
Third Series of the Proposition

Between these events-effects and language, or even the possibility of language, there is an essential relation. It is the characteristic of events to be expressed or expressible, uttered or utterable, in propositions which are at least possible. There are many relations inside a proposition. Which is the best suited to surface effects or events?

Many authors agree in recognizing three distinct relations within the proposition. The first is called denotation or indication: it is the relation of the proposition to an external state of affairs (*datum*). The state of affairs is *individuated*; it includes particular bodies, mixtures of bodies, qualities, quantities, and relations. Denotation functions through the association of the words themselves with *particular images which ought to* "represent" the state of affairs. From all the images associated with a word—with a particular word in the proposition—we must choose or select those which correspond to the given whole. The denoting intuition is then expressed by the form: "it is that," or "it is not that." The question of knowing whether the association of words and images is primitive or derived, necessary or arbitrary, can not yet be formulated. What matters for the moment is that certain words in the proposition, or certain linguistic particles, function in all cases as empty forms for the selection of images, and hence for the denotation of each

state of affairs. It would be wrong to treat them as universal concepts, for they are formal particulars (*singuliers*) which function as pure "designators" or, as Benveniste says, indexicals (*indicateurs*). These formal indexicals are: this, that, it, here, there, yesterday, now, etc. Proper names are also indexicals or designators, but they have special importance since they alone form properly material singularities. Logically, denotation has as its elements and its criterion the true and the false. "True" signifies that a denotation is effectively filled by the state of affairs or that the indexicals are "realized" or that the correct image has been selected. "True in all cases" signifies that the infinity of particular images associable to words is filled, without any selection being necessary. "False" signifies that the denotation is not filled, either as a result of a defect in the selected images or as a result of the radical impossibility of producing an image which can be associated with words.

A second relation of the proposition is often called "manifestation." It concerns the relation of the proposition to the person who speaks and expresses himself. Manifestation therefore is presented as a statement of desires and beliefs which correspond to the proposition. Desires and beliefs are causal inferences, not associations. Desire is the internal causality of an image with respect to the existence of the object or the corresponding state of affairs. Correlatively, belief is the anticipation of this object or state of affairs insofar as its existence must be produced by an external causality. We should not conclude from this that manifestation is secondary in relation to denotation. Rather, it makes denotation possible, and inferences form a systematic unity from which the associations derive. Hume had seen this clearly: in the association of cause and effect, it is "inference according to the relation" which precedes the relation itself. The primacy of manifestation is confirmed by linguistic analysis, which reveals that there are in the proposition "manifesters" like the special particles I, you, tomorrow, always, elsewhere, everywhere, etc. In the same way that the proper name is a privileged indicator, "I" is the basic manifester. But it is not only the other manifesters which depend on the "I": all indicators are related to it as well.¹ Indication, or denotation, subsumes the individual states of affairs, the particular images and the singular designators; but manifesters, beginning with the "I," constitute the domain of the *personal*, which functions as the principle of all possible denotation. Finally, from

denotation to manifestation, a displacement of logical values occurs which is represented by the Cogito: no longer the true and the false, but veracity and illusion. In his celebrated analysis of the piece of wax, for example, Descartes is not at all looking for that which was dwelling in the wax—this problem is not even formulated in this text; rather, he shows how the I, manifest in the Cogito, grounds the judgment of denotation by which the wax is identified.

