

## Philosophical Theories of Metaphor

著者 (英)	Peter LAMARQUE
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# Philosophical Theories of Metaphor

Peter LAMARQUE

## I. Preliminaries

A brief survey of academic disciplines soon reveals the widespread and diverse interest in the theory of metaphor. Those disciplines where language itself is at the centre of attention, notably linguistics and literary criticism, inevitably come to enquire about the workings of metaphor. Theoretical linguists will seek explanations for the prevalence of metaphor in spoken language and how this relates to shifts of meaning and idiomatic usage; they will also attempt to classify ranges of metaphor in particular areas of discourse.<sup>1</sup> Literary critics will explore the use of poetic metaphors in literary works to show how an author is able to express and develop the most subtle ideas and emotions through figurative language.<sup>2</sup>

Other disciplines have their own special concerns. Cognitive psychologists will look at the role of metaphor in language learning and in perception.<sup>3</sup> Political scientists will pursue the impact of metaphor on political rhetoric and indeed might reflect on the integral part it plays in their own theorizing: 'the body politic,' the 'organic' theory of society, and so on.<sup>4</sup> Anthropologists, not to mention theologians, will often be in dispute over the appropriateness of a figurative as against a literal interpretation of the texts and beliefs they examine.<sup>5</sup> Science of all kinds is imbued with metaphorical language and it has been argued that metaphors play a crucial role in scientific hypotheses, so much so that whole research programmes can sometimes be thought of as attempts to explicate particularly fertile metaphors (e.g. the mind is a computer).<sup>6</sup> In art history and aesthetics the idea of visual metaphor is at the heart of our understanding of aesthetic perception.<sup>7</sup>

No general or philosophical theory of metaphor can hope to do justice to the detailed issues that arise in all these different academic contexts, certainly where these involve empirical investigation of particular metaphors. But philosophy can hope to tackle certain fundamentals and to provide a general perspective on the subject. The basic philosophical issue can perhaps best be encapsulated in the Kantian-type question: how is metaphorical expression possible? We will return to this question later. A number of subsidiary questions soon fall into line. One concerns the irreducibility of metaphor in our speech and thought. Is metaphor an integral and unavoidable part of human expression or is it no more than a type of decoration or shortcut? Can thoughts them-

selves—our mental representations of the world—be metaphorical? What, ultimately, is the point of metaphorical expression?

It is theories relating to questions such as these that the paper seeks to investigate. It is a reasonable hope that this investigation will make some contribution to the concerns of other disciplines.

## II. Traditional hostility to metaphor

The crux of what Plato called the ‘ancient war’ between poets and philosophers concerned the correct path to truth. Who can provide the deepest understanding of man and nature? Is it the philosopher with his abstract reasoning or the poet with his keen eye and imagination? Plato favoured the philosophical path thinking that poetry was a form of deceit which ought to be banished from any well-ordered republic.

Metaphor is a familiar battleground for this ancient war. Philosophers hostile to metaphor have often taken their stand in the name of truth. Metaphorical and poetic language, they argue, is the language of rhetoric and as such deals in illusion and deceit. In contrast, philosophical and scientific language is the language of argument and reasoning; it alone heralds the way to knowledge and truth.

John Locke is particularly severe:<sup>8</sup>

...if we would speak of things as they are, we must allow that all the art of rhetoric, besides order and clearness, all the artificial and figurative application of words eloquence hath invented, are for nothing else but to insinuate wrong ideas, move the passions, and thereby mislead the judgment, and so indeed are perfect cheats, and, therefore, however laudable or allowable oratory may render them in harangues and popular addresses, they are certainly, in all discourses that pretend to inform or instruct, wholly to be avoided, and where truth and knowledge are concerned, cannot but be thought a great fault, either of the language or person that makes use of them.

And we find the same hostility in Hobbes:<sup>9</sup>

In Demonstration, in Councill, and all rigorous search of Truth, Judgement does all; except sometimes the understanding have need to be opened by some apt similitude; and then there is so much use of Fancy. But for Metaphors, they are in this case utterly excluded. For seeing they openly professe deceit; to admit them into Councill, or Reasoning, were manifest folly.

The shared, and puritanical, assumption here is that if something is worth saying it is worth saying plainly and without ornament. Truth needs no embellishment. The message, which has often resounded through the history of philosophy, is that philosophers should beware of rhetoric; and the first step is the banishment of metaphor. Metaphor is not merely a superfluous ornament, it is also a sure sign of intellectual dishonesty.

