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| Submitted as a thesis for the            |      |
| degree of Master of Arts, in Philosophy, |      |
| on 11th October, 1971                    |      |
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## SYNOPSIS

### C O N T E N T S

The structure of the enquiry will be as follows. The first chapter will consist of some introductory comments which will be followed with a sketch of the theories of metaphor suggested by Philip Wegener and I.A. Richards. Wegener argues that metaphor is the source of all generality, and Richards that it is the omnipresent principle of language. I shall reject both these sweeping claims.

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## SYNOPSIS

The structure of the enquiry will be as follows. The first chapter will consist of some introductory comments which will be followed with a sketch of the theories of metaphor suggested by Philip Wegener and I.A. Richards. Wegener argues that metaphor is the source of all generality, and Richards that it is the omnipresent principle of language. I shall reject both these sweeping claims.

In chapter II I will consider the relation between metaphor and simile. It has been argued that metaphor gains its meaning from an implied literal comparison which the equivalent simile states. This is the comparison view of metaphor, and I shall argue that it is untenable.

Chapter III will be concerned with the highly influential interaction view of metaphor proposed by Black. Black argues that both components of a metaphorical statement undergo a change in meaning, and that it is not possible to produce an equivalent paraphrase. Black's account provides some important insights, but I will suggest that there are some difficulties, notably concerning the change in meaning of a metaphor and the question of paraphrase.

Acceptance of the comparison view would provide a simple affirmative answer to the question whether a metaphorical statement can be adequately re-expressed in other terms. But rejection of the comparison view does not entail rejection of the possibility of paraphrase. In chapter IV I shall argue that the possibility of producing a paraphrase is in fact a condition of significance for metaphor. But in an important sense the paraphrase, while capturing the content of the

metaphor, does not provide the insight that the metaphor did. This will be followed by chapter V in which I shall consider some problems for the paraphrase programme, in particular those which emerge from synaesthetic or intersensory metaphor. I will argue that even this problematic case is amenable to paraphrase.

The enquiry will conclude with chapter VI in which I will consider the relation between metaphors and category mistakes. Accepting category mistakes as meaningless would entail rejecting a large number of metaphors as unintelligible, and I will argue that this consequence, which emerges from the analyses of Ryle and Sommers, must be rejected for more reasons than just the significance of metaphor. Category mistakes, I will argue, are not meaningless, but a priori false. I will argue further that metaphors are also a priori false statements, but that a priori falsehood is no barrier to truth.

metaphor, Aristotle tells us, is "...giving a thing a name which belongs to something else"<sup>1</sup>. As a definition this is imperfect in a number of respects, but it is possibly as good as any that might be offered as a preliminary characterization. Almost any descriptive term in a language whose history can be traced can be shown to have come about metaphorically.

Originally, of course, we are told, from the description of a solid concrete object, or some actual physical object, activity, the name later was applied to other objects, activities, and so on. Language develops and is refined as a result of our need to introduce new

C H A P T E R   O N E

Some Theories of Metaphor

A distinction is made between "live" or "fresh" and "frozen" or "dead" metaphor. Fresh metaphor can be roughly characterized as an obvious case of metaphor, that is, a case where a familiar literal application of the expression is clear, and where some relation between the literal and metaphorical use is recognized. Frozen metaphor, on the other hand, is generally and correctly not recognized as metaphor at all; consistent and consistent figurative use of the expression has resulted in the acceptance of the term as ordinary part of the literal vocabulary. There is no sharp dividing line between fresh and frozen metaphor, and our language abounds with cases of partially frozen metaphors.

<sup>1</sup> Aristotle, Poetics, Ch. 21, 1457<sup>b</sup>  
<sup>2</sup> Barfield, Poetic Diction, p. 29

Metaphor, Aristotle tells us, is "...giving a thing a name which belongs to something else"<sup>1</sup>. As a definition this is imperfect in a number of respects, but it is probably as good as any that might be offered as a preliminary characterization. Almost any descriptive term in a language whose history can be traced can be shown to have once been metaphorical; originating usually, we are told, from the description of a solid sensible object, or some animal (probably human) activity<sup>2</sup>. The common Latin verb for "think" (puto) derives etymologically from vine-pruning. Language develops and is refined as a result of our need to introduce new distinctions and eliminate old ones, and it will emerge that one of the most pervasive means of achieving this end is through the use of metaphor.

A distinction must therefore be drawn between "live" or "fresh" and "frozen" or "dead" metaphor. Fresh metaphor can be roughly characterized as an obvious case of metaphor, that is, a case where a familiar literal application of the expression is known, and where some relation between the literal and metaphorical use is recognized. Frozen metaphor, on the other hand, is generally and correctly not recognized as metaphor at all: constant and consistent figurative use of the expression has resulted in the acceptance of the term as ordinary part of the literal vocabulary. There is no sharp dividing line between fresh and frozen metaphor, and our language abounds with cases of partially frozen metaphors which

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1 Aristotle, Poetics, Ch.21, 1457<sup>b</sup>7

2 Barfield, Poetic Diction, p.64

are revived easily enough. I will use the term "transparent" to designate those cases of metaphor which, if attended to, are unmistakably metaphorical, but whose intended meaning within context is nevertheless immediately clear. The need for a distinction between transparent and non-transparent metaphor will become clear later in the enquiry, and it will emerge that this distinction is actually of greater importance than that between fresh and frozen metaphor. A number of theories have run into considerable difficulties because they assume that we can explicate metaphor only through its wholesale elimination in favour of literal expressions. I shall argue that the programme of wholesale elimination is misconceived; the need for explication emerges from the requirements of semantic clarity rather than from the intrinsic nature of the literal and the metaphorical. The tendency to treat frozen metaphor as genuine metaphor has also created difficulties for some theories. Though frozen metaphor may be of considerable interest to the etymologist, we shall see that it is not metaphor at all.

Metaphor has frequently been considered to be an isolated phenomenon; a fortunate accident of language whereby we are able to express ourselves more colourfully, but essentially a figure of speech which it is always in principle possible - some have argued desirable - to eliminate in favour of equivalent, if less exciting, literal paraphrases. At the other extreme we find writers who discover in metaphor a transcendent source of truth which cannot be approached by our mundane



literal language<sup>3</sup>, and the source of all generality<sup>4</sup>. I do not think that either of these claims can be substantiated. But I shall argue that far from being an ornament to language, metaphor is of considerable importance if we are to retain our capacity to formulate and change our conceptions of the world. It is of course compatible with this view that metaphor is used only as a cognitive aid and can always be avoided in favour of perhaps more cumbersome literal modes of expression. The answers to the questions raised here will have to await a more detailed examination of the elimination programme. But whatever the answer might be to the elimination question the importance of the enquiry is testified to by the fact that it seldom happens that one gets through two consecutive sentences of fluid discourse without recourse to metaphor.

There is a frequently cited dichotomy which divides language into what may be called scientific or descriptive language on the one hand, and expressive or figurative language on the other. These two aspects, or more accurately, uses, of language, are often regarded as distinct; and ordinary discourse is commonly supposed to be a mixture of the two. At one extreme, it is said, we find the precise, unambiguous statements of science, while at the other lies the vague, amorphous language of myth and poetry. Metaphor is often supposed to be a part of expressive language, and it has been argued, particularly by philosophers with positivist leanings, that the use of metaphorical expressions has no cognitive value. Ayer<sup>5</sup>, for example, has argued that all

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3 Martin Foss, Symbol and Metaphor, is a prominent exponent of this view.

4 Philip Wegener's arguments to this conclusion will be considered below.

5 A.J. Ayer, Language, Truth and Logic

knowledge concerns either analytic truths or truths which can be established by empirical observation. Expressive language therefore adds nothing to a statement of fact, but simply reveals, at best, certain attitudes of the speaker. Insofar as there is some advantage to be gained from the expression of feelings, figurative language may be efficacious, but holds no cognitive value. The argument is not designed to persuade us that figurative, and a fortiori metaphorical, expressions are to be eschewed, but simply that they are devoid of empirical content. Quine<sup>6</sup> has argued not that ordinary language stands in need of reform, but that every conceptually significant feature of language can be expressed in the canonical notation of classical quantification theory. It follows, of course, that the features of language which are not captured, which include figurative expressions, are not conceptually significant. The position adopted by Ayer and Quine appears to be one of tolerance to figurative language as a quirk, but to concede no cognitive importance to it.

Other philosophers have been less benign, and have condemned figurative tropes as a rich source of error and confusion to be avoided at all costs. Hobbes, for example, lists the use of "metaphors, tropes, and other rhetorical figures"<sup>7</sup> as one of the seven causes of absurd assertions, and goes on to entreat his readers to follow the paradigm of Euclidean precision. Many other philosophers while not engaging in a general vendetta, have isolated metaphors as the source of particular philosophical confusions. For example,

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6 W.V.O. Quine, Word and Object

7 Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan, p.85

J.L. Austin, in discussing the argument from illusion, writes, "now first, though the phrase 'deceived by our senses' is a common metaphor, it is a metaphor"<sup>8</sup>. The implication appears to be that metaphor is at least misleading, and certainly less than the literal truth, if not straightforwardly false. It is also interesting that no further specification of the offence is needed: the argument is at once held under suspicion simply by attaching the epithet "metaphor". A little later on he writes:

We have here, in fact, a typical case of a word, which already has a very special use, being gradually stretched, without caution or definition or any limit, until it becomes, first perhaps obscurely metaphorical, but ultimately meaningless.<sup>9</sup>

This statement suggests a not idiosyncratic view that the use of metaphor lies on the path of obscurity which leads ultimately to nonsense.

It would be foolish to suggest that people have not been misled by metaphors, as indeed they have been misled by literal expressions. But perhaps there are some features of metaphors which make them especially dangerous; a tendency, for example, to carry some aspect of the literal meaning of the expression over to the metaphorical application where it is no longer appropriate. An unvigilant use of metaphor has certainly been the source of confusion, but it is also true, and frequently not recognized, that metaphor is an important device in our conceptual armoury. It will be one of the aims of this enquiry to attempt to substantiate this claim.

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8 J.L. Austin, Sense and Sensibilia, p.11

9 J.L. Austin, op. cit., p.15

That metaphor is problematic is attested to by such paradoxical characterizations of it as "significant self-contradiction"<sup>10</sup> and "calculated category-mistake"<sup>11</sup>. It is often claimed that a precondition of significant discourse is that it should be an orderly, rule-governed affair. Without such control, it is said, words become too plastic to support stable meanings, and the very possibility of analysis dissolves with language as a whole. How is it that metaphors can be meaningful if they in fact depend, as they appear to, on the systematic violation of the rules on which meaning is said to depend? That is, how are we able to understand, let alone gain insight, from what is prima facie a deliberate misuse of an expression? One suggested answer is that this misuse is only apparent, and that there are "higher" rules which govern our metaphorical use of expressions. This claim will be considered further in a later chapter.

Those philosophers who have ventured an account of metaphor have not yet developed anything like a universally accepted terminology. This produces some problems in comparing the various theories that have been proposed. However, the fundamental problem is the relation between the metaphorical and the literal, and the major question to emerge is: can what is said metaphorically be said literally? The denial of the possibility of paraphrase does not commit one to a special world of transcendent meanings, nor does the acceptance of the

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10 Monroe Beardsley, Aesthetics, p.141

11 Nelson Goodman, Languages of Art, p.73

possibility of equivalent literal paraphrase necessarily rule out metaphor as cognitively unimportant. I shall argue that metaphor is cognitively significant and, with some qualifications, that a paraphrase can always be provided.

The first discussion of metaphor which I shall consider is the one provided by Philip Wegener<sup>12</sup>. I shall argue that metaphor is a process whereby we generalize sense, but Wegener's claim is the stronger one that metaphor is the source of all generality. His account may be sketched as follows.

Language is first acquired through the use of single words. This does not mean that words function like proper names in the most primitive instances; that is a sophisticated notion which is acquired much later in development. Rather the word fixes attention on a point of interest within some context, and it is only within this context that the word can be understood. At this stage, of course, the context is non-verbal. A child, for example, may say the word "outside", meaning he or she wishes to go outside, or to draw the attention of the attentive adult to some object or phenomenon which is outside, and which is apparent within the total context of assertion. It is the context which provides the setting in which the word is used, and thereby enables the thought behind the word to be understood. Thus, though language begins with individual words, the word can be said to express a thought or sentence.

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12 Philip Wegener, Untersuchungen über die Grundfragen des Sprachlebens. The account is derived from Susanne Langer, Philosophy in a New Key, pp.136-141

Wegener claims that the development of fully articulate language from such humble beginnings is possible in accordance with two general principles of linguistic development: emendation, which begets syntactical forms of speech, and metaphor, the source of generality. Wegener argues that in primitive communication of the one-word variety, the expressions that we might suppose are used by infants or people in the early stages of acquisition of a foreign language (without the benefit of phrase-books), can be used only to express fairly primitive ideas. To reach higher levels of abstraction more is required. At this primitive level considerable like-mindedness is required; this is assisted by the extra-linguistic contextual factors, and depends on the assumption that the hearer shares to some extent the speaker's attitudes and interests. But differences inevitably arise, and the speaker finds himself misunderstood. The expression needs further refinement and this is achieved by emendation of the original one-word sentence. This emendation may take the form of gestures, added inflections, or additional vocables, and these latter forms of qualification commence a drive towards the evolution of grammatical structure. Thus Wegener claims that grammatical structure derives from the undifferentiated context of the one-word sentence, and the fixed denotation of separate words emerges gradually from the total context of assertion. This is perhaps a more plausible account than that which attempts to build the complexities of discursive speech out of supposedly primitive words with distinctly substantive or relational connotations.

Though language structure may result from the need for emendation, the contexts in which this structure develops are unique: the expression is always applied in a particular concrete situation. To achieve generality an expression must get beyond the particularity of the context in which it is introduced. It is a metaphorical extension of the expression which makes this possible.

Wegener claims that discourse contains two elements, which may be called the context (verbal or practical), and the novelty. The novelty is what the speaker is attempting to point out or express, and the word used to express the novelty is determined or modified by the context. Since there are always contextual differences between the initial and subsequent uses of an expression, the later uses are, at least initially, metaphorical. If the expression is used frequently, it becomes apparent that some of the aspects of the context are to be ignored, and the metaphor becomes accepted as having a literal meaning through the successful generalization of its sense. Thus generality is achieved by metaphorical extension of the initial use of a word, which is subsequently taken to include what is common to the old and the new senses. By abstracting the common features from different contexts the metaphor acquires generality and freezes, thus becoming a general term of our literal vocabulary. This primitive use of metaphor to achieve generality is essentially the same as the more sophisticated employment to draw attention to some feature shared by contexts which otherwise may be very different indeed.

The context makes clear that the word cannot be taken in its usual sense; a thought cannot be literally weighty, a wine reticent, or a silence pregnant; but some aspect of the literal meaning of the metaphorical expression is being brought to bear on the principal subject of the assertion. If the metaphor is used frequently the relevant aspect which is common to the different contexts may start to dominate, and eventually supplant the old literal meaning. For example, the word "sensitive" may have been originally applicable only to people, and the extension to instruments, stock markets and so forth, at one stage a metaphor. However this usage has generated a general sense, something like: "extremely liable to be affected by external influences", and this generalized sense can be applied equally to people, objects and institutions.

As well as being a means for the extension of meaning, metaphor may result in the introduction of ambiguity or multiple ambiguity. When an expression has been used metaphorically in the same sense on a number of occasions, a genuinely alternative, though related, sense may emerge. Thus the metaphors of a running stream, a fence running (around a boundary), a road running over the mountains, the mountain range running to the North, all produce a different, though related sense of running to the original literal meaning. Running acquires the sense of following a path. Constant and consistent figurative use has introduced a new sense of the word. This additional sense by no means exhausts the ambiguity of the word "run": trains and taps, sheep and prime ministers,



all may run in a sense different to the one sketched above. And they may run in more than one sense; we rely on the context to indicate in which sense the expression is to be taken. It may not of course be apparent which sense of the expression is the original literal one, but this does not seem to me to be important. The important point is that the emergence of new senses, either by extension of meaning or through the introduction of ambiguity, can be the result of the use of metaphor.

The ambiguity described here is of course different from that of words like "cape" or "bank" in which the alternative meanings bear no relation to one another. Metaphor is not relevant to such cases, or if it was once it has long ceased to be so.

Every new experience or idea, Wegener argues, evokes first of all some metaphorical expression. As the idea becomes familiar the use of this expression freezes into a literal sense. This use of metaphor, which is largely unconscious, is the means whereby language with its necessarily limited vocabulary manages to embrace the indefinitely large varieties of experience. Metaphor is the life of language, the means whereby we are forever laying a deposit of abstracted concepts. The drive towards precision of expression and the increasing refinements in the distinctions we draw, produce the sharp definitions which enable speech to become an increasingly precise descriptive tool:

until human beings can actually believe it was invented as a utility, and was later embellished with metaphors for the sake of a cultural product called poetry.<sup>13</sup>

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13 Langer, op. cit., p.142

A principal difficulty for Wegener's account is the role he assigns metaphor in the early stages of the acquisition of concepts. I shall argue later that metaphor can only occur against some background of literal meaning, and I think that this already presupposes the acquisition of general terms. A metaphor is itself a general term (if we use 'names' metaphorically, such as "a Napoleon" or "a Munich" they have ceased to be names). Metaphor cannot therefore be used to explain generality, and Wegener's suggestion that generality can be achieved by a metaphorical extension of particularity must be rejected. The account can be given some plausibility with such examples as the ones concerning the words "runs" and "sensitive", but they only make sense against a previously acquired and fairly sophisticated assortment of linguistic skills. Given such a background, we shall see metaphor is indeed a means of generalizing sense. But the strong claim that it is the source of all generality seems to me to be one which it would be extremely difficult to substantiate. The acquisition of language in any case raises formidable psychological questions which I prefer to avoid, and henceforth I shall be concerned exclusively with the operation of metaphor within a received conceptual system. Finally, while Wegener's account testifies to the importance of metaphor, it provides us with few clues as to what the underlying mechanisms through which metaphor conveys its sense might be.

I.A. Richards presents an account of metaphor which like Wegener's theory makes a strong claim for metaphor's ubiquity and importance<sup>14</sup>. Metaphor, Richards claims, is the omnipresent

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14 Richards, The Philosophy of Rhetoric, Chs.V and VI

principle of our freedom of expression; the means whereby we are able to formulate and express our changing conceptions of the world. Metaphor is no grace or ornament of added power to language, but rather its constitutive form, and "language... is utterly unable to aid us except through the command of metaphor which it gives"<sup>15</sup>. Richards draws attention to Bentham's conclusion that since the descriptions of any intellectual operation are derived from metaphors, the mind and all its doings are fictions, and he mentions approvingly the stronger conclusion of Bradley and Vaihinger that as a result of the irreducibly metaphorical nature of our thinking, "matter and all its adventures, and all the derivative objects of contemplation, are fictions too, of varied rank because of varied service"<sup>16</sup>. The importance of the subject for philosophy is considerable:

In philosophy, above all, we can take no step safely without an unrelaxing awareness of the metaphors we, and our audience, may be employing; and though we may pretend to eschew them,<sup>17</sup> we can attempt to do so only by detecting them.

Richards supports Bradley's contention that our pretence to do without metaphor is never more than a bluff waiting to be called.

I think Richards' advocacy for metaphor, like Wegener's, borders on the excessive. A great deal of the excess emerges from his failure to carefully distinguish fresh and frozen metaphor: if we do not rule out frozen metaphor as a genuine instance then we do indeed become troubled by metaphor's

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15 Ibid., p.90

16 Ibid., p.91

17 Ibid., p.92

ubiquity, and the distinction on which the very notion of metaphor depends dissolves. This is a matter to which I shall return.