We ought to reserve the term “signification” for a third dimension of the proposition. Here it is a question of the relation of the word to *universal or general* concepts, and of syntactic connections to the implications of the concept. From the standpoint of signification, we always consider the elements of the proposition as “signifying” conceptual implications capable of referring to other propositions, which serve as premises of the first. Signification is defined by this order of conceptual implication where the proposition under consideration intervenes only as an element of a “demonstration,” in the most general sense of the word, that is, either as premise or as conclusion. Thus, “implies” and “therefore” are essentially linguistic signifiers. “*Implication*” is the sign which defines the relation between premises and conclusion; “therefore” is the sign of *assertion*, which defines the possibility of affirming the conclusion itself as the outcome of implications. When we speak of demonstration in the most general sense, we mean that the signification of the proposition is always found in the indirect process which corresponds to it, that is, in its relation to other propositions from which it is inferred, or conversely, whose conclusion it renders possible. Denotation, on the other hand, refers to a direct process. Demonstration must not be understood in a restricted, syllogistic or mathematical sense, but also in the physical sense of probabilities or in the moral sense of promises and commitments. In this last case, the assertion of the conclusion is represented by the moment the promise is effectively kept.² The logical value of signification or demonstration thus understood is no longer the truth, as is shown by the hypothetical mode of implications, but rather the *condition of truth*, the aggregate of conditions under which the proposition “would be” true. The conditioned or concluded proposition may be false, insofar as it actually denotes a nonexistent state of affairs or is not directly verified. Signification does not establish the truth without also establishing the possibility of error. For this reason, the condition of truth is not opposed to the false, but

to the absurd: that which is without signification or that which may be neither true nor false.

The question of whether signification is in turn primary in relation to manifestation and denotation requires a complex response. For if manifestation itself is primary in relation to denotation, if it is the foundation, it is so only from a very specific point of view. To borrow a classic distinction, we say that it is from the standpoint of speech (*parole*), be it a speech that is silent. In the order of speech, it is the I which begins, and begins absolutely. In this order, therefore, the I is primary, not only in relation to all possible denotations which are founded upon it, but also in relation to the significations which it envelops. But precisely from this standpoint, conceptual significations are neither valid nor deployed for themselves: they are only implied (though not expressed) by the I, presenting itself as having signification which is immediately understood and identical to its own manifestation. This is why Descartes could contrast the definition of man as a rational animal with his determination as Cogito: for the former demands an explicit development of the signified concepts (what is animal? what is rational?), whereas the latter is supposed to be understood as soon as it is said.³

This primacy of manifestation, not only in relation to denotation but also in relation to signification, must be understood within the domain of “speech” in which significations remain naturally implicit. It is only here that the I is primary in relation to concepts—in relation to the world and to God. But if another domain exists in which significations are valid and developed for themselves, significations would be primary in it and would provide the basis of manifestation. This domain is precisely that of *language* (*langue*). In it, a proposition is able to appear only as a premise or a conclusion, signifying concepts before manifesting a subject, or even before denoting a state of affairs. It is from this point of view that signified concepts, such as God or the world, are always primary in relation to the self as manifested person and to things as designated objects. More generally, Benveniste has shown that the relation between the word (or rather its own acoustic image) and the concept was alone necessary, and not arbitrary. Only the relation between the word and the concept enjoys a necessity which the other relations do not have. The latter remain arbitrary insofar as we consider them directly and escape the arbitrary only insofar as we connect them

to this primary relation. Thus, the possibility of causing particular images associated with the word to vary, of substituting one image for another in the form "this is not that, it's that," can be explained only by the constancy of the signified concept. Similarly, desires would not form an order of demands or even of duties, distinct from a simple urgency of needs, and beliefs would not form an order of inferences distinct from simple opinions, if the words in which they were manifested did not refer first to concepts and conceptual implications rendering these desires and beliefs significative.

The presupposed primacy of signification over denotation, however, still raises a delicate problem. When we say "therefore," when we consider a proposition as concluded, we make it the object of an assertion. We set aside the premises and affirm it for itself, independently. We relate it to the state of affairs which it denotes, independently of the implications which constitute its signification. To do so, however, two conditions have to be filled. It is first necessary that the premises be posited as effectively true, which already forces us to depart from the pure order of implication in order to relate the premises to a denoted state of affairs which we presuppose. But then, even if we suppose that the premises A and B are true, we can only conclude from this the proposition in question (let us call it Z)—we can only detach it from its premises and affirm it for itself independently of the implication—by admitting that Z is, in turn, true if A and B are true. This amounts to a proposition, C, which remains within the order of implication, and is unable to escape it, since it refers to a proposition, D, which states that "Z is true if A, B, and C are true . . .," and so on to infinity. This paradox, which lies at the heart of logic, and which had decisive importance for the entire theory of symbolic implication and signification, is Lewis Carroll's paradox in the celebrated text, "What the Tortoise Said to Achilles."⁴ In short, the conclusion can be detached from the premises, but only on the condition that one always adds other premises from which alone the conclusion is not detachable. This amounts to saying that signification is never homogeneous; or that the two signs "implies" and "therefore" are completely heterogeneous; or that implication never succeeds in grounding denotation except by giving itself a ready-made denotation, once in the premises and again in the conclusion.

