. Another example of speech that overlaps with Harpocratic silence is listening to or reciting a text in a foreign language. The words are said but they are empty of meaning for anyone who does not understand that language. Any meaning they do acquire is based on the context in which they are said and the way in which they are delivered; which explains why some actors are said to be so talented they could evoke emotional responses simply by reading the Glasgow telephone directory. This was one of the primary reasons for translating the Christian ceremonies into the vernacular; before that, their meaning (though not their significance) was silent to those who did not understand Latin.

Elsewhere in this middle range where silence merges with speech, is speech which is designed to obscure meaning. Such speech merges with

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[4]Alternatively, there could be implicit meaning in the silence between the two strangers, for instance there is an unspoken agreement not to communicate because this may be perceived as threatening or insincere – as in 'have a nice day!'

silence through ambiguity, in the way that lies and distortions silence their true meanings. Bindeman referred to this type of silence within ironic writing, such as in the works of Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard's irony relies on silence to contain and communicate the author's intended meaning. But, ironic statements are not silent. They are spoken. It is rather their literal meaning which is silent. Thus, silence and speech overlap in irony because the message is spoken but its meaning is silent. This makes irony a form of Larundic silence, because its silence is not empty but meaningful.

Elsewhere, the continuum further supports the idea that silence is much like metaphor. We have seen that metaphors rely on silence to transfer their symbolic meanings. This occurs at the point on the continuum where silence merges with speech, and the words of a statement telegraph their meaning indirectly in the silent background which accompanies them. The second assertion regarding the relationship between metaphor and silence can also be located on the continuum between silence and speech. In cases where silences can express symbolic meanings they fall on the part of the continuum where silence is meaningful and expressive without literal accompaniment. These are Larundic silences, both wordless and expressive at the same time.

The silence which communicates meaning in more obvious ways also exists in the heart of the continuum. These are the paradigm examples of Larundic silence which pass on information without words. It is especially important to see such silences as part of the continuum with speech because doing so places value on them as real acts of communication. Otherwise Larundic silence risks being considered a failure of language; or worse, not perceived as an act of communication at all. To place Larundic silence inside the continuum is to acknowledge its ability to make successful transferrals of information.

The extreme toward the speech end of the continuum is presumably highly effective communication. Cries for help are effective speech acts

because they are succinct and unambiguous. However, even cries for help rely on silence to inform those to whom they are directed. A call of "Help I'm drowning" does not have to be followed by "Throw me a life preserver, dive in after me, swim to me, grab me and tug me back to shore..." In fact, it is not easy to find an unambiguous pure speech act that does not require some assistance from silence. This is because language relies on silence for the economy of speech already discussed in this thesis. So the extreme on the continuum toward speech is no more experiential than the purest form of silence. Nevertheless, the extremes inform our understanding of the mid-ranges and account for the common understanding that silence and speech are opposites.

Jaworski's continuum thus shows that speech and silence are complementary rather than contradictory even though they can have strong opposing extremes.

> "...of the formal properties of silence the most prototypical meaning of the concept of *silence* involves a total lack of audible vocal signals. However,... silence in the sense of abstaining from speaking is relative and gradable.... Silence, then can be graded from the most prototypical, (near) total silence of not uttering words to the least prototypical cases of silence perceived as someone's failure to produce *specific* utterances."[5]

We have seen some examples of the positions on the continuum. These are: speech which is as empty as Harpocratic silence; speech which obscures its meaning and leaves it to Larundic silence; and Larundic silence which resembles speech because it communicates meaning, but does so without words. This demonstrates the variability of silence and speech and

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[5]Jaworski, pg: 73.

hopefully shows that silence is in some respects equal to speech on the continuum.

> "...silence and speech compliment each other in the linguistic universe and they are capable of performing similar functions and expressing similar meanings."[6]

4.1.1 Language games and Silence games:

Speech and silence are part of a continuum from most to least verbal forms of communication, and from most to least meaningful kinds of utterance. Therefore, silence must not be overlooked as just a gap in communication; rather, its role is different in different types of discourse[7]. Wittgenstein pointed out that we use words in different ways depending upon the context of their use. He called the different contexts 'language games' and showed that we understand words differently when they are part of one language game than we do when they are part of another. So, for instance the word 'drink' is used one way by a person in a bar, and quite a different way by a parent offering a beverage to a child. The difference does not need to be explained, as it is part of the information understood in the given context[8]. Silences are understood in quite the same way, as meaning different things at different times relative to different contexts.

Silence is what is expected in certain types of speech or communication. Rhetorical questions by definition do not require answers. Religious worship often requires no sound nor expects any answer, and the worshipper would probably be shocked to hear a verbal reply from the deity to whom the prayer is directed[9]. Thus, the kind of understanding which is

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[6]Jaworski, pg: 47.

[7]Jaworski, pg: 46-7.

[8]Wittgenstein, L.: *Philosophical Investigations*. G.E.M. Anscombe trans. Basil Blackwell Ltd.; Oxford, Great Britain; 1958.

[9]Jaworski, pg: 36.

expected in these contexts is silent rather than spoken. And since the contexts vary we can refer to them as the same sort of games Wittgenstein described language as participating in. Thus, we can refer to the 'rhetoric game' or the 'religion game' to explain that silence is not being used inconsistently in the examples above, but that its use varies according to its context.

Silence can have positive and negative uses in communicative contexts, but so can speech. For instance, both can signal bonding or lack of bonding between people, indicated by conversations that go well or badly, and silences that are comfortable or uncomfortable. Where there is anger, speaking can negotiate; but silence can help preserve communication by avoiding saying something destructive, as this example illustrates from Peter Hoeg's novel *Smilla's Sense of Snow*: "If I reply I will end up hurting Moritz. So I let it pass uncontested."[10] So silence can be the opting-out choice[11]. In some contexts, it plays the game by being "the extreme manifestation of indirectness"[12]. These are examples of the sorts of silence games we play in communication.

Silence does not just play a negative role in silence games. It can be used as a positive tool as well, and in some contexts can be more advantageous than speech. These are some examples that Jaworski suggests to illustrate this. Silence can mark a turn-taking in ordinary conversation. Pauses help organise speech, and give the speaker time to formulate what to say next. Moreover, sometimes it is more effective to rely on silent communication, for example in a noisy room. In the context of emotional silence games, silence can be face-saving in potentially embarrassing

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[10] Hoeg, Peter: *Smilla's Sense of Snow*. Tiina Nunnally trans. Dell Publishing, New York, N.Y. 1993; pg: 214.

[11] Jaworski, pg: 49.

[12] Tannen, D. *That's Not What I Meant: How conversational style makes or breaks your relations with others*. J.M. Dent & Sons; London; 1986; pg: 52.

moments, such as when an offer or invitation is turned down. Silence's ambiguity helps disguise one's feelings without lying, and helps avoid unpleasant topics. Even more substantially, silence can be the main vehicle for exchange, especially in highly visual events such as dance where visual stimuli make talking secondary[13]. "Silence keeps things open."... "speech deteriorates"[14]. Any number of other examples can be found to show that silence varies with context, and thus fits Wittgenstein's model of game playing. This accounts for the variations on Jaworski's continuum, in that different positions on the continuum apply to different contexts and different games played.

4.1.2 Conclusions:

The benefit of viewing silence as part of a continuum with speech rather than as its antithesis, is that it underlines the usefulness of silence as a part of communicative exchange. The continuum shows that silence is another aspect of good communication. Thus, it need not be looked on as a failure on the part of the one communicating to rely on silence to put a point across. A failure of language does not mark a failure to communicate; rather, it is a different kind of communication which takes the place of language – silent communication. The continuum reinforces the possibility of this positive attitude toward silence. It shows silence can be a useful and valuable part of exchanges between individuals, without cutting it off from other kinds of more verbal exchanges. Thus, the continuum helps maintain a positive understanding of silence.

Seeing silence as continuous with speech allows us to apply to it some theories about speech. Thus, we have seen silence as capable of multiple meanings, of being communicative and non-communicative within certain

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[13] Jaworski, pg: 50-1.

[14] Sontag 1984, pg: 194.

contexts, and as having both positive and negative characteristics in different contexts. The variance is similar to the variance which language is shown to exhibit in Wittgenstein's language game theory.

We can conclude from this exploration of the continuum that silence can exist in degrees. There are parts of the continuum where silence is pure and most closely fits the Harpocratic description of silence. Other parts where silence is communicative like language, as in the most distinct forms of Larundic silence. And places where silence supports language by containing the meaning that will not be directly spoken, such as in lies and ironies. The continuum also helps us understand how Larundic silence can slip into Harpocratic silence, and carry a meaning that is so vague it leaves room for reflection and creative interpretation. This ambiguous Larundic silence is exemplified by silent prayer, where the content of the prayer can be anything so long as it takes the form of a communion with a deity. Silence also exists in degrees where it interacts with speech. A speaker can alternate between speech and silence in order to put a point across in the most effective way. This occurs most frequently in arts such as poetry. In between these silences, there are many areas of overlap among the more and less communicative types of silence and speech. It is useful to perceive silence in degrees because it illustrates how it is possible to mistake Larundic silence for Harpocratic silence, the main source of misinterpretation of silences. We will return to this notion later.

The arts depict the degrees of silence most efficiently. In the section that follows we will explore the varying degrees of silence as they can be demonstrated in music, dance and works of fine art.

4.2 Degrees of Silence:

We have already explored the primary difference between Harpocratic and Larundic silences. Harpocratic silence is empty and awaits the creative imposition of meaning to give it content. Larundic silences can be communicative silences and possess meanings of their own. However, these meanings will be understood and shared only if an interpretation of them can be constructed. Methods for interpreting actual Larundic silences will be described in part II. These are silences which are not necessarily accompanied by gestures or symbols other than their own presence, such as the silence of a person who is angry and will not speak to another person. Such silences are unequivocally silent, although they do contain meaning. However, with regard to silent acts of communication which do involve gestures and symbols, there arises the question whether these are silent at all. The question is particularly compelling with reference to sign-language which communicates in a demonstrably more direct and overt way than an ordinary silence does. Following from that, however, it must also be admitted that the silent communication of a work of art, though less direct than sign-language, is still more direct than an unaccompanied silence; and the same can be said for silences which are accompanied by gestures such as the touch of a hand. This description illustrates the likelihood that there exist degrees of communicative silence based on variations of ostensive accompaniment such as symbols and gestures.

Is a painting silent? Can we make a general claim of the statement that all paintings are silent? Surely, paintings are silent in the most obvious sense that they make no sound. So in at least this most obvious sense paintings are silent, and the same can be said of most works of fine art. There are some works of art which do make noise and can therefore be said not to be silent. Examples of these might be automated sculptures, sound sculptures,

performance art, and of course music, poetry and drama. These works of art make sounds and are therefore not silent in any obvious way. But some of them might be silent in a more subtle way. They may make noise, but the meaning of the noise may not be clear or obvious. Or their meaning may not even be present, as in forms of highly abstract-minimalist art which is intentionally meaningless. For, as was pointed out above by Jaworski's continuum, it is possible for a sound to be silent in the sense that it has no meaning or that its meaning is opaque. From this, we can already deduce two degrees of silence: first a technical soundless silence, like a soundless sculpture; and second a silence which is not soundless but meaningless, like an unintentional cough or a grunt. However, these two degrees are deceptively simple, because though works of art can be silent to the degree that they make no noise, we will see that they are not fully silent. Likewise, a sound can be silent to a great degree when it carries no intended obvious meaning, as will be seen below.

A third degree of silence can be detected in art. Jaworski's continuum between silence and speech demonstrates that works of art such as paintings can be silent and communicative at the same time. Such works of art would exist on the part of the continuum where silence approaches speech. The best example of this is representational art. A representational painting is technically silent, but it offers symbols which help define and demonstrate the content of its meaning. The meaning does not have to be that which the author intended it to be. On the contrary, the meaning is what is contained in the symbols and construction of the painting. In this sense a work of art can be said to have a vocabulary and rules of grammar, which if not general are at least internally consistent. It is because of the demonstrative vocabulary of works of art that we are inclined to say that they are not purely or Harpocratically silent: works of art are not empty of meaning and they do try to communicate. The way they communicate is less direct than literal

linguistic forms of communication, but more direct than unaccompanied silences. Therefore, we can suggest a further degree of silent communication which exists on the continuum somewhere between silence and speech; a silence accompanied by symbols which offer clues to its meaning and facilitate interpretation. Paintings are examples of this degree of silence. This would be a fairly low degree of silence compared to Harpocratic silence.

A fourth degree of silence relevant to art arises in abstract minimalism. Abstract minimalist artists assert that their work is meaningless[15]. Minimalism is a reaction against abstract expressionism and automatic painting where anything could be considered a work of art, including just random lines on a plain background. Minimalist painters were critical of this and tried to show that abstract expressionism was meaningless. They demonstrated this by creating intentionally meaningless works of art, such as blank canvasses, and plain white or black tableaux. But, the minimalists' attempts to depict meaninglessness were bound to fail. Returning to the notion of meaningfulness described by Searle and Grice, meaning and intention are closely tied. Searle and Grice claim that intention to convey an intention, or intention to make an intention understood by an audience, *is* meaning. Therefore, the minimalist painters who intended to depict meaninglessness as a response to their colleagues could not escape being meaningful – their meaning was meaninglessness, or a desire to show that something can be meaningless. By intending their work to be a reaction to, and critique of, the work of the abstract impressionists, they were making a statement and, therefore, their empty canvasses were not, could not be meaningless.

> "[The modern artist carries silence] to the point of final
> simplification, so that he becomes literally silent. More

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[15]Steiner believed the frame around abstract art encased only meaninglessness, as for instance in Dadaist art. Steiner, Wendy: *The Colours of Rhetoric: Problems in the reflection between modern literature and painting.* University of Chicago Press; Chicago Il.; 1982.

typically, he continues speaking but in a manner that his audience can't hear."[16]

Nothing intentional can be meaningless. Even the empty paintings of minimalist artists like Marden and Rheinhardt[17] contain the meaning that they are intended to represent nothingness, meaninglessness or Harpocratic silence. As a result, the silence of these works will not be meaningless, at least not when it is intended to mean nothing. So their silence cannot be pure silence which, as was said earlier, is only an abstract concept and cannot be achieved, least of all when one is intentionally trying to achieve it. So, in fact, the silence of an abstract minimalist work of art is really not a high degree of silence because it very clearly contributes to a dialogue about meaninglessness in art.

This is not to say that silences always bear significant meaning. The meanings may be insignificant like the accidental or incidental silence of an empty room. It is meaningful that the room is not in use, the empty silence containing the reason why the room is not in use. All sorts of interpretative turns can be applied to the silence of a room, but in the end the silence is not always terribly significant. And this will be the highest degree of impure silence we can reach, a silence which has no significant meaning. This is a silence which does not deliberately draw attention to itself, and contains no meaning of its own. It is Harpocratic silence and permits the percipient to create a meaning to fill it. This is the closest we can be to pure silence of the highest degree.

The above demonstrates that there is a level of silence which bears meaning that is communicated opaquely, or not very well. This is a fairly high degree of silence, one which closely approximates the purest of Harpocratic

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[16] Sontag 1982, pg: 184.

[17] Battcock, Gregory ed. *Minimal art: A Critical Anthology.* E.P.Dutton & Co.; New York, N.Y.; 1968.

silence. The so-called meaninglessness of the abstract minimalist painters is not meaninglessness but opacity of meaning. The meanings of their works are not easily understood because they leave few clues toward constructing an interpretation of them. Thus, Jaworski's continuum between silence and speech includes both a level of communication so abstract that it resides closer to pure silence than communicative silence or speech, and another degree of silence less abstract, but still slippery because it communicates with difficulty. But it also contains a degree of silence so low that the gestures and symbols that accompany the silence actually speak for themselves; this silence is hardly slippery at all.

4.2.1 Dance:

Dance presents another noteworthy aspect of the degrees of silence. Two particular pieces of choreography serve as examples of the idea of degrees of silence: "Silence is a Rhythm Too" (by Daksha Sheth & Ellen von Schuylenbruch, March 8th, 1995) and "Echo de Silencio" (Juan Carlos Garcia choreographer, March 11th, 1995) as seen performed at the "New Moves Festival Across Europe" in Glasgow at the Tramway.

It seems impossible in the context of silence to discuss dance without referring in some way to sound, most specifically to music and rhythm. It is no longer taboo to find bits or entire choreographic works performed without music. These pieces are to all intents and purposes silent dances, but more often than not the sounds which remain are part of the performance. By this I refer to the sounds of the dancers' feet striking the stage and the reverberations this causes; the breathing and odd grunts issued by the dancers; as well as the incidental sounds of their movement and finally the sounds emitted by the audience. There is another significant way in which the aural minimalism is not completely silent and this is through communication. The works of art we call dance performance are communicative to the same extent that other works

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of art communicate such as paintings, sculptures, music, poetry and drama. Through an examination of these two dance pieces, choreographed specifically with silence in mind, I shall try to show to what extent silence affects dance.

Dance has long been considered a form of communication. Whether this be the fairly direct pantomime of a fully choreographed and performed ballet based on a narrative story such as Swan Lake or the Nutcracker, the ritual dances performed at rites and festivals all over the world, or the "vertical expression of a horizontal activity" performed at dance clubs and raves, there is no doubt that people try, and succeed, to communicate through dance. But in dance as in the other arts, communicative silence occurs in different degrees of effectiveness, from more direct and less slippery silent acts of communication to more indirect and more slippery acts of communication.

In "Silence is a Rhythm Too", it is not readily clear what the choreographer Daksha Sheth and choreographer/dancer Ellen von Schuylenbruch have in mind with their use of silence. Hence, this piece would be an example of dance minimalism where communication is cool, vague and very indirect, and where the silence is almost maximally slippery. The nineteen minute piece consists of a series of carefully controlled, difficult acrobatic movements performed to abstract contemporary music composed by Shrikanth Sriram. The music consists of atonal, non(anti)-melodic sounds, distortions and reverberations in and around which the dancer moves, responding to the tones as they reverberate into silence. The brief silences between intonations become part of the dance as the dancer either stops or is compelled to move within the silences. The atonal nature of the music itself sounds like an imitation of what silence would sound like if it were given noise. The tones are rich, yet hollow; they move, yet have no direction. In short, they embody many of the paradoxical elements of a silence. The dancer's movements or steps keep time to this non-music. The piece is

abstract and defies explanation, yet it effectively directs our attention to the way silence can inspire and expire movement.

On the surface, there is a high degree of silence, or empty silence, in "Silence is a Rhythm Too". Its abstraction makes it as silent as the work of abstract minimalist painting appears to be. But, like abstract minimalism, "Silence is a Rhythm Too" is actually a highly effective part of a conversation. Its meaning is a response to other dance and music. The title implies that it is a response to more melodic and rhythmic traditional music and dance. So, like abstract minimalism it is part of a conversation about what constitutes meaning and emptiness. And in so being, this choreographic piece is a highly efficient attempt at communicating because it successfully shows how rhythm can be found in silence.

Less abstract is the interpretative piece choreographed by Juan Carlos Garcia called "Echo de Silencio". The piece is inspired by and danced to Henryk Goréki's *Third Symphony*, a highly emotive melody which the choreographer purports

> "expresses the desperate lament before tragedy. It echoes the silence of thousands of speechless, astonished spectators. Neither the pain nor the anxiety can be repressed." (Program notes)

The piece is deeply moving in part because of the music, but equally because the choreography and the set design contribute to the emotional charge. The music begins in darkness as the dancers enter from various parts of the performance space. Each of the four dancers enters the space and switches on covered lamps which hang low to the stage. The lamps are turned on and off at strategic parts of the piece by the dancers themselves, pulling cords which hang, nearly invisible, within their reach. The light falls in distinct circles upon the black dance mat and illuminates either the whole stage, or individual distinct spots when only one is switched on at a time.

This provides effective lighting for the space and clearly delineates the spectator-dancer from the performer-dancer at any given time. At the beginning of the piece individual dancers perform in individual light spots, while the other dancers walk around the spot either far enough away to be in virtual darkness or just on the perimeter of the light. This provides a very powerful display of isolation, separation and observation between the dancers. It also aptly illustrates the relative silence of those in the shadows whose dance-voices are not heard, at least not distinctly heard, because they can hardly be seen even though they may continue to dance. The choreographer states that

> "The choreography includes multiple parallel actions and pieces of information. Details often escape the spectator, just as in real life."

So the silencing occurs outside the lights, but also when the dancers are illuminated by their own performance-lights, because too much happens at one time to be acknowledged all at once by the audience.

The choreographer is clear that there is communication occurring in the piece whether all of it is acknowledged or not. He even goes so far as to describe his work using linguistic terms,

> "My intention hasn't been to compose a piece to go with the music but to create a dialogue. Dance and music co-exist. They underline man's contrasts, contradictions, opposing situations. They reflect emotions severely. Tenderness and energy. Indolence. Strength." (Program notes)

> "For some years I have been exploring the potential of Indian martial arts like Chhau and Kalari for developing a new dance *vocabulary*." (Italics added, program notes)

It is the use of the term 'vocabulary' which is curious here, but relevant to all dance. Even though "Silence is a Rhythm Too" is abstract it is implied from the use of the term 'vocabulary' that the choreographers relied on a sort of

language to express and communicate a meaning. A *dance vocabulary* implies that dance is in some sense a language, possibly an abstract and indirect language but one which has the ability to communicate nonetheless. This implies that the degree of silence actually present in a choreography is not much greater than the degree of silence present in a painting or a poem. The symbols create a vocabulary for the work of art which keep it from being completely silent.

Like silence, dance is an abstract and indirect method of communication; a cool medium, as Jaworski referred to it. But there does seem to be a difference between a paradigm Larundic silence and dance, or any work of art for that matter. The difference is based on the amount of facility with which one can construct interpretations of a work of art and the amount of difficulty in interpreting silence. The symbolic vocabulary of art offers clues for capturing the meanings in works of art; but silence has no such vocabulary and is therefore much more slippery. The repertoire of steps of ballet are adequately referred to as a vocabulary partly because they contain pantomimic symbols of meaning. Thus, the degree of silence present in works of art such as dance and painting is less than would be expected. The difference extends outside works of art as well. Included in the puzzle will be other silent forms of communication which hardly seem like silence because they use symbols, signs and other ostensive means of communication. Most especially we would have to include sign-language and pantomime as silent/non-silent acts of communication. In other words these examples involve a low degree of silence because they use gestures and symbols to put their point across. Thus, these are acts of communication which include less silence and would find themselves in the middle of Jaworski's continuum closer to speech than to Harpocratic silence.

4.2.2 Dubious silences:

Now we turn to more communicative degrees of silence which beg the question whether they are silent at all. Books and sign-language fall into this category to different degrees. This is because they are far less abstract than works of fine art. The primary reason for this is that books and sign-language use complicated systems designed to be more precise and clear than the more limited systems of the arts.

When the choreographers discusseded above described their dance as having a vocabulary they were referring to a vocabulary which is limited compared to verbal vocabularies. The vocabulary, grammatical rules and syntax of language in the traditional sense is complex. It is due to this that language is capable of expressing ideas with a degree of directness and detail of which dance is not capable. The language of dance is inherently indirect because its level of complexity is low. As a result we will have to concede that dance possesses a greater degree of silence than ordinary language does, not just because dance is soundless, but also because it is indirect. The sounds dance does use, the music, rhythm etc. do not communicate any more directly than the dance steps do. As a result the sounds in dance cannot increase the level of communication that dance is capable of, except by increments. Highly emotive music can move the audience more successfully perhaps, but the meaning of the performance may not become any more overt. Gestures help give dance a lower degree of silence, because they give the audience something to work with in constructing interpretations; but again this does not help it escape silence altogether. Thus, compared to language, dance is quite silent.

Books are able to move closer to the level of speech because they communicate with a far greater degree of directness. Interpretations of the meanings of books are likely to be much easier because their vocabulary is more complex. But not all literature is that direct. The meaning of a literary work can be increasingly silent depending on its opacity, until the meaning is

nothing more than a whisper among the words. Poetry, for example, can be deliberately opaque and make interpretations of it more difficult. This puts poetry near silence on the continuum because interpreting it can be so difficult. The prose used in instruction manuals and text books, however, is placed closer to speech because it is meant to be more direct and clarifying than opaque. An abstract instruction manual would hardly be of much use to the person attempting to program and use a video tape player. Thus, books such as text-books can be said to exist in a lesser degree of silence; but because it is a continuum we are describing, it is also possible to see books, especially poetry and novels, as possessing a higher degree of silence due to the difficulty of interpreting them.

It is sign-language which is the most interesting of these degrees of silence because although it is technically silent it is also distinctly not silent. It exists both in silence and in speech on the continuum. Speakers of sign-language are silent but not because they are not speaking. It is only that they do not require sounds to make their direct communications understood. They can be described as being silent at times, when they are not signing. They are also describable as being loud and louder when the speaker increases the size of the sign-gestures, so that everyone in a large room can see/hear them, or in moments of enthusiasm. As a mode of communication, sign-language is barely silent at all. It manifests a language and a culture more clearly than dance or representational art do. Its meanings are just as direct as any natural language, and it can also be indirect and opaque enough to write abstract poetry. The degree of difficulty of interpreting the meaning of a sign-language utterance is no greater than attempting the same for an equivalent language one is familiar with. It is for these reasons that it is tempting to say that sign-language is not silent except to the weakest degree[18].

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[18]Dolnick, 1993. Pp: 37-53.

Thus, there are degrees of silence and these degrees may interweave. An utterance can be technically silent but imbued with meaning easy to interpret because it is accompanied by gestures, symbols or signs. Representational art, standing ovations and sign language are among examples of several of these degrees of silence. Other things may be very noisy but still be silent because their meanings are either very opaque or non-existent, for example the sound of the wind. Still other things may be silent in both ways in that they make no discernible noise, and contain no discernible significant meaning, or no meaning at all.

In exploring the notion of degrees of communicative silence we see that the amount of silence present in an "utterance" depends on the level of difficulty or facility of constructing interpretations of the utterance. Utterances appear to be multi-layered, so that communication can occur at different degrees on different levels. The presence of interpretable symbols decreases the amount of silence in the utterance. Media that use many established symbols, such as religious art, classical ballet and prose texts are not very silent because they make their meanings known in a non-slippery way; their symbols act like clues for interpretation the same way words do in speech. Silence uses less overt means of communication, and there is virtually no fixed vocabulary supplied to make interpretation easier. Silence is what is not given in any obvious way. Thus, the more abstract and opaque the medium of communication, the higher the degree of silence present in it.

4.3 Conclusions:

We have seen that there exists a continuum between silence and speech. This continuum is useful because it explains how we can have silences that communicate and speech that does not. The continuum allows us

to see that there is overlap between speech and silence in areas such as irony, equivocation and meaningful silences. It also indicates that there are degrees of silence. Silence can be said to be present to a greater degree in abstract utterances which have little fixed symbolism accompanying them; and silence is present to a lesser degree in cases where symbols such as words make interpretation more direct. The point was made through examples of more and less silent works of art. These helped to demonstrate the degrees of silence and showed that Harpocratic or meaningless silence cannot be created intentionally as any intention indicates a meaning. We will now explore the various uses of silence in the hope of understanding more about the complexity of its presence.

CHAPTER 5

VALUING SILENCE

5.1 Varying Value:

> "I sit there in total silence. It's always interesting to leave
> Europeans in silence. For them it's a vacuum in which the
> tension grows and converges toward the intolerable."[1]

> "We drink it in silence. It's Christmas Eve. For me, silence is
> usually an ally. Today it's pressing lightly on my ears."[2]

> "It's not until the engine room shuts behind me that I realize
> how enervating the noise was. The silence is refreshing."[3]

These are three quotes from Peter Hoeg's novel *Smilla's Sense of Snow* in which the main character holds a particular affinity for silence. The quotes demonstrate something significant about silence. They show that we apply both negative and positive value to silence. Our attitude toward it is ambivalent because it is both useful, and difficult to deal with. We can benefit from being silent, for example, when we wish to be evasive. On the other hand, it is frustrating to try to interpret the meaning of an evasive silence because it is so slippery. Our ambivalent attitude toward silence shows in the way we respond to silences in certain contexts: liked where it is useful; hated where it makes communication opaque; and dreaded where it confronts us with death. Thus, an understanding of how we value silence will necessarily

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[1] Hoeg, 1993. Pg: 21.

[2] Hoeg, pg: 124.

[3] Hoeg, pg: 296.

proceed from a relativist theoretical perspective so that we can account for our variable attitudes toward it.

In the section that follows, two claims about silence will be proposed. 1) That the general ambivalent attitude we have toward silence is evidence for the claim that silence itself is value neutral; from which it follows that 2) we impose value upon silence depending upon its situational and contextual status. No normative claim regarding whether silence is inherently good or bad, useful or detrimental, and so on, can be made about silence in general nor of any of its broad sub-categories delineated above. Instead we apply value-statements to silence externally and relative to our attitude toward it in a specific situation. Claims regarding truth and falsity are particularly difficult to deal with in regard to silence because very often silence makes no assertion at all, or some assertion indirectly. Thus, it is hard to avow the truth or falsity of silent speech acts until after they have been interpreted; and then it is the interpretation about which claims to truth and falsity will be asserted, at which point the interpretation will have to be assessed for its own accuracy and a value applied to it. Evaluation of interpretations will be dealt with in Part II. This section will deal with an assessment of attitudes toward silence, showing how they are situation dependent.

5.2 Value and Context Dependence:

Jaworski claims that silence has two values: negative and positive. Silence can, for example, mark "a failure of language" or "an opportunity for personal exploration"[4]. However, this assertion requires a qualification: *silence itself is value neutral,*. It is individuals who assign a value to silence according to the instance in which it arises. Value-neutral silence can be

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[4]Jaworski, pg: 66-67.

assigned positive or negative weight depending on the situation and the judgement of the interpreter. Thus, we consider the peace of a silent room to be a positive silence, whereas the silence of a dark street can seem menacing. Silence itself, as a general concept, cannot be assigned the value labels of 'good' or 'evil', because it does not have independent inherent value in the way torture or generosity may be said to have. If silence has no inherent value but its value changes according to the situation in which it arises, then silence derives its value from its *context*: sometimes it is considered negative and sometimes it is considered positive. These values are not inherent but applied by external observers or issuers of a given silence. Provided that Jaworski accepts this context-relative qualification, his theory that silence is open to valuation is correct.

This change notwithstanding, Jaworski's analysis of silence is an excellent reference for understanding ordinary valuations of silence. His linguistic perspective clearly shows the many ways in which we manifest positive and negative attitudes toward silence, and ultimately shows how our reactions to silence vary according to the contexts in which they arise, and according to our cultural predispositioning toward silence. The following is a summary of Jaworski's position with some additions.

Jaworski favours the cultural-relativist analysis of silence because of the ambivalent attitude we have toward it, and there is a great deal of evidence to support this choice.

> "...the attribution of invariant meanings and interactional properties to either speech or silence does not find plausibility in the communicative realities of different speech communities/cultures. Therefore a relativistic approach to the study of the meaning of silence has been advocated."[5]

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[5]Jaworski, pg: 48.

That silence can be meaningful is no longer in question. What silence means is a question which cannot have a single answer. Silence is open to many meanings, it is a pluralistic concept, and cannot be circumscribed by a simple definitional explanation. The meaning we attribute to silence is likely to be context dependent, and because we do not ascribe value where there is no meaning, it follows that the value assigned to a silence will be context dependent as well. But it seems wrong to infer from this that silence is a generic concept upon which we impose whatever we choose. Instead it may be said that Larundic silences can carry a variety of meanings and values because silence is flexible in the same way certain words can be flexible. This is much like the word 'I'. 'I' is not definable in any specific way because its referent varies depending upon who utters it. Silence is similar. Although two utterers can use a silence in the same sort of way, its meaning or referent being different in different situations[6]. Silence *can* carry its own meaning like a word does,[7] but what this meaning is will vary according to its context. Also, the value we attribute to silence will vary according to the meaning the silence carries, and this will depend on context as well. How a silence is used, then, will affect our valuation of it.

5.3 The Uses of Silence:

The variability of the meanings of silences explains why we are ambivalent toward it; sometimes we seek its comfort and safety, other times we rage against its entrapment of freedom of speech. Sometimes it is luxurious, other times it is dangerous or frustrating. Our attitude depends

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[6]Admittedly, 'I' is not an average word. The significance of the example was to draw attention to the fact that some words are capable of the flexibility of silence.

[7]Reference to language games in Wittgenstein. See above.

upon the meaning the silence is given, and therefore the context in which it arises. In this section we will explore a summary of some of the uses Jaworski ascribes to silence and some of the drawbacks inherent in using silence as a means for communication.

One thing is certain; as Jaworski points out, we must dispel the belief that silence is merely a background for speech[8]. As Sontag says "Something is neutral only in respect to something else."[9] Jaworski criticises Bruneau for saying that "silence is to speech as the white of this paper is to this print."[10] In other words, Jaworski asserts that it is wrong to believe that all silence does is provide the contrast for the presence of words. Silence does more for speech than that. Accordingly, Jaworski concludes that silence belongs to the para-linguistic systems of language. It is part of speech in the same way volume and intonation are part of speech, so it is not mere background[11]. Volume and intonation make a great deal of difference in speech. Saying something loudly has a different effect than saying it softly. Placing emphasis on some words changes the meaning of a sentence. For example, "I won't have it' is different from 'I won't have it'. Likewise, silence defines the boundaries between utterances, aids in the cognitive processing of speech, it helps us note changes and allows the speaker to formulate thoughts[12]. So it follows that "silence and speech are two intersecting and equally relevant communicative categories."[13]

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[8] Jaworski, pg: 12.

[9] Sontag 1984, pg: 186.

[10]Bruneau, T.J.: "Communicative Silences: Forms and Functions". *The Journal of Communication*, 23, 17-46. Pg: 18.

[11] Jaworski, pg: 14.

[12] Jaworski, pg: 13.

[13] Jaworski, pg: 17.

5.3.1 Pauses:

As a linguist, Jaworski helps us see how silence is an integral part of communication[14]. He says there are three types of silences during conversation, these are: gaps, lapses, and significant silences. He illustrates the usefulness of silence with reference to these pauses in speech. For example, pauses politely leave room for others to participate in the speaking, which makes the situation more comfortable. Pauses may also help the speaker formulate ideas more fully, or analyse them more thoroughly. Pauses help the speaker not to impose or dominate, and help restore balance if this should occur. Pauses also provide a reasonable time for replies to be formulated, and a response to be made. Jaworski even recommends that we wait longer than we have planned for a reply, and we will be pleasantly surprised at how well it improves communication. This is especially relevant in teaching situations, because students are often intimidated and will not speak unless they feel that they are truly invited to do so[15]. Pausing also leaves the student time to digest new information.

However, pauses can have troubling consequences as well. The two most obvious problems are being cut-off and having the pauses interpreted negatively. Everyone is familiar with the frustration of being cut-off in a conversation during a pause to gather thought or take a breath. This can be so frustrating that some people panic at the thought of having to take a pause and rush right through them. But not taking pauses can have equally adverse effects, such as not having time to reflect and gather one's thoughts. This can lead to incoherence, and suspicion on the part of listeners that one is trying to dominate the conversation. Having pauses misinterpreted is really a topic for

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[14] Jaworski, pg: 35.

[15] Jaworski, pp: 9-10.

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discussion in the second part of this dissertation. However, it is useful to note now how misinterpretations can occur and the effects they can have.

Pauses are usually ignored by listeners, but sometimes they can be perceived negatively. For example, they can be thought of as a lack of clarity of thought, or as preparation for a lie. They can also signal an avoidance on the part of the speaker, who is seen as stopping themselves from saying what is really on their minds. Moreover, we tend to be afraid of silences in conversations, especially when we do not know the person with whom we are conversing. We tend to be afraid that a pause in conversation might indicate lack of rapport[16]. Pauses can be telling signs of misdirection, or they can be useful tools for clarity. It is how they are interpreted and responded to in a given context which gives them positive or negative value.

5.3.2 Expressing the Inexpressible:

We saw earlier how silences can be economical in conversation because they contain what is implied so that not everything has to be made overt; silence can be "economical, efficient and to the point."[17] Silence is also able to express ideas which go beyond language or which are unspeakable. For example, victims of torture often find it impossible to express the horror of their experiences, and some psychologists believe it to be unfair to their clients to try to force them to do so. But the horror of the situation is nonetheless communicated by the fact that no words can adequately express the victims' feelings. Thus, silence is useful for communicating what language cannot express.

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[16] Jaworski, pg: 6.

[17] Jaworski, pg: 4.

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"There is relatively little that words can do for grief. Words can do relatively little about anything. But what else do we have?"[18]

What we have is silence. Larundic silence is an excellent substitute for speech, especially "when speech breaks down", and fails to describe or explain. This is when words become irrelevant, when they cannot express what can be conveyed silently, and instead flounder in failed attempts to express in language ideas and feelings for which there can be no words.

There is a tendency in such situations to rely on small-talk to help ease the discomfort of being at a loss for words. Because of this, Jaworski draws parallels between silence and small-talk. Small-talk is often criticised as not containing any communication. The actual meaning of the conversation remains silent and small-talk eases the awkwardness of it. Often there is a difference between what is said and what is meant in small talk. For example, in the West the phrase 'let's get together sometime' can be a way of politely putting off a date, but in some cultures an expectation of some sort of follow up emerges. There are cultural variances in attitudes toward what mark sufficient and insufficient amounts of talk, what is regarded as polite or impolite[19]. The routine behaviour of small-talk helps avoid the discomfort and awkwardness of silence in some cultures. In other cultures, silence replaces small-talk in some social settings. This is especially true where the society makes extensive use of silence. Apache greetings do not have to contain words. They are often silent, especially upon first meetings[20], and speech is considered suspect between strangers.

Native American teachings propound this reliance on and appreciation for silence.

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[18]Hoeg, pg: 166.

[19] Jaworski, pg: 56.

[20] Jaworski, pp: 54-55.

"Training began with children, who were taught to sit still and enjoy it. They were taught to use their organs of smell, to look where there was apparently nothing to see, and to listen intently when all seemingly was quiet. A child who cannot sit still is a half developed child."[21]

5.3.3 Culture and Context:

As the previous example illustrates, silence is a form of communication which is used in different ways by many different cultures, and of which Jaworski says:

"Therefore I believe children acquire the ability to use and understand silence very much in the same manner that they acquire all other linguistic skills in the acquisition process."[22]

Some cultures rely on silence more than others, but it is clear that silence is a universal means of communication. Silence can be useful in many aspects of life, including teaching, learning, psychology, marriage, management... But it must be said that attitudes toward silence vary according to culture as well as context. For example, even in the West where silence is relatively little valued, politicians who talk too much are perceived as not trustworthy, and excessive verbiage is seen as covering up lies or ignorance. Silence is also preferred when speech inhibits activity, such as long good-byes at leave-taking. Additionally, by not expressing contentious ideas, silence can help alleviate tension and avoid confrontation. So in some sense it is the language of diplomacy.

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[21] Chief Standing Bear in *A Fabulous Gift: Inspirations on Silence and Solitude*; Eileen Cambell ed. Aquarian, an imprint of HarperCollins; Hammersmith London; 1994.

[22] Jaworski, pg:4, and note 3 pg: 26.

The Japanese take a more favourable attitude toward silence because for them speech is considered a deterrent to action. As a result, Japanese simultaneous translators are less valued for their very strenuous and vital contributions to international relations, because they make their living by speaking in a society which prizes silence above speech[23]. Speech is seen as a deviation from a preference for silence.