### III. Metaphorical language as a subject for philosophical analysis

The rise of linguistic philosophy in the 20th Century, under which language itself becomes a focus of philosophical interest, has encouraged a detente in the ancient war. Poetic and metaphorical language is no longer dismissed as inherently deceitful and indeed has emerged in its own right as a subject for philosophical analysis, and respect.

What is the basis for the philosophical interest in metaphor? When the poet asks 'Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?' and elaborates 'Thou art more lovely and more temperate' the philosopher has no professional concern. Comparisons, for the philosopher, are neither odious nor problematic. To say that one thing is *like* something else might be to speak vaguely but otherwise it presents no theoretical puzzle. The conditions under which a comparison can be judged true or false are more or less clearly recognized; and the words retain their standard meanings.

But when the poet says:

In me thou seest the glowing of such fire

That on the ashes of his youth does lye

As the deathbed, whereon it must expire

the philosopher's professional attention is engaged. The poet's sentence is puzzling not because it is *not* comprehensible but precisely because it *is* comprehensible. This brings us back to the Kantian-type question: how is metaphorical expression possible? More specifically, how can we extract meaning from a sentence which so starkly violates simple and known semantic rules? To speak of Time, as Shakespeare does, as a 'bloody tyrant' or of Love, as Cowley does, as 'basking in sunny eyes' is on one level to utter manifest nonsense. Yet on another, recognizable, level it is to say things the sense of which, without too much effort, can be grasped and accepted. How is the comprehension of metaphors possible? Why is it that some but not all semantic violations can acquire a meaning? Is it possible, as the poets in the ancient war thought, that metaphors can convey a special sort of meaning and even a special sort of truth?

It is these questions about the linguistic peculiarities of metaphor which are the starting point for philosophical theories of metaphor. I am going to look at two general types of theories, which I shall label 'emotive' and 'cognitive,' which until recently have served to define the parameters of the problems. I will extract from them what I take to be their central insights. Then at the end, drawing on more recent developments in the philosophy of language, I will propose in outline a view of metaphor which departs radically from this framework but which nonetheless incorporates the insights of the earlier approaches.

#### IV. Emotive theories

Emotive theories I associate with the empiricist tradition deriving from John Locke. More recent proponents are the Logical Positivists of the 1920s and 1930s. The most general claim of emotive theories is this: that metaphors serve not to describe facts but to arouse feelings. Locke's objection was precisely that arousing feelings has no place in the serious pursuit of truth.

Emotive theories might take different forms varying no doubt in the degree of hostility or benevolence towards their subject.<sup>10</sup> I will concentrate on a version which broadly could be characterized as logical positivist, and which is also, I suppose, benevolently disposed. This version, which has been applied variously to poetry, ethics and metaphysics, has two basic premises:

- (1) a distinction between two functions of language; and
- (2) the Verification Principle of Meaning.

Language, according to I A Richards, has a descriptive and an emotive function, the former characteristic of science, the latter of poetry; that is, our primary intentions in using language might differ, now to state facts, now to arouse feelings.<sup>11</sup>

The Verification Principle of Meaning offers a criterion for a meaningful descriptive use of language. If a statement is not empirically verifiable, i. e. testable by observation or experiment, or analytic, i. e. true or false entirely in virtue of the meanings of its constituent elements, then it is meaningless. If it is meaningless it is either completely worthless or it must be seen as performing an emotive rather than a descriptive function.

Metaphorical statements, according to this view, are not empirically verifiable; no cognitive meaning can reside in a statement that violates semantic categories. At best the value or purpose of such a violation must lie in its emotive force. Here is an example. The expression 'ashes of the fire' has a straightforward cognitive meaning subject to conditions of application—based on what is observable—that are known to anyone who knows the language. The expression 'ashes of...youth,' however, is in breach of the standard conditions of application of both 'ashes' and 'youth.' Empirical verification of propositions containing this expression is blocked. Our focus of attention, according to emotive theories, is thus redirected to the emotive import of the words. Associations of ashes, fire, loss, destruction, and so on, become juxtaposed with our thoughts of youth and age.