From denotation to manifestation, then to signification, but also from

signification to manifestation and to denotation, we are carried along a circle, which is the circle of the proposition. Whether we ought to be content with these three dimensions of the proposition, or whether we should add a *fourth*—*which would be sense*—is an economic or strategic question. It is not that we must construct an a posteriori model corresponding to previous dimensions, but rather the model itself must have the aptitude to function a priori from within, were it forced to introduce a supplementary dimension which, because of its evanescence, could not have been recognized in experience from outside. It is thus a question *de jure*, and not simply a question of fact. Nevertheless, there is also a question of fact, and it is necessary to begin by asking whether sense is capable of being localized in one of these three dimensions—denotation, manifestation, or signification. We could answer first that such a localization seems impossible within denotation. Fulfilled denotation makes the proposition true; unfulfilled denotation makes the proposition false. Sense, evidently, can not consist of that which renders the proposition true or false, nor of the dimension in which these values are realized. Moreover, denotation would be able to support the weight of the proposition only to the extent that one would be able to show a correspondence between words and denoted things or states of affairs. Brice Parain has discussed the paradoxes that such a hypothesis causes to arise in Greek philosophy.⁵ How are we to avoid paradoxes, like a chariot passing through one's lips? More directly still, Carroll asks: how could names have a "respondent"? What does it mean for something to respond to its name? And if things do not respond to their name, what is it that prevents them from losing it? What is it then that would remain, save arbitrariness of denotations to which nothing responds, and the emptiness of indexicals or formal designators of the "that" type—both being stripped of sense? It is undeniable that all denotation presupposes sense, and that we position ourselves *straight away* within sense whenever we denote.

To identify sense with manifestation has a better chance of success, since the designators themselves have sense only in virtue of an I which manifests itself in the proposition. This I is indeed primary, since it allows speech to begin; as Alice says, "if you only spoke when you were spoken to, and the other person always waited for *you* to begin, you see nobody would ever say anything. . . ." It shall be concluded from this that sense resides in the beliefs (or desires) of the person who expresses

herself.⁶ "‘When I use a word,’ said Humpty Dumpty, ‘it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less. . . . The question is . . . which is to be master—that’s all.’" We have, however, seen that the order of beliefs and desires was founded on the order of the conceptual implications of signification, and that even the identity of the self which speaks, or says "I," was guaranteed only by the permanence of certain signifieds (the concepts of God, the world . . .). The I is primary and sufficient in the order of speech only insofar as it envelops significations which must be developed for themselves in the order of language (*langue*). If these significations collapse, or are not established in themselves, personal identity is lost, as Alice painfully experiences, in conditions where God, the world, and the self become the blurred characters of the dream of someone who is poorly determined. This is why the last recourse seems to be identifying sense with signification.

We are then sent back to the circle and led back to Carroll's paradox, in which signification can never exercise its role of last foundation, since it presupposes an irreducible denotation. But perhaps there is a very general reason why signification fails and why there is a circularity between ground and grounded. When we define signification as the condition of truth, we give it a characteristic which it shares with sense, and which is already a characteristic of sense. But how does signification assume this characteristic? How does it make use of it? In discussing the conditions of truth, we raise ourselves above the true and the false, since a false proposition also has a sense or signification. But at the same time, we define this superior condition solely as the possibility for the proposition to be true.⁷ This possibility is nothing other than the *form of possibility* of the proposition itself. There are many forms of possibility for propositions: logical, geometrical, algebraic, physical, syntactic . . . ; Aristotle defined the form of logical possibility by means of the relation between the terms of the proposition and the *loci* of the accident, *proprium*, genus, or definition; Kant even invented two new forms of possibility, the transcendental and the moral. But by whatever manner one defines form, it is an odd procedure since it involves rising from the conditioned to the condition, in order to think of the condition as the simple possibility of the conditioned. Here one rises to a foundation, but that which is founded remains what it was, independently of the operation which founded it and unaffected by it. Thus