Richards' account of the operation of metaphor I shall call the interanimation account; although the term "interaction" appears on more than one occasion, this epithet has been appropriated for his own theory by Black. Metaphor, according to Richards, is the having of "two thoughts of different things active together and supported by a single word, or phrase, whose meaning is the result of their interaction"<sup>18</sup>. The modes of interaction may be of "immense variety"; it may be that of similarity, but this is only one of many modes. As it stands this characterization is clearly unsatisfactory, since it could be used to describe virtually any empirical statement. In "the crocodile is on the piano" we have two thoughts of different things (the crocodile and the piano) held together by a single phrase, and the meaning is the result of their interaction. Richards might reply that this is not a genuine case of interaction because the statement in fact expresses a single composite thought. He suggests later that the test for metaphor is whether we are able to distinguish two co-operating meanings or only a single one<sup>19</sup>. Unfortunately there is a dearth of illuminating examples, and it is difficult to determine exactly how this claim is to be read. But the test also looks inadequate; metaphor is drawn to our attention through inappropriateness and conflict rather than, as Richards suggests, by co-operation. Certainly they must result in

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18 Ibid., p.93

19 Ibid., p.119

harmony, indeed a harmony which overcomes the conflict, but there is no explicit statement of this essential requirement in Richards' theory. Richards' terminology of "tenor" and "vehicle" has been largely superseded, and since most of what is valuable in the account has been taken over by Black, I shall not examine the account in any detail.

But the discussion of Richards' account does provide me with a pretext for making some comments on the relation between metaphor and theories of meaning. Although I do not believe that an analysis of metaphor will provide some particular theory of meaning, I think that an acceptance of the significance of metaphor will at least perform the negative role of ruling out some theories of meaning as inadequate. In particular, I think we are forced to reject any theory of meaning which rules out metaphor as meaningless. Richards spends some time arguing against the theory of meaning which he calls the Doctrine of Usage, which holds that the meaning of words is rigidly predetermined by fixed semantic rules. The title of this doctrine is not happily chosen since it tends to evoke some more or less antithetical theories associated with the later Wittgenstein. But it may be useful to have a label for this doctrine, and I shall refer to it as the Principle of Univocity. I shall come back to this in chapter VI in connection with the theories of Fred Sommers, who has proposed the most thorough-going development of this principle of which I am aware.

Instead of a theory assigning words with rigidly fixed meanings, Richards proposes a Context Theory of Meaning, which claims, roughly, that the meaning of a word is the missing

part of some context, and it is the rest of the context which determines its meaning<sup>20</sup>. In rejecting a theory of fixed sense-relations Richards seems to go too far in the other direction, and makes language so fluid that any systematic account is quite impossible. It seems to me that any satisfactory theory of meaning will have to admit some stabilities, though I think Richards is correct in suggesting that this need not be of the order suggested by the Principle of Univocity.

Both Wegener and Richards burden metaphor with too heavy a load. Wegener's claim that metaphor is the source of all generality I think must be rejected, and I also think that in Richards' account metaphor assumes so dominant an influence that it becomes difficult to explain the existence of literal and univocal meaning. But they are a counter-balance to the more widespread tendency to treat metaphor as a deviant and expendable phenomenon. It is against this tendency that the remainder of the enquiry will be directed. I shall therefore end this chapter with a cautionary note against treating metaphor as the paramount principle of meaning and language. I will go on to consider how the role of metaphor in language should in fact be seen, beginning in the next chapter with an examination of the relationship between metaphor and simile.

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20 Ibid., p.35 ff.

In the last chapter I suggested that the fundamental question that arises in connection with metaphor is the nature of the relation between the metaphorical and the literal. The acceptance of such a view has called for a re-examination of the history of the 'literalist theory' which appears to have been the dominant view of the subject of this subject. A defender of this view is the philosopher, who has been mentioned between two terms which are appropriate to the subject. It is this view which I will return to in the present chapter. I will begin by considering the widely influential view of Black, who has argued that metaphor is a form of comparison.

C H A P T E R   T W O

The Comparison View

of metaphor, which will be the subject of the next chapter. The influence of Black's paper justifies a re-examination of the subject, and for the sake of completeness I will include the account of the subject of metaphor, though I think this view is too important to omit or to be mentioned only in passing.

In expressing the usual view of the subject of metaphor, Black says a number of things. In connection with metaphor, he argues that metaphor is a form of comparison. The question is whether it is a form of comparison. The question is whether it is a form of comparison. The question is whether it is a form of comparison. The question is whether it is a form of comparison.

1. Black, "Metaphor", *Journal of Philosophy*, LXXIII, p. 33.  
2. Beardsley, *Philosophy of Language*, p. 118.

In the last chapter I suggested that the fundamental question that arises in connection with metaphor is the nature of the relation between the metaphorical and the literal. Acceptance of what Black has called the comparison view<sup>1</sup> and Beardsley the Literalist Theory<sup>2</sup> will apparently provide a straightforward account of the nature of this relation. A metaphor on this view is the elliptical presentation of a comparison between two terms which an equivalent simile explicitly states. It is this view which I intend to examine in the present chapter. I will begin the examination by considering the widely influential views of Black, whose classical paper on the subject is a popular starting point for contemporary discussions. His discussion of the comparison view will be considered independently from his positive account of metaphor, which will be the subject of the next chapter. The influence of Black's paper justifies a reasonably comprehensive treatment, and for the sake of completeness I will include his account of the substitution view of metaphor, though I think this view is too insubstantial to merit or permit examination in any depth.

After expressing the usual regrets at the widespread neglect of this important topic, Black sets a number of questions in connection with metaphor, the answers to which would provide some sort of analysis of the notion. The questions are: "How do we recognize a case of metaphor?", "Are there any criteria for the detection of metaphor?", "Can metaphors be translated

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1 Black, "Metaphor", in Models and Metaphors, p.35

2 Beardsley, Aesthetics, pp.136-138



into literal expressions?", "Is metaphor a decoration of 'plain sense'?", "What are the relations between metaphor and simile?", "In what sense, if any, is metaphor 'creative'?", "What is the point of using metaphor?". These questions are not taken to be independent or exhaustive.

Black commences his account by providing some examples of metaphor, "the clouds are crying", "the chairman plowed through the discussion", and others. In each case he observes that the sentence has a literal component and a metaphorical component, which he calls respectively the frame and the focus. At this stage of the enquiry he considers it to be advisable to consider only simple cases: statements in which some words are used metaphorically and others literally. A sentence which is entirely metaphorical will result in an allegory or riddle. For example, "every cat in the dusk is grey" in the sort of context in which we might suppose it is standardly uttered would not normally be taken to be an assertion about the colour properties of the familiar carnivorous quadruped just before dark. It seems reasonable to attempt to provide some analysis of more straightforward occurrences of metaphorical expressions before such examples are dealt with.

The basic cases, then, contain a metaphorical component and a non-metaphorical component, and evidently enough the meaning will depend on some relation between these components.

The first example Black considers is "the chairman plowed through the discussion". It might be thought that the speaker intended to say something about the chairman's behaviour, but instead of saying it directly he chose a word ("plowed") which

strictly means something else, but the hearer can easily guess what the speaker had in mind. This view holds metaphor to be a substitute for some literal expression, and the meaning of the sentence is taken to be the same as the sentence with the literal expression. Not unnaturally, Black calls this the substitution view. Adherents of the substitution view would hold that metaphor is always eliminable in favour of literal paraphrases. This view is fairly widespread. Fowler, for example, begins his essay on metaphor with the distinction between live and dead metaphor, saying, "...living [metaphors] are offered and accepted with a consciousness of their nature as substitutes for their literal equivalents..."<sup>3</sup>(my emphasis). And if we ask why the writer performs the substitution, and the reader in consequence the inverse substitution, we may be told that the metaphor provides us with convenient abbreviations; that is, metaphor is a species of catachresis. When catachresis cannot be invoked, substitution apologists claim that the reason for the use of the metaphor is stylistic.

The substitution view, Black claims, is a special case of a more general view about figurative language. This view holds that any semantic change is a transformation of literal meaning. Thus, instead of providing us with the intended meaning 'm', the writer provides us with some function of it  $f(m)$ , and the reader extracts the original meaning by applying the inverse function ' $f^{-1}$ ', to obtain  $f^{-1}(f(m))$ , or m.

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3 H.W. Fowler, Modern English Usage, p.359

Expressed thus I think the substitution view looks fairly innocuous, but only at the expense of leaving the interesting and important questions untouched. It is not in the least illuminating to be told that in "Richard is a lion" the focal expression "...a lion" is simply a substitute for "...is brave". It may certainly be true that this is the sense which the focal expression conveys, but the substitution is certainly not licensed by synonymy. (To suggest something like "metaphorical synonymy" would obviously get us no further.) What we need is some account of the transformation that is being carried out; the claim that there is some transformation is of little help. Those theorists who deny the possibility of adequately re-expressing metaphorical statements in other terms would probably reject the substitution view as question-begging. It simply presupposes that there is some literal equivalent which can be substituted for the focal expression. I will argue later that metaphorical statements can be re-expressed, but I think it is a claim that needs to be argued and not merely assumed.

The comparison view can be treated as an extension of the substitution view in which the characteristic transforming function is specified as similarity. The metaphorical expression is similar or analogous to the literal equivalent, and with the frame or wider contextual clues, the reader is able to construct the literal equivalent. This account treats metaphor as elliptical simile: thus "electricity is a fluid" means the same as "electricity is like a fluid". The metaphor implies a comparison that the equivalent simile states.

"The main objection against a comparison view", Black says, "is that it suffers from a vagueness that borders upon vacuity."<sup>4</sup> If we are puzzled by some expression 'M', we are told that it stands in place of some literal expression 'L', and that M used literally stands for something similar to what L stands for. But a bare assertion of similarity is uninformative. The vagueness however is not in respect of the claims of the comparison view; these can be stated quite precisely. Edward Erwin, who has recently argued in support of the comparison view, provides a clearer exposition of this theory than Black. The comparison view, Erwin says, claims that although it is absurd or inappropriate to take a metaphorical statement literally, the terms of the metaphorical statement can be taken literally as the components of a different statement, "...this 'different' statement is simply a simile - a statement making a literal comparison between two terms"<sup>5</sup>. And when we adopt this view:

...there is no problem about the meaningfulness of the statement that is "really" made when we speak metaphorically. The statement that is "really" made...is a straightforward statement making a comparison between two terms.

Erwin does not provide any substantial arguments in favour of the comparison view. Instead he attacks Black's interaction view, and on refuting this to his satisfaction simply assumes the comparison view to be adequate. The logic of this enterprise is of course questionable: because the interaction view is

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4 Black, op. cit., p.37

5 Erwin, The Concept of Meaninglessness, p.113

6 Ibid., pp.113-114

inadequate it will not follow that the comparison view is. But since Erwin's principal arguments are presented in connection with the interaction view I will postpone further discussion of his views until the next chapter.

The vagueness of the comparison view does not apply, then, to the claims of the theory itself, but rather to the claim made by a bare assertion of similarity. A metaphorical statement does not simply claim that two things are similar, it is used to express a particular similarity. In fact we shall shortly see that an unqualified statement of similarity does not just border on vacuity, as Black states, but is indeed vacuous. If we qualify a simile appropriately then we can in many cases, though not all, extract the sense of the metaphor. This is a common way of 'spelling out' a metaphor, a process which I will have more to say about later. The claim "electricity is a fluid" acts as a challenge, for the description can only be accepted by some modification of our concept of a fluid. In general an unfamiliar metaphor presents us with a problem to be resolved, and the resolution can very often be expressed by a suitably circumscribed comparison. But the circumscribed comparison cannot be used as a challenge in the same way, even though it expresses the content of the metaphor. We shall see in chapter IV that its function is importantly different. The fluid metaphor acts as a suggestive model to explain certain features of the behaviour of electricity: we might liken voltage to pressure and current to flow. But there are usually points at which the analogy breaks down. There is,

for example, no need to follow Thurber's aunt in fearing that an electric socket without a bulb will result in electricity "leaking all over the house". Electricity is not a fluid to that extent.

Black also makes the most interesting suggestion that in many cases, prior to the use of the metaphor we would have difficulty in finding any literal resemblance between the terms. He suggests that it may be more accurate to say that the metaphor creates similarity than formulates some antecedently existing similarity. I am prepared to accept Black's claim about creativity, since I think that selecting some point of significant similarity from an indefinite and unspecifiable range is a creative achievement. I shall not at this stage provide any clue as to what a 'significant' similarity amounts to. But Black's account of the creation of similarity is a little misleading. The creative process is not that of producing a similarity that did not exist before, but rather in selecting the point of similarity from an indefinite range. Anything is similar to anything else, if only, as Beardsley notes, in that both terms form unit classes<sup>7</sup>. This is why a bare assertion of similarity is quite uninformative.

There is also the further point made by Black that the comparison view is unable to accommodate a shift in meaning of the subject and focal expression, but this will be discussed in connection with the interaction view.

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7 Beardsley, op. cit., p.162

The final comment of Black's which I will consider here is the suggestion that a formal comparison effected by the simile seems to be subject to precise formulation, whereas metaphor is used in cases where there is no question of the precision of scientific statement: "...as we approach such forms [of precise statement] metaphorical statements lose their effectiveness and their point"<sup>8</sup>. Perhaps what he has in mind here is that because explicit comparisons are drawn without any meaning shift in the component terms, we are usually not in any doubt as to how questions concerning the nature and extent of the comparison are to be answered. But a literal comparison can also be vague, so clarity is not a satisfactory criterion to distinguish the literal from the metaphorical.

Beardsley's discussion of the comparison view is sharper than Black's, and his arguments can be developed into an extremely damaging case against this theory<sup>9</sup>. He begins by drawing a distinction between "open" and "closed" similes; in the former case we are told simply that a is like b, and no indication of the basis of the alleged similarity is provided. In closed simile, however, the claim is that a is like b in respect of P; that is, the claim includes some reference to the basis of the alleged comparison. An open simile can never be a satisfactory basis for metaphor, Beardsley argues, because no matter what subjects may be selected, it will always be possible to find some common feature which they have. The claim that two things are similar in some respect is empty. On the other hand, the

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8 Black, op. cit., p.37

9 Beardsley, op. cit., pp.136-138 and pp.160-162

closed simile will also prove to be unsatisfactory, because any attempted reduction of a metaphor to a closed simile will be circular. A closed simile, Beardsley claims, in fact suggests a metaphor, and it will therefore be quite fruitless to attempt to account for metaphor in terms of closed simile.

The open simile need not detain us. In fact it seems to me very doubtful that there is any such thing in any natural context of assertion. The claim that two things are similar in some way is too weak to be of any value in ordinary discourse, and any apparent cases of open simile will be found to be closed within the context in which it occurs. That is, the context will always provide some indication of the respect in which the comparison is to be drawn.

According to Beardsley, closed similes can be restated "fairly satisfactorily" as metaphors, but not all metaphors can be restated as closed similes. This is because not all metaphors are implied comparisons. The argument is somewhat elliptical. Taking the line "The moon lies fair upon the straits", what, Beardsley asks, is it claimed that the moon is like<sup>10</sup>? He apparently believes it is self-evident that no satisfactory answer can be given. The problematic metaphorical component which he has in mind is presumably "lies upon", though we could probably introduce further complications with the word "fair". The salient point seems to be that since a comparison is relational we need to be able to identify the relata. This much we will see also seems to be implicit in the interaction view with its talk of primary and subsidiary subjects

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10 Beardsley, op. cit., p.138



or systems. But the interaction view treats metaphor as construing one system in terms of another, rather than as an examination of the relations between the two systems. Indeed, the latter is probably simply an alternative way of stating the comparison view.

Beardsley's point seems to be that it is not always possible to identify the metaphorical component as a relatum. And in such cases the comparison view does start to look very lame. If the metaphorical expression is a noun-substantive then it is possible for the comparison view to gain some credibility. It seems to be at least arguable that "man is a wolf" does not differ significantly from "man is like a wolf". The comparison view begins to look less plausible when we introduce a verbal metaphor, such as "the sky is smiling". Perhaps in this case a comparison proponent might suggest that what is implied is a comparison between the sky and the corresponding noun-substantive: "the sky is like a smile". When we select an adjectival metaphor the comparison apologist should have become uncomfortable; what is the comparison implied by "a pregnant silence"? At this point the artificiality of constructing a suitable noun-substantive for the second term of the comparison becomes manifest. It could be suggested that the silence is like something pregnant, but this is obviously inferior to the original, and not simply as the result of prolixity. By suggesting something substantial the rendition has introduced irrelevancies. All that is relevant of the metaphor is the property of being pregnant, and introducing a substantive term will introduce unintended additional meanings associated with

the substantive term. We might wonder about such irrelevancies as the stage of the pregnancy, or whether the silence will be abortive. When we come to Beardsley's chosen example it is difficult to see anything that could reasonably be worked up into the second term of a relation. Beardsley has selected a relational verb, "lies upon", as his problematic case, and the comparison account must explain the relation between the principal subject (the moon) and a relation.

The argument, which I emphasize is directed against the view that metaphor can be adequately restated as simile, not that it is impossible to restate it in other language, can be presented schematically as follows. If we have a metaphor 'a is F' then it is often possible to change 'Fa' into the form 'aRb'. Thus we might suppose that "man is vulpine" does not differ significantly from "man is a wolf". And if we can get two plausible substantives then it might be possible to see the metaphor as the result of a comparison between them. But there are cases where this seems to be impossible, and here the comparison view must founder through lack of anything with which the subject of the statement can be compared.

The comparison proponent might attempt to counter with the claim that the comparison is not between the moon and a relation of which it is one of the terms, but between the relation between the moon and the straits and the literal sense of "lies upon". But this only says there is some sense relation between the literal and metaphorical use of an expression, which is surely not to be doubted. The point of the comparison view, however, was to explain the operation of the metaphor in terms of the relation of similarity between the primary and

subsidiary subjects, and in this it has not been successful. A simple way of expressing this point is that we cannot always treat metaphor as the relation between primary and subsidiary subjects because we frequently do not have a subsidiary subject at all in the required sense.

Beardsley's second argument is that even if it is possible to construe metaphors as similes, it is of no help in explaining the metaphor. By similes he means closed similes, since as we have already noted anything is similar to anything else in some respect. Similes are only effective, he argues, insofar as they entail metaphors, and any attempt to explain metaphor in terms of simile would therefore be circular. Thus "the wind is as sharp as a knife" gains its effect from the implied metaphor "the wind is sharp"<sup>11</sup>. I think an objector could argue that the comparison has been misconstrued: the correct form is "the wind is like a knife in being sharp". The term "sharp" is the ground of the comparison rather than one of the terms, and is truly predicated of both the wind and the knife. But even if "sharp" is the ground, its application to the wind is still metaphorical. The sharpness which is being attributed to the wind is not an unspecified sharpness, nor is it some general sort of sharpness which can be univocally predicated of knives and winds, but a knife-like sharpness. To predicate this of the wind, as the comparison suggests, must be to apply the term metaphorically. What the comparison says is that sharpness is true of both the knife and the wind, of the one literally and the other metaphorically.

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11 Beardsley, op. cit., p.162

If we accept this argument we cannot use simile to explain metaphor because the meaning of simile already presupposes the meaning of metaphor. This, we shall see, does not exclude the use of simile in explicating particular metaphors. The explicit comparison will be of no help in explaining metaphor not because it is by nature inferior through being chained to literal language, but because it is equally problematic. And we have therefore arrived at Goodman's position, that in fact "Instead of metaphor reducing to simile, simile reduces to metaphor; or rather, the difference between simile and metaphor is negligible"<sup>12</sup>.

Neither Goodman nor Beardsley are denying that there are literal comparisons. We can, for example, compare objects with respect to colour or length or processes with respect to duration. But it is in precisely these cases that there is no need for metaphor, because we possess adequate means to determine reasonably precisely the points of similarity and difference. But when we use metaphor, the corresponding simile, if it can be produced at all, will derive all its force from the metaphor. It cannot assist our understanding of it.