Monroe Beardsley offers another example of how this shift from the descriptive to the emotive register occurs:

...the sharpness of a knife can be tested by various means, so that the phrase "sharp knife" is meaningful. We may also suppose that "sharp" has some negative emotive import, deriving from our experience with sharp things. Now, when we speak of a "sharp

razor" or a "sharp drill," the emotive import is not active, because these phrases are meaningful. But when we speak of a "sharp wind," a "sharp dealer," or a "sharp tongue," the tests for sharpness cannot be applied, and therefore, though the individual words are meaningful, the combinations of them are not. In this way the emotive import of the adjective is released and intensified.<sup>12</sup>

A common theme of emotive theories of metaphor is that only literal language (which on this version means descriptive and verifiable language) can strictly speaking be meaningful; metaphorical language works not through meaning but through cause and effect. Thus it is not strictly correct to speak of *understanding* a metaphor. Rather we should speak of a metaphor working or succeeding. It works if it elicits the appropriate emotive response. Emotive theories hold that there is no metaphorical meaning to be grasped, nor any propositional or representational content. For this reason metaphorical statements cannot be described as true or false. Nor do they in themselves advance knowledge. I say 'in themselves' because metaphors, on this view, might well be attributed the causal power of getting us to see things more clearly or of coming to frame true propositions which otherwise we might not have been able to do. But truth and knowledge are in this way at best only a by-product of metaphor; they are not its primary purpose or achievement.<sup>13</sup>

Over the last thirty years logical positivism has come under perhaps fatal attack. Both the premises of the emotive theory under discussion, namely, the distinction between emotive and descriptive functions of language, and the Verification Principle of Meaning, have been challenged. Thus it has often been pointed out that so-called descriptive language nearly always has some emotive charge; and indeed that metaphorical language often has no more emotive charge than the most prosaic of 'scientific' language. The Verification Principle is most commonly challenged on the grounds that it fails to satisfy its own criterion of meaningfulness.

Nevertheless, I think there are fundamental insights in emotive theories which ought to be retained even after the demise of logical positivism. The central idea that metaphors work more by eliciting attitudes than by describing states of affairs seems to contain an important element of truth. After all, it is often difficult to identify any clear propositional content in a metaphorical statement, as is evident when we try to assess whether such a statement is true or false. Truth-assessment only seems possible when we have translated the metaphor into some literal expression. Emotive theories avoid having to appeal to a special sort of metaphorical meaning or truth. Also, they take metaphors seriously in that they do not try to eliminate them in favour of some non-metaphorical substitute, for example, a corresponding simile. A special function is assigned to metaphorical language and each metaphor, with its power to elicit a complex yet specific set of attitudes, is deemed unique and unparaphrasable.

## V. Cognitive theories

In contrast to emotive theories are cognitive theories. These display an even greater diversity but the main general contention is this: that metaphors can be a vehicle for meaning and truth. According to cognitive theories, metaphors can be attributed a descriptive, propositional content, assessable as true or false.

Max Black, in his seminal paper on metaphor published in 1955,<sup>14</sup> was perhaps the first philosopher to turn the tide against the earlier, positivist non-cognitive theories. On Black's account, the terms in a metaphorical expression are said to *interact* to create a new, metaphorical, meaning which goes beyond the literal meaning of any of the component terms.

This interaction theory rests on a distinction between the literal meaning of a word and a set of commonplace beliefs about what the word refers to. Here is Black's example:

Consider the statement 'Man is a wolf.' Here, we may say, are two subjects—the principal subject Man (or: men) and the subsidiary subject, Wolf (or: wolves). Now the metaphorical sentence in question will not convey its intended meaning to a reader sufficiently ignorant about wolves. What is needed is not so much that the reader shall know the standard dictionary meaning of 'wolf'—or be able to use that word in literal senses—as that he shall know what I will call the *system of associated commonplaces*. Imagine some layman required to say, without taking special thought, those things he held to be true about wolves; the set of statements resulting would approximate to what I am here calling the system of commonplaces associated with the word 'wolf.' ...If the man is a wolf, he preys upon other animals, is fierce, hungry, engaged in constant struggle, a scavenger, and so on. Each of these implied assertions has now to be made to fit the principal subject (the man) either in normal or abnormal senses. ...A suitable hearer will be led by the wolf-system of implications to construct a corresponding system of implications about the principal subject.<sup>15</sup>

Thus it is, on Black's theory, that a new metaphorical meaning results from the interaction of the wolf-system of associations with the principal subject, i. e. man.