denotation remains external to the order which conditions it, and the true and the false remain indifferent to the principle which determines the possibility of the one, by allowing it only to subsist in its former relation to the other. One is perpetually referred from the conditioned to the condition, and also from the condition to the conditioned. For the condition of truth to avoid this defect, it ought to have an element of its own, distinct from the form of the conditioned. It ought to have *something unconditioned* capable of assuring a real genesis of denotation and of the other dimensions of the proposition. Thus the condition of truth would be defined no longer as the form of conceptual possibility, but rather as ideational material or "stratum," that is to say, no longer as signification, but rather as sense.

Sense is the fourth dimension of the proposition. The Stoics discovered it along with the event: sense, *the expressed of the proposition*, is an incorporeal, complex, and irreducible entity, at the surface of things, a pure event which inheres or subsists in the proposition. The discovery was made a second time in the fourteenth century, in Ockham's school, by Gregory of Rimini and Nicholas d'Autrecourt. It was made a third time at the end of the nineteenth century, by the great philosopher and logician Meinong.⁸ Undoubtedly there are reasons for these moments: we have seen that the Stoic discovery presupposed a reversal of Platonism; similarly Ockham's logic reacted against the problem of Universals, and Meinong against Hegelian logic and its lineage. The question is as follows: is there something, *aliquid*, which merges neither with the proposition or with the terms of the proposition, nor with the object or with the state of affairs which the proposition denotes, neither with the "lived," or representation or the mental activity of the person who expresses herself in the proposition, nor with concepts or even signified essences? If there is, sense, or that which is expressed by the proposition, would be irreducible to individual states of affairs, particular images, personal beliefs, and universal or general concepts. The Stoics said it all: neither word nor body, neither sensible representation nor *rational representation*.⁹ Better yet, perhaps sense would be "neutral," altogether indifferent to both particular and general, singular and universal, personal and impersonal. It would be of an entirely different nature. But is it necessary to recognize such a supplementary instance? Or must we indeed manage to get along with what we already have: denotation, manifestation, and signification? In each period the contro-

versy is taken up anew (André de Neufchateau and Pierre d'Ailly against Rimini, Brentano and Russell against Meinong). In truth, the attempt to make this fourth dimension evident is a little like Carroll's Snark hunt. Perhaps the dimension is the hunt itself, and sense is the Snark. It is difficult to respond to those who wish to be satisfied with words, things, images, and ideas. For we may not even say that sense exists either in things or in the mind; it has neither physical nor mental existence. Shall we at least say that it is useful, and that it is necessary to admit it for its utility? Not even this, since it is endowed with an inefficacious, impassive, and sterile splendor. This is why we said that *in fact* we can only infer it indirectly, on the basis of the circle where the ordinary dimensions of the proposition lead us. It is only by breaking open the circle, as in the case of the Möbius strip, by unfolding and untwisting it, that the dimension of sense appears for itself, in its irreducibility, and also in its genetic power as it animates an a priori internal model of the proposition.¹⁰ The logic of sense is inspired in its entirety by empiricism. Only empiricism knows how to transcend the experiential dimensions of the visible without falling into Ideas, and how to track down, invoke, and perhaps produce a phantom at the limit of a lengthened or unfolded experience.

Husserl calls "*expression*" this ultimate dimension, and he distinguishes it from denotation, manifestation, and demonstration.¹¹ Sense is that which is expressed. Husserl, no less than Meinong, rediscovered the living sources of the Stoic inspiration. For example, when Husserl reflects on the "perceptual noema," or the "sense of perception," he at once distinguishes it from the physical object, from the psychological or "lived," from mental representations and from logical concepts. He presents it as an impassive and incorporeal entity, without physical or mental existence, neither acting nor being acted upon—a pure result or pure "appearance." The real tree (the *denotatum*) can burn, be the subject and object of actions, and enter into mixtures. This is not the case, however, for the noema "tree." There are many noemata or senses for the same *denotatum*: evening star and morning star are two noemata, that is, two ways in which the same *denotatum* may be presented in expressions. When therefore Husserl says that the noema is the perceived such as it appears in a presentation, "the perceived as such" or the appearance, we ought not understand that the noema involves a sensible given or quality; it rather involves an ideational