In the West we tend to treat the presence of speech as normal and silence as deviational[24]. According to Jaworski, in the U.S.A. humans are perceived as machines where the natural humming (talking) is considered normal, healthy working behaviour. Its absence is a sign of break-down and malfunctioning[25]. Among North American psychologists silence during a therapy session is often wrongly perceived as failure to progress; nobody is speaking so it seems as if nothing is happening. Likewise, Jaworski points out that a silent student is often misperceived as being disengaged from the learning context, but, he adds, a silent student is not necessarily one who is not learning[26]. In both these examples, silence can also be seen as a positive element that leaves room for productive thoughtful activity which may be inhibited if it had to be verbalised. Yet Westerners do not necessarily perceive it in this positive way. Instead we link silence in these contexts with discomfort and failure. It is safe to say that there are some cultural contexts that might value these examples of silence differently. For instance, a Buddhist monk might be inclined to praise the silence of a student.

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[23] Kondo, Masaomi. "Japanese Interpreters in Their Socio-Cultural Context." *UM Meta*, 1988, 33, 1 Mar., pp: 70-8.

[24] Jaworski, pg: 44. Here Jaworski makes reference to the feminist critique of psychology which designates qualities common in men as normal, their absence in women is hence considered deviational and abnormal. See for example Carol Gilligan.

[25] Jaworski, pg: 46.

[26] Jaworski, pg: 53.

5.3.4 Using silence correctly:

Using silence to communicate will affect what is communicated[27]. As a result, silence will be favoured as a medium of communication in some situations and disfavoured in others. This is because silence produces certain qualitative differences in what is conveyed. Silence leaves a great deal of intended content ambiguous, which could be dangerous in some fields, such as medicine or engineering. Thus, silence lends itself better to some contexts than it does to others. Religious language prefers ambiguity and hints, so silence lends itself well to religion. Science, on the other hand, tries to stay away from ambiguity, so silence is usually out of favour with scientists whose work requires distinct statements in order to preserve clarity. Legal language requires the same kind of exactitude. As a result, lawyers favour speech and are suspicious of witness silences during cross-examination[28].

Ambiguity can be useful in some contexts but not all. Thus, it is clear that silence will be assigned positive value in some situations and negative valuation in others. The inclination to call silence purely negative or mere absence is simply a cultural prejudice of the West[29]. Silence can actually be seen to confer all sorts of benefits. Potentially uncomfortable situations can be rescued with routine, ritualistic behaviours which involve silence. For example, when nothing is said because we do not want to call attention to a cultural *faux-pas*, or when someone makes a rude remark. Different contexts call for different formulaic responses and silence can be one of those

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[27]Marshall McCluhan said "the medium is the message", and Jaworski applies this notion to the way silence communicates its messages. See *Understanding Media: The extensions of man*; Mentor; New York, N.Y.; 1964.

[28]See chapter 16 on "Silence in the Court".

[29] Jaworski, pg: 48.

responses. In fact, even in the West silence is preferred in important situations, such as when marking the boundaries of life through rituals such as weddings, or at births and deaths. Unfortunately many people tend to forget that silence is clearly favoured over speech in certain contexts.

> "Both speech and silence can be used in creating bondage, communication, rapport, and so on, or just the opposite: Both can be used to cut oneself off from others and to convey no (genuine) message. While silence is usually associated with the perception of lack of communication, speech is associated with its presence."[30]

But some speech only creates the illusion of communication, while some silences only create the illusion of non-communication. We can say that the presence of irrelevant words in speech can cause it to be regarded as silent[31], just as the failure to mention something significant is the same as being silent about it. On the other hand silent looks can be just as clear as an outright statement, and sometimes more eloquent. In fact, given the right context, silence can do many of the things speech can do, and sometimes vice verse. The ambiguity of silence is appreciated more in some cultures than in others, but all cultures have instances where silence is openly preferred as a medium of communication.

5.4: Pseudo-Communication:

Words become irrelevant when they are part of *pseudo-communication*. Jaworski calls an act of communication 'pseudo-communication' when it is not negotiated but controlled purely by the sender,

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[30] Jaworski, pg: 98.

[31] Jaworski, pg: 99.

as in advertising[32]. It contains a contrast between what is the stated (which remains unclear and hidden) and what is the observed purpose of the communication. It exploits uncritical and collective thinking, relying on the passivity of its audience for its success (probably because it is not meant to withstand criticism). It is ambiguous due to its confused use of symbolism, and appeals to emotions rather than intellect or reason. Pseudo-communication depends on external authority and secret knowledge. Its means are subordinated to its ends, and it is usually simple, reduced to an easy-to-understand universe which is ultimately sloganizable. All this apparently leads those subjected to pseudo-communication to pay it little or no attention. As a result, things like advertisements are usually disregarded, because it is assumed that they contain little meaningful content, and that the content will require a great effort on the part of the audience in order to be understood[33]. Ordinarily, silence communicates what is not overtly said in pseudo-communicative contexts. The bits of information not present are left to be deduced by the audience. However, this is only possible if the presence of the pseudo-communication is noticed, otherwise it will be ignored. And because it requires an effort to deduce the meaning of the pseudo-communication it often is ignored in favour of things more easily understood.

According to Jaworski, silence tends to suffer from the same problem pseudo-communication does because it shares some of the same qualities. If we assume that some text, for example an advertisement, will not have satisfactory results for our efforts we tend to ignore it, relegating it to a subattentive level. We do the same to silences which we expect will have no meaning, and so are not inclined to make any effort to understand[34]. This is

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[32] Jaworski, pg: 100. Habermas would argue that this is impossible as all communication must be negotiated to occur.

[33] Jaworski, pg: 100.

[34] Jaworski, pg: 101.

very important because it results in a communicative vacuum, where no passage of information can occur because it is not recognised as occurring. We will see that it is highly significant that a silence must be noticed as relevant in this way before it is understood.

Jaworski asserts that the first effort required for communication via silence must be the acknowledgement, from both the utterer of the silence and the audience, that an effort at communication is being made. Without this acknowledgement no transferral of information can happen. But his claim overlooks two important points. First of all, it ignores the possibility of subliminal communication. This may conjure up images of wicked advertisers covertly coercing us to over-consume products for their own gain; but it is possible to imagine an act of silent communication which may be acknowledged by the utterer, but not by the percipient who receives the knowledge at a sub-conscious level. It is possible to understand that a meaning is conveyed without acknowledging that the act of communication is taking place. Secondly, Jaworski's account does not accommodate acts of unintentional communication. It is possible to communicate something silently which one does not intend to communicate nor believe to have communicated. Jaworski himself raises examples of lies which people try to disguise by speaking over. A liar may believe she has gotten away with her lie, but can have unknowingly signalled it by talking too much. Actors are cautious not to telegraph what they are about to do. The person playing Hamlet[35], for example, can unknowingly communicate to the audience that he knows someone is hiding behind the drape in Gertrude's chamber before he is supposed to have noticed the movement, which ruins the shock of Hamlet's murder of Pelonious. So mutual acknowledgement may not be necessary for communication to take place, as communicative silence can function on a

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[35]Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet*. New American Library; New York, N.Y.; 1987.

subconscious level without conscious acknowledgement on the part of the utterer, the audience or both.

The communication vacuum created by pseudo-communication can also be produced by repetitive speech, which eventually is ignored. As a result advertisements must be changed every so often in order to avoid too much repetition. As Jaworski points out, repetition can produce meditative, reflective states, and aid in understanding, and, he says, silence can do the same[36]. We can see this as Jaworski's equivalent to Harpocratic silence which stimulates its percipient to reflect and meditate. The repetitive nature of ads is more likely to be oriented toward creating a non-reflective state, where consumers buy not because they have been convinced of the reasons to believe that this is the best product, but because the advertisement has been successful in capturing their attention on a less cognitive level. Passive Harpocratic silence causes creative and productive behaviour on the part of the percipient, whereas this description of repetitive advertisements shows that they are more likely to inspire passivity in the percipient. So passive silence requires greater effort than the passive behaviour required for repetitive advertising. Thus, advertising is pseudo-communication, but silence does not resemble it to this extent.

5.4.1: Oppressive silence in the political context:

Political propaganda borrows strategies from advertising, using repetitive speech and irrelevant words to create pseudo-communications[37]. Both of these strategies camouflage silences which the speakers are afraid may be distrusted. Thus, politicians hide behind verbiage when they are afraid that they will be seen as either secretive or ignorant. This helps them preserve

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[36] Jaworski, pg: 105.

[37] Jaworski, pg: 104.

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their silences behind a pretence of sharing knowledge, although they remain silent on more salient subjects.

As a result, silence can be a useful tool for political discourse, and not just an effect[38] (as in being silenced, see below). Jaworski says that silence is politically strategic when

> "...the refusal of a public figure to communicate verbally... (1) violates expectations, (2) draws public attribution of fairly predictable meanings, and (3) seems intentional and directed at an audience."[39]

The result of these silences is to clearly communicate an intended intention (perhaps of the sort "I am not a crook") without actually stating it. Such an intentional message must either be general enough to accommodate the ambiguity of its medium, or be directed toward an audience that is specific enough to make misunderstanding less likely. This follows from a further statement:

> "The difference between politically strategic silence and other forms of communicative silences is that the former does not have to rely on its context to make its meaning predictable, whereas the meanings of the other kinds of communicative silence can only be interpreted in relation to the verbal and other non-verbal context in which they appear."[40]

So Jaworski is assuming that the political context is somehow not a necessary element for use of, and interpretation of a politically strategic silence. But I assert that context is necessary for all predictability. If the political context in which the silence takes place did not exist it would be just another difficult-to-interpret silence, and could be intended to mean just about anything. The

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[38] Jaworski, pg: 105; as in being silenced, see below.

[39] From Brummett, 1980, pg. 289; Jaworski pg. 106.

[40] Jaworski, pg: 106.

context, as will be explained in Part II, provides the necessary parameters for making sense of a Larundic silence.

Strategic silences can have good and bad consequences. In the political context a silence always implies mystery and passivity[41]. This can have positive effects on the image of the politician, but it can also be perceived as elusive and untrustworthy because expectations of communication are not fulfilled. One can evaluate the outcome of a politically strategic silence by analysing "political contexts preceding and following the silence, its ethical aspects, and other non-verbal behaviour accompanying it..."[42]. The outcome will indicate what value is placed on the silence by revealing how well it succeeded in masking the secret. Thus, the context reveals at least part of the meaning of the silence.

In Polish there is a specific term for 'failing to mention something' (*przemilczenie*). It is considered a useful political tool for manipulation[43], but it can backfire when the audience expects to hear what was ostensibly ignored by the speaker. The consequences of failure to mention something are positive when the silence is effective, but can have serious negative effects when they are discovered. In this sense, silence can be "concealed in a multitude of words"[44], so it is possible to remain silent even when we speak.

Ordinarily, strategic silences are meant to have positive effects. Allusional references can, like in-jokes, communicate directly with a few and indirectly with others[45], thus giving a single statement a *double-entendre* which owes its subtlety to silence. Strategic silence permits discretion and indirectness. A silence is often more polite than a direct refusal. Euphemisms

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[41] Jaworski, p: 106.

[42] Jaworski, pg: 107.

[43] Jaworski, pg: 109.

[44] Jaworski, pg: 8.

[37] Jaworski, pg: 110.

are helpful in this way by appearing to be relevant and exhaustive[46], while actually leaving a great deal to silence.

Silence can be relevant to politics in ways other than equivocation. When a law is silent about a particular topic, and the judge decides it is not a problem for the courts, the issue is passed on to legislators. Thus, the case enters the political realm. Now legislators and politicians must decide how to formulate a new and appropriate law, and to do so they must discern the public attitude toward the issue. More often than not legislators do not consult every citizen in order to learn how each perceives the solution to the problem. To do so would be far too cumbersome and time consuming. Instead, politicians rely on openly expressed opinions, and their own interpretation of silence in the community. This can have problematic effects on the community because politicians' and legislators' interpretations of public attitudes can be mistaken or distorted, and this is particularly true in the case of silence.

In the political realm silence is most often considered acquiescence. If citizens do not openly express their attitudes toward an issue politicians will continue to do what they were doing, assuming that the silence means they have full agreement from citizens. But, agreement does not always mean acceptance in politics. Sometimes it merely means the government has succeeded in coercing its citizens enough to make them afraid to speak, as was often the case under the Third Reich. Alternatively, during the U.S.A. McCarthy hearings, silences were deliberate displays of dissent on the part of witnesses who refused to "name names". So, interpreting public silence as support can be a mistake.

Jaworski believes that silence can help maintain the status quo in politics and elsewhere. This is often done through censorship, either self-imposed (as in a public figure's use of 'no comment') or other-imposed.

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[46] Jaworski, pg: 114.

Dictators often maintain control by use of silence and silencing measures[47]. This is a form of what Jaworski refers to as 'macro-silence', which hides injustices and controls reactions to them. Mass media can be used to issue political gibberish in order to disguise these silences[48], and then the irrelevancies of the propaganda become silent pseudo-communication. For example, martial-law in Poland silenced opposing parties by not allowing media access to certain groups. More overtly the *desaparecidos* (missing people) of Latin America were victims of outright terrorism in an attempt to silence them. Fortunately, their mothers, wives and sisters prevented them form being completely silenced by carrying photos of the missing persons on banners protesting the government. The victims' stories are given voice through these women, and the victims' identities are preserved from silence because of them.

> "The silencing of a group may take very subtle but equally effective forms: brainwashing, indoctrination, and negative stereotyping, which all lead to the creation of a group's self image as a powerless, submissive, inferior body with nothing relevant to say."[49]

Silence is oppressive when it is characteristic of a dominated group. Oppressive silence is silence which is not an absence of speech on the part of its victims, but an absence of listening on the part of the oppressors. This silence usually causes tension, anxiety and depression to members of the oppressed group. It can be subverted in many ways including graffiti, and underground publications, and other methods which defeat the oppressive silence.

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[47] Jaworski, pg: 115.

[48] Jaworski, pg: 116.

[49] Jaworski, pg: 118.

5.4.2: Oppressive silence in the social context:

Jaworski includes women among those who suffer from being silenced by a dominated group. Even St. Paul said:

> "Let women keep silent in the churches, for they are not allowed to speak. Instead, they must, as the Law says, be in subordination. If they wish to learn something, let them inquire of their own husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church."[50]

There are many examples of women's oppression through silencing. Women have traditionally lacked access to male dominated media. Only recently have female voices become more prevalent in public places, and then these women are often subject to irrelevant restrictions not applied to men, such as age and appearance. Also, women's achievements have been silenced historically. Women's activities, art and craft have been ignored or given the generic rubric of community activities and crafts. Their work appears in museums without names to indicate who made them.

The oppressive silencing has not been exclusive to the public realm. Women are frequently interrupted in face-to-face conversation, and have suffered from the double-bind of being expected to talk in social contexts but be subordinate to men the rest of the time. Strangely, women are generally considered to have better verbal skills than men, but are still kept from having control over conversations. Furthermore, men's tendency toward inexpressiveness can be seen as a type of male dominance over women.

Those oppressed by silence are prohibited from indulging in the relaxing, private silence "men have access to at home"[51]. Silence perceived as a luxury, in the sense of being private, relaxed or meditative, takes on a different feeling when it is enforced. Instead, the silence of the oppressed is a

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[50] II Cor. 14.34-35; Jaworski 119. See also, Kramer, H. & Sprenger, J. *Malleus Maleficarum*. Montegue Summers trans. Arrow Books; London; New York, N.Y.; 1987.

[51] Jaworski, pg: 119.

frustrating struggle against not being heard, where one is limited in expression and belittled.

Women, and silence, have been perceived as abnormal form the biased point of view of those who see men, and speech, as normal. Speech is preferred because it appears to be logical, simple, and intelligible[52]. It is interesting to note that men have applied the same labels to male thinking; whereas, female thinking is often called illogical, fuzzy and emotive and criticised as abnormal for being so[53]. But,

> "The perception of a feature as normal or abnormal is never a question of objective fact but of the circumstances in which it is observed..."[54]

Those things which are perceived as abnormal cause anxiety because of their complexity and the challenge they pose to the dominant order. As a result, the desire to silence the abnormal is strong. The self is regarded as right because it is familiar or normal, thus the other is wrong because it is unfamiliar or abnormal. Perception of the other can be altered and manipulated, so that we can decide whether to perceive something as familiar/same or alien/different. Thus, speech may be perceived as preferable and then the unfavoured group is prevented from engaging in it, or their mode of speech is classified as inappropriate for some reason. Women's speech has been called fuzzy and emotive, laden with irrelevancies and, therefore, different from men's. The male model is considered clear and truthful, better able to communicate important things. It is the male model which is dominant, therefore it is perceived as normal, while the female model is perceived as abnormal. The assignation of status is ambiguous and people's status can change according to context. People are defined not according to

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[52] Jaworski, pg: 122.

[53] Gilligan, Carol. *In A Different Voice.* Harvard University Press; Cambridge, Mass.; 1982.

[54] Jaworski, pg: 122-3.

facts, but according to "what we believe to be the case..."[55]. Thus, when a group is perceived as being 'other' and are oppressed as well, they become taboo and are then silenced[56].

5.5 The Restrictions of Language:

Language is often perceived as a means of control. We have control when we speak, in that we have voice. But it is also another kind of control, namely the control language has over the speaker. Language is limited and it limits us when we try to use it. Even the most eloquent speaker, the best user of a language, will need to resort to neologisms, words borrowed from other languages, metaphors and silences. A language can be silent on a subject in cases where it has no words to address it, label it or describe it. In such cases the speaker is controlled by the language which limits speech and ultimately can limit thought if we ignore what is beyond language. Linguistic control abbreviates what can be communicated, and can prevent others from understanding what one intends to say. Additionally, in some cases language may require us to say something other than what we want to say.[57]

By contrast, silence is freedom from the restrictions of language. In silence we can address thoughts which cannot be addressed by language because language lacks the frame of reference for doing so. We escape the control language has over us when we do not use it, at least to some extent, as we often fail to notice things for which there are no words in our language. The Inuit think about snow differently from the way English speakers do

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[55] Jaworski, pg: 124.

[56] The above is from Jaworski, pg: 125. See also the work of Dana Jack.

[57] Robin Downie mentioned an interesting example of this. Apparently a certain language has no other term for 'far away' than "there where one cries 'mother I am lost'".

because their vocabulary is great enough to account for subtle, but probably significant, differences English speakers do not notice. However, this does not mean that we have no experience of things for which we have no name, it is just that the experience is silent and therefore easily ignored.

Silence liberates us from the restrictions of language, provided that it is not ignored. The subtleties and vagueness of silence can be useful for breaking through the limitations language imposes upon us. We must be open to what silence offers, pay attention to what cannot be said, what is left out of language, in order to escape the tyranny of language. To do this is to learn to appreciate silence, and thereby allow it a positive value. This notion will be expanded upon in Part II.

5.6 Conclusions:

The many uses of silence illustrate how it is unsatisfactory to assign a single value to silence as a general concept. The positive uses of silence indicate its positive value. Hence we judge as 'good' the silence which passes on information without it needing to be spoken; and we judge as 'bad' the silence which deceives or oppresses.

Silence is not a definable concept; by evading definition it remains flexible. So we have not defined it, but instead have tried to create a generalised analysis of its many functions, from the difference between pure and impure silence, to the subdivision of impure silence into Harpocratic and Larundic silences, and finally focusing on Larundic silence in its communicative role. This examination allows us to see silence in different ways and permits a richer understanding of the role of silence in communication. However, the realisation that silence is meaningful and common in our lives and language uses could not help us to determine whether normative statements and value statements about silence can be made sense of. This had to be done via an exploration of some of the many functions silence serves.

It is not clear whether silence is valued in itself or not. On the whole the general attitude toward silence is one of ambivalence; sometimes 'silence is golden', other times it is evil like the 'silence of a conspiracy', or the 'silence of the grave' (which term is usually thought of as evil though it is probably quite neutral except for the feelings we impose upon it). The value we attribute to silence seems to be context dependent, much like its meaning. So the value we attribute to silence will vary according to the meaning the silence carries, and this will depend on context. The context itself will be situation dependent or culturally dependent as different cultural groups have

different attitudes toward silence in general. Among these groups the value a silence is given depends upon the situation in which it arises. Silent greetings are less favoured among European Westerners than they are among Navajo Native Americans[58], except in certain situations where a silent greeting is more appropriate to European Westerners such as when you wish to greet someone in a lecture hall while a lecture is being given. Hence the appeal to context.

It should no longer be in question whether silence can bear meanings, as they have shown to be able to do so. Moreover, those meanings can be transmitted to an audience through Larundic silence, and without the use of more overt forms of communication. In this sense silence is communicative like speech is. However, ultimately we cannot say of silence that it is valued or not, because its status depends on its context, and even then its value may be ambiguous. The same may be said of most things. However, it is possible to make value assertions about individual silences, which means that in order to make sense of value statements about silence we must follow Jaworski's recommendation and assume a relativist perspective. This marks a similarity that silence has to language; neither is inherently valuable in every case – silence and speech are good or bad only when we apply our judgement upon them. We can assert normative claims about silence and speech only according to the context in which they arise.

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[58] Jaworski, pp: 54-55.

CONCLUSION TO PART I

In part I of this thesis it was shown that silence is a far more complex notion than is immediately obvious. We have tried to circumnavigate this complexity by mapping out a vocabulary that demonstrates the different types of silence. To this end silence was divided into the two categories of pure and impure silence. Impure silence was the subdivided into Harpocratic and Larundic silences, with further subdivisions. It was subsequently demonstrated that Harpocratic silence can be empty and ready to have meaning applied to it. Larundic silence, meanwhile, was shown to bear its own meaning in the way that linguistic utterances bear meanings. In order to understand how silences carry and then communicate their meanings, silence was compared with metaphor. It was concluded that silence shares enough similarities with metaphor that it is possible to refer to it as a form of metaphor. The reasons for this were outlined in chapter 3. From the point where silence is viewed as a form of communication, we proceeded to look at its relation to speech. Jaworski's notion of a continuum between speech and silence helped determine the connection between the two, and to strengthen the arguments in chapters 2 and 3 which apply linguistic theories to silence. In chapter 4, the continuum then clarified how it is that silence can communicate even though it is wordless. And chapter 5 offered a summary of different ways in which silence is used.

Part II of this thesis will explore other aspects of the communicative nature of silence. In the sections that follow, we will see that silence relies on interpretation to make its meanings known. It will also be seen that this requirement makes communication through silence precarious and hence

reliant on restrictions to guard against radical readings. Thus, a model for the interpretation of silence will be offered in Part II based on suggestions from a variety of theorists.

PART II:

INTERPRETING SILENCE

CHAPTER 6

PROBLEMS WITH INTERPRETING SILENCE

6.1 Introduction:

Part I extends the argument that silences can have meanings, and do act as meaningful utterances which can communicate and inform. The argument demonstrates that silences can communicate but that they do so with great ambiguity, much the way metaphors do. Their ambiguity is not, however, necessarily a drawback. On the contrary, ambiguity can be useful for communicating concepts which are either obscure or elude language altogether. Moreover, silent communication can accommodate richness, depth and texture which ordinary language cannot; this is because absence of speech stimulates the imagination and leaves space for new ideas. Finally, it was shown that silence can be expedient when language fails to be.

On the other hand, there are inherent problems related to the ambiguity and vagueness of Larundic silence. Its evasion requires the audience to construct interpretations of it in order for its meaning to be understood and communicated. Unfortunately, this can lead to misunderstandings, which prompt the twin aims in Part II of this thesis. The first aim is to examine some of the features of interpretation and misunderstanding. Second, is to explore some of the possibilities for making interpretation of silence less uncertain. In order to accomplish the second aim several elements are proposed which, when combined, will make interpretation accessible and misunderstanding less likely. These elements are derived from the works of a number of philosophers, most notably Ludwig Wittgenstein, Hans-Georg Gadamer,

Sperber and Wilson, Richard Bernstein and Ronald Dworkin; and include such notions as: context, relevance, *prejudice*, tradition, openness, agreement, practical reasoning, best light and fit.

In order to facilitate the process of building interpretations which adequately reflect the meaning of the utterance, the above elements will be considered. It will be argued that the best interpretation of a meaning must attend to the *context* in which it arises. Such attention is not limited to the immediate surroundings and to the utterer, but also to the context in a more mediate sense including the details not available on the surface. Attention to mediate information ensures the interpretation has proper *fit* to the coherent whole of the utterance. This in turn ensures that the utterance is seen in its *best light*; in other words, as internally consistent and not set up as a straw man easily knocked down by the interpreter. This is one way in which the interpretation relies on relevance to prevent misunderstanding. Jaworski suggests a second salience of *relevance* in interpretation of silence. As he puts it, ideally the audience "chooses the most relevant interpretation of my silence"[1] in an effort to prevent misunderstandings. This requires *openness* on the part of the interpreters so that all the relevant information is acknowledged and used. Openness is necessary because information can be obscured by the preconceptions interpreters bring to the act of interpretation. These preconceptions, or *prejudices*, can obscure the meaning of the silence. However, Gadamer suggests that *prejudices* may also facilitate our understanding by providing the basis upon which to build the understanding. Gadamer's *prejudicial* basis will thence be useful for constructing interpretations of silences which offer few clues of their own as foundations for interpretations. Finally it is necessary to reach an *agreement* of the meaning between the interpreter and the utterer or the utterance, to provide a means of differentiating between understanding and misunderstandings. This

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[1] Jaworski, pg: 3.

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is pulled together by the act of *practical reasoning* which weaves the constituent parts into a general model and applies it to individual silences with flexibility and coherence.

For reasons which may be obvious, this part of the thesis focuses primarily upon Larundic silence rather than Harpocratic silence. Larundic silences bear meanings of their own and are therefore the only silences that require interpreting. By extension then, they are also the only silences that can fall victim to misinterpretations. This is what I shall refer to as a *radical reading* of the meaning of a silence. Going outside the finite meaning of a Larundic silence is problematic for the simple reason that it involves misunderstanding and hinders communication. Moreover, Larundic silences are likely to precipitate serious consequences when they are ignored or when they are mistaken for Harpocratic silence. The following chapters are designed to help restrict interpretations to the limits inherent in the Larundic silence, and thereby limit the possibility of radical readings. This does not mean that there is no freedom in a Larundic silence. Its perimeter is wide, but it is still restrictive to a degree, as we shall see.

The theories examined below offer elements which contribute to a possible model of interpretation that not only accommodates language and text, but also silence[2]. We begin with an exploration of the slippery nature of silence, and an attempt to explain why it is both difficult and necessary to construct interpretations of silent communications.

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[2] These theories are also applied to art, science, law and social-understanding in general by the various authors. Gadamer especially leaves his theory deliberately open to be applied in various contexts. In fact, the term "text" for him can substitute for many different objects of interpretation including utterances and works of art. The term" author" is also applied in various ways accordingly; thus an utterance can have an author, as can a work of art. These terms will be used in a similar manner throughout this text.

6.2 The Slippery Nature of Silence:

The problem with silences is that they are opaque. This opacity implies that the meanings of silences are difficult to apprehend. Consequently, silences must be interpreted to be understood. However, interpreting meanings is rarely an infallible practice, even under the best of circumstances when clues are provided and a meaning is obvious. There is always a risk of misunderstanding or distortion due to the presence of personal beliefs brought to the act by the interpreter. Because of the high potential for misunderstanding and opportunism in interpretation it is useful to construct, if not rules, then some kind of general methodology for making interpretations. This will be especially useful for silences because silences rarely, if ever, provide the optimum conditions for interpretation that other more overt acts of communication provide. Thus, we say that silence is too slippery to get a hold of. The following exchange between Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson illustrates how easy it is to overlook the importance of a silence.

> "Is there anything to which you wish to draw my attention?"
> "The singular incident of the dog in the night time."
> "But the dog did nothing in the night time."
> "That was the singular incident."
> (Holmes to Watson, on the subject of the dog who did not
> bark because he knew the burglar[3].)

As familiar as we are with the experience of meaning behind our own silences, we are equally familiar with times when we have recognised the presence of meaning behind the silences of others. For example, one can be aware that the silence of children in the next room means trouble before going to see this for oneself. However, the knowledge that another's silence is

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[3] I would like to thank Prof. Graham Watt for drawing this example to my attention.

meaningful is not necessarily accompanied by a distinct understanding of what that meaning is. Some theorists doubt whether it is ever possible to know the intended meaning behind another's utterance, whether that be a silent or a spoken utterance, a text or even a work of art. Theorists such as Gadamer deny the hegemony of authorial intention altogether. However, if we grant that silences do have meanings, and that they can communicate these meanings, then we will want to know how this is accomplished: how can we know what the meaning of a silence is? Grasping the meaning of a silence involves constructing an interpretation of it, but this will be difficult because silences are slippery and do not offer the kinds of conditions needed for making accurate interpretations.

How do we account for the slippery nature of silence? Jaworski applies to silence the theory put forth by Marshall McLuhan in *Understanding Media: the Extensions of Man*[4]. According to this theory, media of communication come in two forms: "hot and cool". Hot media offer the audience a large amount of information for understanding the messages they bear; cool media offer little information so they must be filled in by the listener in order for communication to take place[5]. Television is given as an example of a hot medium because it fills the senses with visual and auditory information and leaves very little to the imagination. Speech is a cool medium of communication because it requires at least some effort on the part of listeners for clear understanding to take place. Silence is even *cooler* because it requires a great deal of effort. And this is at least one way in which silence can be described as slippery, because grasping its meaning requires effort.

> "Silence is a medium of communication whose processing requires more cognitive effort than speech."[6]

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[4] Routledge, Kegan & Paul; London; 1964.

[5] Jaworski, pg: 141.

[6] Jaworski, pg: 141.

Even though speech is a cool medium, when we hear someone speak comparatively little cognitive effort is required to determine whether their speech is meaningful or not. Some additional effort may be required to determine what the meaning of their utterance is, but the utterance is easily recognised as meaningful. Silence is different. A greater effort is required for the percipient to even notice that a silence is meaningful, and even more effort is required to determine what that meaning is. According to Jaworski, silence does not manifest its meaning in a strong way. In this sense, he continues, Larundic silence is like a code and necessitates the effort of decoding through interpretation. This leaves silence vulnerable to misinterpretation[7]. Silence resembles a code because its message is not obvious but ambiguous, and like a code it must be recognised as being a communicative attempt before it can pass its meaning on. It must be assumed that an attempt at communication is occurring or a silence risks being ignored as meaningless. This is because silence lacks manifest conventions of communication. In the same way, a written code may be perceived as mere gibberish until it is acknowledged to be a message and then decoded. As a non-verbal mode of communication, silence relies on coding and decoding because it is weaker than verbal communication and is therefore slippery and ambiguous.

We can summarise this depiction of the slippery nature of silence as follows. The description of silence as a cool medium of communication and Jaworski's analogy of silence as a code, distinctly illustrate how the communicative act of silence is slippery in the following ways: 1) silence is an ambiguous and therefore weak form of communication which manifests its meaning only very coolly; 2) as a result it is not always recognised as being a meaningful act of communication and is therefore easily overlooked as empty or ignored; 3) even when it is recognised as being meaningful silence requires

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[7] Jaworski, pg: 85.

efforts of interpretation in order to be understood, and this leaves it vulnerable to misinterpretation. To this will also be added 4) silence as a non-verbal form of communication offers few clues for making the act of communication more likely to succeed. Because of these four characteristics, silence is accurately described as being slippery.

6.3 Conditions for Building Interpretations:

It is the problem of mistaking full communicative silences for empty ones that in part fuels the need to address the ways in which we construct interpretations of silences. Another reason for doing so is that even when silences are recognised as bearing a meaning this meaning is difficult to discern because the silence is slippery. Under optimum conditions the construction of an interpretation of a meaning is relatively straightforward. But silences rarely, if ever, present such optimum conditions and as a result they are more difficult to understand. So what are the conditions that make construction of an interpretation of a meaning, any meaning, possible?

To determine this it will be helpful to look at an example of a relatively simple interpretative act. Take an illocutionary act such as the command "silence, please". In a particular situation, such as when visiting a library, the meaning of the command is sufficiently clear and is made clearer by the context in which it arises. Hence, the audience is intended to interpret the command as directed toward anyone who is making noise, and as requiring this person to stop doing so. But how is this interpretation to be arrived at? How do we know what the utterance "silence, please" means? In this case there are two factors which will assist our understanding, these are: 1) the utterance itself, i.e. the words and language used to construct the utterance, and 2) the context of the situation. As described earlier, the words provide the

clues to what is being said; they are the signs of a predetermined linguistic system, and their meanings or the ideas they represent are also predetermined. Thus, the words with which the utterance is constructed help the audience to understand what the meaning of the utterance is by narrowing the field of possible choices from infinite to manageable. The audience must then select from the restricted possibilities the interpretation they think is best. Secondly, the context helps reduce the possible interpretations further and directs the interpreter toward a plausible meaning for the command. That the command is issued in a library, for instance, that other people in the library are trying to read, possibly even that the librarian as person in authority has issued the command; these are all clues to the possible meaning of the utterance. By these indices and a process of elimination the correct interpretation can be reached and the sense of the utterance understood.

We want to be able to describe certain acts of interpretation as misunderstandings for at least two reasons. First, because we know misunderstandings occur, and it would be counterintuitive to deny this. And second, because to deny the possibility of misunderstanding is to presume the infallibility of all interpretations, and this is dangerously relativistic. It is important to accommodate at least the form of misunderstanding which will be called "miscommunication" and is described by Jaworski as a "pragmatic failure".

> "When the pragmatic force of the utterance, in this case silence, attributed by the hearer is different from that intended by the speaker, 'pragmatic failure' takes place."[8]

By this we assume Jaworski is referring to the propositional force (Pf) described by Grice[9] as the intended informative content of the utterance.

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[8] Jaworski, pg: 68.

[9] Grice, 1967. Pp: 39-48.

When the Pf of a statement as perceived by the audience is different from the Pf intended by the utterer then miscommunication takes place, and the audience fails to understand the meaning which the utterer intended them to grasp.

This implies that there is a certain importance attributed to the intention of the utterer in issuing the utterance. An idea which is not especially radical, but which does meet with criticism. There are many who disagree that authorial intent plays a role in interpretation. Their argument is briefly something like this: we can never know what goes on in the mind of an author when making a statement; furthermore, the utterance once issued takes on a life of its own and will be interpreted in ways which the author could never have intended (partly because interpreters have different perspectives than the author has). Therefore authorial intent is not a helpful concept for formulating interpretations. This argument contains some truth, but it is not necessarily valid. It is true that we cannot read minds, and even if we could, our personal views of the world and our past histories would affect the way in which we understood the information we receive. It is also true that authors rarely succeed in directly transmitting their exact thoughts to an audience, and any attempts to do so are bound to be frustrated. However, the anti-intention position does not withstand the critiques offered by Searle as outlined above, and Gadamer, as will be demonstrated below. Their positions assert that there is something distinct to which the audience is ascribing a meaning. This something is independent of the interpretation ascribed to it by the audience. Gadamer will go so far as to say, that there is an object independent even of the intended meaning of its author; and that it is the *thing-in-itself*, as Gadamer calls it, upon which our interpretations are imposed. Even without taking the extreme perspective Gadamer takes, it is possible to support the claim that there is a meaning independent of the interpretation imposed upon it. This will explain why we have to be careful how we make

interpretations, and will also explain why we can be said to make wrong interpretations. It lays the groundwork for misunderstanding.

The tenability of this notion holds for silences as much as it does for any utterance or work of art. Even though it is not entirely clear what a silence means, it is the case that Larundic silences can have specific meaning, and that interpretations of a Larundic silence ought to try to remain faithful to whatever that meaning is. The question remains how this is to be done.

6.3.1 Words as Clues:

Under ordinary circumstances, when an utterance is made its audience understands the message it conveys. In other words, we tend to understand what people say to us. At least one of the many reasons why this is so is that the words in the utterance help convey the meaning to the audience. As Wittgenstein put it, we understand the *sense* of the sentence at least partly because we understand the words with which it is composed[10]. In some way the words act as clues to the meaning.

Interpretation of words is different from interpretation of silence. Words are symbols which act as perimeters or limits to their interpretation. Every word has at least one meaning, and this meaning directs the interpreter toward specific ideas. These are the ideas for which the word is a symbol. If the interpreter goes outside the limits of these ideas then it is possible to describe the interpretation as wrong or radical. The limits guide the interpreter toward right interpretation, and to exceed the limits is to miss the point. Take for example the word 'house'. If the interpreter construes this symbol to be something with four legs, a long tale, and a big mane the attempt would be judged as a wrong interpretation of the symbol. If the interpreter took the word to mean a building with four external walls, a roof, a garden, and used as a dwelling, the interpretation would be judged as right. This is because the

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[10] See Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, §3.3 &4.022; and *Investigations*, §20, 33, 117 & 197.

interpretation has remained within the accepted limits of the definition of the word. Nevertheless, it is possible to make mistakes by staying within the boundaries of correct interpretation. If the speaker had in mind the House of Parliament then the interpreter's conception of a dwelling would be incorrect. Yet somehow we hesitate in calling this wrong in the same way mistaking a house for a lion is wrong. We might be more inclined to call it an honest mistake but not actually wrong. This is because the interpreter did not exceed the limits the symbol set out; she merely took what was most readily evident to her as the correct interpretation without fully exploring the boundaries of meaning the symbol offered. Thus, words restrict interpretations of utterances, at least to some extent, by being associated with accepted meanings. But can the same be said of utterances that contain no words?

6.3.2 Clues for Silence:

It is possible to interpret silences even though they lack the overt clues words offer. This is because there are other clues we use to make interpretations, and these can be applied to interpretations of silences as well. One such clue is in the way that silence draws attention to itself, an idea earlier referred to with reference to metaphor. Silent communication appeals to its ostensive-referential surroundings in order to make it distinguishable from meaningless silences, marks or sounds. That is to say, that silences which occur when they are expected, or when their presence is conspicuous, are perceived as meaningful because of the way they fit into their surroundings. For example, a minute of symbolic silence at a memorial is meaningful because of its context, and is easily differentiated from the meaning of a minute of silence which might precede a concert. Furthermore, the tension of the *inappropriate* presence of a silence can also cause one to recognise its meaningfulness, as we have seen above. This is one way Larundic silence has to protect itself from the vulnerability of being ignored as Harpocratic.

Grice, as we saw earlier, and Jaworski have pointed out that an act of communication occurs on two levels.

> "The manifestness of assumption in communication takes place at two levels of intentionality. *Informative intention* is recognised when a certain stimulus (verbal or nonverbal) is produced by the communicator to manifest or make more manifest to the audience a set of assumptions. *Communicative intention* is recognised when it is made mutually manifest to audience and communicator that the communicator has this informative intention. The two basic layers of information provided by ostention are the following: (1)... the *informative intention* – and (2)... the *communicative intention*."[11]

Silence is capable of *informative intention* on its own in that it can bear a specific meaning; or of *informative intention* accompanied by *communicative intention* such as when a silence cannot be ignored.

> "It appears that when silence is used ostensively to manifest explicitly (or make more manifest) a set of assumptions, both informative and communicative intentions are fulfilled."[12]

However, a silent informative intention is easily ignored if its communicative intention is not recognised. So a person confronted by a silence will first of all need to perceive the communicative intention behind the silence; after which it is possible to recognise that the utterer wants to convey a meaning by issuing it. This is the one of the necessary clues for non-radical interpreting of Larundic silences. It will be referred to as noticing the *relevance* of the silence, in keeping with the idea of relevance introduced by Sperber and Wilson and discussed below. To note that a silence is relevant is the first clue toward interpreting its meaning because we do not make efforts to interpret things which we do not recognise as bearing any meaning.

Nevertheless, this does not account for the kinds of unintentional silences discussed earlier which can and do communicate without either the

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[11] Jaworski, pg: 84-5. See also the section of this thesis on Meaning and Silence.

