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Explaining metaphor : a pluralistic approach.

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EXPLAINING METAPHOR: A PLURALISTIC APPROACH

A Dissertation Presented

by

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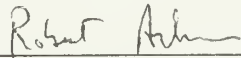
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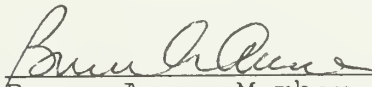
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This work is dedicated, in gratitude and admiration,
to my parents: for Dad, who taught me laughter,
and how to enjoy a good turn of phrase; and for Mom,
who taught me reflection, and how to see that no good
turn of phrase is innocent.

ABSTRACT

EXPLAINING METAPHOR: A PLURALISTIC APPROACH

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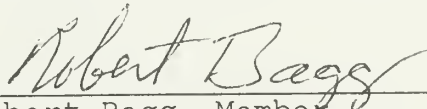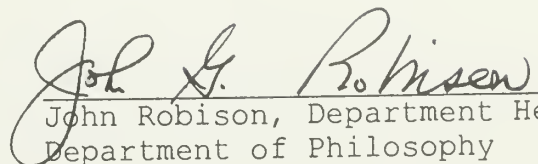
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Efforts in recent Anglo-American philosophy to explain
the work of linguistic metaphor can be reduced to four basic
types of position: first, metaphor as an ornament of style,
produced by a transfer of terms related according to some
relevant similarity among their referents, for aesthetic,
rhetorical or didactic ends; second, metaphor as an
instrument of cognition, identified when features normally
associated with disparate subjects are brought together in a
unique and original synthesis, giving expression to a
distinctive metaphorical content, and revealing the
associative procedures that structure all language, thought
and experience; third, metaphor as a type of indirect
speech, occurring when a speaker implies, suggests or means
by an utterance something distinct from what a hearer
unaware of the circumstances of that utterance would be able
to determine simply on the basis of the conventional

meanings of the words employed; and finally, metaphor as well-formed non-sense, used to prompt a hearer or reader to imagine familiar things in unfamiliar ways, by evoking new ideas or images without expressing them either directly or indirectly. I argue that each of these four positions is inadequate as a general theory of metaphor, and moreover, that recognition of the failings of each supports a pluralistic approach to understanding the work of metaphor, one that enables us to take account of various distinct types of metaphor, corresponding to the various distinct types of function that metaphors serve.

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INTRODUCTION

Although metaphor has long been an object of
philosophical reflection, there is remarkably little
consensus among philosophers today as to just what it is and
how it works. My dissertation is addressed to this problem:
in what follows, I present and defend a pluralistic account
of metaphor. This account is developed as a response to
what I consider to be the inadequacy of each of the dominant
contemporary theories of metaphor. The better part of my
discussion, accordingly, is devoted to a critical
examination of these theories, where I undertake to show the
defects of each. Prior even to the concluding summary in
which I assemble my own account, the originality of this
project consists first and foremost in its systematic
assimilation of a vast and often complex critical literature
to a clear and reasonably simple framework for approaching
the philosophical study of metaphor in language.

My own organization of this material is intended to
show that discussion of metaphor in Anglo-American
philosophy has centered on two basic questions: first,
whether (and if so, how) metaphors can be translated to
equivalent literal terms; and second, whether metaphorical
assertions express a cognitive content that renders them
legitimate 'truth-value candidates' (and if so, how such

content may be discerned). In relation to these two
prevailing questions, I identify four distinct types of
position that may be represented schematically as follows:

		Metaphorical assertions express a 'cognitive content'	
		YES	NO
Metaphors are accurately 'translatable'	YES	1.1	2.1
	NO	1.2	2.2

Here I have labelled each of these four types of position to
correspond to the number of the relevant section below in
which it is discussed. In my first two chapters, I
reconstruct several different versions of these views, in
order to display the insoluble problems raised by each.

In Chapter 1, I consider attempts to explain the work
of metaphor in terms of semantics. Semantic views generally
begin with the assumption that metaphorical assertions,
although most often literally false or nonsensical, are
nonetheless meaningful in a figurative or metaphorical
sense. They then typically proceed with an analysis of what
they consider to be recognizable cases of metaphor, in an
effort to inquire more generally into the way in which we
are able to produce and understand these nonliteral
'metaphorical meanings'. I divide such semantic views into
two types, according to their disagreement over the question

of whether metaphors may be 'translated' to literal terms without cognitive loss.

In Section 1.1, 'Reducible Metaphorical Sense,' I provide a very general account of the traditional view of metaphor derived from classical philosophy and made famous by the British empiricists.[1] On this familiar view, a metaphor is just the nonliteral use of words or expressions as a decorative ornament for stylistic embellishment, a use that is, consequently, most inappropriate for precise expression or careful reasoning. Once identified and duly translated, however--by straight substitution into corresponding literal terms, or into equivalent literal comparisons--metaphorical assertions may be said to acquire cognitive significance. Thus, taking a standard example, to say metaphorically that Richard is a lion is to mean simply (by substitution) that he is brave, or (by comparison) that he is like a lion in being brave. Proponents of this view often praise metaphor for its compact power of suggestion, through which the skilled user is able to effect an enhanced apprehension of the world, by capturing insights and identifying nuances that might normally be overlooked. Poets are said to exemplify this activity, in their use of metaphor as a means of artistic expression, which often

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[1]In particular, I examine ideas drawn from Plato, Aristotle, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, John Stuart Mill and Colin Turbayne.

directs us to subtle or unfamiliar resemblances. Nonetheless, according to this traditional account, it is imperative that serious thinkers avoid the metaphorical use of language, for in shifting a term or expression from one object to another, and thereby extending the pretense that something is the case when it is not, metaphors can at best provide a kind of evocative diversion. Otherwise, they merely encourage confusion and deception, and are thus grave impediments to any sincere attempt to communicate knowledge, which can only take the form of literal truth. To summarize, then, in reference to the chart above, the traditional view contends that the artistically concealed 'cognitive content' expressed by a metaphorical assertion is at once disclosed by and identical to that of its appropriate 'translation' into standard literal terms.

In Section 1.2, 'Irreducible Metaphorical Sense', I describe and evaluate the important reorientation that has come to define the dominant contemporary perspective. Against the traditional view, metaphors are here considered most often incapable of literal translation or paraphrase, as the meaning of a metaphorical assertion is understood to be the product of a complex comparison and 'interaction' of distinct concepts, categories, or extended systems of associations. On this view, initiated in the work of I. A. Richards and Max Black, and reasserted in various forms over

the past thirty years by many prominent American philosophers and linguists,[2] understanding metaphor is a distinctive intellectual operation involving a complex procedure of simultaneous selection and suppression, in effect, a creative and original reorganization of disparate elements associated with two distinct subjects. As a result, metaphorical assertions are thought to be bearers of a unique, irreducible and indispensable 'cognitive content'. A phrase like 'marmalade sky' is considered to impose a unique synthesis of features previously attributed to, or associated with, only one or the other of 'marmalade' and 'sky', expressing something entirely new and unattainable in literal terms. Advocates of this position, despite their substantial differences of opinion accounting for the particular linguistic mechanism that enables us alternatively to produce and understand this original and irreducible content, tend to share the view that metaphor is pervasive in our everyday speech precisely because the human conceptual process itself is metaphorically structured, since to conceptualize is just to classify experience in terms of familiar antecedent categories.

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[2]Though Richards and Black receive primary consideration, I also make reference in this section to views expressed by Paul Henle, Monroe Beardsley, Nelson Goodman, George Lakoff, Mark Johnson, Mark Turner, Eva Kittay, and Mary Hesse.

In Chapter 2 my discussion turns away from semantics, in order to consider various efforts to explain metaphor in terms of pragmatics. Pragmatic views generally begin with the assumption that understanding the work of metaphor requires that it be treated as a transgressive act of language, where what is most important is not what a metaphor means, but what it is used to do. They then typically proceed with an analysis of what they consider to be recognizable cases of metaphor, in an effort to inquire more generally into the way in which certain aspects of the context of use support or require a reinterpretation of the absurd literal meaning of a metaphorical utterance in terms of the beliefs or intentions it would appear to indicate or evoke. I divide these pragmatic views into two types, according to their disagreement over the question of whether the beliefs or intentions indicated or evoked by a metaphor may be accurately 'translated' into literal terms by way of a reliable pragmatic calculus.

In Section 2.1, 'Reducible Non-Sense', I examine and assess a few of the more prominent attempts to understand metaphor in terms of the speech-act distinction between word or sentence meaning and speaker's utterance meaning.[3] According to this type of view, a literal utterance occurs

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[3]In this section, I focus primarily on the position of John Searle, though I also discuss ideas drawn from the work of Paul Grice, Dan Sperber, Deirdre Wilson and Robert Fogelin.

when speaker's meaning and sentence meaning are the same; metaphor, on the other hand, is a special case of a speaker saying one thing while meaning another. We engage in such indirect communicative activity quite often, for instance, in asking 'have you got a kleenex?' in order to request one, or in stating 'it's cold in here' when what is in fact intended is 'please close the window'. Indirect speech of this sort is successfully employed and understood due to its conformity to an implicit procedure or device that permits its hearers initially to recognize it as such, and then to infer the speaker's intended meaning from the literal utterance meaning. One such type of indirect speech is irony, where the literal inappropriateness of an utterance to the speech context in which it occurs compels the hearer to reinterpret it to mean the opposite of what it says. Thus, if offered the comment 'splendid weather' just seconds after a loud thunderclap, or when caught in a sudden downpour, we have no trouble identifying this utterance as an instance of irony, nor understanding its intended sense. On this view, metaphor functions in like fashion. It is signaled by a speaker's violation of one or more of a number of standard conversational maxims pertaining to such basic cooperative principles as truthfulness, brevity and relevance. The vital difference between metaphor and other kinds of indirect speech, however, consists in the fact that

metaphors violate such standards by virtue of the manifest absurdity or incoherence of their literal meaning in relation to the circumstances of their utterance. Metaphorical meaning is just speaker's intended meaning, which we arrive at by inference from the particular juxtaposition of the semantic content invoked to utter such literal absurdity or incoherence, and the alternative interpretive possibilities provided by its context of use. Thus, to take an example, the literal absurdity of Ann Richards's assertion that George Bush 'was born with a silver foot in his mouth' compels us, first, to assume that she is speaking metaphorically, and second, to infer, from our knowledge of both the normal use of these terms and the broader context of her remarks, that her intended meaning is that Bush is incompetent, despite all of the advantages offered to him in virtue of his privileged background. (By mixing conventional metaphors, she even provides a clever instance of the sort of verbal gaffe so often delivered in earnest by Bush, the evocation of which serves to support her case.) Despite their various differences of opinion over the precise nature of the pragmatic calculus permitting us to carry through such inferences consistently and correctly, defenders of this type of 'indirect speech' position tend to agree that metaphor may be successfully

translated to equivalent literal terms, expressing the meaning for which it was devised by its author.

In Section 2.2, 'Irreducible Non-Sense', I discuss and evaluate what might be considered a more strictly pragmatic, or 'causal' view of metaphor, one which signals a key break by denying both 'cognitive content' and 'translatability'. Here I focus primarily on the claim that metaphors convey no coded message, nor indicate anything other than what they literally say.[4] Instead, they provoke or inspire us to 'see as' rather than 'see that', imposing a new perspective that prompts us to imagine familiar things in wholly unfamiliar ways inaccessible to literal translation or paraphrase. Briefly put, this type of position may be distinguished from the two preceding views as follows. Adherents to this type of pragmatic view agree with 'interactionists' (position 1.2 above) in holding that metaphorical assertions cannot be accurately translated into literal terms--but this agreement is not because they share the idea that such assertions bear an irreducible cognitive content, rather, it is because they believe that there is nothing nonliteral in a metaphor to be translated. Correspondingly, supporters of these two positions differ over the cognitive status of metaphor: against the same 'interactionists', supporters of this

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[4]The central figure here is Donald Davidson, though in this section I also consider views expressed by Marcus Hester, Paul Ricoeur, Marcia Cavell, Samuel Levin and Richard Rorty.

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latter pragmatic view deny that metaphors communicate an

encoded 'metaphorical meaning'--yet they deny it not because

they accept the 'indirect speech' reduction of metaphor to

speaker's intended meaning (position 2.1 above), but because

they hold that metaphor achieves its wonders with no more

than ordinary word meanings, albeit employed in imaginative

new ways. Here we might consider, for instance, Yeats's

mention of 'the foul rag-and-bone shop of the heart.'

Rather than seeking to explain or decipher a concealed

message in these words, defenders of this type of position

urge that we limit ourselves merely to describing what they

evoke. Upon hearing or reading a metaphor, we often find

ourselves forming new ideas, and occasionally even new

beliefs. On this view, metaphors are best understood as

causes, rather than expressions, of such changes.

In my third and final chapter, I outline a pluralistic

account of metaphor. This account follows from the results

of the preceding chapters, which establish that none of the

four types of position presented above succeed in providing

an adequate account of metaphor. Drawing upon the strengths

and weaknesses of each of these views, I distinguish three

kinds of metaphor, which might be considered to correspond

to three distinct synchronic moments in the same diachronic

process of linguistic innovation, conflict and change.

Finally, in closing, I offer some thoughts on the general

social function served by each of these three distinct uses of language.

To complete these rather drawn out introductory remarks, a few caveats will be appropriate, regarding certain matters with which this project is _not_ concerned. First, behind much of the recent discussion of metaphor among philosophers there lurks a series of traditional philosophical problems, and of course, sets of opposing positions over these problems, which I have sought earnestly to avoid. I am not convinced that the continuing debates between various representatives of realism and anti-realism, foundationalism and anti-foundationalism, or absolutism and relativism need have any immediate bearing on one's understanding of the work of metaphor.[5] Still, granting Hilary Putnam's claim that 'to accept another philospher's vocabulary is always to accept a good many of his philosophical assumptions,'[6] I have made an effort to employ

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[5]Compare, for instance, Nelson Goodman's discussion of 'ways, metaphorical and otherwise, of making worlds' ('Metaphor as Moonlighting,' in Johnson, Philosophical Perspectives on Metaphor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1981, p. 227n) with Thomas Kuhn's self-description as an 'unregenerate realist' ('Metaphor in Science,' in Anthony Ortony, Metaphor and Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982) p. 539). Despite their obvious metaphysical differences, each advances a view of metaphor (in the articles cited) that I consider an instance of the position labelled as 1.2 above.

[6]Hilary Putnam, 'Truth, Activation Vectors and Possession Conditions for Concepts,' Philosophy and Phenomenological Research Vol. LII, No. 2 (June 1992): 431-444

terms that would steer clear of these debates insofar as possible. In certain areas, this pledge has been difficult (or arguably impossible) to keep--for instance, in relation to discussion over the nature and limits of linguistic meaning. Here I have endeavored to maintain only a general, common-sense understanding of what it is to say that certain marks or noises have meaning, one that I hope would be both accessible and plausible to the reader with little or no exposure to contemporary philosophy of language.

It will be evident, moreover, that my consideration of the philosophical literature on metaphor is by no means exhaustive. Rather, I make specific reference only to the texts that I consider best representative of the most relevant and interesting positions, which, on my view, have served to structure much of the subsequent discussion for recent English-speaking philosophy. It is now clear that discussion of metaphor and metaphor-related issues has in recent years become an important cross-disciplinary point of contact, producing a vast quantity and range of critical commentary. In reference to this overwhelming secondary literature specific to debates over a profusion of problems spanning fields as diverse as linguistics, cognitive science, psychology, education, theology, philosophy of science and literary criticism, I make no claim to

expertise, nor even, in many cases, to minimal competence.[7]
The scope of this work is limited to a critical discussion
of metaphor within the parameters set by the positions
outlined in cursory fashion above.

A final word regarding conventions of style:
underlining within quotations invariably indicates the
emphasis of the author cited; square brackets contain
editing of my own. Full references are provided just once
in the footnotes; thereafter, references are indicated only
by parentheses containing page numbers following quotations
in cases where the source is evident.

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[7]As a measure of the extent of recent interest in
metaphor, consider Jean-Pierre van Noppen, ed., Metaphor II: a
classified bibliography of publications 1985 to 1990
(Philadelphia: J. Benjamins Publishing Co., 1990), a text
containing some three and a half thousand references.

CHAPTER 1

SEMANTIC THEORIES OF METAPHOR

In this first chapter I consider attempts to explain
the work of metaphor in terms of semantics. Semantics,
broadly speaking, is the study of linguistic meaning.[8] An
essential aspect of language use is the ability to
distinguish meaningful expression, in accordance with a
conventional system for conveying messages, which permits
language-users to link words with certain meanings, or
specific referring intentions. Any adequate
characterization of linguistic competence must incorporate a
description of this conventional system of meanings--in
short, it must include a semantics. Insofar as our use of
metaphor relies upon or in some way augments this
conventional system, it too may be considered an instance of
meaningful expression, which must be accounted for within a
theory of semantics.

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[8]Here and throughout this chapter, my employment of the
word 'meaning' is intended in a general and non-technical
sense, as an inclusive term that may be understood to
encompass sense, reference, use, and such related ideas. It is
not my intention here to develop or give preference to a
particular theory of meaning, although important aspects of
the discussion below draw upon what I take to be the general
purpose or rationale of any such theory.

Semantic views of metaphor generally begin with the assumption that metaphorical assertions, although most often literally false or nonsensical, are nonetheless meaningful in a figurative or metaphorical sense. They then typically proceed with an analysis of what they consider to be recognizable cases of metaphor, in an effort to inquire more generally into the way in which we are able to employ and understand these nonliteral 'metaphorical meanings'. In this chapter, following upon the organization of the chart presented in my introduction, I divide these semantic views into two types, according to their disagreement over the question of whether metaphors may be accurately 'translated', by which I mean 'reduced to literal terms without cognitive loss'.

1.1   Reducible Metaphorical Sense

> Do not believe his vows, for they are brokers
> Not of that dye which their investments show,
> But mere implorators of unholy suits,
> Breathing like sanctified and pious bards,
> The better to beguile.
>
> - Polonius to Ophelia, Hamlet I,3

Most views of metaphor begin by distinguishing the metaphorical use of language from its ordinary literal use, which is taken to be strictly denotative. In ordinary language, we represent reality to ourselves and to each other; its denotative capacity allows us to characterize or

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make reference to different states of the world. Metaphor, however, marks a departure from this standard use. It is discerned when we confront a non-standard conjunction of standard literal terms, whose strikingly odd concurrence in a manifestly false or apparently nonsensical assertion deters us from assigning to them their usual meanings. This initially unfamiliar use of familiar linguistic expression may effect a novel comparison of normally unassociated objects or events, which may in turn lead us to identify previously unrecognized similarities in their respective properties. As such, we have come to accept as meaningful the languid claims that time is money, the world a stage, and no man an island, just as we are likely to grant a certain sense to one who sings 'I'm a Howlin' Wolf,' or 'You are the Sunshine of My Life.' The point of these trite examples is only to illustrate that metaphoric attribution is often understood to involve a distinct shift of meaning, from ordinary, direct reference to a peculiar form of innovative, indirect reference. Indeed, such would seem to be warranted by the etymology of the term, which comes to us from the Greek meta (usually taken to signify the idea of displacement, or transfer), and pherein (to carry, or bear).[9]

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[9]The Oxford English Dictionary.

The priority awarded to this idea of deviation from literal use, effecting in turn a transfer of meaning, is generally considered to have originated with the celebrated definition of metaphor provided in Aristotle's Poetics. Aristotle is there concerned with an elaboration of general rules for the imitation of human action in poetry, principally tragic poetry. In his discussion of the various linguistic resources available to the poet for the construction of his art, he asserts that

> Metaphor consists in giving the thing a name
> that belongs to something else; the
> transference being either from genus to
> species, or from species to genus, or from
> species to species, or on grounds of analogy.
> (1457b)[10]

Critics have often pointed out that this account applies only to isolated words; most recent considerations of metaphor expand the same treatment to include phrases, sentences and even poems and other texts in their entirety.[11] Many have even suggested that Aristotle's 'name' can here be construed to incorporate any sign or collection of signs, so that other works of art such as

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[10]Aristotle's Rhetoric and Poetics (New York: Random House, 1954), Rhetoric translated by Rhys Roberts, Poetics translated by Ingram Bywater. Hereafter, as with all future series of citations where source is evident, simply page numbers (standard edition pagination where available) in parentheses following quotations, as above.

[11]In particular, cf. Paul Ricoeur, The Rule of Metaphor (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977; Robert Czerny trans.), chapter one, pp. 9-35.

paintings and sculptures can be granted metaphorical status. For the moment, I postpone discussion of this critical 'question of demarcation', along with its concern for distinguishing various types of metaphor within a general definition.[12] Presently, I want only to underline two key features of Aristotle's view: first, the idea of deviant usage, 'in giving the thing a name that belongs to something else;' and second, the condition that such deviance involves a 'transference' among related terms.

The basis for this transference is made explicit in the following section. While considering the elements of poetic diction, Aristotle tells us that 'a good metaphor implies an intuitive perception of the similarity in dissimilars.' (1459a) A third significant component of his definition, then, is that the successful transfer of meaning is assured by the presence of a subtle, underlying resemblance between normally unassociated things; the author of a good metaphor recognizes and gives expression to a striking 'similarity in dissimilars.' Yet this is not easily accomplished. In the course of the same discussion of Diction, Aristotle praises the 'fine' verse of Euripides over the comparatively 'poor'

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[12]This designation is David Cooper's; see his Metaphor (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), pp. 5ff. My own response to what he calls the ''external' demarcation problem' is provided in chapter 3 below.

work of Aeschylus, and then proposes a test for

distinguishing such inferior use. There he notes that

> the rule of moderation applies to all the
> constituents of the poetic vocabulary; even
> with metaphors, strange words, and the rest,
> the effect will be the same, if one uses them
> improperly and with a view to provoking
> laughter. The proper use of them is a very
> different thing. To realize the difference
> one should take an epic verse and see how it
> reads when the normal words are introduced.
> The same should be done too with the strange
> word, the metaphor, and the rest; for one has
> only to put the ordinary words in their place
> to see the truth of what we are saying.
> (1458b)

An inappropriate metaphor is foolish or idiotic; it follows

from immoderate use, which can only provoke laughter. More

interesting for my purposes here, however, is Aristotle's

claim that such improper use may be readily discerned 'when

the normal words are introduced.' Such a test presupposes,

of course, that these words are accessible--in other words,

that a metaphor is capable of being rendered in equivalent

literal terms. The ready availability of such terms assures

that there is no special or irreducible figurative meaning

imparted by metaphor; consequently, for Aristotle, the

essential function of metaphor is strictly decorative. When

we 'put the ordinary words in their place,' we strip

language of its ornamental 'poetic vocabulary,' in order to

better evaluate a metaphor for its appropriateness. This

translation procedure in no way alters sense. Rather, it

appears intended to clear away any ambiguity or uncertainty

associated with poetic language, in order that we may focus

exclusively on the unadorned literal sense of an expression,

and the degree of relevant 'harmony,' or 'similarity in

dissimilars' to which it attests.

This account of metaphor is maintained and reinforced

in Aristotle's Rhetoric. Although this text is concerned

with a distinct discipline--namely, the various

'argumentative modes of persuasion' in spoken discourse--the

Rhetoric carries over from the Poetics the same definition

of metaphor, and emphasizes its equal value for prose

composition.[13] Once again, Aristotle addresses the question

of the proper and improper use of metaphor, and in

particular, the importance of the latent similarity that a

metaphor identifies through its transgressive naming. There

again we are told that the appropriateness of a metaphor

will depend upon the degree of relevant similarity that it

indicates, for

> Metaphors, like epithets, must be fitting,
> which means that they must fairly correspond
> to the thing signified: failing this, their
> inappropriateness will be conspicuous: the
> want of harmony between two things is
> emphasized by their being placed side by
> side. (1405a)

Inappropriate use of metaphor proceeds despite this 'want of

harmony between two things,' which marks a standard form of

'bad taste in language' (1405b). Such bad taste is evident

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[13]Most notably, at 1404b-1405a.

in instances of metaphor that are 'ridiculous,' 'too grand and theatrical,' 'far-fetched,' or 'obscure'--metaphors that 'fail, for the reasons given, to carry the hearer with them.' (1406b)

If proper use requires attention to similarity, then it would seem that one obvious way to interpret a metaphor would be to treat it as equivalent to a corresponding statement of comparison. In a well-known passage of the Rhetoric, Aristotle defends a version of this view, arguing that

> The Simile also is a metaphor; the difference
> is but slight. When the poet says of Achilles
> that he
>   'Leapt on the foe as a lion,'
> this is a simile; when he says of him 'the
> lion leapt,' it is a metaphor--here, since
> both are courageous, he has transferred to
> Achilles the name of 'lion'. (1406b)

These lines are often credited with having inspired the enduring view that metaphors are nothing other than elliptical similes, that is, abridged or compressed statements of comparison, whose want of an explicit comparative term in no way alters their informative content. As the comparison in question may be construed literally or figuratively, we may identify in this proposal at least two distinct positions; I return to a discussion and critical appraisal of each of these positions below.[14]

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[14] I take up the view that metaphors can be reduced to literal comparisons later on in this section; in accordance with the organization of the critical literature set out in my

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For the moment, it will do to summarize what is most
fundamental in Aristotle's important and abiding legacy for
all succeeding discussion of the nature and function of
metaphor. On his view, metaphor is a striking, yet purely
ornamental deviation from ordinary language use, involving a
transfer of terms that are related by virtue of some
appropriate similarity between their referents, a similarity
which may be alternatively expressed in equivalent literal
form.