Beardsley's first argument, that not all metaphors are implied comparisons, is sufficient to force us to abandon the comparison view. The second argument, that a simile gains its force from the implied metaphor, has to be interpreted with some care. The point of this argument is to show that not all the implied comparisons, when they can be found, are literal

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12 Goodman, Languages of Art, p.78

comparisons. The wind and the knife are not being compared in respect of any property which they literally share. This need not amount to a claim of primacy for metaphor over simile, but as Goodman suggests, places them on a level: simile will not explain metaphor, but neither will metaphor explain simile. The comparison view seeks to avoid problems about metaphorical meaning, as Erwin states specifically, by replacing metaphor by a literal comparison. But the equivalent comparison turns out to be not always literal, so exactly the same problems arise. We cannot adopt "the equivalent simile" as a simple general answer to the question of what a metaphor states. As I hinted earlier in this chapter there is an important difference in the function of metaphor and simile, though this does not prevent a circumscribed comparison being often the means by which we explicate particular metaphors.

To deny the possibility of adopting an equivalent literal comparison as a general explanation of metaphor is not to despair about the possibility of producing any satisfactory account of its operation. I suspect that the failure to find any such simple relation between literal and metaphorical statements is a reason that has led some writers to treat metaphor as a distinct and often superior mode of cognition. Metaphor develops a mystique, a transcendent quality which places it in a quite different order to the supposedly straightforward modes of literal language. But I think it is just as important not to charge metaphor with some ineffable cognitive power as it is to refrain from treating it as totally

devoid of significance. The role of metaphor in language and the problem of re-expressing metaphorical statements will be the major themes of chapters IV and V. But before becoming involved with these central questions I want to examine the interaction view suggested by Black.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE INTERACTION VIEW

As an alternative to the specification and substitution views, Black proposes his interaction view of metaphors, which in some respects is a refinement of Richards' interaction account. Richards' account refers only to an interaction, but he provides us with little information about its nature: his observation that the words of interaction may be of "diverse variety" is not very illuminating.

In discussing interaction, Richards also introduces the additional terminology of primary and secondary metaphors. The former refers to the subject of the metaphorical comparison and the latter to the modifier.

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The metaphorical modifier operates, Black claims, through a "system of associated connotations" which are associated with the modifier. These associated connotations are transferred to the principal subject, and as a result of the transfer path components undergo a shift in meaning. An important feature of the connotations is that they are not true of the focal expression, but they can be used readily and freely even. Because the associated connotations from one society to another, it is not surprising that they are perpetuated in another. For example, the phrase "old-fashioned" is "equivalent" that suggests a certain quality, and the English colloquialism "old-fashioned" is equivalent to "outdated gear". But such words are not used in the same way for although similar may arise from the same source in particular speech communities, their use and implications of metaphors are perfectly translatable.

As an alternative to the comparison and substitution views, Black proposes his interaction view of metaphor, which in some respects is a refinement of Richards' interanimation account. Richards' account refers explicitly to an interaction, but he provides us with little information about its nature: his observation that the modes of interaction may be of "immense variety" is not very illuminating.

In discussing interaction metaphors Black introduces the additional terminology of principal and subsidiary subjects. The former refers to the subject of the metaphorical statement, and the latter to the metaphorical modifier or focal expression. These components of a metaphorical statement are also sometimes called, respectively, the primary and secondary systems.

The metaphorical modifier operates, Black claims, through a "system of associated commonplaces" which are associated with the modifier. These associated commonplaces are transferred to the principal subject, and as a result of the transfer both components undergo a shift in meaning. The important feature of the commonplaces is not that they should be true of the focal expression, but that they should be readily and freely evoked. Because the commonplaces differ from one society to another, an apt metaphor in one may seem preposterous in another. For example, the nearest Russian 'equivalent' that Kosygin's translator could find for the English colloquialism "old fruit" translates literally as "sunbleached pear". Too much should not be made of this point, for although oddities may arise from the idiosyncrasies of particular speech communities, a large and important class of metaphors are perfectly translatable.



Black takes as his main example the statement "man is a wolf". This statement commits the speaker, Black says, to some of the accepted platitudes about wolves; a system of beliefs not sharply delineated, but sufficiently definite to admit some sort of enumeration. Which wolf-like characteristics are evoked will depend to a large extent on the principal subject. In this case such characteristics as being fur-covered, carnivorous, and a quadruped, will recede from prominence, while other characteristics which can be applied to men will come to the fore. The expression will not evoke exactly the same characteristics as might the literal use; that is, the wolf has to some extent been humanized. In short, Black's claim is that the metaphorical expression's system of commonplaces organizes our view of the principal subject of the statement by introducing those wolf-like characteristics which can, without strain, be transferred to people. These might include, Black suggests, preying on other animals, being fierce, hungry, engaged in constant struggle, and so on. The subsidiary subject thus selects, suppresses, and emphasizes features of the principal subject, which in turn exercise control on it. This interaction produces a change in meaning of both component expressions.

Black uses the metaphors "filter" and "screen" to describe the interaction, and also claims that the principal subject is "projected upon" the field of the subsidiary subject. These may suggest that the principal subject undergoes a passive transformation through the effect of the focal expression. However at other points Black claims that the

principal subject performs an active role, as when he claims that the wolf in "man is a wolf" is seen to be more human. I think that on the whole his account suggests it is the active role which he has in mind.

Although Black talks of commonplaces principally in connection with the metaphorical modifier, the principal subject also has a set of commonplaces. Both subjects, he suggests at one point, are "often best regarded as 'systems of things', rather than 'things'"<sup>1</sup>. This suggests that the wolf-commonplaces organize our view of man by acting on the commonplaces normally implied by the literal use of the word "man". Because Black employs an undifferentiated notion of associated commonplaces in his account of change in meaning brought about by metaphorical expressions, he is unable to account for some of the most crucial features of metaphor. Before developing this point I want to consider Black's answer to a possible objection which he says might be directed against the interaction view. Black says it might be claimed that:

some of the "associated commonplaces" themselves suffer metaphorical change of meaning in the process of transfer from the subsidiary to the principal subject. And these changes, if they occur, can hardly be explained by the account given. The primary metaphor, it might be said, has been analysed into a set of subordinate metaphors, so the account given is either<sup>2</sup> circular or leads to an infinite regress.

Black says this objection may be countered by denying that all changes of meaning in the associated commonplaces are metaphorical. Many of these, he says, are better described as

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1 Black, "Metaphor", p.44

2 Ibid., p.42

extensions in meaning. And where the commonplaces do undergo a metaphorical shift in meaning, these metaphors are to be taken "less emphatically". I will argue later that there is no reason to worry about using metaphorical statements to explicate other metaphorical statements, so I do not think Black's fears about circularity need to be taken at all seriously. Circularity would emerge if his explanation of metaphor presupposed this very notion, but this is quite a different matter from using metaphor to expound other metaphors, which is a procedure which I think is perfectly in order.

The occurrence of metaphor in our explication of particular metaphors is not in itself problematic. But the attempt to explain particular metaphors through an undifferentiated system of associated commonplaces is. The difficulty is that almost any expression carries associations with it, and in general only a selection from these will be appropriate in any particular context, even where the use of the expression is not metaphorical. The word "animal", for example, carries with it a number of associations, but these are not all relevant to its attribution to "man". Black's account does not provide us with any clue as to what difference between the cases accounts for our taking "man is animal" literally and "man is a wolf" metaphorically. Nor does it provide any explanation of why the "associated commonplaces" involved in metaphor result in a change of meaning. This might be helped by a distinction between the standard or central meaning of an expression and its marginal or accompanying meanings.

Presented thus the problems for the interaction view are different from, but no less severe, than those faced by the comparison view. The interaction view was proposed by Black because the comparison view failed to account for the change in meaning produced by metaphor. By attempting to explain metaphor as a literal comparison the comparison view amounts to a denial of change in the meaning of the component terms. But as Black characterizes the interaction view expressions used literally seem also to be able to produce a meaning change. So whereas on the comparison view no use of an expression could effect a meaning change, on Black's account a literal as well as a metaphorical use of an expression may. This consequence is not because Black's presentation is so far as it goes problematic, but because it is incomplete.

Mary Hesse produces an account of metaphor which is essentially modelled on Black's interaction view. Her account at one point suggests the distinction between central and associated ideas which the interaction view presented by Black omits, but she fails to utilize it in her account, and in consequence her theory inherits some of Black's problems. Whereas Black considered the interaction view to be a supplement to the comparison theory, Hesse makes the stronger claim that it is incompatible with it. The essence of the comparison view, Hesse claims, is that the literal descriptions of the primary and subsidiary systems, which form the components of the metaphor, remain literally true independently of the use of the metaphor<sup>3</sup>. The interaction view, Hesse argues, must reject this claim.

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3 Hesse, "The Explanatory Function of Metaphor", p.252

According to Hesse, for a statement to be taken metaphorically there must be some obvious inappropriateness in taking it literally. Thus since it is obviously inappropriate to say man is literally a wolf we must turn to the associations or suggestions which the expression "wolf" evokes to grasp the meaning of the statement. These were called the "associated commonplaces" by Black, and it does seem to be necessary to introduce some such notion in order to explain the significance of metaphor. But Black's failure to draw a distinction between the central and secondary meanings of an expression, meant he could not explain what it is that forces us to interpret expressions in a particular context metaphorically. Hesse says that the total meaning of an expression includes features "both linguistic and empirical"<sup>4</sup> and I think this suggests the required distinction. Black perhaps thinks that the literal inappropriateness of an expression is an obvious requirement for metaphor, and this would suggest that the "associated commonplaces" should be taken to include only secondary meanings. But the literal inappropriateness is, even if obvious, an important requirement which needs to be examined in some detail.

Also I think that Black's account suggests, though it does not entail, that the system of associated commonplaces might be composed of ad hoc accretions. This seems plausible for a number of instances, such as the case of the colloquialism "old fruit" which I mentioned earlier, but it will not do as a general account. The impression is corrected

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4 Ibid., p.250

to some extent by the use of the descriptive metaphors "filter", "screen", and "projection", which suggest the associations are organized, but I think Black's chosen example "man is a wolf" is not representative of the large class of important metaphors which illuminate the subject through secondary meanings which are related in a quite systematic fashion.

Metaphor operates, Hesse says, by transferring the associated ideas of the secondary to the primary system. Now literal expressions are understood partly in terms of the set of ideas associated with the system they describe. These associated ideas of the primary system are changed to some extent by the use of the metaphor, and the same is true of the secondary system, whose associations are affected by its assimilation to the primary. The central point of the interaction view according to Hesse is that the interaction between the primary and secondary systems is carried

...to the point of invalidating their original literal descriptions if these are understood in the new, post-metaphoric sense. Men are seen to be more like wolves after the wolf-metaphor is used, and wolves seem to be more human<sup>5</sup>.

The comparison account on the other hand is committed to the view that the literal descriptions of both systems are and remain independent of the use of the metaphor. And this is incompatible with Hesse's interaction account.

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5 Ibid., p.252

The claim that the components of the metaphor should be treated as systems of things rather than things is one which needs further examination. This idea, that we are dealing with concept-systems is central to the interaction account provided by Hesse and Black. But should we treat the meaning of "man is a wolf" as the result of an interaction between man-beliefs and wolf-beliefs? And has the use of the wolf-metaphor in fact changed the meaning of the word "man"?

Erwin believes that the interaction view is mistaken in its claim that the use of metaphor results in a shift in meaning of the principal subject. A proper evaluation of this claim will evidently require some consideration of what constitutes a shift in meaning. I have argued in the last chapter that Erwin's conclusion that there is no barrier to treating metaphor as a literal comparison between its component terms is untenable. On the question of paraphrase Erwin suggests that there are problems, but that these are the result of the scarcity of precise synonyms, and not from any particular difficulties with metaphor. Finding an adequate paraphrase for a literal expression is just as problematic as finding them for metaphors.

Erwin argues that in the majority of cases there is no reason to suppose that the meaning of an expression has changed as the result of the use of metaphor. In those cases where a change does result this is because the metaphor has frozen, and frozen metaphor, he correctly observes, is not really a problem for metaphor at all, for in such cases

a former metaphor has acquired the status of a literal truth. Erwin, then, presents us with the following dilemma: either the metaphor results in no change of meaning, in which case we can adopt the comparison view; or the meaning does change, in which case the metaphor has frozen and no account of metaphor is needed.

Now the change in meaning which attracts Erwin's attention is the change in literal meaning which he says the interaction view claims to result from our use of metaphor. Such a shift in literal sense may occur when metaphor freezes; that is, permanently retains the sense it acquires from its use as a metaphor; but if it does not retain this metaphorical sense, then it is simply false to suppose that there has been a change in meaning such as the interaction view suggests. This highlights the need to carefully distinguish between two aspects of change of meaning. First there is the change in meaning which results from our use of metaphor, and secondly the changed meaning which an expression acquires in a particular context when it is used metaphorically. Apparently these changes are not independent. Any resultant change in meaning, *prima facie*, emerges from the sense of the expression acquired when it is used metaphorically. Erwin's argument is that what we might call the resultant changes do not normally occur, and on those occasions where they do, what we have is better described not as metaphor, but a new literal sense. And further, the meaning of an expression when used as a metaphor is adequately explained as a literal comparison.



Taking Black's example first, Erwin argues that the application of the wolf-metaphor, even with repeated use, will not result in changing the literal meaning of the expression "man"<sup>6</sup>. He then goes on to consider an example provided by Hesse, "Nature is a machine", and argues as follows:

Let us assume that the term "nature" has changed in meaning and that the change has occurred because of the extensive use of the "machine" metaphor... "nature" means something different at times  $T_1$  and  $T_2$ ... If someone were to say at time  $T_1$  that "Nature is a machine"... we could have interpreted the speaker, as the comparison analysis suggests, as saying that nature is like a machine (in certain respects).

...if someone were to use this sentence at time  $T_2$ ... he would be saying, literally and truly, that "Nature is<sup>7</sup> a machine"... No metaphoric analysis is needed.

Erwin denies here that there is, as the interaction view suggests, a change (or at least an immediate change) in the meaning of the principal subject as the result of the use of the metaphor. He therefore thinks that this reason, which led Black and Hesse to reject the comparison view, need not be accepted.

Hesse says that nature is seen to be more machine-like after the use of the machine metaphor, and that man is seen to be more wolf-like after the use of the wolf-metaphor. The wolf-metaphor therefore results in a change of meaning of the term "man". The way Hesse is able to justify this claim for a change in meaning of "man" is by adopting a fairly permissive

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6 Erwin, Meaninglessness, pp.115-116

7 Ibid., pp.117-118

criterion for a change in meaning. "...a shift in meaning may result from a change in the set of associated ideas, as well as from a change in reference or use."<sup>8</sup> And if we adopt this as a workable criterion for change in meaning then I think it is perfectly alright to argue for a change in meaning of the expression "man". If all that is required is some extension in the range of associated ideas then it is very likely that a metaphorical attribution will have just such an effect. But I can see no reason why, on this view, non-metaphorical attributions should not equally produce a change in meaning. The ideas associated with such notions as man can equally be changed or extended as a result of accumulated factual knowledge, and indeed it seems likely that a change in this sort of sense has occurred in our notion of man from the theories suggested by, say, Darwin or Freud. In Hesse's sense, a change in meaning of a subject expression is not a peculiarity of metaphorical attributions. Erwin offers an alternative criterion for a change in meaning, but before considering his suggestion there are three points that I want to make.

The first is that for the above reasons I do not think that a change in meaning in the sense suggested by Hesse is of particular interest to metaphor. Secondly, I think that the resultant shift in meaning, even in cases where it is produced by a metaphorical attribution, is not as important for an account of metaphor as is the metaphorical meaning acquired by an expression when used metaphorically. In explaining the sense

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<sup>8</sup> Hesse, op. cit., p.250

of metaphor what is important is the relation between the standard or literal meaning of the expression and its sense in a non-standard context. How this change is effected is of considerable importance whether or not the acquired sense is in fact retained and succeeds in supplanting the former sense of the expression. I think the interaction view fails to attend to the distinction between these aspects of change of meaning with sufficient care, and the more important sense for metaphor seems to be completely by-passed by Erwin, I suspect as a result of his uncritical acceptance of the comparison view. The third point I want to make is that it is simply false to suggest that a satisfactory paraphrase cannot be produced because of a change in meaning of the primary system. Even if such a change were the inevitable consequence of a metaphorical attribution, all that would follow is that the paraphrase offered after the use of the metaphor would not be the same as any description that may have occurred to us prior to the use of the metaphor. If the systems interact to the point of invalidating the original literal descriptions, as Hesse suggests, it does not follow that we cannot provide some new, post-metaphorical literal descriptions.

It is implicit in the accounts provided by both Hesse and Black that metaphor (for Black interaction metaphors) are not eliminable. Hesse says that reference to the secondary system is not dispensable<sup>9</sup>, which in her terms is a claim that metaphor cannot be eliminated, and Black says that paraphrase produces cognitive loss<sup>10</sup>, which ultimately comes to the same

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9 Ibid., p.252

10 Black, op. cit., p.46

thing. Both accounts also carry the suggestion that accepting the cognitive equivalence of paraphrase commits one to the comparison view. I think this is mistaken, although the converse is true.

I suspect also that Black's belief in the ineliminability of interaction metaphors was a major reason which led him to claim that the apprehension of these metaphors called for a "distinctive intellectual operation"<sup>11</sup>. This I think is a dangerous first step toward treating metaphor as phenomenon quite distinct from the sphere of plain language.

I have suggested that Hesse's criterion for a change in meaning is of no particular help for explaining the change of sense associated with metaphor. Erwin offers an alternative negative criterion for a change in meaning:

...a term has not changed in meaning when used in two separate statements, if a statement containing the term is inconsistent with a subsequent statement which contains the same term and is<sub>2</sub> the apparent denial of the original statement.<sup>12</sup>

Using this criterion, Erwin proceeds to show that the wolf-metaphor has not succeeded in changing the meaning of "man".

For, he argues:

If Black had said prior to 1954, "All men must die", and if he, or any other employer of the wolf-metaphor, were now to say, "Not all men must die", would not the second statement be inconsistent with the first? If so, would this not show that the meaning of the term "man" had not changed?<sup>13</sup>

Erwin's criterion is that if we take two contrary predicates and find that applying them to what appears to be the same

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11 Black, op. cit., p.46

12 Erwin, op. cit., p.116

13 Ibid., p.117

subject at different times produces inconsistency then this is sufficient to establish that the subject has not changed in meaning. I think this is a very tough criterion<sup>14</sup>. If we allow that any pair of contradictory predicates may be selected I think it will be difficult to find any changes of meaning in Hesse's sense. Hesse would allow that our notion of man can alter without affecting the true attribution of mortality. Erwin, if I understand him correctly, is suggesting that the continuing truth of "all men must die" is sufficient to show that the expression "man" has not changed in meaning. Now certainly if we considered that "all men must die" were true at one time and "not all men must die" were true at another, and also that both claims were consistent, and that further "...must die" was univocal, then I think we would have to concede that "man" had changed in meaning. Hesse and Black I think would accept the sufficiency of this condition, but would almost certainly argue that it is not a necessary condition. Erwin appears to place no restriction on which statement and its denial might be selected as a test for any subject. And by selecting some statement about man which expresses something fairly central to our understanding of this notion (such as the fact of his mortality) we can ensure the conclusion that the meaning of this expression has not changed, no matter what literal or metaphorical attributions might be made. That is, even for a subject that has prima facie undergone a fairly substantial change in meaning, I think it would be always possible to find some statement whose affirmation and denial before and after the change produced an inconsistency.

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<sup>14</sup> The criterion bears a close resemblance to Quine's criterion for ambiguity (Word and Object, p.128) which, interestingly, Erwin rejected earlier as too strong (Meaninglessness, p.55ff.)