The distinction between the literal meaning of a word and the system of commonplace beliefs associated with it is common to many versions of cognitive theories. Monroe Beardsley bases his own cognitive theory, which he has developed and refined over several articles,<sup>16</sup> on a distinction between (a) the characteristics *designated* by a word and (b) the characteristics *connoted* by a word. The designated characteristics are those that define the word while the connoted characteristics are simply those widely thought to belong to many of the things the word denotes. When the designated characteristics are seen to be inapplicable, as in a metaphorical use, we turn to the connotations. It is the interaction of connotations that gives birth to a new meaning.

Beardsley sometimes calls his theory a 'conversion theory' by which he means that the senses of terms get altered, or converted, in metaphorical combinations. Thus to say that 'Time is a tyrant' is, on Beardsley's view, to alter the sense of both 'Time'

and 'tyrant.' The connotations or commonplace beliefs about tyrants—that they are ruthless, arbitrary, unforgiving, without feeling, etc.—stretch and alter the literal sense of the word; while at the same time the abstract characteristics literally associated with 'Time' give way to the personalized characteristics deriving from the connotations of 'tyrant.' The metaphorical combination has created a new semantic or propositional content, which in turn can be assessed for truth or falsity. We must ask ourselves whether time can truly be conceived in this way.

Whether we call this process 'interaction,' 'interanimation,' 'conversion,' 'tension,' or whatever,<sup>17</sup> the common thought behind cognitive theories is the same, namely that metaphorical meaning is a property acquired by an expression when literal interpretation of that expression affords no acceptable reading.

## VI. Comparison and assessment of emotive and cognitive theories

For all their differences, there seems to be a common structure behind both emotive and cognitive theories. Both start from the premise that a literal reading or interpretation is 'blocked,' either by a failure of verifiability or by the inapplicability of the literal senses of the words. According to emotive theories this 'blocking' encourages (and is the cause of) a characteristic affective response, while according to cognitive theories it creates a new semantic content through the interaction of connotations.

But there are major shortcomings in both types of theory. First of all, emotive theories leave no room for a rational response to metaphor, that is, for a reasoned and argued interpretation of metaphors allowing us to speak of correct or incorrect interpretations. They admit only the reactive side of our response, an affective reaction triggered by a causal stimulus. But in practice metaphorical interpretation is a great deal more ordered than that. However varied a pure *reaction* to a metaphor, there are definite constraints on what is acceptable as an *interpretation*. The reasoned procedures of poetic criticism would not be possible without such constraints.

Cognitive theories do allow for rights and wrongs in the explication of metaphors; there is at least some degree of objectivity in what counts as a 'connotation' or 'commonplace belief.' However, a major problem faces theories like Black's or Beardsley's: how is the transfer of connotations from subsidiary to principal subjects to be carried out? When we transfer the connotations of tyrant to time or ashes to youth or even wolf to man we are nearly always going to involve ourselves in further metaphors. Let us suppose that tyrants are commonly believed to be egocentric, psychopathic, and wantonly cruel. We can only apply these epithets to the abstract concept of time *metaphorically*. Time is not literally egocentric. It seems we have to explain one metaphor only by producing another. What is more, it is hard to see how we are ever going to find connotations of 'tyrant' which will transfer non-metaphorically to Time.



But if we cannot find such then, on Beardsley's account, we haven't grasped the metaphorical meaning and are no better off establishing the truth-conditions. What originally looked like a straightforward procedure for extracting a new 'interactive' sense now looks nearly impossible to put into effect.

I suggest that a new approach is needed that builds on the strengths of the emotive and cognitive theories but by-passes these problems. Emotive theories are right to stress the imaginative component in the interpretation of metaphor but wrong to see our response as merely caused without being reasoned. Cognitive theories are right to stress the systematic and constrained nature of metaphorical interpretation but wrong to see metaphor as creating a special sort of meaning or propositional content.

Both theories are wrong, I think, to take as their point of departure a paradigm of meaning associated with the semantic notions of reference and truth. On emotive theories metaphor is relegated to the 'emotive function of language' in virtue of its failure to meet the standards of reference and verification demanded of the paradigmatic 'descriptive function of language.' On cognitive theories metaphor is brought into line with the semantic paradigm and duly assigned truth conditions by having the status of 'connotations' and 'commonplace beliefs' raised to the level of (metaphorical) meaning.