[12] Jaworski, pg: 87.

intention to inform or the intention to communicate. These silences were referred to earlier as 'silent slips of the tongue'. For example the silence of two strangers passing in the street does convey the information that they do not know one another, but such silences are not intended to convey information they are simply incidentally communicative. Another example is found in the Straussian school of Platonic exegesis which bases itself on finding meaning in what is *not* present in the texts[13], so the readers find meaning in what has been (un)intentionally left silent. Thus, we can transmit information without fulfilling either the informative intention or the communicative intention; in fact without any intention at all. This is because some information is cognitive and not inferential, such as accents which express information about the speaker without intending to[14]. In this sense, a silence can tell us something about the identity of its utterer or the person who avoids making an utterance. Formal silences and pauses can intentionally convey meaning, especially if they are formulaic in nature. But they can also convey information unintentionally and therefore require no intention on the part of the utterer that a communicative act is taking place. Furthermore, the information conveyed does not necessarily have to be recognised by the audience, who can receive the information by osmosis, as it were, without knowing they have received it. Hypnosis works on exactly this premise, where people are hypnotised in order to help them remember the elements of events they have witnessed but could not recall the fine details of. It follows from all of this that it makes sense to say that we can interpret a silence whose bearer claims has no intended meaning.

In order to interpret the meaning of a silence we look for the clues within the context in which the silence occurs. As the examples in the

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[13] Strauss, Leo: *The Argument and the Action of Plato's Laws.* University of Chicago Press; Chicago, Il.; 1975. Thank you to Richard Stalley for calling this example to my attention.

[14] Jaworski, pg: 88.

previous paragraph suggest, sometimes this means reading between the lines, an idea illustrated in more detail in the section on "Medical Silence".

Clues for the interpretation of silence are possible, even though silence is slippery. The clues for interpreting silence emerge when careful attention is paid to the possibility of meaning within silence and when the context of the silence is examined, like reading between the lines. But this must be done with an awareness of the multifacity of silence. Silence is not merely communicative or uncommunicative; silence can also be either communicatively relevant or communicatively irrelevant, just like speech, and we can acknowledge it or ignore it the same way we do speech. This accounts for empty silences, full silences and the problem of full silences which are mistaken for empty silences. Below we will show how other elements, including context and relevance are of utmost importance as clues for interpreting silences.

CHAPTER 7

CONTEXT

7.1 Context and Frame Analysis:

The primary element for constructing non-radical interpretations is context. Context provides silences, and other objects of interpretation, with a frame of reference. This kind of frame analysis[1] is especially helpful in simplifying the activity of interpreting silence. The frame analysis model can provide the interpreter with valuable clues for constructing her interpretation and

> "...explain how individuals exchange signals that allow them to agree upon the level of abstraction at which any message is intended."[2]

Framework is a useful analogy applied to silence by Jaworski. Context, he says, is like the frame of a painting which draws the boundaries between the painting and reality. The meaning the painting extends exists only within the frame; outside the frame the painting is something else: an object, a decoration, an investment[3]. Staying within the perimeter of the frame ensures that the interpretation is consistent with the story the painting tells. Thus, we are required to remain within the frame in order to generate non-radical interpretations of the object. This will be a significant source of

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[1] Jaworski, pg: 145.

[2] Jaworski, pg: 147.

[3] Jaworski, pg: 148.

clues for interpreting Larundic silences. The painting outside its frame is something else, just as a silence outwith its context is not the same silence it is within its context. The limiting characteristics of a frame of reference thus help prevent us from mistaking finite Larundic silences for the infinite qualities of Harpocratic silence. Uncovering and remaining within the frame of reference is necessary for making non-radical interpretations of Larundic silence.

Larundic silences are the only silences that require interpreting, because they are the silences which bear meaning to be interpreted. The meaning a Larundic silence offers is a limited meaning in that its meaning is specific. Any interpretation that moves outside the limits of the silence's frame of reference is a radical reading of the silence. For a reading to be non-radical it must respect the boundaries set by the frame of reference. This means respecting the context of the silence in its mediate and immediate forms. In this way the interpreter of a silence will be able to uncover clues to the meaning of the silence, and the boundaries of the frame of reference will become clearer until the meaning is revealed. The point of remaining within the limits set by the silence and revealed in its contextual elements is to remain faithful to the meaning which the silence extends.

However, there are Larundic silences that point the way outside their own frames of reference; for example, poetry can suggest a silent meaning of its own, but may also serve as a take-off point for the imagination. In such cases it is necessary to remain within the perimeter of the silent meaning of the poem only to the extent that the percipient wishes to know the meaning of the poem. Beyond that, the percipient is free to move into a less finite, more Harpocratic silence of creativity. Two different but overlapping silences are at play here. The finite Larundic silence that contains the meaning of the poem, and the resulting infinite Harpocratic silence to which the poem directs the reader. Not recognising the distinction between the two raises problems for

Larundic silences, because it leads to unrestricted interpretation of a specific meaning; in other words, a radical reading of a Larundic silence.

7.1.1 Reading the Clues:

> "The interpretation of the message may equally depend on the understanding of both the said and the unsaid elements of the utterance (*implicature*)."[4]

Reading the clues in the context can help us resolve the ambiguity of Larundic silences. Studying physical characteristics such as duration, intensity, and contextual strain, can assist in the clarification of the meaning of a silence. Physical characteristics serve as clues for interpreting the silence with greater accuracy. The setting of the silence has been shown to be important in several examples in the thesis already. The silence of church-goers at prayer ought to be considered within the context of the church, just as the silence of an audience attending a concert is meaningful within the context of the concert. Familiarity with the physical characteristics surrounding a silence will reveal further information, as it will disclose mediate information about the silence not available on the surface. To illustrate, consider how one interprets the meanings of Larundic silences uttered by people we are familiar with. It is no coincidence that we are better able to interpret the meanings of people we know. And, in fact, our agility at interpreting a silence can grow with the degree of closeness we have to the person whose silences we interpret. This is due to familiarity. A familiarity with the silent utterer's non-verbal signals increase our ability to understand the meanings behind their silences. Hence I can recognise that when my husband tugs on his beard he is tense, and I do not need him to express this to me verbally. However, there is more to my interpretation than simple association of action with emotion,

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[4] Jaworski, pg: 79.

because I am also able to tell when this same tugging is an indication of concentration. This is where I go deeper into the context of the situation. Patrick's silent beard-tugging can be understood in different ways depending on when he is performing the action. I can know that his silence means tension or concentration according to the temporal context in which he is pulling on his beard. Someone who didn't know him as well as I do, might mistake beard-tugging while concentrating for beard-tugging due to boredom. My familiarity provides me with better interpretative skills because I have assembled a lexicon of Patrick's behaviour.

But this is not sufficient explanation of interpretation through context. It must also be said that I can be wrong about my interpretation because I am too involved with the person whose silence I am interpreting. In this case our shared context might interfere, and a stranger might be better able to interpret Patrick's silence. I may believe that Patrick is tugging on his beard because he is engrossed in what I am saying and is concentrating. I could miss the fact that he is actually tugging on his beard because the subject of our conversation is making him tense. An impartial observer might be better equipped to interpret Patrick's silence correctly. How do we explain the observer's success? Once again it is the context on which the observer relies to make sense of the situation. The context shows that this is a conversation between spouses in which the husband tugs on his beard. My familiarity may blind me to certain elements in the context. A stranger on the other hand may be highly aware of the elements I miss. Through contextual observation the observer may remark other aspects of the setting in order to make a less radical reading of Patrick's silence.

This example indicates the importance of mediate contextual information. The advantage I have over the stranger is that I am capable of assessing not just information from the immediate setting, but also from the mediate setting. I am familiar with Patrick's personality to a greater degree

than the stranger is. Mediate information is a valuable clue to interpretation because it reveals what is below the surface. When we reach only for immediate contextual information we may not access important clues that reveal information with greater depth and complexity. The immediate understanding can be facile and incomplete. Thus, it is worth the effort of excavating for further information, even if this is not easily available. This is important to bear in mind later on when the thesis discussion will return to the notion of effort required for interpreting silences. The effort may be greater than that required for interpretation of words with overt clues, but the revealed richness will make the effort worthwhile.

Careful examination of the context of the silence will reveal a great deal of information, but not all the information will be appropriate to the interpretation of a particular Larundic silence. Some information will confound rather than assist the interpretation. There are at least two sorts of confounding information in this regard. First of all, some information will be brought to the act of interpretation by the interpreter and mistaken for information revealed by the silence. For instance, mistaken hunches and prejudgements may be so common-place that the interpreter does not recognise them as her own. Second, the silence will be surrounded by a large amount of information some of which may be unnecessary or misdirective. Too much information will overwhelm the interpreter, who may choose to ignore the meaning because the effort at understanding it is too great. Still other information may not be useful at all.

Thus, as Jaworski says,

> "...the principle of relevance based on minimisation of the information processing effort and maximisation of the contextual effects of the utterance, can be useful in explaining how silence is interpreted and disambiguated."[5]

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[5] Jaworski, pg: 68.

Below, the discussion of fit, openness and relevance will reveal more about this idea. Fit plays a role in assuring that a silent meaning is framed within its own context. Jaworski suggests that in order to avoid miscommunication the interpreter of a silence ought to attend to the pertinent issues of the interpretation. This means considering whether the interpretation they offer is coherent with the significant characteristics of the utterer, which can include the context, the relationship between utterer and audience, internal rationality, etc. The importance of openness will also be revealed in greater detail below. Making use of context requires a degree of openness to the information present within the frame of the utterance; information which is not made clear in any direct way. The interpreter is asked, then, to read between the lines and be open and receptive to the information supplied there[6]. Prejudgements may interfere with this to a degree, but it will be revealed that they also assist the interpretation by providing a basis upon which to grow.

7.1.2 Context and Value:

The argument was offered earlier that context helps determine the value of a given silence. We saw that the value a silence has is the one applied to it externally, based on context and individual perception. The variance was seen to occur over cultural contexts as well as different social contexts, such as in politics and small-talk. It appears that silences are assigned positive value when they are part of a context that shows their ambiguous qualities in a good light. However, the value determination is not complete until the percipient (either the utterer or the audience) evaluates the silence. The percipient then judges whether the silence has served their purposes or produced the desired consequences for the context. If the percipient is satisfied that the silence is suitable to the context, she will then apply a positive valuation to the silence. In cases where the silence is not suited to the context, it will be assigned a

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[6] Examples and further discussion of this can be found in chapter 15 "Medical Silence".

negative valuation. For instance, a stunned silence can be useful where the silence was the desired effect on the part of the mugger who tried to stun her victim. On the other hand the same silence may be evaluated as negative by the audience who, stunned into silence, become victims of the assault. In this case the mugger assigns a positive value to the silence, but the victim proffers the opposite evaluation, the negative valuation, because the silence caused them harm. It follows that not only the meaning given the silence, but also the value applied to that meaning, are part of the act of interpretation, and rely on context for their determination.

The mugger example also demonstrates that a silence is not only evaluated according to context, but according to individual perspective as well. We will see later on, that perspectival valuation depends on a mutual cognitive negotiation and agreement between the utterer of the silence and the percipient of the silence. Agreement on this ground will provide the foundations for determining the soundness of an interpretation of a silence.

Perhaps the most convincing argument in favour of using context for understanding utterances is that offered by Wittgenstein in *Philosophical Investigations*. Wittgenstein argues that context demonstrates the *sense* of an utterance which makes communication and understanding possible. The following is a summary of Wittgenstein's argument regarding context, and some ways in which the argument can be applied to silence.

7.2 Wittgenstein on Context:

In his *Philosophical Investigations*[7], Ludwig Wittgenstein shows how important context is for language interpretation and in doing so he illustrates

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[7] Wittgenstein, Ludwig, 1958.

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how silence is instrumental in the interpretation of spoken utterances. He also provides the basis for an argument showing how context is relevant to interpreting silences.

> "One thinks that learning language consists in giving names to objects. *Viz*, to human beings, to shapes, to colours, to pains, to moods, to numbers, etc. To repeat - naming is something like attaching a label to a thing. One can say that this is preparatory to the use of a word. But what is the preparation for?"[8]

The above is Wittgenstein's characterisation of the Reference Theory of Language, which was the most convincing theory of language before *Philosophical Investigations* was produced. Wittgenstein is critical of this theory of meaning because he claims it is an inadequate description of the way language actually functions. The reference theory purports to explain the functioning of language as follows: all words simply name objects in the physical world, or extralinguistic objects. According to the reference theory of language, then, language is simply a tool for expressing the world. Wittgenstein takes issue with this perception of language because he finds it inadequate for explaining the subtleties of language usage. For instance, it does not explain the expression of abstract thoughts and emotions. He also says that the reference theory of language underestimates the complexity of language and the significance of contextual elements in communication. Wittgenstein's suggestion that context is part of understanding is instructive where silence is concerned because it provides the basis for clues for the interpretation of silence.

Wittgenstein begins his critique of the reference theory of language by examining a quote from St. Augustine regarding the process involved in the acquisition of language. In §1 of *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein points to the important issue that Augustine's passage brings to light: all words have meaning and the point is to discover how they get their meanings and

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[8] Wittgenstein: *Philosophical Investigations*, §26.

how these meanings function in communication. Augustine claims that words refer to the objects they name, and therefore all words are just the names or labels[9] for objects. However, Wittgenstein justly remarks that this can only be true of nouns, and thus the theory seriously limits the possible uses of words. We can ascribe such names to "certain actions and properties" but this, Wittgenstein says, is only a secondary element of the reference theory of language. He says this merely shows how a particular word is used in a given sentence, not how the word is defined. Names and labels, he argues, are only meaningful within contexts.

Although names name things and facilitate some kind of communication they only do so in the most rudimentary way. Wittgenstein describes several fictional languages based on the reference theory of language which he says cannot be complete because they do no fully incorporate the subtleties of language. The language described in §2 of *Philosophical Investigations* is a language formed on this theory, and Wittgenstein describes it as primitive. Here A can communicate requests to B by simply speaking the name of the various objects named in their world. A calls for "slab" and B responds to a preunderstanding of the word by bringing A the slab. This is a convincing description of one way language works, but only one particular way, and is not an exhaustive list of language usages. For example, what if by saying the word "slab" A was actually trying to express to B that she would like to have B remove the slab from her foot, rather than bring her a new one. Just saying the word would not sufficiently describe the idea intended by A's use of it at that particular time. The primitive language does not make a sufficient distinction between words and sentences[10]; it packs too much meaning into one word, thus complicating communication. Words in such a primitive language are too reliant upon the economy principle of silence,

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[9] Wittgenstein: *Philosophical Investigations*, §15.

[10] Wittgenstein: *Philosophical Investigations*, §19

where inherent meaning is silent at the expense of direct, hot, clear communication. The silent information can be easily overlooked, and the situation thereby confused by what is unsaid. This notwithstanding, not all economically silent communication will be this problematic, as will be shown in the rest of this discussion of context.

Another issue which the reference theory of language does not address is the silent subtlety of language based on the many possible uses of words[11]. The reality of this is made clear by the work an actor must do when preparing to work with a script. There is a standard demand for the actor to incorporate silent subtext into a performance, speaking one idea out loud, while conveying an unspoken and possibly even unrelated thought The plays of Harold Pinter are notorious for this, as this scene from Pinter's play *Betrayal* helps to illustrate. Two old friends are having lunch together in a restaurant. Robert is describing a trip he took to Torcello while on vacation in Venice with his wife Emma.

Jerry: It's so long ago, I'm obviously wrong. I thought one went to Torcello by gondola.
Robert: It would take hours. No, no, – whoomp – across the lagoon in the dawn.
Jerry: Sounds good.
Robert: I was quite alone.
Jerry: Where was Emma?
Robert: I think asleep.
Jerry: Ah.
Robert: I was alone for hours, as a matter of fact, on the island. Highpoint, actually, of the whole trip.
Jerry: Was it? Well it sounds marvellous.[12]

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[11] Wittgenstein: *Philosophical Investigations*, §23.

[12] Harold Pinter, *Betrayal*, Grove Press, New York, N.Y., 1978; scene 7, pg: 112-113.

On initial reading this sounds like a relatively benign conversation, but it is made clear by the rest of the script that the actors would in fact have to be silently transmitting thoughts and emotions quite different from what the lines suggest. In this situation Robert has just discovered that his old friend Jerry is having an affair with Robert's wife, Emma. During their encounter in the restaurant Robert is unsuccessfully masking the hostility he feels toward Jerry; and Jerry, sensing that something is wrong, is trying to placate his friend without asking outright what is the matter, because he fears a confrontation. Each word in the scene is rich with ideas that the actor must communicate to the audience without actually speaking the words. It could be said that all this would be transmitted to the audience through vocal inflection and body language, but that is only partially true[13]. A critically good performance is usually a very subtle one, thus eliminating the possibility of Robert displaying his true emotions by dumping his lunch in Jerry's lap. The information must be communicated as silently as possible, using very little ostensive-referential information to make the meaning clear; and yet the meaning is communicated even so.

What is interesting about the play, and all of Pinter's work, is that he does not make anything too obvious, but relies on the language of the script, and the context of the story, to convey his point in silence. Robert's line about the highlight of his trip is one of the more obvious examples of this point. He seems to be testing Jerry, giving the ambiguous message that either the island itself was the highlight of his trip, or being away from Emma was. It is possible that the actor playing Robert would set this statement up with an eye to seeing how Jerry would react to his having been happy to be away from Emma. Yet the language is ambiguous enough to mask his true intent thus enabling him to avoid a confrontation in the restaurant.

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[13] Wittgenstein: *Philosophical Investigations*, §21.

The ambiguities of language simply cannot be properly accounted for in the reference theory of language. If every word was just the name of some extralinguistic object how could we explain the fact that whole sentences and individual words express ideas well outside the perimeter of the relationship between the name and the thing named.

> "Think of the tools in a tool-box: there is a hammer, pliers, a saw, a screw-driver, a rule, a glue-pot, glue, nails and screws. – The functions of words are as diverse as the functions of these objects. (And in both cases there are similarities).
>   Of course, what confuses us is the uniform appearance of words when we hear them spoken or meet them in script and print. For their *application* is not presented to us so clearly. Especially when we are doing philosophy!"[14]

This is closely related to the second point of criticism Wittgenstein makes of the reference theory of language. He says that words and language are context dependent. Hence, they do not derive their meaning solely from their relationship to the relatively stable outside world of the objects which they name. They also derive meaning through their usage in a particular situation by particular individuals at a particular time.

> "When we say: ' Every word in a language signifies something' we have so far said *nothing whatever*; unless we have explained exactly *what* distinction we wish to make."[15]

Our understanding of the meanings of words is context dependent, so any given word can have different possible meanings according to the context in which it is used. In other words the context will 'explain exactly what distinction we wish to make'. Silences are equally flexible, if not more so; and silences rely just as much upon their contexts, if not more so. The reference theory of language does not account for this. In the primitive language of §2 the word "slab" would have to be able to incorporate many

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[14] Wittgenstein: *Philosophical Investigations*, §11.

[15] Wittgenstein: *Philosophical Investigations*, §13.

possible usages because it is so stark and thus would be used in many different ways depending on the context. Even our much more complex language offers many examples of words which can be used in many ways depending on their context. One might be making an order, or being sarcastic, or trying to be polite. The scene between Jerry and Robert described above takes on new meaning when couched in the contextual information surrounding it, and has no particular or deep meaning without that information. Furthermore, its meaning could have been very different had it taken place in a different context with a different historical background. The context may be silent, but it must not be overlooked as it is important for constructing interpretations.

Language's dependence on silent context is clear from the difficulty we have in understanding the acquisition of language. We do not learn to speak a language simply by having someone point at and call the names of various different objects, in the hope that we will know what it is the teacher is referring to through the ostensive-referential definition. This would be impossible because there are some things that cannot be made clear by simple ostension reference without the proper context. Take colours, for example. One cannot teach someone the meaning of the colour blue by simply pointing out a blue object. The student might mistake the word blue for the name of that particular object, and not for the colour. So one attempts to reexpress the thought by pointing to several objects, all of which are blue. This presents a further problem, namely expressing the concept that the similarity of all the different shades of blue is in fact what you are trying to indicate as the meaning of the word. The same is as much true for learning to understand silent communication, which is not taught through ostensive references so much as through experience. Learning to understand silences is not really something which can be taught with words either. Silent communication defies all standard methods of teaching, and yet it succeeds in being expressive and being understood. To accomplish successful communication

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through words or silence requires what Wittgenstein refers to as "mastery" on the part of the interpreter.

Teaching and learning languages involves mastery[16]. Mastery is the key to understanding the innuendoes inherent in language. When one has truly mastered a language one is capable of grasping the generalities of speech and applying them to specific contexts and situational usages. Mastery is like being proficient enough at a game to think it through and make optimal use of one's position[17]; it is to truly know a language. Ostensive-referential definitions require some mastery in order to be comprehensible because the student must be able to make out what it is the teacher is referring to when she indicates a particular object. The teacher may point at a ball saying the word "round", and the student must be capable of grasping the fact that it is the shape of the object which is being referred to and not the colour or the object itself. Mastery helps the student to realise the unspoken communicative silence of the teacher. The reference theory of language assumes that everyone has some kind of mastery of some language before the actual learning takes place, but this is impossible for children learning a language for the first time. Pointing at objects and merely giving them names is not enough of an explanation of how children acquire language or understand silent communications. Wittgenstein includes the relevance of social context and the participation in a community to the possibility of learning the language of words and the language of silence. *Training* he says facilitates understanding[18]. One is trained to react in a particular way when a particular name is called, indicating that socialisation is an important part of understanding language or silence - even in theories of ostention. This

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[16] Wittgenstein: *Philosophical Investigations*, §20.

[17] Wittgenstein: *Philosophical Investigations*, §31.

[18] Wittgenstein: *Philosophical Investigations*, §6.

accounts for the differences in attitudes toward speech and silence between cultures and groups.

> It is not just because things have names that we have language:
>
> "We name things and then we can talk about them: can refer to them in talk."[19]

Some words do not name objects at all. Still others only name objects when they are intended to do so. Language is much more complex than just the use of names; it involves ambiguities, context and meaning. All of this indicates that the reference theory of language previous to *Philosophical Investigations* was not a satisfactory explanation of the way language works, including silent 'language'. Much more is involved than the reference theory of language allows, as the critiques Wittgenstein put forth indicate.

To summarise, according to Wittgenstein the reference theory of language overlooks two major aspects of language: 1) language contains many ambiguities due to its lack of uniformity; and 2) language is context dependent and relies on a comprehension of the context to facilitate understanding. The same points can be said to apply to silence, whose inherent ambiguity and lack of uniformity give it the freedom to stand for many different meanings which cannot be differentiated nor understood except from within their given contexts. The above also shows how meaning is closely tied to intent for Wittgenstein. In §19 he suggests that all words are subject to the intent of their users, so the sense of a word depends on how the user wants it to be used in that situation. This may recall the theories of meaning offered by Grice and Searle, where we showed silence can have specific meanings. It also foreshadows an argument concerning the need to respect the limits of that meaning when constructing interpretations. We do

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[19] Wittgenstein: *Philosophical Investigations*, §27.

not have to limit this to authorial intention, however, since doing so is problematic, as was seen above with reference to silent slips of the tongue.

7.3 Conclusions:

Context has been demonstrated to be a valuable feature of interpretation. Building a non-radical interpretation of a Larundic silence can be assisted by context in the following ways. Firstly, context provides the frame which delimits a specific meaning for the silence; beyond the limits, it was shown, is where interpretations become radical. Context also provides clues which can direct the interpreter to the meaning extended by the Larundic silence. Additionally, the value we ascribe to a silence can be ascertained by reference to the context in which the silence occurs. Silences are assigned positive value where the context is suited to their ambiguity, and negative value where the context is not suited to ambiguity. Finally, Wittgenstein's theory suggests that context reveals the sense a silent utterance is to take, and in so doing assists the interpretation of ambiguous silences. The multiple possibilities of the meaning of a silence make its meaning vague. Wittgenstein demonstrated that context reveals the vagueness by placing the silence in a setting that directs us to the sense of the meaning of the Larundic silence.

It was suggested earlier that other ingredients will be necessary for constructing non-radical interpretations of silences. We now turn to the philosophical hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer in order to reveal further elements.

CHAPTER 8

GADAMER'S CONTRIBUTION:

8.1 Gadamer's Hermeneutics:

Larunda's myth demonstrates the necessity of interpretation for understanding silence. The interpretative possibility of Larunda's silences is provided through the love of Hermes, the messenger of the gods. Thus, we turn to hermeneutics, which derives its name from Hermes, to assist in the understanding of Larundic silence. Gadamer's hermeneutics offers some important proposals for grasping how we interpret silence. He makes four claims which are in general useful for the purposes of constructing interpretations of Larundic silence. The first is that we are prisoners of our prejudices, histories and traditions, so we ought not to try to escape them in a misguided attempt to find unencumbered rational understanding. Second, is his theory about fusion of horizons in which communication occurs in the overlap between separate conciousnesses. Third, is his rejection of relativism based on his belief in a 'thing-in-itself' which delimits our attempts at interpretation. And finally there is his interest in dialectic agreement as a basis for truth. Each of these ideas will be examined in what follows, and it will be shown how they are relevant to understanding silence.

8.1.1 Authorship:

It is natural to turn to the intentions of the utterer in trying to establish the meaning of an utterance[1]. Intentionalism of this sort attempts to remain

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[1] Because there are similarities between authorship and original utterances the two terms will be used interchangeably.

faithful to the meaning the utterer is trying to communicate by making the utterance. In the passages on meaning discussed above, it was shown that Searle claims an utterer has something in mind when issuing the utterance. This particular meaning, it would seem to follow, is what the audience ought to receive, otherwise the utterance is a failed attempt at communication. And it follows from this that meaning is what the author intends it to be. Or is it?

Gadamer rejects the hegemony of authorial intention as the source of meaning. In fact he is wary of accepting any form of pure authoritativeness because he believes that this would create a tyranny of the privileged perspective. The alternative he offers is a meaning which exceeds the meaning intended by the author, and incorporates the meaning as it is interpreted by the percipient. However, this does not permit the percipient to construct subjectively opportunistic interpretations of the author's work. Gadamer, in fact, rejects this kind of subjectivism:

> "The consequence of modern subjectivism, it seems to me , is that in all such realms self-interpretation receives a primacy that is not justified by the facts."[2]

Rather, Gadamer prefers a greater meaning which is created through a combination of the meanings offered not only by the intentions of the author, nor only by those combined with the interpretation by the audience, but also including the meaning extended by the text itself as an independent object. Gadamer's position is that there is a meaning constructed in the act of interpretation, a meaning which is different from the meanings offered by any of the individual components. Hence it will not do to claim that the meaning of a text or text analogue is what the author says it is. Self-description is not an adequate postulate of a meaning, because meaning exceeds what one

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[2] Gadamer, H.G.: "The Nature of Things and the Language of Things" (1960); in Gadamer, Hans-Georg: *Philosophical Hermeneutics*. David E. Linge trans./ed. University of California Press; Berkeley, Calif.; 1976; pg: 80.

person's understanding of it is. No individual's interpretation is truer than any other's.

The primary advantage of this position is that it eliminates the possibility of tyranny by a single perspective. Gadamer argues instead, that meaning is perspectival, and that the truth of a meaning can vary and change. But, to avoid becoming relativistic, he does claim that there is a thing-in-itself which has a continuous existence in spite of the change; just as we can say that a person is the same individual throughout youth, adolescence and adulthood. There is always one object being described, but it is described differently from varying perspectives. As a result, the meaning of an object, a text or text analogue, can be somewhat different for every interpreter who encounters it. The same can be said for utterances one encounters. Nevertheless, there will be overlaps because each interpretation must have some input from the continuous thing-in-itself.

> "Now when we encounter the expression 'the nature of things' the point is clearly that what is available for our use and given to our disposal has in reality a being of its own, which allows it to resist our efforts to use it in unsuitable ways. Or to put it positively: it prescribes a specific comportment that is appropriate to it."[3]

It must be noted before we continue, that this is the same kind of independence of meaning already ascribed to Larundic silences. The prescriptive component is the meaning inherent in the silence that restricts our interpretations of it. The prescription acts as the perimeter beyond which we must not go in order to remain faithful to the silence.

The reason for this perspectival perception is based on Gadamer's explanation of human ontology. He insists that we are the culmination of our personal experiences combined with general history. As a result, each individual has a different and unique perspective of the world, both as we

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· [3] Gadamer 1960, pg: 70.

interpret the past and how we understand the present and future. This is because all individuals bring their own set of experiences, preferences, expectations, beliefs and other such things, to the act of understanding. Gadamer calls these one's personal *prejudices*, and he accepts them as a functional aspect of our interpretative capacities. It is clear that Gadamer is using a different sense of the word 'prejudice' than in its usual pejorative sense. This difference requires further explanation.

8.2 Prejudice:

When René Descartes began his *Meditations*[4] he did all he could to divest himself of his previous beliefs in order to discover what he could know which was not contingent upon other knowledge. In other words, he did not want his prejudices to interfere with his reasoning. Enlightenment thinkers were equally distrustful of prejudice; they claimed it obscured our knowledge of the truth. Gadamer, however, sees these attempts to abandon prejudice as fruitless. He claims that the distrust, far from being divorced from prejudice, is in fact a manifestation of it. Gadamer says that we cannot escape our prejudices because they are part of our ontological make up. The belief that we can eliminate them in order to find unencumbered rational truths is, according to Gadamer, misguided. He has been praised for pointing out the inherent connection between our understanding and our *prejudices*; and for finding a useful place for *prejudice* in cognitive activity. In fact, Gadamer warns that we ought to be aware of how *prejudice* affects us and then use it to build upon.

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[4] Descartes, René: *Meditations on First Philosophy: with selections from the Objections and replies*; John Cottingham trans. Cambridge University Press; Cambridge; 1986.

I will make use of Gadamer's positive ontological sense of *prejudice* throughout the rest of this thesis. It must be understood that this is restricted to Gadamer's sense of the term and not the ordinary pejorative understanding with which it is normally used. To distinguish it from ordinary prejudice I will use italics where Gadamer's notion is being applied and plain text where it is not.

Past experiences and beliefs are the foundations of further learning. Without some previous understanding of the world we are unable to identify and make sense of new information. Nevertheless, this does not limit us, as Gadamer states "...individual explorations necessarily start from the very limited experiences and fields of experience."[5] Then we use our experiences to identify new ideas and to construct coherent interpretations of the new information we receive.

> "It is not so much our judgements as it is our *prejudices* that constitute our being. This is a provocative formulation, for I am using it to restore to its rightful place a positive concept of *prejudice* that was driven out of our linguistic usage by the French and the English Enlightenment. It can be shown that the concept of *prejudice* did not originally have the meaning we have attached to it. *Prejudices* are not necessarily unjustified and erroneous, so that they inevitably distort the truth. In fact, the historicity of our existence entails that *prejudices*, in the literal sense of the word, constitute the initial directedness of our whole ability to experience. *Prejudices* are biases of our openness to the world. They are simply conditions whereby we experience something – whereby what we encounter says something to us. This formulation certainly does not mean that we are enclosed within a wall of *prejudices* and only let through the narrow portals those things that can produce a pass saying, 'Nothing new will be said here.' Instead we welcome just that guest who promises something new to our curiosity."[6] (Italics added)

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[5] Gadamer, H.G.: "On the Scope and Function of Hermeneutical Reflection" (1967, G.B. Hess & R.E. Palmer trans.); in Gadamer, Hans-Georg: *Philosophical Hermeneutics*. David E. Linge trans./ed. University of California Press; Berkeley, Calif.; 1976; pg: 18.

[6] Gadamer, H.G.: "The Universality of the Hermeneutical Problem" (1966); in Gadamer, Hans-Georg: *Philosophical Hermeneutics*. David E. Linge trans./ed. University of California Press; Berkeley, Calif.; 1976; pg: 9.

Prejudice is something integral to an individual's identity, part of the ontological structure of human beings, part of the human condition, if you will[7]. We do not appear to be able to avoid or escape it; we simply have preferences, beliefs and prejudices which are constitutive of who we are. That a given individual has a preference for isolation over community, a dislike for market economy, and a belief in a pantheistic religion are all qualities which form part of her identity, her ontological structure. Even inevitable changes in these qualities are part of her identity and do not change it completely. We can at least say about her that she is the person who *once* believed in pantheism. Beliefs and preferences, etc., are acquired over time, through the process of experience. "It is the untiring power of *experience*, that in the process of being instructed, man is ceaselessly forming a new preunderstanding."[8]

The experiences which inform our *prejudices* may be either direct or indirect: direct, in that they derive from events which have occurred to the person first hand, such as the phrase 'once burned twice shy' illustrates; indirect, in that they may be the influence of community or culture, history or tradition instead of events which the individual has experienced personally. As Gadamer puts it, "It is not really we ourselves who understand: it is always a past that allows us to say, 'I have understood'."[9] Thus, our personal experiences and the cultural experiences we acquire from history create the foundation upon which we build our understanding of the world.

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[7] Gadamer 1967, pg: 28.

[8] Gadamer 1967, pg: 38.

[9] Gadamer, H.G.: "On the Problem of Self-understanding" (1962); in Gadamer, Hans-Georg: *Philosophical Hermeneutics*. David E. Linge trans./ed. University of California Press; Berkeley, Calif.; 1976; pg: 58.

8.2.1 Historical references to prejudice:

Historically these preconceived ideas have been much criticised for causing interference with true knowledge of the world. They have had this notoriety since at least as far back as Plato, whose cave example[10] is a good description of how the baggage of *prejudice* might interfere with one's understanding of the world. The people in the cave are victims of false beliefs because their only knowledge of the world is of the imperfect shadows cast on the wall before them. If they do not realise they are being misled they will never have true knowledge and therefore will not be free. But, released from their chains they may venture into the light of the real world which, if they are brave enough to stay outside until their eyes adjust to the light, will liberate them. The chains are much like the biases and preferences which make up our ontological baggage of *prejudice*. Plato calls them "opinion", or *"doxa"*, and eschews them in favour of true or right knowledge of the forms. He says only those who are able to see the forms without the encumbrance of *doxa* are truly free, and have the knowledge to become philosopher kings.

Plato may have been one of the earliest to condemn the ontological baggage of *prejudice*, but he certainly was not the last. Many decriers of *prejudice* followed, especially during the Enlightenment. Some have accepted the possibility that *prejudices* and pre-judgements can play a functional role in understanding, while others say they are mostly a hindrance to right and clear understanding and ought to be purged. In a paradigm example of those who would reject baggage, Hutcheson suggests it is the interference of *associative ideas*[11] which prevent the clarity required for making accurate interpretations. His solution for the fogging associative ideas cause is to abandon them completely or as much as possible. The purity of interpretative vision required

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[10] Plato, *The Republic*, book x; Allan Bloom trans. Basic Books; New York, N.Y.; 1968.

[11] Hutcheson, Francis: *Philosophical Writings*; R.S. Downie ed. Everyman's Library; Dent; London; 1994.

to prevent error can only be achieved by eliminating the prejudices and preferences we acquire through certain types of experience, and through the association with others whose opinions one might acquire and accept though they are not true. His cure for the obscuring property of associative ideas is to purge them, and thereby eliminate their obscuring effects. These notwithstanding, some have said that this baggage is inescapable, and have described how it can even be useful.

Aristotle may have been one of the earliest to express an implicit acceptance of *prejudice* and show how it could provide a functional purpose in understanding. His discussion in the *Nicomachean Ethics* of virtue gained through the habitual performance of virtuous acts shows the value of acquired knowledge[12]; "...virtue comes about as a result of habit..."[13] He says that to become virtuous, students must locate a virtuous person and then imitate her actions until they become habitual. But this implies first that we have the knowledge to identify a virtuous person from a vicious or non-virtuous person. Thus, we must have a preconception of virtue so that we know what to look for, even though this preconception may change after observation. This is the first way that *prejudice* is implicitly encouraged by Aristotle. Next he says that we are to repeat the virtuous behaviour until it becomes habitual for us. Hence it becomes behaviour based on habit, which is no more than preconception or *prejudicial* behaviour. So we can say that Aristotle accepted *prejudice* as a means for achieving the ultimate aim of human existence, namely virtue.

Phronesis plays an especially important role here because it is one of the foundations of understanding through practical reasoning. *Phronesis* is the kind of moral reasoning which extrapolates theoretical knowledge from

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[12]Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics,* 1179b21, 1127b7.

[13]Aristotle, 1103a16.

practical knowledge, such as the facts of an event[14]. Having examined the event, a judgement regarding its moral content is produced by theoretical reasoning about it. The solution has more universal characteristics than the case does. It takes the form of an abstract description of the case, resting more on the universal concepts within it than the particular facts. So, for example, the case may be one in civil law where the judge must decide whether to award damages to a patient whose doctor behaved negligently. The principle extrapolated from the case might be that people deserve protection from, and in some cases compensation for, harm caused them. Thus, the patient deserves some kind of reward for her suffering. In this sense, *phronetic* reasoning moves between the universal and the particular. The *phronomos* individual examines facts to extrapolate universal, or more general judgements, and then moves back again to the case at hand to see how these judgements may be applied to the facts. *Phronesis* requires flexibility and imagination because it goes beyond mere rule following; it is not simple submission to principles previously or extraneously imposed. Instead, the exercise of phronetic reasoning requires the individual to assess the case on its own merits, and creatively construct a solution to the moral problem at hand. It is in this sense that *phronesis* can be described as resting on previously acquired knowledge: The act of imaginative theoretical knowledge construction, or the invention of a solution to the moral problem, requires individuals to use all sorts of information and understanding available. The new ideas cannot spring fully formed from nothing; they need a communion of concepts of which they are the result. Preconceptions mixed with new information are the basis for creating novel ideas. Thus, *prejudices* are part of phronesis or practical wisdom. But this is only implicit in Aristotle's description of reasoning. He does not actually state the need for the old ideas

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14 Aristotle, 1142a27.

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to form the basis of new ones. However, it does seem to follow from what he says about learning to be virtuous through habitual behaviour.

8.2.2 The hooks which draw us to the meaning:

Historically, then, philosophers have chosen to reject *prejudice* on the grounds that it obscures and confounds understanding and communication. Gadamer makes a different move in his post-Heidegerrian hermeneutics. His argument is that we understand novel meanings only from the basis of knowledge we already posses; namely from our *prejudices*. He claims that this occurs through the *fusing of horizons* when the *prejudices* which form our personal horizons join or intersect with the horizons of others.

> "Just as when we progress in understanding the *mirabilia* lose their strangeness, so every successful appropriation of tradition is dissolved into a new and distinct familiarity in which it belongs to us and we to it. They both flow together into one owned and shared world, which encompasses past and present and which receives its linguistic articulation in the speaking of man with man."[15]

It is precisely the baggage of *prejudices* said to interfere and lead to error in interpretation that are the vehicle for the fusing. Gadamer makes us aware that we own this baggage; it is our histories, our preferences and our prejudices. These are never far away no matter what activity we are engaged in. He acknowledges this and gives it a functional role in his theory saying *prejudice* makes communication possible. Without it, understanding would have to happen in a vacuum. Each piece of baggage stores the elements of understanding, making the link from familiar to foreign.

> "Only the support of familiar and common understanding makes possible the venture into the alien, the lifting up of something out of the alien, and thus the broadening and enrichment of our own experience of the world."[16]

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[15] Gadamer 1967, pg: 25.

[16] Gadamer 1967, pg: 15.

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This way, the interpreter uses ideas already familiar to her to gain access to ideas she has never experienced before. The fusing brings familiarity and familiarity brings correct understanding and interpretation. And this will be of vital importance to interpretations of Larundic silence because they permit so little access to familiar knowledge on their own. Using what is familiar is the start of breaching the inscrutability of a Larundic silence.