Already in this account we may identify the rationale
for the longstanding occupational aversion to metaphor among
philosophers. As a forceful, yet strictly decorative
instrument of vital importance in both poetry and rhetoric,
metaphor is capable of being employed as a seductive and
dangerous means of persuasion, for manipulation of the
emotions in order to effect praise or blame, without any
regard for truth. Of course, it is well known that such
misgivings about metaphor precede Aristotle's influential
account. Plato, a master of figurative language himself,
repudiated both rhetoric and poetry on the basis of their
potential for duplicity. In several of the dialogues,
rhetoric is condemned as the art of creating illusion for
the purpose of deception.[15] This accusation provides the

introduction, I address the claim that metaphors are best
understood as figurative comparisons in section 2.1 below.

[15]Most notably, in the Protagoras, Gorgias and Phaedrus.

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substance of his case against the sophists, assailed by Socrates for 'mak[ing] trifles seem important and important points trifles by the force of their language.'[16] With regard to poetry, evidence of the 'ancient quarrel between it and philosophy' occupies much of Book X of the Republic, most notably in the form of warnings against the intoxicating allure of mimetic art.[17] Socrates there argues that the imitative poet has 'neither knowledge nor right opinion about the beauty or quality of the things he imitates;' (602a) rather, with his 'artistic coloring [and] ornaments,' (601b) his imitative work only 'relates to the excitable and varied character...' (605a) Hence the famous verdict pertaining to the poet, maker of metaphors:

> So we are right not to admit him into a city
> which is to be well governed because he
> arouses this [excitable] part of the soul and
> strengthens it, and by so doing destroys the
> reasonable part...[and] sets up a bad
> government in the soul of every private
> individual by gratifying the mindless part...
> (605b)

This conception of metaphor as an enchanting and deceitful form of stylistic embellishment of our ordinary literal talk has retained a lasting influence. As one would expect, the endurance of this view has been accompanied by a

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[16]Phaedrus 267a-b, translated by R. Hackforth, in Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (eds.), The Collected Dialogues of Plato (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961).

[17]Republic 607b, G.M.A. Grube translator (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1974).

persistent distrust of metaphorical expression among philosophers. Aversion to the use of metaphor in any serious context, or for any meaningful pursuit, has found particularly impassioned expression in certain classic works of the English-language philosophical canon.[18] Thomas Hobbes, for one, cautioned that our standard attempts to communicate knowledge (by registering our thoughts with words) are frequently obstructed by 'abuses of speech.' Prominent among these abuses is the case 'when [men] use words metaphorically; that is, in other sense than that they are ordained for; and thereby deceive others.'[19] In his Leviathan (1651), Hobbes conceives of human reason as 'nothing but reckoning, that is adding and subtracting, of the consequences of general names agreed upon, for the

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[18]What follows is by no means an attempt to provide a complete history. For a general historical survey of work on metaphor in philosophy, see: Mark Johnson, 'Metaphor in the Philosophical Tradition,' in Mark Johnson (ed.), Philosophical Perspectives on Metaphor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1981), pp.3-47; Fred Dallmayr, Language and Politics (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), Ch. 6, pp. 149-173; James D. Edie, Speaking and Meaning: The Phenomenology of Language (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976), pp. 161-180; David Cooper, Metaphor (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), Ch. 1, pp.1-34; Eva Kittay, Metaphor: its cognitive force and linguistc structure (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp.1-13; and Paul Ricoeur's unrivalled account in The Rule of Metaphor (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), translator Robert Czerny, originally published as La métaphore vive (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1975).

[19]Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1947), I,4, p. 19.

marking and _signifying_ of our thoughts.' (I,5) To be
rational or meaningful, our linguistic expression must
adhere strictly to the agreed-upon designations that permit
accurate tabulations. Accordingly, 'metaphors, and
senseless and ambiguous words, are like _ignes fatui_; and
reasoning upon them is wandering amongst innumerable
absurdities; and their end, contention and sedition, or
contempt.' (I,5) Hobbes is thus abruptly dismissive of 'the
use of metaphors, tropes, and other rhetorical figures,
instead of words proper,' concluding that 'in reckoning and
seeking the truth such speeches are not to be admitted.'
(I,5)

A corresponding hostility to the use of figurative
language for any kind of direct and sincere communicative
exchange later emerges in the work of John Locke. For
Locke, the 'right use and perfection of language' consists
in having our meaning understood, that is, in communicating
our thoughts by words, which are the instruments for
conveying our ideas into the minds of others. In a chapter
of his _Essay Concerning Human Understanding_ (1695) entitled
'Of the Abuse of Words,'[20] Locke treats of the 'several
wilful faults and neglects which men are guilty of' (122)
when they employ words. There he contends that apprehension

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[20]John Locke, _An Essay Concerning Human Understanding_
(Edited by A.C. Fraser; New York: Dover, 1959), volume 2, book
III, chapter X, most notably section 34.

of 'dry truth and real knowledge' requires that we 'speak of

things as they are.' (146) With respect to alternative

formulations, however, he concludes that

> 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
> judgement; 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 the person that makes use of
> them. (146)

Much later still, John Stuart Mill expressed a

comparable distrust of metaphorical expression, even while

relegating it a certain limited use as a form of analogical

illustration. While denying to metaphor any type of

independent cognitive status, Mill does provide it with a

suggestive role, as a kind of temporary placeholder to mark

the existence of an intuition not yet well-formulated, but

accessible nonetheless by way of analogy. In a key chapter

of his System of Logic (1865) dealing with 'Fallacies of

Generalization,'[21] however, he cautions that 'it is apparent

(especially when we consider the extreme facility of raising

up contrary analogies and conflicting metaphors) that so far

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[21]John Stuart Mill, A System of Logic (Edited by J.M.
Robson; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), Book V,
Chapter V, especially section 7.

from the metaphor or analogy proving anything, the applicability of the metaphor is the thing to be made out.' (799) In other words: 'metaphors, for the most part, therefore, assume the propositions which they are brought to prove.' (800) So even while offering potential benefit as a figure of illustration, such benefit must be secured with vigilance, since 'a metaphor is not to be considered an argument, but as an assertion that an argument exists; that a parity subsists between the case from which the metaphor is drawn and that to which it is applied.' (801)

In drawing attention to this analogical role, Mill anticipates the idea that in certain contexts, metaphor functions much like a scientific model, in serving as an heuristic or inventive device. This idea remains consistent with the traditional suspicion of metaphorical expression among philosophers insofar as it identifies in this functioning a disquieting capacity for deceit, realized when the metaphor or analogy itself is unknowingly accepted at face-value. Implicit here again is the idea that through such analogical or figurative applications, metaphorical expression obscures the precise truth of the matter, and thus requires translation into equivalent literal terms if it is to have cognitive import.

To offer an idea of the enduring influence of this account, it will be worthwhile to consider in closer detail

a more recent study of metaphor that reiterates and further develops this position. Here I refer to Colin Turbayne's The Myth of Metaphor (1970),[22] a text devoted primarily to questions concerning the proper role of metaphor in the context of ordinary prose explanation.   For his effort to establish strict guidelines for the legitimate employment of metaphorical expression, Turbayne may be considered a significant modern representative of the traditional view of metaphor in philosophy. His approach to the subject has been lauded as 'both sympathetic and tough,' and 'exciting and original...[for its] clarification of how one may avoid being victimized by metaphor.'[23] Indeed, a principal aim of his book is to instruct the reader on how to excavate metaphors that have unknowingly become fossilized in thought, there to claim an illegitimate cognitive or referential significance. The book's initial section headings are at once indicative of this project: the first chapter, 'The Nature of Metaphor,' is divided into two parts, 'Using Metaphor' and 'Being Used by Metaphor'.

   Turbayne begins by professing his fidelity to Aristotle's basic intuitions about metaphor, even while

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[22]Colin Murray Turbayne, The Myth of Metaphor (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1970), revised edition; originally published 1962.

[23]Foster Tait, 'Foreword II [to revised edition],' in Turbayne (1970), p. xii-xiv.

expressing a desire to extend and more clearly delineate
what he considers to be the intended meaning of the
celebrated Aristotelian definition. Borrowing a phrase from
Gilbert Ryle, he asserts that

> Metaphor consists in 'the presentation of the
> facts of one category in the idioms
> appropriate to another.' As with Aristotle's
> definition the fundamental notion expressed
> here is that of transference from one sort to
> another or, for short, of sort-crossing. (12)

To this definition he is quick to add that although every
metaphor involves sort-crossing, not every instance of sort-
crossing is a metaphor. The vital further condition that
distinguishes metaphorical cases of sort-crossing provides
the central thesis of his book: 'The use of metaphor
involves the pretense that something is the case when it is
not.' (13)

In order to substantiate his view, Turbayne asks us to
compare a series of pairs of assertions. The first of these
pairs juxtaposes 'The timber-wolf is a wolf' with 'Man is a
wolf.' Here 'the timber-wolf' and 'man' are given the same
name, yet we are likely to consider only the second of these
a metaphor. We understand the former claim to mean simply
that 'the timber-wolf is a sort included in the larger sort
wolf...or that timber-wolves are included in the denotation
of 'wolf';' yet we take the latter claim to 'intend that
[man] shares some of the properties of wolves but not enough
to be classified as an actual wolf--not enough to let him be

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ranged alongside the timber-wolf and the Tasmanian wolf.'
(14-15) We read 'man is a wolf' metaphorically by adopting
the vital pretense. As Turbayne explains,

> though I give [man] the same name I do not
> believe he is another sort of wolf. I only
> make believe he is. My words are not to be
> taken literally but only metaphorically. That
> is, I pretend that something is the case when
> it is not, and I implicitly ask my audience
> to do the same. (14)

An important consequence of this view is that where
there is no such pretense, there can be no metaphor. We
often represent facts of one sort in words that may be
equally appropriate to the facts of another--this is mere
duality of sense. For even the most conservative
lexicographer, phrases such as 'the point of a needle' and
'the point of a joke' today express distinct literal
meanings that pose no problems of comprehension. For
Turbayne, 'the use of metaphor involves both the awareness
of duality of sense and the pretense that the two different
senses are one.' (17) It follows that an instance of
duality of sense may acquire--or return to--metaphorical
status only when 'the _as_ _if_ prescription is filled.' (18)
Turbayne takes up this task; indeed, the better part of his
book is devoted to restoring the 'make-believe' pretense to
a few prominent cases for which it has been lost. He
explains that

> to the plain man there may be no metaphor in
> Aristotle's 'substance,' Descartes' 'machine
> of nature,' Newtonian 'force' and

> 'attraction,' Thomas Young's 'kinetic
> energy,' and Michelangelo's figure of Leda.
> Placed in their customary contexts these
> present to him nothing but the face of
> literal truth. To the initiated, however, who
> are aware of the 'gross original' senses as
> well as the now literal senses, they may
> become metaphors. There are no metaphors _per_
> _se_. (18)

This conclusion directs us to the subject of his second section, 'Being Used by Metaphor.' Turbayne begins by considering some of the benefits of a good metaphor: it can change one's point of view, offer a new perspective, even provoke a shift in attitude. Effective sort-crossing imposes a 'screen' or 'filter' through which we look at some part of the world.[24] It may succeed in stressing certain less familiar aspects of that part, while suppressing features that are more commonly known. It is just this success, however, that baits the potential snare in any effective metaphor. If the new association produced by metaphorical sort-crossing becomes conventional, the vital pretense of 'make-believe' may be obscured, and even lost. Aspects stressed and features suppressed by the sort-crossing may then begin to appear as such quite naturally, just as 'a story often told--like advertising and propaganda--comes to be believed more seriously.' (21) Once this happens, we are used by metaphor.

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[24]Turbayne borrows these terms from the important work of Max Black, which I take up in section 1.2 below.

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> When the pretense is dropped either by the
> original pretenders or their followers, what
> was before called a screen or filter is now
> more appropriately called a disguise or mask.
> There is a difference between using a
> metaphor and being used by it, between using
> a model and mistaking the model for the thing
> modeled. The one is to make believe that
> something is the case: the other is to
> believe it. (22)

Turbayne underlines that it is not necessarily a mistake

simply to cross sorts, for to do so can be pleasing,

productive and interesting. Rather, 'it is a mistake to

present the facts of one sort in the idioms of another

without awareness. For to do this is not just to fuse two

different senses of a sign; it is to confuse them.' (22)

To be used by a metaphor, then, is simply to take it

literally. Yet just as duality of sense alone does not

account for use of metaphor, errors about duality of sense

do not necessarily entail being used by metaphor. For

instance, we may confuse the distinct literal senses of

homonyms, or words and signs that are ambiguous. An error

about duality of sense becomes a case of taking a metaphor

literally

> [o]nly when one of the two different senses
> confused is metaphorical and this is taken
> for the literal...But since a metaphor is not
> a metaphor per se but only for someone, from
> one point of view it is better to say that
> sometimes the metaphor is not noticed; it is
> hidden. That is, if X is aware of the
> metaphor while Y is not, X says that Y is
> being taken in by the metaphor, or being used
> by it, or taking it literally. But for Y it
> is not a case of taking the metaphor
> literally at all, because for him there is no

metaphor. He is speaking literally or taking
it literally. (23-4)

In these terms, Turbayne proceeds to describe the three
potential stages in the life of a metaphor. 'At first a
word's use is simply inappropriate. This is because it
gives the thing a name that belongs to something else.'
Once duality of sense and the vital pretense are recognized,
'the effective metaphor quickly enters the second stage in
its life; the once inappropriate name becomes a metaphor.
It has its moment of triumph. We accept the metaphor by
acquiescing in the make-believe.' (24) At this point, we
use the metaphor quite attentively, often to significant
artistic or explanatory effect; for Turbayne, '[t]his is the
stage at which the metaphor, being new, fools hardly
anyone.' (25) In time, however, we may grow complacent and
tend to overlook the sense of make-believe that is necessary
to the proper use of metaphor. This is the third stage: we
no longer pretend that sounds are vibrations, and the human
body a machine, for now 'sounds are nothing but vibrations,
and the human body is nothing but a machine. What had
before been models are now taken for the things
modeled...reducibility has become reductionism...' (25-6)

For Turbayne, eminent victims of metaphor in history
are easy to find. Among them are some of the most original
and influential sort-crossers we have known. Plato,
Descartes, Newton, Berkeley, and Freud are cited as flagrant

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cases of authors who, '[h]aving invented their new
metaphors,...were then so beguiled by the charm of their
creations that they mistook these interpretations for the
things interpreted.' (6) This unwarranted passage--from
make-believe to belief, and thereby from attentive use to
complacently being used--is perhaps most plausibly explained
by the principle of association made famous in the writings
of David Hume. As Turbayne notes, '[t]he long continued
association of two ideas, especially if the association has
theoretical and practical benefit, tends to result in our
confusing them.' (26) In the case of metaphor, this common
confusion is abetted by the fact that distinct ideas share a
common label and set of properties.

    Fortunately, Hume also suggested a means of exposing
and overcoming this type of confusion. Turbayne observes
that

> The burden of David Hume's refutation of the
> argument for the nature of God from the order
> or design found in the world amounts to the
> exposure of a metaphor, directly, by showing
> a weak analogy, and indirectly, by extending
> the metaphor. (57)

In the famous argument from design, Hume identified hidden
metaphors such as 'the world is a ship or a house,' and 'God
is a builder.' To attack the argument, he simply attributed
further properties of (the literal senses of) 'ship' and
'house' to the world, and of 'builder' to God. By alluding,
for instance, to many worlds 'botched and bungled' before

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this one, and to multiple builders, male and female,

possessing the most ordinary human features, he focused

attention upon some of the absurd implications of a literal

reading of the hidden metaphors--thereby exposing them as

metaphors, and restoring the 'as if' pretense.[25] By way of

further illustration, Turbayne applies this same method to a

literal reading of 'man is a wolf.'

> We take 'wolf' literally and transfer
> properties such as four-legged and tailed to
> man. We then ask the victims to test the
> wolf-hypothesis. Any man they meet is now a
> disconfirming instance, and it is hoped that
> they will reject the hypothesis. (58)

In similar fashion, the remainder of Turbayne's book is

devoted to a critical comparison of the machine model of

nature, as tendered by each of Descartes and Newton, with

his own proposal for an alternative, which he derives from

Berkeley's language model of vision. In carrying out this

study, he undertakes 'to explode the metaphysics of

mechanism...by exposing mechanism as a case of being

victimized by metaphor.' (5)

Without going into any further detail about this

particular case, we may enumerate certain key features of

Turbayne's general account of metaphor. The novelty of his

view lies in its detailed emphasis on the potential

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[25]Cf. David Hume, Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion
(New York: Hafner Publishing Company, 1966), Part V, p. 39;
edited by Henry Aiken. Originally published in 1779.

educative function of metaphor. While most of the authors

associated with the traditional view address themselves

primarily to aesthetic or rhetorical considerations (that

is, metaphor as it is used to persuade, please or

influence), Turbayne is concerned above all with the

appropriate explanatory role of metaphor. As to this role,

he concludes that metaphors may be of value as models, for

pedagogical or inventive purposes--in short, as a form of

convenient heuristic fiction. Still, his account conforms

to the traditional view in virtue of its opposition to the

use of metaphor in attempting to communicate any type of

direct cognitive claim. Despite its potential heuristic

value, metaphor remains above all a fiction, which must be

recognized as such if it is to be literally rendered. From

his opening pages, Turbayne warns of the grave confusion

dormant in hidden metaphors, which lead us inevitably 'to

mistake, for example, the theory for the fact, the procedure

for the process, the myth for history, the model for the

thing, and the metaphor for the face of literal truth.' (4)

To avert this confusion, he prescribes three steps:

> first, the detection of the presence of the
> metaphor; second, the attempt to 'undress'
> the metaphor by presenting the literal truth,
> 'to behold the deformity of error we need
> only undress it'; and third, the restoration
> of the metaphor, only this time with
> awareness of its presence. (56)

In this call to expose and 'undress' metaphors, thereby

to reveal facts free of theory and history free of myth, we

have excellent testimony to what I have called the traditional view of metaphor among English-speaking philosophers. As earlier indicated, adherents of this view contend that although such clever figurative adornment may direct us to delightful, interesting and even valuable new perspectives, metaphor ultimately obscures literal truth. In transferring a sign from one referent to another, metaphor suggests that something is the case when it is not, thus inviting confusion and deception. For Turbayne, as for Aristotle, Hobbes, Locke and Mill, metaphorical assertions may be said to express cognitive claims only once they have been detected and translated into equivalent literal terms. Accordingly, use of metaphor in the process by which we acquire and communicate knowledge must be considered cautiously, with an appropriate measure of suspicion, if not aversion.

The enduring attraction of this view consists in its strong common-sense appeal to the way in which we often seek, at least initially, to interpret instances of metaphor. At an intuitive level, we attempt to reduce such instances to more accessible literal terms that will permit us to 'make sense' of the statement or expression in which they occur. The guiding intuition for this reduction, derived from Aristotle, is that a keen eye for resemblance will yield the appropriate literal translation that is the

meaning of a metaphor. As this literal translation is assumed to be always available in principle (at least to those sufficiently clever at solving the puzzle or riddle posed), metaphor is regarded as just a more imaginative or artistic way to say the same thing. A related virtue of this position, then, is its implicit defence of the adequacy of standard literal semantics for explaining the process by which we create and understand metaphorical utterances. By resisting appeal to an alternative type of meaning, the traditional view avoids the potential complications of a parallel, nonliteral semantics, and preserves the unrivalled integrity of literal truth.

The basic problem with this position, however, is that adequate literal translations are simply not available for most instances of metaphor. Indeed, many of us are more likely to regard the readily-translatable cases as just everyday ambiguity or painful cliché, rather than metaphor. For innumerable reasons, literal translations of even the most ordinary metaphors often fail miserably to accomplish what they do in their original form. At best, our proposed translations depend upon a series of inferences from context--inferences sufficiently loose to forbid any unambiguous literal rendering. If I call Rush Limbaugh a pig, for instance, I may be saying something about his size, shape, odour, appetite, table manners or political views--

but not necessarily any or all of these. The intended sense

of my statement, like that of so much of our ordinary

literal talk, can only be determined with confidence in

light of relevant information about its particular context

of use.[26] Moreover, for a vast number of occurrences of

metaphor, there seems to be no evident literal translation

available at all, or at least, no translation that may be

assured of evading reasonable charges of crude reductionism,

interpretive prejudice, or general incompleteness. What

strictly literal phrasing, for instance, will do justice to

the physicist's discussion of 'curved space', the poet's

reference to 'marmalade skies', or the social critic's

attack on 'the spirit of the times'? Attempts at literal

paraphrase are most often inadequate simply because the

successful metaphor--whether it be strikingly fresh, or

fading terminally into literal use--is successful precisely

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[26]This is true not only of utterances that employ
ambiguous terms or expressions; for instance, contextual
knowledge is always required to interpret signs that serve a
semantic function indexically, such as 'this', 'here' or
'him'. Cf. Charles Sanders Pierce (1897), in Justus Buchler
(ed.) The Philosophy of Peirce: Selected Writings (London:
Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1956), who draws a clear distinction
between signs that can be interpreted independently of a
referring situation (symbols and icons) and those that may
only be understood through the actual situation in which they
occur (indices). For discussion of the importance of this
distinction, cf. Elizabeth Bates, Language and Context (New
York: Academic Press, 1980), and Carol A. Kates, Pragmatics
and Semantics (Itahaca, Cornell University Press, 1980), most
notably chapter 5. I consider attempts to explain the work of
metaphor by reference to contextual knowledge in my second
chapter below.

because it contributes something vital. For the moment, this is only to say that an effective metaphor seems (to those for whom it is effective) every bit as fitting as it does pleasing, and as such, it can only be considered delightfully or disturbingly appropriate as it is.

By way of reply to these criticisms, advocates of the traditional position might concede that metaphors seldom admit of direct replacement terms, in order to retreat to a qualified version of the view that the meaning of a metaphor is equivalent to that of its ever-accessible literal translation. Such a qualified version might contend that metaphorical meaning resides not in individual words, but in their comparative juxtaposition--most notably, in the tacit assertion of a relation of similarity between (the referents of) individual words employed in their ordinary literal senses. As we have seen, support for such a strategy can be drawn from Aristotle's claim that a good metaphor exhibits a 'perception of similarity in dissimilars', or from Turbayne's opinion that a proper reading of 'man is a wolf' identifies the shared properties of men and wolves. On this alternative account of the traditional view, metaphors are nothing other than abridged or compressed statements of comparison, whose omission of certain words marks a mere difference of style rather than substance. Accordingly, insertion of the missing comparative term ('like' or 'as')

only renders explicit in an ordinary literal statement the same comparison and ensuing perception of similarity operating implicitly in the metaphor to which it corresponds. Thus, taking one of the standard examples, to assert metaphorically that Richard is a lion is to mean simply that he is like a lion (in being brave). In general terms, the meaning of the metaphorical claim 'X is Y' is just that of the literal statement 'X is like Y'; in this way, a metaphorical assertion may be considered to acquire cognitive significance once it has been translated into its corresponding literal comparison.

This variant of the traditional view is no less deficient, however, for several reasons. First, relatively few occurrences of metaphor take the form of an identity or predication ('X is Y').[27] In the case of metaphorical phrases such as Whitman's 'Lilac and star and bird twined with the chant of my soul', or Eliot's 'yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes', for instance, no corresponding statement of comparison is evident at all. Second, for still other cases, even such familiar oldies as

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[27]Christine Brooke-Rose offers the most complete survey of the many various grammatical forms of metaphor, considered by syntactic group; her detailed study of the syntax of metaphor in the work of fifteen poets ranging from Chaucer to Dylan Thomas identifies the 'Genitive Link' ('the A of B') as the most frequently-occurring type of metaphor. Cf. Christine Brooke-Rose, A Grammar of Metaphor (London: Secker and Warburg, 1958), p. 288.

'you are the apple of my eye', or 'Babe Ruth was the sultan of swat', introduction of the comparative term ('like' or 'as') yields not literal comparison, but simile--that is, another nonliteral statement, itself requiring some form of additional nonliteral interpretation. The move from metaphor to simile is in fact no more than a move from figurative assertion to figurative comparison (where we may take 'figurative' to be synonymous with 'metaphorical'). As figurative comparison resists reduction to the sure and immediate account of shared properties that we associate with standard literal comparison, this move only postpones the interpretive burden imposed by the initial metaphor.[28]

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[28]Lynne Tirrell has argued that
no simile can be understood wholly literally.
A sentence of the form 'A is like B' is not
ipso facto a simile. In 'A bicycle is like a
tricycle except a bicycle has two wheels
instead of three', 'a bicycle is like a
tricycle' is not a simile. It is a
straightforward literal comparison. I can
justify my assertion of 'The engine of my boat
is like the engine of my car' with a long
tedious list of properties both have--in the
same literal sense. (Both are physical
objects, made of metal, plastic, and rubber,
both power vehicles, both are of internal-
combustion design, both run on gas, and so
on.) Although of the correct syntactic form,
such a comparison is not a simile. Neither the
inferences it licences nor the justification
it requires involves figurative discourse in
any way.'
Cf. Lynne Tirrell, 'Reductive and Nonreductive Simile Theories
of Metaphor,' The Journal of Philosophy, Volume LXXXVIII, No.
7, July 1991, p. 343. Her conclusion, which I accept
unreservedly, is that 'the distinction between simile and
literal comparison lies in the sort of interpretation an

It cannot, therefore, be considered a translation to the strict literal terms required by the traditional view.