objective unity as the intentional correlate of the act of perception. The noema is not given in a perception (nor in a recollection or an image). It has an entirely different status which consists in *not* existing outside the proposition which expresses it—whether the proposition is perceptual, or whether it is imaginative, recollective, or representative. We distinguish between green as a sensible color or quality and "to green" as a noematic color or attribute. "*The tree greens*"—is this not finally the sense of the color of the tree; and is not "*the tree greens*" its global meaning? Is the noema anything more than a pure event—the tree occurrence (although Husserl does not speak of it in this manner for terminological reasons)? And is that which he calls "appearance" anything more than a surface effect? Between the noemata of the same object, or even of different objects, complex ties are developed, analogous to those which the Stoic dialectic established between events. Could phenomenology be this rigorous science of surface effects?

Let us consider the complex status of sense or of that which is expressed. On one hand, it does not exist outside the proposition which expresses it; what is expressed does not exist outside its expression. This is why we cannot say that sense exists, but rather that it inheres or subsists. On the other hand, it does not merge at all with the proposition, for it has an objective (*objectité*) which is quite distinct. What is expressed has no resemblance whatsoever to the expression. Sense is indeed attributed, but it is not at all the attribute of the proposition—it is rather the attribute of the thing or state of affairs. The attribute of the proposition is the predicate—a qualitative predicate like green, for example. It is attributed to the subject of the proposition. But the attribute of the thing is the verb: to green, for example, or rather the event expressed by this verb. It is attributed to the thing denoted by the subject, or to the state of affairs denoted by the entire proposition. Conversely, this logical attribute does not merge at all with the physical state of affairs, nor with a quality or relation of this state. The attribute is not a being and does not qualify a being; it is an extra-being. "Green" designates a quality, a mixture of things, a mixture of tree and air where chlorophyll coexists with all the parts of the leaf. "To green," on the contrary, is not a quality in the thing, but an attribute which is said of the thing. This attribute does not exist outside of the proposition which expresses it in denoting the thing. Here we return to our point of departure: sense does not exist outside of the proposition . . . , etc.

But this is not a circle. It is rather the coexistence of two sides without thickness, such that we pass from one to the other by following their length. *Sense is both the expressible or the expressed of the proposition, and the attribute of the state of affairs.* It turns one side toward things and one side toward propositions. But it does not merge with the proposition which expresses it any more than with the state of affairs or the quality which the proposition denotes. It is exactly the boundary between propositions and things. It is this *aliquid* at once extra-Being and inherence, that is, this minimum of being which befits inferences.¹² It is in this sense that it is an "event": *on the condition that the event is not confused with its spatio-temporal realization in a state of affairs.* We will not ask therefore what is the sense of the event: the event is sense itself. The event belongs essentially to language; it has an essential relationship to language. But language is what is said of things. Jean Gattegno has indeed noted the difference between Carroll's stories and classical fairy tales: in Carroll's work, everything that takes place occurs in and by means of language; "it is not a story which he tells us, it is a discourse which he addresses to us, a discourse in several pieces. . . ."¹³ It is indeed into this flat world of the sense-event, or of the expressible-attribute, that Carroll situates his entire work. Hence the connection between the fantastic work signed "Carroll" and the mathematico-logical work signed "Dodgson." It seems difficult to say, as has been done, that the fantastic work presents simply the traps and difficulties into which we fall when we do not observe the rules and laws formulated by the logical work. Not only because many of the traps subsist in the logical work itself, but also because the distribution seems to be of an entirely different sort. It is surprising to find that Carroll's entire logical work is directly about *signification*, implications, and conclusions, and only indirectly about sense—precisely, through the paradoxes which signification does not resolve, or indeed which it creates. On the contrary, the fantastic work is immediately concerned with *sense* and attaches the power of paradox directly to it. This corresponds well to the two states of sense, *de facto* and *de jure*, *a posteriori* and *a priori*, one by which the circle of the proposition is indirectly inferred, the other by which it is made to appear for itself, by unfolding the circle along the length of the border between propositions and things.