Another helpful metaphor for explaining the *prejudice* is 'hooks'. Ideas we already possess act as hooks like the microscopic hooks on a single wool fibre. A spinner uses these hooks to draw one fibre onto the next to supply the initial attachment and strength for the strand of wool she is spinning. In this sense, familiar ideas can hook onto new and foreign ideas, and pull them through the spindle onto the bobbin as a single strand of yarn. For example, one must learn how to count 1,2... before understanding that 1+1=2. Thus, novel ideas are eventually understood through connection to familiar ideas, and the entire set of ideas is a ball of yarn, strong and secure[17]. The work is more complex when it comes to silence because silence is slippery. There are few hooks with which the spinner can draw it into the yarn of understanding. The interpreter is thus required to make a greater effort in the interpretation and must make a study of the surrounding ideas which will consist of personal opinions, context and previous knowledge of the subject of interpretation. These will be the hooks for interpreting the silence.

One carefully hooks together all the surrounding ideas, creating a tether of understanding from the interpreter to the subject. Still, it is necessary to be aware that the hooks which are useful can also be the cause of error in interpretation. Every ball of wool yarn has stray fibers which did not enter the

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[17] This image is similar to Wittgenstein's example of meanings related to one another like the fibers of a rope, not necessarily directly connected to one another but held together by intermediary fibers. I hope to show that my analogy is somewhat different in what follows.

twist tightly enough and stand away from the strand. These may be said to represent false paths in interpretation; they start off one way but do not lead to the solution at the heart of the new idea. They are here abandoned or there left hanging in mid-air. But these strays are not altogether unacceptable as they are the part of the wool which give it softness and fluff, just as mistakes are useful for greater understanding. Both are functional to the overall project. Still, expertly spun yarn is said to have few loose strands of this sort, and the best way to avoid them is to ensure each fibre is carefully hooked to its predecessors. So in interpretation, the best way to reach the correct conclusion is to hook on to ideas previously known to be accurate, ideas properly hooked to the subject at the heart of the interpretation. With silence this means context, previous knowledge of the subject, previous knowledge the interpreter possesses and generalisation of understanding which hook themselves to the silence and make it understandable.

Nevertheless, there will always be cases in which the interpreter makes a wrong assumption regarding the object of interpretation, especially when that object has few hooks like slippery silence. This will be particularly true when the interpreter is given very little interpretative evidence to go on, such as when the interpreter is not well acquainted with the subject of interpretation. The more familiar the subject, the easier it is to make an accurate interpretation of it. It is not necessary for the interpreter to become an expert about the subject of interpretation, only that the interpreter be aware that the subject cannot be understood merely from the interpreter's own ideas. The subject, like a word, has and offers its own meaning which sets up limits for the interpretation, as we have seen.

> "The appeal to a nature of things refers to an order removed from human wishes.... 'the nature of things' is something that asserts itself, something we have to respect."[18]

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[18] Gadamer 1960, pg: 71.

It is required that the interpreter acknowledge and use the perimeter created by the meaning of the thing-in-itself in order to gain a good understanding of the subject. Like words, if she exceeds these limits the interpretation is wrong. Thus, the interpreter is required to use personal *prejudice* wisely and be aware of its propensity to mislead. We will see how this can be done later on.

8.3 The Hermeneutic Circle:

We have already noted the roles of *prejudice* and the thing-in-itself in establishing interpretations of meanings in Gadamer's theory. What has not been mentioned specifically is the to-and-fro motion involved in using these elements during acts of understanding. Gadamer claims understanding is like a conversation. A dialogue between the interpreter and the object of interpretation, where each of their claims to truth are tested against one another and an interpretation eventually emerges. As we have said, this requires an attitude of openness so that the new information in the truth claims can be recognised and assimilated. It is also necessary to ensure that the interpretation is relevant to the object of interpretation, be that a work of art, a text or a silent utterance. The to-and-fro-ness comes from the action of the dialogue where claims from both sides – the interpreter and the interpreted – are made, accepted and assimilated.

8.3.1 Openness and silence:

From a practical perspective Gadamer's call for openness is highly relevant to silence. To illustrate this we might look at a helping interview, for example between a doctor and a patient. Where the doctor is prepared to listen, silences can be a useful tool for eliciting information from the patient.

The doctor's openness permits the patient to fill the silence. In ordinary conversations silences can be awkward; someone always wants to fill a silence. From a positive perspective the silence is turned into an invitation; where there appears to be an empty spot someone is invited to fill it. When a silence occurs in the doctor-patient interview it is just such an invitation and a skilled doctor will allow the invitation to be directed toward the patient. This allows the patient to fill the silence with information the doctor might not have thought to ask about. In other words, silence on behalf of the doctor is a clear indication of the doctor's openness to the patient and willingness to listen. Open silence is an act of generosity which can provoke excellent returns when the patient offers information to fill it which helps the interview to proceed productively.

Openness has a second function, that of being receptive to the soundness of the subject being interpreted. And in the case of silence, it serves the function of allowing recognition that a silence is Larundic and therefore meaningful. The interpreter is required to adopt this degree of receptivity so that the subject will be noticed as having a serious claim to present, and that a Larundic silence will be noticed at all. Without openness, *prejudice* fails to acknowledge the full meaning of the subject. Therefore, as we saw earlier, openness is an essential aspect of interpretation. Hence, *prejudice* without openness is likely to result in opportunistic radical readings of the subject.

However, we may be suspicious of openness because it appears to eliminate the possibility of assuming a critical attitude to the truth claim made by the object of interpretation. If being open entails acceptance, then it may mean judging the claim as true by virtue of the fact that it is being made. The advantage to this is that openness prevents opportunistic interpretations clouded by our own *prejudices*. However, this kind of openness might cause acquiescence to, and acceptance of, claims to truth which are either false or

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distorted, and in some cases even morally reprehensible. It is not clear how openness can be defended given this possibility, but Gadamer does attempt to detail a safeguard which permits critical judgement to function alongside openness.

Gadamer's reply to the loss of critical judgement inherent in openness is by way of reference to the hermeneutic circle. The hermeneutic circle is a theory of how we accomplish understanding and it involves steps to act as fail-safes to the hegemony of personal *prejudice* and the truth claims made by the object. In fact, they act as checks against one another. In order to preserve the open attitude from accepting the unacceptable, Gadamer increases the number of participants in the conversation; to the elements of *prejudice* and openness already mentioned, he adds *tradition* and *history*.

Just as our ontological selves are determined by the *prejudices* we acquire, the *prejudices* themselves are founded on our historical situatedness. The experiences of our lives form our personal histories. But our personal histories in turn take place within the context of history in general, namely the history of our cultural heritages and the traditions which are constitutive of them[19]. These traditions have as much bearing on our perceptions of the world as our personal *prejudices* do, but because they have been accepted by the community in general they are greater than any one individual and, therefore, are of great importance where interpretations are concerned. Gadamer claims that we tend to defer to tradition naturally, and adds that we ought to do so because tradition enhances our cohesiveness to our community and protects us from constructing idiosyncratic or opportunistic interpretations. Tradition is, therefore, an equal participant in the dialogue of understanding.

This dialogue is the hermeneutic circle. The to-and-fro motion is the movement from the object to the interpreter and then to tradition, in any order.

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[19] Gadamer 1967.

Each of the elements present claims to truth which the others must be open to, but these claims must also be tested against those made by the other elements in order to determine their veracity. In this way, each of the elements acts as an obstruction to any of the other elements interposing an opportunistic or idiosyncratic interpretation. Thus Gadamer restrains the domination of any one element by ensuring that each element coheres with the truths of all the others. For instance, an individual is prevented from using the words of a language to mean anything she wants them to mean because she is restrained by tradition and by words themselves. The tradition and the etymological history of the words enforce a certain type of usage upon the individual so that she is not free to use a word in any way she chooses. However, words have been known to change their meanings over time, indicating that tradition and history can bend to individual interpretation. Thus, no single element has authority over the others, and they must all be open to one another. Hermeneutics encourages questioning of one's prejudices in

> "...constant self-reflections and attempts at self-awareness. Thus only through hermeneutical reflection am I no longer unfree over against myself but rather can deem freely what in my preunderstanding may be justified and what unjustifiable."[20]

This helps us to see that "tradition is no proof and validation of something, in any case not where validation is demanded by reflection"[21]. So reflection provides a check against non-reflective submission to tradition. On the other hand, Gadamer adds that "authority is not always wrong"[22], so agreement with tradition or history can be appropriate when it is reflected upon first, even if this happens unconsciously. "Reflection on a

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[20] Gadamer 1967, pg: 38.

[21] Gadamer 1967, pg: 34.

[22] Gadamer 1967, pg: 33.

preunderstanding brings before me something that otherwise happens *behind my back*."[23]

A person confronting a Larundic silence will be prohibited from imposing upon it just any interpretation because the elements of the hermeneutic circle will block opportunistic interpretations. This is why we can say that a person who enters a crowded temple where everyone is silent, is wrong if she interprets the silence as meaning that no one there likes her. It is a better interpretation of the silence if the tradition of silent prayer is considered in the interpretation, and the silence perceived as an act of devotion and respect to the deity rather than a snubbing of the late-comer. This gives the interpretation more relevance or fit to the context of the silence at hand.

8.3.2 Playing Games:

The activity of understanding is therefore a dynamic one which engages the interpreter in the to-and-fro motion of a dialogue with tradition and the object, and from which an interpretation emerges. The importance of each of the elements is illustrated by Gadamer in his metaphor of a game[24]. He says that the game exists in and of itself only to the extent that it provides the rules which delimit it from the rest of life. Thus, abiding by the rules means that one is playing that particular game and not performing any other activity. However, this requires someone to play the game, otherwise the game cannot be realised and remains nothing but a set of rules. The players and the game are therefore of equal importance to the game's existence.

One is transported out of ordinary existence when playing a game. Players put ordinary parts of their lives aside while playing[25]. The game, and its to-and-fro movements, become the subject or focus of the activity replacing

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[23] Gadamer 1967, pg: 38.

[24] Gadamer 1962, pp: 44-58.

[25] Patients in acute care hospitals do the same for a while.

the individual and her concerns. This involves temporarily 'entering a normatively binding domain'[26], which takes precedence over other concerns.

> "Whatever is brought into play or comes into play no longer depends on itself but is dominated by the relation that we call the game....[The individual] conforms to the game or subjects himself to it, that is, he relinquishes the autonomy of his own will."[27]

> "The game thus has authority over its players and even specifies a range of appropriate attitudes and responses."[28]

Rules dictate actions. Once again this requires openness to the truth of the claim made by the object, allowing it to provide some of the rules for action. During acts of interpretation the same effect is achieved. Once one submits to the truth claim of the object one has become one of the players following the truth claim as if it were the rules of the game[29].

The description is not complete without the addition of the players. Games require players to bring them to fruition; so games dictate the play, but cannot exist without someone to perform the required actions. Thus, players are also creators of the game. But, the players do not determine the rules of the game. Therefore, the game requires what it brings and what the players bring to it to carry it to fruition[30]. The act of interpretation is the same. It is not enough to grant authority to the object of interpretation, but we must also give credit to the participation of the interpreter. The interpreter uses her entire ontological structure in the act, and she is just as much responsible for the creation of the meaning as the object and its creator are.

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[26] Warnke, Georgia: *Gadamer: Hermeneutics, Tradition and Reason.* Polity Press; Cambridge; 1987. Pg: 49.

[27] Gadamer 1962, pg: 53.

[28] Warnke, pg: 49.

[29] Gadamer 1967.

[30] This is like festivals, non-existent until they are celebrated, but they are celebrated because they are there. Warnke, pg: 50-1.

The interdependence between interpreter, author and the thing-in-itself is reflected in the existence of the game. Games change at each playing because the conditions, i.e. players, place etc., change each time. Each one is not a different instantiation of the game, but an actual change to the concrete existence of the game. The meaning of the object of interpretation can also be said to change in this sense with every interpretation of it. Yet something remains the same; there is a continuous thing which is the type of the game repeatedly being played. The object of interpretation, like the game, remains the same while constantly changing. Its meaning is not determinate but variable; very much like the identity of a person who is also a changing person over time.

But why do we need anyone other than the author to give the object (text or text analogue) or game concrete existence? Why must there be an audience to interpret the thing-in-itself? Gadamer says the audience, like the players, are important because they help give the meaning of the object or game "clearly separable and identifiable content."[31] It is a condition of a game that it be played by players, in the same way that being seen by an audience is part of a work of art's "self-representation", whether the work be a sculpture, a symphony or a piece of theatre.

> "What distinguishes works of art that must be performed from those that can be experienced directly by an audience is thus simply that the former must undergo two processes of concretization. The work is concretely realised first in its performance and second in the experience of its audience. But in both cases the audience turns out to be as essential to it as its original creator."[32]

This demonstrates why meaning is more autonomous than can be accounted for by merely applying author's intent. Authors can intend to create

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[31] Warnke, pg: 53

[32] Warnke, pg: 54.

a work that has meaning, but often these intentions are frustrated by interpretations which differ from or exceed it. It is equally possible for an author to create an object whose meaning goes beyond that of the author's intended meaning; a work that stands alone[33]. In order for this to be possible there must be more to the object of interpretation than the author's idea of it; the author and the object supply the rules, but the audience must play the game in order to realise the meaning. Thus, the object requires an audience to give it meaning, and the work requires more than its individual creator to give it meaningfulness. The meaning of the object contains more knowledge than the knowledge in its authors' intentions[34]. Thus, we cannot be restricted to authors' intent for meaning as this meaning exceeds the authors' knowledge. In the same sense, a poem can be understood by a reader to have a meaning the poet could not have known because the experiences of the reader and those of the poet are different. Similarly, a Larundic silence can be understood by its interpreter to have meaning which its utterer did not intend or know was possible. Author's intent is therefore not enough to provide meaning.

> "...the words we find capture our intending, as it were, and
> dovetail into relations that point out beyond the momentariness
> of our act of intending."[35]

Still, this does not permit radical or opportunistic readings of a Larundic silence. Larundic silences assert meanings of their own which are part of the conversation in the hermeneutic circle. The specific meaning of the Larundic silence may not be given hegemony, but it does apply to restrictions on the final interpretation.

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[33] Warnke, pg: 55. Warnke also refers R. Dworkin, "How Law is Like Literature" in *A Mater of Principle*, Harvard UP, Cambridge, 1985, pp: 157-8.

[34] Warnke, pg: 55.

[35] Gadamer 1962, pg: 56.

8.4: The Fusion of Horizons:

Gadamer expands on the restrictions in the hermeneutic circle by claiming that understanding challenges the audience to become involved in the object they seek to understand, the way players are involved in a game. Understanding requires temporarily entering the normatively binding domain of the object; making the object their world and abandoning their own worlds in favour of this one for a short time, but with an enduring change in the world to which they will return.

> "It seems, rather, to be generally characteristic of the emergence of the hermeneutical problem that something *distant* has to be brought close, a certain strangeness overcome, a bridge built between the once and the now."[36]

For Gadamer, understanding is participation. There is no canonical reading of a work because the game of understanding engages each individual player/spectator in a different way.

> "Interpretation belongs to the essential unity of understanding. One must take up into himself what is said to him in such a fashion that it speaks and finds an answer in the words of his own language."[37]

Each act of understanding is an unique experience, depending on the unique information and experience the individual brings to it. This is because we learn from the work differently, according to what we bring to it. Thus, we understand things differently depending upon what our past holds and who we are in the present; our *prejudice* affects how and what we will learn in the future. It is because of these personal differences that the content of a game

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[36] Gadamer 1967, pg: 22.

[37] Gadamer 1962, pg: 57.

can change according to who is playing it, just as its form can change. Also cultural and historical differences create changes in how we perceive and understand. Hence our historical position will allow us to see things in a work that would not have been conceivable at an earlier historical time[38].

The participation of the individual in the act of understanding is what Gadamer calls the "fusion of horizons"[39].

> "By this he means the integration of one's understanding of a text or historical event with its relevance to one's own circumstances in such a way that an 'original' or 'intended' meaning cannot be differentiated from the meaning of the text or event for oneself."[40]

This requires a "fusion of the interpreter's perspective and the object."[41]

> "What Gadamer means by the 'fusion of horizons' is the integration of our historically determined concerns with the object of understanding in such a way that this integration determines the content of the object for us."[42]

The fusion of horizons constitutes a fundamental dialectic between the interpreter and the subject of interpretation. It is within this dialogue that an agreement on the interpretation emerges.

8.4.1 The dialectic of the hermeneutic circle:

A dialogue between the elements of the hermeneutic circle takes place within the fusion of horizons. The elements check one another and eventually

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[38] Warnke, pg: 65-8.

[39] *Truth and Method* pg. 271-4 and *Philosophical Apprenticeships*, Robert R. Sullivan trans. MIT Press, Cambridge 1985, pg: 49.

[40] Warnke, pg: 69.

[41] Warnke, pg: 69.

[42] Warnke, pg: 103.

a version of the meaning of the subject emerges. This version is thereby the agreed truth regarding the meaning of the object, and is as close to objectivity as is possible. The dialogue could not occur if one of the participants was empty and had nothing to contribute. The interpreter contributes by bringing *prejudices* to the act of interpretation. The subject contributes its meaning. In this sense we can then see how the meaning inherent in a Larundic silence participates in the construction of the interpretation of it. The Larundic silence is an equal member of the dialogue and is supported by history and tradition. This is how all the elements of the hermeneutic circle contribute to the dialogue in order to establish a non-radical interpretation of the subject.

No individual element takes a dominant position in the process of understanding. Neither one's *prejudice*, tradition, nor the object of interpretation, takes precedent; they are all equal. Thus, it is possible to keep each element in check by reference to the opinion offered by the others. Thus, the new understanding emerges from the joining of those which preceded it[43]. There is always an implied acquiescence to tradition's hold over us "in the sense that we are part of it and oriented by it."[44]. The 'classical' is history preserved and distilled through renewed proof which allows it to continue and be reapplied from context to context[45]. This is effective history which has a hold on us whether we acknowledge it or not. Something is preserved even through its modification. But there is room for modification and this is where tradition is affected by the elements of *prejudice* and the thing-in-itself within the circle. Thus, we are held by tradition but we can change it through

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[43] Warnke, pg: 105.

[44] Warnke, pg: 106.

[45] This is much like Kuhn's idea of paradigm shifts which are dramatic ideological changes but which contain overlaps that make sense of the history as a whole. Kuhn, Thomas S.: *The Structure of Scientific Revolution*, 2nd ed. International Encyclopaedia of Unified Science: Foundations of the Unity of Science; vol. 2, no. 2. University of Chicago Press; Chicago, Ill.; 1970.

experience, and *vice verse*. Thus, no individual participant in the dialogue can be shown to have greater control than any other.

8.5 Conclusions:

The above is a description of how individuals understand the objects they seek to understand. It has been shown how this ought to be accomplished with the help of critical elements of *prejudice*, the thing-in-itself, history and tradition. Each of these elements serves as a check against the interpretation of any single one being ascribed the canonical position.

The relevance of Gadamer's hermeneutics for silence is this. Silence offers few clues toward the successful construction of non-radical interpretation. In order to prevent a Larundic silence from being mistaken for a Harpocratic silence the percipient must recognise that the silence does contain a meaning. The use of *prejudice* of the sort Gadamer supports, provides the foundation from which the silence can be recognised as meaningful. The clues the silence has to offer hide beneath its surface disguise of meaninglessness and emptiness. But one's *prejudices* remind one that silences can be meaningful because they have been so in past experience. *Prejudices* can then act as the hooks upon which to begin to add new information found within the context of the silence. However, the *prejudices* can also obscure information by preventing one from seeing what cannot be hooked to the *prejudices* as they are. As a result, the interpretation founded solely on *prejudice* can be opportunistic and radical. Thus, a fail-safe must be added, and it is already present in the form of tradition and history, which guides the interpreter to ideas previously understood by others. A second safe-guard is present in the thing-in-itself, the meaning of which is specific and delimits the possible readings of it. The entire system is engaged through

the to-and-fro motion of the hermeneutic circle, and occurs during the fusion of horizons between the interpreter and the object of interpretation. Larundic silences are thus secure from radical readings by asserting a meaning which takes the role of the thing-in-itself. It is an equal participant in the hermeneutic circle, and is therefore part of the negotiated understanding which forms the composite interpretation.

The following section will suggest further methods for preserving the integrity of the meaning of Larundic silence. Then, in chapter 11, it will be demonstrated how the element of agreement can assist in creating critically open non-radical readings during the act of interpretation.

CHAPTER 9

RELEVANCE

There are two senses in which relevance is a significant element in constructing non-radical interpretations of silence. The first sense is one that relates well to the ideas in Gadamer's theory related above. The problems associated with *prejudice*, in Gadamer's use of the word, are not much different from those associated with prejudice in general. Namely, that radical and opportunistic readings of an object are likely to occur when prejudice interferes with the act of interpretation by obscuring the thing-in-itself. Accordingly, Jaworski, and Sperber and Wilson recommend that these problems will be avoided where interpreters take care to recognise the relevance of the meaning of the silence; thereby identifying the meaning as the thing-in-itself and an equal participant in the dialectic of interpretation. Their position is that we do not attempt to understand what we do not perceive as meaningful; thus interpretation must begin with acknowledging the meaningfulness of a given Larundic silence. Without this acknowledgement, we shall see, the Larundic silence will be mistaken for Harpocratic.

The second sense of relevance arises from the same set of problems. In this case it is necessary for interpretations to remain in some sense faithful to the object of interpretation. This will ensure that the interpretation fits the object in a suitable manner. It is the elements of Ronald Dworkin's theory of interpretation that inspire this understanding of relevance. His suggestion is that an object deserves to be seen in its *best light*, in order to perceive it as coherent and sound, before being critical of it. Then one must ensure that the interpretation *fits* with the meaning inherent in the silence as the object or

thing-in-itself. This will ensure that the interpretation is relevant to the meaning of the silence.

The two senses will be examined separately, and can be summed up as the difference between the 'relevance of' and the 'relevant to', as follows:

1) In constructing a non-radical reading of a silence one must recognise the *relevance of* the meaning of the silence.
2) In constructing a non-radical reading of a silence one must ensure that the interpretation bears *relevance to* the meaning issued by the silence as the thing-in-itself.

9.1 *Prejudice* and Sperber and Wilson's Relevance:

Sperber and Wilson[1] demonstrate the importance of the connection between old and new information in their psychologistic cognitive theory of relevance. They suggest that human beings will not recognise new information if it does not somehow touch the knowledge they already possess and are able to access at the time. The readily available old information provides the context which is touched by the new information, and this information is processed and stored if and only if doing so does not require great effort. This cognitive effect is what the authors refer to as *relevance*. Its implications are clear: we require some knowledge base to acquire new knowledge, without it we do not even know to recognise the new information as having any bearing on us. The consequence of not observing the relevance of a new piece of information is that the new information is ignored. But when there is a hook to pull our attention toward it, then we draw the new information in and it becomes part of the collection of processed information we carry with us. The collected processed information is what Sperber and

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[1] Sperber, D. & Wilson, D.: *Relevance: Communication and Cognition.* Basil Blackwell; Oxford; 1986.

Wilson call our *encyclopaedic knowledge*[2], and what Gadamer referred to as *prejudice*.

9.1.1 Contextual Effect:

Relevance is determined by two elements. The first element is *contextual effect* which involves our natural tendency to contextualise new information by uniting it with old information[3]. In this way, new assumptions can be strengthened by old ones, implications can be derived, and conclusions can be made. The context itself is constituted by the previous knowledge base and, importantly, the set of assumptions derived from that base. If the context, i.e. encyclopaedic knowledge and a previous set of assumptions, is altered by the contextualisation of the new information then we have a contextual effect[4]. This is a modification of the original set of assumptions possessed by the individual. Contextual effects are elements of the context which change our assumptions and issue new ideas by the conjoining of old and new information. Hence our *prejudices* are the means by which we acquire and process new information with the contextual effect.

It is important to note that the conclusions derived by this method can only be as strong or certain as the assumptions upon which they have been made; thus a weak assumption base leads to weak conclusions[5]. Weakness can be resolved by adding logical implications to the assumptions in order to support the conclusions further[6].

> "Interpreting an utterance involves more than merely identifying the assumption explicitly expressed: it crucially

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[2] Sperber & Wilson, pp: 87ff.

[3] Sperber & Wilson, pg: 108.

[4] Sperber & Wilson, pg: 117.

[5] Sperber & Wilson, pg: 111.

[6] Sperber & Wilson, pg: 114.

involves working out the consequences of adding this assumption to a set of assumptions that have themselves already been processed. In other words, it involves seeing the contextual effects of this assumption in a context determined, at least in part, by earlier acts of comprehension."[7]

So far, Sperber and Wilson's description of relevance is very close to Gadamer's theory of personal *prejudices* which are altered by the experience of understanding by being challenged by the thing-in-itself. *Prejudices* are the knowledge base and set of assumptions which Sperber and Wilson refer to as context. The truth claim made by the object provides the challenge of new information as it is presented to the previous set of assumptions and the context in which they occur; the *prejudices* are altered through contact with the new claims, and this produces the changes or the contextual effect. Sperber and Wilson go deeper into this area and produce a theory of relevance which I believe is a useful addition to Gadamer's theory where it is applied to interpretation of Larundic silence.

9.1.2 Economy of effort : a cost -benefit approach:

The second element in determining the relevance of new information is one of economy (different from the principle of economy mentioned above). Processing information and building assumptions from it requires effort, effort that Sperber and Wilson insist we are reluctant to make. As a result, an audience will tend to assess a new piece of information to determine the amount of effort it will require to process and the amount of benefit they will derive from doing so. If the benefit outweighs the cost, the information is considered relevant and is processed. The effort is considered 'less' when the individual is prepared for the type of information being offered. This is the case when the context of knowledge at the forefront of the audience's attention is related to the new information on offer; in other words, if the individual is

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[7] Sperber & Wilson, pg: 118.

thinking about a related topic at the time or considers the topic important. The

effort is considered 'great' when the context is not prepared in this way.

> "An assumption is relevant to an individual at a given time if
> and only if it is relevant to one or more of the contexts
> accessible to that individual at that time."[8]

The correlate step in the assessment involves a quantitative appraisal of

the benefits gained from assimilating a new piece of information. The benefits

of processing the information are 'great' when the contextual effect produces

new information which connects to the context at hand and can produce a

useful set of new assumptions; the benefits are found to be 'less' when the

new information produces little or no new and useful assumptions. The

resulting definition is,

> "*Relevance*:
> *Extent condition 1*: an assumption is relevant in a context to the
> extent that its contextual effects in this context are large.
> *Extent condition 2*: an assumption is relevant in a context to the
> extent that the effort required to process it in this context is
> small."[9]

Once again, it is possible to draw a comparison between Sperber and

Wilson's theory and Gadamer's. Gadamer said, "what we reject has nothing

to say to us – or we reject it because it has nothing to say to us."[10]. This

means that we ignore what does not appear important to us or, to use Sperber

and Wilson's terminology, what seems that it will take too much effort to

process because it offers no obvious cognitive effect.

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[8] Sperber & Wilson, pg: 144.

[9] Sperber & Wilson, pg: 125.

[10] Gadamer 1966, pg: 4.

9.1.3 The problem of surprise information:

The difficulty with Sperber and Wilson's definition is that it does not obviously account for surprise information. We do have the ability to process new information which does not appear to have the necessary relevance and contextual preparedness they require. For example our ability to process and understand non-sequiturs. When one asks (1) Q: "how many graduate students does it take to change a light-bulb?" it follows somewhat from the question, and our past experience with similar jokes, that the answer A: "One, but it takes five years" is appropriate even if it is ironic. In some sense the context for the answer is provided in the set up of the joke. However, another similar joke (2) Q: "how many surrealists does it take to change a light-bulb?" A: "a fish", provides less context for the reply. This notwithstanding, joke (2) is still processed and understood, even though one wasn't thinking about fish at the time. How, then, do we come to regard surprise information as relevant? Why is it that the audience does not ignore the non-sequitur answer and wait to hear some more relevant answer?

Sperber and Wilson's reply to this would likely be that the audience intuitively assesses the benefit derived from expending the effort required to process the non-sequitur. Hence, presumably the pleasure in finding the humour resolves the cost-benefit analysis in favour of making the effort to understand the joke. If the effort is made but the joke is not understood, then presumably the audience eventually makes the decision not to expend any more energy and gives up. But that raises the problems of questions which are not easily understood, and yet are never given up upon; for instance, philosophical problems like defining justice, or theological questions about the existence of God. Why do we continue to expend energy on what appear to be unanswerable questions? Sperber and Wilson do not seem to have an answer for this, and the best that one can tell from the theory is that the questions are themselves relevant enough to be posed and somehow provide enough benefit

to earn the effort of trying to solve them. Presumably the pleasure and implications derived from deliberation upon these problems, even if they cannot be solved, is enough to make the effort worthwhile.

The cost-benefit analysis can have significant consequences for understanding silence as well. Silence is greatly dependent in relevance for its communicative capacity, as can be demonstrated by the following example.

(1) Gwyneth: (pause) it's nice.

The pause or silence in Gwyneth's utterance is indeterminate because we have no context upon which to attach an interpretation of its meaning. As a result the audience can pay it very little attention because it appears to be irrelevant. Instead we want to know more about why Gwyneth has made the statement at all. What is she saying is nice? Why does she use that rather weak and much maligned adjective to describe it? But all of that leaves the silence ignored and uninterpreted because the effort of doing so appears to have less benefit than the effort to interpret the words.

The silence takes on a greater sense of relevance when the example is adjusted to give it a context, as follows:

(2) David: what do you think of this jacket?
    Gwyneth: (pause) it's nice.

From the change in the example the audience is given some clue as to the context of the utterance containing the silence. Because of the context provided it is possible to assess the meaning of the pause preceding the linguistic statement as an intentional or unintentional suggestion of the fact that, for instance, Gwyneth doesn't really believe that David's jacket is nice. So we might provide an alternate phrasing of the example as follows:

(3) David: what do you think of this jacket?
    Gwyneth: I don't want to hurt your feelings, but it's ugly.

Until the context for the example was provided it was not clear that the pause in Gwyneth's utterance was possessed of any relevant meaning for the audience. Instead, we are more concerned with the words in the utterance, and

try to interpret *their* meaning because they provide the clues or hooks that make them more likely to produce the most benefit for the least amount of effort. The silence can therefore be ignored as irrelevant. However, when the silence is placed in a more extensive context its meaning becomes more important and it is not as easily ignored as irrelevant. In fact, the silence in (2) if perceived as relevant provides the basis for a more profound and accurate interpretation of Gwyneth's utterance which would not have been available otherwise.

We can see that there might be a relevant difference between example (2) and example (4),

  (4) David: what do you think of this jacket?
    Gwyneth: it's nice.

where the absence of the pause implies Gwyneth is likely to appreciate David's taste in jackets after all.

This leaves us with a very important bit of information for the task at hand: because silences are slippery, they will be ignored as irrelevant more readily than words are and this can cause misunderstandings. If a silence is not considered relevant it is easier to ignore than words, even words which are assessed as irrelevant, because silences are slippery and have no hooks to draw in the audience's attention. But ignoring a silence can lead the interpreter to ignore information which affects the degree to which they can make an accurate interpretation. This is why relevance is so vital to understanding silence. When silences are not considered relevant the information they carry will be lost. Even so, some silences are silences which are impossible to ignore, like one of the many silences encountered by Eva in Isabel Allende's novel *Eva Luna*[11].

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[11] Allende, Isabelle: *Eva Luna*, Margaret Sayers Peden trans. Bantam Books; New York; 1989. Pp: 167-8.

"At eleven I awoke, frightened by the silence; the crickets had stopped chirping and the air was still; not a leaf was stirring in the patio."

This is a Larundic silence of portent and meaning but only because it is given relevance by its context; in this case the crisis of a failed love affair and an omen of tragedy. But silences of crickets and stillness of air will be ignored if they are not relevant to the context of the audience. Thus, the problem exists when relevant silences are mistaken for irrelevant silences and their message goes unnoticed.

The solution to the danger of mistaking a silence as irrelevant is sourced in context, as we saw earlier. Context will help us receive the meaning of a silence and show us its relevance. The solution will equally rest on the interpreter's *prejudices* or encyclopaedic knowledge because it provides the context from the position of the interpreter – the foundation for the interpretation. But this might cause conflicts between meaning of the Larundic silence as the thing-in-itself, and relativistic opportunism in which the interpreter might favour her own context and *prejudice* and ignore the context of the silence itself. To avoid this we will rely upon a different conception of relevance, as outlined below.

9.2 Dworkin and A Second Kind of Relevance:

Sperber and Wilson's formulation of relevance provides important insights for understanding how Larundic silence works. Moreover, this conception can be easily reconciled with the elements of Gadamer's hermeneutic project as it will be applied to interpretations of silence. But there is an additional understanding of the concept of relevance. Relevance need not only be a signal to the audience that it is worth their effort to

construct an interpretation, it may also be a requirement for how the interpretation is made. In order to avoid miscommunication the interpreter of a silence ought to attend to the relevancy of the interpretation to the object: is the interpretation coherent with the significant features of the silence, such as its utterer, the context, the relationship between utterer and audience, and so on? Interpretations using the first understanding of relevance require openness on the part of interpreters in preparation of noticing that a silence has a meaning and that that meaning is worth the effort of being understood. To construct interpretations which are relevant according to the second notion of relevance, the interpreter will be required to stay within the perimeter of the object interpreted. This is the difference between *relevance of* and *relevance to*.

9.2.1 Dworkin's contribution:

Relevance to the thing-in-itself as object of interpretation requires that the interpretation *fit* the meaning of the object being interpreted. *Fit* is an idea from Ronald Dworkin's work, *Law's Empire*[12], designed to ensure that interpreters find coherence in the information on offer – before they build an interpretation of it. This permits the interpreter to see the object in its *best light:* as coherent; and helps ensure that the interpretation is relevant to the object itself. Fit and best-light will be shown to be highly useful elements of a method for constructing non-radical readings of silence. They will help ensure that interpretations do not exceed the boundaries, or what Dworkin calls the *integrity*, of the thing-in-itself.

Dworkin's emphasis on integrity is a theoretical element for understanding and interpreting law and political practice. Nevertheless, his theory can extend beyond these areas. Dworkin draws a great deal of his material from theories of creative or artistic interpretation, especially

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[12] Dworkin, Ronald: *Law's Empire*. Fontana, Belknap Press; 1986.

interpretation of creative texts such as novels. It can be argued that Dworkin's ideal of integrity can be extended to any act of interpretation, including interpretation of silence. In fact, integrity will be very useful for our purposes because of the implicit insistence that interpreters respect the object of their interpretation in order to produce the best possible understanding of it. Integrity, as it is defined by Dworkin, entails the dual notions of best light and fit which permit the kind of consideration for the object we require (and which is advocated by Gadamer[13]). Seeing the object in its best light ensures that the interpretation fits the integral whole of the object. This relies on openness and respect which help the interpreter understand the object before being critical of it. Such understanding does not have to exclude the *prejudicial* content of the interpretation, but it does help keep *prejudices* from obscuring the object's integrity. This prevents the interpreter from making the object into what she wants it to be, instead of what it is. Not respecting the object's integrity leads to what Dworkin calls, and we have been calling throughout this thesis, construction of a *radical interpretation*. Thus, applying best light and fit protect the integrity of the thing-in-itself by ensuring that the interpretation is relevant to the object.

Integrity is composed of two almost opposing facets: that of *consistency*, and that of *flexibility* (related to Aristotle's practical wisdom, *Phronesis*). In the best of circumstances one ought to respect the internal consistency of the object of interpretation. Doing so will accord the object the consideration which in turn prevents unintentional (or intentional) opportunistic obscuring of the object of interpretation. Seeing the object in its *best light* requires the interpreter to assume that the object is internally consistent and meaningful. It must be said that staying consistent with the integrity of the object does not preclude taking a critical stance toward it. It is

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[13] Kuhn also makes the argument that we ought to try to see a theory as making sense and being coherent before trying to criticise it.

only the first necessary step in understanding the object. It is an internal appreciation for the object as a whole which ensures that interpretations fit it as the thing-in-itself.

The problem that ideas can be taken out of context and have their meanings changed illustrates why consistency is a virtue, at least some of the time. Lifting thoughts out of their ordinary or initial contexts and taking them away from their integral whole, distorts and transforms them and is not respectful of what they are. It is true that in some cases taking an idea out of its context can rescue good ideas from bad contexts, as it were. But doing so has transformative effects on the ideas, and this transformation is contrary to respect for their integrity as a whole.

Integrity and consistency are different concepts. It is important to understand that integrity is not identical to consistency, rather, consistency is a valued though sacrificeable part of integrity. Integrity does not require continuation of precedence or traditionally held opinions. It is not adherence to bare logical consistency, but to general principles. In law, for example, these may be justice and fairness[14]. Thus, integrity is consistent only to the extent that it is faithful to certain basic principles which are worth maintaining overall.

The most significant difference between the two is that integrity includes *flexibility*, whereas consistency shuns it. Flexibility permits one to go beyond what is consistent with the history of an object of interpretation, for example a law or legal system, in order to maintain its integrity to the general principles the system wishes to uphold. These principles are more significant than overall consonance and deserve preserving no matter what the cost to consistency. Flexibility in integrity permits organic change within a custom, which is practical in cases that are difficult to resolve. When there is no obvious way of dealing with a case and preceding solutions do not help in

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[14] Dworkin, pg: 185.

solving it, the interpreter, a judge perhaps, must rely on an ability to be flexible and reason the problem out.

Here is where Aristotle's idea of *phronesis* becomes most germane. *Phronesis* is usually translated as 'practical wisdom'. Flexibility requires one to make use of practical wisdom: the ability to apply general principles (and other accessible knowledge) to situations where it has not been used before. Successful application of general to particular, old to new, familiar to foreign, encourages creativity so that a solution to the problem can be found. Integrity is different from consistency because integrity requires this flexibility. It requires one to be faithful to the overall principles of the system, even at the expense of being consistent[15]. As a result,

> "integrity is a more dynamic and radical standard [than consistency]...because it encourages [an interpreter] to be wide-ranging and imaginative in search for coherence with fundamental principles."[16]

This allows integrity based-interpretations to be radical in order to uphold the fundamental principles[17]. However, it does not give the interpreter free reign to create radical opportunistic interpretations of the object. Flexibility must be restricted by the same kinds of limitations Gadamer and Wittgenstein pointed out: namely, common language, culture, history, tradition and the object of interpretation itself. For Aristotle, flexibility arose in the way that one applied general principles to particular situations, but always with the restriction that the principles must be considered absolute and unchanging[18]. Dworkin appears to accept these sentiments when he says that we are both free and constrained in our interpretations because the freedom

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[15] Dworkin, pg: 219.

[16] Dworkin, pg: 220.

[17] Dworkin, pg: 221.

[18] Aristotle, 1142a27.

and the constraint check one another[19]. When there are many competing interpretations of an object, flexible reasoning helps the interpreter choose between them based on which fits the object better, and which makes the text better. This is in fact free and constrained because it requires interpretation and personal choice, but also includes the constraints described by Aristotle, Wittgenstein and Gadamer.

Furthermore, we have 'internal' or 'subjective' restraints which keep us from allowing our fancies to roam wild[20]. Dworkin says our internal "convictions actually check one another"[21] and prevent us from accepting just any information. To use Gadamer's terminology, the internal constraints permit our *prejudices* to be critical, while also ensuring against *prejudices* becoming opportunistic. Once again it is clear that Dworkin's ideas have connections to Gadamer's hermeneutic circle where external constraints of tradition and history work with the internal constraints of *prejudice* to keep opportunism at bay.