It would appear that this abridged comparison position applies only to metaphors occurring (or easily rendered) as identities or predications, for which insertion of 'like' or 'as' yields direct literal comparison, rather than simile. Even for cases adhering to these restrictive formal requirements, however, there remains an additional problem, which is that literal comparisons by themselves often fail to preserve anything like the clarity and succinctness of a good metaphor. The difficulty here, simply put, is that everything is endlessly similar to everything else.[29] As

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audience assigns (or ought to assign) to the expression.' (345)

[29]Cf. Hilary Putnam, Reason, Truth and History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), for the claim that
> everything is similar to everything else in infinitely many respects. For example, my sensation of a typewriter at this instant and the quarter in my pocket are both similar in the respect that some of their properties (the sensation's occurring right now and the quarter's being in my pocket right now) are effects of past actions...Both the sensation and the quarter exist in the twentieth century. Both the sensation and the quarter have been described in English. And so on and so on. The number of similarities one can find between any two objects is limited only by ingenuity and time. (64-65)

Robert Fogelin has sought to deny this claim by arguing that similarity statements are asymmetrical. Cf. Robert Fogelin, Figuratively Speaking (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), pp. 58-67. I consider Fogelin's own view of metaphor, and this argument, in sections 2.1 and 2.2 respectively.

similarity always admits of degrees, any thorough effort to understand metaphor in terms of literal comparison must take the form of an extended report of the many various respects in which the two distinct subjects in question may be relevantly said to resemble each other.[30] Here we might well put aside the well-worn examples concerning the wolfishness of men, or Richard's lion-heart, and ponder instead a case like Nietzsche's 'Man is a rope over an abyss'. To the extent that a report of the relevant similarities that this statement calls to mind approaches a reasonable degree of completeness, it loses the vivacity and concise effectiveness of the original metaphor from which it is derived. This is not to say that our efforts to interpret this (or any other) metaphor are without merit; it is, however, to cast doubt on the claim that metaphors can be equivalently translated as literal comparisons, since these comparisons will often provide only arbitrary reductionism, on the one hand, or relative indistinctness on the other.

The traditional account of metaphor is inadequate because its defense of the idea of reducible metaphorical sense--whether it be construed in terms of straight literal

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[30]This point is well made by Max Black, his conflation of simile and literal comparison notwithstanding. Cf. Max Black, 'Metaphor,' Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, N.S. 55 (1954-55), pp. 273-294.

substitution, or abridged literal comparison--cannot be
sustained. For most contemporary critics and theorists of
metaphor, this inadequacy is considered instructive. Our
chronic difficulty in furnishing satisfactory literal
translations might be said to account for the fact that so
many metaphors are more quickly and easily 'grasped', or
intuitively appreciated, than they are 'unpacked' or
explained. In my next section, I turn to a rival set of
semantic theories of metaphor, theories that acknowledge and
indeed celebrate this very difficulty, by proposing several
versions of a more elaborate analysis of the notion of
metaphorical meaning.

Before proceeding to discuss this alternative set of
semantic views, however, I must append a further word
concerning my choice of Turbayne as a significant
contemporary representative of the traditional account.
This word concerns a few striking passages in which Turbayne
seems less certain about the notion of unique literal truth
than the rest of his book would indicate. In the very last
paragraph of his section on 'Being Used by Metaphor,' he
adds, curiously, that

> The victim of metaphor accepts one way of
> sorting or bundling or allocating the facts
> as the only way to sort, bundle or allocate
> them. The victim not only has a special view
> of the world but regards it as the only view,
> or rather, he confuses a special view of the
> world with the world. He is thus,

> unknowingly, a metaphysician. He has mistaken
> the mask for the face. (27)

Here, the victim of metaphor is no longer merely one who
takes a metaphor literally; rather, he is anyone who claims
a unique, authoritative status for his own particular
bundling of the facts. The implicit suggestion that all
descriptions are just alternative metaphorical bundlings,
however, is at once undermined by customary references to
'the facts,' 'the world,' and 'the face,' all of which point
to the accessibility of just such a privileged (literal)
description. Thus concludes, rather enigmatically,
Turbayne's key section and chapter on how it is that we
unwittingly fall victim to the compelling charms of
metaphor. His apparent equivocation on this point is not
altogether cleared away until the completion of his general
discussion of metaphor, where, in a passage just preceding
his extensive study of the central metaphors employed in the
work of Descartes, Newton and Berkeley, Turbayne reveals his
hand:

> The attempt to re-allocate the facts by
> restoring them to where they 'actually
> belong' is vain. It is like trying to observe
> the rule 'Let us get rid of the metaphors and
> replace them by the literal truth.' But can
> this be done? We might just as well seek to
> provide what the poet 'actually says.' I have
> said that one condition of the use of
> metaphor is awareness. More accurately
> speaking, this means more awareness, for we
> can never become wholly aware. We cannot say
> what reality is, only what it seems like to
> us, imprisoned in Plato's cave, because we
> cannot get outside to look. The consequence

> is that we never know exactly what the facts
> are. We are always victims of adding some
> interpretation. We cannot help but allocate,
> sort, or bundle the facts in some way or
> another. (64)

It is not my intention here to assess this affirmation of what would appear to be a type of metaphorical relativism with respect to truth.[31] I want only to exhibit what I take to be a lingering tension in Turbayne's work, one prominent enough to require that an asterisk be fixed to his affiliation with the traditional view. This tension presents itself when we recall his central thesis that 'the use of metaphor involves the pretense that something is the case when it is not,' (13) which provides the basis for his indictment of so many complacent and confused theorists who have fallen victim to a literal reading of their own metaphors. If Turbayne is indeed of the view that it is vain to seek to restore the facts to where they 'actually belong,' or to attempt to replace the metaphors with literal truth, then it is hard to see what remains of the critical force in his denunciation of our frequent neglect of the 'make-believe' pretense that entails 'being used by metaphor'. His revised condition for the proper use of metaphor, in demanding only '_more_ awareness, for we can never become wholly aware', would seem to amount to little

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[31]A comparable view is developed in greater detail in the work of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, which I discuss in section 1.2 below.

more than a call for humility, for recognition of the existence of competing descriptions that we cannot demonstrate to be false. To be humble in this way, however, would be to rescind the very basis of his earlier distinction between literal and metaphorical expression, and thereby undermine the central thesis of his book. For this reason, I have elected to treat the passages immediately above as aberrations from (or perhaps afterthoughts to) what is an otherwise consistent viewpoint. Though much of his work lends itself well in support of the traditional account, Turbayne is perhaps not, at the end of the day, its most unfailing advocate. Indeed, the reservations expressed in the passages I have cited might best be understood as a certain measure of self-criticism, prompted by the charges leveled against the traditional view in the early work of the so-called 'interactionists,' of which Turbayne would certainly have been aware.

I turn now to consider a few prominent versions of this work.

1.2 Irreducible Metaphorical Sense

> How pregnant sometimes his replies are; a
> happiness that often madness hits on, which
> reason and sanity could not so prosperously
> be delivered of.
>
> -Polonius (aside), Hamlet II, 2

The reservations expressed by Turbayne concerning the

availability of equivalent literal translations for all

metaphorical expression might be regarded as an indication

of the rising influence of an alternative perspective on

metaphor that challenges the traditional account. This

innovation is generally considered to have emerged with I.

A. Richards's Philosophy of Rhetoric (1936)[32], a critical

study of the field in large part intended 'to put the theory

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[32]Ivor A. Richards, The Philosophy of Rhetoric (London:
Oxford University Press, 1936); references are to the 1976
reprint. Kittay (1987) points out that Richards, a student of
Coleridge, was greatly influenced by 'the Romantic heritage,'
and in particular, the view that language is above all a
medium for imaginative expression. 'Hence,' she writes, 'the
lineage of current discussions of the cognitive import of
metaphor is traced back to that Romanticism, tempered with
Kantianism, epitomized by Coleridge.' (4-6)
　　On my organization of the principal approaches to
metaphor in philosophy, this Romantic 'expressivism' falls
rather uneasily between sections 1.2 and 2.2, which is to say,
between standard conceptions of 'irreducible metaphorical
sense' and 'irreducible non-sense'. Although Romantic views
endorse the idea of artistic expression as a direct source of
higher knowledge, they tend to distinguish sharply this more
perfect 'artists' knowledge' from the rather mundane ordinary
knowledge expressed by the cognitive claims of literal
discourse. As this separation of distinct cognitive and
emotive uses of language later forms an important basis for
the positivist refusal of the idea of metaphorical sense, I
have elected to treat of this 'Romantic heritage' (albeit
briefly), in section 2.2 below.

of metaphor in a more important place than it has enjoyed in traditional Rhetoric.' (95) Richards's assault on the classical view begins with his repudiation of the customary means of distinguishing the literal and figurative use of words, which he labels the 'Proper Meaning Superstition.' (11) For Richards, words can never be said to possess a 'proper' meaning, in the sense of a fixed and direct link to distinct ideas.[33] Citing the multiple meanings of certain words, the existence of meaning variance over time, and ultimately, the fact of evolution and change in language, through which significations wax and wane amid a constant 'movement among meanings,' (48) Richards calls into question the customary idea of the word as an independent semantic unit, contending instead that the meaning of a word can only be determined by reference to its role within a more general context of discourse. This contention is central to his 'context theorem of meaning,' with which he seeks to depose the semantic priority of the word endorsed by conventional studies of rhetoric. The meaning of an utterance is not the result of a tabulation of independent word meanings; rather,

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[33]Richards here echoes what Saussure considered 'the organizing principle for the whole of linguistics, considered as a science of language structure,' namely, that 'the linguistic sign is arbitrary,' in the sense that it is 'unmotivated: that is to say arbitrary in relation to its signification, with which it has no natural connection to reality.' Cf. Ferdinand de Saussure, Course in General Linguistics (Translated by Roy Harris; La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1986), pp. 67-69.

as is familiar to any translator of languages, word meanings are always construed organically, in relation to the more general sense of the utterance in which they occur. The components of discourse are in this respect always interdependent. Words do indeed refer, but they do so only by virtue of being already embedded within a broader linguistic context of other 'interanimated' words. (47) Consequently, the relative stability of a word's meaning over time and in different circumstances follows from a relative stability of its place within a particular linguistic context. As polar instances of such variable stability, Richards contrasts technical vocabulary, where rigid univocal meanings are rooted in explicit definitions, with poetic images, where construal of meaning relies upon an extensive and diverse range of interpretive possibilities at play in the greater semantic constellation that is the poem. (48)

Most of our everyday speech situations fall somewhere between these poles, drawing upon linguistic resources from a significant range of contexts. For Richards, this routine combining of terms from various contexts reveals the full extent of our reliance upon metaphor, without which 'we cannot get through three sentences of ordinary fluid discourse.' (92) The inescapable semantic interdependence of words entails that in all but the most artificial or

technical contexts, metaphor is not a deviant or decorative

use of language, but 'the omnipresent principle of all its

free action.' (90) To defend this rather startling claim,

Richards appeals to his own 'context theorem of meaning.'

If in most ordinary speech contexts, meaning is produced by

a union of signs, then

> a word is normally a substitute for (or
> means) not one discrete past impression but a
> combination of general aspects. Now that is
> itself a summary account of the principle of
> metaphor. In the simplest formulation, when
> we use a metaphor we have two thoughts of
> different things active together and
> supported by a single word, or phrase, whose
> meaning is a resultant of their interaction.
> (93)

Richards here introduces a term that has since acquired

an unrivalled currency among philosophical efforts to

explain the work of metaphor. Today, 'interactionism', in

all of its assorted and elaborate renderings--and despite

the challenges posed by competing pragmatic views--would

have to be considered the dominant contemporary perspective.

The common point of departure for most versions of this

position, following Richards, is one of opposition to the

traditional view, where 'metaphor has been treated as a sort

of happy extra trick with words...a grace or ornament or

added power of language, not its constitutive form.' (90)

On Richards's account, by contrast, metaphor is pervasive in

ordinary speech contexts because it gives expression to our

most fundamental thought processes, which are unavoidably relational.

> The traditional theory noticed only a few of the modes of metaphor; and limited its application of the term metaphor to a few of them only. And thereby it made metaphor seem to be a verbal matter, a shifting and displacement of words, whereas fundamentally it is a borrowing between and intercourse of thoughts, a transaction between contexts. Thought is metaphoric, and proceeds by comparison, and the metaphors of language derive therefrom. (94)

In an effort to be more precise about this metaphorical 'borrowing between and intercourse of thoughts,' Richards proposes two technical terms for separating the distinct ideas that a metaphor brings together in one. In this, he intiates what would be a long series of attempts among his followers to arrive at the appropriate analytical nomenclature for a precise and accurate account of how a metaphor works. He proposes the name 'tenor' for the intial or primary idea under consideration, and 'vehicle' for the idea through which it is described or imagined, stipulating that we may speak of 'the tenor [as] the underlying idea or principal subject which the vehicle or figure means.' (97) While employing this distinction to clarify the role of each of the distinct component parts of a metaphor, he warns of the potential for confusion in regarding either part in isolation. 'We need the word 'metaphor' for the whole double unit;' (96) tenor and vehicle cannot be considered apart from one another since a metaphor exists only when

each is apprehended through the other. Metaphor requires

the participation of both in their interaction. Against the

traditional view, then, Richards insists that in a metaphor,

the tenor does not remain unaffected; as such, it cannot be

accurately depicted apart from the vehicle, as if the latter

was a merely ornamental redescription of the former. In

other words, a metaphor is not capable of being translated

into equivalent literal terms, since

> the co-presence of the vehicle and tenor
> results in a meaning (to be clearly
> distinguished from the tenor) which is not
> attainable without their interaction. The
> vehicle is not normally a mere embellishment
> of a tenor which is otherwise unchanged by it
> but that vehicle and tenor in co-operation
> give a meaning of more varied powers than can
> be ascribed to either. (100)

For Richards, the defining feature of a metaphor is

that it gives us two ideas in one. This would seem to imply

that despite the pervasive influence of metaphor that he

identifies in most speech contexts, we may nonetheless

continue to distinguish between literal and metaphorical

expression in the same terms, identifying the literal with

cases for which we are unable to discriminate tenor and

vehicle. Richards's account is unclear on this point and

several others. Although he does discuss a few instances of

metaphor drawn from the work of his adversaries in order to

call into question their views, he fails to carry through

any further analysis of examples in terms appropriate to his

own theorem and definitions, which remain rather obscure as

a result. Obscurity notwithstanding, however, Richards's insistence that metaphor marks neither a deviant nor ornamental use of language, but rather, a pervasive and fundamental aspect of thought and expression, marks a decisive shift in the way that English-speaking philosophers have come to understand metaphor.

This shift did not take hold until it was widely popularized in an article by Max Black some eighteen years later.[34] Black's article may be read as an effort to provide a more extended and rigorously systematic treatment to Richards's seminal ideas. A measure of the success of this effort is that his article remains even today the authoritative statement of the interactionist position. As the views expressed in this article constitute the primary point of reference for an enormous contemporary philosophical literature on metaphor, it will be important to examine them in some detail.

Black sets himself the task of working out a 'logical grammar' of our use of the word metaphor, in the form of answers to questions about how it is that we detect and understand metaphorical expression. To this end, he elects to begin with an analysis of what he takes to be 'clear cases' of metaphor, starting with the sentence 'The chairman

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[34]Black (1954), reprinted in Johnson (1981); page references are to the latter.

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plowed through the discussion.' (64) In this instance, our attention is quickly drawn to the word 'plowed,' which we read in a different way than we do the other words of the sentence. Yet there is nothing special about the word 'plowed' in itself. Taken in isolation, we would not consider it (or any other word) a metaphor. It is the entire sentence that we identify as a metaphor, even though our justification for this attribution refers to a single word, 'plowed,' which functions in a distinct fashion that we want to call 'metaphorical.' In identifying a case of metaphor, observes Black, 'we are referring to a sentence or another expression, in which some of the words are used metaphorically, while the remainder are used non-metaphorically.'

This observation is useful for two reasons. First, it enables us to distinguish metaphor from certain other tropes, since '[any] attempt to construct an entire sentence of words that are used metaphorically results in a proverb, an allegory, or a riddle.' (65) Second, it permits a clear separation of the component parts said to be 'active together' in a metaphor, by switching from Richards's rather obscure reference to 'co-present thoughts' to a more precise analysis based on particular words and the sentences in which they occur. This switch is accomplished once Black replaces Richards's 'tenor' and 'vehicle' with technical

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terms of his own. In reference to 'the chairman plowed through the meeting,' he proposes that '[we] call the word 'plowed' the _focus_ of the metaphor, and the remainder of the sentence in which that word occurs the _frame_.' (65-66) In these terms, further insight into how it is that we recognize and make sense of metaphor requires that we understand how the presence of one frame calls attention to a focus that we read metaphorically, while the presence of a different frame for the same complementary word yields no such separation, but only literal sense.

One account of this variance holds that metaphor is called upon to fill gaps in our vocabulary, in contexts where no literal equivalent is available. 'So viewed,' argues Black, 'metaphor is a species of _catachresis_...the putting of new senses into old words. But if a catachresis serves a genuine need, the new sense introduced will quickly become part of the _literal_ sense.' Metaphors, on the other hand, have an enduring quality, even in cases where 'there is, or there is supposed to be, some readily available and equally compendious literal equivalent.' As such, metaphor cannot be reduced to catachresis simply because '[i]t is the fate of catachresis to disappear when it is successful.'

An alternative account maintains that 'the focus of a metaphor, the word or expression having a distinctively metaphorical use within a literal frame, is used to

communicate a meaning that might have been expressed literally.' (69) The fundamental problem Black identifies in this type of view, however, is that it does not adequately justify the use of metaphor in the first place. If an equivalent literal expression is always accessible, then metaphor offers no new information. Rather, its use is purely decorative, and intended only to please the reader, 'who is taken to enjoy problem-solving--or to delight in the author's skill at half-concealing, half-revealing his meaning.' So for those who 'have something more important to do than give pleasure to their readers,' Black concludes, 'metaphor can have no serious place...' (70)

Still another view holds that metaphor is just a 'condensed or elliptical simile,' which presents an implicit analogy or similarity; on this account, 'the metaphorical statement may be replaced by an equivalent literal comparison.'[35] While improving significantly upon the preceding view by suggesting that a metaphorical statement actually has two distinct subjects, this view is impaired by the fact that comparisons lack determinate rules of interpretation. Reducing metaphor to comparison is worthwhile only if we can make better sense of the latter.

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[35]As noted (in section 1.1) above, Black here conflates simile and literal comparison; separating them yields distinct positions, which I address in sections 2.1 and 1.1 respectively.

As Black points out, however, our attempts to express briefly and in clear literal terms the basis of similarity between compared subjects usually fail. Hence his determination that '[t]he main objection against a comparison view is that it suffers from a vagueness that borders upon vacuity.' (71)

Against the standard views, then, Black submits that '[m]etaphorical statement is not a substitute for a formal comparison or any other kind of literal statement but has its own distinctive capacities and achievements.' To provide support for this claim, he turns to the work of Richards in order to clarify and develop 'an interaction view of metaphor.' (72) In short, this view hinges on the idea that the distinguishing feature of metaphor is its capacity to produce 'a new meaning, which is not quite its meaning in literal uses, nor quite the meaning which any literal substitute would have.' In Richards's notion of two thoughts 'active together,' in 'connexion,' 'interillumination,' or 'co-operation,' Black identifies 'the secret and mystery of metaphor,' (73) where figurative meaning emerges from the active engagement of distinct sets of connotations associated with each of the subject terms. To illustrate this process, Black takes up a familiar 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.... The idea of wolf is part of
a system of ideas, not sharply delineated,
and yet sufficiently definite to admit of
detailed enumeration. (73-74)

In these terms, Black urges that we 'think of metaphor

as a filter" (73) that selects certain aspects of the

principal subject, while suppressing others; or further, as

a 'screen,' whereby 'the principal subject is 'seen through'

the metaphorical expression...or 'projected upon' the field

of the subsidiary subject.' (75) These images serve to

underline that the metaphorical transfer of meaning is

accomplished not through any kind of simple decoding

procedure, but rather, by way of a distinct intellectual

operation invoking entire systems of implications associated

with the terms in question. The original and important

result of this interactive operation is a wholly new

arrangement of associations applied to each subject. As

Black continues,

The effect, then, of (metaphorically) calling
a man a 'wolf' is to evoke the wolf-system of
related commonplaces. If the man is a wolf,
he preys upon other animals, is fierce,
hungry, engaged in constant struggle, a
scavenger, and so on...Any human traits that
can without undue strain be talked about in
'wolf-language' will be rendered prominent,

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> and any that cannot will be pushed into the
> background. The wolf-metaphor suppresses some
> details, emphasizes others--in short,
> <u>organizes</u> our view of man. (74-75)

Moreover, it is of particular importance that the

'filtering' or 'screening' process that generates such a

reorganized view runs in two directions, as the system of

'related commonplaces' evoked by a metaphor is itself

altered by the character of its metaphorical application.

Thus, advises Black, 'i]f to call a man a wolf is to put him

in a special light, we must not forget that the metaphor

makes the wolf seem more human than he otherwise would.' In

this way, he adds, metaphors assist in determining the very

system of associations that they apply, 'as though the stars

could partly determine the character of the observation-

screen by which we looked at them.' (77)

The vital contribution of the 'interactionist' position

is to be found in this recognition that metaphors play an

important role in the creation of meaning, as distinct

systems of associations are fused in a new and original

synthesis. Black's key contention, against the traditional

view, is that the semantic shift effected by a metaphor is

'not expendable,' for it cannot be adequately captured in

literal terms. While allowing that to a point, we may

succeed in recounting a number of relevant aspects of the

system of implications that a good metaphor delivers, he

underlines that 'the set of literal statements so obtained

will not have the same power to enlighten and inform as the original.' In his concluding remarks, Black reiterates this opinion as follows:

> One of the points I wish most to stress is that the loss in such cases is a loss of cognitive content; the relevant weakness of the literal paraphrase is not that it may be tiresomely prolix or boringly explicit--or deficient in qualities of style; it fails to be a translation because it fails to give the insight that the metaphor did. (79)

This passage fittingly sums up the decisive principle common to the many various semantic views that have risen to prominence in opposition to the traditional account. Metaphors confer an insight that is irreducible to literal terms; they transmit new information that cannot be alternatively expressed.

Their shared support for the idea of irreducible metaphorical sense notwithstanding, advocates of such alternative semantic views have continued to debate the question of just how it is that metaphors carry out their creative work. Here Black's influence is pervasive, for in his effort to provide a clear and yet adequately precise explanation of the distinctive mechanism through which the metaphorical transfer of meaning is accomplished, he defined the task that has framed nearly all subsequent philosophical discussion of metaphor. Among the many defenders of comparable semantic views, a few merit brief consideration

here for their attempts to elucidate and extend the interaction position.

One such effort has been carried out by Paul Henle,[36] who invokes the distinction, derived from C.S. Pierce, between signs that refer directly in accordance with an arbitrary conventional bond (symbols), and those that signify indirectly by virtue of their resemblance to the signified (icons). Metaphor is said to occur when a 'clash of terms' at the level of their literal meanings leads us to discern the figurative sense of the expression in which they appear according its 'iconic element.' By way of example, Henle asks us to consider a segment of verse from Keats, 'When by my solitary earth I sit,/ And hateful thoughts enwrap my soul in gloom.' Here we remark that two distinct situations are evoked by the second line, 'the one of someone or something enveloping a person in something...a cloak or a blanket or something of the sort...The other situation is that of hateful thoughts making one gloomy.' (86) The metaphor in this passage presents the second situation in terms of the first, as 'envelopment in a cloak is used to present the notion of gloom.' More generally speaking, 'we are led to think of something by a consideration of something like it, and this is what

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[36]Paul Henle, (ed.), Language, Thought and Culture (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1958). References are to the reprint of pages 173-195 in Johnson (1981), pp. 83-104.

constitutes the iconic mode of signifying.' (87) On Henle's view, then, metaphors refer to iconic objects, whose capacity for indirect signification is the source of metaphorical meaning. Accordingly, metaphorical assertions may be said to express 'a double primary cognitive content,' corresponding to 'two situations--that symbolized literally and that symbolized figuratively.' While some initial similarity between these two situations makes metaphor possible, there is often 'supervening on this initial similarity...an additional similarity suggested or caused by the use of the metaphor.' This additional similarity is the 'induced content of the metaphor,' a 'modification of the way of thinking of what the metaphor symbolizes indirectly,' (100) which forms a distinct 'part of the effect of the metaphor...[for which] no paraphrase can be adequate.' (102) Accordingly, '[t]he function of metaphor in general is to extend language, to say what cannot be said in terms of literal meanings alone.' (95)

Against this type of 'thing-approach' that attends primarily to the objects referred to by a metaphor, Monroe Beardsley has sought to defend a 'word-approach,' or 'Verbal-opposition Theory,' relying upon the resources of language alone.[37] He proposes that

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[37]Monroe Beardsley, 'The Metaphorical Twist,' Philosophy and Phenomenological Research Volume XXII, Number 3 (March 1962), pp. 293-307.