Fourth Series of Dualities

The first important duality was that of causes and effects, of corporeal things and incorporeal events. But insofar as events-effects do not exist outside the propositions which express them, this duality is prolonged in the duality of things and propositions, of bodies and language. This is the source of the alternative which runs through all the works of Carroll: to eat or to speak. In *Sylvie and Bruno*, the alternative is between "bits of things" and "bits of Shakespeare." At Alice's coronation dinner, you either eat what is presented to you, or you are presented to what you eat. To eat and to be eaten—this is the operational model of bodies, the type of their mixture in depth, their action and passion, and the way in which they coexist within one another. To speak, though, is the movement of the surface, and of ideational attributes or incorporeal events. What is more serious: to speak of food or to eat words? In her alimentary obsessions, Alice is overwhelmed by nightmares of absorbing and being absorbed. She finds that the poems she hears recited are about edible fish. If we then speak of food, how can we avoid speaking in front of the one who is to be served as food? Consider, for example, Alice's blunders in front of the Mouse. How can we avoid eating the pudding to which we have been *presented*? Further still, spoken words may go awry, as if they were attracted by the depth of bodies; they may

be accompanied by verbal hallucinations, as in the case of maladies where language disorders are accompanied by unrestricted oral behavior (everything brought to the mouth, eating any object at all, gritting one's teeth). "I'm sure those are not the right words," says Alice, summarizing the fate of the person who speaks of food. To eat words, however, is exactly the opposite: in this case, we raise the operation of bodies up to the surface of language. We bring bodies to the surface, as we deprive them of their former depth, even if we place the entire language through this challenge in a situation of risk. This time the disorders are of the surface; they are lateral and spread out from right to left. *Stuttering* has replaced the *gaffe*; the phantasms of the surface have replaced the hallucination of depth; dreams of accelerated gliding replace the painful nightmare of burial and absorption. The ideal little girl, incorporeal and anorexic, and the ideal little boy, stuttering and left-handed, must disengage themselves from their real, voracious, gluttonous, or blundering images.

But this second duality—body/language, to eat/to speak—is not sufficient. We have seen that although sense does not exist outside of the proposition which expresses it, it is nevertheless the attribute of states of affairs and not the attribute of the proposition. The event subsists in language, but it happens to things. Things and propositions are less in a situation of radical duality and more on the two sides of a frontier represented by sense. This frontier does not mingle or reunite them (for there is no more monism here than dualism); it is rather something along the line of an articulation of their difference: body/language. Comparing the event to a mist rising over the prairie, we could say that this mist rises precisely at the frontier, at the juncture of things and propositions. As a result, the duality is reflected from both sides and in each of the two terms. On the side of the thing, there are physical qualities and real relations which constitute the state of affairs; there are also ideational logical attributes which indicate incorporeal events. And on the side of the proposition, there are names and adjectives which *denote* the state of affairs; and also there are verbs which *express* events or logical attributes. On one hand, there are singular proper names, substantives, and general adjectives which indicate limits, pauses, rests, and presences; on the other, there are verbs carrying off with them becoming and its train of reversible events and infinitely dividing their present into past and future. Humpty Dumpty

forcefully distinguished between two sorts of words: "They've a temper, some of them—particularly verbs: they're the proudest—adjectives you can do anything with, but not verbs—however, *I* can manage the whole lot of them! Impenetrability! That's what *I* say." And when Humpty Dumpty explains the use of the odd word "impenetrability," he provides a much too modest explanation ("I meant . . . that we've had enough of that subject"). In fact, impenetrability does mean something else. Humpty Dumpty opposes the impassibility of events to the actions and passions of bodies, the non-consumable nature of sense to the edible nature of things, the impenetrability of incorporeal entities without thickness to the mixtures and reciprocal penetrations of substances, and the resistance of the surface to the softness of depths—in short, the "pride" of verbs to the complacency of substantives and adjectives. Impenetrability also means the frontier between the two—and that the person situated on the frontier, precisely as Humpty Dumpty is seated on his narrow wall, has both at his disposal, being the impenetrable master of the articulation of their difference ("... however, *I* can manage the whole lot of them").