9.2.2 Purpose:

The constraints to radical interpretations can be condensed into the two central elements from Dworkin's theory already discussed: *fit* and *best light*. Dworkin states that the best way to decide between competing interpretations of an object is to determine which interpretation fits best with the history of the object as it has been interpreted, understood and used over time. "We all enter the history of an interpretative practice at a particular point..."[22], and this produces certain restraints upon the interpretation in the form of "brute facts of

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[19] Dworkin, pg: 234.

[20] Dworkin, pg: 235. This recalls Gadamer's view of how the elements of the hermeneutic circle safeguard against the dominance of any one element.

[21] Dworkin, pg: 237.

[22] Dworkin, pg: 91.

history"[23]. These constitute the identity of the object of interpretation or the thing-in-itself. The goal of a good interpretation is to be able to fit in with this history as much as possible. But fit is not all there is. Dworkin insists that the interpretation must show the object in its best light. Which means it must be consistent at least with the general principles to be upheld and it must be represented as "the best it can be".

> "I offered this general and very abstract characterisation of interpretation: it aims to make the object or practice being interpreted the best it can be."[24]

Looking at the object in its best light requires one to find the *purpose* of it. In Dworkin's use of 'purpose' the interpreter understands the choice of the constituent words of the sentence as well as the reason why the words have been chosen, and this gives the sentence meaning. Interpreting a text or anything creative is an act of attributing fit to the overall object of interpretation: trying to see it in its best light as having internal integrity, and thereby seeing the purpose in it.

By this Dworkin is referring to the opposite of Wittgenstein's notion of *sense*[25]. We know the sense of the words in a sentence when we understand their individual meanings as well as their meaning as constituents of the whole sentence. The main difference between sense and purpose is that Wittgenstein does not describe sense as being imposed from outside by the interpreter, rather the interpreter has it imposed on her through the understanding of the meaning of the sentence. Dworkin, on the other hand, states that the interpreter imposes purpose on the sentence in an attempt to make sense of it.

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[23] Dworkin, pg: 255, Dworkin refers to the brute facts of *legal* history, but I have extended this as is explained elsewhere.

[24] Dworkin, pg: 77.

[25] See Wittgenstein: *Tractatus*, §3.3 &4.022; and *Investigations*, §20, 33, 117 & 197.

> "...creative interpretation takes its formal structure from the idea of intention, not (at least not necessarily) because it aims to discover the purposes of any particular historical person or group but because it aims to impose purpose over the text or data or tradition being interpreted."[26]

This "aim to impose purpose" is the intention of the interpreter to view the object in its best light as having integrity to its history, and thereby ensure the fit of the interpretation. Furthermore, Dworkin claims that when people interpret a conversation the act is a purposive one, in the same way as when they interpret texts. The intention of the interpreter is to

> "...assign meaning in the light of the motives and purposes and concerns it supposes the speaker to have, and it reports its conclusions in a statement about his 'intention' in saying what he did."[27]

For this reason interpretation also differs from causal explanation, because it is purposive and imposes purpose on the object.

It must not be supposed to follow from this that the object has no meaning of its own until one is imposed on it. The interpreters' external understanding of the purpose of the object cannot be permitted to be a radical or opportunistic reading imposed on the thing-in-itself. Permitting this would have relativistic implications we seek to avoid. In order to prevent opportunism, the interpretation is subject to the same limiting boundaries which restrict the interpretations of words. Thus, sentences have internal sense which is understood by way of reaching a purposive understanding of the sentence without obscuring it. Opportunistic imposition is therefore limited by the requirement of seeing the object in its best light as fitting with its own meaning and the history of imposed external meanings which accompany it.

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[26] Dworkin, pg: 228.

[27] Dworkin, pg: 50.

However, as we have already said, seeing the object at its best does not mean one is committed to accepting it. It is still possible to be critical of the object. Once the idea is understood in its best light with regard to completeness and integrity, the percipient can then take a different perspective and be critical of it if so desired. It is simply that the first step of the interpretative understanding entails seeing the object as a whole, and as consistent as possible, before the critical reaction to it can begin. This does not harm the critical position, and in fact helps it. We do not have to agree with the object once it is understood, but understanding it helps us to know it more thoroughly. "Know thine enemy" serves as a good model for critical judgement here. Not that the object needs to be seen as an enemy, but that knowing it fully helps the critic to see its failings more thoroughly, and makes visible its points of weakness. Understanding the integral whole of the object indicates where it's integrity is suspect.

9.2.3 Interpretations of art:

According to Dworkin, the act of interpretation is somewhat different in artistic interpretation. Interpreting art is more constructive than purposive; it seeks less to determine authorial intent than to attempt to see the object at its best[28]. Interpretation of art adds to the dialogue from which the artistic statement issued. It is constructive in that the interpreter's choice of what is the best light in which to view the object will involve some personal choice and will reflect personal attitudes[29].

> "This brings the interpreter's sense of artistic value into his reconstruction of the artist's intention in at least an evidential way, for the interpreter's judgement of what an author would have accepted will be guided by his sense of what the author should have accepted, that is, which sense of which readings

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[28] Dworkin, pg: 52.

[29] Dworkin, pg: 52-3.

would make the work better and which would make it worse."[30]

In this sense the interpreter is as involved as the author in creating the meaning of the object. The interpreter would view a best light interpretation as one which she would apply to her own work[31]. Thus, personal attitudes are an inescapable part of constructing interpretations because the interpreter is always caught in her own history which distorts interpretation, and even best light attempts at viewing the world do not escape this[32]. This again is in agreement with Gadamer's theory that we cannot avoid *prejudicial* content in interpretative acts.

In constructing interpretations of novels, Dworkin says that the "distinction between author and interpreter [is] more a matter of different aspects of the same process."[33] Dworkin uses the notion of a chain novel to illustrate this sort of author/interpreter relationship. Here, authors must be interpreters of previous chapters written by other people before adding to the novel by becoming authors of the next chapters. This confers a special obligation upon the current author who must act as interpreter before adding anything constructive to the text. The current author is required to remain faithful to the limitations which have already been imposed by the previous authors in the chain, ensuring there is fit and that the novel is shown in its best light.

> "Each novelist aims to make a single novel of the material he has been given, what he adds to it, and (so far as he can control this) what his successors will want or be able to add."[34]

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[30] Dworkin, pg: 57.

[31] Dworkin, pg: 58.

[32] Dworkin, pg: 62.

[33] Dworkin, pg: 229.

[34] Dworkin, pg: 229.

This is similar to writing sequels, such as books about Sherlock Holmes written by authors other than Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Authors are restricted in the kind of information they are allowed to apply to the characters; so Holmes lives at 23B Baker Street not 1313 Mockingbird Lane, and Watson is a doctor not a lawyer, etc. This is because the information, like Wittgenstein's idea of words, provides the perimeter within which the interpretation is defined as faithful and marks where additions are wrong. In order to succeed in creating an interpretation which both fits and is the best it can be, the author must have an idea of the overall whole of the novel and some idea of how the characters will progress and what they will do.

> "He must think up some view of the novel in progress, some working theory about its characters, plot, genre, theme, and point, in order to decide what counts as continuing it and not as beginning anew."[35]

The chain novel example shows that there is no way of telling when the interpretative role ends and the authorial role begins, as the interpretative role is often authorial because it brings new information to the constructed text[36]. This is partly why interpreters have to be careful to not allow too much of themselves to interfere with the understanding of the text, but it is also why we ought to respect what the interpreter brings to the act of interpretation. The interpreter's creativity can bring new and important revelations to the interpretation.

How then do we ensure against radical opportunistic interpretations? Interpretations are kept in check by staying within the perimeter of the object of interpretation and by trying to give it integrity by seeing it in its best light. However, some personal attitudes will find their way into the interpretation.

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[35] Dworkin, pg: 230.

[36] Dworkin, pg: 232.

"Your assignment is to make of the text the best it can be, and you will therefore choose the interpretation you believe makes the work more significant or otherwise better."[37]

As a result, any interpretation can be multifarious, because the object can be approached from many different view points[38]. Differences in individuals result in a plurality of interpretations. But rather than weaken the system, these help strengthen it by permitting dialogue which tests and transforms the interpretations. The idiosyncrasies of personal taste and *prejudice* are the cause of disagreement, says Dworkin. However, this is a functional characteristic of interpretation because differences of opinion spark the debate which strengthens the system overall. Can one interpretation be better than another? Not necessarily. However, Dworkin will reply that the best interpretations of an object are the ones which present it in its best light and which fit the object most comfortably. The different ideas of the object create the possibility of the dialectic Gadamer suggested. Each participant in the dialogue checks the other to ensure that no one is more prevalent than the others. Ultimately the interpretation will rely on agreement based on this dialectical process.

9.2.4 Context leads to agreement:

Consideration must be paid to a final aspect of Dworkin's theory. He claims that context is an important part of interpretation: context of the interpreter and context of the object. Context makes agreement possible because we are all to some extent part of the same context. There is an overlap available in the form of shared language, history, tradition or culture, in the same way that Wittgenstein and Gadamer have suggested. This overlap

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[37] Dworkin, pg: 233.

[38] Dworkin, pg: 230.

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provides the similarities which make agreement possible. Similar outlooks can create similar understandings and customs[39]. "...[A] variety of forces tempers...differences and conspires toward convergence"[40], which makes agreement possible. The "forces" are paradigms and principles which inspire community agreement, "...and this fact discourages radical interpretations"[41]. An example of limitations to opportunism is precedent in the legal context. However, the theory extends beyond law, as Dworkin includes intellectual environment and common language as contextual limitations. These are shared influences within the participants' context. There is therefore enough overlap room in the shared context to nurture agreement.

Integrity permits diversity because individuals can bring their own ideas regarding fit and best light to the act of interpretation[42]. However, there are still limits to personal *prejudice*, making idiosyncratic interpretations less likely. Historical context is one such limitation. Even though flexibility will be more important than consistency[43], interpretations must still have fit to the historical context of what is interpreted[44]. So, for example, the history of the word 'holocaust' always entails its meaning as it pertained to the Second World War, even when it is applied to other events. Thus, when other events are described as being holocausts, it is usually with the Second World War idea in mind and with the author's desire to invoke this as part of its meaning. This permits a mutual understanding between the author and the audience in the form of overlapping historical context.

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[39] Dworkin, pg: 63.

[40] Dworkin, pg: 88.

[41] Dworkin, pg: 88.

[42] Dworkin, pg: 243.

[43] Dworkin, pg: 257.

[44] Dworkin, pg: 255.

However, the traditions and linguistic rules that serve to create agreement can also lead to irreconcilable divergence. The elements on which we rely for agreement can change over time[45] partly because of disagreement on how they are to be used and understood, and these changes may produce schisms which cannot be healed. To help prevent this, there must be a balance between divergence and similarity as too much of either can weaken the interpretative project[46]. Too much divergence lessens mutual understanding, whereas too much agreement prevents critical discernment and the fruitful debate it incurs. Moreover, we should not rely on immutable truths as there is a history of great changes in conventions over time. Hence we cannot assume consensus on conventions or truths[47]. This is why flexibility plays such an important role in interpretation. Dialogue and agreement provide the balance between input from the object and input from its interpreter. Chapter 11 will further reveal the significance of agreement for interpretation.

9.2.5 Conclusions on Dworkin's contribution:

If we distil the elements of Dworkin's theory for our purposes we can see which are most helpful for interpreting silence. 'Relevance to' in this case means preserving the integrity of the object by viewing it in its best light and ensuring the interpretation fits with the history of the object. History is the information referred to earlier that is part of the thing-in-itself and defines the perimeter outside which an interpretation is considered radical. We recall that it is Larundic silences that offer perimeter that must be respected. Respecting the perimeters of a Larundic silence will protect it from radical readings. Hence integrity and its constitutive elements are useful in interpretations of Larundic silences.

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[45] Dworkin, pg: 77.

[46] Dworkin, pg: 89.

[47] Dworkin, pg: 137.

But preserving integrity requires a degree of flexibility in its application. Flexibility in integrity ensures that we remain constant to the purpose of the object, while also allowing for consideration of the information brought by the interpreter. Permitting the interpreter's contribution allows the foundational knowledge which leads to noticing the relevance of the object. Moreover, the flexibility involved in 'relevance to' is especially important to interpreting Larundic silences because it ensures that proper attention is paid to the meaning of the silence, even though the percipient will add to it during the act of interpretation. This combination permits the fusion between the thing-in-itself, the Larundic silence in this case, and the interpreter's *prejudices*. The fusion takes place in the overlap of shared context between the interpreter and the interpreted. the result of which is the agreed upon understanding of the subject.

The respect which follows from integrity, seeing the object in its best light, the importance of fit to context, and the other elements of Dworkin's theory, are highly significant for silence because silence so easily falls victim to misunderstanding and lazy or radical interpretations. The slipperiness of silence frustrates interpretative attempts and can lead the interpreter to decide that the silence is not worth the effort, as we have seen above in the discussion of Sperber and Wilson's work. Furthermore, the effort and frustration might cause the interpreter to take a dim view of the silence and construct a negative interpretation of it, as is illustrated by the effects of stammers in the court room and pleading the Fifth Amendment in the USA[48]. Reminding interpreters that they ought to try to construct the best interpretation of the silence they possibly can would encourage more positive interpretations of silence and alleviate the debilitating effects misunderstandings can have. Dana Jack has shown the debilitating effects self-silencing can have on

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[48] See chapter 16 "Silence in the Court".

women, leading to depression and anxiety[49]. This is exacerbated by the fact that those around the victim of self-imposed silence further silence the individual by imposing opportunistic interpretations on her identity and making her into what they need her to be. This creates a confusion of misunderstanding which leads to abuse and objectification of the silent women due to the interpreters' lack of effort at trying to construct accurate interpretations of the silence. Rather than blame the victims of misunderstanding we should to set up mechanisms to prevent these misunderstandings, and to this end Dworkin suggests reliance on integrity, best light and fit.

This is a rough sketch of how Dworkin's thesis contains supportive elements for the model of interpreting silences. We will see how they link with the other elements in the conclusion to part II.

9.3 Relevance and Silence:

We have seen how relevance can be seen in two distinct manners: 'relevance of' in Sperber and Wilson's sense, and 'relevance to' as it is derived from Dworkin's theory. Both these ideas of relevance have a significant role to play in the model for interpreting silence. The first type or relevance discussed is important for Larundic silence because it alerts us to the fact that a communicative attempt is being made. This attempt presupposes inherent meaning in the silent utterance because, as was revealed in part I, there must be something that is being communicated. Once the percipient is alerted to the presence of a meaning, it is incumbent upon her to interpret that meaning in order to discern what is being communicated. This requires effort

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[49] See Dana Jack: *Silencing the Self: Woman and Depression*; Harvard University Press; Cambridge, Mass.; 1991, on constructing identities for the silent.

on the part of the percipient, and we are told, most percipients are reluctant to make this effort. Thus, they rely on information close to hand and risk building lazy, radical interpretations. The danger of this for silence is even greater than it is for spoken utterances, because silence is slippery. As a result, it falls prey to opportunistic interpretations, and at the extreme, may be mistaken for empty and then be ignored.

In order to protect silences from percipients' constructing radical interpretations of them, the conditions of the second form of relevance can be applied. In this sense of relevance the percipient is alerted to the problems of interpreting silence, and cautioned to ensure that interpretations are relevant to the silent utterance. This, as we have seen, includes maintaining the integrity of the silence by seeing it in its best light and ensuring that the interpretation fits the Larundic silence in question. However, we are cautious to prevent the non-critical acceptance that this would entail. Thus, the role of the interpreter is to apply her personal *prejudice* in a contextual overlap that combines the meaning of the Larundic silence with the input from the interpreter. This occurs in the dialogue that balances the two perspectives in an attempt at agreement on the interpreted meaning of the silence. We now turn to the element of agreement.

CHAPTER 10

AGREEMENT, CONSENSUS AND MEANING

10.1 Introduction:

A number of philosophers have argued for the importance of agreement in communication and truth evaluation. Among them, Richard Bernstein stands out where these ideas are to be applied to silence. He has explained how negotiation and persuasive argument permit the formulation of an interpretation which is considerate of the claims made by all the participants. Thus, a Larundic silence will be less likely to have its perimeter infringed upon where agreement precedes interpretation. But agreement is not unique to Bernstein. Gadamer demonstrated the role of agreement in understanding; while Wittgenstein begins from the other end showing how agreed upon rules for language make understanding possible through familiarity and custom. The work of these authors shows a significant degree of overlap in their reliance upon agreement, custom and tradition in communication theory. Their work also coincides with Dworkin's demand for flexibility in understanding and communicating, and this leads to the importance of practical reasoning or *phronesis*, at least as far as this project is concerned. Agreement will be a further element to the collection from which we shall construct a model for the interpretation of silence.

10.2 Richard Bernstein and the Agreement Theory of Truth:

The *agreement theory of truth* is central to Richard Bernstein's book *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics and Praxis*[1]. Bernstein claims that the world is suffering from a malaise which he calls the Cartesian Anxiety. This anxiety is based on the Cartesian need for objective foundations of rationality and judgement of right and wrong. Attempts to address this need, and critiques of these attempts, have created a dichotomy which consists of two extreme concepts on what Bernstein considers is a single continuum: the extremes of objectivism and relativism. In order to ease the anxiety that has overtaken us, Bernstein suggests we must find an alternative to the two extremes. Neither extreme has successfully solved the problems that weaken Cartesian foundationalism nor presented a suitable alternative. Hence Bernstein suggests an alternative that lies beyond the dichotomy of objectivism and relativism, somewhere in between.

The alternative to the dichotomy which is the seat of the problems of Cartesian-influenced modernity (not just in philosophy), is to be found in hermeneutics. Bernstein relies on the works of many recent philosophers including Kuhn, Geertz, Winch, Habermas, Rorty, and Arendt, but especially Gadamer. Gadamer's epistemological research on hermeneutic understanding and interpretation offers a middle road between the stringency of objectivism and the chaos of relativism. Gadamer suggests a way for individual subjects with very different ontological structures (belief systems, cultures, up-bringings, *prejudices*...) and separate identities to communicate with one another in meaningful and creative ways. To reiterate, Gadamer says that the supposed incommensurability described by relativism is a myth. Differences can be overcome by means of dialogue and meaningful communication. This

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[1] Bernstein, Richard J. *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics and Praxis*. University of Pennsylvania Press. Philadelphia; 1983.

requires openness between individuals and a willingness to be aware of one's own *prejudices*, and if necessary change them when they are wrong. Once this kind of communication is established there is no longer any need for external foundations, nor any other objectivist tool, to make agreement possible. Bernstein echoes Gadamer's sentiments and claims that we can rely on agreement instead objectivism. Agreement can be produced by meaningful communication and debate designed to persuade listeners and justify propositions on the basis of rational or good argumentation. Strong arguments produced in favour of a given idea will persuade others to accept it, if not immediately then at least over time. Agreement will involve community, and community will create further agreement. In the end, the hermeneutic circle will heal the dichotomy by offering an alternative to universally fixed criteria for judgement. So, establishing the meaning of a silence, or other object of interpretation, can be done through agreement within the dialectic of the hermeneutic circle.

10.2.1 Three elements for agreement:

Bernstein's conclusion arises from the possibility of meaningful communication between individuals and persuasion toward agreement. He says Cartesian anxiety will be eased by three elements working in combination. The three elements are:

> Reciprocal or Communal Judgement
> Practical Discourse
> Rational Persuasion

Reciprocal Judgement is best described in Bernstein's section on Hannah Arendt. He says,

> "Judgement is not the expression of private feelings or
> idiosyncratic subjective preferences. Neither is it to be
> identified with the type of universality that [Arendt] takes to be

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characteristic of 'cognitive reason'. Judgement is communal and intersubjective; it always implicitly appeals to and requires testing against the opinions of other judging persons."[2]

Reciprocal judgement requires flexibility and reasoning; it is practical wisdom joined with community. Propositions of practical wisdom are discussed within a community and agreed upon. Thus, consensus grows from those propositions which are most plausibly argued.

Bernstein suggests that reciprocal judgement emerges from the other two parts of the trio: practical discourse and rational persuasion. The three are, therefore, inextricably intertwined. You cannot have reciprocal judgement without practical discourse about the proposition; and the eventual agreement relies on rational persuasion to make it plausible. The discourse makes the proposition clear; the persuasion creates the catalyst for agreement. Finally, the judgement evolves from all of this.

At this point, Bernstein's argument becomes political[3]. He says there must be established a political community that lives by the three elements, and in which all citizens would be equal and free to participate in the agreement procedure. Bernstein cites Habermas in saying there is a strong inherent need in human nature to create and rely upon these three elements, but this is frustrated by the lack of the correct kind of community to support and encourage their use. We yearn for it and turn toward it with every linguistic effort, every attempt at mutual understanding.

> "Habermas shows how deeply embedded the claim to communicative reason is in our everyday forms of social life and reproduction, how it develops a stubbornly transcending power even when it is violated and silenced again and again."[4]

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[2] Bernstein, pg: 219.

[3] Bernstein, pg: 230.

[4] Bernstein, pg: 228.

An ideal community based on the three elements represents an end to "distorted communication". Distorted perhaps by not adhering to the rules of hermeneutic understanding outlined by Gadamer. The secret to effective communication is persuasion coupled with undistorted communication; each of these ideas is drawn from Kuhn and Gadamer.

Bernstein uses Kuhn's explanation of the process of scientific revolution[5] to explain how persuasion and agreement occur. Far from being limited to the scientific context, Bernstein claims that Kuhn's model of revolution can extend to any situation where a community makes changes to the accepted ideologies and paradigms of their time. Essentially, new ideas help to break down and change old paradigms until a shift occurs and the paradigm is exchanged for one which better suits the new ideas. The world view shifts to a new view which is described as incommensurable with the old one(s); but this incommensurability does not have to imply complete exclusivity between the rationales of the different paradigms. Instead it includes some overlap which makes communication and even understanding possible between world views. Thus, Newtonian physics can be understood within the context of the Einsteinian paradigm. The actual shift implies this kind of mutual comprehension. Hence, the person trying to persuade a colleague to concept paradigm A, that some proposition under paradigm B is true, must be able to argue in a manner which can be understood by both paradigms. Ultimately, the transferral is made on the basis of persuasion and a leap of faith from one paradigm to the next, but the leap requires the momentum of persuasive argument. Sound, strong arguments are made in favour of one position and the leap is made because the arguments hold enough persuasive force to encourage the transferral – but the arguments need to be understood before they can be persuasive. However, this is a general

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[5] Kuhn, Thomas S.: *The Structure of Scientific Revolution*, 2nd ed. International Encyclopaedia of Unified Science: Foundations of the Unity of Science; vol. 2, no. 2. University of Chicago Press; Chicago, Ill.; 1970.

political theory. For it to be applicable to silence, it must be relevant to interpersonal communication as well. In order to show how this is possible on a personal individual basis Bernstein relies on Gadamer's hermeneutics.

Gadamer's hermeneutics is the explanation for the mutual-comprehensibility between persons from different paradigm perspectives, such as between Einsteinian and Newtonian physicists. Bernstein stresses the importance of two factors from Gadamer's theory as it pertains to mutual understanding: 1) the appreciation of tradition and *prejudice*, and 2) openness or receptiveness to new ideas. Tradition and *prejudice*, as we have seen, form the personal ontological structure of every individual; this is what Gadamer calls our horizons. To recap, our individual horizons consist of two main ingredients: influences of the past transferred through language (what Gadamer refers to as historical consciousness), and the formation of personal preferences, dislikes, opinions and beliefs which form individual identity and the *prejudices* of our ontological structures. We are not simply trapped by this horizon, we *are* the horizon, so there is no point in trying to separate ourselves from it in order to distinguish objective truth from subjective opinion – this would be impossible. Instead, we have to learn to work with what we have and use the horizon to reach interpretative understandings of the world. This will be done through openness or receptiveness to new ideas, which is the best we can do since we are incapable of separating ourselves from *prejudice*. However, rather than interfering, *prejudices* have been shown to help us understand the world because they provide the anchor with which to ground ourselves, and the perspective from which to view the new ideas. Nevertheless, sometimes *prejudices* are wrong or inappropriate for the understanding of a given idea. When this happens it is necessary to examine, transform or relinquish the old *prejudicial* beliefs in favour of new ones. Openness clearly facilitates this procedure by allowing one to see and recognise useful *prejudices* from useless ones. This makes persuasive

argumentation a real possibility because it implies people are capable of changing their minds, of accepting new ideas while rejecting old ones.

Bernstein's project with Gadamer's hermeneutics is to show that it is possible to reach agreement between paradigms or horizons. Reaching an agreement is facilitated by historical consciousness applied through communication. Language is imbued with a plurality of concepts which evolve within it through traditional usage, and which are maintained over time. Nevertheless, additions can be attached due to the variance of usage throughout history. Thus, we can account for agreement between Kuhnian-type paradigms by pointing to similarities in the historical bases of the language used to express new and old ideas. In other words, the language used by a Newtonian physicist is the foundation of the updated language of the Einsteinian physicist. They both use more or less the same language containing common historical knowledge. The shared language, therefore, provides the basis for communication and transferral of new ideas. We see the world through our *prejudices* and express ourselves with the personal language that reflects them. Nevertheless, we are open to change through debate and can be transformed through persuasive argument. The shared information is the catalyst for transformation. This is because the leap of faith is less daunting when something familiar is attached to it, *viz.* traditional linguistic tools and personal beliefs. So agreement is possible between paradigms because of the presence of shared language.

10.2.2 How agreement halts radical interpretation:

Bernstein's cure for Cartesian Anxiety is to abandon the search for that which is absolute in favour of consensus and agreement through rational discussion. It is not necessary for this to extend toward scientific truths, although Bernstein will say that it does. For our purposes the agreement theory of truth is interesting because it solves the classic interpretative

problem: In cases where no understanding can be produced without it being wholly or partially biased, the notions of persuasion and agreement help prevent radical and opportunistic readings. Persuasion requires deliberation and dialectic reasoning, which ought to allow for testing toward agreement. Thus, a meaning is constructed over time. This is most obvious in artistic fields where the meaning of a piece of work develops as critics discuss it and observers view it. Further examples can be found in politics where consensus building is of obvious necessity; and in science where a 'fact' is determined through repeated testing until a hypothesis becomes a truth.

In the area of silence, agreement escapes the limitations caused by few clues for interpretation, and the tendency toward not noticing the relevance of a silence. This occurs as follows. A proper dialectic expects openness on the part of the participants so that their *prejudices* will not be allowed to be opportunistic in reaching the understanding, at least not without being challenged and transformed if necessary. The challenge and transformation ensures interpretations will be carefully reflected upon, and that consideration will be given to all participants involved. Once this dialogue is begun, persuasive argument will cause transformation of opinions and *prejudices*, as well as of the history and traditions involved, and ultimately an agreement will be reached. Gadamer refers to this as reaching an understanding[6], which is an apt description of how this sort of communication through interpretation works. The participants arrive at a common understanding in which the *prejudices* of the interpreter come to comprehend the silent thing-in-itself, as object of interpretation, while remaining within the perimeter set up by it. The agreement is not just a submission of one party to another but a mutually arrived at understanding of the object; therefore a critical perspective is still possible. This is especially important for slippery Larundic silence which, already in danger of being overlooked as irrelevant, is also in danger of being

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[6] Warnke, Georgia. Pg: 103.

misinterpreted by percipients who are unable or unwilling to make the effort of remaining within its perimeter. Agreement implies respect for all the parties concerned as they discuss and persuade until the understanding has been reached.

Prejudices are acceptable aids in the course of understanding and communicating through agreement. Which means that communication can take place without the need for objectivity, something important for our purposes. We are trying to construct a method of interpretation which permits communication without needing to eliminate the input of personal *prejudice*. *Prejudices* are part of us and cannot be eluded or put aside while engaged in the sorts of judgements required for understanding silences. These are value judgements like ethics and aesthetics, and cannot be dealt with on a purely rational basis. However, *prejudices* provide the basis for recognition of the relevance of a Larundic silence. Without them, the Larundic silence will not produce the cognitive effect that encourages effort at interpretation and understanding. Thus, there must be room for the irrational, the judgmental and the *prejudiced*,. This is exactly what agreement provides, only not without some way of preserving the object from radical readings. To that end, the agreement theory of truth uses practical discourse, as described below. Which makes it an effective method of constructing interpretations that satisfy our requirement that *prejudices* be maintained.

Practical discourse is necessary in an account of interpretation of silence because of the negotiation it entails. Silences are slippery methods of communication which deserve the effort of understanding because they can yield vast amounts of useful information that cannot or will not be communicated any other way. The negotiation implied in agreement restricts radical readings and ensures silences are considered carefully before they are assigned a final interpretation. Agreement also ensures that the *prejudices* of the interpreter can be afforded a degree of respect in an act of interpretation, so

that a negotiation takes place in which all perspectives are considered and the agreed upon outcome includes aspects from all the members of the negotiation. To use the language of ethics, agreement is the fairest way to establish an interpretative meaning in which all parties may participate.

An example of this is the silence of an unopened letter which may contain the contradiction of a presumed unrequited love or its confirmation. Imagine a scenario where a tragic lover burns the letter unopened because its silence is more comforting than confirming her suspicions that her love is unrequited. The lover cannot *know* that she has been rejected, but by burning the unopened letter she presumes an interpretation which she neither seeks to confirm nor contradict. Instead she relies exclusively upon her *prejudices* to interpret what is inside. Hence, by burning the letter she leaves no room for the negotiation toward agreement which ideally precedes interpretation and could render a suitable meaning to the silence. This melodramatic example illustrates the tragedies which can arise when an interpreter does not make sufficient effort to construct a reasonable interpretation of the meaning of a Larundic silence. Agreement assists construction of non-radical interpretations of Larundic silence because it ensures that all participants in the dialectic of interpretation are considered to have equal force. This consideration permits the participation of the thing-in-itself by ensuring we remain faithful to the perimeter its meaning establishes. It also allows the interpreter to add to the meaning with the relevant *prejudicial* information she brings to the interpretation. Although, it also ensures that this is not the only information considered. Exclusively applying *prejudice* leads to misunderstanding, as the example of the letter showed.

Agreement can preserve problematic silences from suffering from radical or opportunistic interpretations imposed upon them. The relative safety which agreement creates for silence eliminates the need for absolute certainty. Certainty is then replaced with a dialectic toward understanding.

This is necessary when interpreting silence because there can be no absolute certainty in any rational sense about the realm of communication which Wittgenstein said was beyond the rational. "Whereof we cannot speak, thereof we must be silent"[7] refers to a world distinct from linguistic rationality and certainty which entails common understanding through the use of words. Larundic silence can communicate and a mutual understanding can be reached, but this occurs through agreement rather than through rational certitude. And this is significant because it permits silence the freedom and flexibility to mean more than one thing, and to go beyond transliteration. To stop at a mere transliteration of a silence is to underestimate it because a silence can be filled with more thoughts than a word can possess, as we have seen. The best understanding of a silence we can hope for is an agreed to interpretation of its likely meaning(s). Certitude of the meaning of a silence will always elude us. Therefore, using a system of understanding and communication which does not require certainty is ideally suited to silence.

We have established that agreement presupposes dialogue and negotiation between the participants. An agreement, including practical discourse is one where each participant's content is offered, considered and negotiated. This is why it is within the dialectic that precedes agreement that radical readings will be intercepted. We will see later on how this element works with the those described in previous chapters. Before this, we will explore how the effort involved in constructing non-radical readings of a silence requires a degree of flexibility, insight and openness, as described above. The following section is a discussion of the Aristotelian concept of *phronesis* as it is required for this type of reasoning, and can be applied to interpretations of silence.

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[7] Wittgenstein, Ludwig: *The Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus.* C.K. Ogden trans. Routledge Press; London England; 1922.

CHAPTER 11

PRACTICAL WISDOM OR *PHRONESIS*

11.1 Introduction:

Many of the theories described above rely on what has been referred to as flexibility in reasoning. This idea derives from the notion of *phronesis* discussed by Aristotle[1] in the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Politics*, and from Gadamer's usage of *phronesis* in connection with understanding. The term '*phronesis*' is often translated as practical reasoning or practical wisdom, and has arisen in different forms in the above discussion of the works of Gadamer, Wittgenstein, Dworkin and Bernstein.

11.1.2 The concept:

The ideal practical aim in Aristotle's theory of virtue is the pursuit of *eudaimonia*, or the good in human existence. For him *eudaimonia* meant the pursuit of happiness as a principle of temperance rather than hedonistic excess. To achieve temperate happiness the virtuous individual must habitually choose to apply the principles of virtue in cases where a moral choice is required. The ability to successfully apply universal principles of virtue to particular cases, is called *phronesis*. It is concerned with universals as well as particulars, "for it is practical, and practice is concerned with particulars."[2] Thus, *phronesis* can be characterised as the application of general rules to individual cases.

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[1] Aristotle: *The Basic Works of Aristotle.* Richard McKeon ed. Random House; New York, N.Y.; 1941.

[2] Aristotle, 1141b16.

> "But ethics is manifestly not just knowledge of universal principles, it is also knowledge of how to apply them correctly in particular circumstances in order to achieve *eudaimonia*. And this, of course, is where *phronesis* comes explicitly into the picture."[3]

Phronesis is "a true and reasoned state of capacity to act with regard to the things that are good or bad for man."[4] The definition of the *phronomis* person, then, is one who is able to deliberate well about what makes the good life in general[5]. Careful deliberation allows the *phronomis* enough flexibility to apply first principles of virtue in variable situations, even in difficult cases.

As we can see, *phronesis* involves a degree of choice. Practical wisdom is the capacity to choose with deliberate desire to conform to the general principles of virtue.

> "the reasoning must be true and the desire right, if the choice is to be good, and the latter must pursue just what the former asserts...; ...of the part [of the intellect] which [is] practical and intellectual the good state is truth in agreement with right desire."[6]

So the first principles are not blindly submitted to, rather, the *phronomoi* has the rational and deliberate intention to apply them because they generate eudaimonia. Deliberate choice using practical reasoning is, therefore, the "strongest of all states for resisting following opinion and making mistakes."[7] Practical reasoning is a freedom to make choices that are appropriate for bringing about *eudaimonia*.

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[3] Reeve, pg: 2.

[4] Aristotle, 1140b5.

[5] Aristotle, 1140a24.

[6] Aristotle, 1139a27.

[7] Aristotle, 1146a3.

It follows that *phronesis* is more concerned with means than ends. Good action is the end in itself for practical wisdom, "...virtue makes us aim at the right mark and practical wisdom makes us take the right means."[8] Thus, *phronesis* is closely associated with *praxis*, or action, as it is the choice which informs right action. It is therefore possible to make errors in practical reasoning that do not produce good or right effects. The main advantage tin permitting this is that it preserves freedom of will in the *phronomoi*. *Phronesis* is the ability to choose among first principles in such a way as to produce the most virtuous good.

How does one become aware of the first principles in the first place? Through *nous*. Because *phronesis* is involved in the teleological pursuit of *eudaimonia*, it must also be associated with the more fixed idea of *nous*. *Nous* provides the person with knowledge of the first principles in order to chose the right means to apply them. In order for one to desire the good it may be helpful to know what the good is, and this is discovered through *nous* either by experience and deliberation or as an intuitive flash of insight[9]. *Nous* is the faculty possessed by the virtuous individual to know what the first principles of virtue are. Gadamer calls *nous* "the 'seeing' of what is immediately to be done"[10], and he sees it as containing the information of tradition and history. When *nous* informs *phronesis* the individual chooses right means on the basis of first principles and cannot help but produce the good as a result.

A further natural association for *phronesis*, then, is understanding. Understanding is the faculty by which we judge, and practical reasoning requires judgement of a particular situation in order to discern the correct means for applying first principles to it. To judge what is true is to understand

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[8] Aristotle, 1144a8.

[89] Reeve, pg. 62, refers to a notion of *nous* as insight after experience and deliberation; though the term is often more closely associated with intuitive insight of a priori principles.

[10] Gadamer, Hans-Georg: *Truth and Method*; Garrett Barden & John Cumming eds. Crossroad Publishing Co., New York, N.Y. 1985; pg: 287.

it; thus, to understand a thing is, at least in part, to see how it fits with the ideals of virtue[11]. Once the thing is understood, *phronesis* can discern the right means for achieving its desired end in keeping with the first principles of virtue.

Phronesis naturally entails a degree of flexibility in the context of application. To apply the universal first principles to particular cases requires that the *phronomoi* be capable of understanding and judging which principles apply where, and how to best make this application. There are no rules to follow as *phronesis* is not *techné*, practical reasoning which is neither an art nor science. There is no guaranteed method of applying the first principles. Also, each particular case is unique, if even just to a minor degree, so no general rules could be constructed which would fit all cases. So there are universal principles, but no universal method of exercising them. As Gadamer puts it,

> "What is right ... cannot be fully determined independently of the situation that requires a right action from me, whereas the *eidos* of what a craftsman desires to make is fully determined by the use for which it is intended."[12]

First principles must be general in order to be applicable to many different cases. This is why *phronesis* needs to be informed by understanding and judgement regarding how to apply the first principles in any given situation. Through the act of understanding, the first principles are flexibly applied to particulars. But this occurs only after deliberation and practical reasoning about how this ought to be done. This is the process of *phronesis*.

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[11] Aristotle, 1143a5.

[12] *Truth and Method*, pg: 283.

11.2 How *Phronesis* Applies to Interpretations:

Phronesis is characterised by its requirement of deliberation on the part of the one attempting to employ it. It is therefore sensibly associated with dialectical reasoning of the sort we have used to describe persuasion toward agreement[13]. The dialectic toward agreement entails rational argument designed to persuade and create understanding. This means that facts and information are coupled with *prejudices* in order to discover or construct meaning in a creative manner. Practical reasoning is useful for this because it encourages one to find new ways to approach difficult problems. Which is why it is useful that *phronesis* is more concerned with means than it is with ends[14]. Its emphasis is on seeking new ways of understanding the world to assist us where it is difficult to know how to act in a particular situation. It creates novel modes of action, or *praxis*. Thus, it is a method rather than a solution. Bernstein describes this kind of reasoning as,

> "a form of reasoning that is concerned with choice and involves deliberation. It deals with that which is variable and about which there can be differing opinions (*doxai*). It is a type of reasoning in which there is a meditation between general principles and a concrete particular situation that requires choice and decision. In forming such a judgement there are no determinate technical rules by which a particular can simply be subsumed under that which is general and universal."[15]

Preservation of general principles requires flexibility in their usage. Flexible application of the rules suggested by these principles helps us deal with situations where universals do not easily apply to particulars. This directs us to solutions which cannot be found by simple rule application.

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[13] Bernstein, pg: 146.

[14] Bernstein, pg: 147.

[15] Bernstein, pg: 54.

The flexibility of practical reasoning is an excellent resource in interpretative efforts of aesthetic or ethical ideas. It also applies to any non-rational ideas of the sort Wittgenstein said silences are. This is because *phronesis* embodies the flexibility to use what is at hand in order to construct interpretations with creativity. This means that one's *prejudicial* information is not excluded from the act of interpretation. Rather, it aids one to go beyond the standard rules for understanding, and to create interpretative meanings where the ordinary rules simply do not apply. There are no set rules to follow, so anything goes.

Nevertheless, this still does not give the interpreter free reign to construct radical interpretations. In Gadamer, *phronesis* is the ability to engage in "free play within set limits"[16]. He says that the information used to construct interpretations is not irrelevant information[17], rather it provides the basis for learning new ideas. To ensure against opportunism then, *phronesis* requires an ability to discern the fit of information used in constructing an interpretation, and the fit of the interpretation itself. This means recognising relevance in the second sense we have defined it, as relevance to the object of interpretation. Thus, the flexibility of *phronesis* is tempered with the need for relevance, which is the key for preventing radical readings.