> when a term is combined with others in such a
> way that there would be a logical opposition
> between its central meaning and that of the
> other terms, there occurs a shift from
> central to marginal meaning which shows us
> the word is to be taken in a metaphorical
> way. (299)

On the revised and updated version of this view,[38] Beardsley

specifies that his use of the phrase 'logical opposition'

should be understood to include 'both direct incompatibility

of designated properties and a more indirect incompatibility

between the presuppositions of the terms,' (299) and

further, that with 'marginal meaning,' he intends to name

'the total set of accidental properties either found in or

attributed to [an] object,' or more succinctly, 'the

potential range of connotation' of a word. (300) When we

encounter a metaphorical expression like 'th'inconstant

moon,' he observes, we seize upon the 'logical opposition'

it displays, in order to begin looking for a way to provide

it with sense. In so doing, 'we look about among the

accidental or contingent properties of inconstant people in

general, and attribute these properties, or as many as we

can, to the moon.' (301-302) New meaning thus emerges as

'metaphor transforms a property (actual or attributed) into

a sense.' (302) This transformation marks an enduring

semantic innovation that 'expands our verbal repertoire

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[38]Beardley's initial position is set out in his
Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism (New York:
Harcourt-Brace, 1958), Chapter III.

beyond the resources of literal language,' allowing 'for
novelty, for change of meaning... [and for] the surprising
ideas that may emerge even from chance juxtapositions of
words.' (303-304)

Still another view refuses appeal to any genuine
transfer of properties, in an effort to furnish an
alternative 'word-approach' based exclusively upon the
activity of predication. On this nominalistic account
recommended by Nelson Goodman,[39] metaphor is simply 'a
matter of teaching an old word new tricks--of applying an
old label in a new way.' Beyond routine occasions of new
naming, Goodman tells us, 'metaphor is an affair between a
predicate with a past and an object that yields while
protesting.' While new naming applies a label to a
previously undecided case, the '[a]pplication of a term is
metaphorical only if to some extent contra-indicated.' (69)
We say, for instance, that a picture is 'sad,' even though
its being insentient implies that it cannot be; the conflict
is resolved only as 'sad' takes on a second range of
application that 'springs from' and is 'guided by' the
first. As opposed to mere ambiguity, then, metaphor occurs
when 'a term with an extension established by habit is
applied elsewhere under the influence of that habit,' both

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[39]Nelson Goodman, <u>Languages of Art</u> (2nd edition;
Indianapolis: Hackett, 1976), most notably II, 5, pp. 68-75.

in 'departure from and deference to precedent.' (71)
Because no term functions in complete isolation, but rather,
as part of a network of labels belonging to the same general
realm, the metaphorical reassignment of a discrete predicate
may effect a sweeping reorientation, as '[a] whole set of
alternative labels, a whole apparatus of organization, takes
over new territory.' (73) In addition to the novel
organization of this territory, 'new associations and
discriminations are also made within the realm of transfer;
and the metaphor is the more telling as these are the more
intriguing and significant.' (80)

Without undertaking to pass judgement over their
specific points of disagreement,[40] we may return, by way of
summary, to the common ground held by these competing
semantic views. To recapitulate, they are united in their
opposition to the traditional account, on the grounds that
metaphors are most often incapable of literal translation or
paraphrase. Instead, they take the cognitive content of a
metaphorical assertion to be the unique, irreducible and
indispensable product of a distinct intellectual operation,

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[40]Israel Scheffler offers a useful way to distinguish many
of these views with his six-fold classification (intuitionist,
emotive, formulaic, intensional, interactional, and
contextual) of how we interpret metaphors. Cf. Israel
Scheffler, Beyond the Letter: A Philosophical Inquiry into
Ambiguity, Vagueness, and Metaphor in Language (London:
Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), and the discussion of his
work in Kittay (1987), chapter 5, section 1, pp. 178-195.

involving a complex procedure of simultaneous selection and
suppression, in effect, a creative and original
reorganization of disparate elements attributed to or
associated with two distinct subjects. Advocates of this
type of position, despite their substantial differences of
opinion accounting for the particular linguistic mechanism
that enables us alternatively to produce and understand this
innovative and irreducible content, tend to share the view
that metaphor is pervasive in our everyday speech precisely
because human thought processes are themselves
metaphorically structured, since to conceptualize is just to
classify experience in terms of familiar antecedent
categories.

The virtues of this type of position are many. In
defending the idea of irreducible metaphorical meaning (or,
to include Goodman's strictly referential approach, the idea
of distinct metaphorical application), it acknowledges the
sense of inescapable loss accompanying our attempts to
provide a literal rendering of most metaphors. More
generally, this view offers valuable insight into the manner
in which meaning is produced in language, as old words are
employed in new ways. Indeed, the 'interaction' position,
in all of its subtle variations, is perhaps most significant
for its recognition of the important role of metaphor in the
acquisition of knowledge and in the evolution of language.

In terms familiar to this view, for instance, many acclaimed philosophers of science[41] have argued that scientific models can be understood as extended metaphors. In transposing the particular facts (and anomalous data) of one theory to the vocabulary of another theory that is more familiar to us, models offer a powerful tool for discovery. Accordingly, we have light waves and nuclear meltdowns, black holes and big bangs--metaphors that have called forth previously unrecognized similarities through a complex 'interactive' process. In this function, metaphors are seen to be 'constitutive of the theories they express,'[42] and thus an essential part of scientific progress.

Despite its many virtues, however, there remains an insuperable problem with the 'interaction' position, as detailed above. Stated simply, its account of the cognitive irreducibility of metaphor invariably verges on incoherence. The principal objection may be put as follows: sponsors of such a position hold that a metaphorical assertion expresses

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[41]Cf. Richard Boyd, 'Metaphor and theory change: What is 'metaphor' a metaphor for?' in Andrew Ortony (ed.), Metaphor and Thought (2nd edition; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, first published in 1979), pp. 481-532; Thomas Kuhn, 'Metaphor in science,' in Ortony (1993), pp. 533-542; Mary Hesse, Revolutions and Reconstructions in the Philosophy of Science (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980; Michael Arbib and Mary B. Hesse, The Construction of Reality (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); David Bohm and David Peat, Science, Order, and Creativity (New York: Bantam Books, 1987).

[42]Boyd (1979), p. 360.

something that literal language cannot--but then claim that this 'something' is a 'cognitive content', which is precisely what literal language expresses.[43] The minimal point here is that our cognitive claims, insofar as they can be said to express something 'cognitive' at all, must be recognized and understood as meaningful claims. To be meaningful, they need only employ terms that appeal to shared standards of meaning--standards that distinguish the relatively unambiguous clarity of conventional literal sense. Metaphorical expression, on the other hand, announces itself by way of a judicious disregard for such standards; indeed, it is recognized as metaphorical precisely in virtue of its considered abdication of the requisite means for cognitive expression. This is not to say that any particular metaphor must ever remain incapable of such expression. To the contrary: well after its initial formulation and use, the successful metaphor is often retained by its enthusiasts, in order to be later

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[43]While earlier suggested by Anthony M. Paul, 'Metaphor and the Bounds of Expression,' Philosophy and Rhetoric 5, no.3 (1972): 143-157, Martin Warner, 'Black's Metaphors,' British Journal of Aesthetics 13, no.4 (1973): 367-372, and William Charlton, 'Living and Dead Metaphors,' British Journal of Aesthetics 15, no.2 (1975): 172-178, this objection has been most forcefully articulated in Donald Davidson's essay, 'What Metaphors Mean,' Critical Inquiry 5, no.1 (1978): 13-30, reprinted in Johnson (1981), pp. 200-220. Cf. in particular p. 216 of the latter; citations below also to this reprint. I discuss Davidson's positive views on metaphor in detail in section 2.2 below.

repeated, and gradually construed in relation to a regular context of use. In this way, over time and with wear, it may come to acquire just such an accepted, conventional sense. Correspondingly, it will gradually be employed to assert cognitive claims, as this very acquisition of a fixed, conventional use marks its death as a metaphor, and its successful integration into the lexicon of standard literal sense, where its cognitive value is plainly recognizable.

Of course, the same sponsors of the 'interaction' view may reply that this objection is spurious, for begging the very question of the cognitive status of metaphor, by assuming illegitimately that whatever is cognitively significant may be expressed literally.[44] Against this assumption, some have argued that the cognitive irreducibility of metaphor is assured by the fact that metaphor is essentially conceptual, rather than linguistic. In the broadest sense, it occurs whenever we understand or experience one kind of thing in terms of another. Prior to its appearance in language, they claim, metaphor functions as an inescapable principle of human understanding. The linguistic utterances we call metaphors are really just surface manifestations of the more basic conceptual

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[44]Cf., in particular, Mary Hesse, 'Tropical Talk: The Myth of the Literal,' Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplemental Volume 61 (1987), pp. 283-296.

metaphors that structure all language, thought and experience. Once we accept, in this way, that metaphor is essentially conceptual, it will be a mistake to distinguish the metaphorical from the literal in the traditional manner, that is, according to whether or not it is cognitively significant. Rather, it will be more accurate to say that the metaphorical stands to the literal as scheme to content, or as theory to observation. On this type of account, ordinary language will be regarded as inevitably shot through with metaphor, since all (literal) linguistic expression is always relative to an antecedent (metaphorical) scheme, which is both nonliteral and yet cognitively vital.

This kind of reply marks a considerable extension of the 'interactionist' position, one that has instigated discussion accounting for a substantial portion of the contemporary literature on metaphor. Most prominent among the defenders of 'conceptual' metaphor are George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, who have maintained through a lengthy series of books and articles[45] a set of views that may be summarized as follows:

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[45]Cf. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, 'Conceptual Metaphor in Everyday Language,' The Journal of Philosophy 77, no.8 (1980): 453-486, reprinted in Johnson (1981), references to the latter, hereafter simply Lakoff and Johnson (1980a); George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, Metaphors We Live By (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), hereafter simply Lakoff and Johnson (1980b); George Lakoff, Women, Fire and Dangerous

> [M]etaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not
> just in language but in thought and action.
> Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of
> which we both think and act, is fundamentally
> metaphorical in nature....the way we think,
> what we experience, and what we do every day
> is very much a matter of metaphor.[46]

Lakoff and Johnson claim empirical support for their

position in the ordinary expressions of our everyday

language, which they consider to reveal the metaphorical

nature of the concepts upon which they are based. A

standard example they cite concerns our ordinary talk of

'attacked premises,' 'indefensible claims', 'argumentative

strategies,' and 'targeted criticisms,' formulations which

they take to provide linguistic evidence for the existence

of the underlying conceptual metaphor 'Argument is War'. (4-

6) Or similarly: in speaking of our propensity to 'save',

'spend', 'invest', 'budget' and 'waste' time, we reveal that

Things: What Categories Reveal about the Mind (Chicago:
University of Chicago Press, 1987); Mark Johnson, The Body in
the Mind: the Bodily Basis of Meaning, Reason and Imagination
(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); George Lakoff
and Mark Turner, More Than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to
Poetic Metaphor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989);
George Lakoff, 'Metaphor and War: The Metaphor System Used To
Justify War in the Gulf,' distributed via electronic bulletin
boards, January 1991, reprinted in Brien Hallet (ed.),
Engulfed in War: Just War and the Persian Gulf (Honolulu:
Matsunaga Institute for Peace, 1991); also in Journal of Urban
and Cultural Studies, volume 2, number 1, 1991; in Vietnam
Generation Newsletter, volume 3, number 2, November 1991; and
in The East Bay Express, February 1991; George Lakoff, 'The
contemporary theory of metaphor,' in Andrew Ortony (ed.),
Metaphor and Thought, 2nd edition, Cambridge: Cambridge
University Press, 1993, pp. 202-251.

[46]Lakoff and Johnson (1980b), p. 3.

such utterances are structured by the metaphorical concept 'Time is Money' (7-9). Lakoff and Johnson emphasize repeatedly that these are 'metaphors we live by' in this culture, for they structure not just our respective talk about arguments and time, but entire systems of thought that sustain and direct the actions we perform in relation to argumentation and the experience of time. Our lives are inescapably organized around these and other like systems, which we are urged to regard as 'experiential gestalts, which give coherence and structure to our experience.'[47] In these terms, metaphor is just 'the projection of one common gestalt structure onto another,' a procedure giving rise to 'a new gestalt that restructures aspects of our experience, thought, and language.' (31) Or alternatively, as Lakoff has more recently put it, 'metaphors are mappings, that is, sets of conceptual correspondences.'[48] Accordingly, our descriptions of relationships 'unable to turn back', 'going nowhere,' 'off the track,' or 'at a crossroads' are governed by the conceptual metaphor 'Love is a Journey,' in effect, an 'ontological mapping across conceptual domains, from the source domain of journeys to the target domain of love.' This mapping, we are reminded, is no mere matter of language; rather, 'it is a fixed part of our conceptual

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[47]Johnson (1981), p. 31.

[48]Lakoff (1993), p. 207.

system, one of our conventional ways of conceptualizing love relationships.' (208) In transposing one distinct ontology onto another, and along with it, a distinct set of linguistic expressions, inference patterns, and affiliated values and motivations, this example attests to a key consequence of the 'conceptual' account, which is that 'metaphor plays a very significant role in determining what is real for us.'[49]

Further inquiry along these lines, most notably, concerning the way in which conceptual metaphor might be considered to establish systematic relations of meaning among distinct words and expressions, has been carried out by Eva Kittay.[50] Her investigation centers on metaphor as a linguistic utterance, in order 'to advance our understanding of the conceptual and cognitive significance of metaphor...through the elucidation of metaphorical meaning.' (15) She begins by invoking a holistic view of language as an interconnected system of signs, whose individual meanings can only be determined in opposition to one another. This view, derived from the work of Ferdinand de Saussure (and later echoed in reference to metaphor by I.A. Richards[51]), provides the basis for her extensive analysis of metaphor in

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[49]Lakoff and Johnson (1980b), p. 146.

[50]Cf. Kittay (1987).

[51]Cf. note 33 above.

terms of semantic field theory, the study of lexical items

according to sets bound by assorted relations of affinity

and contrast. The conclusion she reaches is that

metaphorical meaning is produced by more than a mere shift

of properties, predicates or implications; rather, 'in

metaphor what is transferred are the relations which pertain

within one semantic field to a second, distinct content

domain.' (36) By way of illustration, we are asked to

consider the statement, made of a basketball player, that

her playing has been 'hot' lately. In this instance, Kittay

remarks,

> 'hot' is the vehicle, and its semantic field
> is the field of temperature terms; the domain
> of the topic is athletics. Hot and cold are
> graded antonyms in the temperature field;
> when they are transferred to sports, we can
> construe a hot player as one who plays well
> and scores, while a cold player does not. The
> antonymy of the pair is preserved. Moreover,
> if a player scores only moderately well, we
> can say 'she was lukewarm in the third
> quarter'. Since 'hot' and 'cold' are not
> absolute but graded antonyms, we can capture
> all sorts of performances in between, and
> even on the outer extremes, for example, 'Her
> performance on the court today is sizzling'.
> In this way metaphor can, through a
> transposition of relations, structure an as
> yet unstructured conceptual domain or reorder
> another semantic field, thereby altering,
> sometimes transiently, sometimes permanently,
> our ways of regarding the world. (36-37)

The cognitive significance of metaphor arises from this

capacity to restructure conceptual domains. While this

restructuring activity will certainly generate many new

implications, no one literal statement of paraphrase can

capture its full import. 'The irreducibility of metaphor,'
Kittay explains, 'is importantly tied to the incongruity
between the domains of the topic and vehicle. That
incongruity guarantees that a metaphorical predication
cannot easily accomodate itself in the conceptual scheme
which lies behind literal and conventional language.
Without such accomodation it cannot be paraphrased.' (37)
With the shift to the descriptive resources of a distinct
semantic field, then, we arrive at an altered conceptual
organization of matters previously accessible to us only by
way of standard categories. This process, notes Kittay, is
vital to our capacity to learn; indeed, '[m]etaphor is a
primary way we accomodate and assimilate information and
experience to our conceptual organization of the world.'
(39)

This range of work on behalf of 'conceptual' metaphor
has done much to suggest interesting considerations for the
study of patterns of inference among certain of our various
lexical groupings. Of particular interest is the evidence
it provides for the generative character of conventional
linguistic practice. In compiling an impressive body of
empirical research to show that so much of our ordinary talk
reflects and upholds habitual ways of representing one type
of experience or activity in terms of another, the defenders
of 'conceptual' metaphor convincingly demonstrate our

capacity to fashion ever new locutions that are readily understandable in virtue of their conformity to such habits. Moreover, by identifying metaphor with the establishment of these conceptual correspondences underlying and structuring our conventional speech, they have, along with their 'interactionist' predecessors, gone further than any other theorists of the subject in explaining the various ways in which we interpret metaphorical expression.

Returning to matters at hand, however, we must note that this view of metaphor does not answer the principal objection to the notion of irreducible metaphorical sense, as stated above. The 'conceptual' approach would apparently defend the general significance of metaphor for cognition, even though such is nowhere in question. To appreciate the vital role of metaphor in effecting new attitudes, theories, beliefs and intentions, we are by no means bound to accept the priority of conceptual over linguistic metaphor, nor indeed, the notion of irreducible metaphorical sense. We can affirm the power of metaphor to evoke such important changes, even while denying that metaphors are bearers of an irreducible yet still-somehow-determinate meaning, or more particularly, that metaphorical assertions express a distinct 'cognitive content'.

That this cannot be the case is perhaps best illustrated by the well-worn character of the many examples

offered and examined by the sponsors of irreducible
metaphorical sense as paradigm instances of metaphor. We
are told, in a few such typical analyses, of distinctive
interaction effecting a unique cognitive synthesis in talk
of 'wolfish' men, 'sad' paintings, and thinkers 'wrapped up'
in thought; or alternatively, of conceptual correlations
such as 'argument is war,' 'time is money,' and 'hot players
play well and score' governing our respective claims to
'defend' premises, 'waste' time, and issue 'sizzling'
performances on the basketball court. Clearly, any complete
account of the presumed 'interactive' or 'conceptual' basis
of metaphor relies upon semantic or referential content
already well-established in advance, as a necessary
condition of its explication. Whether we elect to
understand this content as the product of an 'intercourse of
thoughts' (Richards), a 'system of associated commonplaces'
(Black), an 'iconic signification' (Henle), a 'potential
range of connotations' (Beardsley), a 'reassignment of
labels' (Goodman), a 'projected gestalt structure' (Lakoff
and Johnson), an 'ontological mapping across conceptual
domains' (Lakoff), or a 'reordered semantic field' (Kittay)
is immaterial.[52] To the extent that any such report of the

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[52]Goodman faces the same dilemma, despite his elegant
assimilation of metaphor to nominalist principles. Recall that
on his view, the metaphorical application of a term is always
'contra-indicated' by its prior habitual use. Thus, a picture
can be at once sad and not sad because ''sad' has two

interactive or conceptual process animating a metaphorical

expression is made coherent or defensible, the informative

content of that expression will have been laid bare. Both

'interaction' and 'conceptual' views of metaphor thus

confront the same predicament. To identify and explain in

literal terms the workings responsible for the creation of a

presumed 'metaphorical meaning' is equally to demonstrate a

capacity to render that meaning in equivalent literal terms.

This dilemma assures that effective analysis of this kind

will be limited to only the most trivial cases of metaphor.

Indeed, the above instances might sooner be deemed <u>former</u>

metaphors, which have over time been successfully

lexicalized, by virtue of having acquired a conventional

sense. As is the case for any utterance, their semantic

value and capacity to express cognitive claims varies

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different ranges of application.' This does not leave 'sheer
ambiguity,' however, since metaphorical application always
'springs from' and 'is guided by' prior habit. The problem is
that Goodman never provides us with a clear sense of what it
means to 'spring from' or 'be guided by' prior habit. To
distinguish metaphor from the routine application of a
familiar label to a new case, he must separate literal and
metaphorical ranges of application of the same label. But this
separation is possible only where an alternate application has
been established in relation to a regular context of use, as
is evident for the 'sad' picture and 'blue' mood that he takes
as examples. Cf. Goodman (1976), pp. 123-135, and (1978), pp.
221-227. For critical discussion of Goodman's view, see
Ricoeur (1977), pp. 231-239; Davidson (1978), pp.209-211;
Cooper (1986), pp.27-30 and 208-210; and Kittay (1987), pp.
192-195. For related discussion of examples and mechanisms of
importance to 'interaction' theories, see Ricoeur (1977), pp.
83-100; Davidson (1978), pp. 200-220; Cooper (1986), pp. 59-
66; and Kittay (1987), pp. 181-192.

directly with the extent to which they have fallen into a regular pattern of use, and thereby been integrated into ordinary literal language. To side with the defenders of irreducible metaphorical sense, and retain such familiar, conventional instances as paradigm cases of metaphor, therefore leaves two related problems: first, how to account for the origin and assimilation of new metaphor; and second, how to distinguish the metaphorical from the literal at all.

As we have seen, defenders of 'conceptual' metaphor see no indictment here. Lakoff, for one, argues that new instances of linguistic metaphor issue from the same underlying conceptual correlations that structure all metaphorical expression. 'The problem with all the older research on novel metaphor,' he claims, 'is that it completely missed the major contribution played by the conventional system.'[53] This systematic organization of our metaphorical talk according to standard conceptual associations, according to Lakoff, is what permits us both to generate and understand novel utterances. By way of example, he asks us to consider two well-known poetic figures, Dickinson's coachman ('Because I could not stop for Death-- / He kindly stopped for me-- / The Carriage held but just Ourselves-- / And Immortality.') and Eliot's footman

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[53]Lakoff (1993), p. 237.

('I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker, / And I have seen the eternal Footman hold my coat, and snicker, / And in short, I was afraid.) We are able to make sense of these lines of verse because they evoke the same underlying conceptual metaphor 'Death is Departure.'[54] The two poets thus draw upon and allude to the same standard conceptual correlation expressed by our ordinary metaphorical (and euphemistic) talk of someone having 'passed away,' 'left us,' joined the 'dearly departed' or those 'no longer with us.' Hence Lakoff's conclusion: 'Poetic metaphor is, for the most part, an extension of our everyday, conventional system of thought.'[55]

This conclusion in itself is unobjectionable, as it stops short of endorsing the idea that novel or poetic metaphors express a ciphered message of some kind, which the reader must endeavor to decipher properly. Here again, the above point concerning the limits of cognitive expression applies equally to first-time locutions, whose semantic value and capacity to express cognitive claims extends only as far as the immediacy and facility with which they are assimilable to conventional practice. For new utterances generated from our most familiar and firmly-entrenched semantic or conceptual correlations, satisfactory literal

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[54]Lakoff and Turner (1989), pp. 1-10.

[55]Lakoff (1993), p. 246.

paraphrase will normally be swift and certain.[56] New
utterances defying the standards of conventional practice,
however, will resist such easy assimilation. Consider a few
instances of what we might want to deem new metaphor:
speculations among physicists about a 'reverse universe,' or
that 'time is space'; reports of recent communications
technology describing 'hackers surfing through cyberspace,'
or warning of 'roadkills on the information superhighway';
political protest against 'environmental racism,' 'socialism
of morality,' or 'eco-feminist correctness'; or, more
obviously perhaps, Stéphane Mallarmé's 'poetry of
mathematics,' Sylvia Plath's 'world of bald white days in an
empty socket,' or Tolstoy's 'eternity is a spider in a
Russian bathhouse.' 'Making sense' of these utterances
requires interpretation and reflection, in relation to the
relevant context in which they are issued, and according to
the ideas, images or perspectives they may bring us to
appreciate. Confusion enters the picture only if we are
tempted to call the result of this kind of creative
procedure a 'metaphorical meaning' or 'cognitive content'.
As Donald Davidson has observed, '[t]he common error is to
fasten on the contents of the thoughts a metaphor provokes
and to read these into the metaphor itself.'[57]

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[56]I consider this type of case more closely in section
2.1.

[57]Davidson (1978), p. 216.

But _why_ is it an error? Why must we distinguish literal from metaphorical in this way, or for that matter, at all? As earlier noted, supporters of 'conceptual' metaphor claim that their discovery of 'a huge system of everyday, conventional, conceptual metaphors has...destroyed the traditional literal-figurative distinction.'[58] With respect to 'the cognitive claims of metaphor,'[59] Mary Hesse has alleged that 'there is no [sound] argument for a distinction between the knowledge-bearing properties of the literal and the metaphorical,' because any such argument must assume an untenable 'ideal of literal language, transcending particular schemes and metaphors.'[60] Instead, she argues that _every_ application of a general term, however apparently 'literal' or 'metaphorical,' is simply a matter of classification according to similarity.

> In learning a language, we learn to structure
> our perceptions of similarity, so that the
> general terms of that language implicitly
> classify the furniture of the world in
> conformity with the classifications of our
> culture. Different natural languages
> generally presuppose different
> classifications, which, like theories, are
> underdetermined by the world. This is a
> fundamental fact about language: the world
> does not come naturally parcelled up into
> sets of identical instances for our

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[58]Lakoff (1993), p. 204.

[59]This is the title of Hesse's paper in J.P. van Noppen (ed.), Metaphor and Religion, Theolinguistics 2 (Brussels, 1984) pp. 24ff.

[60]Hesse (1987), pp. 307-308.

> inspection and description. What we call
> linguistic 'metaphor' is only a complex
> extension of the same process into novel and
> striking contexts, and does not differ in
> principle from any decision to recognize
> 'That's an X again'. (311)

If metaphorical utterances classify the 'furniture of the world' in the same way that literal utterances do, there can be no legitimate reason for denying that they are capable of expressing cognitive claims. Indeed, if metaphorical expression is therefore just 'a complex extension of the same process' that we carry out for instances of ordinary literal expression, then there can be no rightful justification for rejecting the possibility of a future 'semantics of metaphor,' or theory of 'metaphorical meaning.'

Hesse suggests that metaphor is just ordinary classification in extraordinary ('novel and striking') contexts. What is extraordinary about the metaphorical context, however, is just that it is unfamiliar to the ordinary classifications of familiar language--for a metaphor is recognizable as a metaphor only in virtue of its break with standard classification. This break assures that metaphorical statements, unlike ordinary literal statements, do not yield immediately assimilable meanings; they are unable to display the same manifest informative content. Recognizing this inability, defenders of semantic theories of metaphor assume that metaphorical utterances must conceal

a distinctive 'metaphorical meaning.' As we have seen above, however, this assumption is defensible only in relation to familiar utterances that have already been integrated with the ordinary classifications of our language, and to novel utterances that are promptly assimilable to standard classification owing to their direct descent from our most time-worn semantic or conceptual correlations. Cases of new metaphor, by contrast, prompt us to engage in a strategy of imaginative construal, according to the various ideas or images they may happen to inspire or evoke. So once again, the relevant question is: why must we refrain from granting to interpretation of these 'ordinary classifications in extraordinary contexts' the status of a 'metaphorical meaning,' or 'cognitive content'? An informed response to this question will have to consider what it means to confer this status. Our consideration thus brings us back to the general discussion with which this chapter began.