Hesse's criterion, on the other hand, that a change in some associated idea is sufficient to produce a change in meaning makes change in meaning extremely easy. I can see no simple way of weakening Erwin's criterion by placing restrictions on what statements may be admitted as allowing change in meaning which would be useful for our present purposes. The dispute in any case seems to be about changes in literal meaning, which concerns, I have suggested, changes resultant from the use of metaphor. And I have already suggested that this is of less importance than the sense relation between an expression used metaphorically and its standard literal meaning.

If Hesse had strengthened her criterion by using the distinction between central and peripheral meanings she may have been able to provide a more illuminating account. We have seen also that Black's interaction account is incomplete because it takes no account of the distinction between central or standard meanings of an expression, and secondary meanings, variously called the peripheral, marginal or accompanying meanings. This leaves him unable to account for what it is that forces us, in a particular context, to interpret an expression metaphorically. A distinction along these lines I have suggested is further necessary if we are to make any progress in understanding what relation there is between the standard meaning of a term and its meaning when used metaphorically, which I have suggested is the change in meaning which is important for an explanation of metaphor. Monroe Beardsley draws this distinction very clearly.

Beardsley calls the central meaning of an expression its designation, and the secondary meanings its connotations<sup>15</sup>. The designation is the standard core meaning of the word, and the sort of thing one would expect to find entered in a dictionary. What a word connotes are the characteristics which it does not designate but that are widely thought or said to belong to the things which it denotes<sup>16</sup>. These characteristics form a range of connotation, and what the word connotes in a particular context will be a selection from its total range. The total range may even include incompatible connotations. The distinction, Beardsley claims, may not be sharp, but it is operative in all our ordinary speech. Mary McCloskey appears to have the same sort of distinction in mind when she speaks of the logical and psychological aspects of a term<sup>17</sup>. This account is a considerable improvement on Black's "associated commonplaces" because it explains quite simply what it is about a word which forces us in a particular case to take it as a metaphor. In some cases the context indicates that an expression cannot be taken literally, that is, the designation of the word is seen to be absurd or inappropriate. When this occurs it is to the connotations that we must turn to make sense of the expression. Which connotations are relevant will depend on the context, the most important feature of which is, of course, the principal subject. This account will explain Black's comments on the

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15 Beardsley, op. cit., p.125 ff.

16 "Denotation" is used rather loosely here and is better reserved for the relation between name and object. I shall follow Beardsley and use "designation" as the relation between word and object or concept, and deliberately refrain from characterizing these notions any further.

17 McCloskey, "Metaphors", p.230

humanizing of the wolf-system. The wolf is humanized because the principal subject determines which wolf-commonplaces are relevant. Metaphor operates by selecting connotations from the total range, and the selection is necessary because of the inappropriateness of applying the central meaning or designation of the word. Beardsley calls his theory the Controversion Theory because the normal literal sense of an expression is controverted by the context, and this forces us to turn to the secondary meanings to determine its meaning in that context.

In Black's example, because the term "wolf" cannot be literally predicated of man, it gains its effect by activating wolf-connotations. (This is a good reason to follow Black and Hesse in treating the secondary subject of the metaphor as a system of concepts rather than as a single one.) Exploring the range of connotations is the process of 'spelling out' the metaphor, and this will be considered further in the next chapter.

There is a relativistic problem which arises in connection with the range of connotations of a word. Because the connotations can to some extent be made up of personal associations, the success of the metaphor will to that extent be unavoidably dependent on individual idiosyncrasies. It looks as if the 'correct' interpretation of a metaphor will admit no objective answer. Further, even in the apparently unlikely event of exact agreement being reached as to the range of connotations, there remains scope for real dispute as to which connotations within the context were intended by the speaker.



The answer to the first question pointed to by Beardsley is that the designation of the term is relatively stable for any given speech community<sup>18</sup>. A thorough examination of this problem lies beyond the scope of the present enquiry, although I shall return to it briefly in the next chapter. The second problem also raises formidable questions. I will say no more at this stage than that the intended meaning is usually perfectly clear, which is to say that most metaphors are transparent. And the discovery that on occasions a metaphor can be extended further or in different directions to that intended by the speaker seems to be a source of considerable richness of this mode of expression.

The essential point of Beardsley's account of metaphor, and one which is taken up by McCloskey, is that the literal sense of the word is rejected by the context, and that this results in the sense being taken up by the connotations.

Another major virtue of Beardsley's account is that it provides a simple and elegant account of how metaphor freezes. Failure to distinguish between fresh and frozen metaphor has dangerous consequences which will be taken up later. On Beardsley's account a metaphor freezes when one or more of its former connotations become fixed as its new designation. Once again this is difficult to fix with precision, but the beginning and end points of the process can be fairly readily identified. Because it has been made a defining feature of metaphor that the designation of the expression must be contradicted, it can be readily seen that a frozen metaphor is not

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<sup>18</sup> Beardsley, *op. cit.*, p.131 ff.

really metaphor at all. The new designation may include the former designation, in which case the metaphor has generalized the sense of the expression, or it may yield a sense which is quite distinct from the original.

Beardsley's controversion theory can be considered a refinement of Black's interaction view, though I am not suggesting that it derives historically from Black's theory. It patches up a major weakness in Black's theory by suggesting why some expressions must be taken metaphorically, and provides an account of the relation between the literal and metaphorical sense of an expression. I argued that a "system of associated commonplaces" could equally be responsible for the sense of a literal attribution, which suggests there is some incompleteness in Black's account. Hesse's account suggests there is a distinction between central and peripheral meanings, but did not exploit this difference in her account of metaphorical meaning. As I said before, I think this is because her account concentrates on the changes of meaning which result from the use of metaphor rather than the actual meaning of an expression used metaphorically. And in any case the changes which Hesse suggests result from the use of metaphor can equally be the result of a literal attribution.

Beardsley corrects both these weaknesses. It is contextual controversion that forces us to abandon a literal reading of the expression, and it is to the connotations we then turn to determine the meaning of the expression. The main difficulty in Beardsley's account lies, I think, in his

treatment of the connotations. He believes that in literal use these lie dormant, and the contextual controversion forces them to our attention. Beardsley's suggestion is that metaphorical meaning is already present, albeit latently, in the expression prior to its use metaphorically and the use in a particular context simply "brings them to life"<sup>19</sup>.

The claim that the connotations of an expression are present prior to its use suggests that it would be possible to determine in advance what limits exist for the term's metaphorical application. This I think would involve a denial of the creativity of metaphor which I argued for earlier in the chapter. I agree with Beardsley that the creativity involves a selection of some sort, but I do not think that it is possible to specify, prior to the use of the metaphor, a limit within which the selection is made, as Beardsley's account of the connotations suggests<sup>20</sup>. Black's intuitions about metaphor "creating" similarity<sup>21</sup>, and his claim that a paraphrase fails to provide the insight that the metaphor did<sup>22</sup> are, I believe, perfectly sound, and my reasons for supporting these claims of Black against the results which emerge from Beardsley's account will become clear in the next chapter.

Given the background use of an expression together with its occurrence in a particular context it is usually possible to determine whether it is to be taken literally or metaphorically. And the test of whether or not an expression is to

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19 Ibid., p.143

20 The claim that metaphor involves selection will be subject to important qualification in the next chapter.

21 Black, op. cit., p.37

be taken metaphorically is the simple one: is it for any reason inappropriate to take the expression literally within that context? An affirmative answer will not distinguish between a metaphorical statement and an 'absurd' one. We need the further test: is it revealing? Does it assist our understanding of the situation? This is, of necessity, rather loose; although we can provide some reasons for inappropriateness, appropriateness is something which looks impossible to account for by any blanket criterion. All we can do is settle individual cases through discussion and agreement. For what could be a criterion for what we find interesting or useful?

Without the background use and the context it is not possible to legislate on whether a given statement is metaphorical or absurd. And this is why with sufficient ingenuity it is usually possible to provide an apparently absurd statement with some sort of metaphorical sense. But these contextual contortions do nothing to refute the fact that particular statements in particular contexts are absurd. If this is countered with the claim that the openness of actual contexts, or as Beardsley would say the range of connotations, allows enough leeway to admit any sentence as meaningful, I would observe simply that our patience is not without limits. Salvaging nonsense may become a curiously compulsive interest, but it is of no particular assistance to the understanding.

Beardsley, we shall see, falls into the error of supposing that the sense of metaphor exists prior to its use, and it is instructive to compare his mistake with Black's. Whereas Black saw that the creativity of metaphor cannot be readily explained

on an account which claims that it is possible to re-express metaphor in other terms, and suggested that therefore it required "a distinctive intellectual operation" to be grasped, Beardsley instead denies the creativity of metaphor. He proposes instead that the meaning is already present, albeit latently, in the connotations, and the use of the metaphorical expression simply "brings them to life".

Metaphor provides us with insights that cannot be provided by literal expressions, but it remains true that they can be restated without cognitive loss in non-metaphorical terms. This paradoxical statement will be one of the themes of the next chapter.

In this chapter I propose to examine the question: can what is said metaphorically be said literally? What are we to make of the claim that "...metaphorical language can be translated without significant loss into other languages?"

The first point to be considered is whether it is important that the paraphrase might contain other metaphorical expressions. This will depend on what we regard as the purpose of the paraphrase. Substituting one expression for another is of no use in itself, and in this case the purpose is to clarify or explicate an unclear expression. If the assumption is that the original language is clear whereas metaphorical

C H A P T E R   F O U R

The Explication of Metaphor

is extremely unclear, without attempting to provide an answer to the question: can what is said metaphorically be said literally? it is quite different from literal language. There is no point in providing an explication of an expression for another, literal or metaphorical, unless there is any purpose for paraphrasing it. The purpose may be the requirements of clarity, or it may be to show the intrinsic nature of the literal and the metaphorical.

In fact it will probably be found that the possibility of a substitution of metaphorical expressions for literal expressions, and further, that the possibility of determining the meaningfulness of expressions can only be determined for the literal and the metaphorical.

1. Anderson, "Metaphorical Thinking", p. 7

In this chapter I propose to examine the question: can what is said metaphorically be said literally? What are we to make of the claim that "...metaphorical language can be translated without significant loss into other language"<sup>1</sup>?

The first point to be considered is whether it is important that the paraphrase might contain other metaphorical expressions. This will depend on what we regard as the purpose of the paraphrase. Substituting one expression for another is no end in itself, and in this case the purpose is to clarify or explicate an unclear expression. If the assumption is made that literal language is clear whereas metaphorical language is obscure, there will be some justification for attempting to provide strictly literal paraphrases for metaphorical expressions. But this assumption is extremely dubious. Without attempting to provide an answer to the contentious claim that all metaphors are obscure, it is quite apparent that literal language is not always clear. There is no good reason to substitute one equally obscure expression for another, literal or metaphorical, so if there is any purpose for paraphrase it must arise from the requirements of semantic clarity rather than from the intrinsic nature of the literal and the metaphorical.

In fact it will eventually emerge that obscurity is no more a condition of metaphorical expressions than clarity is of literal expressions, and further, that the conditions which determine the meaningfulness of expressions are much the same for the literal and the metaphorical.

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1 Henderson, "Metaphorical Thinking", p.9

The most important purpose for providing a paraphrase for an expression, literal or metaphorical, is to clarify or spell out its meaning. A paraphrase purports to present an expression or set of expressions which explicate what the original expression means. It might be argued that a paraphrase may succeed in revealing the ground of the metaphor, that is, the means by which it expresses its meaning, but that the precise meaning of the metaphor is something which eludes capture. The idea of some meaning which transcends the so-called ground of the metaphor is one which is by no means clear. The meaning of the metaphor is not some disembodied entity but simply is the ground, though this will need a little qualification. A pragmatic test which is frequently used to determine whether an intended meaning has been grasped, is to demand a roughly equivalent restatement of the sentence or expression. In fact this seems to be the kernel of the notion of explanation: how do we reformulate the unfamiliar expression in terms of other more familiar expressions? To admit that this is not possible is tantamount to denying that explanation is possible at all. And that which transcends all possibility of explanation leaves us with the uneasy feeling that it may not be really intelligible. The question of paraphrase seems to come down to the question of whether metaphors are intelligible in terms of our ordinary precepts of understanding. It is only as a last and desperate resort that a distinctive mode of apprehension for understanding metaphor should be introduced.



It seems to me that this desperate step has been taken because any paraphrase seems grossly inferior to the original metaphor, and from the failure to clearly distinguish between fresh and frozen metaphor.

Although I think the possibility of producing a paraphrase is a condition of intelligibility of a metaphorical expression, it does not follow that the paraphrase is equivalent to it in all respects. To begin with we can never be sure that the paraphrase exhausts all the interpretations that can be given. But to the extent that the metaphor has been understood, a paraphrase can be provided.

A second and more important reason for resisting the idea of exact equivalence between metaphor and paraphrase is the change in meaning which may be introduced by the metaphor. There is an illusion of equivalence which results from our tendency to take an after-the-fact view of metaphor. It is easy to suppose that the meaning of the metaphor was already present in the expression prior to its use as metaphor, but this is true in only a trivial sense. Metaphor is not an alternative way of expressing common sense, but a common way of achieving new sense. Once metaphor is seen as a perfectly ordinary process through which new meanings are generated much of the mystery which frequently surrounds it evaporates.

This shift of meaning must not be confused with the freezing of metaphor, though the processes are related. A frozen metaphor results from a permanent shift of meaning, and for this reason should not be considered as metaphor at all. It is only when we are aware of an alternative meaning

that we can be aware of a shift in meaning. Talk of the "tension" or "life" of a metaphor, and making it a feature of genuine metaphor, is simply a way of ruling so-called frozen metaphors out of the discussion. It is only when we are aware of an apparent incompatibility between the old and new senses that we can be aware of tension in the use of an expression.

Making this awareness a requirement of genuine metaphor enables us to avoid a serious blunder which emerges from a number of discussions which fail to rule out frozen metaphor. The danger of treating frozen metaphor as real metaphor is that virtually every expression in any language comes to be seen as a metaphor. Plagued by this ubiquity, these accounts see language as a whole to be infected with metaphor, and metaphor destroys itself. For in such a prevailing climate of semantic anarchy, words become too plastic to support stable meanings, and the very possibility of description and analysis dissolves with language as a whole. It is only against the background of stable meanings that the possibility of metaphor can arise, and whether we choose to call these literal or frozen metaphors is of little importance. It is dangerously misleading to talk of metaphor as a primitive phase of language development preceding the refinements of logical and precise descriptive thought. In such a language, if it ever existed<sup>2</sup>, the possibility of metaphor could not arise. Though we may agree with Barfield that philologists have had "the

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2 See Erich Fromm, The Forgotten Language

vivid hallucination of metaphor bending over the cradle of meaning"<sup>3</sup>, I would conclude with Stanford that: "Dead metaphors tell no tales, except to the etymologist"<sup>4</sup>.

The awareness requirement has the effect of introducing relativity into the notion of metaphor, and this might be thought to be undesirable. An expression may be a metaphor for A, but not for B, or it may change from metaphor to non-metaphor (and perhaps back again) for A at different times. This does not seem to me to be a very serious consequence, for though individual idiosyncrasies can affect our understanding of the meaning of an expression, there is a stabilizing effect provided by the members of any given speech community which will tend to establish, though not generally explicitly, bounds within which the expression will have a correct literal use. The existence of such a community is necessary to provide stabilities of meaning by establishing precedents for the correct and incorrect uses of an expression, and these stabilities are in turn a precondition for metaphor.

Metaphors are usually not misunderstood because they are used deliberately, and seen to be used deliberately. It is important to realise that expressions, literal or metaphorical, are chosen to serve the purpose of communication rather than to obscure it. In fact the desire for clarity and precision is a powerful factor in our use of metaphor and our choice of particular metaphors. There are idiosyncratic uses of expressions, the choice of a metaphor which capitalizes on some

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3 Owen Barfield, Poetic Diction, p.88

4 W. Bedell Stanford, Greek Metaphor, p.85

knowledge or experience which lies outside the ambit of the audience, and the use of such an expression will normally demand clarification. Misunderstandings will from time to time occur, and their correction is a constant and on-going process. Looked at broadly, we can view literal meaning as the result of a constant process of stabilization. Thus although making awareness a necessary condition for the use of metaphor suggests that the notion is relative, this is not a serious consequence because of the stabilizing of meaning which occurs within any speech community.

The fact that metaphors are in most cases chosen and understood to convey some fairly explicit idea explains why the common use of metaphor goes largely unnoticed. Because the meaning is usually quite evident we do not pause to consider alternative recondite interpretations that might be attributed to the metaphorical statement. That we are on occasions deceived or misled, and sometimes by this alerted to the occurrence of metaphor, in no way tells against the fact that by and large the meaning of ordinary discourse, and the metaphors it contains, is quite apparent. To say that metaphors frequently pass unnoticed is not to claim that their use is not deliberate or unconscious, but simply that they are selected and grasped with the same facility with which we handle literal expressions. The literal-metaphorical distinction is not apparent simply because meaning is usually clear. This is the feature of common metaphor, which I earlier called its transparency, and it should not be confused with

frozen metaphor, for if we attend to the expression it can be unmistakably perceived to be metaphorical. However, in many cases it perhaps does represent an intermediate stage between fresh and frozen metaphor.

In this chapter I will argue, with some qualifications, that it is possible to re-express metaphorical statements in other terms. But if this is the case it might be wondered why we use metaphor at all. If there is even the possibility that a metaphorical statement might be misleading, it would surely be more prudent to adopt the apparently more perspicuous expressions of literal discourse. One consideration which governs our choice and use of metaphor is undoubtedly stylistic. The metaphorical expression is often chosen to avoid the tedious and flat prose style to which discourse can and does descend. I see no reason to give credence to the view that clarity and precision of expression demand the most colourless and drab terms available. And if, as I hope to establish, the meaning of metaphorical statements is not a hopelessly mysterious or obscure matter, then there will be no reason to adopt a policy of deliberately avoiding this mode of expression.

A second reason which leads to the widespread use of metaphor is that a well chosen metaphorical term often achieves economy of expression which cannot be matched by a more circumlocutory literal statement. Whether or not economy alone carries any cognitive advantage is perhaps open to question. It could be argued that if it is possible to provide an equivalent paraphrase then the metaphor has not

expressed anything that could not be equally well captured by other means. But even if this claim is disputed there is an undeniable pragmatic advantage in adopting condensation of expression which can be achieved by metaphorical expressions. The painstaking avoidance of all but the most explicit and prolix mode of discourse can often be a burden to the sense it is attempting to convey. It is significant to note here that condensation is frequently used as a test for comprehension.

There is a third and more important reason to recognize the importance of metaphor in discourse, which accords to its significant cognitive achievements and this will form the substance of the present chapter. Although I will argue that we can paraphrase the sense conveyed by the metaphorical statement, in many cases this would not be possible prior to the use of the metaphorical expression. There is a trivial sense in which this is true, for of course if a metaphorical expression has not been used, there can be no question of providing a paraphrase of it. The claim is rather that in many cases the sense conveyed by the metaphorical statement could not be otherwise expressed in non-metaphorical language prior to the use of the metaphorical expression, though after the statement has been grasped such explication is possible. Although the paraphrase expresses the insight conveyed by the metaphorical expression it fails to provide it, but this is difficult to see after the insight has already been provided. It is our tendency to take an after-the-fact view of metaphor which lures us into thinking that metaphor simply draws our attention to something which was evident prior to its use.

The use of metaphor is a process through which new sense is achieved, and the sense which has been achieved can be expressed in other terms. When metaphor is viewed as such a process, it can be seen to be neither some utterly inexplicable or mystical mode of insight, nor simply false or seriously misleading, nor just a colourful restatement of plain sense. In arguing toward this conclusion I will follow Donald Schon, whose account of the process of metaphor, I think contains some important insights into this phenomenon<sup>5</sup>.