Interpreting the meaning of a silence depends on *phronesis* because silences are not readily dealt with under ordinary rules for interpretation. They require far greater effort and negotiation to be understood than words do, even when the words are indirect, such as when used as metaphors (and in these cases the meaning of the words is arguably silent, as was pointed out). Words always establish fairly clear perimeters about their meanings; silences usually only establish vague perimeters, when they establish them at all. So the flexibility of practical reasoning is required in face of any silence, whereas

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[16] *Truth and Method*, pg: 285.

[17] *Truth and Method*, pg: 279.

verbal utterances can be understood more readily through general application of the definitions and rules of language. We do acknowledge the type of Larundic silence which one might say 'speaks louder than words', and this is very true in some cases, as we have seen. But even these very clear, loud Larundic silences fall prey to misunderstandings more easily than do words. This is because they are more readily overlooked or misinterpreted even when they are acknowledged. Therefore, Larundic silences rely on flexible application of rules after deliberation. In other words, they rely on *phronesis*.

Phronesis is a necessary part of this proposed theory of the interpretation of silence because it permits flexibility in the use of rules for understanding ordinary acts of communication. We cannot easily apply the rules of language to silence because the rules of language do not fit instances of silence, even obvious communicative Larundic silences. Definitions cannot be applied to silences either, as a dictionary of silences would lack the ostensive referential element dictionaries use to point out which word is being defined. There would be only blank space where the word itself would be, turning the whole thing into a list of different emptinesses or absence/presences.

So the rules for language cannot be applied to silent utterances unless we use the rules with the flexibility which permits them to be used in this way. In order to do this the interpreter must be prepared to use practical reasoning, and apply the rules of language to something which is not linguistic or grammatical in the ordinary sense. Nevertheless, application of the rules of language to Larundic silence does bear fruit, as we have already seen. *Phronesis* is therefore ideal in difficult cases where rule application must be performed creatively, or when rules must be set aside altogether. Dworkin and Gadamer each speak of this sort of *phronesis* in law, where judges confronted with difficult cases find it necessary to apply laws in ways that may not have originally been intended, or if applying a law would produce an unjust

outcome. *Phronesis* here provides the basis for exploring ways to better protect the universal principles of the justice system, as we have seen in the passage on Dworkin above. And it is in a similar sense that *phronesis* will help in the processing of silent communication.

Phronesis teaches us to be creative within restrictions, and in the case of silence we want to be able to do exactly that. We must be creative when interpreting silence to the extent that we must seek new ways of understanding that do not rely on words. However, our creativity ought not to be boundless where Larundic silences are concerned. Larundic silence restricts possible interpretations by offering its own meaning to be interpreted. A successful act of communication through Larundic silence will be one that conforms to the boundaries set by the Larundic silence to a great degree. So, Larundic silence requires finite creativity for interpretation, and this is much like *phronesis*.

This final element is important to the model because of the way it both limits and permits creativity in interpretation. *Phronesis* restricts creativity by application of specified rules which restrict the percipient. Its creativity is bound by principles which set up restrictions for the interpreter. On the other hand, *phronesis* also introduces creativity to the act. For, whereas the other elements of the model are prescriptive, this final element reminds us of the limited value of prescriptions and encourages a degree of flexibility in their application.

CHAPTER 12

DRAWING THE THREADS TOGETHER IN SILENCE:

12.1 Summary of Part II:

We have examined many different elements in this part of the thesis. It is now necessary to draw the various threads together into a single theory. It is with this in mind that the model for constructing satisfactory interpretations of silence will be assembled, using these many elements. The most significant elements appropriated for this model ought to come together to form a theory of interpretation which permits the following details: 1) It must allow for a kind of dialectical process between the percipient and the silence or silent utterer that, 2) precipitates a relevant understanding of the silence. 3) The understanding must be agreed upon between them, and 4) must satisfy the integrity of the silence as object of interpretation while 5) respecting the interpretative elements brought to the act by the percipient. In other words, the dialectic will permit an agreed upon interpretation which respects all players: the utterer, the interpreter and the silence itself. This will require flexibility in the application of the general elements of the theory in order to accommodate individuality. Nevertheless, some guidelines will need to be rigid enough to ensure that the perimeter afforded by the object of interpretation is not breached. To accomplish this the interpreter must be open to recognising the relevance of the silence and ensure that the interpretation fits in the context of the best, most charitable understanding of the silence. This will require the interpreter to be flexible when applying the model of interpretation, encouraging the play of practical wisdom (*phronesis*) to prevent

rigidity and *prejudice* from obscuring the relevance of the interpretation. It will also require effort on the part of the interpreter to keep opportunistic or lazy interpretations at bay. This, in a nutshell, is the model for interpretation of silence which will be argued for in the rest of this thesis.

12.1.1 A summary of the problem:

It is clear that there are inherent difficulties in any attempt at understanding through interpretation, and this is especially true for silence because it is slippery. These difficulties notwithstanding, silences must rely on interpretation in order to be understood. As a result, we are left with having to rely on a problematic medium of understanding in order to make communication through silences a possibility. It is because of this that we must make an attempt to construct a model for interpreting silence which responds to its slipperiness and protects it against lazy, radical or opportunistic readings. The restrictions which the model applies to interpretative acts will have to accommodate the various elements discussed in the preceding chapters, and be sensitive to the limitations of interpretation in general. It is suggested, then, that the model be primarily a set of principles which can be applied to particular silences but which can be used flexibly or not at all if need be. Thus, we outline a set of principles for the interpretation of silence which can be applied through practical reasoning and which helps prevent radical readings and misunderstandings of silence.

We have already suggested that rules for interpreting Harpocratic silences are not likely to be necessary as such silences offer no limitations to the percipient, thus allowing free creative interpretation to blossom. A vacant silence is like the *tabula rasa* upon which the percipient may apply any understanding. It permits imaginative use of *prejudices*, encyclopaedic knowledge and even the external forces which serve as checks to freedom in communicative Larundic silences. There are no restrictions to Harpocratic

silences except the ones the percipient brings to them. Thus, it is a silence of imagination which can be constructive in the way Descartes silence was for him. The only prescriptive note to attach to the interpretation of a Harpocratic silence is to *notice* this silence and recognise it, not with dread, but with the courage to be creative. Its emptiness is fathomless, but unlike the existential abyss, it does not have to swallow one up. Rather we can impose meaning upon it and place it under our own control. This creativity in the face of the mystery of Harpocratic silence is exemplified in the creative reaction humans have toward the ultimate silence of death. In order to make sense of death we apply meaning to it, either in the form of a possible after-life, or in the meaning the living give it: 'it was for the best, her suffering has ended and she is in a better place now.'

The problem, as mentioned throughout the thesis, arises when Larundic silences are mistaken for Harpocratic silences. In such cases, the percipient mistakes a full silence for an empty one and applies radical readings to the silence which do not respect the limits the Larundic silence imposes. It is obvious how such mistakes can be made. If Sperber and Wilson are right about the natural desire not to make too great an effort at understanding an utterance, then silences which do little to call attention to themselves will be easily ignored or go unnoticed altogether. Our natural tendency to avoid the effort will obscure the presence of the silence. In addition, silences that make their meaningful presences known may still suffer because their meanings are not obvious and little effort is made to interpret them faithfully. Treating a Larundic silence as though it were Harpocratic, negates the meaning it brings with it and escapes the perimeter within which an interpretation might be said to be accurate or respectful.

On the other hand, the informative claim made by the Larundic silence must be interpreted to be understood and interpretation entails some input from the interpreter. As a result, the limits of the meaning the silence brings

with it must also admit to some change by the imposition of the interpreter' *prejudices*, and traditional and historical beliefs which accompany the interpretative act. This requires adequate consideration of all the claims brought to the interpretation of the silence which will be achieved through dialectic and agreement.

All of the participants involved in the act of interpretation bring information and truth claims with them, all of which interact with one another in a dialectic of argumentation, persuasion and eventual agreement. The debate includes postulations of hypotheses which are accepted or rejected on the basis of implicit persuasive dialogue. This is usually accomplished silently and can be instantaneous where there is no struggle to create an adequate interpretation. Remember that an adequate interpretation will be one which accommodates both the meaning put forth by the silence and the information the interpreter brings with her. None of the elements are given priority over the others; there must be a give and take, a to-and-fro, which satisfies all participants concerned. Thus, the interpretation will consist of a transformed synthesis of the information brought by the percipient and by the object of interpretation.

The mechanisms considered in this thesis are numerous. They are the checks against external forces of history and tradition; the significance of considering context and remaining within the limits the context helps set up; the importance of viewing the object in its best light in order to produce an interpretation which fits and is relevant; and the agreement founded on persuasive dialectics and consensus. All of these mechanisms require flexibility and practical reasoning from the interpreter to ensure that only relevant information is considered in the act of interpreting a silence. Each of the elements will be employed in the interpretative act in the ways described below.

Context:

Context serves as an excellent mechanism for avoiding misunderstandings in the interpretation of silence. Awareness of context is one of the methods of locating information which surrounds a given silence, and which will help make it less slippery. If the silence itself does not speak, its surroundings will. Thus, the percipient may consider the information which accompanies the silence such as who or what produced it, when it was produced, what initiated the silence, what, if any, gestures or feelings are associated with it, and so on. The context is instrumental in defining the perimeter within which the meaning of the silence resides. Interpretations that remain within the perimeter established by the contextual information are more likely to be accurate because they consider the informative claims associated with the silence. Therefore, once established, the perimeter facilitates creation of an interpretation which is accurate because it is relevant to the silence. A good example of a silence understood through its context is the silence of the patient in Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient*[1], where the English Patient is silent about his identity until Caravaggio detects it through the information he does give and other information which Caravaggio possesses. Here we plainly see how contextual information mixes with information already in one's possession (see *prejudice*) to construct an interpretation and clarify the perimeter within which the interpretation must remain. Such detective work is what is required of the percipient of a silence in order to understand its meaning.

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[1] Ondaatje, Michael: *The English Patient*. Vintage Books, Random House Publishing; Toronto, Ont.; 1992.

Prejudice:

Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics is favoured as an interpretative model for silence because it contains many of the elements required for constructing safe interpretations, and can accommodate those which it does not already contain. Primary among the pertinent aspects of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, for our purposes, is his acceptance of *prejudice* and his rejection of the notion that understanding can happen without *prejudice*. The percipient brings information to the act of interpretation. The information she brings is composed of her personal *prejudices*, as well as the history and tradition inherent in her language. These will necessarily play an important role in an interpretation, and because they are part of her identity they cannot be put aside nor done without. It is this ontological baggage which permits the percipient to identify the presence of a meaningful silence in the first place. As we have seen, it is part of the nature of understanding that the relevance of an utterance must be recognised before it can be interpreted; and silences are especially reliant upon this because they are easily ignored or misidentified as meaningless. The way we notice relevance is by connecting it to knowledge we already possess, hence we cannot avoid the necessity of *prejudice* as it is exactly that part of our being which contains knowledge. *Prejudice* is the hook which catches hold of new ideas and permits understanding.

The experiences that constitute *prejudice* and traditional expectations provide the information by which to recognise that a Larundic silence has a relevant meaning. This is accomplished as follows. We are used to the idea that silences can communicate since we traditionally use them to do so, and these traditional expectations are supported by regular experience of successful communication through silence. So it is immediately clear that *prejudices* and traditions about silence facilitate communication through it and interpretation of it. Without these preconceived notions that silence can

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communicate we would not notice the relevance of any silence and would therefore fail to construct interpretations of them. Thus, *prejudice* and tradition are necessary aspects of communication through silence.

Having argued in favour of the application of *prejudicial* knowledge to the act of interpretation, it is necessary to consider the dangers of allowing it too much freedom in the act of interpretation. It has already been shown how misunderstandings arise when a Larundic silence is mistaken for a Harpocratic silence, and the same problem holds when a Larundic silence is simply misinterpreted. The source of this problem is the same on both counts; namely that the individual percipient's *prejudices* interfere with the construction of an appropriate interpretation of the object. This difficulty is especially common with regard to silence, because silences offer few clues to facilitate interpretation and preserve them from false application of *prejudices*. As a result, it is easy to create radical or opportunistic interpretations of silences, and silences can do little to stop these from occurring because of their inherent slipperiness; hence, they offer very little evidence to indicate that the interpretation is wrong. It follows then that silences, perhaps more than other acts of communication, must rely upon a mechanism of protection against radical and opportunistic interpretations.

Tradition and History:

Gadamer introduced the elements of history and tradition as tempering measures to the possible domination by *prejudice*. These external forces become internal to the individual through language use and acquisition. Once internalised they prevent *prejudice* from imposing personal, by inserting traditional and historical attitudes and beliefs into the dialectic of understanding. Hermeneutic interpretation of a silence involves the fusion of horizons between the interpreter and the silence as object of interpretation. The interpreter is prevented from simply imposing her own *prejudicial* beliefs

upon the object by the fact that the interpretation must accommodate and fit with the information that tradition and history provide through language. Thus, any interpretation must achieve a certain degree of fit with the external events of history and traditions, even if the fit is designed to show where traditional or historical interpretations are wrong. Furthermore, one might interpret a traditional or historical belief as inappropriate because it perpetuates an abuse. It would follow that the traditions ought to be transformed, as history shows they can be. Any transformation would then vindicate the interpretation which acknowledges the inappropriateness of a tradition, and does not accept it. The change would show how traditions can be transformed by new attitudes. All the participants involved in the interpretation engage in a dialectic toward a synthesis of the beliefs of all those involved. The silence communicates something that the percipient interprets in a way which contradicts tradition and history; tradition and history try to persuade the interpreter to change the interpretation to fit them; but the silence will not be subsumed under traditional and historical attitudes without compromising the integrity of the meaning it bears; and the interpreter, recognising all of this, rejects custom and chooses instead to build an interpretation which better fits the silent object of the interpretation.

The same description can be used to show that *prejudice* can be persuaded to change its interpretation to conform with tradition and history. This happens frequently when students change their convictions about a certain subject after researching it and discovering that the historical information tells a different story.

Fit, Best Light, and Relevance:

Remaining within the perimeter established by the contextual information surrounding a silence is essentially a request for relevance in the interpretation. An interpretation is less likely to be radical or opportunistic if

there is clear and definite fit between it and the object of interpretation. Silences can therefore be preserved from misinterpretations if the interpreter ensures that the ideas included in the interpretation are ideas which do not contradict the object or show it to be internally inconsistent. This means making the effort to see the object in its best light before developing a critique of it. For example, we do better to interpret the silence of a student as thoughtfulness rather than stupidity, as this puts the silence in its best light and best fits the model of educating instead of humiliating. This way of thinking is another safety mechanism against free reign of *prejudice* interfering with the interpretation. If consideration is given to the degree to which the interpretative effort fits with the context and meaning of the silence, and an effort is made to see the silence in its best light as coherent and meaningful, then *prejudices* will be forced to confront contradictions which prevent it from making opportunistic readings. Faced with contradictions, percipients must reconsider their understandings and attempt to reconcile themselves with the information provided within the perimeter of the context of the silence.

Agreement and openness:

It is not necessary for an interpretation to be the absolute and immutable truth about the silence. As Wittgenstein pointed out, the standards of absolute truth established by the rationality of scientific understanding cannot hold in matters which are beyond language and are non-rational. Instead of absolute truth, then, we are more concerned with an interpretation which fits with the various elements involved in the interpretation, and this is where agreement plays a significant role. It is within an act of achieving agreement that *prejudice*, tradition, history and the silence being interpreted put forth claims about the meaning of the silence and where these claims are debated and synthesised.

Reaching an agreement about a silence requires a dialectic of the assertions regarding its meaning, the critiques of the assertions and the persuasions, in an attempt to come to a mutual understanding among all concerned. No one claim need be settled upon, rather the optimal outcome is one which considers all claims equally and forms a synthesis which includes aspects of all the claimants combined. Agreement requires openness on the part of each of the participants to seeing each other's claims fully and in their best light, so that the participants emerge from the dialectic transformed by what they have learned from one another. The end product of the dialectic is an agreement about the interpretation which has considered and included all the claims on offer.

Phronesis:

The elements described above are the many mechanisms which an interpreter can use to help produce the best possible understanding of a silence. This means constructing an interpretation which respects both the object and the interpreter, while ensuring that the interpreter does not mistake her own personal *prejudicial* reading for the best possible reading of the silence. To accomplish a good interpretation, then, is a difficult task that requires juggling of all the aspects described and discerning which ones ought to apply where and in what ways. In order to perform what on the surface appears to be a Herculean task, the percipient must be able to apply the general principles described above to particular cases where a silence needs interpretation. And to achieve this the interpreter must use *phronesis* or practical reasoning. Practical reasoning will direct the interpreter to the best means of achieving the desired goal which is to create the best possible interpretation of the silence. *Phronesis* permits the flexibility to use the suggested rules for interpreting silence in what ever way may be necessary for the given case of silent communication. Thus, the mechanisms can be played

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with until an interpretation is reached which can be agreed upon by all the members concerned.

Radical and opportunistic interpretations of silence can be avoided, provided that all the above mechanisms are adhered to, to some degree. There will probably always be problems with constructing interpretations of silences because their slipperiness cannot be helped. However, as we have seen in the first chapter, its inherent ambiguity and vagueness is what makes silence a useful tool for communicating or not communicating as the case may be.

12.2 The Case of Sir Thomas More's Silence:

To illustrate how the model for interpreting silence works it will be applied to the example that inspired it. This is the silence of the Sir Thomas More character in Robert Bolt's play *A Man for All Seasons*. The play involves More's trial after he was arrested for treason against King Henry VIII. More would not publicly support the King's appropriation of the title of Head of the Church in England. He did not support the King's choice because he believed the King's reason for usurping the position was immoral; namely that Henry wanted to divorce his wife Katherine after she had been unable to produce an heir. But because More was aware of the punishment for denouncing the King, and because he did not want to sacrifice the integrity of his religious convictions, he chose to remain silent on the issue. This was of little help. He was arrested anyway. The trial focuses primarily on the nature of More's silence. In the play, Robert Bolt shows some of the frustration associated with interpreting and distinguishing between Harpocratic and Larundic silences. In this scene, Thomas Cromwell offers a fair description of the former:

> "But, Gentlemen of the Jury, there are many kinds of silence. Consider first the silence of a man when he is dead. Let us say we go into the room where he is lying; and let us say it is the dead of night – there's nothing like darkness for sharpening the ear; and we listen. What do we hear? Nothing. This is silence, pure and simple."[2]

This is Harpocratic silence: empty, passive, and meaningless. As we have seen, interpreting this kind of silence is futile, because it is empty. The most it can do is make itself known to us so that we may use it creatively. On its own it means nothing, and it would be wrong to read any more into it.

Later on in the same speech Cromwell describes two examples of Larundic silence. He claims they are both meaningful, and his argument hinges on the fact that there exists a very subtle similarity between them.

> "Suppose I were to draw a dagger from my sleeve and make to kill the prisoner with it, and suppose their lordships there, instead of crying out for me to stop or crying out for help to stop me, maintained their silence. That *would* betoken! It would betoken a willingness that I should do it, and under the law they would be guilty with me. So silence can, according to some circumstances, speak. Consider, now, the circumstances of the prisoner's silence. The oath was put to good and faithful subjects up and down the country and they had declared His Grace's Title to be just and good. And when it came to the prisoner he refused. He calls this silence. Yet is there a man in this court, is there a man in this country, who does not *know* Sir Thomas More's opinion of this title? Of course not! But how can that be? Because this silence betokened – nay this silence *was* - not silence at all, but most eloquent denial."[3]

Cromwell shows what he believes to be a similarity between the hypothetical situation of the judges not preventing an action, and the real case of More refusing to take an oath supporting the king's claim. The similarity is that both silences are communicative, what we call Larundic silences, and he is right about this. However, there is a crucial discrepancy in the way he

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[2] Bolt, Robert; *A Man for All Seasons;* Bellhaven House, Toronto, Ont.; 1963: pg: 91.

[3] Bolt, pg: 91.

applies his belief to the two cases. The first case is an act of omission, easily interpreted as an acceptance by the judges. They do nothing to stop the murder, hence they are likely to have no objection to it. However, if the judges' silence is interpreted as acceptance, then it is only consistent to interpret Sir Thomas' silence the same way. But, Cromwell does not do this. Instead he says the judges' silence is an act of assent, whereas More's is an act of dissent, even though More claimed otherwise. So, in fact, Cromwell was applying his understanding of Larundic silence in two different ways, a discrepancy that had bitter consequences for More.

More's defence rested on this point, and on the then current rule for interpretation of silence in the law. He says:

> "The maxim of the law is: 'Silence Gives Consent'. If therefore, you wish to construe what my silence 'betokened', you must construe that I consented, not that I denied."[4]

Cromwell applied this rule to the judges, but did not support it in More's case. So Cromwell's interpretative method was inconsistent and opportunistic in order to make his case against More. By going beyond the then recognised rules for interpreting silence Cromwell illustrates the hardships associated with doing so, and the outcome of the trial shows how dangerous these can be. At the end of the play, one feels Sir Thomas More was unjustly treated by Cromwell's claim to be able to interpret More's silence. Moreover, More was not the only one unfairly treated – the law itself was degraded by Cromwell's inconsistent use of an already established rule. However, this misunderstanding could have been avoided if the elements of the model for interpreting silence had been properly applied.

Cromwell based his confidence in his interpretation on of the contextual information he regarded as relevant to the silence. But his choice

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[4] Bolt, pg: 92.

was made at the expense of other relevant contextual information. That is, he claimed anyone who knew More's reputation would agree that More in fact did not support the King's new title, and because this was such common knowledge, this refusal to support the King was tantamount to treason. What Cromwell did not consider was the self-preservatory aspect of More's position. More was not suicidal in his choice of silence, rather he preferred to agree to disagree with the king and not say anything one way or the other. The contextual information Cromwell ought to have considered was More's love of life, his love of his wife and daughter and his love for his religion. Had Cromwell considered these factors his interpretation would have had to be transformed. In its best light, More's choice was not a self-destructive one, but a self-preservatory one. Cromwell did not overlook the significance of contextual information, but he did limit the information he paid attention to to information that would further his own goals. Examination of context is important, but it must be full and it must not be obscured by *prejudice*. Context requires some safety mechanism to protect it from the kind of opportunistic distortion Cromwell exercised. Thus, context is a useful but insufficient basis for establishing non-radical interpretations of a person's silence.

In this case, Cromwell's *prejudicial* information caused him to overstep the bounds of More's silence. But his *prejudicial* belief was not entirely incorrect. He could have employed it in a useful negotiation toward a less radical interpretation, as we shall soon see. The beginning of his interpretation is inarguably correct. It is clear from contextual information about More's faith and beliefs that he did not accept King Henry's claim to the head of the church. At least to this extent, the *prejudicial* knowledge Cromwell used to make the interpretation was appropriate and had to be considered. However, the *prejudice* that caused him to believe that More was being deliberately treasonous and trying to incite wider dissent was incorrect.

More had no intention of being open about his disagreement, so he could not have sparked a revolt. The hooks of Cromwell's *prejudicial* knowledge base were correct but he was too free with the deductions he drew from them. So this particular *prejudice* of Cromwell's would have been better left out of the interpretative act as it was partly responsible for its failure.

Hence, the primary deficiency of Cromwell's interpretation is that it lacked relevance to More's silence. This is true only of the second sort of relevance, not the first. After all, Cromwell noted the cognitive effect of the strain of a silent statement from More. In other words, Cromwell noticed the silence, and that it bore communicative content. Thus, he noticed the relevance *of* More's Larundic silence. What Cromwell did not consider was whether his interpretation of More's Larundic silence had relevance *to* the meaning asserted by the silence. To a certain extent Cromwell's interpretation did have fit to More's communicative attempt. He did mean to disagree with the King. However, Cromwell did not satisfactorily view the meaning of the silence in its best light. If he had done so, his interpretation would have been more charitable. As we said above, More's actual intention was to agree that he disagreed with the King's choice but would do nothing to prevent it. If Cromwell had considered More's silence in its best light, the parameters set up by the silent meaning would have directed him to this less provoking conclusion and consequently would have saved More's life. Cromwell's interpretation was partially correct, but because More denied the allegation it is clear that some contextual information was left out of the interpretation. Thus, the conclusion was not entirely relevant to More's silence, and this resulted in tragedy for More.

What was required of Cromwell was that he assume the correct attitude of openness toward a less radical understanding of More's silence. This attitude would have permitted negotiation between the participants, and the trial would have facilitated the dialectical process toward agreement. An

agreed interpretation would have permitted proper consideration of More's entire position, and once again would probably have saved his life. Instead, Cromwell's position was allowed to dominate More's position, and equality of consideration was lost. This demonstrates the importance of openness and respect for all the participants involved in a communicative act that depends on interpretation.

It is interesting to note that Cromwell's unintentional application of the elements for non-radical interpretations is not entirely wrong. This at least shows that the elements are to a degree natural and applicable. We do, in fact, employ them in regular communicative and interpretative efforts, and they are an inherent part of all interpretative efforts. In this case, Cromwell naturally turned to both the contextual information and his own *prejudicial* or encyclopaedic knowledge to construct the interpretation. He also noticed the relevance *of* More's silence, and noticed that the silence was Larundic rather than Harpocratic. So at least these elements appear to be natural and even obvious aspects of interpretation of silence.

Nevertheless, Cromwell did not naturally apply all the elements of the model. What Cromwell did not do is to engage in the negotiative dialectic that included consideration of the meaning extended by More's silence. The dialectic would have generated the agreement upon an interpretation that was relevant to More's silence because it considered its extended claim. If this had been admitted, another defence would have been in place to rescue More. But Cromwell ignored the possibility of negotiating his position. Perhaps this is an indication that the element of dialectic is less natural and more likely to be excluded from acts of interpretation. If this is the case, then an argument must be made to support the need for the contrivance of making the effort to consider the views of all participants. Herein lies the normative aspect of the thesis, that the interpreter is responsible for respecting the parameters established by the silence. Performing this will ensure that the interpretation

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is relevant to the silence because it establishes fit and views it in its best light. This obligation will be a moral obligation because it is more likely to establish safe, non-radical readings of silences, and prevent the sorts of misunderstandings that lead to dangerous consequences. It was to this end that the sections of part II argued for including the varied elements of this model for interpreting silence.

The case of Sir Thomas More's Larundic silence illustrates well the need for standardised rules for interpreting silence. Silence is too ambiguous to be left without such standards because it is open to abuse through misinterpretation, neglect and distortion. Had More verbalised his statement, it would not have been so easy for Cromwell to reverse More's expressed intent. However, the verbal statement would also have incriminated More. He chose instead the safety of silence, for its vagueness. This quality should have helped More by making his thoughts partially known, while preserving the diplomacy of ambiguity in the process. Instead, rather than being appreciated, the vagueness of More's Larundic silence was abused by Cromwell and used to support his own ends. This example demonstrates how the ambiguities of silence make it necessary to curb liberties taken by its interpreters. Hence the compilation of the elements for establishing non-radical readings of silence as they appear in this thesis.

12.3 Conclusions:

We have seen how each of the elements can be used to promote non-radical interpretations of silence. The elements are to be used together to ensure that each acts as a defence against the hegemony of any one element over the others. The Larundic silence as object of interpretation is respected as a bearer of communicative content, while the interpreter is also permitted to

contribute to the final meaning by using *prejudice* as the knowledge base from which the interpretation can be built. Both the object and the interpreter are considered, because while the object's claim must be respected, *prejudice* permits discrimination on the part of the interpreter. There is room for consideration of all ideas brought to the interpretative attempt, and each acts to check the other's truth claims. This occurs in the dialectical process of the hermeneutic circle, where the horizons of the participants join to produce a conclusion that is agreed to by each, and therefore relevant to the silence. It is the interaction of the elements that restricts radical interpretations and facilitates communication through Larundic silence.

CONCLUSION TO PART II

Silence is a far more complex concept than we are generally aware of. The purpose of this thesis has been to explore the various aspects of silence and show how it is possible that silences can communicate information. We have seen that silence is a general term which can be categorised and sub-categorised into many different senses, from pure Harpocratic silences that are austere or mysterious, to meaningful Larundic silences which communicate information without words. We have not tried to define silence as its multifacity defies a single definition, however we have seen what some of the characteristics of this multifacity are.

If we accept that silences can be meaningful in the ways described by Grice and Searle, then it is necessary to show how it is possible to know what their meanings are and how these can be communicated. Obviously, the method of communication through silence is different from that of spoken communication, and very often silence requires more effort to be understood. Because of this added effort it is likely that silence will be ignored or disdained as a tool for communication. It is therefore important to see why silence can be as valuable as speech as a method for conveying information. To this end we have demonstrated the uses of silence and shown how silence can express what is verbally inexpressible. This makes silence a highly valuable aspect of communication.

It has also been shown that silence can be a tool for oppression and as such is powerful and destructive, as for example when people are silenced under political regimes or social control. Self-imposed silence, or self-silencing can lead to depression in certain cases while it is useful in other cases (such as

when doctors silence themselves in order to maintain the Hippocratic role, or when an individual refrains from speaking in order to be a generous listener). The final aspect of silence, explored in chapter one, showed that silence may be part of a continuum with speech. We showed that silences sometimes even occur when someone is speaking. For example when one tries to avoid a subject by being silent about it, and diverting attention from the silence by talking about something else. Silences were also shown to act as spoken metaphors do by replacing direct speech when it failed, and by using ambiguity in a useful and expressive manner.

However, using silence as a tool for communication can be problematic because of its slippery nature. As a result an attempt was made to design a series of general mechanisms to act as principles, if not rules, for the interpretation of silence. To this end we explored the theories of Gadamer, Wittgenstein, Sperber and Wilson, Dworkin and Bernstein in an attempt to discover the best mechanisms for constructing sound interpretations of silence, which are not compromised by its slipperiness.

The romance between Larunda and Hermes is an excellent analogy for the aim of the model for interpreting silence. Ideally, the hermeneutic attempt to understand the meaning of a Larundic silence will respect that silence and the meaning it contains. The romantic version of the myth of Larunda includes the respect which permits this. Nevertheless, the original written version of the myth from Ovid is equally telling and applicable for our purposes. In the original, Hermes' passion for Larunda is unrequited and villainous. Hermes violates Larunda, taking advantage of her inability to call for help. In the same sense, Larundic silences can fall victim to hermeneutic attempts that betray the parameters set by the silence. If the model for interpreting silence is not adhered to then the radical reading that can result is a violence done to that Larundic silence. The model offers a sound hermeneutic for building non-radical readings of Larundic silences; as a result there is normative value in giving

careful consideration to the elements of the model described above.

In an attempt to illustrate some of the information provided in parts I and II of the thesis, and to provoke new thoughts, the following sections deal with cases of applied silence. The sections on applied silence highlight areas in which silence arises in a significant manner, examine the various aspects of these silences and the difficulties which arise in their interpretation. This is not meant to be an exhaustive list, rather it is just a sampling of significant ways in which silence arises in general activity.

PART III:

APPLIED SILENCE

CHAPTER 13

MEDICAL SILENCE

13.1 Introduction:

The significance of silence in medical care has generally been restricted to the topic of truth-telling and deception in the doctor-patient relationship. Though important, these notorious issues rather limit the breadth of the relevance of silence to medicine, restricting it to a strictly pejorative meaning. On the contrary, silence has been demonstrated to be morally neutral, and in general its moral value to be derived from its particular context. Narrowing the field from general silence to the particular context of medicine does not make valuation any more obvious. Medical silence is no more morally determinate than any other applied silence. In other words, even in medicine there will be times when silence plays a benevolent role and other times when it has negative moral implications. In a medical setting these implications may be serious since the silences of patients and care-givers can mean the difference between good treatment and bad, and the opportunity to live a truly autonomous life or live in the shadow of doubt and surprise. In this section I intend to examine some of the reasons why silence is problematic in health care, but also to explore reasons for accepting silence on the grounds that it has a function and is inevitable.

13.2 Where silence is bad:

There are any number of factors which explain why silence can have harmful effects in care-giving. Three negative elements of silence which sometimes intertwine are: 1) not telling patients the truth about their conditions; 2) not explaining to patients what is happening during procedures; and 3) silencing the humanity of patients and care-givers. The list does not end with these three elements, but these three complement one another and are likely to be the most common.

13.2.1 Truth-Telling:

The most notorious negative element of silence is where it is associated with deception. Dr. Jay Katz in his book *The Silent World of Doctor and Patient* claims that silence has always been a way for physicians to maintain positions of power in the care-giving relationship[1]. Katz shows how historically silence was a necessary tool for continued faith in doctors' abilities before "medical arts" became more scientific. In the past, doctors preserved healing trust by not admitting how very new and untried their skills and tools were. A conflict existed between doctors admitting their ignorance and the clinical benefits of faith in the healer. Thus, began what Katz refers to as the deep-rooted tradition of silence in medical care. From here doctors continued their secretiveness by justifying it as being in the best interest of the patient, and in the placebo effect derived from blind, almost religious faith in medicine. Patients were offered little room for autonomous decision. Once doctors were consulted, patients were in their hands, losing the freedom to make decisions partly because the doctors were silent about information needed to make informed decisions.

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[1] Katz, Jay M.D. *The Silent World of Doctor and Patient.* New York: The Free Press, a Division of MacMillan Inc., 1984.

As medical science has grown so has the cry for patient autonomy, but the degree of complexity of information required for making informed decisions has grown as well. Thus, much information is still inaccessible to patients, and doctors must act as advocates for patients, helping them make decisions as interpreters of the information silent to the lay-person. Nowadays, doctors with the best of intentions may provide some information, but they also remain silent because they either cannot or will not impart all they know. Sometimes they argue that patients will not be able to understand the information, but not all information needs to be explained in order for the patient to make an informed decision; if it were, the patient would be lumbered with too much detail to make a clear decision. Thus, care-givers *cannot* be expected to explain everything to their patients. However, this is different from the situation where they *will* not impart information which the patient could understand. In this case they may deceive their patients and could be described as lying for withholding information which will affect the patients' decisions.

Arguments have shown how silence on the part of a physician who has full knowledge of a patient's case but deliberately refuses to disclose it to the patient, is in fact lying. Nevertheless, it is not clear that not saying anything at all is the opposite of telling the truth - that being silent is the same as lying. Surely there is a difference between responding to a question with an overt assertion which one believes to be false, and not saying anything at all. This is primarily because we tend to have stronger reactions to lying than we do to silence, which appears to be a weaker form of deception when it deceives at all[2]. When silence does deceive (whether intentionally or unintentionally), it is usually described as an act of omission instead of an outright act of lying. The legal argument about acts of omission is that they carry culpability though not to the same extent that criminal acts do; thus, the person who commits an immoral

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[2] Jackson, Jennifer. "Truth telling" in *Journal of Medical Ethics*, vol.17 #1, 1991; 5-9.

act (such as lying) is more deserving of punishment than the person who said nothing to stop it. Nevertheless, in some cases, the person who does not stop the immoral act may still be thought of as guilty though to a lesser extent. Remaining silent about a serious crime, omitting to stop it, can implicate one as an accomplice to it. Thus, silence, though not as significantly wrong as lying, may still carry with it the guilt of an act of omission.

The implications of this argument are that there is a difference between remaining silent and lying because silence lacks any overt assertion intended to mislead. However, that silence is different from lying does not mean silence cannot produce harmful effects. In a recent article, Higgs gives an unsettling example of a man who was not informed of his lung cancer until fifteen years after it was surgically treated, and then only accidentally, via a concerned general practitioner who hoped the man would give up smoking[3]. Higgs' example demonstrates how the silence of doctors toward their patients can have as grave moral relevance as lying has. It is morally disturbing that a person can undergo such serious treatment as the removal of a lung, and not know the true reason for it nor be allowed to change his habits accordingly. It is clear that the patient would have a right to feel that a breach of trust had occurred between him and the attending physicians. And, although they may not have deliberately lied to the patient, it is equally clear that the doctors' silence had significant moral import to him. This is at least one case where silence as a deliberate act of deception did harm trust, even though it was committed with the best of intentions. So although the distinction between silence and lying is useful, we cannot ignore the fact that even if its deception will not *always* harm trust it can do so some of the time. Thus silence, though different from lying, can still damage the doctor-patient relationship, and decrease the patient's autonomy, and in such cases is morally wrong.

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[3] Higgs, R.: "Truth-telling, lying and the doctor-patient relationship. In Gillon, R, ed. *Principles of Health Care Ethics.* West Sussex: John Wiley and Sons, 1994.

13.2.2 Telling Risks:

Katz's reference to the historical mask of silence surrounding fledgling medical techniques raises an interesting issue for contemporary medicine: is it still acceptable for physicians to avoid telling patients when they are being given new or experimental treatments? And, how much information need be explained, considering the doctors may not know all there is to know about possible side effects and risks.

Recent changes in expectations about information sharing would suggest that it is no longer appropriate to withhold any relevant facts from patients, but this is tricky for obvious reasons: we do not know what ought to be said, and how much to say. Even with the best established treatments it is hard to know what information is truly worth sharing, especially given the effort it would take to disclose *all* the information available. Moreover, disclosure can take time and great effort, as patients are not all likely to be able to understand everything they are told. The time and energy used for this task could possibly be put to greater use elsewhere, as these are resources in scarce supply. Of course, this does not mean we ought to eliminate all information sharing, but at some point it looks as if the balance would tip in favour of not disclosing everything. That leaves us with the problem of what information ought to remain silent and what ought to be shared.

Say, for example, that in Country A it is required that any patient about to undergo surgery be told that the risks of iatrogenic illness and death from general anaesthetic are 20%. In Country B these problems are less likely to occur (only a 10% chance), so most doctors do not mention the possibility, as they feel it would cause patients unnecessary anxiety. This seems reasonable, as a 10 in 100 chance is far less troubling than 20 in 100. But what isn't clear is at what point we draw the line. When are the chances so low that remaining silent about the risks is considered acceptable? The answer to this is itself

silent, and this is not an isolated case. There will be many questions which are currently unanswerable or to which the answers are better left silent.

If we work with the assumption that knowledge of risks causes unnecessary anxiety to patients, then couldn't we conclude that we ought not to disclose the risks under any circumstances? Or does the balance tip at some point so that the degree of responsibility entailed in telling is greater than the possible anxiety it would create? On the whole, when they are high, remaining silent about the risks of a treatment seems irresponsible; whereas not being silent about very marginal risks is likely to appear equally irresponsible if it causes undue stress to the patient. Where to draw the line between these is likely never to become clear; they are extremes on a continuum and do not easily admit to borders. However, in the case of experimental or new treatments, where the risks are not yet known, the morally correct choice is a bit more obvious. Not telling an individual that he or she is about to undergo what is essentially an experimental or untried treatment would be a blatant disregard for the patient. By not advising him or her that the possibility of harm as a direct result of the treatment is unknown, the physician cancels out the patient's freedom to exercise her autonomy and decide for herself if the risk is worthwhile. In this case silence is the morally unacceptable choice.

On the other hand, it could be argued that the placebo effect of silence in such cases would have three positive results: 1) patients would not suffer from unnecessary anxiety due to a lack of faith in an untried treatment; 2) the lack of knowledge would make patients better subjects for experimentation, like the subjects of a blind experiment; 3) it would alleviate the burden of long explanations in a situation where the doctor would have to admit ignorance and thus possibly injure the trust between doctor and patient.

The first reason appears morally justifiable at least to the extent that it shows concern for the patient's condition. We have only to recall Katz's point that historically care-givers placed a great deal on the faith of their patients to see

how important faith is in encouraging successful treatment. At one point in time at least, faith in a noble silence was part of good patient care. However, the objection to this is clear: faith requires trust between doctor and patient. Such trust would be easily destroyed if a patient realised that the doctor had placed her in a harmful, or potentially harmful situation without explaining the possibilities and giving the patient the opportunity to refuse. It is not clear that this kind of paternalism can ever be fully justifiable.