But this is not yet sufficient. Duality's last word is not to be found in this return to the hypothesis of *Cratylus*. The duality in the proposition is not between two sorts of names, names of stasis and names of becoming, names of substances or qualities and names of events; rather, it is between two dimensions of the proposition, that is, between denotation and expression, or between the denotation of things and the expression of sense. It is like the two sides of a mirror, only what is on one side has no resemblance to what is on the other ("... all the rest was as different as possible"). To pass to the other side of the mirror is to pass from the relation of denotation to the relation of expression—without pausing at the intermediaries, namely, at manifestation and signification. It is to reach a region where language no longer has any relation to that which it denotes, but only to that which it expresses, that is, to sense. This is the final displacement of the duality: it has now moved inside the proposition.

The Mouse recounts that when the lords proposed to offer the crown to William the Conqueror,

"the archbishop of Canterbury found it advisable—,"—"Found *what*?" asked the Duck.—"Found *it*," the Mouse replied rather crossly: "of course you

know what 'it' means."—"I know what 'it' means well enough, when *I* find a thing," said the Duck: "it's generally a frog, or a worm. The question is, what did the archbishop find?"

It is clear that the Duck employs and understands "it" as a denoting term for all things, state of affairs and possible qualities (an indicator). It specifies even that the denoted thing is essentially something which is (or may be) eaten. Everything denoted or capable of denotation is, in principle, consumable and penetrable; Alice remarks elsewhere that she is only able to "imagine" food. But the Mouse made use of "it" in an entirely different manner: as the sense of an earlier proposition, as the event expressed by the proposition (to go and offer the crown to William). The equivocation of "it" is therefore distributed in accordance with the duality of denotation and expression. The two dimensions of the proposition are organized in two series which converge asymptotically, in a term as ambiguous as "it," since they meet one another only at the frontier which they continuously stretch. One series resumes "eating" in its own way, while the other extracts the essence of "speaking." For this reason, in many of Carroll's poems, one witnesses the autonomous development of two simultaneous dimensions, one referring to denoted objects which are always consumable or recipients of consumption, the other referring to always expressible meanings or at least to objects which are the bearers of language and sense. These two dimensions converge only in an esoteric word, in a non-identifiable *aliquid*. Take, for example, the refrain of the Snark: "They sought it with thimbles, they sought it with care; / They pursued it with forks and hope"—where the "thimble" and "fork" refer to designated instruments, but "hope" and "care" to considerations of sense and events (sense, in Carroll's works, is often presented as that which one must "take care of," the object of a fundamental "care"). The strange word "Snark" is the frontier which is stretched as it is drawn by both series. Even more typical is the wonderful Gardener's song in *Sylvie and Bruno*. Every stanza puts into play two terms of very different kinds, which offer two distinct readings: "He thought he saw . . . He looked again and saw it was . . ." Thus, the ensemble of stanzas develops two heterogeneous series. One is composed of animals, of beings or objects which either consume or are consumed; they are described by physical qualities, either sensible or sonorous; the other is

composed of objects or of eminently symbolic characters, defined by logical attributes, or sometimes by parental names, and bearers of events, news, messages, or sense. In the conclusion of each verse, the Gardener draws a melancholic path, bordered on both sides by both series; for this song, we learn, is its own story.

He thought he saw an Elephant,
That practiced on a fife:
He looked again, and found it was
A letter from his wife.
"At length I realize," he said,
"The bitterness of life."

He thought he saw an Albatross
That fluttered round the lamp:
He looked again, and found it was
A Penny-Postage-Stamp.
"You'd best be getting home," he said:
"The nights are very damp!"

He thought he saw an Argument
That proved he was the Pope:
He looked again, and found it was
A Bar of Mottled Soap.
"A fact so dread," he faintly said,
"Extinguishes all hope!"¹