Semantics, broadly speaking, is the study of linguistic meaning. An essential aspect of language use is the ability to distinguish meaningful expression, in accordance with a conventional system for conveying messages. Such a conventional system, though ever evolving, delineates the regularities of present usage that enable language-users to link words with certain meanings, or specific referring

intentions. The function of a conventional system of meanings, then, is to help us to understand one another on the basis of our respective utterances. The point of the notion of linguistic meaning is to facilitate this project, by enabling us to correlate in a coherent and systematic way the various marks and noises of others with various beliefs and expectations about their conduct and demeanor, in order that we might render our behaviour intelligible to one another. The value of a meaning is just this explanatory capability, which words possess in accordance with convention, and independently of any particular speaker who might decide to use them, or purpose to which they might be put.[61] When we extend the notion of meaning to include the individual associations and inventive readings that a metaphorical utterance may happen to inspire or evoke, we employ the term where it does no such work. Instead, we only permit a measure of ambiguity to obscure and obstruct the conventional explanatory function that it serves. To preserve this function, we must concede that metaphors express no such distinctive meaning or informative content. Moreover, we must grant that this concession marks the

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[61]Cf. Davidson (1978), p. 202 and 210, and Cooper (1986), pp. 89-117. I return to this rationale for the notion of meaning in discussing its positive implications for understanding the work of metaphor in section 2.2 below.

failure of the many repeated attempts to understand the work
of metaphor in terms of semantics.

CHAPTER 2

PRAGMATIC THEORIES OF METAPHOR

In this second chapter I consider attempts to explain the work of metaphor in terms of pragmatics. Pragmatics is the study of language use in relation to context, and in particular, the study of what we use language to do.[62] The preceding chapter emphasized that a satisfactory description of linguistic competence must incorporate our knowledge of a conventional system of meanings that words may be said to possess prior to and apart from any particular context of use. Yet this knowledge--even when combined with an awareness of syntactic rules--cannot account for all cases of successful linguistic exchange. We routinely employ and understand a broad range of terms and expressions in ways that the meaning conventions of our language can only begin to approximate. For example: indexical terms such as 'he,' 'she,' 'there' and 'this'; ambiguous talk of finding a 'bat'

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[62]Here and below I maintain a general reading of the term 'pragmatics,' in an effort to resist reduction of its domain to the strictly 'communicative' intentions of speakers. A confined understanding of this sort is outlined in the editor's introduction to Steven Davis (ed.), Pragmatics: a reader (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 11. One instance of a more general view is elaborated in Adrian Akmajian, Richard Demers, Robert Harnish (eds.), Linguistics: An Introduction to Language and Communication, 2nd edition (Cambridge, Massachusetts: M.I.T. Press, 1987), p. 391.

in the closet, or being unable to 'bear' children; indirect speech alluding ironically to 'fine friends,' or hyperbolically to 'mammoth mosquitos'; or performative utterances along the lines of 'I promise,' 'I apologize,' and 'I'll bet'. Successful communication in these cases relies upon more than the semantic resources of language. It requires additional knowledge about the speech context relevant to the utterance in question, and in particular, knowledge of the shared understandings and inference procedures implicit to that context, which allow us to determine the intentions, purposes, beliefs or desires of speakers that supplement or replace the conventional meanings of their words. Insofar as our use of metaphor similarly relies upon or in some way extends these shared understandings or inference procedures, it too may be counted as an instance of using language to do something discernable only in reference to context, and consequently, it must be accounted for within a theory of pragmatics.

Pragmatic views of metaphor generally begin with the assumption that understanding the work of metaphor requires that it be treated as a transgressive act of language, where what is most important is not what a metaphor means, but what it is used to do. They then typically proceed with an analysis of what they consider to be recognizable cases of metaphor, in an effort to inquire more generally into the

way in which certain aspects of the relevant context of use support or require a reinterpretation of the absurd literal meaning of a metaphorical utterance in terms of the beliefs or intentions it would appear to indicate or evoke. In this chapter, heeding once again the plan of the chart presented in my introduction, I divide these pragmatic views into two types, according to their disagreement over the question of whether the beliefs or intentions thought to be indicated or evoked by a metaphor may be accurately 'translated' into literal terms by way of a reliable pragmatic calculus.

2.1 Reducible Non-Sense

> There's matter in these sighs, these profound
>   heaves.
> You must translate, 'tis fit we understand
>   them.
>
>   - Claudius to Gertrude, Hamlet IV, 1

Interest in pragmatic theories of metaphor arises, not surprisingly, as a response to the deficiencies of the various semantic accounts. As noted at the conclusion of section 1.2 above, the principal objection to semantic views of metaphor takes the form of a staunch defence of the explanatory capacity standard sense. To retain any such explanatory force, the cognitive or propositional content of an utterance must be explicit, and determined by conventions governing the use of the words it employs. Metaphors, by contrast, are identified only on the basis of a break with

semantic convention.[63] Consequently, they cannot be considered to express a cognitive content, or distinctive metaphorical meaning.

Pragmatic theories of metaphor often recognize this break with convention by claiming that metaphorical assertions are 'patently false' when taken literally. But this is a potentially misleading claim. If we understand a 'patently false' assertion to be an assertion that is obviously false, or even widely believed to be false, then patent falsity is neither a sufficient nor a necessary condition for metaphor. 'Vermont is a state bordering Utah' is a sentence that is patently false, though not metaphorical (under ordinary circumstances). 'No man is an island' is true on a literal reading, yet we are more likely to interpret it metaphorically. A phrase like Plath's 'world of bald white days in a shadeless socket' asserts nothing. It is neither true nor false; nonetheless, it

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[63]For pragmatic theorists of metaphor, this claim is not undermined by what Ted Cohen (in his 'Notes on Metaphor,' Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, XXXIV (1976): 249-59) has called 'twice-true' cases--for instance, when a company president, staring out the boardroom window at the cloudy sky just before meeting with union leaders, says to her assistant, 'There's a storm brewing.' While it is clear that this statement (and many others like it) can be unproblematically assigned both a literal and a figurative interpretation consistent with the context in which it is uttered, this quality is not a sufficient condition of metaphor. In metaphor, standard literal interpretation is problematic; accordingly, 'twice-true' cases might be more fruitfully considered in the company of figurative devices like idiom, allegory or pun.

somehow encourages us to imagine a state of affairs to which it might refer, in the same way that metaphorical statements invite us to imagine readings that might make sense. These examples suggest that what prompts us to interpret an utterance metaphorically is not patent falsity, but semantic incompatibility. Compare, for instance, 'Vermont is a state bordering Utah' with 'Vermont is a state of mind,' or 'Vermont is a symphony of colors.' All three assertions are obviously false on a literal reading, but only the first is demonstrably so. The latter two, read literally, do not require falsification; like Plath's 'world of bald white days,' they employ words in ways that violate the semantic conventions of our language. In each case, the (literal) result is not so much false as it is absurd or nonsensical.[64] On behalf of the various pragmatic views, then, one might say that metaphorical expression is most often announced as a peculiar type of non-sense;

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[64]Cf. Samuel R. Levin, Metaphoric Worlds: conceptions of a romantic nature (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), pp. 14-15:

> It is in my opinion a mistake to conflate, as is so frequently done, absurd sentences and false sentences. False sentences are false in virtue of a disagreement between what they assert and facts in the world; 'absurd', or semantically deviant, sentences, if they are reckoned false, are so reckoned because there are held to be no facts in the world of which they may be properly asserted.

In metaphor, he concludes, there is 'no propostional falsity; there is only a lexical misuse.'

accordingly, where these views refer to 'patent falsity,' I
have elected to read 'non-sense'. Here and below I insert a
hyphen in order to distinguish the non-sense that metaphors
express from both conventional sense and sheer nonsense. A
metaphor is an instance of well-formed non-sense; that is,
an utterance in violation of semantic convention, whose
adherence to correct syntax nonetheless appeals to the
hearer for construal, in order that meaning might be
preserved.[65]

One way in which we often proceed to construe metaphors
is by treating them as cases of indirect communication.
Upon hearing a well-formed but apparently non-sensical
utterance, we normally assume that it is intended in some
sense other than the absurd literal meaning provided by the
conjunction of its constituent terms. Where this assumption
is correct, we are most often able to discern the intended
message with relative ease according to information and

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[65]My 'non-sense' is just Husserl's notion of Unsinn (the
'absurd' or 'counter-sensical'), which he distinguishes from
Widersinn (the 'senseless' or 'nonsensical') as 'a sub-species
of the significant.' Cf. Edmund Husserl, Logical
Investigations (New York: Humanities Press, 1970; J.N. Findlay
trans.), vol. 2, pp. 516ff. This distinction (or some similar
version of the relevance of syntax) has been variously invoked
in reference to metaphor in the following works: Christine
Brooke-Rose, A Grammar of Metaphor (London: Secker and
Warburg, 1958); J. Tamine, 'Métaphore et syntaxe,' in
Langages, 54, Paris, 1979, pp. 65-82; David Cooper, Metaphor
(Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986); Michele Prandi, Sémantique du
contresens (Paris: Minuit, 1987); and Jean-Jacques Lecercle,
The Violence of Language (London: Routledge, 1990).

inferential procedures implicit to the context in which it occurs. This manner of explaining metaphor finds endorsement in the work of Paul Grice, most notably, as an extension of his more general effort to defend and develop the idea that successful communication requires a mutual recognition of intentions among interlocuters. As this idea forms an important basis for the class of pragmatic views that treat metaphor as an instance of indirect communication, or 'reducible non-sense,' it will be worthy of preliminary consideration here.[66]

In the course of his inquiry into 'the nature and importance of the conditions governing conversation,' (24) Grice observes that linguistic exchange does not normally consist of a succession of disconnected remarks, and would not be considered rational if it did. Our speech encounters, he argues, are generally cooperative in nature. Participants in conversation can normally be said to recognize a common purpose or mutually accepted direction which, at a minimum, forms a part of their initial motivation for entering into discussion. This common

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[66]Cf. Paul Grice, Studies in the Way of Words (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989). His analysis of communication is well set out in the essay entitled 'Meaning,' pp. 213-223 of the same volume. Indication of its significance for metaphor appears in the essay 'Logic and Conversation,' pp. 22-40 of same, hereafter simply page numbers in parentheses following passages cited. 'Logic and Conversation' was originally published in P. Cole and J.L. Morgan (eds.), Syntax and Semantics, volume 3 (New York: Academic Press, 1975).

purpose or direction may be fixed explicitly at the outset, or it may remain rather indefinite, and evolve considerably during the exchange. Its existence at any particular moment, however, is confirmed by the fact that 'at each stage, <u>some</u> possible conversational moves would be excluded as conversationally unsuitable.' (26) To capture this aspect of what it means to carry on a conversation reasonably and in good faith, Grice formulates a 'Cooperative Principle,' which participants in any linguistic exchange may be expected to observe: 'Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.' (26) Contributions that accord with this Cooperative Principle, he adds, will adhere to a series of more specific conversational maxims, which together delineate the most important expectations or presumptions of cooperative linguistic practice. These maxims he arranges, with a nod to Kant, under four basic categories: Quantity ('Make your contribution as informative...[but no] more informative than is required.' (26)); Quality ('Try to make your contribution one that is true...[i.e.,] Do not say what you believe to be false...[nor] that for which you lack adequate evidence.' (27)); Relation ('Be relevant.' (27)); and Manner ('Be

perspicuous...Avoid obscurity...[and] ambiguity. Be brief...[and] orderly.' (26)).

Of course, it is quite often the case that we fail to uphold one or another of these maxims. At times we intend to deceive others, and so knowingly violate a maxim. Or maxims may clash in such a way that we are obliged to defy one in order to fulfill another--for instance, in a situation where there is inadequate evidence for the only adequately informative commentary we are able to offer. On occasion, we may even elect to abandon altogether the Cooperative Principle and its attendant maxims, out of sheer unwillingness to communicate or cooperate further. Finally, and for Grice, most significantly, we may decide to 'flout a maxim'; that is, we may 'blatantly fail to fulfill it.' (30) This last type of violation, he argues, when carried out in such a way that it is reasonable to assume that the speaker faces no clash of maxims, is not opting out of cooperation, and (in view of the flagrancy of his violation) intends no deceit, may be taken to indicate that a maxim is being exploited willfully for the sake of a conversational implicature.

Conversational implicature occurs when what a speaker implies, suggests or means by an utterance is distinct from what she says. Or, to be clear as to the intended sense of 'says': it occurs when what she implies, suggests or means

by an utterance is distinct from what a hearer competent in
the same language and yet unaware of the circumstances of
her utterance would be able to ascertain simply on the basis
of the conventional meaning of her words. Grice here
'introduce[s], as terms of art, the verb implicate and the
related nouns implicature (cf. implying) and implicatum (cf.
what is implied)...to avoid having, on each occasion, to
choose between this or that member of the family of verbs
for which implicate is to do general duty.' (24) The
initial example he provides concerns two people talking
about a mutual friend, who works in a bank: A asks B how C
is getting on in his job, and B replies with the comment 'Oh
fine, he hasn't been to prison yet.' B thus flouts the
maxim 'Be relevant', and A might well inquire what he has
intended in so doing. In a suitable setting, where A has no
reason to suppose that B is facing a clash of maxims, or
that B should want to deceive him, or opt out of cooperation
altogether, A may justifiably conclude that B's irrelevance
is intended to implicate that C is potentially dishonest.
(31)

     In recognizing a conversational implicature, then, we
rely upon at least three distinct types of information: the
conventional meaning of the words uttered; their status with
respect to the Cooperative Principle and its maxims; and
relevant knowledge about the particular context in which

they occur. Moreover, of critical importance is that
invariably, 'a conversational implicature must be capable of
being worked out'. (31) If communication is to succeed,
both speaker and hearer must know or have reason to assume
that all relevant information and interpretive procedures
are available to the other. In summarizing these
conditions, Grice offers a 'general pattern for the working
out of a conversational implicature,' which the hearer
pursues as follows:

> 'He has said that p; there is no reason to
> suppose that he is not observing the maxims,
> or at least the Cooperative Principle; he
> could not be doing this unless he thought
> that q; he knows (and knows that I know that
> he knows) that I can see that the supposition
> that he thinks that q is required; he has
> done nothing to stop me thinking that q; he
> intends me to think, or is at least willing
> to allow me to think, that q; and so he has
> implicated that q.' (31)

Among the many distinct types of conversational
implicature that he proceeds to consider, Grice counts
figurative expression as a case in which the first maxim of
Quality ('Do not say what you believe to be false') is
flouted. Ironic utterances, for instance, implicate the
contradictory of what they say. If A says of B, a close
colleague who has just betrayed a secret of A's to a
business rival, that B is a 'fine friend,' an informed
hearer will know that A has said something he does not
believe. 'So, unless A's utterance is entirely pointless, A
must be trying to get across some other proposition...[and]

the most obviously related proposition is the contradictory
of the one he purports to be putting forward.' (34)

Metaphorical utterances, according to Grice, are
'categorially' false statements that implicate the
attribution of a resemblance. This rather casual
observation leaves many questions unanswered. To be fair,
we must recall that it is offered not as an autonomous
account, for careful scrutiny in and of itself, but merely
as evidence of yet another distinct type of conversational
implicature. The relevant passage nonetheless merits
quotation in full:

> Metaphor. Examples like You are the cream in
> my coffee characteristically involve
> categorial falsity, so the contradictory of
> what the speaker has made as if to say will,
> strictly speaking, be a truism; so it cannot
> be that that such a speaker is trying to get
> across. The most likely supposition is that
> the speaker is attributing to his audience
> some feature or features in respect of which
> the audience resembles (more or less
> fancifully) the mentioned substance. (34)

It remains unclear, for instance, just how the hearer
manages to discern the particular feature or features in
respect of which she is considered to resemble the cream in
the speaker's coffee. Having earlier determined that 'a
conversational implicature must be capable of being worked
out,' Grice is obliged to show that with respect to this
example, there is in fact a recognizable procedure according
to which the hearer is able to identify the unstated message
the speaker is 'trying to get across'. The presence of an

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implicature here is well signaled by the 'categorial'
falsity (that is, the assignment of something to the wrong
category) of the statement uttered. Its propositional
content, however, would appear to be something seized upon
immediately and intuitively by the hearer, without recourse
to pragmatic calculation. If this were in fact Grice's
position, he might have been more appropriately considered
as a proponent of the 'traditional view' outlined in section
1.1 above. But this is not his view. In subsequent
discussion, for instance, he reminds us that 'to calculate a
conversational implicature is to calculate what has to be
supposed in order to preserve the supposition that the
Conversational Principle is being observed.' There he
concedes, however, that

> since there may be various possible specific
> explanations, a list of which may be open,
> the conversational implicatum in such cases
> will be disjunction of such specific
> explanations; and if the list of these is
> open, the implicatum will have just the kind
> of indeterminacy that many actual implicata
> do in fact seem to possess. (40)

Identifying an implicature is indeed a matter for
calculation according to recognizable argumentative
procedures, but the best obtainable result may occasionally
be disjunctive, or ultimately indeterminate. Grice thus
concedes that in certain cases, conversational implicature
is in fact incapable of being worked out, if by 'worked out'
we are to insist upon something as strict as 'translated

into equivalent literal terms.' As it stands, then, his theory of conversational implicature cannot sustain a defensible version of the pragmatic approach to metaphor that I have labelled 'reducible non-sense'. Still, his work provides a foundation for this type of view, insofar as it identifies metaphor as an instance of indirect speech, whose distinctive manner of violating the conventional dictates of conversational practice is to be construed in terms of the implict communicative intentions of its speaker.

The most complete version of this type of approach has been advanced by John Searle. Searle's detailed account of metaphor emerges from his extensive work in developing a theory of speech acts.[67] Following Grice, he treats metaphorical expression as a distinct type of indirect

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[67]Searle's analysis of speech acts in turn issues from many of the important ideas presented by J.L. Austin in his 1955 William James Lectures at Harvard, published posthumously as How to Do Things with Words, edited by J.O. Urmson (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962), and more recently re-edited by J.O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa and published as a second edition in 1975. Cf. J. R. Searle, Speech Acts (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1969); 'A Taxonomy of Illocutionary Acts,' in K. Gunderson (ed.), Language, Mind and Knowledge: Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1975); and 'Indirect Speech Acts,' in P. Cole and J.L. Morgan (eds.), Syntax and Semantics, vol. 3: Speech Acts (New York: Academic Press, 1975), pp.59-82. Searle's account of metaphor is confined to the essay 'Metaphor,' in his Expression and Meaning (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 76-116, reprinted in Mark Johnson (ed.), Philosophical Perspectives on Metaphor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981), pp. 248-285. References below are to the latter; hereafter simply page numbers in parentheses following cited passages.

speech, where communication succeeds even though both speaker and hearer know that the conventional meanings of the words uttered do not express what they are intended to mean. To understand how this is possible, Searle poses what he takes to be the 'fundamental question' as follows:

> The problem of explaining how metaphors work
> is a special case of the general problem of
> explaining how speaker's meaning and sentence
> or word meaning come apart. It is a special
> case, that is, of the problem of how it is
> possible to say one thing and mean something
> else... (249)

In formulating the 'problem of metaphor' in this way, however, he is quick to point out that distinguishing 'speaker's meaning' from 'sentence or word meaning' should not permit us to conclude that there are two kinds of sentence meaning, literal and metaphorical. Rather, 'sentences and words have only the meanings that they have.' (249) To hold otherwise, he claims, is to fall victim to the 'endemic vice' of 'semantic interaction theories,' in their 'failure to appreciate the distinction between sentence or word meaning, which is never metaphorical, and speaker or utterance meaning, which can be metaphorical.' (257) Indeed, this failure accounts for what Searle regards as inevitable confusion associated with the idea that metaphors involve a transfer of meaning. To remove such confusion, we need only concede that

> strictly speaking, in metaphor there is never
> a change in meaning; diachronically speaking,
> metaphors do indeed inititate semantic

> changes, but to the extent that there has
> been a genuine change in meaning, so that a
> word or expression no longer means what it
> previously did, to precisely that extent the
> locution is no longer metaphorical. (257-8)

So-called 'dead' metaphors are thus no longer genuine

metaphors, since they mark an actual shift of meaning,

effected over time through increasingly familiar use.

Though it is often said of genuine metaphors that they mean

something other than the meaning of the words they employ,

this is not because there has been any change in the

meanings of those words; rather, it is only because what the

speaker intends by them is different from what they mean.

Searle underlines the importance of this distinction in

terms of the 'fundamental question' posed above. The

'problem of metaphor' is to explain how speaker's meaning

and sentence meaning can differ: 'Such an explanation is

impossible,' however, 'if we suppose that sentence or word

meaning has changed in the metaphorical utterance.'(258)

Our rather loose talk of 'metaphorical meaning' should

thus be taken to refer exclusively to the communicative

intentions of the speaker of a metaphorical utterance,

rather than to the meaning of the words she utters. As his

criticism of 'semantic interaction' theories would indicate,

Searle aims to avoid this familiar equivocation over our use

of the term 'meaning' by introducing a pair of qualifiers,

which in turn permit a clear statement of his own central

thesis:

> Strictly speaking, whenever we talk about the
> metaphorical meaning of an utterance, we are
> talking about what a speaker might utter it
> to mean, in a way that departs from what the
> word, expression or sentence actually
> means...I shall call the former speaker's
> utterance meaning, and the latter, word, or
> sentence, meaning. Metaphorical meaning is
> always speaker's utterance meaning. (249-50)

For Searle, the fact that we do succeed in communicating

indirectly entails that there must be a set of general

principles or procedures, known to speakers and hearers

alike, according to which speakers are able to convey

something more or other than what they say. 'Our task in

constructing a theory of metaphor,' he avows, 'is to try to

state the principles which relate literal sentence meaning

to metaphorical utterance meaning.' (250) A viable theory

is one that will reveal principles allowing us to

distinguish metaphorical utterances both from their literal

counterparts, and from other sorts of utterances where

speaker's utterance meaning does not coincide with word or

sentence meaning.

In literal utterances, speakers mean what they say;

speaker's utterance meaning and word or sentence meaning are

one and the same. (253) With a metaphorical utterance, what

a speaker means is distinct from what he says; thus 'in its

simplest form, the question we are trying to answer is, How

is it possible for the speaker to say metaphorically 'S is

P' and mean 'S is R', when P plainly does not mean R?' (273)

The success and systematicity with which this type of

expression is employed in our everyday language assures that speakers and hearers must share a common set of 'principles of metaphorical interpretation.' (273) To discover these principles, Searle examines a few 'simple sorts of cases' of metaphor, such as 'Sally is a block of ice,' 'Richard is a gorilla,' and 'Sam is a pig.' In reflecting upon these examples from the position of the hearer, he proposes 'a rational reconstruction of the inference patterns that underlie our ability to understand such metaphors.' (274) This ability, he claims, consists of 'at least three sets of steps':

> First, [the hearer] must have some strategy
> for determining whether or not he has to seek
> a metaphorical interpretation of the
> utterance in the first place. Second...he
> must have some set of strategies, or
> principles, for computing possible values of
> R, and third, he must have a set of
> strategies, or principles, for restricting
> the range of R's--for deciding which $\bar{R}$s are
> likely to be the ones the speaker is
> asserting of $\underline{S}$. (274)

Briefly, and in accordance with these steps, the vital ingredients of Searle's theory may be enumerated as follows: first, metaphors are identified when a hearer confronts an utterance that is 'radically defective' when read literally, a condition he takes to include 'obvious falsehood, semantic nonsense, violations of rules of speech acts, or violations of conversational principles of communication.' (274) Second, the hearer proceeds to infer possible values for $\underline{R}$ according to a range of strategies including (though not

necessarily confined to): 'Things which are P are by definition R' (enabling us to infer, for example, that the utterance 'Sam is a giant' may be intended to mean that Sam is big) (276); 'Things which are P are contingently R,...a salient or well known property of P things' (such that 'Sam is a pig' may be taken as uttered to mean that Sam is filthy, gluttonous and sloppy); 'Things which are P are often said or believed to be R, even though both speaker and hearer may know that R is false of P' (so 'Richard is a gorilla' may be uttered to mean that Richard is nasty and prone to violence, despite the fact that gorillas are in reality timid and sensitive creatures) (277); 'Things which are P are not R, nor are they like R things, nor are they believed to be R; nonetheless...[we] perceive a connection, so that P is associated in our minds with R properties' (thus 'Sally is a block of ice' may be understood as intended to mean that she is unemotional) (277-8); and so on. Finally, the hearer restricts the range of possible values of R to the actual value of R, by imposing as a 'basic principle' that 'only those possible values of R which determine possible properties of S can be actual values or R.' (281) These principles Searle deems 'individually necessary and collectively sufficient to enable speaker and hearer to form and comprehend utterances

of the form 'S̲ is P̲', where the speaker means metaphorically that S̲ is R̲ (where P̲ differs from R̲).' (281)

That these principles are specific to metaphor, he argues, may be seen by comparing them with those that apply to irony and indirect speech acts, two other sorts of utterances in which speaker meaning does not coincide with literal meaning. When taken literally, an ironic utterance is 'obviously inappropriate to the situation;' consequently, 'the most natural way to interpret it is as meaning the opposite of its literal form.' (282) For instance, if A says to B 'what a brilliant thing to do' just after B has broken a priceless vase, B may correctly infer that A's intended meaning is that it was a stupid thing to do. Indirect speech acts, on the other hand, differ significantly from both irony and metaphor. 'In the indirect speech act, the speaker means what he says. However, in addition, he means something more. Sentence meaning is part of utterance meaning, but it does not exhaust utterance meaning.' When during mealtime one asks 'can you pass the salt?,' this question would lack any conversational point if not for the fact that the hearer to whom it is addressed 'knows that the ability to pass the salt is a preparatory condition on the speech act of requesting him to do so.' (282)

Finally, as to the question 'whether all metaphorical utterances can be given a literal paraphrase,' Searle contends that either way, the answer is trivial. If we interpret the question to ask whether we are capable of restating in literal terms a speaker's intended meaning in uttering any given metaphor, his answer is clearly yes, since '[i]t follows trivially from the Principle of Expressibility...that any meaning whatever can be given an exact expression in the language.' (283) If, on the other hand, we understand the question to ask whether we have 'exact devices for expressing literally whatever we wish to express in any given metaphor,' then the answer is just as obviously no, since 'in metaphorical utterances, we do more than just state that S is R...we state that S is R by going through the meaning of S is P.' Here literal paraphrase understandably fails, 'because without using the metaphorical expression, we will not reproduce the semantic content which occurred in the hearer's comprehension of the utterance.' (283)

By way of summary, it will be instructive to compare the pragmatic approach to metaphor represented by Searle with the account I have called the traditional view (discussed in section 1.1 above). Their affinities, which may seem striking at first glance, are in many respects quite superficial. True, both identify metaphor as an

instance of deviant language use, uttered to convey a
message that is ever capable of being alternatively rendered
in equivalent literal terms. Closer scrutiny reveals,
however, that they are at odds over just how a metaphor
deviates from, and is translated to, ordinary literal talk.
According to the traditional view, deviation is ornamental,
and translation automatic. Terms related by virtue of an
appropriate similarity between their referents are
transferred for decorative or analogical ends. A metaphor
is therefore really no more than a clever or unusual synonym
for a standard literal term or expression, which users must
be aware of for there to be metaphor at all. As Turbayne
puts it, 'there are no metaphors per se'; rather, metaphors
exist only where there is both 'duality of sense' and 'the
pretense that something is the case when it is not.' Where
duality of sense or the vital pretense is lost or obscured,
we fail to recognize the relevant expression as a metaphor;
unaware of its literal translation, we stumble into grave
confusion by taking it at face value. Hence the widespread
aversion among representatives of the traditional view to
the use of metaphor for serious attempts to communicate
knowledge.