## VII. Metaphor in a theory of communication-intention

I propose that we view metaphor not as belonging to a theory of semantics, where the above paradigm of meaning is upheld, but in a theory of communication-intention. Metaphor is best treated not as a semantic property of language but as a pragmatic property of language use. It is neither stimulus (emotive theories) nor propositional content (cognitive theories); it is rather an intentional act governed by constitutive rules. In what follows I will very briefly sketch the outline of a theory which has communication-intention, not semantics, as its basis.

The fundamental distinction on such a theory is not that between emotive and cognitive meaning but between *what a sentence means* (in a language) and *what a speaker means* (in a particular utterance). This distinction is best illustrated by irony or ironic utterance, which I think is the nearest relative to metaphor.

Consider the sentence:

(A) That was a clever thing to do.

The meaning of (A) in the language is determined by the meanings of its component words; for example, 'clever' means 'intelligent, sensible, wise,' and so on. However, (A) could be uttered in a particular context, *c*, such that a speaker means:

(B) That was a stupid thing to do.

The utterance of (A) in context *c* is ironic. By speaking ironically a speaker can utter (A) and mean (B). But the meaning of (B) is not a semantic property of (A); 'stupid'

could never be included correctly in a list of meanings for 'clever.' The gap here is between what the speaker said and what the speaker meant. In context *c* the speaker did not mean what he said. Metaphor, I suggest, or strictly metaphorical utterance, is another example of not meaning what you say. It belongs in a family of cases which as well as irony includes hyperbole, insinuation and hinting.<sup>18</sup>

Being metaphorical, like being ironic is a property of utterances (what a speaker means) not of sentences. One consequence of this is that strictly speaking there are no metaphors in a language. There are only sentences or expressions with greater or less potential to be used as metaphors. Those who hold that metaphor is a linguistic or semantic property (like transitivity or synonymity) are hard put to identify those semantic characteristics required of metaphors; it is like looking for the semantic requirements of an ironic expression or of a hint. The favourite candidate, which we have seen cited in both emotive and cognitive theories, is semantic anomaly or the violation of semantic categories, as occurs in 'ashes of youth' or 'Time is a tyrant.'

But it seems that semantic anomaly is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for an utterance to be metaphorical. On the one hand, it is not necessary because many sentences (or expressions) with a quite straightforward literal meaning and no semantic anomaly can be used metaphorically in particular contexts: for example, 'That house needs spring-cleaning' or 'The rats are still inside.' Indeed some sentences can be used simultaneously both metaphorically and with their literal meaning: 'Moscow is a cold city' or 'John went in at the deep end.' On the other hand, semantic anomaly is not a sufficient condition for a metaphorical use because we need to mark a distinction between making a metaphor and making a mistake. Not just any violation of a semantic category can count as a metaphor. The child who says 'The flower is clever' or 'The moon told me to go to sleep' is not automatically to be interpreted metaphorically. Utterances of these sentences might be intended literally and rest on mistaken beliefs about flowers and the moon.

So what makes an utterance metaphorical? First of all, the identification of metaphorical utterance (though, as we shall see, not necessarily the *meaning* of that utterance) must refer back to the utterer's intentions. The semantic structure of the sentence used might be a good indication of a speaker's intentions but it is not the determining factor in metaphor. In using an expression metaphorically a speaker intends, as in every other meaningful utterance, to produce a response in a hearer. But he intends to produce that response not through a purely causal mechanism, as suggested by emotive theories, but through rational means in the sense that the hearer is intended to respond because he recognizes that that is what the speaker intends him to do.<sup>19</sup>

The primary intention behind at least creative or novel metaphors is not that a hearer should *believe* something, i. e. accept the truth of a proposition, but that he should *do* something. The utterance, correctly interpreted, is to be viewed as an invitation to

undertake an imaginative and intellectual task. This is the crucial point behind metaphorical utterance. We are being invited to attempt in as many ways as we can to imagine or conceive of one thing (the tenor, to use I A Richards' term) through ideas and concepts connected with something else (the vehicle) often of a quite different logical type. This imaginative and intellectual task, which I shall call the 'metaphorical procedure,' will no doubt follow much the same lines as described in the cognitive accounts of Black and Beardsley; in other words, appeal will be made to 'systems of commonplaces' and 'connotations.' But once we get rid of the idea of a special metaphorical meaning acquired by a sentence through the interaction of its terms, the need to resolve the cognitivists' problem of how to transfer connotations non-metaphorically is less pressing. The metaphorical procedure is not restricted to finding predicates compatible with tenor and vehicle; instead it will freely invoke many different kinds of mental aids, the imagination, mental imagery, analogies, and so on. The procedure need not involve linguistic expression.