Schon sets out to provide an account of the emergence of new concepts. He identifies two prevalent approaches in dealing with conceptual novelty. On the one hand there is the reductionist approach which dismisses novelty as an illusion. According to this view apparently new concepts are to be explained as variations on old ones, or alternative ways of expressing concepts which we already possess. The problem of explaining novelty is thus avoided by the expedient of denying that there is really anything to be explained. The other dominant approach is to treat the emergence of new concepts as a mysterious phenomenon for which no explanation can be given. Thus on the one hand we find a tendency to deny the existence of disruptive novelty, and on the other to revere it as being a matter of vital importance but transcending explanation. The burden of Schon's account is to establish that conceptual novelty is both real and can be explained. New concepts are indeed derived from old, but they cannot be reduced to the old in the way the reductionist

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5 Donald Schon, The Displacement of Concepts

theorists suggest. The dichotomy of theories of mystery versus theories of reduction has historical antecedents reaching back to early Greek philosophy, and forms a leitmotif of theories of novelty right up to the present.

Right at the beginning Schon explicitly draws attention to the intimate relationship between his account of the emergence of conceptual novelty and the phenomenon of metaphor: "In at least one of its senses, the process of metaphor is nothing more or less than my displacement of concepts"<sup>6</sup>.

An important type of situation in which metaphor is commonly used is that in which there is some element which is baffling or perplexing: some feature of the situation becomes manifest which our existing conceptual apparatus is unable to accommodate. In such a case it is common for a metaphorical expression to be proffered as a description or explanation<sup>7</sup>. Any situation whatsoever contains aspects of novelty, but in descriptions which proceed in accordance with our established canons of classification we attend only to the old and familiar. We selectively attend to those aspects which are easily recognizable as instances of concepts with which we are familiar, and deliberately ignore disruptive novelty. This familiar concept-instance model is the pattern which our ordinary literal descriptions follow, but it is applicable only at the expense of ignoring aspects of the situation, which is

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6 Ibid., p.ix

7 I do not think we can sharply separate the notions of description and explanation. This is a consequence of the fact that a concept-in-use is theory-laden.



always new in its here-and-now particularity. Each concrete instance of a concept differs from every other in some respects, but description can proceed only through attention to similarities. In identifying some aspect of the situation as an instance of a familiar concept nothing significantly new can emerge. A problem arises however when the situation embodies some feature which cannot be readily ignored, but which cannot be assimilated as an instance of the concepts with which we are familiar. In these cases where our familiar modes of categorization break down, we are forced to amend or extend some concept; in Schon's terminology, meaning undergoes "displacement". A metaphorical expression is characterized in Schon's terminology as one whose meaning can be seen to have been displaced.

The extension of meaning which the metaphor effects is not simply an increase in the number of things to which the term can be applied. The essential feature of metaphor is that the term is applied to a new type of thing. We need some account of what is to count as a type of instance; it would obviously be circular to attempt to explain it in terms of the achievement of metaphor. In order to clarify the idea of a concept embracing a new type of instance, I will consider one of the examples presented by Schon. He writes:

...when I found myself in a metal room with a thin metal wall that reverberated whenever it was jarred, it was a new thought to me that the room was a kind of drum.

I shall assume that the metaphorical statement which is being

considered here is "the room is a drum". Schon does not mistake the room for a drum. He is still able to identify those objects to which the word "drum" can be correctly applied, for he already knows about "snare, bongo, bass, and oil drums"<sup>9</sup>. I shall disregard the latter sense for the moment since it is apparently an ambiguous sense of "drum". But we shall shortly see that this sense can be explained in terms of a metaphorical extension of meaning of the word.

It is relatively easy to see what the room has in common with the other drums Schon has mentioned. In fact in the course of introducing the example Schon has revealed the ground of the metaphor. The room, like snare, bongo, and bass drums, is a hollow container, covered by an elastic membrane which reverberates noisily when struck. If we adopted this characterization as the definition of a drum, then the room would quite unmistakably and literally be a drum.

But prior to the description of the room as a drum it is most unlikely that we would have adopted this as our definition. The ordinary notion of a drum possesses other features which would exclude the room as a possible instance. And this of course is the reason that the use of this word to describe the room must be taken metaphorically. Snare, bongo, and bass drums are all musical instruments, and fall within some fairly definite, though not precisely specifiable, range of physical dimensions. These are features which we expect to find associated with drums, though they are certainly not shared by the room. The room is not a musical instrument, and it may be

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9 Ibid., p.30

surprising to find oneself actually inside a "drum". The metaphorical sense of "drum" which emerges here depends on the fact that it has been applied to the room. This much was claimed by the interaction view. But the metaphorical statement "the room is a drum" does not, as the interaction view suggests, go any way toward invalidating our former descriptions of rooms. (I shall ignore the possible exception "the room is not a drum" which one might feel inclined to accept prior to the use of the metaphorical statement: this is obviously a highly artificial case.) The subject of the metaphorical statement exercises control on the metaphorical modifier, and the modifier changes our view of the subject by introducing a novel description. But the metaphorical modifier does not, as the interaction view suggests, change our notion of what it is to be a room, except in the sense that we now have an additional way in which they can be described. It is now possible to sort rooms into those which are "drums" and those which are not. But this will have no effect on the criteria we use to identify instances of the concept "room". By introducing the possibility of sorting rooms in a new way we do not change our idea of what rooms can be. The position here is no different from introducing a classification according to literal predicates which we may not have thought to apply. There may of course be difficulties in deciding whether or not to apply the term "room" to particular cases, but this is a consequence of the "open-texture"<sup>10</sup> of the term, and has nothing to do with metaphor.

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10 See Waismann, "Verifiability"

Although the metaphorical statement has not changed our notion of rooms, it has of course changed our notion of this room. It comes to be assimilated to the class (which may be novel) of rooms which reverberate noisily when struck. But coming to look at it in this way does not differ in principle from assimilating it to the class of rooms which are painted white or air-conditioned. The sort of change the metaphorical modifier effects by introducing a novel perspective is not different from our more habitual sortings, though simply because the perspective is novel it is presumably more striking.

Turning from the subject of the statement to the metaphorical modifier, it is possible to discern an important difference between saying "the room is a drum" and "the room is like a drum". By introducing a suitably circumscribed comparison it may be possible to express the meaning of the metaphorical statement, though this will need a little qualification. I have already argued that this will not be true of all metaphorical statements, but in this case the simile suggests a way of revealing the ground, that is, a way of paraphrasing the metaphorical statement. But whereas the comparison can never result in changing the meaning of "drum" - comparing the room in such and such respects does not change our notion of drums - seeing the room as a kind of drum can. This can be expressed by saying that the use of a comparison does not result in any displacement of sense. By changing the sense of the word "drum" in its use as a metaphorical description the possibility arises that the new sense of the modifier may freeze and become the literal truth, but when the

locution "like" is used this cannot happen. A comparison cannot introduce anything significantly new because the comparison only qualifies, and does not change, our existing concepts. Metaphor stretches the concept to apply to the new instance, and this may eventually result in a permanent change in the concept. The sense of "drum" which emerges here would have been excluded in terms of the previous criteria for the application of the expression, which, after the metaphorical use of the expression, are amenable to suitable modification so as to include the new instance. I do not know of any criteria to determine what is to count as "suitable modification". It could be added that the characteristics which serve as the ground on which the shift in sense is based should be non-trivial, but this is not much help. The room and the drum share a number of characteristics, such as both being physical objects, which would not count as a satisfactory ground for the metaphor. What we are prepared to admit as significant or illuminating metaphor can only be settled by agreement following the examination of individual cases.

I do not believe that Schon's example has resulted in changing our notion of "drum". Our concepts are not so volatile. The notion of drum used in the example remains tied to the bongos and snares, and the foregoing is intended only to indicate how a new sense of "drum" could emerge through regular metaphorical use in this and comparable statements.

The notion of a drum can also be extended in other directions. If we suppose that the original sense of the expression was something like: "a noise-producing membrane-covered cylindrical musical instrument", metaphorical extension can be produced by attending to other prominent features. Thus "oil drum" and other "container" drums may develop from the cylindrical container feature, "ear drum" from the elastic membrane feature, and so forth. By this sort of metaphorical extension of the meaning of "drum" in different directions we can see how a word can develop a set of referents which share what Wittgenstein has called a "family resemblance"<sup>11</sup>. The relationship between "family resemblance" and metaphorical extensions of a word could probably be fruitfully explored further.

I have said that the sense of "the room is a drum" can be adequately expressed by a suitably circumscribed comparison. This makes it look as though metaphor is indeed elliptical simile in this case, and I want now to qualify this claim. I think the way Schon introduced this example belies his theory, and displays some features of the "after-the-fact" views that he is anxious to refute. Schon said that he found himself in a room with a thin metal wall which reverberated when jarred, and the thought then occurred to him that the room was a kind of drum. Presented thus, Schon seems to have simply perceived a number of points of similarity between the room and a drum, and from this constructed the metaphor. And

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<sup>11</sup> Wittgenstein, Investigations, Section 66 ff.

expressed thus the comparison view appears to be quite plausible. I think, however, it is more likely that an unusual feature of the room, probably its producing a noise when struck, suggested to him the description "drum", and it was during the course of considering this description that he discovered that the room possessed other drum-like properties: being a hollow container covered by an elastic membrane. (The story may be empirically false, but I think the argument requires only that it reflects a common way of examining novel situations.) The point is that the metaphorical description was most probably initially applied to the room without full realization of what features of the room it covered. The metaphor was first offered as a tentative description of the room, which provided the basis for developing an explanation of some unusual aspects of its behaviour. After the statement has been explored it is possible to legislate on to what extent the room is a drum, and in this process of investigation, or spelling out the metaphor, we are providing a paraphrase, which may take the form of a comparison between certain features of rooms and drums. And after the metaphor has been explored it is difficult to avoid reading the results of the investigation back onto the situation as features of the room which were obvious before the metaphor was applied. But without the metaphor as the framework to structure the situation in this way, a number of features of the room which Schon draws our attention to would almost certainly have been unnoticed. But even if they had been noticed in isolation, which is most unlikely, they would have lacked the systematic ordering provided by the metaphorical modifier. Though the sense of the

metaphorical statement can be reproduced by a paraphrase, the paraphrase cannot structure the situation in the way in which the metaphorical expression does. This is the reason that the paraphrase "fails to provide the insight which the metaphor did"<sup>12</sup>. Schon does in fact stress most of these points, and my criticism concerns his example rather than the underlying theory. As he presents it, the example lends itself too readily to an after-the-fact interpretation, which is one of the principal sources of error of a number of accounts of metaphor.

The use of simile cannot serve as a model explanation in this way. Disregarding open simile, which I have already argued is uselessly weak, the closed simile, by drawing our attention to various points of similarity, is an end-point of an enquiry rather than the beginning. But metaphor serves as the starting point for analysis. A metaphor calls for explanation, and in the process of examining it we develop a paraphrase, which is simply a statement of how far it can be extended. The further it can be taken, the richer the metaphor. Whereas simile provides an answer about the relation between two terms, metaphor poses the question. I think this is the point Stanford has in mind when he suggests that simile and metaphor are not generically related at all, simile being analytic and metaphor synthetic<sup>13</sup>. The frequent use of (closed) simile to explicate metaphor perhaps reflects this difference in function.

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12 Black, *op. cit.*, p.46

13 Stanford, *Greek Metaphor*, p.28 ff.



In coming to understand a metaphorical statement we engage in a process of exploration; we look to see how far the metaphor can be extended, that is, how many aspects of the subject the metaphorical modifier can structure intelligibly. This process is one of seeing how much that is familiar in the modifier can be retained, as well as how much novelty in the subject can be revealed. This exploration, the 'spelling out' of the metaphor, is nothing more than providing a paraphrase. In coming to understand the metaphor, we proceed by expressing the insight which the metaphor provided in other language. Whether or not this re-expression involves the use of other metaphors is not a matter of great importance. The purpose of the paraphrase is to explicate the sense of the metaphorical statement, and there can be no objection to the use of metaphorical statements whose meaning is clear to do this. That is, it is quite permissible at least to use transparent metaphor. The use of metaphors which themselves stand in need of explication will, however, compound the problem, and it is desirable to avoid these instances. Schon addresses himself to this point with the claim that:

At best, the literal-metaphorical distinction is a distinction in function; for a given metaphor, the literal language is...what is used to spell it out.<sup>14</sup>

This statement seems to go dangerously close to dissolving the literal-metaphorical distinction altogether, for it suggests that any component of the paraphrase is to be taken as literal. However, I think that all we need ask is that the paraphrase be perspicuous, and this does not exclude the use of further metaphorical statements, though it will of course exclude some

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14 Schon, op. cit., p.57

metaphorical statements. This is a reiteration of the claim made at the beginning of the chapter, that explication and paraphrase emerge from the requirements of semantic clarity rather than from the distinction between the literal and the metaphorical. In the case of metaphor, pace Quine, explication is not elimination.

The reason for providing a paraphrase of a metaphorical statement is the same as the reason for providing a paraphrase or explication of any statement whatever: something about it is obscure which we would like clarified. But metaphor is unclear not because we are unfamiliar with the meaning of the metaphorical component, but just because we are familiar with its meaning, which in the context does not readily fit. But if the metaphor is a good one with some modification it can be made to fit, and we come to understand the situation as we come to understand the extent to which it does fit, that is, the extent to which the new situation differs from and is similar to the situations from which the metaphorical modifier was derived. The metaphorical modifier can thus be seen as a model, programme, or framework through which the situation is explored, and the meaning of the metaphorical statement is the result of the exploration which the modifier suggests. The process is one which demands our active participation, and in coming to understand the metaphorical statement we understand those features of the situation which the modifier structures. Insofar as these features are grasped at all they can be described, and so the metaphor, so far as it has been understood at all, can be

paraphrased. In claiming that the majority of cases of metaphor are transparent I am simply saying that the modifier, though clearly metaphorical, has a widely accepted or self-evident interpretation.

Schon's discussion of the after-the-fact view throws light on the nature of structured concept systems which have featured in most of the accounts of metaphor which I have discussed. The reason that the modifier is able to structure or provide a perspective for a particular situation is a consequence of the fact that language contains no isolated concepts. Concepts in use are related, albeit loosely, to other concepts, that is, they are theory-laden. This feature of language has already been alluded to: it is what underlies Beardsley's "connotations", Black's and Hesse's "systems of things", and McCloskey's "concept clusters", "peripheral characteristics", and "psychological aspects". Most of these theories attest to the fact that our concepts are loosely tied together, and explicitly employ this feature to explain the achievements of metaphor. Expressed formally, the metaphorical expression has associated with it a set of predicates from which we extract the sense of the metaphorical statement. And I would maintain that in articulating the range of predicates which the metaphor introduces, we produce a paraphrase of the metaphorical statement.

Schon also talks of "concept clusters"<sup>15</sup>, but his treatment differs in an important respect from these theories. The talk of "connotations", "commonplaces", "peripheral

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15 Ibid., p.54 ff.

characteristics", or whatever, being carried over to the novel situation by the metaphorical modifier reveals that an after-the-fact view has been taken. Schon suggests that if we are to understand the operation of the metaphorical modifier we should treat the associated predicates rather as a set of expectations<sup>16</sup>. It is only after examining the situation in terms of these expectations, that is, determining whether they are fulfilled or not, that we are able to decide which of the predicates can be applied. The associations which give sense to the metaphorical statement are not something carried over passively, but are the result of our exploration and discovery. The interaction and controversion views suggest that the associated commonplaces or connotations are manifest prior to the use of the metaphor; but in many cases this occurs only after the metaphor is used. It is through the exploration we engage in in coming to understand the metaphor that these "associated" predicates become actual associations. It is more accurate to say that the metaphorical use of the expression actually brings the association into being. It is once again our reading the sense achieved by the metaphorical statement back onto the beginning of the process which enables us to suppose that the association in question was present from the start. Again, we can speak of it as having been present in the trivial sense in which a metaphor must have some ground, but the selective and active process of drawing it to our attention is a genuinely creative achievement.

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16 Ibid., p.58 ff.

Treating the associations from the point of view of a set of expectations reveals an important way in which a well-chosen metaphor can achieve considerable economy in explanation. Not only does the metaphorical modifier provide a programme or model for investigating the subject, but by simply remembering the metaphorical statement we can avoid burdening ourselves with all the aspects of the subject which the metaphor has drawn to our attention. For the

series of expectations...need not be remembered since they can be generated again. They [metaphors] have the condensation essential to instruments of thought.<sup>17</sup>

To illustrate the tendency to regard the displacement of sense which results from the use of the metaphorical modifier as having been present prior to the use of the modifier, Schon considers a fairly typical account of metaphor provided by Roger Brown. Brown writes:

Sometime in the past someone or other noticed that the foot of a man bears the same relation to his body as does the base of the mountain to the whole mountain. He thought of extending the word foot to the mountain's base. The word foot then referred to two categories. These categories share a relational attribute which makes them one category. Within this superordinate category, which we might name the foundations or lower parts of things, there are two subordinate categories - the man's foot and the mountain's base. These two remain distinct within the larger category because the members of each subordinate category share attributes that are not shared with the members of the other subordinate category... Metaphor differs from other superordinate-subordinate relations in that the superordinate is not given a name of its own.<sup>18</sup>

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17 Ibid., p.60

18 Brown, Words and Things, p.140

Schon comments:

For him [Brown] a metaphor calls to mind two categories of reference and points to an attribute they share - here, 'the foundations or lower parts of things'. He sees a metaphor as nothing more than a way of identifying two categories as subspecies of a common genus. The only difference is that in metaphor the genus, or superordinate, 'is not given a name of its own'. But he does not see in metaphor the emergence of a new concept nor does he see that the concept or the superordinate may come into being only through the metaphor.<sup>19</sup>

The objection that is liable to be levelled against Schon here is that the similarity, in this case the unnamed superordinate category, must have existed prior to the use of the metaphor, or the metaphor would have no basis. The answer to this objection by now should be apparent. All that exists prior to the use of the metaphor is an unperceived similarity. But postulating a previously unperceived similarity as the basis of metaphor is quite empty, for we can accord cognitive significance only to similarities of which we are aware. Admitting the ubiquity of unnoticed similarities explains nothing, and simply transforms the problem into why a particular similarity was drawn to our attention. There seems to be little difference between talking of creating similarity and of becoming aware of it. The emptiness of open simile which we noted earlier is simply a consequence of the spuriousness of the similarities of which we are not aware.

The temptation to invoke unperceived similarities here has a twofold source. First there is the seductiveness of the after-the-fact view: after a concept has been extended it is difficult to resist believing that the extension was obvious.

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19 Schon, op. cit., pp.36-37

And secondly, by introducing an unnamed superordinate category, it is possible to understand the metaphorical displacement in terms of the familiar concept-instance model. Of course if the displaced sense of the metaphorical expression becomes the standard sense, that is, if the metaphor freezes, then a concept-instance account is perfectly legitimate. But we have already seen that frozen metaphor is not genuine metaphor at all, and so the concept-instance account can only be invoked in precisely those cases where no account of metaphor is needed.

The history of science affords us many striking examples of the "obviousness" of certain features of our surroundings which, once noticed, seem virtually impossible to have ever been overlooked. The typical reaction is nicely summed up by T.H. Huxley's response to Darwin's theory of evolution: "How extremely stupid not to have thought of that". The importance of metaphor in scientific explanation, amply attested to by Hesse and others, is simply a consequence of the fact that through metaphor we bring the familiar to bear on the unfamiliar. The new, if it is new, is not just an instance of our existing concepts, but it must be understood through an intelligible adaption of our existing concepts, for we have nothing else with which to come to grips with it.