    Despite its influence, however, the traditional account
is inadequate. The problem, we may recall, is that such
immediate and intuitive literal translations are rarely

available, even for the most simple cases of metaphor. New metaphors in particular evade such easy paraphrase; at best, our efforts to restate them in literal terms depend upon relevant information drawn from the context in which they are employed. The indirect speech account of metaphor would make up for this deficiency, by differing on several counts. Here deviation yields semantic incongruity (rather than ornamental synonymy), and translation proceeds in accordance with an inferential calculus relying upon supplemental information drawn from context (as opposed to a presumed direct intuition of similarity). Strictly speaking, then, metaphors are on this view cognitively meaningless; they are distinguished on the basis of the well-formed non-sense they express, which must be provided with a non-literal interpretation if it is to be fathomed in the least. Moreover, if such interpretation is to be accurate, it must adhere to a fixed set of principles, distinctive to metaphor, which permit us to advance from the absurd or non-sensical utterance meaning to its speaker's intended meaning.

This type of pragmatic approach rightly claims many distinct virtues. First among these is its candid acknowledgement that metaphorical assertions express no cognitive content. Though the constituent terms of a metaphor may be read as meaningful in isolation, they are

nevertheless recognized as metaphorical because of the absurdity or semantic incongruity they express when taken literally in relation to their immediate context of use. In virtue of this transgression of the limits of sense, metaphors function effectively as a type of indirect speech. The non-sense they express is considered to be of importance only insofar as it enters into the pragmatic calculus we employ to discern its speaker's intended meaning, the cognitive content that metaphors are used to indicate. As opposed to the various competing semantic views, then, this view of metaphor as indirect speech would apparently have no problem accomodating cases of new metaphor--provided that such cases may be explicated by reference to a reliable inferential rule or procedure revealing their respective communicative intentions. To the extent that this procedure enables us to move successfully from utterance meaning to speaker's meaning, and thus from non-sense to sense, it succeeds where semantic theories have failed, that is, in providing a set of fundamental governing principles for the way in which we create and understand metaphorical language.

The simple problem with this position, however, is that no such procedure or set of principles is available. This is so for at least two reasons. First of all, this type of indirect speech account assumes that metaphor can always be traced to a unique and unequivocal speaker's intended

meaning. Yet upon hearing Hamlet assert that 'the time is out of joint', or in pondering his mention of 'the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune', we may have good reason to infer several plausible intended meanings, or for that matter, a single meaning that is multi-layered and ambiguous. Metaphors are very often contrived from intentions that are imprecise, open-ended, and impervious to a single correct reading. Indeed, certain types of lyric poetry explicitly disavow any pretension to intended meaning. Instead, they encourage only a convulsive flow of words in spontaneous combination, a practice that has been known to produce arresting metaphor. The point is that speaker's intended meaning is frequently elusive, indeterminate, or even non-existent.[68] Secondly, our attempts to 'make sense' of metaphor rarely focus uniquely on the speaker's or writer's intended meaning. Often we lack the relevant contextual information that would permit an informed judgement concerning authorial intent. Ignorance of Greek mythology, or of 17th century views concerning sexual morality, for instance, does not prevent a reader from appreciating Marvell's pledge (to his coy mistress) that 'though we cannot make our sun / Stand still,

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[68]Cf. Cooper (1986), pp. 74-77, for a detailed discussion of this point.

yet we will make him run'.[69] Moreover, express knowledge of
authorial intent does not restrict further interpretation.
Bosnian Serbs may insist that the phrase 'ethnic cleansing'
was intended only to indicate a reasonable policy of
relocating certain segments of the population, but this has
not altered its widespread acceptance into conventional
terms as the latest horrifying euphemism for mass murder.
When Wittgenstein described all talk of ethics or religion
as a 'running against the walls of our cage', members of the
Vienna Circle effectively downplayed his frequent insistence
that he was seeking to defend the intrinsic, absolute value
of the unsayable.[70] Derrida's efforts to clarify his
purpose in having penned the famous claim that there is
'nothing beyond the text' have apparently done little to
settle questions concerning its final or proper
interpretation--a circumstance that may be considered
nothing less than an ironic vindication of his very claim.
The point here is that once it has been issued, a metaphor
often takes on a life of its own, a life determined at least
as much from the perspective of the hearer as by the

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[69]Zeus, having seized power from Chronos to become chief
of the gods, made the sun stand still in order to lengthen his
night of passion with Alcmene; in 17th century England, it was
popularly believed that each sex act reduced the length of
one's life by a day. Cf. J. Paul Hunter, Poetry (New York:
Norton, 1973, p. xxxvi.

[70]Cf. Ray Monk, Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius
(New York: Macmillan-The Free Press, 1990), pp. 277ff.

intentions of its original author. By confining himself

merely to 'simple sorts of cases' of metaphor, Searle

obscures this point, and confers an unwarranted legitimacy

upon the idea that 'metaphorical meaning is always speaker's

intended meaning.'[71] Instead, our endorsement and construal

of new metaphors must be regarded as a creative activity in

itself, adhering to no single, universal, rule-governed

procedure.

This conclusion, if in fact sound, raises questions

about the presumed communicative function of metaphor. In

particular, one might ask whether recognition of a creative

audience contribution entails that metaphors can be

appropriately understood--or at least acceptably

interpreted--without any concern whatsoever for the beliefs

or intentions of their authors; or furthermore, if such be

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[71]Searle's view thus recalls the position of a well-known
Wonderland character:
> 'When I use a word,' Humpty Dumpty said,
> in a rather scornful tone, 'it means just what
> I choose it to mean--neither more nor less.'
>   'The question is,' said Alice, 'whether
> you can make words mean so many different
> things.'
>   'The question is,' said Humpty Dumpty,'
> which is to be master--that's all.'

Cf. Lewis Carroll, Through the Looking Glass, VI, here taken
from Alice's Adventures in Wonderland; and, Through the
Looking Glass (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 190.
For an extended discussion of 'Humpty Dumpty's Theories of
Language,' and of the above passage in terms of the Saussurean
thesis concerning the 'arbitrary character of the sign,' cf.
Jean-Jacques Lecercle, The Philosophy of Nonsense (New York:
Routledge, 1994), pp. 134-161.

the case, one might wonder how indeed our use of metaphor can be said to conform in the least to conventional dictates of conversational practice, through which parties to any successful exchange arrive at a mutual recognition of intentions. In my next section, I turn to a series of views emphasizing the radically unconventional and non-communicative character of metaphorical expression. Before doing so, however, I would like to give brief consideration to two more recent 'speaker intention' views that would defend and explain the place of metaphor in regular communication--views which may be read as attempts to build upon the work of Grice and Searle, by assigning a creative role to the hearer within the framework of an indirect speech account of metaphor.

The first of these belongs to Dan Sperber and Deidre Wilson, who have developed a theory of pragmatics to challenge the standard distinction between literal and metaphorical uses of language.[72] 'Literal talk, loose talk and metaphorical talk,' they argue, 'differ not in kind but only in degree of looseness, and...are understood in essentially the same way.' (540) To defend this view, they invoke a conception of linguistic exchange based upon a

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[72]Cf. Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson, 'Loose Talk,' Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society 86 (1985-86): 153-171. Reprinted in Steven Davis ed., Pragmatics: A Reader (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 540-549. Page numbers in parentheses below refer to this reprint.

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single pragmatic principle for identifying the relation between an utterance and the thought it is used to convey.[73] In order to communicate, a speaker must claim the attention of another, and in effect, demand that he or she expend whatever time and effort it might take to hear and understand what that speaker has to say. Attempts to communicate are thus accompanied by an implicit assurance that such time and effort will be worthwhile--that the information the hearer may expect to obtain will merit the mental effort required to obtain it. 'Any utterance addressed to someone automatically conveys a presumption of its own relevance. This fact,' the authors remark, 'we call the principle of relevance.' (544) According to this principle, 'humans automatically aim at maximal relevance, i.e. maximal cognitive effect for minimal processing effort.' Conversational exchange is thus doubly bound, by 'a presumption of adequate effect on the one hand, and a presumption of minimally necessary effort on the other.' Relevance at this basic level, we are told, is not a matter of convention to be learned; rather, 'it is an exceptionless generalization about human communicative behaviour.' (544)

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[73]For the most detailed account of their general view of communication, cf. Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson, Relevance: Communication and Cognition (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986).

The primary importance of the principle of relevance is
that it allows us to account for successful communication in
the face of 'linguistic underdetermination'--the fact that
the literal meaning of an utterance is often ambiguous,
elliptical, vague, or simply not the sense in which the
utterance is intended. (544-45) For the austerity of their
solution to this enduring problem, that is, the problem of
explaining how we are able to determine correctly the
thoughts that such linguistically underdetermined utterances
are intended to communicate, Sperber and Wilson claim to
have improved upon the work of their predecessors (among
whom we may count Grice and Searle).

> Various pragmatic theories appeal to complex
> sets of rules, maxims, or conventions to
> explain how this linguistic
> underdetermination is contextually overcome.
> We claim that the principle of relevance is
> enough on its own to explain how linguistic
> structure and background knowledge interact
> to determine verbal comprehension. (545)

Consider, by way of example, an instance of ordinary
'loose talk'. Marie, who lives in Issy-les-Moulineaux, just
one block outside the city limits of Paris, meets Peter at a
party in London. When Peter asks Marie where she lives, she
replies: 'I live in Paris.' Although this reply is
literally false, it is perfectly appropriate in context, for
it adheres to the relevance principle, by employing minimal
effort to maximum effect. In the most obviously economical
way, Marie enables Peter to infer a substantial amount of

plausible information about her (that she knows Paris well, lives an urban life, and so on), in a way that telling him she lives near Paris would not. (545-46) In the latter case, the qualification 'near' would demand of Peter a degree of processing effort which would not be offset by a corresponding cognitive effect. On the presumption of relevance, this qualification would be misleading, as it would encourage Peter to draw certain false inferences (that she lives a suburban or rural life, etc.). Of course, in an alternative context, say, an electoral meeting for a Paris local election, the truth of the statement expressed would be more crucially relevant, and thus more likely to be understood literally. Knowing this, Marie would adjust her reply accordingly (if indeed she were intending to be truthful). Loose talk, conclude Sperber and Wilson, is no different from any other kind of talk, in that it is both motivated and explained by the pursuit of relevance.

> Whenever a proposition is expressed, the hearer takes for granted that some subset of its logical and contextual implications are also logical or contextual implications of the thought being communicated, and aims to identify this subset. He assumes (or at least assumes that the speaker assumed) that this subset will have enough cognitive effects to make the utterance worth his attention. He also assumes (or at least assumes that the speaker assumed) that there was no obvious way of achieving these effects with less processing effort. He aims for an interpretation consistent with these assumptions, i.e. consistent with the principle of relevance. (545)

Metaphor, they contend, is employed and understood in the same way. Here again, the utterance expressed is not intended literally; instead, the hearer recognizes that the speaker is endorsing some subset of what that utterance may be taken to imply. In the case of 'highly standardized' examples, such as 'Jeremy is a lion,' there is 'one very strong implicature which constitutes the main point of the utterance: thus ['Jeremy is a lion'] implicates, in the context of stereotypical assumptions about lions, that Jeremy is brave.' (547) Less standard cases will demand greater processing effort, which should in turn be offset by added effect. Taking a 'marginally more creative' example, we might consider the statement of a mother to her child, 'you're a piglet.' Here a double implication is at work, Sperber and Wilson explain, since young animals are endearing, even when adults of the same species are not; 'the child may feel encouraged to derive not only the obvious contextual implication that he is dirty, but also the further contextual implication that he is, nevertheless, endearing.' (548)

In general, the wider the range of potential implicatures, the more creative the metaphor. More creative cases thus entail a more active role for the hearer, who must endeavor to understand what a speaker or writer intends

to convey, by first determining, and then selecting from, this broadened range of warranted implicatures.

> In the richest and most successful cases, the hearer can go beyond just exploring the immediate context and the background knowledge directly invoked, accessing a wider area of knowledge, entertaining ad hoc assumptions which may themselves be metaphorical, and getting more and more very weak implicatures, with suggestions for still further processing. The result is a quite complex picture, for which the hearer has to take a large share of the responsibility... (548)

To illustrate, we are asked to consider the words of Prospero to his daughter Miranda: 'The fringed curtains of thine eyes advance / And say what thou see'st yond.' The success of this creative metaphor lies in its 'extreme condensation,' whereby a relatively simple expression, loosely employed, allows of a complicated range of acceptable weak implicatures. There are, consequently, many different ways in which Shakespeare's metaphor might be understood. On one critical reading, for instance, Coleridge estimated that something was about to appear to Miranda ''as unexpectedly as if the hearer of a drama were to be on the stage at the instant when the curtain is elevated...'' Yet this image represents just one interpretive path available to the reader. As Sperber and Wilson duly note,

> Merely retaining the implication that Prospero is telling Miranda to raise her eyelids—no doubt the strongest implicature— would result in an interpretation requiring

> too much effort for too little effect. A more
> creative hearer will invest a little more
> effort and get much more effect...[moreover],
> different hearers with different background
> knowledge and different imaginations will
> follow somewhat different routes. (548)

The principle of relevance thus accounts for our interpretation of creative metaphors in much the same way that it explains our processing of ordinary loose talk. Indeed, when considered in terms of relevance, the standard distinctions between literal, loose, and metaphorical talk would appear to evaporate. All such acts of communication, regardless of their degree of 'looseness,' (that is, the extent to which they are linguistically underdetermined) presume only an interpretive 'effort-to-effect' correspondence between an utterance and the thought it is intended to convey. Hence the concluding remarks of Sperber and Wilson, in which they summarize their principal thesis:

> [Metaphors] are in no sense departures from a
> norm or breaches of a rule or maxim of
> communication. They are simply creative and
> evocative exploitations of a basic feature of
> all verbal communication: the fact that every
> utterance resembles, with a degree of
> closeness determined by considerations of
> relevance, a thought of the speaker's. (549)

This is a most compelling account, if only for its elegant simplicity. As a general rule, speakers utter words that resemble their thoughts. In adhering to this rule, our use of metaphor is an act of communication not significantly different from any other. True, for certain metaphors, the resemblance in question may span a considerable 'creative

and evocative' distance; nonetheless, hearers process such cases in the same way they process any utterance--by determining, in relation to the proper 'effort-to-effect' considerations of relevance, which 'subset of its logical and contextual implications are also logical or contextual implications of the thought being communicated.'

Despite its economy and proficiency, however, this effort to understand the work of metaphor in terms of relevance does leave certain problems. A closer look at the distinction between literal and metaphorical, for instance, suggests a difference of more than degree. What characteristic feature of creative metaphor, after all, signals to the hearer that greater processing effort will yield greater cognitive effect? Sperber and Wilson point only to its relative looseness, discernable in context, according to which the hearer is justified in assuming that '[t]he greater effort imposed indicates that greater effect is intended.' (547) As we have seen, the most creative metaphors exhibit a degree of looseness requiring that hearers assume primary responsibility for assembling and selecting from collections of warranted implications, to such an extent that different hearers will interpret the same creative metaphor differently. Here already we have a significant distinction, for it is difficult to see how divergent interpretations of the same utterance can all be

said to resemble (other than trivially) the thought that utterance may have been intended to convey. To be employed for communicative purposes, an utterance must be capable of being paired with the intentions of its speaker. Once again, with respect to certain metaphors, it remains unclear how we are to reconcile the creative role of the hearer, who engages in the task of open-ended, imaginative construal, with a conception of metaphor as a type of indirect speech, bound by way of shared implications to the thought its speaker aims to communicate. As a general principle for interpreting various instances of linguistically underdetermined 'loose talk,' relevance stands out as a fundamental guiding consideration. It does so, however, at the price of a vagueness that renders it virtually ineffective in dealing with our more inventive (and less strictly communicative) uses of language.

A corresponding indirect speech account follows Sperber and Wilson in emphasizing the importance of resemblance to understanding the work of metaphor. According to Robert Fogelin, metaphors call our attention to similarities by presenting figurative comparisons.[74] Unlike so many of his predecessors, Fogelin does not conflate figurative with literal comparison; on his view, metaphors 'differ from

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[74]Cf. Robert Fogelin, Figuratively Speaking (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).

similes in only a trivial grammatical way: metaphors are
similes with the term of comparison suppressed; they are
elliptical similes.' (25) To understand this position well,
it will be necessary to consider it in the context of the
more general theory of figurative speech in which it
appears.

For Fogelin, our figurative use of language 'derives
its force by including the respondent in a mutually
recognized task of making sense of what is said.' (112)
From the outset, he acknowledges his methodological debt to
the work of Grice and Searle (among others), most notably,
for assuming that in carrying out this task, both speaker
and hearer proceed according to a set of general strategies
or rules governing communication. Fogelin concerns himself
above all with two distinct 'families' of the figures of
speech: the first of these he labels 'figurative
predications,' of which irony is the paradigm instance; the
second he identifies as 'figurative comparisons,' counting
metaphor and simile as standard cases. (3) 'Making sense'
of these two types of figures, he claims, proceeds along
contrary lines: 'With figurative predications, this
involves replacing the speaker's utterance with one that
squares with the context. With figurative comparisons, this
involves finding ways of adjusting the context so that it
squares with the speaker's utterance.' (112-13)

Figurative predications, which also include hyperbole and meiosis (understatement), are false statements uttered with the intention of producing a corrective response. Hyperbole and meiosis invoke weakening and strengthening corrections, respectively. Irony reverses polarity, to varying degrees. Ironic praise, for instance, is understood as blame: ''Great throw' can have the force of 'horrible throw' if that's the proper corrective judgement in context (for example, when the shortstop has just thrown the ball into the dirt, wide of first base).' (9) The vital feature of figurative predications, then, 'is a mutually recognized intention by the speaker that the respondent not take the speaker's words at face value, but instead, replace them with a correct judgement.' (87)

On Fogelin's view, 'something very similar takes place with figurative comparisons.' (87) Here again, one utters 'a pointless and mutually recognized falsehood' in order to call forth a correction--but with an important difference.

> With figurative predications, the context is
> held steady, and the assertion made within
> that context is adjusted or corrected. With
> figurative comparisons, the comparison is not
> rejected; the claim that A is like B is not
> withdrawn, corrected, or modified in any way.
> Instead, the context is adjusted to
> accomodate it. (87-88)

Just what it means to 'adjust the context' can be seen in the distinction Fogelin draws between figurative and literal comparison. Literal comparisons draw or evoke a comparison

of two things in terms of their most salient features.

Thus, 'a road grader is like a bulldozer,' because both are

'used to push about large quantities of dirt, the chief

difference being that road graders have their blades beneath

their chassis rather than in front of them.' (88) In saying

that two things are similar, we assert that they share a

sufficiently large number of salient features to convey

information relevant to the context of discussion.

Figurative comparisons, on the other hand, also draw or

evoke a comparison of two things, but they do so only upon

summoning a context or frame of reference in which 'the

order of dominance in salient features is reversed.' (91)

Interpreting a figurative comparison, for instance,

'Margaret Thatcher is [like] a bulldozer,' thus involves a

'two-step process':

> By comparing a person with a bulldozer, we
> invoke a feature space dominated by
> bulldozer-salient qualities. But under that
> reading, the comparison seems plainly false.
> In order to avoid attributing a pointlessly
> false statement to the speaker, the
> respondent now prunes the feature space of
> the falsifying features and, if the metaphor
> is sound (I'm not saying striking; I'll come
> back to that later), then the comparison,
> figuratively taken, is true. (89)

Margaret Thatcher is not a machine, nor can she move large

quantities of dirt in a manner comparable to a bulldozer or

road grader; she has, however, on many occasions

demonstrated her ability to push aside or run over any

opposition in her path. With figurative comparisons, the

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hearer thus 'squares the context with the utterance' by ignoring standard salient features, and interpreting the assertion of similarity in terms of only those more general or subsidiary qualities of the one item that may be considered applicable to the other. In this way, offers Fogelin, 'the target thought-act or speech-act is produced in the respondent as part of his participatory response, rather than merely given to him in the form of the speaker's direct speech act.' (89)

The novelty and interest of this account lies in its use of speech-act categories to present and defend a renovated version of the enduring comparison view of metaphor, whose lineage can be traced to Aristotle. Metaphors are elliptical similes; they present figurative comparisons, which elicit a doubly active response on the part of the hearer. First, the hearer assumes that in uttering what would otherwise appear to be a pointlessly false statement, the speaker intends to identify a subtle or remote 'similarity in dissimilars.' Second, the hearer contemplates the dissimilar objects in question, in order to ascertain the shared feature or features in virtue of which the implicit assertion of likeness is justified. The intellectual and aesthetic power of figurative comparison emerges in this activity, as 'the respondent is made to arrive at the result himself.' (92)

While this account bears considerable intuitive force,
it nonetheless harbors certain familiar problems that render
it ultimately untenable. For one, it offers no way around
the standard dilemma facing any comparison view, namely,
that of identifying the statement of comparison believed to
correspond to a particular metaphor. In evaluating
traditional (literal) comparison views above, we noted that
a great many instances of metaphor do not take the form of
an identity or predication ('A is B'); many of these, in
turn, resist the same easy transposition to simile. In a
passing reference to this dilemma, Fogelin considers it an
advantage of his account over previous comparison views that
figurative comparisons are often loosely drawn, and thus
capable of accomodating the many 'accidental ways' in which
a comparison can be expressed.

> Whether we say Achilles is like a lion, say
> he is a lion, refer to him as a lion, or
> speak about him as if he were a lion, we are
> drawing a comparison (a figurative
> comparison) between him and a lion. How the
> comparison is couched grammatically is of
> relatively less importance. (97-98)

Grammatical form is of less importance for these instances--
but these instances only begin to approach the dilemma at
hand. What of more complex formulations lacking any such
immediately evident terms of comparison? Consider, for
example, the sportscaster's claim that 'when he was young
Sandy Koufax could throw a strawberry through a locomotive,'
or Virginia Woolf's sketch of a highbrow as 'a man or woman

of thoroughbred intelligence who rides his mind at a gallop across country in pursuit of an idea.'[75] In making sense of these metaphors, we do not seek to identify dissimilars in order to inspect them for relevant shared properties. We simply find ourselves imagining what Sandy Koufax or a highbrow would have to be like--that is, _how_ each would have to be--for these descriptions to be accurate. In such cases, comparison would seem to play little or no role. As indicated in section 1.1 above, most notably, in reference to phrases along the lines of Whitman's 'lilac and star and bird entwined with the chant of my soul,' and Eliot's 'yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes,' metaphors often admit of no equivalent statement of comparison at all, or at least, no such statement that may be assured of evading reasonable charges of arbitrary reductionism or interpretive prejudice.

A more general tension in Fogelin's view concerns his express desire to classify metaphor as a type of indirect speech. With figurative comparisons, he urges, 'the point of the comparison lies in the indirect speech act--what I mean rather than simply what my words mean.' (96) Clearly, then, if a hearer is to _get_ the point of a figurative comparison, she must have recourse to a shared procedure

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[75]I borrow these examples from Tirrell (1991) and Davidson (1978) respectively.

enabling her both to identify an utterance as such, and determine the sense in which it is intended. Fogelin does adopt a Gricean principle of identification ('With figurative comparison, the speaker flouts, or at least violates, standard conversational rules and thus engages the respondent in the task of making adjustments that will produce a good fit.' (96)), but he can offer no assured means of fixing a speaker's communicative intent. The most one can say about the informative content of the indirect speech act--for Fogelin, the very point of speaking figuratively--is that it asserts an obscure likeness, which must be decided by the hearer.[76]

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[76]Fogelin concedes as much when he writes:
> The comparativist has no difficulty in giving
> a paraphrase of the metaphorical expression 'A
> is a B.' It means, literally means, that A is
> like a B. Critics seem to think, however, that
> somehow the comparativist is committed to
> giving an adequate paraphrase of the content
> of the indirect speech act that may be the
> point of the comparison. This simply is not
> true, and, again, the point can be made with
> respect to non-figurative comparisons. I say
> that someone runs like a gazelle to indicate
> that he runs with effortless speed and grace.
> If asked if that is what I meant, I may say
> yes, feeling that nothing, or at least nothing
> important, has been left out. At other times,
> because of the problems of ineffability
> discussed in the previous chapter, no literal
> paraphrase can be found that captures the
> content of the intended indirect speech act in
> an adequate way. (96-97)

Fogelin would thus deny that his (comparativist) indirect speech account of metaphor is committed to providing a determinate content for metaphorical indirect speech acts, apparently on the grounds that metaphors are comparisons, and

Thus, even for the restricted range of metaphors that may be acceptably transposed to simile, there can be no reliable or final access to authorial intent. Here again any number of examples may be called upon as evidence. Consider, for instance, Schelling's comment that 'architecture is frozen music,' or Sartre's 'hell is other people.' Research and reflection might convince us that we are reasonably sure of knowing what these utterances were intended to convey; our attempts at elucidation, however, are more than likely to be imprecise, multi-layered, and capable of constant elaboration. Moreover, as earlier indicated in evaluating the work of Searle, perfect ignorance of (or indifference to) authorial intent in no way prevents us from appreciating these and other metaphors in a variety of possible ways commensurate with the vagaries of individual experience and imaginative response.