Another advantage of this 'invitation' view of metaphor over the cognitivist view is that it does not presuppose that there must always be some specific propositional content which a speaker, in using a metaphor, intends to convey to a hearer.<sup>20</sup> There might or might not be such an intended 'content' but I think we should allow for the possibility of a speaker being surprised by his own metaphor. There is no reason why the creator of a metaphor should not have to engage in the very same imaginative task as the hearer without any privileged insight into the outcome.

However, when I spoke earlier of the primary intention behind metaphorical utterance (as being an invitation to undertake the metaphorical procedure), I added the qualification 'at least (in) creative or novel metaphors.' It must be conceded that in the use of expressions which are very often called metaphorical a speaker will indeed have primary intentions of just the kind associated with literal usage. That is, the speaker will intend to convey some specific and recognizable meaning ('propositional content'). It is fanciful, and surely a mistake, to suppose that in our everyday uses of expressions like 'climbing the social ladder,' 'coughing up money,' 'being in a different ball-game,' 'dodging the question,' etc. we are doing anything as elaborate as inviting people to undertake an imaginative task. Each expression has a definite meaning and that is what we intend to convey.

But such commonplace 'metaphors' are better characterized as idioms. Their idiomatic meaning is as fixed as any literal meaning. They are sometimes described as 'dead' metaphors; metaphors die from overuse. It is significant that we can, at least partially, 'bring alive' a dead metaphor by drawing attention to its metaphorical origins. Thus if we say 'John is climbing the social ladder but unfortunately he has slipped on the top rung and has taken a nasty fall' we are reviving the original connotations of 'ladder' (precarious device, slow step-by-step ascent, etc.). But a truly 'live' metaphor

is one not only where the connotations are active but one in which the connotations have to be worked out. In a dead metaphor or idiom the working out has all been done before and the results are common knowledge.

The 'invitation' view of metaphor takes as its paradigm metaphors at the 'live' end of the living—dying scale which seems to characterize metaphorical use. If a speaker creates a new metaphor, as for example poets strive to do, he will not expect his hearer immediately to grasp some intended meaning. The novelty will draw attention to the metaphor *as a metaphor*, as something to be savoured, and of course worked out. The primary intention, as with the primary expectation, is that a hearer will engage in an imaginative and intellectual process.

Indeed, the 'invitation' view affords a criterion for distinguishing live from dead metaphors. To the extent that a speaker can reasonably intend (and expect) a hearer to grasp an intended meaning through knowledge of a conventional usage, the metaphorical expression will be 'dying' or, to change the figure, will be solidifying into idiom. To the extent that a speaker intends a hearer to undertake the metaphorical procedure (seeking out connections perhaps for the first time), to that extent the metaphor is active and 'living.'

What makes a hearer interpret an utterance metaphorically? In general terms there must be something arising from the context of utterance which blocks its being taken literally; normally, but as we have seen not necessarily, this will be the presence of some overt semantic oddity in the expression used. There must be some reason why a hearer (or reader) cannot accept that the speaker (or writer) means what he says; the speaker (or writer) will of course endeavour to provide that reason. The possibility of communicating metaphorically with such ease—the recognition that an utterance is metaphorical barely requires any conscious inference to a speaker's intentions—arises because speaking metaphorically is an established practice. There are constitutive rules for what counts as a metaphorical utterance (including a 'principle of charity' in interpretation whereby we try for a metaphorical reading before dismissing an utterance as nonsense) and these determine the appropriate ways to respond.