There is one point of disagreement with Schon's account which I should mention. By addressing himself to the question of whether or not metaphor can be eliminated his account is threatened with trouble from metaphor's ubiquity. By considering the slightly different question of whether metaphor can be explicated these problems can be avoided. The difference is that in explicating metaphor there is, on my account, no objection

to the use of other metaphors provided their meaning is clear, that is, provided we choose those cases which I have characterized as 'transparent'. And this only amounts to pursuing the apparently reasonable course of demanding explanation only where explanation is needed. But I do not consider this point of disagreement to be major, and on the whole I endorse Schon's account.

In particular, I believe that his pathology of the prevailing accounts of metaphor, isolating the principal error as our tendency to take an after-the-fact view, and believe the results of metaphor were obvious prior to its use, provides an important contribution to our understanding of the process and how it comes to play a central role in concept formation.





In this chapter I will consider some objections which have been raised against the possibility of paraphrasing a metaphorical statement. Scepticism about producing a reformulation of a metaphorical statement in other terms has been expressed by a number of writers. Charles L. Stevenson writes, "There is no such thing as giving an exact translation of a metaphor into non-metaphorical terms"<sup>1</sup>. Stanford claims "the finest type of metaphor transcends the explicitness of paraphrase"<sup>2</sup> and that "efforts to explain them are just queer perverted compliments to their influence"<sup>3</sup>. According to Black "The literal paraphrase inevitably says too much - and with the wrong emphasis"<sup>4</sup>. Philip Wheelwright claims that metaphor involves a kind of knowing which is "paralogical" and that a paraphrase invariably loses the "feel" and "presential reality"<sup>5</sup>. I will not multiply the examples further. There is a common argument which underlies these claims, expressed by Henderson as follows:

The chances are...that an interpretation, giving the tenor of a metaphor, will always be too exact, too sharp, however many sentences it may contain. The suggestiveness of a metaphorical expression, on the other hand, is subject to no fixed rules... So no sentence or series of sentences can hope to coincide in meaning with what the metaphor-sentence suggests.<sup>6</sup>

Stevenson claims that the metaphorical statement suggests more than it descriptively means<sup>7</sup>. The argument proceeds as follows:

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- 1 Stevenson, Ethics and Language, p.74
  - 2 Stanford, Greek Metaphor, p.29
  - 3 Ibid., p.58
  - 4 Black, "Metaphor", p.46
  - 5 Wheelwright, The Burning Fountain, p.56 ff.
  - 6 Henderson, "Metaphorical Thinking", p.10
  - 7 Stevenson, op. cit., p.74

Only if direct language had exactly those effects on the hearer or reader which the metaphorical language has, could it be said to convey precisely what the metaphor suggests. In that event it would have to convey a referential meaning, certain implications of that referential meaning, certain attitudes, say the speaker's or writer's confidence in his subject matter, deference towards his audience, and so on. An interpretation in direct language will certainly not 'convey' all of these suggestions.

But, Henderson counters, a paraphrase can certainly convey some of these suggestions, and it will have a better chance if it attends to only some aspects of the full suggestiveness of the statement. I think this claim can be strengthened. It is possible to convey any of the suggestions mentioned above in direct language. If we notice, say, that the speaker conveys a particular attitude toward his audience it must be possible to state what this attitude is. The problem really arises with the "and so on"; the argument really rests on the claim that the restatement is always incomplete because of the aspects of the statement which have been overlooked. There is this sense, then, in which the paraphrase is unavoidably partial. But here I would follow Wittgenstein and claim that the assertion that our understanding is partial only makes sense if we are aware of an alternative interpretation. And if we become aware of an alternative interpretation, we are able either to extend the paraphrase or provide a competing one<sup>9</sup>.

Wittgenstein's argument concerns the notion of "seeing as...", and there are significant parallels between visual perception and metaphor. The important parallel here is that

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8 Henderson, *op. cit.*, p.10

9 Wittgenstein, Investigations, Part II, xi

just as seeing involves interpretation, so does the understanding of an expression, metaphorical or not. For non-transparent metaphors the interpretation must be supplied consciously<sup>10</sup>. I shall come back to the notion of "seeing as..." later in the chapter.

We cannot treat the meaning of a metaphorical statement as the totality of possible interpretations. The totality is spurious because it is impossible to know in advance just what extensions or alternative meanings might be provided for any metaphorical statement. The claim is only that insofar as the statement has been understood at all, it is possible to provide a paraphrase.

There is another point that should be noted in connection with Stevenson's arguments. As Stevenson himself observes, suggestiveness manifests itself in statements which we would be reluctant to treat as metaphorical. Thus "four-score and seven years ago" may have a different impact on a hearer to "eighty-seven years ago", though it is not entirely clear what the former rendition expresses which the second fails to capture. We might attempt to describe what is lost through such metaphors as "feeling" or "tone", but all attempts of which I am aware to describe this loss are disappointingly vague. My principal concern however is with the cognitive aspects and achievements of metaphor, and it seems that these are not only amenable to paraphrase: they demand it. That in many cases the paraphrase is immediately grasped; that is, is not and need not

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10 Wittgenstein explicitly notes there is a parallel between visual perception and meaning. He writes, "And I can see it [a cipher] in various aspects according to the fiction I surround it with. And here there is a close kinship with 'experiencing the meaning of a word'". (Investigations, Part II, xi, p.210)

be explicitly articulated, in no way tells against the argument. The possibility of paraphrase is the condition of intelligibility of cognitively significant metaphor.

It is of course open to the hearer to reject a paraphrase as inadequate. But the bare statement that the paraphrase simply is unsatisfactory is extremely lame. The proponent of the paraphrase might reasonably ask why the paraphrase is unsatisfactory, and if no reason is forthcoming there is no reason why he should not stick to it. The disagreement in such a case cannot be resolved, for there are no grounds on which an argument can proceed. The dogmatic stance of blank rejection cannot be answered, but since it provides no reason why it should be accepted it can be safely ignored. But to adopt such a position is unusual, and the objector will more commonly provide some reason for rejecting the paraphrase as partial or mistaken. And when the criticism is offered with some backing it can no longer be ignored. But in the course of presenting his reasons, the objector is revealing ways in which the paraphrase can be corrected or extended. Far from telling against the possibility of paraphrase, in engaging in any substantive act of rejecting the one which has been offered, the objector is participating in the enterprise of providing one. This is very frequently a part of the process of 'spelling out' a metaphorical statement, which is the process by which we come to understand non-trivial metaphor. In practice, agreement on a satisfactory explication is usually reached very quickly.

I think the claim "if a metaphor needs explaining it is a bad one"<sup>11</sup> needs a little qualification. If it is intended to convey that metaphors should be selected in the interests of clarity rather than obscurity, there can be no objection to it. But if it is intended to suggest the clarity must be present from the start I think it is mistaken. Very often explanation and exploration is demanded, though as we have seen after this has been done the result may seem 'obvious'. Transparent metaphor does not need explaining simply because the explanation is evident, frequently as the result of earlier exploration, and therefore does not need to be repeated explicitly. Part of the economy of metaphor derives from the fact that explicit explication is unnecessary.

In support of his view that metaphors are untranslatable, Stevenson takes the example "The world's a stage"<sup>12</sup>. After providing several perfectly reasonable paraphrases of the statement, he goes on to say nevertheless there is a wealth of suggestive meaning which the paraphrase is unable to capture. Again I think that unless Stevenson is able to say what it fails to capture we can dismiss the charge at least in respect of cognitive meaning. And non-cognitive meaning is an enormously suspect notion which I do not propose to consider. There is a problem with aphoristic statements such as this because they can be used in a vast number of different contexts, and in changing the context we can to some extent change the meaning. However, what the statement expresses in any particular context, such as when it was used by Hamlet, can be

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11 McCloskey, "Metaphors", p.223

12 Stevenson, op. cit., p.74

determined and fairly readily reexpressed, though not perhaps as elegantly or economically. Here as elsewhere understanding involves interpretation, and an interpretation can be stated explicitly.

Aphorisms are aphorisms because they have the sort of generality which makes them appropriate to a number of different contexts, and in different contexts amenable to different interpretations. But their occurrence in a particular context at least limits the alternatives, and usually effectively indicates a single, specifiable interpretation. To say that they have a wide range of alternative meanings is to claim that we can envisage their meaningful occurrences in a large number of different concrete contexts. But without some actual context it is impossible to know what the meaning might be, though this does not matter since without the context the expression is of little interest. Speculating on alternative meaning commonly proceeds by setting up a number of different contexts in which the statement might reasonably occur. And if the statement achieves such generality that no context is called to mind, its meaning becomes attenuated, and aphorism degenerates into cliché.

Aphorisms and related statements do not, then, constitute a serious problem for the paraphrase programme. But opposition to paraphrase is proposed from a variety of pretexts. Martin Foss argues that metaphor plays a unique and irreducible role in our thinking, and his account suggests that any use of metaphor is beyond the possibility of paraphrase<sup>13</sup>. A number of

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13 Foss, Symbol and Metaphor

writers in contrast, while accepting paraphrase for the simpler cases, refuse to admit that the more vital forms can be subjected to restatement. This is perhaps the most common position, and is the approach taken by Black and Stanford, for example. The line of demarcation between metaphors which can be paraphrased and those which cannot has been variously and usually vaguely drawn, and to consider the different suggestions would involve embarking on an enormous task of cataloguing. I shall consider only a class of metaphors which is popularly cited by opponents to the paraphrase programme: the synaesthetic or intersensory metaphors, which are those cases which involve the alienation of sense modalities. It is argued that while perhaps a satisfactory paraphrase might be possible for a number of metaphorical statements, the recalcitrant synaesthetic class at least will not submit to restatement in more direct language. Brown, for example, writes:

Richard is a lion because he manifests courage, majesty, strength, pride, and the like. But a voice is cold because it is cold. A single attribute links the referents and that attribute is itself one of the referents. This leaves us unable to talk about the sensory basis of the metaphor in any illuminating way.<sup>14</sup>

Brown is suggesting that we are unable to add anything to explain what is conveyed by the coldness of a voice. The metaphorical modifier here is final: apart from offering equally problematic synonyms nothing further can be said. We might say that here we have reached a limiting case, where the modifier simply is the ground. In the application of "foot" to a mountain, Brown argued that we can explain the sense of the

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14 Brown, Words and Things, p.149



metaphorical statement through the notion of a superordinate category, but there is no possibility of a comparable explanation here, for there is no category which can be invoked to span both temperature and the quality of a voice.

Synaesthetic metaphors are extremely common in poetry; Dante's "silent sun", Milton's "blind hands", and Swinburne's "blind lips" are all cases in point. The presence of this class of metaphors in poetic forms is perhaps an important reason why it is in this sphere that paraphrase encounters its gravest difficulties, and also its most hostile resistance. A thorough examination of the problems encountered here would involve going a long way into the field of aesthetics, and my treatment here will necessarily be extremely sketchy.

A point to note at the beginning is that "cold voice" is not a fresh metaphor, and we would probably have little hesitation in using it to describe particular voices. We have developed a pre-*œ*dent-class for the application of the term, which has at least partially severed it from the notion of temperature from which it was initially derived. And the independent criterion for its application is a sign that an ambiguous sense has been developed. This really obscures the problem. What we want to know is how this sense was developed. How do we go about exploring the sense of a synaesthetic metaphor when it is first used or encountered? Is there any ground which we attend to and might articulate through which our understanding of the metaphor proceeds? A negative answer is suggested by Ernest Gombrich<sup>15</sup>.

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15 Ernest Gombrich, "Physiognomic Perception", in Meditations on a Hobby Horse

Gombrich claims that some of our responses to our surroundings are basic and carry immediate conviction. These he calls physiognomic perceptions. Physiognomy usually relates to facial characteristics, but Gombrich has in mind a more general sense relating to any immediate reaction we experience when confronted by some aspect of our surroundings. "Immediate" simply means that the awareness is such that we are not conscious of interpretation or of reading signs in any way. Our reactions, Gombrich claims, testify to the constant scrutiny with which we scan our surroundings with the vital question: are you friendly or hostile, a 'good thing' or a 'bad thing'? The suggestion is that the basis for at least some metaphors is not the result of shifting an expression from one category to another, but a spontaneous choice of a more basic categorization than the tight meshes of our literal language would allow. Ernst Cassirer<sup>16</sup> has argued toward a similar conclusion, claiming that in some cases the metaphor does not so much establish new connections as re-establish old ones which have been severed or obscured through the complexity and refinements produced in the course of our conceptual development. Stanford<sup>17</sup> adopts a comparable position, claiming that synaesthetic metaphors awaken some aboriginal response, and our grasp of them reflects the ancient and integrated perception of our surroundings. The poet does not create something new, but recreates the old and lost unified view of the world which existed "when humanity was young, and language was still green and pliant"<sup>18</sup>, and for which we have an instinctive

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16 Cassirer, Language and Myth

17 Stanford, op. cit., p.56 ff.

18 Ibid., p.58

empathy. On this view the notion of displaced sense is replaced by that of re-discovered sense, reflecting a primaeval and unified view of the world, which encompasses aspects of the world which our specialized and developed categorizations have taught us to treat as disparate. Gombrich points out that an infant does not have to be told that a lullaby is soporific or that bright colours are more cheerful than dull ones. This simply reflects the immediate reactions of a pre-conceptual stage of development.

It may be true that our use and understanding of synaesthetic metaphors presupposes some preconceptual response to particular stimuli, but the account is of no help in explaining the meaning of the statement which results from the present use, which depends on the word's position in our received and refined conceptual apparatus. Primitive unified perception could not explain for example any shades of meaning which might result from the selection of the term from one sense modality rather than another, for there could be no such distinction. The account is much too general to be of any help in explaining particular cases which are bound to remain mystifyingly vague. Goodman rejects the account, for although in some cases the metaphorical expression may be reclaiming some range of application which it has since vacated:

The reapplication is nevertheless metaphorical; for what is literal is set by present practice rather than by ancient history...however illuminating it may be...it obviously does not explain the metaphorical applications of all or even most terms.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Goodman, Languages of Art, p.77

As I have presented it, the account was not intended to explain the metaphorical use of all terms; only the synaesthetic cases. The theory tells us that since synaesthetic metaphors depend on basic preconceptual responses, no paraphrase is possible, because the paraphrase involves analysis in terms of our existing concepts. But although no paraphrase is possible, since our grasp is immediate, none is required.

I think the difference suggested by Gombrich between an immediate or basic response and a mediate or interpretive one, can be illuminated with the notion of "seeing as...". It is no accident that the physiognomic account was developed to explain synaesthetic cases, which are concerned with basic perceptual responses. It makes no sense to say that I see this colour patch as yellow because judgments of simple colour qualities are minimally interpretive. The colour concepts, like other basic perceptual responses, differ from the majority of our concepts in that, unlike descriptive terms such as "drum", they are not structured. Since these judgments involve no interpretation there is no possibility of an alternative interpretation. Wittgenstein suggests that our perception of 'simple' objects such as a fork also involves no interpretation; it makes no sense, he argues, to speak of seeing it as a fork<sup>20</sup>, but I think this is quite wrong. Here we do have an interpretive element, and hence the possibility that the object might be interpreted differently: we might well see it as an egg-beater, as a less-than-adequate comb, or

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20 Wittgenstein, op. cit., p.195

topologically as a ctenoid. Each of these possibilities associates it with a different set of items. The locution "seeing as..." is strange because it suggests we are aware of an alternative interpretation. In describing the majority of the items with which we are familiar we are not aware of an alternative interpretation, but this is because none occurs to us, not because none can be given. We just 'see' forks, drums and typewriters in a way which seems just as natural as the way we see yellow. The interpretation is so habitual that it takes considerable effort to see that it is there at all.

The main claim of the physiognomic account is that the grasp of some metaphors is immediate and has and needs no explanation. But if one fails to grasp it there is no way in the world in which it can be explained. There are no means whatever of exploring or coming to understand synaesthetic cases, for with the possible exception of useless synonyms we are unable to provide an indication in any other terms of what the statement conveys. This seems to me just empirically false. Synaesthetic metaphors do convey something, and any number of attempts to re-express what is conveyed, principally from the field of literary criticism, could be cited. They may also, like any statement, generate in the listener or reader some non-cognitive response. The means whereby we analyse and come to understand them, we shall see, are not the same ones that we employ in all cases, but analyse and come to understand them we do. To gainsay this would be to reduce them to the status of a purely phatic collocation.

Synaesthetic metaphors no less than any others are used to organize or structure experience, though the means whereby the organization is carried out is not the same as that which we encountered in the "foot" and "drum" cases. The description of a voice as cold is a way of classifying it, and classification invariably has cognitive implications. It is important to resist the idea of a dichotomy allowing on the one hand cognitive metaphor which operates through the dispassionate structuring of objectively quantifiable features of experience, and on the other purely poetic metaphor which operates through some kind of immediate, non-cognitive suggestiveness. The conviction that the distinction between science and poetry is the distinction between knowing and feeling, the cognitive and the emotive, has led to mistaken theories in science and aesthetics. Rather, as Goodman argues, in aesthetic experience the emotions function cognitively<sup>21</sup>. The consequence is that since all metaphors are descriptions, and all descriptions aid the understanding by sorting and discriminating various aspects of our experience, metaphorical descriptions function cognitively, irrespective of whether they arise from basic perceptual or emotive responses or from refined and organized structural features of experience. Like all metaphors, synaesthetic cases can be explored, modified and developed, they are adjuncts to cognition, and operate by discrimination, sorting, and classification. And as with other cases, what has been understood can be restated.

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21 Goodman, op. cit., Ch.VI

Understanding is achieved through exploration, and this I have argued may be 'spelled out' to produce a paraphrase. Exploration involves classification, and unless there is classification, and hence the possibility of misclassification, the metaphor could tell us nothing; and in conveying no information it would become indeed mere noise. The paraphrase is the statement of the principle of classification, and classification is at least a necessary condition for cognition. Nonsense begins where paraphrase ceases.

I have suggested that the difference between synaesthetic and structural metaphors is not one that can be expressed by saying that one has a structuring function that the other lacks. We cannot separate them by a dichotomy between cognitive and non-cognitive metaphor; both are cognitive, and both are therefore subject to paraphrase.

But there remains a problem to be resolved in the case of these basic perceptual metaphors. In the "drum" and "foot" cases which I considered earlier, the modifiers seem to operate by interpreting the subject in a manner which draws our attention to some structural features of the subject; or more accurately, structural features emerged through the use of these modifiers. In these cases, it is possible to redefine "foot" or "drum" in such a way as to allow mountains and drums respectively to be included as undisputed instances of these terms. But it is clear that we could not develop a sense of "cold" that could be univocally applied to material objects and voices.

Synaesthetic metaphors do classify their subjects, but the end result cannot be a displacement of sense in the way this can result from other modifiers. What we achieve is discontinuity rather than displacement. This is the most that is shown by Brown's point about the lack of some univocal sense of "cold" emerging which can be univocally applied to voices and physical objects. Synaesthetic metaphors differ from other metaphors in that their use cannot result in an extension of meaning, but only in ambiguity. This is a reflection of the fact that they perform their structuring not by getting us to cross classification boundaries, but by getting us to transpose our responses from one sense modality to another. This results in a reorganization which can be paraphrased, but not in one that will lead to a displacement in meaning. If this is true, then if the sense of "cold" encountered here (I hesitate to say it) freezes, it will result in ambiguity rather than generalization of sense.

Synaesthetic metaphors depend on aspects of the situation which cannot be subjected to the same procedures of exploration and refinement which can be used in the structural cases. Although the refinement which can be applied in structural cases cannot be applied here, the perceptual and emotive features of the situation are nevertheless phenomenologically objective. To suppose that our means of sorting and categorizing depends on aspects of the situation which can be defined with precision, is to take too narrow a view of our conceptual armoury. Although there is no scale on which the emotive aspects of a situation can be quantified or measured, the classification in terms of these aspects is nevertheless a contribution to our understanding of it.