The second point has long been an issue of debate among researchers and regulators. It is probably true that information, especially about side-effects, would be more clearly and honestly discovered if the subject was unaware of the experiment in the first place. They would not be engaged in second-guessing, searching for effects, and worrying about every change to their bodies or emotions. This would have any number of beneficial consequences, not the least of which would be reduced anxiety in the subject, and lower costs of research because it would reduce the amount of sifting through information. Nevertheless, the reasons against blind experimentation of this sort are far too compelling to let the factors weigh in its favour. First, not respecting a person's right to consent or to refuse to involve themselves in possibly dangerous situations shows a disrespect for their autonomy and personhood. For proof of this we have only to look at the effects of experimental drugs such as thalidomide, or the experiments the USA ran of LSD on psychiatric patients during the 1950-60's. Counter-arguments to the points in favour of this type of blind experimentation are easy to find. The likelihood of spotting side-effects which the patient did not consider relevant would be reduced if she or he was not aware of a need to be looking out for anything in the first place. Thus, the subject can help the research by looking out for changes which may be possible side-effects. But, most importantly, disclosure about the experimental nature of a treatment preserves the dignity and autonomy of the subjects and saves them from possible victimisation. So,

where previously in this thesis silence was a property belonging to victims, now we see contexts where it is a property of the victimiser.

The third point has already been addressed above. The explanations required for full disclosure cannot be avoided even where a treatment has had a long and highly regarded history. Patients will always have to be told what treatment they are about to undergo, and the side-effects it might have. This is unavoidable. Full or at least partial disclosure of the experimental nature of a treatment is equally unavoidable if we intend to preserve patients' freedom to make autonomous decisions. This is why silence on the part of physicians is morally wrong in situations where possible risks are unknown. Admission of ignorance would not cause a breach of trust because the trust between doctor and patient can be better preserved by at least this much honesty than by the deception of silence. The fact is, that a patient who discovers her doctor has put her in a position of unknown risk is less likely to have faith in that doctor than a patient to whom the limited knowledge has been explained and the reasons for choosing it shared, so that she may make the decision herself.

We can only conclude that silence about the unknown risks of experimental treatment would be harmful to the patient. It is beneficent to tell the patient that the risks are unknown, and at least non-maleficent to explain that it is a new treatment in experimental stages and let patients infer what they may from this.

13.2.3 Silencing Humanity:

The attention placed on the relevance of silence in truth-telling and lying in health care ethics is certainly useful, but its centrality detracts from other ways in which silence is relevant. Silence will have negative effects in the context of medicine where the social notion of 'silencing' emerges. The idea that something can be suppressed or repressed either in ourselves or in others entails silencing aspects of voice or self. In the medical context it is primarily

the humanity of a given situation that is silenced in this way. This occurs in two senses as either the silencing of the humanity of the patient through repression of their feelings by the coldness of the situation; or alternatively, it can be the humanity of the care-givers that is silenced, when they suppress their own feelings in order to maintain professional distance and attitude. These two negative elements of silence will be best understood with the help of an example. Imagine this scenario: a physician is concerned about the possible negative effects to her patient should she tell him he has a terminal illness, an illness for which he is not yet noticing any symptoms (a silent illness). She decides to keep silent about his condition. During an examination she may discuss his family and job with the patient, but in order to protect her secret she tells him nothing about what she is doing nor why she is doing it. Instead she pokes and prods the patient as he becomes confused by the need for the new tests. In the end the doctor allows the patient to go on living without knowledge of his illness so he may have 'as normal a life as possible' until it can no longer be ignored.

First of all, when a care-giver is silent about procedure during a medical examination it is alienating and trying for the patient. The vulnerability of the patient stripped of clothing and normal companionship, in a cold foreign environment can be eased by the sharing of information about the procedure. This would bring comfort to an event which has sometimes been described as an assault because it lacks the mutuality of normal human interaction. Usually the kind of contact involved in a medical examination is reserved for personal social activity with prior consent; this includes a silent and implicit agreement that acts which are uncomfortable can be refused. In a medical examination the patient is being performed upon, not with, and the silent contract permits the physician to do whatever is necessary to promote health. In order to facilitate the care-giver's work the patient will submit to the examination procedure, but only at the expense of a certain amount of dignity, submitting to things they

would ordinarily not submit to. This is a necessity, as it is intended to benefit the patient in the long run, but the way in which it is done makes the difference between respect for the patient as a person and treating the patient as an object of study. Silence about the procedure silences the humanity of the situation, and silences the patient's human reactions to the procedure.

Treatment within hospitals can be equally alienating and silencing. Once a person checks into the hospital, various parts of their individuality and personal identity are put aside as they acquire the role of 'the patient'. This is an immediate silencing of their ordinary life role, which some people find disconcerting to the point of depression[4]. Information becomes silent, even from the initial care-giver's not explaining how to get to the hospital. Many patients express a feeling of uselessness because they are restricted to the role of the ill person. This is especially poignant for people with long-term illnesses and those being hospitalised due to the need for care as they age. It can be suggested that rules for the chronically ill ought to be qualitatively different from those for the acutely ill. Patients whose health is not expected to improve are encouraged to continue to assert their own identities and be as independent as possible; whereas patients who are expected to become well again are urged to abandon their normal roles in favour of the sick role, and those who do not are considered 'bad' or 'non-compliant' patients. Thus, our identities are silenced in the acute care setting, and once again the situation silences our humanity.

13.2.4 Good and bad patients:

In the past, patients have been labelled as good patients and bad patients partly on the basis of their silence. The definition tended to be that good patients were quiet patients, but noisy patients who asked many questions and

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[4] It is interesting to note that those who are known health-care professionals, or who are famous for their professional identities are often treated with more deference to their individuality than those of us who are merely patients.

wanted to discuss their illnesses were called bad patients. The patients who felt a need to grapple with the illness and the significance it had upon their lives were considered difficult and demanding. This is an image of the patient role as silent and passive. It stems from the idea of a doctor/patient contract which patients enter voluntarily in search of expertise they do not possess. The result of the voluntary contract is that the doctor as expert has authoritative control of the situation and the patient assumes a passive role in order to benefit from the expertise as much as possible. The assets of this kind of relationship are that patients do not have to learn or understand what is necessary to improve their health; this is particularly useful as medical information is massive and complex and not something one would want to have to learn at a time when one felt frightened and unwell. It is just common sense that we should listen to those we have consulted for their expertise, otherwise we would not have to consult them: we call the plumber when our pipes don't work, consult lawyers when we need legal help, and this extends to doctors and other medical professionals as well.

However, there has been a change in this attitude over the last ten years or so. People wary of being taken advantage of are taking control of situations and we are willing to fire our plumbers and even sue our lawyers. In the case of a medical issue we are more inclined to want to make our own decisions on issues which may have significant effects on our lives. As a result, the doctor/patient contract has been transformed into one where the patient has a less passive role and the doctor less control. This makes the noisy patient appear 'less bad' than before, because patients are being expected to make important decisions on their own behalf and are encouraged, to a certain extent, to ask questions and discuss their health. There is some irony in the possibility that in the not too distant future the good and bad roles will be reversed, and the passive silent patient will be considered bad for not assuming enough responsibility.

13.2.5 Silencing Care-Giver Humanity:

We have considered the negative effects of silence on the patient, now we move to the point of view of the doctor. In the case above, the physician has suppressed her humanity to some extent as she chose to remain in the Hippocratic role of the 'healer who does no harm', believing that the patient's negative reaction or depression would be injurious to him. It can be argued of course that humanity is conveyed through the Hippocratic role. However, the demands of that role can in fact narrow the physicians' human reactions and have debilitating effects; hence doctors are frequently accused of hiding humourlesly behind their white lab-coats. The physician in the above example suppresses her natural human reactions because she presumably believes that physicians should not show the emotions they would show in personal contexts. Suppressing her 'only-too-human' reactions in favour of Hippocratic benevolence in fact harms the care-giver by preventing her from acting as a human being with personal feelings about such situations.

If the doctor feels powerlessness or guilt associated with the incurability of the illness, she may further silence her humanity by not admitting these feelings to her patient; an effort which, to her credit, would help maintain the faith necessary for a working healing relationship. This may be useful because the nature of the relationship requires that care-givers do not burden patients with their own problems and insecurities. However, silencing human reactions can be painful for the care-giver so it may be necessary to create some form of release mechanism to protect care-givers from repressing their emotional reactions to moving issues. Silencing one's humanity to a professional level is useful; beyond that it can be harmful.

We have seen how remaining silent about a patient's condition can have serious negative consequences and thus should be avoided in order to preserve patient autonomy. The notion of the good patient who is silent was shown to be

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out of place in the contemporary medical ideal. Moreover, silence was also demonstrated to have adverse affects on the care-giving relationship and on the care-giver. It remains to be seen how silence can be beneficial in care-giving.

13.3 Where Silence Is Good:

There can be comfort in silence throughout care. Sometimes it is a more eloquent method of communication than words: as in the Larundic silence between a dying patient and a palliative care-giver. Sometimes it is a more suitable vehicle for healing: such as when a physician respects the Larundic silence of a patient who has just received bad news. Many examples show the benevolence of silence in care interactions. We shall examine just a few.

13.3.1 Truth-Telling Revisited:

Truth telling is generally justified by the preservation of patient autonomy through informed consent. But there is another side to this, for example when patients would rather not know all the information about their cases. A cancer patient once told me "happiness is not having a diagnosis", and though this may be an extreme position, for some it may be true. Certain patients refuse to allow anyone to explain all the details of treatments they will undergo. They may feel sufficiently aware of their conditions and not want any more information. Such people feel less secure the more they are told and prefer to leave the gory details to silence.

There is freedom in not knowing all there is to know about one's own illness. At a certain point it no longer serves the benefit of autonomy to force information on patients when they are perfectly capable of functioning without it. Here the sensitive care-giver will recognise that patients' autonomy is sometimes better preserved by allowing them to chose not to confront what they

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can do nothing about. Allowing this silence about facts and inevitabilities leaves room for thought about more important things such as life plans. It also creates space for thought about things that cannot be articulated aloud, like certain hopes, fears and resolutions; thus converting a threatening Larundic silence into a safe and productive Harpocratic silence. In the palliative setting silence about a patient's health creates room for what may need more attention at that time. Such silences are part of the healing process either of one's health or, in the case of the dying patient, of one's life. So, though it is important to recognise the necessity of imparting all relevant knowledge in order to ease the fears of some patients, still others will prefer not to know all there is to know about their conditions for precisely the same reasons. Both positions can be autonomy-preserving in that patients with less knowledge of their cases will have chosen not to know and be free to concern themselves with other things.

13.3.2 Silence at the end of life:

Silence plays a significant role in palliative care. It is somewhat comforting to imagine a time in one's life, toward the end of it, where nothing more needed to be said, where all the issues had been resolved as far as they could be, and a reprieve given from explanation, justification and resolution. There is freedom in simply letting things lie as they are without desperately seeking to resolve them, knowing that what is imparted wordlessly through a Larundic silence is enough to let those around us know that everything is alright. I doubt whether it is reasonable for us to expect this kind of peace at the ends of our lives, but it does provide something to aspire to; a time where silence is enough to uncover the beauty of death as a release from suffering and turmoil. In the end there is truly nothing words can adequately express and even attempts are imbued with meanings more in what is not said, what is inexpressible, than what is said. Silence is enough when there is nothing more

to say. The silence of dying may be a comfortable prologue to the ultimate silence of death, provided those around us will allow the silence to be.

At times fear, loneliness and insecurity do not allow patients to distract themselves with short bits of small-talk from care-givers who run in and out of their rooms distracted by duties. in such circumstances it may be useful for a nurse, for example, to simply sit in silence with the patient, perhaps doing her work at the bedside for a while. The quiet company can provide great comfort by making the silence less lonely and filling it with human warmth[5]. There are times when care need not or cannot be articulated. It should not be perceived as a failure to say nothing at a time when nothing can be said. Instead it is an act of generosity to perceive the need for silence and not fill it because of one's own discomfort.

13.3.4 Silence experiences in a role-play setting:

Incidents which occurred at a communication training class of second year medical students at the University of Glasgow offer insights into the benefits of silence in the doctor/patient relationship. The class was set up as a series of mock first meetings between actors as patients and medical students playing the new GP's. The actors had fixed agendas, parts of which were hidden and would only be revealed if the doctors discovered and pursued the clues offered them. Afterwards each of the doctors was asked for a self-evaluation and an MD tutor and communications specialist offered some ideas of their own. When all the students had had the opportunity to play the doctor, the actors returned and offered their own evaluation of the meeting.

First and most obviously was the importance of silences and pauses as a means of *allowing patients time to speak.* Many of the patients were uncommunicative or "were not aware" of their own problems. The first

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[5] McDermitt, Reena R.N.: Talk given at the Brantford Hospital Palliative Care Conference in Brantford, Ontario; 1993.

interview was between a young female GP and a 26 year old man who wanted sleeping pills. The patient was very uncommunicative. Because of that and because this was the first of the interviews, the meeting did not go very well. The doctor was quick to ask very probing questions which were appropriate for the session. She asked about employment and emotional state, etc. Nevertheless, the questions met with very little in response, and the patient remained silent for a good part of the interview. The main problem was that the doctor asked too many compound questions, and did not offer the patient long enough breaks to feel he could answer. Instead he chose to answer the easiest questions with as little effort as possible. As a result it was never discovered that the patient was a drug addict looking for a prescription to sell in order to buy harder drugs. Granted, he probably would not have told her his real reason for wanting the drugs, but had he been given a little more opportunity to talk, the truth might have revealed itself indirectly. In the end, the doctor gave him the prescription, partly out of frustration and to end her own discomfort.

Closely related to silence which permits room for speech is silence which permits better listening to patients. Although the two usually come together, it must be noted that permitting someone to speak is not the same as listening to them. One type of silence is passive in allowing speech, the other is active in seeking to listen and understand what is said. One of the doctor/students had a patient who in the first few minutes of her interview had volunteered that she was sent to the GP by the hospital which she had been in. The doctor passed over this in favour of asking the patient other less significant questions. It took quite a long time before the doctor happened upon the fact that the patient had been in hospital because she had attempted suicide. It was clear that this would have been revealed much earlier had the doctor been listening to the patient. As it was, we were given the impression that the doctor had her own agenda and was determined to stick to it because she thought she had understood the patient's problem. As a result she did not find the true

problem because it was occluded by her own preconceptions, even though she was prepared to allow pauses in which the patient could speak. It is imperative that doctors be aware of the difference between silence which permits the patient to speak and silence which listens to what is being said. If the doctor is unable to silence her own thoughts and *prejudices* she is not listening to the patient, and will only hear what she wants to hear. This has the effect of silencing the patient as well, which does no good.

Sometimes *prejudices* interfered in more obvious ways. Other doctor/students were not silent enough about their own feelings. It was hard for the students with strong convictions to avoid the trappings of their own beliefs. In one such case, a 23 year old male patient consulted his female GP about respite care for his mother who had been suffering from MS for four years, during which he had never taken a vacation. The doctor repeatedly asked him if he didn't think he ought to postpone his vacation until later if his mother was that close to dying, but he insisted that he had not had a break in four years and did not want to be made to feel guilty about it. The doctor did not clue in to his expression of guilt and worry, and instead admitted to finding his behaviour selfish, after the session had ended. In this case, the student's inability to be silent and allow her patient to communicate, and her inability to silence her own opinions about his behaviour interfered with a satisfactory outcome to the session. She did say she would arrange temporary respite care, but never really reached the depth of his feelings about guilt and frustration toward his mother's condition. Silencing one's own beliefs would be a difficult thing to ask anyone to do, but it is very important that the doctor be able to set aside certain feelings in order to allow the patient space to explore his. This does not imply a complete silencing of one's own convictions and human reactions. As a doctor these are necessary for two main reasons: 1) to maintain the humane sympathy for patients which is necessary for a caring bedside manner; 2) so the doctor can keep on solid ground with regard to how far s/he is willing to compromise

herself to patient requests (giving sleeping pill prescriptions to drug abusers, for example). There must be a careful balance between silencing doctors' personal opinions and allowing for sympathetic and protective reactions.

13.3.5 Conclusions:

Whether good or bad, silences will arise in the medical context as a matter of course and present themselves in such a way that they cannot be ignored. It is part of medical codes that patient information is private information and will be withheld from others. Doctors may be silent in order to protect a patient by not disclosing information. Such examples show the many ways in which Larundic silence occurs in the medical context. Other cases show that patient silences can be Larundic: they may indicate confusion, misapprehension, intentions to deceive, and so much more. These silences cannot be ignored because they *will* arise and they contain highly significant information. It is necessary therefore that silence not be overlooked, ignored or disregarded as vacuous.

13.4 Interpreting silence:

The model for interpreting silence in part II suggests care and consideration must be taken in the formulation of meanings of silences. This is no less the case for medical Larundic silences. Medical Larundic silences arise in various, sometimes less than obvious places, and as with every Larundic silence require interpretation to be understood. Interpreting Larundic silences in the medical context can supply greater depth of understanding and confer information hidden in the silences. This information can be relevant to diagnosis of illness and for understanding how illness affects patients. All this information can be made good use of in treating and caring for patients.

13.4.1 Silence and diagnosis:

Sometimes an illness will be silent, either to the patient or the diagnostician. These Larundic silences are not obvious silences, but do require interpretation like any other Larundic silence. It has been shown why a doctor ought not to remain silent about a disease which is silent to its victim; but problems which are silent even to the diagnostician require a special kind of interpretation. It is in the nature of medical interviews that much is said indirectly and remains silent. Informative clues for constructing diagnostic interpretation can thus be drawn from attentiveness during patient interviews. Care-givers can interpret some of what is not verbalised, just as they interpret what is verbalised, and draw conclusions from what the patient is silent about. It is therefore incumbent on the diagnostician to be open to the relevant information being communicated silently in the patient's utterances.

Clues for Larundic silences can appear in the form of psychosomatic illnesses. These symptoms which present with no apparent physiological cause may telegraph silent messages about unacknowledged psychological or emotional riddles. When the silent problem is important enough or severe enough the body may betray the underlying truth of the suffering, silently making clear what is not overt. Nervous stomachs and tension headaches are obvious examples of the body silently divulging what the mind or emotions have yet to acknowledge. More extreme examples arise as paralysis and "hysterical pregnancies" which have no physical cause but which affect the sufferer with no less severity than the physiological versions. These symptoms tell us something about the person, silently betraying through a bent spine or hunched shoulders that something is wrong.

13.4.2 Reading between the lines:

Silent illnesses and silent cries for help mean that care-givers are sometimes obliged to read between the lines and listen to patient's stories. This will help them to decipher the silent implications of what patients or their symptoms say. Talkative patients can give away a great deal of information about puzzling illnesses, and noncommunicative patients can pass on a great deal of information through symptoms. Often what patients do not say can betray the most. There are many reasons patients might choose for being silent. In *Stories of Sickness*, Howard Brody suggests some literary reasons for the silences of patients and care-givers[6]. Virginia Woolf was silent to her friends about having the flu because she felt they could not be truly sympathetic, as it would only remind them of their own past illnesses. Others, she felt, might be too sympathetic and sit with and bore her because "...only laggards and failures" have time to be sympathetic[7]. In Kafka's *Metamorphosis* the Samsa family cannot make a public announcement about Gregor's condition and must therefore suffer in silence[8]. They are confused and ashamed of Gregor's 'illness' and this prevents them from seeking aid; they are helpless in their silence.

Making sense of such Larundic silences requires sensitivity to the patient's narrative: reading between the lines. It involves listening to patients' stories about their illnesses or about their lives and deducing knowledge from what they tell and what they do not tell[9]. This does not mean care-givers should be able to read minds or construct fictions about their patients. It does mean that care-givers should try to reconstruct truths through the ideas patients' give them;

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[6] Brody, Howard. *Stories of Sickness*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987.

[7] Brody, pg: 102.

[8] Brody, pg: 111.

[9] Brody.

ensuring all the time that the interpretations have fit and show the meaning of the silence in its best light. This requires staying within the perimeters set by what the patient does say. Like in a child's colouring book; the outline for the drawing already exists, and one has only to fill the outline with colours. Staying within the lines is faithful to the picture, moving outside the lines is creative and adds something which was not already there. The goal is to get an idea of the actual picture and then, if necessary, add created novelties which are faithful to it. Reading between patient's lines means being careful not to go too far beyond them. Often what isn't said is what is most helpful in making diagnoses. This is especially relevant in cases such as when a physician must temporarily act as social worker: having to identify abuses and victims of abuse without being told directly. The moral aspect of this reminds us to consider all relevant possibilities and ensure that the final interpretation is faithful to the silence and its utterer.

It may simply suffice to enquire as to the meaning of a particular silence, but often silences mislead. They can do so in at least two distinct ways: either they are not obvious and so overlooked, or their meaning is misinterpreted. The second problem can be illustrated by this example: Imagine the silence of a patient who is confused, but the silence is interpreted by the doctor as the patient's not wishing to discuss the case any further. The patient may intend the conversation to continue, but the doctor misinterprets the silence to mean she ought to bring the conversation to a close. It is important to realise that there are two sides to every assertion: its intended side and its interpreted side, and these may not necessarily coincide. It is the responsibility of both parties to try to work out the best interpretation of the intention by providing and being receptive to relevant information. But in the special relationship between care-giver and patient the patient is often intimidated or too confused to make the necessary moves and thus remains in the silence until coaxed out of it by sensitive attempts at understanding by the care-giver.

Attempts at understanding silences may be frustrating and problematic. Silences are slippery, making interpretation of silence trickier than interpretation of words. Brody suggests a remedy for this by asking people to describe their life stories thus far and then how they would like that story to proceed[10]. This provides perspective for understanding the patient a little better. It fills in gaps, thereby creating a sharper image of the patient's self-determined identity. From there silences are more likely to be correctly interpreted because the stories create perimeters within which the understanding may capture the slippery silences and begin to find meaning in them.

The inevitable silences of the medical context contain Larundic meaning just as they do in any other context. It is natural that they are ignored or not carefully interpreted, because they are seldom recognised as meaningful. It is for this reason that we must learn to be open to the relevance of Larundic silences in medical settings as in any other setting. Interpreting Larundic silences will bring rewards of depth of understanding and a safe-guard against misunderstanding provided they are interpreted with the care suggested in the model for interpretation. Care-givers must be cautious of how their own silences are interpreted, and how they interpret the silences of their patients. However, careful efforts at deciphering Larundic silences can reveal a great deal of useful information. It is therefore worth making the effort to note the relevance of, and to interpret the meaning of medical Larundic silences between patient and carer.

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[10] Brody 1987, pg: 166.

13.5 Large Scale Issues:

Silence is relevant to the macro-issues in medical ethics, not just the micro-issues such as doctor/patient relationships. Particularly significant is the question of silence about the scarcity of medical resources. No system is without its difficulties in this area. In the USA resources are distributed primarily among those who can afford to purchase them, and some are donated to the very poor, leaving those in the middle to struggle for what they can. The socialised systems do better at class distribution, but ultimately fail to meet the needs of all their citizens. It seems as if no system is immune to the problems of scarcity of necessary health care resources. As a result we are left with many predicaments, and, more specifically, with whether or not to publicise the limitations and to what extent?

It is not clear what the best alternative is as there are problems with remaining silent about the scarcity of resources, and with admitting they exist. People are already voicing the not unfounded fears that they will not be given the treatment they require for reasons extraneous to medical care: reasons such as age, ability and responsibilities. Patients die before they reach the top of waiting lists, and some, especially the elderly, are frightened of never making it to the top. Informing the public of the lack of required resources for adequate medical care is creating a mistrust of medical professionals, and creating a state of anxiety which will ultimately lead to further abuses. The reason for the public's fear is expressed in the cases of generally healthy octogenarians whose treatment is postponed in favour of younger patients, and who express fears of being hospitalised and left to die because they are of low-priority where the purses are wanting. Such anxiety creates abuses of the resources as people try to get all they can before it is too late; and their mistrust that they are not being given all that it would be in their best interests to be given leads them to make demands which they may not allow themselves to be convinced are

unnecessary. Generally then, public disclosure of the fact of scarce medical resources has created anxiety, mistrust and abuse of resources due to desperation.

Being silent about of scarce resources presents its own problems, so it may not be the solution to publicise the details regarding scarce resources. The consequences of silence are more broadly political than those of disclosure. If the public is unaware of the scarcity then they will not be in a position to use medical resources responsibly, and may abuse them, albeit unwittingly. They will obviously not be in a position to try to change the resource allocation and will therefore become victims of their ignorance. Doctors will be burdened with deciding how the resources will be allocated, a decision which is in fact meta-medical and outside their realm of expertise. It is not clear that doctors should, or even want to, shoulder this burden. They are better cast in the position of care-givers whose duty it is to treat anyone in need, not administrators who decide who is to be treated.

It looks as if the ethical choice is disclosure because it allows for better informed decision-making in the community at large, thus enhancing patient autonomy, and reducing the burden placed on doctors to make tough decisions which are essentially non-medical to begin with. The problems entailed in not being silent are significant and must be dealt with, but the values preserved by it tip the balance in its favour.

13.5.1 Squeaky wheels:

Silence can affect other large-scale problems of health-care associated with distribution of scarce resources. Some patients are afraid of silence and seek to fill its presumed emptiness with noise. One such example is commonly referred to as the "squeaky wheel" patient. A possible explanation of squeaky wheel patients is their fear of silence in the power relationship as described by

Katz[11]. The patient's fear of losing control of her body and life causes her to break the silence of the relationship in order to discover what is going on. This is perfectly normal and acceptable at first but in excess can become a burden to care-givers and may become an exploitation of valuable scarce resources. In this case silence may be a useful means of redistributing resources; not responding to the patient's every need helps ensure that other patients are attended to. Although this is a clear example of how silence can have functional uses, it does not seem to be the most beneficent method of dealing with the patient whose fear of the silence is so great she needs to drown it in noise.

13.6 Difficult Questions and Silent Answers:

There are a number of difficult issues in medical ethics, and these invariably produce tough questions to which the answers remain contentious. Many have tried to produce answers to the tough questions, but there are schools of thought which conclude that answers will never be found. This is not a nihilistic response to the opacity of the moral truth of the situations. It is instead a reply to the criteria laid down by those who see the appeal of many competing rational and valuable responses to the quandaries of medical ethics. On the whole, they say that the questions, though compelling, cannot or ought not to be answered. It is an attitude inherited from legal systems which have attempted to reach conclusions about the issues but have failed to so far. The legal attitude is to deal with the issues on a case by case basis. We do not construct any clear legislation about the issues because of the loss of flexibility and sensitivity to context it would entail. As a result we are still struggling with the problems of euthanasia, abortion and many other issues from which it has

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[11] Katz, 1984.

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been impossible to wrest any clear solutions. The upshot is that the issues which are contentious are those for which the answers must remain silent. The hope is that this will also leave silent the frightening consequences of condoning them, while still leaving a margin of permission for the times when they are humane.

Leaving the conclusions to silence ultimately eliminates the need for definite conclusions about issues which reside in the fuzzy middle of the spectrum between right and wrong. Being silent about them recognises the obscurity of their nature and permits flexibility when necessary. Euthanasia is an excellent example of this because the pros and cons of it are so well-known and discussed. Those who resist euthanasia usually support their argument by an appeal to the sanctity of life and to the belief that taking life, even for the best of reasons, ultimately degrades its value. At this point the slippery slope descends into an abyss of dangerous callous possibilities such as the murder of the sick and elderly in order to reduce the strain on resources. Nevertheless, there is no desire to eliminate the kind of mercy killing which we tend to refer to euphemistically as the 'intent to end suffering', and which may take the form of a Brompton Cocktail or the withdrawal of life-support machines. In some cases, indirectly hastening a death is the only truly humane response to the suffering of the dying person. We have it within us to recognise this not simply as merciful but somehow right given the circumstances, and this is reinforced by the fact that we now have the technological resources to prolong life but recognise the difference between that and the unnecessary prolongation of suffering and dying. Still, we cannot quite bring ourselves to refer to the act of helping a person die as euthanasia because of the consequences associated with this idea. Instead we are silent about accepting or rejecting euthanasia and this leaves room for its ambiguity and consequent flexibility – it is right in some cases, for some reasons, and wrong in others.

It is not simply the difficulty of responding to these questions which makes silence their best response. It is that their nature is so obscure (they are slippery like silence) that they ought not to be restricted to any simple yes or no answer, and a constructed reply would have to be so ambiguous that its meaning would exist in a silence which required interpretation anyway. Admitting they are best addressed with silence is an honest way to convey the benefit of leaving them open and flexible, so they can be valued on a case by case basis. This way the significance of their ambiguity will not be forgotten. Every time difficult issues enter a case, the silence about their moral value will act as a reminder of their problematic nature, and thus encourage careful thought and reduce the likelihood of flippant conclusions. Being faced with silence encourages deliberation and reflection.

13.7 Conclusion:

The intricacies of silence in the medical context are many. Silence may play a positive role, a negative role, or something in between. The significance of silence in medical care extends beyond the ones discussed here. Other examples are decisions made in emergencies about which there can be no discussion because of lack of time; healing silences where listening to patients is all that is necessary; the pathologists' role as silent care-giver; silence about errors to protect carers; the tendency to be silent about death; death as the ultimate silence; diseases that are referred to as silent killers; patients' loss of ability to speak, and silent communication through advanced directives and living wills.

Silence has moral implications in medicine. Where silence is misused it has negative consequences to autonomy and the relationship between care-givers and patients. At the very least, silence is relevant in medical care because

it cannot be avoided. But where it is used, and used properly, silence holds a wealth of information and beneficence.

CHAPTER 14

SILENCE IN THE COURT

14.1 Silence in Law:

There are several ways in which silence is pertinent to law: law protects silence through the right to privacy; it enforces silence, and denies it, through laws for the protection of privacy and state; and it both causes problems for and allows flexibility in the interpretation of law by addressing broad categories instead of specific cases. The last issue connects law to politics; for where law is silent it is often the job of politicians and legislators to make it speak as we saw in chapter 5. There are serious moral and functional consequences to silence in the legal world, primarily due to an absence of literature explaining how to interpret silences. Famous cases and historical events, such as the case of Sir Thomas More discussed in chapter 13, have illustrated the perils of the lack of legal information about silence. This oversight must be dealt with in order to ensure that individual liberties are not interfered with by the misinterpretation of silence.

14.1.1 Law as Literature:

Silence is relevant to all types of literature, and, by extension, to law[1]. A reader is often treated to more direct thoughts than is an art viewer, but much of what she derives from her reading is not found in the text directly, but in the unspoken intermingling of the author's ideas and the reader's own

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[1]Levinson, S. & Mailloux, S. eds.: *Interpreting Law and Literature: A Hermeneutic Reader.* Northwestern University Press; Evanston Il.; 1988.

epistemological and ontological structure. The reader approaches the text with her own knowledge, values, beliefs and references which merge with the ideas of the text in a silent communication between reader and what is read. This is not a fully creative silence, present in the act of interpretation, but it does allows us to form conclusions too complex to express in spoken language. There are too many ideas involved in the process of interpreting to be included in speech, so it must happen silently, in the mind of the reader. The required history exists in silence. The background needed for comprehension is not written down nor recounted every time one attempts to interpret; it is only contained in the gap between speaking and understanding. This is the meaningful content of silence.

At least one of the common methods and limits for interpretation is context in the form of *historical background*. We make use of this tool in the interpretation of virtually everything. The relationship is reciprocal; silence is important to understanding history because history is experienced through silence. The presumed empty space of silence is actually filled with past knowledge and understanding of the world, which form the bridge between new and foreign concepts and definitions[2]. The historical knowledge a person possesses provides necessary connections between the interpreter and the new ideas, turning foreign into familiar. We use history when interpreting by relying on the encyclopaedic information we have about the subject to provide us with a context for the silence. This knowledge will include historical knowledge. But because there is often too much information to include verbally, it is left unsaid, a silent buttress to the argument. However, historical background must be applied with discretion. The examples discussed below will show this. If silence is the best way to limit harm in general, it may be best if it is left uninterpreted.

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[2] Bindeman 1981, pg: 129.

14.2 Self-Incrimination: When the Suspect or Witness is Silent:

"At one time stillness was a precious article in an unwritten code of human rights."[3]

Possibly the most famous example of silence in law occurs in the Fifth Amendment to the United States Constitution.   The only section of the Amendment that actually provides protection for silence reads:

"...no one shall be compelled in any criminal case to be witness against himself..."[4]

Hence the witness is provided with a right to protection from self-incrimination by remaining silent.

In his textbook *American Constitutional Law*, Laurence Tribe says that the Fifth Amendment exists to protect one's privacy, liberty, personhood, and to allow the freedom to "control the face one shows to the world"[6]. Ideally, silence ought not to be used as evidence of the witness' guilt. It is implicitly understood that the Fifth Amendment

"...confers a privilege to be silent. The exercise of such a privilege can neither be equated with guilt nor be treated as a forbidden failure to cooperate with a proper inquiry..."[5]

But it is difficult to maintain this attitude, especially in jury cases. Tribe says

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[3]Schafer 1977, pg: 254.

[4] Cury, James A., Riley, Richard B. & Battistoni, Richard M.; *Constitutional Government: The American Experience*; West Publication Co.; St. Paul, M.N.; 1981: pg. A-11.

[5] Tribe, Laurence H.; American Constitutional Law; The Foundation Press, Mineola, N.Y.; 1978: pg: 893.

that claiming protection under the Fifth Amendment is often perceived as furtive, guilty behaviour on the part of the witness[6], which can have negative consequences in the outcome of the trial. As a result, even though the right to silence is constitutionally protected, it is not easily upheld.

The Canadian legal system has similar provisions for allowing the witness to remain silent both before and during the trial, but Canadian judges tend to take a different attitude toward the consequences of such silence. Section 4(5) of the Canada Evidence Act *forbids comment* upon witness failure to testify, but many rulings have clearly indicated that it is acceptable to

> "draw adverse inferences against an accused because of his failure to testify. It is, therefore, unrealistic to speak of the non-compellability of the accused to testify as a great protection."[7]

In fact, in some cases no pretence is made of the effect section 4(5) has on judicial rulings. In the case of R. v. Vezeau the judge's ruling included the statement:

> "It is clear that the jury had the right to consider the failure of the accused to testify and to draw therefrom any logical conclusion."[8]

In spite of the section protecting witness silence, the Canadian legal system recognises that it is unlikely that the jury will ignore witness silence, and will be inclined to interpret it *unfavourably*[9]. It is usually supposed that an innocent person would take any opportunity to explain her innocence. Failure

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[6] Tribe, 1978, pg: 709. See also Albertson v. SACB, 382 US 70(1965); Lefkowitz v. Cunningham, 97 Sct. 2132(1977); Slochower v. Board of Education 350 US 551(1956).

[7] Emspak v. U.S., 349 US 190(1955); Hutcheson v. U.S. 369 US 599(1962).

[8] Ratushny, Ed; *Self- Incrimination In The Canadian Criminal Process*; The Carswell Company Ltd.; Toronto, Canada; 1979: pg. 331.

[9] (1971), 15 CNRS 336, pg: 338.

to testify is interpreted as secretiveness, and therefore an admission of guilt.

The English law makes many of the same assumptions as the Canadian legal system does. This means that witness silence is perceived with suspicion in police investigation as well as in court. As a result, there has been some debate over the acceptability of the right of suspects to remain silent in the English Criminal Justice Act, and reform has been proposed. In England, suspects are permitted the right to silence but only with the implicit understanding that their silence will in all probability be taken as a sign of guilt. Thus, at least one of the reasons in support of the reform to eliminate the suspect's right to silence is to protect the innocent from inappropriate judgement. As it stands, the law stipulates that anything not said during initial police interviews may harm the suspect's testimony later. Thus, silence is viewed as suspicious behaviour. The suspicion is, again, usually founded on the assumption that the innocent will freely protest their case and therefore the silent are trying to hide something.

The proposed reform in England has spawned a number of arguments for and against the right to silence. Those in favour of the reform, primarily the Criminal Law Revision Committee and the Home Office Working Group, base their arguments on the following reasons[10]:

> i. It is natural to defend oneself against an allegation made by a person in authority. Failure to do so is therefore suggestive of guilt, in the absence of some explanation.
>
> ii. A significant number of criminals avoid being charged or, if charged avoid conviction, by remaining silent in interview thereby depriving the police of the investigative opportunities presented by interview.
>
> iii. A significant number of criminals escape conviction by not disclosing their defence to the police and then ambushing the court trial by producing a new defence which the prosecution are then in no position to refute.

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[10] These are drawn from Leng, Roger: *The Right to Silence in Police Interrogation: A Study of Some of the Issues Underlying the Debate.* The Royal Commission on Criminal Justice. HMSO; London; 1993; pp: 4-5.

iv. It is a positive advantage to the police and the prosecution that any defence is raised in the course of interview. This prevents ambush defences and allows the police opportunity to test the defence raised in the course of the interview and to carry out further investigations to confirm or refute any defence raised.

v. Modifying the right to silence as proposed would carry no substantial risks for the innocent suspect, who is adequately protected by other safeguards, notably access to legal advice in the police station.

vi. That suspects who presently exercise the right to silence would be more likely to answer police questions and disclose any defence they wished to raise, if cautioned that if they did not do so they would be less likely to be believed and that it might have a bad effect on their case if they failed to do so.

Defenders of the right to silence have other views. Leng offers counter-arguments to all of the above based on research drawn from "1080 cases collected between 1986 and 1988."[11] He states that silence is rarely resorted to, and that there are motives for silence beyond self-protection, most especially the attempt to protect others from incrimination[12]. Furthermore, he points out that in only 4% (9) of cases did silence appear to be the primary reason for charges being dropped against the suspect[13]. Besides, as the alternative to silence is lying, obfuscation would be no less likely to hinder police investigation[14]. Moreover, it would follow that the absence of the right to silence would encourage suspects to perjure themselves rather than assist in their own incrimination. This is especially plausible when the lie is a denial, or for that matter when the denial is true. As Leng says "...in many cases a denial is effectively as inscrutable as total silence..."[15]

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[11] Leng 1993; pg: 6.

[12] Leng 1993; pg: 19, 72 & 79.

[13] Leng 1993; pg: 23 & 77.

[14] Leng 1993; pg: 29 & 43. It is suggested that lies provide greater opportunity for police to use interview techniques to test the statement. These are not useful where suspects are non-communicative.

[15] Leng 1993; pg: 76.

With regard to the ambush defence, Leng suggests that these are infrequent, and usually occur when police undervalue or fail to recognise a piece of information volunteered by the suspect at interview[16]. Moreover, because new evidence entered at the time of trial was previously silent, it will come under the same suspicions of all silent information and lose credence. The law is specific about the possibility of considering silence as guilt,

> "...there is nothing to stop a bench of magistrates or jury from treating silence as indicative of guilt, but a jury cannot be directly invited to reach this conclusion by prosecuting counsel or the judge."[17]

Because of these suspicions, there is little advantage in ambush defences.

Leng's arguments, among those of others[18], indicate the importance of safeguarding the right to silence in police interviews. Leng showed that cases occurred

> "...in which decision to charge had been motivated by a conviction that the suspect was guilty, confirmed as far as the police were concerned by the suspect's silence in interview."[19]

And this was seen to be the case even though it is generally believed to be difficult to prove the guilt of a silent suspect. Leng offers two reasons for this difficulty: 1) because silence leaves little for police to go on; and 2) because "the very fact that [other] motivations can be identified substantially weakens the

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[16] Leng 1993; pg: 45-58 & 78.

[17] Leng 1993; pg: 2. Refer to The Royal Commission on Criminal Procedure (1981B), pra 83.

[18] See Wood, J. & Crawford, A.: *The Right of Silence: The Case for Retention.* The Civil Liberties Trust; London; 1989. See also Criminal Revision Committee (1972) paras 108-113.