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no comparison can be assured a paraphrase that would adequately capture its intended content. This reply will not do, however, for two reasons. First, it obscures his earlier distinction between simile and literal comparison (according to which literal comparisons identify likeness in terms of obvious salient features, whereas similes require that the hearer respond to an apparent violation of Gricean conversational maxims by seeking to 'square the context with the utterance'), with which he was able to differentiate his view from a traditional reductive (literal) comparison view of metaphor. Second, as above, it defeats the very purpose of an indirect speech act, which is to say one thing while both meaning and producing an understanding of something more. (Cf. Searle 'Indirect Speech Acts,' in Davis (1991), p. 266.) I return to this second point in assessing Fogelin's objections to Davidson's account of metaphor in section 2.2 below.

In general, communication succeeds when speakers and hearers arrive at a mutual recognition of intentions. Metaphors are quite often forcibly employed and fruitfully interpreted where no such transaction occurs. In addressing themselves to the most important pragmatic aspects of conversation, the theorists included in this section offer valuable analysis of ways in which parties to an exchange manage to convey and discern communicative intentions that are not stated explicitly. Along the way, however, all run headlong into the intractable problem with any attempt to understand metaphor as a form of indirect speech. They are unable to explain our use of metaphor for purposes other than stating beliefs, expressing desires, and conveying messages. The problem with theories of metaphor as indirect speech, in short, is their inability to account for the non-communicative functions of metaphor. My next section is concerned with a series of views that would remedy this defect.

2.2 Irreducible Non-Sense

> Her speech is nothing,
> Yet the unshaped use of it doth move
> The hearers to collection; they aim at it,
> And botch the words up to fit their own
>   thoughts,
> Which as her winks, and nods, and gestures
>   yield them,
> Indeed would make one think there might be
>   thought,
> Though nothing sure, yet much unhappily.

> - Gentleman to Gertrude, Hamlet, IV, 5

An alternative pragmatic approach renounces any effort to explain the work of metaphor according to principles of cooperative linguistic practice, by denying that metaphorical utterances are used to transmit information, either directly or indirectly. Vital to this position is the claim, associated primarily with Donald Davidson and his followers, that metaphors convey no coded message, nor indicate anything other than what they literally say. Instead, they provoke or inspire us to 'see as' rather than 'see that', imposing a new perspective that prompts us to imagine familiar things in wholly unfamiliar ways inaccessible to literal translation or paraphrase.

Before elaborating on a few prominent versions of this position, we may distinguish it from the two preceding sets of views as follows. Adherents to this type of pragmatic account agree with 'semantic-interactionists' (section 1.2 above) in holding that metaphorical assertions cannot be

accurately translated into literal terms—but this agreement is not because they share the idea that such assertions bear an irreducible cognitive content, rather, it is because they believe that there is nothing nonliteral in a metaphor to be translated. So evidently, these two positions differ over the issue of the cognitive status of metaphor: against the interactionists, supporters of this latter pragmatic view deny that metaphors express a distinctive metaphorical meaning—yet they deny it not because they accept the 'indirect speech' reduction of metaphor to speaker's intended meaning (section 2.1 immediately above), but because they hold that metaphor achieves its wonders with no more than ordinary word meanings, albeit employed in imaginative new ways.

To maintain a significant pragmatic role for metaphor apart from that of vehicle for the communication of ideas, proponents of this approach tend to emphasize the importance of imagery in metaphor. This emphasis is apparent in their frequent use of descriptive terms pertaining to sight and visibility, a use perhaps nowhere more evident than in the central claim that metaphors prompt us to 'see as' rather than 'see that'. To understand this position well, it will be necessary to develop a clear idea of the meaning of this claim, and of the role of imagery in metaphor. While most of the theorists discussed to this point have alluded to the

importance of imagery in metaphor, few have sought further
elucidation. A notable exception is Paul Henle, whose
interaction view was considered briefly in section 1.2
above. Henle, we may recall, argued that metaphors describe
iconic objects, whose capacity for indirect signification is
the source of a unique and irreducible metaphorical meaning.
By presenting one object or event in terms of another,
metaphors compel us to conjure an original image of the
first bearing an extended range of features parallel in
structure to the second. Notwithstanding his identification
of this 'iconic element' with the cognitive content of a
metaphor, Henle's account anticipates the idea that well
before being provided with an interpretation, metaphors
effect new and original ways of seeing otherwise ordinary
things.

The most detailed analysis of the notion of 'seeing as'
in relation to metaphor has been carried out by Marcus
Hester,[77] whose work draws heavily upon insights provided by
Ludwig Wittgenstein. In developing his views on language,
Wittgenstein was concerned with only literal forms of
expression;[78] Hester presents his account as an attempt to

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[77]Cf. Marcus Hester, The Meaning of Poetic Metaphor (The
Hague: Mouton and Company, 1967).

[78]A rare mention of metaphor in the Investigations
suggests that Wittgenstein may have unreflectively held a view
of metaphor close to that which I have labelled 'the
traditional view' (in section 1.1) above:

extend and adapt certain of these views to the language of poetry. In his famous discussion of Jastrow's duck-rabbit drawing, Wittgenstein distinguishes ordinary seeing from 'seeing as' (or 'seeing an aspect') by remarking that the latter is akin to 'having an image'; like imagining, it is 'subject to the will.' (213) When presented with the ambiguous figure of the duck-rabbit, he observes, it is one thing to say 'I see a duck'; it is quite another, however, to say 'Now it's a duck,' or 'I see it as a duck'. While the former statement simply reports a perception, the latter statements would appear to report a sudden new perception: they describe a change of aspect. 'The expression of a change of aspect,' he notes, 'is the expression of a <u>new</u> perception and at the same time of the perception's being unchanged.' (196) In this respect, 'the flashing of an aspect on us seems half visual experience, half thought. (197)

Taking his cue from these passages, and from a suggestion for extending their range of application in an

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> If I say 'For me the vowel <u>e</u> is yellow' I do
> not mean: 'yellow' in a metaphorical sense,--
> for I could not express what I want to say in
> any other way than by means of the idea
> 'yellow'. (216)

References, here and below, are to Ludwig Wittgenstein, <u>Philosophical Investigations</u>. Translated by G.E.M. Anscombe; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958.

article by Virgil Aldrich,[79] Hester proclaims that 'seeing as is the fundamental distinguishing characteristic of metaphor in poetry.' (175-76) To explain, he asks that we let A, B and C stand for duck, duck-rabbit, and rabbit respectively, and then comments as follows: 'In Wittgenstein's example we are given B and the problem is to see A and C. In metaphor the problem is different though the act of seeing as is similar. In metaphor we are given A and C and the problem is to see B.' (179) At first glance, this would appear to be no more than another version of the comparison view, not unlike that of Fogelin (outlined in section 2.1) above. A key difference emerges, however, with Hester's emphasis upon the sensible aspect of metaphorical expression. Following Wittgenstein, he underlines that 'seeing as' is at once an experience of seeing and an act of selection. It is thus both active and passive: an ambiguous image is presented to us, independently of our control, and yet we manage to organize it in a particular way. Metaphors, he claims, exhibit this same inherent duality. 'Seeing as is an intuitive experience-act by which one selects from the quasi-sensory mass of imagery one has on reading metaphor the relevant aspects of such imagery.' (180) In hearing or reading a metaphor, we experience an

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[79]Virgil C. Aldrich, 'Pictorial Meaning, Picture-Thinking, and Wittgenstein's Theory of Aspects,' Mind, LXVII (January 1958), pp. 70-79.

ambiguous 'mass of imagery' which, though evoked in us involuntarily, requires our 'active interrogation' to determine its relevant sense. We succeed in making sense of the metaphor only once we are in this way able to see its 'vehicle' as its 'tenor'.[80]

As an intuitive ability, however, metaphorical 'seeing as' cannot be reduced to a set of procedural rules. '[I]n my calling [it] an intuitive experience-act,' notes Hester, 'I mean that seeing as is an irreducible, primitive accomplishment that either occurs or does not occur.' (181) Making sense of metaphor cannot, therefore, be taught; at best, it can be assisted, in a manner inversely analogous to helping someone see the ambiguity in the duck-rabbit figure. To illustrate, Hester cites a passage from Emily Dickinson: 'After great pain a formal feeling comes-- / The nerves sit ceremonious like tombs'. Just as we might help someone to see the duck-rabbit as a rabbit by tracing the ears and so on--that is, by pointing out rabbit features in the shared form--here we might assist a struggling reader by pointing out features shared by nerves and tombs.

> The hypothetical conversation might run:
> 'Don't you see that a great pain, a great
> tragedy, stuns one into a stupor. One goes
> about one's daily tasks in a formal,
> unfeeling way. The nerves sit like tombs.
> Instead of the warmth of life which they
> formally felt, now all is precise, numb,

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[80]Hester here invokes the familiar terms set down by I.A. Richards, whose views are discussed in section 1.2 above.

ceremonious and cold like stones in a
cemetery.' (182)

With statements like these we might succeed in directing
attention to relevant aspects of the figure in question.
Hester stresses, however, that although this manner of
assistance may be useful, it can never adequately capture
the experience-act of reading a metaphor. Our most
enlightened attempts at explication 'can no more get the
totality of an experience-act of seeing as than can
statements about red get the sensation of red. Both types
of statements have, in Wittgenstein's terminology, ostensive
meaning.' (178) Here language can only point to a way of
reading; it cannot provide a complete analysis, or
equivalent replacement, for the reading itself. The reading
itself is an intuitive talent, requiring above all 'an
openness to the text, a sensitivity to the imagery
involved.' (182) It is at once a perception and ordering of
this imagery--an experience-act in which 'thought and
sensation are inseparable because the object of reading is a
<u>sensuous</u> <u>object</u> <u>interpreted</u>.' In this way, the 'seeing as'
prompted by our reading of a metaphor achieves a fusion of
verbal and visual; in metaphor, '[t]he same imagery which
<u>occurs</u> also <u>means</u>.' (188)

    The principal virtue of this account lies in the
decisive role it provides for the imagination. Interpreting
a metaphor is a creative activity, requiring only openness

to the range of visual images aroused in memory by the words
it employs, and heed for the free play of the imagination,
in its capacity to extend and organize this flow of imagery,
thereby to give it sense. An obvious advantage of this view
over so many of its rivals is that it offers a more accurate
description of what occurs as we encounter and attend to the
most strikingly novel cases of metaphor. By way of example,
we might consider the report, in surrealist verse, of 'Eyes
capable of cracking pebbles / Smiles without thinking / For
each dream / Squalls of snow cries / Lakes of nudity / And
uprooted shadows.'[81] Making sense of these lines is not a
matter of adherence to established procedure or principle;
it is a wholly innovative undertaking in response to the
vision they release--in response, that is, to the profusion
of images evoked in the reader by the poet's words. With
this insistence upon the vital sensible character of
metaphorical language--in particular, its power to call
forth stirring visual images--Hester's account recalls the
speculation of G.W.F. Hegel concerning the historical
origins of metaphor. Hegel believed that metaphors 'arise
from the fact that a word, which in the first instance
merely designates something entirely sensuous, is carried

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[81]Paul Eluard, 'Amoureuses,' from La Vie Immédiate, cited
in J.H. Matthews, Surrealist Poetry in France (Syracuse, New
York: Syracuse University Press, 1969), p. 110; translated by
J.H. Matthews.

over into a spiritual sphere,'[82] as a means of representing abstract ideas in terms more concrete and thus more readily comprehensible.

Although such speculation remains plausible for many cases of metaphor, it cannot be taken to identify the sustaining feature of current practice. Hester's view, likewise, is mistaken in contending that metaphors are invariably evocative of visual images. Some may fail to do so because they have fallen into a regular pattern of use. When I say that I'm feeling a little blue this morning, or that Wagner is not my cup of tea, my words are unlikely to summon rousing images for anyone familiar with idiomatic English. Of course, one might deny that these are metaphors at all, by arguing that an expression is only as image-evocative as it is free from standards of conventional use. That these expressions fail to evoke images, or perhaps more accurately, that we can make sense of these expressions without forming images, would thus only indicate that they are former (or dead) metaphors. This argument fails, however, when we consider certain other problem cases.

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[82]G.W.F. Hegel, The Philosophy of Fine Arts (London: G. Bell and Sons, Ltd., 1920; F.P.B. Osmaston trans.), volume II, p. 139. This passage marks a significant point of departure for Jacques Derrida's indictment of metaphor in philosophy as a form of 'white mythology.' Cf. Jacques Derrida, "White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy," in his Margins of Philosophy (F.C.T. Moore translator; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp. 207-271.

Take, for instance, Wallace Stevens's pronouncement that 'Death is the mother of beauty,' or Nietzsche's remark that 'Some are born posthumously.' Though plainly concerned with the subject of death, or a type of birth in death, these are not dead metaphors; yet neither are they terribly (or necessarily) evocative of imagery. Further examples in poetry are not lacking: 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty' (Keats); 'For Mercy, Pity, Peace and Love / Is God, our father dear, / And Mercy, Pity Peace and Love / Is Man, his child and care' (Blake); 'Wisdom and Spirit of the universe! / Thou Soul that art the eternity of thought!' (Wordsworth). In these three selections, we find metaphors in which 'tenor' and 'vehicle' are equally abstract. Few, if any, visual images are awakened by the words they employ; each would thus appear to suffer a distinct scarcity of sensory content for imaginative construal. Yet this in no way inhibits our efforts to make sense of these lines, which proceed according to the many various associations and implications we may attach to the terms they provide. The point here, in any event, is that many a metaphor is delivered and decided without eliciting the 'mass of imagery' or 'sensuous object' that Hester would deem indispensible to its comprehension.[83]

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[83]Paul Ricoeur has nonetheless identified in Hester's account a key step toward understanding 'the semantic role of imagination (and by implication, feeling) in the establishment

The most prominent version of the alternative pragmatic approach to metaphor that I have labelled 'irreducible non-sense' has been advanced by Donald Davidson.[84] Metaphorical 'seeing as,' on his view, is less a matter of ordering visual imagery than it is of attending to the full range of imaginative activity prompted by what a metaphor says. Davidson's leading thesis is that 'metaphors mean what the

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of metaphorical sense.' (229) This role, he claims, comprises three steps: first, imagination in what Kant called its productive mode schematizes (that is, provides a procedure for) a synthetic operation of understanding, permitting us to distinguish a relevant similarity in dissimilars. Second, it produces images, both aroused and yet controlled by the clash of verbal meanings, which depict the new intended relation--in Kant's terms, it provides a concept with an image. Finally, it suspends ordinary reference in order that novel meaning may take hold in a projected (or redescribed) world. With his analysis of metaphorical 'seeing as,' in which verbal meanings generate 'bound' images displaying or depicting an intuitive grasp of a new and original predicative connection, Hester places the emergence of metaphorical meaning on 'the borderline between a semantics of productive imagination and a psychology of reproductive imagination.' (237) Ricoeur proceeds to sketch what he takes to be the parallel three-step semantic role of feeling, in order to defend his central claim that 'feeling as well as imagination are genuine components in the process described in an interaction theory of metaphor. They both <u>achieve</u> the semantic bearing of metaphor.' (242) This proposal for an expanded semantic-interaction view of metaphor, while impressive for the sheer range of insight it aims to assimilate, nonetheless relies (by its author's own admission) upon 'a theory of imagination and of feeling which is still in infancy.' (246) Cf. Paul Ricoeur, 'The Metaphorical Process as Cognition, Imagination, and Feeling,' <u>Critical Inquiry</u> 5, no. 1 (1978): 143-159. Page references here are to its reappearance in Johnson (1981), pp. 228-247.

[84]Donald Davidson, 'What Metaphors Mean,' <u>Critical Inquiry</u> 5, no. 1 (1978): 31-47. Page references below to its reprint in Johnson (1981), pp. 200-227. Also reprinted in Davidson, <u>Inquiries Into Truth and Interpretation</u> (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), pp. 157-175.

words, in their most literal interpretation, mean, and nothing more.' (201) With this claim, he registers his firm opposition to the idea of metaphorical meaning, as well as to any view that would treat metaphor as a form of communication. 'The concept of metaphor as a vehicle for conveying ideas, even if unusual ones,' he remarks, 'seems to me as wrong as the parent idea that a metaphor has a special meaning.' Metaphors are incapable of equivalent literal paraphrase 'not because [they] say something too novel for literal expression but because there is nothing there to paraphrase.' (201) This is not to say that metaphors are pointless; it is only to deny that they transmit encoded information. This denial, moreover, should not be taken to imply that metaphors are inappropriate for certain types of thought or expression. 'In the past,' he adds, 'those who have denied that metaphor has a cognitive content in addition to the literal have often been out to show that metaphor is confusing, merely emotive, unsuited to serious, scientific or philosophic discourse. My views should not be associated with this tradition.' (201-02) Although the tradition in question goes nameless, this reference to separate cognitive and emotive uses of language indicates that Davidson is concerned to distance himself from a key tenet of logical positivism. Prior to assessing Davidson's own account, it will be worthwhile to digress

briefly, in order to clarify his relation to this legacy of positivist views in the matter of metaphor.

Positivists sought above all to rid philosophy of the exaggerated claims of speculative metaphysics, by accepting only literal statements capable of verification as legitimate knowledge claims. To this end, they adopted as their central principle that the meaning of a proposition is identical to the set of experiences that are together equivalent to its being true. Assertions lacking any such possible verification in experience were deemed neither true nor false; instead, they were considered devoid of cognitive significance, at best, expressions of (cognitively) meaningless subjective sentiment. This famous positivist distinction between the cognitive (or 'representative') and emotive (or 'expressive') functions of language is invoked by Rudolf Carnap in his Philosophy and Logical Syntax (1935), when he claims that

> Metaphysical propositions are neither true
> nor false, because they assert nothing, they
> contain neither knowledge nor error, they lie
> completely outside the field of knowledge, of
> theory, outside of truth or falsehood; but
> they are, like laughing, lyrics, and music,
> expressive.[85]

For positivists, metaphor provides an equally clear instance of the emotive use of language: even when the attitudes or

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[85]Rudolf Carnap, Philosophy and Logical Syntax (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1935), p. 29.

emotions expressed by a metaphorical statement are reformulated in approximate literal terms, the underlying assertion itself remains incapable of either verification or falsification, and thus entirely without cognitive content. In reference to the figurative language of poets, Carnap maintains that

> The aim of a lyrical poem in which occur the words 'sunshine' and 'clouds' is not to inform us of certain meteorological facts, but to express certain feelings of the poet and to excite similar feelings in us. A lyrical poem has no assertional sense, no theoretical sense; it does not contain knowledge. (29)

Critics have often pointed to the appeal of positivist ideas, and in particular, the dualism of cognition and emotion, in literary theory.[86] As early as 1923, for instance, Ogden and Richards employed this distinction in order to assign metaphor to like status.

> If we say 'The height of the Eiffel Tower is 900 feet' we are making a statement, we are using symbols in order to record or communicate a reference, and our symbol is true or false in a strict sense and is theoretically verifiable. But if we say 'Hurrah!' or 'Poetry is a spirit' or 'Man is a worm,' we may not be making statements, not even false statements; we are most probably using words merely to evoke certain attitudes.[87]

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[86]Cf. Fred Dallmayer, <u>Language and Politics</u> (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1984), chapter 6, most notably pp. 152-155.

[87]C.K. Ogden and I.A. Richards, <u>The Meaning of Meaning</u> (8th edition; New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1946), p. 149.

Of course, prior indications of this separation of two distinct uses of language are pervasive in Romanticism, most notably, throughout the early nineteenth-century rebellion against the neoclassical idea of poetry as imitation, in favour of a conception of artistic production as an essentially personal act of self-expression, to be judged according to the spontaneity and intensity of feeling both emitted and evoked. Wordsworth's rejection of the traditional dichotomy of poetry and prose in support of 'the more philosophical one of Poetry and Matter of Fact, or Science,'[88] along with his characterization of poetry as most vitally a means 'to rectify men's feelings, to give them new compositions of feeling, to render their feelings more sane, pure, and permanent'[89] offers a representative instance. Here a crucial difference must be noted, however, between positivist and Romantic views of metaphor. While both maintain that metaphor serves a function quite distinct from that of standard cognitive expression, positivists consider that this distinctness relegates metaphor to a comparatively diminished status in relation to the pursuit of knowledge. Romantics, by contrast, praise metaphorical

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[88] From the 1800 Preface; cited in Monroe Beardsley, Aesthetics from Classical Greece to the Present (New York: Macmillan, 1966), p. 252.

[89] Letter to John Wilson, 1800; cited in Beardsley (1966), p. 252.

expression as the unerring testimony of a type of direct intuition, offering insight into a higher order of supra-rational truth, to which the poet maintains privileged access. Perhaps nowhere is this contrast more evident than in Shelley's magnificent 'Defense of Poetry,' which concludes with the opinion that

> Poets are the hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration; the mirrors of the gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present; the words which express what they understand not; the trumpets which sing to battle, and feel not what they inspire; the influence which is moved not, but moves. Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world.[90]

Indeed, with this celebration of the unique power of poetic language, its pervasive influence in shaping language and thought, and above all, its role in promoting heightened sensibility, expanded awareness, and the possiblity of human self-realization through expression, the Romantics managed to inspire many of the same philosophical systems that positivists would later organize themselves to attack.[91]

Davidson's account of metaphor bears an important affinity with each of these views. Though he is by no means

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[90]Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'A Defence of Poetry,' in David Bromwich ed., Romantic Critical Essays (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 243.

[91]Cf. Charles Taylor, Hegel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), especially chapter one, pp. 3-50; cf. also Isaiah Berlin, 'Herder and the Enlightenment,' in Earl Wasserman ed., Aspects of the Eighteenth Century (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1965).

a positivist, he holds a similarly restricted view of what it is for an utterance to have a meaning, one that excludes metaphor.[92] And while neither is he a Romantic, he agrees that it is this very exclusion which accounts for the power of metaphor to confer original insight, engage the imagination, and transform the way we think and act. In order to maintain these views as one, he writes,

> I depend on the distinction between what
> words mean and what they are used to do. I
> think metaphor belongs exclusively to the
> domain of use. It is something brought off by
> the imaginative employment of words and
> sentences and depends entirely on the
> ordinary meanings of those words and hence on

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[92]Davidson's own view, which has seen many forms over many years, is that meaning can be successfully analyzed in terms of truth conditions; or, more precisely, that a theory of meaning for a natural language is provided by the truth conditions for the sentences of that language. In outline, this view might be elaborated as follows: once a speaker learns the semantic role of each of a finite number of words or phrases, and in addition, the semantic consequences of a finite number of modes of composition, she is able to interpret utterances of sentences she has never heard before. Since modes of composition can be endlessly repeated, there will be no limit to the number of such novel sentences. She thus has a system for interpreting arbitrary utterances, within certain parameters (relative to speaker, time and place) provided by context. To model this system, and therefore, the abilities of a competent speaker, Davidson proposes that we follow a Tarski truth definition, which provides a recursive characterization of the truth conditions of all possible utterances, by analyzing those which can be made up from the finite vocabulary and modes of composition. Cf. Donald Davidson, Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), particularly the essays grouped together under the title 'Radical Interpretation', pp. 123-179. The technical details of this theory do not concern me here; as noted both in my introduction and at the opening of chapter one, I have sought to avoid any commitment to a particular analysis of meaning.

the ordinary meanings of the sentences they comprise. (202)

Metaphors mean only what they say; what they say, however, is generally absurd or nonsensical.[93] Strictly speaking, then, metaphors are meaningless--they tell us nothing. True, they are often put to very effective use, for instance, in prompting us to entertain new thoughts and ideas, or discern aspects of things we had not previously noticed. But the thoughts, ideas and aspects a metaphor prompts us to consider must not be mistaken for a hidden meaning of the words it employs. Here Davidson is insistent: 'It is no help in explaining how words work in metaphor to posit metaphorical or figurative meanings, or

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[93]Davidson in fact claims that 'a metaphor says only what shows on its face--usually a patent falsehood or an absurd truth.' (214) As I have argued above, however (in the second full paragraph of section 2.1), this is a misleading claim, which pragmatic theorists would do better to replace with the claim that metaphors are semantically anomalous, and thus simply absurd. Here I accept Samuel Levin's judgement, in reference to the example 'The earth pirouettes around the sun,' that

> there is here no propositional falsity; there is only a lexical misuse. The point is that it is improper to say of the earth either that it pirouettes around the sun or that it does not pirouette around the sun. Yet this is not because as a matter of fact it does not pirouette around the sun but because what the earth does is not properly described as pirouetting--around the sun or anywhere else.