Here it is mistaken to demand the existence of a precise paraphrase. No absolute precision in the paraphrase can be achieved here simply because none is presented in the statement. If the statement is understood to convey something simple and precise, the paraphrase will be simple and precise. If, as often happens in synaesthetic cases, they are rich and suggestive, then the paraphrases may be rich and suggestive. Vagueness can be clearly perceived. We can sharpen the meaning in some cases at the expense of sacrificing generality. As with a microscopic examination, the resolution on a particular part may be increased at the expense of losing sight of more and more of the whole. (The analogy is imperfect in a number of respects.)

In synaesthetic metaphor there are no 'logical' or 'obvious' stopping points for the explication because of the indefinite gradations of our feelings; indeed, it is probably a mistake to speak here of gradations or sharp divisions at all. Feelings cannot be quantified in the way in which some other aspects of our surroundings can be, which is possibly what Richards had in mind when he remarked that there could be no such thing as a "poetic thermometer". The problems here derive ultimately, I am suggesting, from the naive pre-supposition that whatever has meaning has a precise meaning. If this assumption is rejected then the denial of precision will not reduce or elevate synaesthetic metaphors to a pre-cognitive or to a supra-cognitive mode.

I do not want to deny the existence of undifferentiated emotion or pre-conceptual responses, but simply to claim that they are never sufficient to explain our understanding of metaphor. Metaphor is something which is understood, and this alone is enough to reject any view that relegates it wholly to the level of a pre-conceptual response. It is also true that what gives rise to synaesthetic cases may be such a pre-conceptual response, and to this extent Gombrich could well be right. Their occurrence may well be the result of some primitive reaction, but primitive reactions alone do not produce metaphors, and neither do they explain them. (We understand the metaphor without actually directly experiencing whatever feeling may have given rise to it.) Metaphor is significant whether or not it is the result of some primitive reaction; the metaphor is still cognitive, and the cognitive aspects of any statement whatever are amenable to paraphrase.

In view of the above it should be possible for me to now say something about what is conveyed by the description of a voice as "cold". First, being sensory, we can abandon the idea of a precise scale of degrees celsius. We might suggest, for example, that it conveys the idea of being uninviting and unemotional. This is not precise, but I have suggested that it is vain to pursue precision. The suggestion will almost certainly be considered to be inadequate, but it need be pursued no further here. It will be shown to be inadequate by being improved, or shown to be mistaken through being corrected. My claim is that as with any metaphor it is meaningful if it conveys something, and what it conveys can be restated.

It may be instructive here to compare the paraphrase of a metaphorical statement with the explanation of a joke. If a joke is understood it is standardly through the apprehension of some underlying logic, usually of a rather perverse nature. But it is notorious that the explanation is usually not the slightest degree amusing, and it may be tempting to claim that the explanation has therefore omitted the most essential element. From there we could go on to claim therefore that jokes contain some mysterious transcendent element which lies beyond the bounds of explanation. Our apprehension of a joke calls for a special act of intuition or immediate awareness which we are simply unable to account for in any illuminating fashion. Such a view seems to me misguided. Like metaphors, jokes have a tensive element which it is the whole point of the joke to discharge. This element is dissipated by the prolixity of the explanation, but it is not an element of the joke in the sense in which the component statements are.

The paraphrase of a metaphorical statement inevitably lacks the charm of the original in much the same way. It is extremely tedious to provide it in those cases where the meaning has in fact been grasped: but it is always possible to provide it, at least to the extent that it has been grasped. And in cases where the statement is unfamiliar or unclear it is necessary to explore it if we are to grasp it at all.

Thus far the enquiry has focussed principally on the use of metaphor in description and explanation. The main points which I hope to have established are that metaphor is cognitively significant and important, and that our knowledge of it does not call for any special cognitive faculty. In this chapter I intend to diverge from this theme, and consider some problems associated with the notion of categories. I have already used such expressions as "categorization", "structure", "scoring", and others, in an informal way, and what I wish to do now is to sharpen these notions, so far as this is possible. I think that in gaining some familiarity with categorical notions

C H A P T E R   S I X

Metaphor and Categories

My approach to categories will be extremely selective. I have already discussed some features of metaphor and category mistakes, and this will form the starting point of the present chapter. It is necessary to find references to categories in accounts of metaphor, and vice versa. The thread which I intend to pursue will be the antecedents in the philosophy of language, the great popularizer of the category notion. The most significant refinements of his basic principles of which I am aware have been produced by Fred Schmitt, and by certain members of the school of thought which he has influenced. This in turn reveals some important features of metaphor, and what I wish to do now is to sharpen these notions and to gain some familiarity with categorical notions

Thus far the enquiry has focussed principally on the use of metaphor in description and explanation. The main points which I hope to have established are that metaphor is cognitively significant and important, and that our understanding of it does not call for any special cognitive faculty. In this chapter I intend to diverge from this theme, and consider some problems associated with the notion of categories. I have already used such expressions as "categorization", "structure", "sorting", and others, in an informal way, and what I hope to do now is to sharpen these notions, so far as this is possible. I think that in gaining some familiarity with categorial notions we shall improve our understanding of the nature of metaphor.

My approach to categories will be extremely selective. I have already drawn attention to some common features between metaphor and category mistakes, and this will form the starting point of the present chapter. It is extremely common to find references to categories in accounts of metaphor, and vice versa. The thread which I intend to pursue has its antecedents in the philosophy of Gilbert Ryle, the great popularizer of the category mistake. The most significant refinements of his basic principles of which I am aware have been produced by Fred Sommers, and by examining Sommers' theory we shall gain some understanding of the nature of a category mistake. This in turn reveals some important features of metaphor, and has, I think, important implications concerning the nature of natural languages.

The most explicit statement about the connection between metaphor and category mistakes has been provided by Colin Turbayne. Turbayne says that Ryle's definition of a category mistake, viz.,

It represents the facts...as if they belonged to one type or category (or range of types or categories), when they actually belong to another.<sup>1</sup>

is "...about the best definition of metaphor known to me"<sup>2</sup>.

Turbayne thinks that the idea of category alienation or "sort-crossing" is "the first defining feature of metaphor"<sup>3</sup>.

Metaphors, however, are not just category mistakes: they are made wittingly. The mistake arises when we cross sorts without awareness, and when this happens metaphor generates myth. When sort-trespassing is used consciously, that is when we are aware of some inappropriateness in the use of the expression, the enterprise is perfectly respectable. I have already mentioned Goodman's description of metaphor as "a calculated category mistake"<sup>4</sup>, and like Turbayne he directs the interested reader to Ryle for an account of this notion.

Roger Brown accounts for metaphor as a process of relating two categories by revealing a superordinate category<sup>5</sup>, and Cassirer says of "radical metaphor" that "...it is not only a transition to another category, but actually the creation of the category itself"<sup>6</sup>. Although the notion of a category is freely mentioned in such discussions it is not given any but the most cursory examination. Conversely, we find reference to

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1 Ryle, Concept of Mind, p.16

2 Turbayne, Myth of Metaphor, p.18

3 Ibid., p.11

4 Goodman, Languages of Art, p.73

5 Brown, Words and Things, p.140

6 Cassirer, Language and Myth, p.88

metaphor from time to time in discussions of categories:

Fred Sommers writes that by reformulating sentences containing the misuse of an expression as a consistent metaphor, "we can always reinstate a sentence on which a sense decision 'nonsense' has been reached"<sup>7</sup>.

Whether or not metaphor always involves the alienation of categories will depend on how we choose to read the notion. On Goodman's account what constitutes a category or schema is characterized, with his nominalist leanings, as a set of predicates or labels. He says that a schema is usually "...a linear or more complex array of labels"<sup>8</sup>. The aggregate of the ranges of extension of the labels in a schema constitute a realm, and the schema may be transferred to a different aspect of experience, an alien realm, and used there to reorganize that realm. Since metaphor always involves resorting or reclassification, in this sense it will always involve an alienation of categories. There are two points I want to make here in connection with Goodman's account. First, the account suggests that a schema consists of a scale of predicates, an ordered sequence from which the metaphor is selected. In fact the majority of metaphors are not quite so neat. The example which Goodman considers in greatest detail, "the painting is sad", can perhaps be viewed in this manner, for we could plausibly produce a linear range of predicates along a sad-happy axis. But in cases like "the room is a drum" it seems to me false to suggest that there is anything like an ordered sequence of labels. The experience of the room is certainly

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7 Sommers, "The Ordinary Language Tree", p.167

8 Goodman, op. cit., p.73

structured, but in a highly specific way which could only be accommodated within a schema account by unduly stretching that notion.

The second point concerns Goodman's despair at producing a general account of how metaphor operates. He writes "...why things have the properties, literal or metaphorical, that they do have...is a task I am content to leave to the cosmologist"<sup>9</sup>. That is, there is no general answer to how a label is used to reorganize an alien realm. In one sense Goodman's despair is perfectly justified. It would be fruitless to search for a general account because different metaphors represent different ways of structuring aspects of experience. But the dismissal is a little too cavalier, for in dismissing the possibility of a general explanation Goodman seems close to dismissing explanation in general. Though we can despair of a general account in one sense, I hope to have established that each specific case can be and must be able to be explained.

The second notion of a category is that used in discussions of ontology. It is this metaphysically heavier sense which Ryle seems to have been concerned with, and which has been laboriously refined by Sommers. In this sense, *prima facie*, metaphor need not involve category alienation; there is, for example, no obviously relevant ontological difference between rooms and drums. It is this second sense of category which I shall now consider.

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p.78



Ryle's account of a category mistake is based on the assumption that a predicate cannot univocally span two subjects that differ in type. His philosophy of mind involves the claim that since bodies and minds are of different types, the predicate "exists", and others, cannot be used univocally to span both these subjects<sup>10</sup>. In general, if any two subjects a and b differ in type, there is no predicate P which can be univocally asserted of both. Since only subjects belonging to the same type can share predicates, hetero-typical subjects enforce predicate ambiguity, or in many cases, Ryle suggests, absurdity. Sommers has argued that Ryle's type-assumption is too strong. Although Russell and continuity are evidently of different types, they are univocally spanned by the predicate 'is thought about'<sup>11</sup>. This can be shown by a comparison test<sup>12</sup>, for it makes sense to say that "continuity is thought about more than Russell". This test seems to me a perfectly correct way of testing for predicate univocity, and therefore I think that Sommers' rejection of Ryle's type-assumption is quite justified. But Sommers is unwilling to follow Quine's conclusion that hetero-typical subjects never enforce predicate equivocality<sup>13</sup>, and the problem is: "When does a type-difference enforce ambiguity on a predicate?"<sup>14</sup>.

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10 On "exists" see Ryle, op. cit., p.16

11 Sommers, "Types and Ontology", p.141

12 Sommers, "Predicability", p.263

13 Quine, Word and Object, pp.130-131. This has the effect of eliminating type-distinctions altogether, which of course is Quine's objective.

14 Sommers, op. cit., p.263

There Sommers proposes a weakened version of Ryle's type-assumption:

Two things are of different types if and only if there are two predicates P and Q such that it makes sense to predicate P of the first thing but not of the second, and it makes sense to predicate Q of the second thing but not of the first.<sup>15</sup>

I shall abbreviate this criterion for type difference as CTD. Further, there can be no third thing which is spanned by P and Q. Such an individual would be a member of two distinct categories, which for Sommers is not a logically possible state of affairs. Thus we have a rule for enforcing ambiguity (REA):

If a, b, and c are any three things and P and Q are predicates such that it makes sense to predicate P of a and b but not of c and it makes sense to predicate Q of b and c but not of a, then P must be equivocal over a and b or Q must be equivocal over b and c. Conversely, if P and Q are univocal predicates, then there can be no three things, a, b, and c such that P applies to a and b but not to c while Q applies to b and c but not to a.<sup>16</sup>

By applying REA to "spirits" (or "egos"), "persons", and "rocks", and the predicates "thinks" and "weighs a hundred pounds", Sommers proceeds to establish that we must give up talk of "spirits" or accept Cartesian dualism.

There are a few points that should be noted. First there is a problem in applying REA. Sommers notes "...the rule does not tell us which of the two predicates is ambiguous"<sup>17</sup>, and this may be a matter of considerable philosophical importance which REA will be of no assistance in resolving.

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15 Ibid., p.265

16 Ibid., pp.265-266

17 Ibid., p.266

There is also the further complicating possibility, not explicit in REA but noted elsewhere by Sommers, that one or more of the subject terms may lack the categorial integrity which Sommers demands of an individual. Ignoring the latter point, there may be some real dispute about which predicate is ambiguous. At one point Strawson seems to be prepared to find equivocity in predicates like "weighs a hundred pounds"; that is, in the so-called "M-predicates", which are said to span material particulars<sup>18</sup>. This seems to me a difficult thesis to maintain, since it would preclude allowing significance to such statements as "Strawson weighs as much as that rock". Yet the whole notion of Strawson having a particular weight derives ultimately from comparison with material particulars. But the solutions offered by Sommers are no more inviting. One suggestion is that we adopt Cartesian dualism. Another, favoured in several places by Sommers is "...if we consider spirits to be the same type of thing as persons...all the M-denials might be true of them"<sup>19</sup>. Thus "...it would be significant though probably false to say that spirits weigh five pounds"<sup>20</sup>. To accept "Smith's mind weighs five pounds" as significant, "though probably false", is, to say the least, counter-intuitive.

There have been a number of attempts to construct counter-examples to REA. Erwin takes the three subjects "headaches", "parades", and "pretty girls" and the predicates "was watched"

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18 Strawson, Individuals, p.105

19 Sommers, "A Programme for Coherence", p.527

20 Ibid., p.527

and "started at 3 p.m."<sup>21</sup>. "Was watched" can be predicated of parades and people but not headaches, and "started at 3 p.m." of parades and headaches but not people. Furthermore the predications seem to pass the comparison test for univocity: headaches may last as long as the parade, and pretty girls can be watched as much as the parade. I suspect that Sommers here would attempt to split the subject-term "parade". The splitting of subject-terms is a point I will return to shortly<sup>22</sup>.

The proof of CTD can be deduced, Sommers claims, "...from certain simple laws of predication"<sup>23</sup>. The argument commences with the claim that "...predication is transitive but not symmetrical"<sup>24</sup>. Asymmetry of predication (rather than non-symmetry) seems natural enough, but the transitivity claim is rather surprising. While "man" can be predicated of Socrates and "species" of man, we cannot predicate "species" of Socrates. But before we dwell on the details perhaps we should give the argument a chance to develop.

Sommers uses a reverse arrow to signify the predicability relation. His account is developed from a number of definitions, the most important of which I shall signalize. First we are

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21 Erwin, Meaninglessness, pp.73-74

22 Another most interesting and apparently damaging attack on REA, and incidentally CTD and Sommers' "tree rule" (which I shall not consider), has been developed by A.G. Elgood, who has proposed a general method for constructing counter-examples to REA. But REA leaves open so many escape routes that it is reasonable to suppose that Sommers could find some pretext for rejecting any counter-example which is proposed. But, as we have seen with "Smith's mind", the battle to retain the integrity of REA results in some extraordinary and counter-intuitive semantic claims.

23 Sommers, "Predicability", p.272

24 Ibid., p.272

told "...a term is said to be predicable of a thing if and only if either the affirmation or denial is true"<sup>25</sup>.

Symbolically, we have:

$$D1 \quad P \leftarrow a \equiv Pa \vee P'a$$

If the term is impredicable of the thing we have a category mistake: "Category mistakes are false statements whose denials are false"<sup>26</sup>. Denial must be distinguished from negation on Sommers' account. For the law of excluded middle, which Sommers wishes to retain, claims that the negation of a false statement is true. Sommers therefore distinguishes denial and negation as two distinct ways of gainsaying a statement. These correspond to predicate negation and statement negation respectively<sup>27</sup>. The distinction, which is central to Sommers' account of category mistakes, is another matter we shall return to.

The transitivity of predication is a consequence of an extension of the relation "is predicable of" to hold between two predicates as well as between individuals and predicates: "P is predicable of Q if and only if P is predicable of whatever Q is predicable"<sup>28</sup>. Thus:

$$D2 \quad P \leftarrow Q \equiv (x)((Qx \vee Q'x) \supset (Px \vee P'x))$$

A category mistake, which was introduced in terms of the notion of impredicability in D1, is correspondingly extended to hold between general terms:

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25 Ibid., p.272

26 Ibid., p.272

27 I shall adopt the convention used by Sommers of using a dash to indicate statement negation, and an apostrophe following a predicate symbol for predicate negation.

28 Sommers, op. cit., p.275

...we can now define the class of category mistakes that tie two general terms in a predicative tie. A statement 'Some P is Q' is a category mistake if P is impredicable of Q and Q is impredicable of P...a category mistake contains terms predicable in neither direction.<sup>29</sup>

Sommers calls such terms "N-related". Hence

$$D3 \quad N(P,Q) \equiv \neg((P \leftarrow Q) \vee (Q \leftarrow P))$$

The symbol "U" is used for "a pair of terms predicable of one another in at least one direction"<sup>30</sup>. Thus Sommers obtains

$$D3.1 \quad U(P,Q) \equiv (P \leftarrow Q) \vee (Q \leftarrow P)$$

which is just another way of stating D3.

Next we are told that "...if a statement is category-correct, then there is at least one individual of which 'is P' or 'is not P' is true and 'is Q' or 'is not Q' is true"<sup>31</sup>.

That is

$$D4 \quad U(P,Q) = (Ex)((Px \vee P'x)(Qx \vee Q'x))$$

To rehearse the account so far. Predicability was introduced with respect to an individual (D1) and the notion was then extended as a relation between predicates (D2). Category incorrect statements contain mutually impredicable or N-related terms (D3), that is, terms for which there is no individual spanned by the terms (D4). The theory obviously stands in need of some account of what is to count as an individual. Sommers presents the following criterion for individuality:

An entity x is an individual if and only if every pair of predicates P and Q that is true of x is such that either <sup>P</sup>P is predicable of Q or Q is predicable of P.<sup>32</sup>

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29 Ibid., p.276

30 Ibid., p.276

31 Ibid., p.277

32 Ibid., p.279

There is evidently the following problem with Sommers' account. Predicability was introduced with respect to individuals, and individuals are accounted for by the notion of predicability. Using "I" for "is an individual" we have:

$$D5 \quad Ia \equiv ((P \leftarrow a)(Q \leftarrow a) \supset ((P \leftarrow Q) \vee (Q \leftarrow P)))$$

D5 follows from the definitions given earlier. If

$\neg((P \leftarrow Q) \vee (Q \leftarrow P))$ , from D3 we have  $N(P, Q)$  and from D4

$\neg(\text{Ex})(Px \vee P'x)(Qx \vee Q'x)$ . It is implicit in the account that

the quantifiers are intended to range over individuals<sup>33</sup>, so

that any apparent individual which entertains N-related

predicates will turn out to be a categorially composite subject

rather than an individual. That is, there is no such thing

as an individual which is spanned by N-related predicates.

I think there is a problem in treating "is predicable of" as a transitive relation, which can be brought out by considering the "Socrates" example I mentioned at the beginning. Since there is something, namely Socrates, that "species" is not predicable of, although "man" is; that is, "species" is not predicable of whatever "man" is predicable; it follows from D2 that "species" is not predicable of man. And since I think any view would reject the claim that "man" is predicable of species, it follows from D3 that "man is a species" is a category mistake.

I think there is also a difficulty with Sommers' notion of an individual. The logical restriction which Sommers places on individuals is that they cannot entertain N-related predicates. Speaking categorially, if a is an individual and P and Q are categorially different predicates which apply to a,

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33 See the derivation of D4, Ibid., p.277

then one category is contained in the other<sup>34</sup>. We can adopt a pair of predicates which are prima facie N-related, (such as "thinks", "weighs ten stone"), and pronounce any subject which apparently entertains them to lack the categorial integrity of individuality. But it is equally open to insist that a subject, such as Socrates, is an individual, in which case we must treat the predicates as U-related. That is, we can simply insist that there is an individual which can serve as a value for the right-hand-side of D4, and hence that the predicates in question are U-related.