### VIII. Conclusion

I have sketched out a theory of metaphor which offers a middle way between emotive (non-cognitivist) and cognitive theories but which rejects the semantic framework within which these are couched. It also shows that any outright hostility to metaphor in the name of truth is misplaced. Metaphor is no kind of deceit or concealment, nor is it a mere ornament of language. It is an expressive device of a distinctive and valuable kind. It works not by merely stimulating an emotive or imaginative reaction nor by embodying a newly devised semantic or representational content. It is more an

interaction, sometimes even like a game, between language users. One aim of metaphor has been described as 'the cultivation of intimacy';<sup>21</sup> offering and working out a metaphor is something like telling and enjoying a joke or sharing an experience. It is a way of using the resources of language to pursue and forge connections in the mind, perhaps just for fun, perhaps for the most serious of ends. The outcome might be the grasp of some previously unthought proposition, in which case the truth-value of that proposition becomes an issue in the assessment of the metaphor. Or it might be simply the stretching of the imagination, a seeing of things from a new perspective; in such cases truth-value is of less importance than interest or fecundity.

Monroe Beardsley has said that the explication of metaphor is the model of all explication. The theory outlined in this paper accords well with the recognized procedures for explicating poetry where what matters is not so much the *translation* as the *explication* of meaning. It also provides a framework for evaluating the many different concerns with metaphor in the other disciplines outlined in Section I. Although no attempt has been made to explicate any one metaphor the paper has attempted to explore the *point*, as well as the *possibility*, of metaphor and to find the correct location for metaphor among other linguistic phenomena. If successful then at least the philosophical task of 'underlabourer' to the sciences will have been accomplished. The empirical work on particular metaphorical systems can then begin.

#### NOTES

1. For a useful empirical study, see G. Lakoff and M. Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago, 1980).
2. See, for example, W. Nowotny, *The Language Poets Use* (London, 1962).
3. See, for example, A. Ortony (ed.), *Metaphor and Thought* (Cambridge, 1979).
4. For a work rich in metaphors of society, see Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West* (London, 1932).
5. See, for example, John Skorupski, *Symbol and Theory* (Cambridge, 1976).
6. R. Boyd, 'Metaphor and Theory Change,' in A. Ortony (ed.), *Metaphor and Thought* (Cambridge, 1979).
7. See, for example, R. Arnheim, *Art and Visual Perception* (Berkeley, 1954); also, Flint Schier, *Deeper into Pictures* (forthcoming).
8. John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), Bk. III, Ch. X, sect. 34.
9. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (1651), ed. M. Oakeshott (Blackwell, n. d.), p. 44.
10. The idea of 'emotive meaning' is usefully discussed in C. L. Stevenson, Max Black and I. A. Richards, 'A Symposium on Emotive Meaning,' *Philosophical Review*, lvii (1948). I include under the broad title 'emotive theories of metaphor,' D. Davidson's influential paper 'What Metaphors Mean,' *Critical Inquiry*, 5 (1978).
11. I. A. Richards, *Principles of Literary Criticism* (London, 1925).
12. M. C. Beardsley, *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism* (Indianapolis, 1958; 2nd.

- edition, 1981), p. 135.
13. This is the view of D. Davidson in 'What Metaphors Mean,' *Critical Inquiry*, 5 (1978).
  14. Max Black, 'Metaphor,' *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 1955.
  15. Max Black, *op. cit.*, p. 287.
  16. See M. C. Beardsley, *Aesthetics* (1958), Ch. III; 'The Metaphorical Twist,' *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 22 (1962); 'Metaphor and Falsity,' *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 35 (1977); 'Metaphorical Senses,' *Nous*, 12 (1978).
  17. I. A. Richards in *Philosophy of Rhetoric* (Oxford, 1936) speaks of 'interanimation of words'; Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor* (Toronto, 1977), speaks of 'tension.'
  18. For further comparisons between metaphor and irony, see Peter Lamarque, 'Metaphor and Reported Speech: In Defence of a Pragmatic Theory,' *Journal of Literary Semantics*, xi (1982).
  19. The basic notion here is adopted from H. P. Grice, 'Meaning,' *Philosophical Review*, lxvi (1957).
  20. This presupposition is, I think, a weakness in the similar account of metaphor, in J. R. Searle, 'Metaphor,' *Expression and Meaning* (Cambridge, 1979).
  21. Ted Cohen, 'Metaphor and the Cultivation of Intimacy,' in Sheldon Sacks (ed.), *On Metaphor* (Chicago, 1979).

Peter Lamarque: 筑波大学 招聘英国教授

Visiting British Scholar, University of Tsukuba

Lecturer, Department of Philosophy, University of Stirling