[19] Leng 1993; pg: 39.

case for treating silence as evidence of guilt."[20] Rather, Leng suggests that the police do not need help to overcome right-based silence, as they could develop legal techniques for encouraging suspects to speak. At the moment, they rely on catching suspects in lies and on citizens' duty to assist the pursuit of justice as far as they can. However, Leng's primary reason for resisting the reform is his belief based on his research that it "...would have little effect in enhancing the prospects of convicting guilty offenders [and] in only a very small proportion of cases."[21]

The Civil Liberties Trust suggests other reasons for protecting the right to silence in trial and in police questioning procedures. They claim that it would protect the innocent from arbitrary and excessive questioning. These are said to discriminate against the innocent or first offenders who, unlike hardened criminals, would not be prepared for such harsh interview techniques. It is such people who would be confused and frightened in interviews, and would either make false confessions or disclose information "...while ignorant of the ramifications of what they may say."[22] The essential right to silence would help avoid such miscarriages where the innocent are wrongly convicted or are forced to commit perjury to prevent wrongful conviction.

Finally, the right to silence should be regarded as a fundamental right along with the right to privacy and confidentiality. Wood and Crawford argued strongly that the right to silence protects the innocent and reduces the incidence of perjury. Leng's research shows that the right to silence does not hinder the process of justice in any serious manner. Therefore, no strong argument exists to support the reform, while many exist to support the right to silence.

Moreover, inconsistencies in interpreting the Larundic silences of

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[20] Leng 1993; pg: 72-3.

[21] Leng 1993; pg: 80.

[22] Wood & Crawford 1989, pg: 31.

suspects and witnesses proves that rules ought to be encoded that protect them from radical readings. The Fifth Amendment appears to be better equipped to preserve rights to a fair trial because it is contained in the American Constitution. Section 4(5) of the Canada Evidence Act and the English Criminal Justice Act do not do so well. They do not actually forbid the use of witness silence as grounds for incrimination, although they do forbid lawyers' *comments* on the silence as argument for guilt. The judge and jury are therefore permitted to formulate their own opinion about the witness' silence, and draw negative conclusions from it if they so choose. The advantage the U.S. Constitution has over the Canadian Evidence Act and the English Criminal Justice Act is its obviously stronger protection of the witness' right to silence; but no one of these is entirely satisfactory as it stands.

14.3 How Lawyers Misinterpret Silence:

Anne Graffam Walker[23] studied common reactions lawyers have to witnesses' silences during questioning. The results of her study show that lawyers connect pauses, hesitancy and silence to the trustworthiness of the witness[24], and that their conclusions are usually incorrect. She says "the witness who pauses before answering questions put to him or her is subject to negative inference about his or her veracity"; and that "hesitation behaviour is an important but misunderstood feature in assessment of witnesses by attorneys"[25].

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[23] Walker, Anne Graffam; "The Two Faces of Silence: The Effect of Witness Hesitancy on Lawyers' Impressions", *Perspectives on Silence*; D. Tannen & M. Saville-Troike eds.; Ablex Publishing Corp.; Norwood, N.J.; 1985.

[24] Walker's study supports this.

[25] Walker 1985, pg: 66.

In her study of ten cases Walker found that lawyers usually associate hesitancy with lack of trustworthiness, but are more likely to overlook pauses when they believe the witness to be cooperative. Half the cases showed that lawyers did not notice pauses in witnesses whom they described as straightforward, responsive and cooperative; but were well aware of the *less frequent* pauses of witnesses described as recalcitrant, nervous, afraid, or not spontaneous[26]. Furthermore, lawyers were generally more suspicious of "silent pauses" as opposed to stammering or "filled pauses", because the former were usually considered preparation for a lie, or the need to check the answer for consistency with the rest of the story. Finally, lawyers were more inclined to perceive the pauses positively when made by their own witnesses, and negatively when made by opposing witnesses.

It is ironic to note that it is common for lawyers to prepare their witnesses by telling them to wait five seconds before responding to any question, because it "...allows counsel to formulate objections; it further allows the witness to think through his answer."[27] The five second pause is also designed to avoid negative judgements of the witness' character, because "If he answers some questions quickly, he will be unable to sustain the pattern, and may warn the examiner of areas of concern."[28] If this is truly an accepted trial tactic, then it is unfair and inconsistent to draw negative conclusions about witnesses who subscribe to it. The institution of guidelines would avoid punishing people who are merely doing what they have been told, or are being careful to answer properly.

> "That does not mean, however, that the advice, 'Think before you speak' is bad advice...What it does suggest is a necessity to

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[26] Walker 1985, pg: 55.

[27] Walker 1985, pg: 69.

[28] Walker 1985, pg: 57. Walker is quoting from a textbook on trial tactics, Barist (1978:13).

become more aware of *how* impressions are formed, what their origins may be, the effect they may have upon critical judgement, and their susceptibility to error."[29]

Lawyers tend to make negative judgements about silence during questioning. Because they are usually wrong, these guidelines are necessary to avoid the mistakes which produce the kinds of injustices Thomas More suffered. Though Walker's study deals with lawyers' attitudes toward silence it is relevant to this project in several ways: it shows how mistakes can be made in interpreting silences at any level, and how this leads to unjust treatment of witnesses and inconsistency in legal proceedings.

Ideally, guidelines would ensure consistency among decisions about silence. The More case in *A Man for All Seasons* illustrates this point well. More was certain of the legal attitude toward silence, and he also believed Cromwell would uphold the integrity of the law; but he was wrong. Cromwell interpreted silence in a way inconsistent with the generally accepted rule. This shows how important it is to enforce the rules for interpretation. Without them, consistency in law cannot be assured.

Limits on interpreting what is not explicit will preserve legal integrity, but the More case also indicates that law's relation to truth is situation dependent. More knew how the law was supposed to work and tried to use this knowledge to escape being persecuted. In truth he really did not approve of the King's actions and therefore may actually have deserved punishment. If a consistently followed rule were established for interpreting silence, some would use it to their own advantage. The alternative, though, is not much better; situational judgements would not preserve the consistency needed to maintain integrity in the law. Laws cannot be situationally dependent, otherwise it would

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[29] Walker 1985, pg: 58. From textbook by Sumit (1978:110).

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be difficult to tell when one was upholding a law and when one was breaking it.

In this case Cromwell was quite openly acting inconsistently with the established rule, but in some cases the problem is due to ambiguity in law. This happens when the law is silent about a particular case. The consequences of silence in law can be the same as those of witness silence, though the reasons for it are different.

14.4 When The Law Is Silent:

Law itself can be silent. This occurs when an unprecedented case comes to trial, or when a case has novel elements to it. Silence of the law is both problematic and functional: problematic, because it lacks express direction for the judge, and functional because it allows enough flexibility to accommodate difficult cases. Both these features have a bearing on the interpretative aspect of judicial process, and it is the ambiguities of this silence which can make the judicial process dangerously capricious.

Law is the codification of rules and restrictions agreed upon by legislators and politicians, and which ideally reflect the values of the community. However, "not all law is codified, perhaps it is not all codifiable"[30]. It is not possible for a law to speak to every element of every possible case. The legislators cannot foresee everyeventuality. Take, for instance, a bylaw which restricted vehicles permitted in a park, but where it was not clear whether this meant only large vehicles like cars and aircraft, or if bicycles, baby prams and other small vehicles were not permitted either. In cases where the law is silent regarding specifics there may be one of two possible solutions: Either the judge can interpret what the intent of the law or

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[30] Atias, Christian & Rials, Stéphan; "Silence et Droit"; *Corps Écrit 12: Le Silence*; Presses Universitaires de France; Paris; 1984: pg. 109. I have done my own translation.

the legislators might have been in the particular case; or, in serious cases, the issue becomes political and it is left to politicians and legislators to create a new law.[31]

When it is possible for the judge to decide the question in court, she must interpret the silent space of the law and decide what it can reasonably be said to include. In effect, she *reads between the lines* to determine what the words of law are not saying in this situation, but which are relevant to it just the same. It becomes the judge's role either to create or discover meaning where law is silent[21]. If meaning is discoverable, then the judge is merely uncovering what is silently already there. Considering law to be Larundic in this way permits consistency in law, and escapes the accusation of nihilism made by legal realists. But if the judge creates the meaning, discretion and inconsistency sneak in because they allow judges the freedom and control to interpret the law to suit virtually any purpose.

Silence can allow some judicial creativity, which makes law flexible enough to accommodate novelties without continually consulting the legislators. But too much flexibility can be dangerous because it allows judges to uphold their own values and beliefs instead of the community's. Hence, judicial interpretation must be limited, though it is strongly debated how the limits must be drawn. Some will be more likely to deal with silence by attempting to reconstruct the attitudes of the framers, the history of the community, etc. While others interpret silence by looking for the true word of law, which itself may entail a review of community history[32].

Rules for interpretation can be useful even where the law is silent, and for the same reasons addressed above. They would help us to decide how to proceed in a way *consistent with previous legislation*, so that we would know

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[31] See chapter 5.

[32] Atias & Rials 1984, pg: 106.

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what to expect when the law does not speak to a particular case. Silence can be functional, allowing for flexibility, but it can also be problematic by allowing judicial whims to prevail. It is where these problems arise that rules for dealing with silence are needed, both to protect witnesses, as was seen in section I, and to preserve legal consistency when the law is silent.

14.5 Conclusion:

Silence can be both a symbol and a metaphor:

> "As symbol, silence appears as: the absence-presence or emptiness-fullness of that which is kept silent about ... As metaphor, silence appears as active in philosophy, poetry, painting and music in the mode of indirect discourse or ironic speech, as the keeping silence that has something to say."[33]

There cannot be certainty when interpreting silence because silence maintains its mystery no matter how much fact, past history and knowledge the interpreter has of the subject. Therefore, there must be guidelines for interpretation; underestimating its importance can lead to mistaken judgements. People have been unfairly persecuted due to misinterpretations of their silence. Limits must be imposed on the interpretation of silence in law and politics in order to preserve freedom.

Also, the outcome of interpretation must follow law and precedent, otherwise people will not be able to depend upon law for consistency. If interpretations were situation dependent it would be impossible to know in advance when one were breaking a law or upholding it. Even thieves know when they are acting illegally and when they are not. Establishing at least a vague set of rules for interpreting silence would keep law consistent, and people

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[33] Atias & Rials 1984, pg: 128-9.

would know when they could seek protection from silence and when they could

not.

CHAPTER 15

APPLIED HARPOCRATIC SILENCE AND THE OVERLAP

15.1 Introductory Notes:

The previous two sections have dealt mostly with Larundic silences. This is because the two areas discussed lend themselves best to communicative silences between individuals rather than the empty silences of reflection. However, many of the examples showed that there can be places where Larundic silences overlap with Harpocratic silences. Examples of this are the therapeutic silences at the bedside and the silences of death. Further examples of the overlap occur in musical silences which can be described as full or empty, as well as both at once. Silences which are strictly Harpocratic, on the other hand, are not numerous and are less identifiable. "As the prestige of language falls, that of silence rises.,"[1] especially regarding complex or spiritual notions. Thus, the prime location for Harpocratic silences is in the religious and spiritual context, where individuals encounter empty silences most frequently. It is worth taking a brief look at these applications of silence to music and at the spiritual and healing silence of religion before concluding.

15.2 Silence, Music and the Overlap:

The beginning of every classical music performance is marked by a

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[1] Sontag 1984, pg: 195.

silence. In fact, the music would not start if the silence did not occur before it. The music is born out of the silence and is carried by it, the silence interrupting every once in a while in the form of a pause or to mark the end of the movement. Finally, the piece of music ends and the silence takes centre stage again. The audience is aware of the necessity of that silent moment before the first notes and accede to its importance not blankly, but with expectation, excitement, and respect for the music and the performers. This silence is therefore not an empty Harpocratic silence. Rather it is Larundic, filled with what the audience expects, feels, and offers. It is also filled with emotions, anxieties, concentration and unification on the part of the musicians and the conductor. Yet, somehow we don't want to limit the meaning which fills this silence to only the feelings and thoughts of human beings. There is something of greater significance in this as well as in other musical silences, something of inherent value. This is where silence in music can be shown to be Larundic.

The meaning of a musical piece is silent in the same way that silence is the medium of communication for most art forms. Meaning in music often seems intangible and ineffable, and words are too harsh to express its nuances. Unlike literature and painting, there is sound in music, but similar to these other two art forms the meaning of the work is implied or conveyed indirectly through the art. This happens to a greater or lesser degree, so that the message conveyed requires greater or lesser amounts of effort to interpret. Nevertheless, no matter how it is communicated, the meaning of a work of art is hidden in Larundic silence.

This not withstanding, some art, including music, is designed to trigger Harpocratic reflection as well as communicate a meaning. This is where the nature of the overlap between Harpocratic and Larundic silence rests. Music which possesses meaning that sends the imagination into creative exploration is one example of this. There are still other pieces that cause stillness and silence of the mind which permits reflection in the Harpocratic sense. Bindemen notes

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that silence does not only deconstruct form, but it constructs it as well. "When we passively hear a silent passage in music we spontaneously attempt to fill it in; thus, meaning is emoted from the silence."[2] The meaning emoted, given our anatomy of silence, is meaning created from reflection on *prejudicial* and encyclopaedic knowledge in Harpocratic silence. Thus, such music initiates reflection and inspires self-exploration in those who confront it. Bindemen adds that we are losing the freedom of silence in a busy world; that we must recapture it in order to leave space to create ourselves, and that certain artists help us do this. Some examples of this are Mahler's *3rd symphony*[3], Barber's *Adagio for Strings*, Gorécki's *Third Symphony*, Satie's *1ere Gymnopédie*, and many of the works of R. Murray Schafer[4].

Perhaps the most obvious example of silence used in music is John Cage's "4 minutes, 33 seconds"[5], a piece which is more aptly described as Larundic than Harpocratic. We will examine this particular piece with emphasis on convention to see how the model for interpreting Larundic silence can be applied to musical silences.

15.2.1 Convention as context:

Conventions provide clues for understanding meaning in music, and nowhere is this more obvious than in Cage's famous work. First, however, compare the event of a rock concert with that of a classical music concert. At a rock concert the sound of cheers and applause seem to dominate where silence normally does in classical performances. The etiquette is different: rock musicians wait for roars from the audience to know they are attended and

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[2] Bindemen, 91.

[3] Which Bindemen describes as an "Ode to Silence", pg: 89.

[4] Schafer 1977, pg: 253.

[5] Cage, John: *Silence: Lectures and Writings*. Marion Boyars Publishing Ltd.; 1987.

wanted; classical music requires silence for the same reason. It seems that whenever there is a hint of silence at rock concerts the audience is invited to fill it with cheers and applause. As soon as the music stops, a wave of shouting swells and crashes as though it were necessary to encourage the performers to go on. At the classical concert this is notoriously different. Silence is the norm. Everyone has experienced moments when, unfamiliar with the piece being played, someone applauds inappropriately during a pause between the third and the fourth movements. Are these reactions merely moments of social convention?

Cage's "4 minutes, 33 seconds" may shed some light on this question of conventions, because, though silent, for all intents and purposes it is arranged like a piece of music. Everything is there, all the elements of music making: an audience, a musician, an instrument, a concert hall... but no music, just silence. It is only the context which tells you what these elements have been gathered together to do. The context tells the interpreter that this is a work of art about to be performed, that it is a piece of music. The context delimits what the author had in mind in calling them all together. That the author is a composer of music is the first thing which sets this apart from a piece of theatre or a prayer service. All the gestures are set forth, performed and respected. It is for all intents and purposes a musical performance, a recital, a concert.

Would it be fair for a spectator at this performance to feel that she has been cheated by it? After all, she paid money to go to a concert and she was given no music, heard nothing. Nevertheless, the spectacle was all there, everything fulfilled the criteria, and the 'music' could have been the sounds of the impure and Larundic silence around her. There was the ritual of listening: a definite beginning, middle, and end. People knew when to stop speaking because the piece was about to begin, they recognised when they were in the midst of the performance and they took their cue to applaud when it was over. So something happened in the room; a show took place. It would be unfair to

perceive it as cheating simply because one ingredient, the music, was absent. Everything else was there. Thus, it appears that there were sufficient conditions for the event to be called a performance rather than a non-event.

This piece illustrates well the role of context in the interpretation of silence. It is an exaggerated case of the importance of using the surrounding elements to lead the audience to construct an accurate interpretation of the meaning of the silence. The context is so clear in the case of "4 minutes, 33 seconds" that there is virtually no question about what has gone on –it was a musical recital. No further explanation is necessary. The depth of the meaning intended by the presentation of the piece may take further puzzling together, but what the silence was intended to mean initially is completely clear from the evidence given.

The depth of the meaning will be harder to fathom, just as it is hard to fathom in a more formal piece of music, or any work of art for that matter. Understanding what is being conveyed indirectly, and in silence, will always present problems. Whether these problems are any greater for "4 minutes, 33 seconds" is hard to say. On the one hand, there is less to go on, fewer hooks with which to grab hold of interpretable information. In this sense it is a more slippery piece. On the other hand the meaning of any piece of music is difficult to interpret because it is always conveyed silently, and is thus slippery as well. We could say it is double the silence and therefore presents double the difficulty for interpretation. This is true, but somehow not quite convincing because the context provides such overt clues for interpretation.

Imagine a situation where context is not so obvious. Say, an audience is gathered for a concert, and about two minutes before it is supposed to begin one or two of the musicians come out on stage and begin to play. They play what could sound like warm-up for a few minutes, then are gradually joined by other bits and pieces of the orchestra. They play, sometimes repeating a few bars after a pause, some of them taking breaks to do what they would normally do in

a warm-up just before a performance. All this continues until finally it becomes clear that this is a piece of music and the concert has already begun. It culminates in the entire orchestra being on stage playing a melody which was hinted at during the earlier "warm-up" part, and then it ends. In the beginning, an unsuspecting audience would be part of the composition, their chatter and movement would be part of the music. Presumably they would quiet down eventually, as they caught on. The idea here is that the context is changed; it has been switched around so that it is no longer what was expected. For a long time the concert consists of everything that is going on in the room, making it more obvious that this is exactly what a concert is -- not just the players playing, but the listeners involved becoming participants in the creation of the event. Here the hermeneutic circle is brought to life. Audience members become participants in the performance and are actually transformed into the concert itself, in the same way that the player of the game becomes the game. In this case, although there is sound in the concert, there is little of the convention ordinarily associated with a classical concert. Thus, understanding the piece as a concert requires greater effort on the part of the unsuspecting audience who must be patient in their effort to interpret the meaning of the event in which they are participating. Anyone whose *prejudice* does not permit them to be open to this meaning will not access the understanding as readily.

Silence occurs as a frame of reference for music in ordinary contexts. However, it also occurs within the music and among the notes. Some pieces employ silence as a echo for notes, others emphasise a note with a silence and still others wait for notes to dissolve in the silence which follows them. These silences are part of the vocabulary of the music and help convey meaning the same way that syntax, style and volume do. The emphasis of a note can change with the presence or absence of a silence around it. And notes that arise from silence are given an air quite different from those which arrive in the midst of sounds. The silence helps build the context around the note and thereby directs

the listener towards an interpretation of the Larundic silence of the meaning of the musical work. The silence constructs the syntax and context of the music. Thus, silence functions as a clue to understanding the Larundic silence in the music.

All these examples show how the anatomy of silence and the elements of the model for interpreting silence can be employed in musical silence. Openness, effort, context, *prejudice* are just some of the obvious elements which arise, showing how it is possible to consider Larundic and Harpocratic silence in music.

15.1.2 The Overlap:

The examples and model application above indicate how any meaning is partially invented by the listener and partially offered by the music itself. Thus, all participants in the hermeneutic circle are involved in the dialogue toward finding a relevant interpretation to the silent meaning of the work. The overlap between Larundic and Harpocratic silence occurs after a considered interpretation is arrived at, one which is respectful of the participants involved and stays within the perimeters set by the silence. After this is accomplished, the interpreter is free to use the interpretation to go beyond the perimeters and develop new creations from reflective use of the infinite possibilities in Harpocratic silence. Thus, Larundic silence becomes the launching point for Harpocratic silence.

15.2 Religion and Applied Harpocratic Silence:

This section has so far revealed applications of Larundic silence and examples of silence that crosses the boundaries of Larundic and Harpocratic silence. Now it is worth revisiting Harpocratic silence in the religious context to

reveal some its useful properties.

> "Just as man requires time for sleep to refresh and renew his life energies, so too he requires quiet periods to regain mental and spiritual composure.... Man held reservoirs of stillness in his life to restore the spiritual metabolism"[6]

Harpocratic silence can be found in meditation and spiritual reflection. The benefit of this is the healing which accompanies silence and stillness. People in distress are often referred to the Book of Job[7] for comfort. Job's faith in God was tested by Lucifer in order to prove its strength. In the story, Job loses everything, his children are killed and his health deteriorates until he is on the verge of death. He rails about his agony but refuses to abandon his faith. Finally, his torment is ended and God rewards Job's fidelity with a new family and greater wealth. It is unclear what comfort they ought to find in this tragedy with a happy ending. Most real tragedies have no comfort in the end. The battle against a fatal illness, the loss of a child; these are events which offer only meagre comforts such as an end to suffering. The comfort from the story of Job, therefore, is silent. Nevertheless, God's silent message may be the message intended for the suffering and bereaved. Harpocratic silence contains the properties for healing that the soul often needs. Silent reflection on loss and what came before can encourage understanding and the creative response required to go beyond pain. It also leaves space for memory to apply its salve by replaying what is lost. This is where Harpocratic silence has the power to heal. Its stillness leaves room to breathe and its emptiness permits reflection in which resolution and comfort can be found.

The stillness of Harpocratic silence is part of the peace of a holy life. Monastic silence is in part designed to be an imitation of God's silence, and is

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[6]Schafer, 1977; pg: 253-4.

[7]*Book of Job: A New Translation According to the Traditional Hebrew Text.* Kethubim trans. The Jewish Publication Society of America; Philadelphia, Penn.; 1980 (5740).

Harpocratic in this sense. It is a Neoplatonic requirement that like can only be known by like, therefore the monks imitate the silence of God in order to know God. However, it does not appear to be an exact imitation, because the monks choose an absolute stillness of the mind, a clearing of thoughts, so that their empty minds will have room to be filled with the soft voice of God. Presumably God's mind, then, is not still and empty; it does not merely contemplate itself as an Aristotelian God does. God's mind thinks the thoughts that would be whispered into the empty spaces in the monks' minds. Without their own Harpocratic emptiness then, the monks would have no room to admit the presence of God.

Prayer and meditation are meant to still the active mind in order that it might be filled with the word of God. It was, perhaps, Job's one error that he was not silent enough to hear God praising his virtue. Instead Job raged at his own failings and at God for making things as they were in spite of his efforts to be faithful. God was not being silent to Job's agony after all; there were many conversations with Satan in which God praised Job for his obedience and tenacity. Perhaps if Job had been silent himself he would have heard God weep with him.

The lack of reply to prayers signifies another way in which God's silence is Harpocratic. We may be frustrated by the silence that greets prayers and favours asked, but we can also be calmed by the simple act of praying. That God does not make overt response to the prayer does not mean that praying is a fruitless effort. Rather, we are offered a gift of reflective time, where formulating and constructing the prayer is part of the reply, as it helps order thoughts which can direct one to an answer. Already formulated prayers, such as Hail Mary's and the Passover *Haggadah* prayers are useful in a different way. They focus the mind on a mantra and open space for the spiritual. In the focus and stillness, reflection can take place and meaning is created as it is in Harpocratic silence. Thus, if God does communicate with us, it is in part to

help us notice new approaches to old information.

Quaker prayer meetings are designed to create the kind of Harpocratic stillness that permits the voice of God to be heard. Other traditions employ meditation and repetition in order to create this space. New information located in this reflective process can be described either as growth and transformation of old into new, or as spiritual revelation. The result is that some novel insight is gained through openness to the emptiness of Harpocratic silence.

There is something mystical about what the mind can do in Harpocratic silence, creating new ideas which lead to original thoughts. We follow the paths of familiar ideas and are led into the unfamiliar terrain of knowledge. It is not just that the ideas were there waiting to be found. They are created by the joining of ideas; they are the offspring of more familiar thoughts. This is creativity similar to Aristotle's idea of practical wisdom, whence concepts born of a current problem which cannot be solved by usual means require a sort of wisdom which creates something new by merging familiar with foreign to create novel. These ideas spring fully formed from our silences as Athena sprang from the brain of Zeus; formed deep within the silence of his mind until her presence could not be ignored, she popped out, unable to be suppressed any longer. It is the same for our silent secrets; some things will not allow themselves to be suppressed and force themselves to be dealt with, no longer able to be silent.

The above are images of a God as an active presence that guides individuals who pay attention to God's word. There are, however, more passive descriptions of the relationship between God and persons. This image is a more scholastic model of a God who is self-reflective and uninterested. The image of the prime mover, for example, in Aristotle. This image is of a Harpocratically silent deity and provokes an understanding of God which is passive and reflective in Harpocratic silence.

There is spiritual content in all Harpocratic silence to some degree, provided one is open to it. Harpocratic silence can be met with comfort and

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rest, or it can be met with fear. The results of this meeting will usually end in expanded self-knowledge. However, many people are frightened by being alone with their thoughts, and are apprehensive about such a meeting. They will tend to fill the emptiness with noise in an effort to keep from reflecting on what they bring to the meeting. This is best described as Harpocratic angst. For those who learn to be comfortable with the emptiness that causes self-reflection, Harpocratic silence becomes something to be grateful for. The rest it entails can be healing, comforting and expanding; and it is for this reason that so many feel the presence of God in empty silence. There is awe in this silence, just as there is awe in the silence in this quote from *A Passage to India*.

> "Opening his eyes, and beholding thousands of stars, he could
> not reply, they silenced him."[8]

Such examples are the best proof of the spiritual content in Harpocratic silence.

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[8]Forster, E.M. *A Passage to India*. Oliver Stallybrass, ed. Edward Arnold (Publishers) Ltd., London, England; 1978. Pg: 241.

PART IV:

CONCLUSION

CHAPTER 16

CONCLUSION

16.1 Three Aims:

Broadly speaking, I have attempted to achieve three related aims through this exploration of silence. The initial aim was to uncover an anatomy of silence designed to draw attention to its different types and help us understand its enigma a little better. This resulted in a useful distinction between Harpocratic and Larundic silences. Harpocratic silence, named after the enigmatic god Harpocrates, was shown to be the empty, mysterious and reflective silence of meditation and creativity. This silence offers no meaning of its own and therefore no fetters to imaginative reflection and creation on those who encounter it. Larundic silence, so-called after the loquacious goddess Larunda, was shown to be full of meaning which it can communicate in sometimes more and sometimes less effective ways than language can. The second aim was to show that Larundic silences can communicate but only through interpretation, which leaves it open to exploitation. Thus a model was constructed which is intended to preserve Larundic silences from radical readings and exploitation. Finally, the sections on applied silence explored some of the ways in which silence is used. This focused primarily on the category of Larundic silences which are more likely to arise in the fields chosen. That is, they are likely to but not exclusively, and Harpocratic silences were also seen to arise in these contexts. Still, Harpocratic silence is probably better suited to other contexts, and we will examine some of these now.

The conclusion will further elucidate an important point that has only

been directly addressed in respect to music. This is the presence of an overlap between Harpocratic and Larundic silences. Throughout the thesis it may have appeared that the examples described as Larundic also contain elements of Harpocratic silence, as if Harpocratic silence were contained within Larundic silence. We will look at more examples of this below. However, it must be noted that although Harpocratic silence occurs within Larundic silence it is not a subset of Larundic silence, nor is the opposite true. Rather the two are better understood as part of the same continuum from reflective to communicative silence, empty to full. This will become clear as we re-examine the aims of the thesis.

The three aims are beautifully illustrated in the following poem.

Death of a Son[1]
(*who died in a mental hospital aged one*)

SOMETHING has ceased to come along with me.
Something like a person: something very like one.
And there was no nobility in it
Or anything like that.

Something was there like a one year
Old house, dumb as stone. While the near buildings
Sang like birds and laughed
Understanding the pact

They were to have with silence. But he
Neither sang nor laughed. He did not bless silence
Like bread, with words.
He did not forsake silence.

But rather, like a house in mourning
Kept the eye turned in to watch the silence while
The other houses like birds
Sang around him.

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[1] Silkin, Jon: "Death of a Son" in *The Healing Arts: An Oxford Illustrated Anthology*; R.S. Downie ed. Oxford University Press; Oxford; 1994. Pp: 78-9.

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And the breathing silence neither
Moved nor was still.

I have seen stones: I have seen brick
But this house was made up of neither bricks nor stone
But a house of flesh and blood
With flesh of stone

And bricks for blood. A house
Of stone and blood in breathing silence with the other
Birds singing crazy on its chimneys.
But this was silence,

This was something else, this was
Hearing and speaking though he was a house drawn
Into silence, this was
Something religious in his silence,

Something shining in his quiet,
This was different this was altogether something else:
Though he never spoke, this
Was something to do with death.

And then slowly the eye stopped looking
Inward. The silence rose and became still.
The look turned to the outer space and stopped,
With the birds still shrilling around him.
And as if he could speak

He turned over on his side with his one year
Red as a wound
He turned over as if he could be sorry for this
And out of his eyes two great tears rolled, like stones, and he
died.

Jon Silkin
1930-

John Silkin's poem poignantly relates the tragedy of the death of his one
year old son who never emerged from silence. The poem can also be used to

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illustrate the three central aims of this thesis. The initial aim, to uncover an anatomy of silence, is amplified by Silkin's poem, where Larundic and Harpocratic silences are used and shown to overlap. The silence described in the first part of the poem is a difficult but definite Larundic silence. This becomes clearer when it is compared with the silence described in the second to last stanza which has the qualitatively empty feeling of a Harpocratic silence. The two are distinct, and the qualitative difference is made palpable when the author says:

> And then slowly the eye stopped looking
> Inward. The silence rose and became still.
> The look turned to the outer space and stopped,
> With the birds still shrilling around him.

The differentiation is clarified by, and helps to clarify, the Larundic Harpocratic distinction. The author points to the very different feeling he has of the active Larundic silence of his son alive, as distinct from the empty Harpocratic silence after the child's death. There is a perceptibly active feeling attached to the characterisation of silence in the early part of the poem. There is live meaning there, "like a house in mourning / Kept the eye turned in to watch the silence", as if the inhabitants were involved in creating meaning for the silence. Then there is a change in the quality of the silence when "slowly the eye stopped looking / Inward" and the silence empties itself of meaning. There is something contained in the initial Larundic silence which is no longer present in the Harpocratic silence at the end.

Moreover, it is clear in the poem how the two categories betray their discreet separations. The Larundic silence is not an obvious one, so it is tempting to perceive the initial silence as Harpocratic; and in some senses it is, although not completely. The poet forces the reader to consider this a full silence, albeit one which is indecipherable because the walls around it are unbreachable. Even so, the reader is given the impression that there is life and

activity going on behind the curtains of the house of his son's silence. This is a real and independent meaningfulness which the poet and the reader must stand outside of and cannot gain admittance to. But it is not a still or empty silence. Whatever it is, this is a silence truly distinguishable from the silence in the last part of the poem, and the distinction is based on the activity and meaning behind it.

Nevertheless, the degree of privacy with which the first Larundic silence is guarded makes the observer retreat to the more creative methods of understanding better suited to Harpocratic silence. This is where the Harpocratic overlap lies. If, as Bindeman suggests, the human mind is fearful of the absurdity of emptiness, then it is likely to react in the same way to impenetrable but full silence. In other words, the mind will attempt to create meaning where none is forthcoming, whether that be because no meaning is present, or because no meaning is readily accessible. Either way, the reaction is likely to be the same, namely a creative manipulation of information that is available. This will necessarily include *prejudicial* or encyclopaedic knowledge, and may exclude difficult to ascertain Larundic content. The knowledge is then used to creatively construct a meaning which is applied to the silence, but which springs from reflection and imagination alone and not from consideration of the perimeters of the silence. Such an interpretation will not be respectful of the content of a Larundic silence. On the contrary, it anticipates no such content so it has no need to respect the perimeters set up by it. The upshot then is that if the silence is truly Larundic, the interpretation will be radical and not an accurate interpretation of the meaning offered by the silence. In order to prevent this the interpreter will have to consider the possibility that a given silence has relevant meaning, even if this requires great effort. Thus it is necessary to be open to the possibility of Larundic content in a silence, and to make every effort to respect that content even where it is difficult to ascertain.

Harpocratic and Larundic silences can overlap in a more productive way

as well. Larundic and Harpocratic silence are not distinct categories, but continuous in the sense that Larundic silence often includes Harpocratic dimensions. This is not to imply that one is a subset of the other, rather that they are part of one another, so it is possible to have Harpocratic silence in Larundic silence and *vice verse*. Silkin's poem is an example of how Larundic silence can support elements of Harpocratic silence. There is a beginning of a meaning hinted at in the initial part of the poem but the meaning evaporates not just at the end but each time the poet and the reader attempts to grasp it. It is at the edges where the meaning is very indistinct that it triggers free Harpocratic reflection. Just as we saw in the relation between silence and metaphor, the concepts of fantasy and imagination come into play. The finite meaning of the Larundic silence becomes a launching point for the Harpocratic silence, just as fancy can be the stimulus for imagination. Thus we learn the meaning of the Larundic silence and use it as the foundation for creative reflection in exactly the same way that *prejudicial* and encyclopaedic knowledge are the foundations for all understanding. Nevertheless, the perimeters of the Larundic silence must be respected before the Harpocratic creativity can be indulged in. It is necessary to understand the meaning offered by the Larundic silence and before moving into infinite imaginings, otherwise the communicative act is jeopardised in favour of creativity. Determining the meaning of the Larundic silence beforehand permits the act of communication and exchange of ideas. After this is done, the Harpocratic silence can be indulged in and creative invention pursued; always with the understanding that treating a Larundic silence as Harpocratic violates the meaning of the silence and defeats the communicative effort.

The second aim is contained within the poem as well. The model for safe interpretations of silence can be shown to have been applied to the Larundic silence of the child in the first part of the poem. Silkin's interpretation of his son's silences can be described as a demonstration of it. The initial silence is considered with respect by the author as containing a meaning, albeit one from

which he feels excluded. Still, the silence is noted as relevant and the perimeters of its meaning are respected. The child's life is thence accepted and respected as meaningful even if that meaning in indecipherable.

What is interesting for our purposes is that the silence in the early part of the poem is not necessarily one that is intended by the son. Rather, its meaning is hinted at though not invented by the poet. The poet insists that there is a significance in his son's silence, and distinguishes it clearly from the second silence in his son's death. There is a meaning independent of intention which exists in the situation and which moves farther and farther away until it disappears altogether. That the poet recognises the relevance of his son's silence is what brings the possibility of an independent meaning into focus. The silence could have been described as empty by someone who was not open to the relevance of its meaning. But the recognition of the silence introduces the many possibilities of meaning described by the poet:

...But this was silence,

This was something else, this was
Hearing and speaking though he was a house drawn
Into silence, this was
Something religious in his silence,

Something shining in his quiet,
This was different this was altogether something else:
Though he never spoke, this
Was something to do with death...

A meaning is clearly present, but a meaning that is remote and difficult to penetrate. Still, it is a meaning that is indifferent to the poet's perception of it, in that it will persist with the life of the afflicted child. This Larundic silence exists, independent of the son's ability to intend to issue it, and independent of the poet 's intention to interpret it. Rather, the content exists and the poet gives it sense. This is an important point because it demonstrates the independence

and complexity of Larundic silence, and again leaves room for the overlap between Harpocratic and Larundic categories. It shows how Larundic silence can stand on its own and still accommodate the creativity of Harpocratic reactions to silence.

The third aim is not so much contained within the poem as it is demonstrated by it. Poetry is another field in which we find applied silence. Poems are silent first in the sense of being without noise, and Silkin's use of the concept shows the peculiar possibility of invoking silence in a silent medium. This produces the effect of making the silence in the poem palpable, distinct and endows it with the characteristics of Larundic and Harpocratic silences. It also demonstrates that silence plays a significant role beyond literature: in relationships, medicine and death. Larundic silence has already been described as active in medicine and law and its importance extends even beyond these, as the poem suggests. Other areas lend themselves better to Harpocratic silences, though not exclusively as all areas will accommodate and demonstrate the overlapping aspects of the two types of silence. Areas such as poetry and music show the overlap most clearly, while exclusive Harpocratic silence is better suited to religion.

16.2 Whereof One Must Be Silent:

Having taken this exploratory look at silence, one thing is certain: silence is complex and multifaceted. Its relevance is seen everywhere, not strictly as a linguistic tool, but as something of its own. It is the richness of it which makes silence such a fascinating topic of study; it never ceases to have something new to offer. But it is elusive, tricky to pin down and slippery to hold onto. So much of what we do and learn occurs in silence. All our interpretative efforts, all our creative ideas, all our acquisition of knowledge

takes place in the quiet of our own minds; or in the space around us which is filled with ideas that literally and figuratively play in the supposed emptiness. Silence is not just empty because it often communicates ideas and feelings, and acts as the symbol for any number of things. Silence can speak. However, it is not just full either. Silence creates space to be filled with ideas, like a pause in a conversation or the silence of a concert hall just before it is filled with music.

Silence is relevant to everything, it is the context for all we do. We know this is true because it seems that all our thoughts emerge out of the silent reaches of our minds, bubbling up from a place within us which we have no direct access to and which is generally silent to us and those around us. It sends out ideas as they are required, but without so much as a hint as to why or where they come from. We do seem to have some access to this part of our minds, although, because it does respond helpfully, sending ideas which cohere with the issue at hand. Even so, it sometimes surprises us with information that may be useful or not. Nevertheless, we do have direct knowledge of silence in an internal way, in the experience of thoughts we do not share with others. Secrets, silent streams of consciousness, internal responses are all examples of how we are aware of our silences. They are also proof that silence is not pure emptiness, but full of ideas and meanings which are indirectly communicated or not shared at all.

We also learn from silence. We use its creative space to teach us things we did not previously understand because they were hidden from our view. The silent retreat has always been seen as a learning process in religion. In this way, Descartes sought refuge from the noise of the world in solipsistic silence hoping to acquire new knowledge.

There is power in silence as well. We have seen how silence can oppress. In the political context this is done by forcing silence on certain groups, and ignoring what they say. In the social context, however, the power of silence can occur in the opposite way. The silence of a person in authority

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can be used to intimidate and frustrate others. Thus using silence can have moral significance where it is designed to oppress, frighten or frustrate. But the power of such silences is great as we have seen.

The cultures of the deaf, the mute and those who choose silence deliberately, all have a message that we have explored in depth under the discussion of Larundic silence. What these cultures allow us to be certain of is that there is content in silence that can be communicated and understood. Silent orders who chose to live without speech also help us uncover the merits of Harpocratic silence. Thus the cultures prove the worthiness of this project. They make palpable the significance of attempting to grasp the subtle differences between the types of silence explored here, and those beyond.

As a last note it must be asked: would it have been wiser to leave silence alone rather than try to understand it? Only if trying to understand it meant trying to limit it. This has not been the project of this thesis. Understanding has only shown how much depth there is to silence, and how little one can actually grasp of this vast topic. It has been nonetheless helpful to examine some of the facets of silence and to show how they arise is various areas. There is little doubt that silence is relevant to every aspect of life. It is clear that the topic has not been exhausted, nor that it ever can be.

The model of the types of silence described in Part I of the thesis was designed to help us make sense of silence. The model for interpretation in Part II was designed to show the importance of respecting silence. And Part III gave proof of the expansive relevance of silence.

Finally, a great deal has been said about the topic. Nevertheless, in the end there are some things that defy language and about which it is better to remain silent.

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