There is an apparent circularity in Sommers' account; predicability is defined in terms of individuals which serve as the values of his variables, and individuals are defined in terms of predicability. This is not apparent because the selection of examples proceeds in accordance with our linguistic intuitions. If the theory is applied in this fashion it may be that this circularity is not in fact vicious. But the logic of individuals and co-predicable terms enforces ambiguity (or nonsense) in all cases where the assumption of univocity generates conflict from the definitions. REA enforces ambiguity quite mercilessly from the appropriately chosen heterotypical subjects to which it is applied. This leaves no room for anything like displacement of sense, which is crucial for metaphor. Any figurative use of an expression which involves the transgression of categorial boundaries will be characterized as a quite distinct sense from the one it possessed in its category of origin. The cognitive significance of metaphor cannot be explained on, and tells against such an account.

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34 Sommers' proof of this appears in the appendix to "Types and Ontology", p.169



Even if we allow our linguistic intuitions to provide some basis for the U-relation, and thereby an escape from Sommers' circle of definitions, further problems remain. We have already seen that division into a body that weighs ten stone and a pure Cartesian ego that thinks is in Sommers' view an "ontologically coherent" solution to Smith's problems. But the division of Smith does not stop here. Smith can have a headache for an hour, and Smith can think that p. But he cannot think that p for an hour (though he can think about something, such as the thought that p, for an hour)<sup>35</sup>. And he can express his thought that p, but he cannot express his headache (though he may express the fact that he has a headache). So the Smith with a headache, which is not the Smith that weighs ten stone, is different again from the Smith that thinks that p.

Sommers may wish to challenge some of these claims, but I think that with sufficient ingenuity in applying CTD we can continue splitting subject terms until the individuals which we are 'really' speaking of are extremely remote from the natural subjects of discourse. But perhaps this splitting would not cause Sommers much concern. At one point he writes that a good logical theory can "...indefinitely continue to generate the ambiguities necessary to preserve its rules in the face of actual usage"<sup>36</sup>. "In the teeth of actual usage" would perhaps be more apposite.

I will not pursue Sommers' approach to the theory of types much further. It is, we have seen, an attempt to develop Ryle's notion of a category mistake with a neo-Russellian

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35 See Geach, Mental Acts, pp.103-106

36 Sommers, "A Program for Coherence", p.527

formal ontology. Whereas Russell's type-theory committed him to the generation of multiple-ambiguities from the splitting of predicates, Sommers' reaches a similarly unpalatable consequence from the splitting of particulars.

The implications of a Sommers-type theory of category mistakes for metaphor, if accepted, would create serious difficulties. Metaphor is concerned with extensions of meaning and continuities of sense, whereas REA and CTD can inform us only of discontinuities and differences. Indeed the cognitive significance of metaphor I think casts some doubt on a Sommers-type formal attempt to develop category criteria to rule out certain combinations of expressions as meaningless or ambiguous. Sommers at one point notes the ambiguity of "rational" as applied to men and arguments<sup>37</sup>; but there is, *prima facie*, some sense relation between its application to these heterotypical subjects which seems lacking when "rational" is applied to men and numbers, for example.

On Sommers' theory the meaning of an expression is something which is rigidly fixed by its sense relations to other expressions in the language, and any change in its sense relations to these other expressions appears to generate a sense which his theory is bound to treat as quite distinct from the former one. This is the central assumption of what I characterized as the Principle of Univocity in chapter 1. The consequences of this sort of account for a theory of metaphor are noted quite explicitly by Sommers:

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37 Ibid., p.526

If, metaphorically, I wish to speak of an itch as a mood or a mood as an itch, then to be consistent in my metaphor I must also allow for the sense of "My mood was on my chest" or any other place on the body. Carrying a metaphor through consistently is nothing more than giving it those sense relations which<sup>38</sup> the data sentences of ordinary language have.

But to claim that an expression retains all its previous sense relations is tantamount to claiming that its former sense has been exactly retained. To say that an expression is used metaphorically and that it preserves all its former sense relations is certainly in conflict with the foregoing account, and seems to me to in fact amount to a contradiction. Metaphors simply are not carried through consistently in the way Sommers suggests here, and this is of course why they are able to produce displacement in meaning.

A category mistake, it will be recalled, was initially characterized by Sommers as a false statement whose denial is false. Because Sommers wishes to retain the doctrine that the negation of a false statement is true, he introduced the denial-negation distinction:

...the term clean is impredicable of the equator since neither the affirmation 'is clean' nor the denial 'is not clean' is true of the equator... it is not the case that the equator is clean, nor is it the case that the equator is unclean (or not clean).<sup>39</sup>

A number of other philosophers have concluded that since neither the affirmation of a category mistake nor its denial is true, a category mistake is meaningless. Arthur Pap, for example, writes:

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38 Sommers, "The Ordinary Language Tree", p.179

39 Sommers, "Predicability", pp.272-273

...the distinction between the false and the meaningless is already recognized by common-sense apart from any preoccupation with logical theory. 'The theory of relativity is blue', 'the number 5 weighs more than the number 6', 'his mind eats fish': these and millions more predications would unhesitatingly be dismissed as meaningless, not false, in spite of their syntactic correctness.<sup>40</sup> (Pap's emphasis)

Paul Benacerraf agrees with Pap, and provides a curious reason for rejecting the claim 'false': "It will be just as hard to explain how one knows that they are false as it would be to explain how one knows that they are senseless"<sup>41</sup>. This seems to me quite mistaken.

Sommers' suggestion seems to be that we can identify "not clean" with "unclean" (or "dirty"). But it is not clear that this should be allowed without, at least, further argument. If it were the case it would provide a strong reason for considering "the equator is not clean" to be false. But it is by no means self-evident that "the equator is not clean" is false, in fact it seems to me just as evident that this statement is true, and indeed must be true. How could the equator possibly be clean? The equator is not clean because it is not the sort of thing that could under any circumstances be clean. The statement is false, rather than neither true nor false, though evidently enough it is not empirically false. If a statement were genuinely senseless it is difficult to see how we could make anything of it at all. But category mistakes, unlike 'sentences' which are grossly ill-formed syntactically are intelligible at least to the extent that we see them to be mistakes, and furthermore we can provide some account of why they are mistakes. I shall come back to this point shortly.

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40 Pap, "Types and Meaninglessness", p.41

41 Benacerraf, "What Numbers Could Not Be", p.66

Richard Routley also favours what we might call the 'meaningless' thesis, and attempts to prove that 'the number seven dislikes dancing' is neither true nor false<sup>42</sup>. The negation of this statement is 'the number seven doesn't dislike dancing'. This statement is also not true. But the negation of a false statement must be true. So 'the number seven dislikes dancing' is neither true nor false. The weakness of this argument, which is noted by Erwin<sup>43</sup>, is the assumption without further argument that 'the number seven doesn't dislike dancing' is not true. It might be thought that this statement entails the absurdity that 'the number seven likes dancing' but it is not clear why this should be accepted. And it would be equally mistaken to conclude that since the number seven neither likes nor dislikes dancing that it is indifferent to dancing. The truth is that "...the number seven does not have an opinion about dancing, or about anything else"<sup>44</sup>.

The function of negation is to deny the applicability of a particular predicate to whatever is specified by the subject expression. It seems to be a thesis of those who deny truth value to category-incorrect statements that negation carries with it categorially affirmative force. Thus it is supposed that if it is true that "the theory of relativity is not blue" or that "virtue is not square" it would have to follow that the theory of relativity is some other colour or that virtue is some other shape. Certainly if the theory of relativity was red, or virtue round, this would be a reason for accepting the truth

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42 Routley, "On a Significance Theory", p.181

43 Erwin, op. cit., p.135

44 Ibid., p.135

of these examples. And the majority of our statements are negated for just this sort of reason: a predicate is excluded because some logically similar but incompatible predicate is affirmed. But it should not be uncritically assumed that this constitutes the only reason for denying the applicability of a particular predicate, or that the denial carries with it some additional affirmative claim (apart from the obvious affirmation of the truth of the denial). Thus Arthur Prior writes:

...in saying virtue is not square I am not saying it is any other shape...I am saying that the thing is <sup>45</sup>not square, and that is all that I am saying.

This is not quite the full story. We do have certain predicate gainsaying devices such as the prefixes "non-", "un-", "dis-" and the like, which in fact may carry some affirmative force. Thus predicates like "dislikes" or "unpopular" are used to convey a positive attribution, and the logic of negation is frequently clouded because they are often loosely used as interchangeable with "not". But their logical behaviour is importantly different from negation, and this is brought out in the discussion of Routley's example above. For although "likes" is incompatible with "dislikes" as well as with "does not like"; "does not dislike" does not entail "likes". These devices do not function like "not", though since predicates are standardly denied with a view to affirming some other with a comparable range of applicability, we often find "not" behaving in a very similar manner to these prefixes. Thus we would under most circumstances take "does not dislike" as a somewhat

tentative and unemphatic affirmation of affinity. But though this may be suggested by the locution it is certainly not entailed.

Against Sommers, Pap, Benacerraf, and Routley, Prior proposes that statements such as "virtue is not square" are not meaningless but true. Prior writes:

My proof that virtue is not square is a simple syllogism - what is square has some shape, but virtue has no shape, therefore virtue is not square.<sup>46</sup>

Prior's argument provides an answer to Benacerraf's charge that it is as difficult to establish falsehood as meaninglessness. Whereas the 'meaningless' claim, where it is not simply assumed, is said to be 'obvious' or 'self-evident', the approach suggested by Prior is able to provide some reason why the applicability of a particular predicate should be denied. Perhaps a proponent of the 'meaningless' thesis would argue that we are quite able to see why some statements are meaningless: it is just because all significant statements have some truth value, and this is not true of statements which involve a categorial mis-match. But this simply presupposes that category mistakes have no truth value; it cannot establish the claim.

Prior's argument is likely to be attacked on the ground that the premise "virtue has no shape" is itself meaningless. But I think that adopting this line of argument will lead to serious difficulties. Erwin points out that Prior could argue for the truth of this premise with the further premises

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46 Ibid., p.159

"...virtue is not in space, and anything which is not in space has no shape"<sup>47</sup>. To follow his attack consistently the 'meaningless' proponent will presumably then have to argue that "virtue is not in space" is meaningless. But as the premises increase in generality the claim becomes increasingly counter-intuitive. For knowing that virtue is not the sort of thing that is or could be in space seems to be a significant feature of our understanding of the notion. And to be consistent the objector will also have to rule out as meaningless such statements as "thoughts are not in space", a statement which seems to me to express an important categorial truth about the nature of thought.

The statement "virtue is not in space" does not have the same prima facie quality of absurdity as "virtue is not square", but I think Prior's argument establishes that they stand or fall together. The argument also reveals why the second statement lacks the plausibility of the first. To say that virtue is not square suggests the possibility that virtue might be some other shape, for the predicate "square" can be denied either because of the presence of some incompatible shape, or because the item in question has no shape at all. The claim that it has no shape is therefore more perspicuous, and is the claim which would presumably be standardly made. I think for this reason we are justified in thinking that the statement "virtue is not square" is misleading; but nevertheless I think Prior's argument establishes that it is in fact true.

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47 Erwin, op. cit., p.134



Category mistakes, then, are false statements rather than statements which are neither true nor false. But evidently enough they are not empirically false. It is an a priori truth that whatever is square has some shape, and it is therefore false a priori that virtue is square. There is no conceivable state of affairs which could make "virtue is square" true. To establish that my left eye-ball is not square, Prior says, it is sufficient to establish that it is some other shape<sup>48</sup>, but to establish that virtue is not square we can proceed by showing that there is no shape that it could have. The premises we use in these two cases are different in nature, but, as Prior emphasizes, there is no significant difference in the logic of the arguments. But although category mistakes are false a priori, not all a priori false statements are category mistakes. Explicit contradictions such as "some bachelors are not bachelors", and implicit contradictions like "some bachelors are married" are also a priori false, but we would not want to call them category mistakes. The a priori falsehood of category mistakes emerges from the a priori truth of propositions like "whatever has shape is in space".

At the beginning of the chapter I said that the notion of a category is sometimes used broadly to mean any classificatory schema we might employ, and sometimes in a more 'metaphysical' sense to suggest a limited and perhaps specifiable number of sorts of things which there are in the world. In the last analysis I think this comes down to the question of whether there is any difference between a category and a class. A category of course is a class, but do we have

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48 Prior, op. cit., p.160

any special features which enable us to differentiate a category from the more general notion? Is there any way of distinguishing the business of category-allocation from that of class-allocation in general? The most widely known and influential negative answer is almost certainly the one provided by Quine, whose well-known conclusion is that the only difference between zoologist and ontologist is breadth of interest<sup>49</sup>. Ryle we have seen proposed the view that mis-classification resulted in falsehood and mis-categorization in absurdity, but failed to provide any means of distinguishing the false from the absurd. I have followed Prior in suggesting that Ryle was in any case mistaken, and that category mistakes are false rather than absurd, though a priori rather than empirically false.

To attempt to unravel all the issues that lie behind the alleged category-class distinction would take us well beyond our present needs. Some writers have recently suggested that this venerable distinction is in any case probably spurious. Bernard Harrison's conclusion that "...there is no adequate logical criterion for distinguishing category errors from errors of other kinds"<sup>50</sup> seems, at least at present, to be perfectly justified. The most thorough attempt to provide logical criteria for category-errors is to be found in the theory of Sommers, and I have indicated the principal difficulties which I think emerge from his approach.

In my account of categories nothing like the heavy metaphysical sense of this notion has emerged. It might therefore be thought desirable to abandon talk of categories in favour of

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49 Quine, op. cit., p.275

50 Harrison, "Category Mistakes and Rules of Language", p.314

classes, but I think this would be a mistake. The investigation shows, I think, that the category-class distinction is in fact a useful one to retain, though the way it should be drawn is in fact quite different from the traditional Aristotelian approach. I think we should use the term 'categorization' to indicate the a priori assignment of a predicate, and 'classification' to indicate any assignment which is determined empirically. Quine of course would reject the a priori-empirical distinction as spurious, and if we followed him in this it would leave no basis for the category-class distinction. However I will assume the a priori-empirical distinction is viable, though I shall make no attempt here to justify it.

The important point to note for our purposes is that the crossing of category boundaries does not have to be treated as inevitably generating meaninglessness. And so metaphors which cross category boundaries need be no more problematic with respect to significance than those which simply cross 'classification' boundaries.

Category mistakes, then, are a priori false, and they share this feature with metaphorical statements. In demonstrating the a priori falsehood of a categorial mis-match, we rely on such statements as "whatever is square has some shape"; truths independent of experience, in Lewis's phrase, true "no matter what". In showing a statement to be metaphorical the inappropriateness is demonstrated in the same way. Thus Goodman writes of "the painting is sad" that "...the

picture's being insentient implies that it is neither sad nor gay"<sup>51</sup>. It is an a priori truth that only sentient beings are either sad or gay.

There are two aspects of grasping a metaphorical statement. First we must recognize that the modifier is inappropriate as the result of some a priori truth concerning its correct application. Ultimately this is a consequence of the fact that there are no concepts which are meaningful in isolation: descriptive terms like "sad" can only be understood if we understand that sentient beings are the only things of which they can be true. And if we did not understand that squareness is a shape we would not have grasped this concept. In demonstrating the inappropriateness in category mistakes and in metaphor we uncover the conceptual presuppositions which underlie the use of particular descriptive terms. But in understanding a metaphorical statement we have to take the further step of seeing that, despite its a priori falsehood, there is also some way in which the statement is illuminating.

The significance of metaphor can be viewed as a counter-example to those theories which attempt to exclude as meaningless all statements which are categorially incorrect. Both metaphor and category mistakes share this feature of being a priori false, but there is an important difference. What is really the source of the pointlessness of such statements as "anger is triangular" or "the theory of relativity is blue" is that having established their a priori falsehood along the lines I have suggested, there is no apparent way of taking the second

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51 Goodman, op. cit., p.70

step to show that the statement is nevertheless illuminating<sup>52</sup>. But in the case of metaphor we can go on to provide some reasons for their appropriateness; that is, their truth<sup>53</sup>. The reasons for accepting the truth of metaphor are spelt out in the paraphrase.

There are of course false metaphors. Thus Goodman says that to call his painting sad is false both literally and metaphorically. But this description is not simply meaningless, for we can describe ways in which the painting might have been different so as to make the metaphorical attribution true. It would be a mistake then to suppose that the truth of metaphorical statements is also a priori. Once the sense of the metaphor has been established through the paraphrase, we may well go on and test its truth empirically. We can, as Beardsley observes, develop tests for the sharpness of winds or tongues, just as we can develop them for razors or knives<sup>54</sup>. The a priori falsehood of metaphor and category mistakes emerges from the conceptual presuppositions which govern the correct application of expressions independently of what happens to be the case. Empirical truth or falsehood is shown, crudely, by seeing what happens in the world. And what happens to be the case is of considerable importance for the correct attribution of a metaphor.

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52 Though as I noted earlier, with some ingenuity and imagination, it is usually possible to dream up some way of paraphrasing nonsense into sense. But whereas this usually involves a conscious effort on our part to impose sense, a fine metaphor seems to draw us on.

53 I have not explicitly discussed the application of the notion of truth to metaphor. There is a question whether the so-called "aptness" of metaphor may be correctly identified with truth. On this matter I am in agreement with Goodman: "Truth and its aesthetic counterpart amount to appropriateness under different names". (Languages of Art, p.264)

54 Beardsley, Aesthetics, p.135

The significance of metaphor also suggests that it would be a mistake to suppose that categorizations are rigid, or that anything like an invariant sense structure is a necessary precondition for the meaningfulness of natural languages.

R.C. Cross suggests:

One should not expect that in their actual behaviour words will always fall into sharp and clearly defined and exclusive patterns, or that there is some easy and simple test to determine their patterns. A crossing of patterns need not produce nonsense - as a trivial example, while we want, for most purposes to distinguish the logical patterns of sound words and colour words, a phrase like 'loud colour' makes good sense...<sup>55</sup>

It is no accident that Cross has chosen a palpable, if transparent, metaphor to illustrate the facility with which a priori categorial boundaries may be crossed with manifest intelligibility. The Principle of Univocity and all its trappings must, as Richards observed, be rejected by a language which is vitally metaphorical. Language itself is the counter-example to any such attempt to explain its cognitive capacity.

The question of why we select the particular metaphorical expressions that we do to describe unfamiliar aspects of our surroundings is one for which I know of no satisfactory explanation. That we come to grips with the novel by amending and extending the familiar seems natural and inevitable: for how else could we proceed? It would be no help to suggest, for example, that Schon selected the description "drum" to describe the room he found himself in because that is what the room was like. This leaves us, at the end of the enquiry, with one of the most striking aspects of the phenomenon of metaphor quite unexplained.

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55 Cross, "Category Differences", p.264

My aim in the enquiry has been to attempt to show that after a particular metaphorical expression has been selected, some explanation of its operation can be provided. I have argued not just that a paraphrase can be provided, but that the possibility of paraphrase is in fact a precondition of the significance of metaphor. The paraphrase will not, however, be anything as simple as a literal comparison. Metaphors, like category mistakes, are statements which are a priori false, but a priori falsehood of itself does not prevent an expression from being revealing, sometimes in a quite striking manner. But striking though metaphor may be on occasions, it is not some supra-cognitive mode, any more than it is merely a decorative device. By arguing that metaphor is comprehensible in the same way that other language is, and that it can be explained in terms of the rest of language, I have placed it squarely on a level with the remainder of language; neither above it nor beneath it.

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