Cf. Levin (1988), pp. 13-15. I take it that Davidson, notwithstanding his above remark, would agree that when confronted with a metaphorical sentence (such as 'The earth pirouettes around the sun'), our first instinct is not to assign it a truth-value, but to attempt to make sense of it, by asking what it could be construed to mean.

special kinds of poetic or metaphorical truth. These ideas
don't explain metaphor, metaphor explains them.' Our
tendency to speak of metaphorical meaning in reference to
what a metaphor provokes or inspires is misleading, he adds
wryly, for 'simply to lodge this meaning in the metaphor is
like explaining why a pill puts you to sleep by saying it
has a dormative power.' (202)

This remark neatly summarizes the principal objection
to the range of semantic-interaction theories presented
above in chapter one. Talk of metaphorical meaning is just
talk about the effects a metaphor has on us; to call these
effects a meaning is to abandon the explanatory function
that provides the rationale for the concept of meaning to
begin with. The point of the notion of linguistic meaning
to explain what can be done with words, in accordance with
conventions that apply independently of any particular
context of use. Metaphors are identified on the basis of a
transgression of these conventions. Talk of metaphorical
meaning, therefore, is empty; it explains nothing. (210) To
believe otherwise is to fall victim to the 'central error
about metaphor...the thesis that associated with a metaphor
is a cognitive content that its author wishes to convey and
that the interpreter must grasp if he is to get the
message.' (217) For Davidson, this thesis is not only
false; given the chronic difficulty of deciding just what

the cognitive content of a metaphor is supposed to be, it is

manifestly implausible.

> [W]e imagine there is a content to be
> captured when all the while we are in fact
> focusing on what the metaphor makes us
> notice. If what the metaphor makes us notice
> were finite in scope and propositional in
> nature, this would not in itself make
> trouble; we would simply project the content
> the metaphor brought to mind onto the
> metaphor. But in fact there is no limit to
> what a metaphor calls to our attention, and
> much of what we are caused to notice is not
> propositional in character.' (217-18)

The difficulty we experience in attempting to provide a

metaphor with an equivalent literal translation is not

simply that 'there is no end to what we want to mention,' it

is, more importantly, that 'no proposition expresses what

[we are] led to see.' (218) It is in this respect that

metaphors may be likened to a type of visual perception.

> Seeing as is not seeing that. Metaphor makes
> us see one thing as another by making some
> literal statement that inspires or prompts
> the insight. Since in most cases what the
> metaphor prompts or inspires is not entirely,
> or even at all, recognition of some truth or
> fact, the attempt to give literal expression
> to the content of the metaphor is simply
> misguided. (218)

Those who would explain a metaphor by appeal to its hidden

message are thus 'fundamentally confused...because no such

message exists.' (218) Davidson is quick to add, however,

that this conclusion should not be taken to disparage the

role of the critic. In his proper role, the critic helps us

to share the experience of a more sensitive or educated

reader. As a result, he finds himself in a type of 'benign competition' with the author of the metaphors under discussion. 'The critic tries to make his own art easier or more transparent than the original, but at the same time he tries to reproduce in others some of the effects the original had on him.' (219)

The key benefit of Davidson's account is that it succeeds in avoiding the liabilities of the views considered in the preceding sections. Those liabilities, we may recall, follow from the attempt to designate a procedure or mechanism for linking the literal non-sense of metaphor with a determinate meaning or intention. Davidson would have us abandon any such project. Rather than seeking to explain or decipher a concealed message of some sort, he urges that in thinking about metaphors, we limit ourselves merely to describing what they evoke. Most theorists of metaphor would agree that upon hearing a new metaphor, we tend to find ourselves forming new ideas, and occasionally even new beliefs. For Davidson, metaphors are best understood as causes, rather than expressions, of such changes. His minimal positive contribution to our discussion, in summary, is to have provided a causal view of how metaphors work. Metaphors incite new thoughts, ideas, images and beliefs, without expressing them either directly or indirectly.

Several minor objections have been raised against this position. Lynne Tirrell, for one, has claimed that 'Davidson mistakenly conflates what is seen with what the metaphor prompts.'[94] With metaphor, she argues, we see one thing, X, as another, Y. What we see, X, is clearly non-propositional; what the metaphor prompts, however--a seeing of X as Y--is less clearly so. To illustrate, she proposes that we consider Romeo's assertion 'Juliet is the sun.'

> It is a fast and illegitimate slide from denying that seeing-as is seeing-that to claiming that no propositional content is associated with seeing-as. We cannot agree that <u>no</u> propositional content is associated with seeing Juliet as the sun. In seeing Juliet <u>as</u> the sun, Romeo may, for example, see <u>that</u> she brings warmth to his life. For that matter, his seeing <u>that</u> she brings warmth to his life may be what enables him to see her as the sun. (146)

Tirrell is right to point out that there may be a propositional content associated with seeing as, but this rather obvious claim in no way contradicts Davidson's position. Her objection is plausible only to the extent that her use of the vague phrase 'associated with' serves to obscure Davidson's key distinction between what words mean and what they are used to do. Davidson denies that metaphors express a propositional content; he stresses, however, that they may prompt, incite, suggest, evoke,

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[94]Lynne Tirrell, 'Seeing Metaphor as Seeing As: Remarks on Davidson's Positive View of Metaphor,' <u>Philosophical Investigations</u> 14:2, April 1991, p. 146.

stimulate, and inspire thoughts, ideas, images, and indeed,
propositions. So in claiming that Juliet is the sun, Romeo
may be motivated by the belief that she brings warmth to his
life, just as his statement may prompt its audience to
embrace the same belief; in neither case, however, does the
statement 'Juliet is the sun' possess as a hidden meaning,
or express in coded form, the proposition that she brings
warmth to his life.

Nelson Goodman has taken issue with Davidson in similar
fashion, objecting to his argument that if metaphors had
special meanings distinct from their literal meanings, then
we would be able to specify those special meanings in
metaphors that have died--as Davidson puts it, '[t]he
figurative meaning of the living metaphor should be
immortalized in the literal meaning of the dead.' But this
consequent does not hold: the once-metaphorical expression
'He was burned up,' for instance, 'now suggests no more than
that he was very angry. When the metaphor was active we
would have pictured fire in the eyes or smoke coming out of
the ears.' (208) Goodman responds as follows:

> Davidson's argument seems at odds with his
> thesis that the metaphorical and literal
> applications of a term cannot be different.
> For if when 'burned up' becomes a literal
> term for angry people, it has the same
> application as when metaphorical, then its
> metaphorical application must have been

> different from its other (original) literal
> application to things consumed by flame.[95]

On this reading, consistency requires that Davidson either back up and implausibly deny that 'burned up' is a former metaphor that now applies literally to angry people, or abandon his thesis that the literal and metaphorical applications of a term are the same. This reading is mistaken, however; it poses no problem for Davidson, who nowhere holds such a thesis. Goodman incorrectly assigns to him the view that literal and metaphorical applications cannot differ, when in fact, he denies that there can be a metaphorical application at all. Davidson's leading thesis, we may recall, is that metaphors have no meaning beyond what they literally say. Transposed to Goodman's strictly referential terms, this amounts to the claim that metaphors have no application other than their standard literal application. Davidson's argument in relation to the above example is quite consistent with this claim. The evocative power of 'burned up' when it was initially employed as a metaphor issued precisely from the fact that it then applied only to things consumed by flame. The gradual decline of this evocative power, moreover, coincided precisely with its

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[95]Nelson Goodman, 'Metaphor as Moonlighting,; in Sheldon Sacks ed., <u>On Metaphor</u> (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 177. Here I concur, for the most part, with David Cooper's assessment of this objection; cf. Cooper (1986), pp. 126-127.

acquisition, over time and with wear, of a distinct application to angry people.

Robert Fogelin, while granting to Davidson's causal theory a certain originality, has objected to his accompanying refusal of the view that metaphors can be understood as figurative comparisons. The problem with comparison views in general, Davidson writes, is that

> They make the hidden meaning of the metaphor all too obvious and accessible. In each case the hidden meaning is to be found simply by looking to the literal meaning of what is usually a painfully trivial simile. This is like that--Tolstoy is like an infant, the earth like a floor. It is trivial because everything is like everything else. (209)

Fogelin distinguishes two criticisms here, in order to consider them separately: 'The first is that comparativism in either form makes the hidden meaning of a metaphor too easy to interpret; the second is that hidden meaning, when revealed, usually emerges as triviality.'[96] In response to the first, he correctly points out that only the reductive comparativist, who conflates simile with literal comparison, stands guilty as charged. Fogelin, by contrast, advocates an elliptical simile view of metaphor that differentiates literal and figurative comparison according to considerations of salience.[97] In response to the second of

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[96]Fogelin (1988), p. 58.

[97]As noted (in section 2.1) above, Fogelin holds that literal comparisons identify likeness in terms of obvious salient features, whereas figurative comparisons, or similes,

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Davidson's criticisms, Fogelin argues that there is no reason to suppose that the simile associated with a metaphor is 'painfully trivial,' since it is not true that everything is similar to everything else. To be clear, Fogelin does not deny that, given any two entities, it is always possible to find something that is true of both; rather, he denies that this shows them to be similar. He describes his strategy in doing so as follows: 'if similarity is a universal relation, it follows trivially that it is a symmetrical relation; thus by showing that similarity is not symmetrical we refute the doctrine that everything is similar to everything else.' (62) It is important to note that by symmetry, Fogelin means reversibility, 'namely, that if a is similar to b, then b is similar to a.' (62) To show that similarity claims are not reversible in this way, Fogelin cites a lengthy passage from the work of psychologist Amos Tversky, which reads (in part):

> Such a statement [of the form 'a is like b']
> is directional; it has a subject, a, and a
> referent, b, and it is not equivalent in
> general to the converse similarity statement
> 'b is like a.' In fact, a choice of subject
> and referent depends, at least in part, on
> the relative salience of the objects. We tend
> to select the more salient stimulus, or the

require that the hearer respond to an apparent violation of Gricean conversational maxims by seeking to 'square the context with the utterance,' that is, by ignoring standard salient features in order to interpret the assertion of similarity in terms of only the more general or subsidiary qualities that the items in question may be considered to share.

> prototype, as a referent, and the less
> salient stimulus, or variant, as a subject.
> We say 'the portrait resembles the person'
> rather than 'the person resembles the
> portrait.' We say 'the son resembles the
> father' rather than 'the father resembles the
> son.' We say 'an ellipse is like a circle,'
> not 'a circle is like an ellipse,' and we say
> 'North Korea is like Red China' rather than
> 'Red China is like North Korea.'[98]

Tversky here appeals to the concept of salience to account
for the directionality, and hence, asymmetry, of similarity
statements. Features are salient, he proceeds to explain,
when they are prominent or conspicuous, or play a central
role in classification. In discussing this passage, Fogelin
concedes that salience 'is a rich and diverse concept--
perhaps in need of regimentation.' (66) His conclusion,
nonetheless, is that '[Tversky's] list of clear examples of
similarity claims that are not reversible...alone is
sufficient to refute...Davidson's claim that everything is,
after all, similar to everything else. (64)

This conclusion is unwarranted, however, as Fogelin's
argument turns on equivocal use of the terms 'symmetry' and
'reversibility'. To establish the falsity of the claim that
everything is similar to everything else, Fogelin proposes
to show that (at least some) similarity claims are
asymmetrical, or non-reversible. He thus needs to show that
for some A and B, it is true that A is similar to B, but

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[98]Amos Tversky, 'Features of Similarity,' Psychological
Review 84 (1977), p. 328; cited in Fogelin, p. 64.

false that B is similar to A. Yet Tversky's examples show only that for some A and B, the intended sense of 'A is similar to B' may differ from the intended sense of 'B is similar to A.' This difference, moreover, does not show any similarity claim to be false. Choice of subject and referent may indeed depend on relative salience, but salience in turn depends on what one wants to say. For instance, we might say 'the father resembles the son' to berate the father of a notoriously immature son, or 'the person resembles the portrait' after she has had her hair styled in a manner not seen since the time of the portrait. The fact that certain pairs are more often directed certain ways tells us something about what is more often being said, but nothing to contradict the claim that everything is similar to everything else. In any event, it is worth recalling that Fogelin's objections are not directed against Davidson's leading thesis; consequently, the accuracy or inaccuracy of Davidson's criticism of the comparison view has no bearing on that of his own causal theory.

The principal objection to Davidson's causal theory is that it fails to explain how we produce and understand metaphorical utterances. Defenders of rival viewpoints have accused Davidson of brazen disregard for the fact that metaphors are pervasive in our everyday thought processes and communicative practices, where they are used quite

commonly to convey messages, in both ordinary and
specialized contexts. Given this fact, any satisfactory
account of metaphor must determine, by reference to some
form of general procedure or mechanism, just how such
content is successfully transmitted. Yet Davidson would
simply evade this vital question entirely. Thus, for
instance, Karsten Harries has argued that in denying to
metaphors a cognitive content, Davidson cannot account for
our frequent use of metaphor in slang:

> [S]omeone is called an AC/DC. Literally
> understood the claim would have to be
> considered false or perhaps meaningless. Once
> the figurative meaning of the term has been
> understood, however, the expression is
> recognized as an assertion that may be true
> or false.[99]

As we have seen throughout the preceding sections, most
theorists of metaphor have based their views upon cases no
less time-worn and familiar--'man is a wolf,' 'Sam is a
pig,' 'time flies,' and so on. Indeed, for many such
theorists, '[m]etaphor is a tool so ordinary that we use it
unconsciously and automatically, with so little effort that
we hardly notice it. It...is an integral part of our
ordinary everyday thought and language.'[100] Metaphors, they
hold, are used to communicate, to convey meanings. Since

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[99]Karsten Harries, 'The Many Uses of Metaphor,' in Sheldon
Sacks ed., On Metaphor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press,
1979), pp. 166-167.

[100]Lakoff and Turner (1989), p. xi.

the meaning a metaphor conveys is distinct from the usual

meaning of the words it employs, however, it follows that

'in addition to the literal meanings of words, we require

rules for the second-order discourse specific to

metaphor.'[101] Davidson's causal view is defective because it

provides no such rules. In an essay entitled 'How Metaphors

Work: A Reply to Donald Davidson,' Max Black has summarized

this point quite simply: 'The gravest objection to

Davidson's vigorously argued standpoint then is that, while

rejecting current views, it supplies no insight into how

metaphors work...'[102]

Of course, to this charge, Davidson can only plead

guilty, as he wants to deny the very existence of what he is

being asked to explain. His leading thesis, once again, is

that metaphors mean nothing other than what they literally

say. Attempts to designate a procedure for decoding a

hidden message in what they say are therefore, as he puts

it, 'fundamentally confused.' From the very outset of his

essay, Davidson emphasizes the irreducible creativity of

both metaphorical construction and construal; indeed, in a

clever--if conspicuous--effort to demonstrate this point, he

opens with a striking metaphor of his own.

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[101]Kittay (1989), p. 143.

[102]Max Black, 'How Metaphors Work: A Reply to Donald
Davidson,' in Sacks (1979), p. 189.

> Metaphor is the dreamwork of language and,
> like all dreamwork, its interpretation
> reflects as much on the interpreter as on the
> originator. The interpretation of dreams
> requires collaboration between a dreamer and
> a waker, even if they be the same person; and
> the act of interpretation is itself a work of
> the imagination. So too understanding a
> metaphor is as much a creative endeavor as
> making a metaphor, and as little guided by
> rules. (200)

More recent defenders of metaphor as a type of 'irreducible non-sense' have sought to extend and reinforce Davidson's view by elaborating in one way or another upon these remarks. Before presuming to pass judgement over the principal objection to this type of position, it will be useful to consider a few such elaborations in brief.

Marcia Cavell has offered an interpretation of Davidson's opening metaphor that draws upon certain of Freud's ideas concerning dreamwork.[103] 'On Freud's theory,' she notes, 'a dream is the representation, or the visualization, of a wish fulfilled.' (496) This wish is not easily recognized by the wakened dreamer, since it is usually infantile (and thus foreign to the wishes and desires of the conscious adult), surrounded by anxiety (at the thought of having such a wish), and presented in a 'visual or fictive mode.' (497) For this distinctive mode

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[103]Marcia Cavell, 'Metaphor, Dreamwork and Irrationality,' in Ernest Lepore ed., _Truth and Interpretation: Perspectives on the Philosophy of Donald Davidson_ (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984), pp. 495-507.

of presentation, 'the dream is the prototype of what Freud sometimes calls 'hallucinatory wish-fulfillment' and sometimes unconscious 'phantasy',' (497) a peculiar type of imagining in which some state of anxiety, lack or need is represented as having been set right. Such hallucinatory or unconscious imagining differs from ordinary imagining in that it fails to distinguish between belief and make-believe, or wishing something were so, and it being the case. This is not to say that in so imagining, one believes the situation represented to have been obtained. One is, rather, of a mental state indifferent to reality, for which questions of assertion and belief are suspended. 'One does not hallucinate--as one believes--<u>that</u> something is the case; one hallucinates <u>the</u> <u>world</u> as being a certain sort of way.' (499) Thus, in calling metaphor the 'dreamwork' of language, Davidson encourages us to think of metaphor in terms of not only dreams, but more importantly, alongside of our experience of phantasy, works of art, and certain types of wishful thinking--instances of the kind of dreamwork, or waking mental process that Cavell calls 'non-propositional envisioning.' (495) 'In dreamwork,' she concludes, 'wishing causes one to describe the world in a certain way, and one's description is mistaken for the world.' (507)

Samuel Levin has taken up a similar line of thought, in proposing that interpreting a metaphor is not a matter of

imagining a metaphoric utterance meaning to fit the actual

world, as most theorists contend, but of imagining a

metaphoric world to fit the actual utterance meaning.[104] In

particular, he urges not only that the language of metaphor

be taken literally, but that to this demand, implicit in

Davidson's view, there be added 'the further requirement

that we accept the epistemological consequences that ensue

from adopting this course, where this means that we try to

conceive of the state of affairs actually described by the

language of the metaphoric expression.' (17) For Levin,

nowhere is the need for this manner of reading more evident

than in the poetry of Wordsworth. In a well-known passage

of the 1805 _Prelude_, for instance, the poet turns from

lamenting his inability to apply himself to the poetic work

of which he feels capable, in order to ask:

> Was it for this
> That one, the fairest of all rivers loved
> To blend his murmurs with my nurse's song,
> And from his alder shades and rocky falls,
> And from his fords and shallows, sent a voice
> That flowed along my dreams? For this didst thou,
> O Derwent, travelling over the green plains
> Near my 'sweet birthplace', didst thou,
>   beauteous stream,
> Make ceaseless music through the night and
>   day,
> Which with its steady cadence tempering
> Our human waywardness, composed my thoughts
> To more than infant softness, giving me
> Among the fretful dwellings of mankind,
> A knowledge, a dim earnest, of the calm

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[104]Samuel Levin, _Metaphoric Worlds: Conceptions of a Romantic Nature_ (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), p. 3.

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Which Nature breathes among the hills and groves?
                    (I, 269-85)

Here Wordsworth is concerned to impart something of 'the refuge and comfort ('the calm') that nature offers from the disappointments and frustrations ('Was it for this') of human affairs.' (224) In particular, he recounts how the river Derwent 'loved to blend his murmurs with my nurse's song,' 'sent a voice that flowed along my dreams,' and 'gave knowledge, a dim earnest, of the calm which Nature breathes among the hills and groves.' One way to read these metaphors would be to treat them as pathetic fallacies, in which the poet transfers to inanimate Nature a range of terms pertaining properly to the impressions and sentiments evoked in him as he contemplates it. On Levin's view, however, such a reading not only 'fails to do justice to the strong poetic feeling of these lines,' it also 'degrades and trivializes' the heightened experience and disposition of mind they would prompt us to share. (224-225) Taking them literally, on the other hand, 'implies a universal interanimation, a sense of something 'deeply interfused',' as all at once 'nature and the river are transfigured: the river does speak, nature does breathe. No longer are their concepts lifeless, of objects existing outside and apart from us; they become vitalized with the same forces that animate human nature.' (226) A literal reading of Wordsworth's metaphors thus summons us to reflect upon 'the

oneness, the integrity of the created world, the idea of man

and nature as participating in a unity of sovereign

disposition.' (228) In so doing, more generally, we are

forced 'to conceive of a world or state of affairs whose

nature...is estranged from common notions of reality and may

rightly be termed metaphoric.' (237)

That metaphors inspire us to conceive of things as

never before is an idea of no less importance to Richard

Rorty, who has sought to provide an account of 'intellectual

history viewed as the history of metaphor.'[105] This account

proceeds from his central 'antifoundationalist' argument,

which he summarizes as follows: 'since truth is a property

of sentences, since sentences are dependent for their

existence upon vocabularies, and since vocabularies are made

by human beings, so are truths.' (21) At 'the level of

criterion-governed sentences within language games,' he

observes, the world may cause us to be justified in holding

a particular belief. Yet when we consider

> alternative language games--the vocabulary of
> ancient Athenian politics versus Jefferson's,
> the moral vocabulary of St. Paul versus
> Freud's, the jargon of Newton versus that of
> Aristotle, the idiom of Blake versus that of

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[105]Richard Rorty, Contingency, irony, solidarity
(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 16; page
numbers in parentheses below refer to this text. Cf. also
'Unfamiliar Noises: Hesse and Davidson on Metaphor,'
Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, supplementary vol. 61
(1987): 283-296; reprinted in his Objectivity, Relativism and
Truth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp. 162-
172.

> Dryden--it is difficult to think of the world
> as making one of these better than another.
> (5)

Vocabularies are not chosen by reference to criteria; they
are acquired, and gradually adjusted, in the service of
various human purposes. To accept this view of the
'contingency of language,' we are told, is to embrace 'a
picture of intellectual and moral progress as a history of
increasingly useful metaphors rather than of increasing
understanding of how things really are.' (9) In support of
this picture, Rorty urges that we see the distinction
between the literal and the metaphorical as just the
difference between 'familiar and unfamiliar uses of noises
and marks.' Literal uses of language 'are the uses we can
handle by our old theories about what people will say under
various conditions'; metaphorical uses, on the other hand,
are those 'which make us get busy developing a new theory.'
(17) This distinction he takes to be a consequence of
Davidson's leading thesis, that metaphors mean nothing other
than what they literally say. 'To have a meaning is to have
a place in a language game. Metaphors, by definition, do
not.' In this respect,

> tossing a metaphor into a conversation is
> like suddenly breaking off the conversation
> long enough to make a face, or pulling a
> photograph out of your pocket and displaying
> it, or pointing at a feature of the
> surroundings, or slapping your interlocuter's
> face, or kissing him. Tossing a metaphor into
> a text is like using italics, or

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illustrations, or odd punctuations or formats.

All these are ways of producing effects on your interlocuter or your reader, but not ways of conveying a message. To none of these is it appropriate to respond with 'What exactly are you trying to say?' If one had wanted to say something--if one had wanted to utter a sentence with a meaning--one would presumably have done so. But instead, one thought that one's aim could be better carried out by other means. (18)

Of course, this is not to say that an unfamiliar noise or mark will never acquire a habitual use, or familiar place in the language game into which it has been introduced. In time and with frequent repetition, it may well do so, once our theories about the linguistic behaviour of others have been modified to accept it. It then will have become just another literal utterance, a successful contribution to the gradual process of 'changing the way we talk, and thereby changing what we want to do and what we think we are.' (20)

Much more could be said about each of these views, in particular, concerning the extent to which each departs from Davidson's stated position.[106] Putting such differences aside, however, and returning to matters at hand, we may note that each endorses a version of his causal theory of how metaphors work. Metaphors incite new thoughts, ideas,

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[106]For persuasive argument of the opinion that Rorty's view of metaphor, for its exclusive emphasis on the discontinuity between linguistic creativity and cognition, is a distortion of Davidson's, cf. Gabe Eisenstein, 'Contingency and Pessimism: Rorty on Creativity and Understanding,' The Philosophical Forum Volume XXIII, No. 3, Spring 1992.

images and beliefs, without expressing them either directly
or indirectly; they mean only what they literally say,
which, though absurd or non-sensical, may nonetheless prompt
us to envision fanciful states of affairs, project
metaphoric worlds, and look for ways to revise our theories
about linguistic behaviour. One notable consequence of this
type of position is that so-called 'conventional' or 'dead'
metaphors (such as those cited and analyzed by advocates of
the preceding rival views) are not metaphors at all. They
are, to borrow Rorty's terms, just once-unfamiliar strings
of marks and noises that have become familiar, by having
been successfully fixed within a predictable pattern of
behavior. It is therefore pointless to look for rules that
would explain how metaphors work. Against those who persist
with this project, only to end up taking such established
utterances as paradigm cases, supporters of the causal view
point out that metaphors are rather more like good jokes or
hidden frogs: though initially quite provocative, they tend
to die when dissected.[107]

To summarize: the principal objection to the causal
view assumes that metaphors are used for communicative

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[107]Cf. Davidson (1978), p. 200: 'there are no unsuccessful
metaphors, just as there are no unfunny jokes.' Cf. also Rorty
(1987), pp. 290-91: 'you may not have to kill a platypus to
get a satisfactory theory of how it works, but you do have to
kill off a metaphor to get a satisfactory theory of how it
works.'

purposes--that is, to convey messages--and then deems inadequate any account that does not explain, by reference to some form of general procedure or mechanism, just how this occurs. In response, defenders of the causal view maintain that once successful communication does occur, the expression in question loses its metaphorical status. What, then, *is* the status of such an expression? No longer a metaphor, they claim, it becomes just an ordinary polyseme, a word or phrase with more than one established sense, whose intended sense on the occasion of a particular utterance is readily discernable in reference to the sentence (or broader context) in which it is used. A glance at any standard-usage dictionary shows that polysemy is a pervasive feature of our language.[108] Most polysemy is the result of distinct related meanings of a word, such as that which exists for words denoting both actions and objects ('stone', 'slice', or 'slide'), or words having multiple analogous meanings ('cells' of an organism, prison or political group, the 'neck' of a person, sweater, or bottle). In other cases, distinct meanings appear to be quite unrelated ('pen',

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[108]My own O.A.D. paperback, for instance, lists four meanings for the entry 'pig': '1. a domestic or wild animal with short legs, cloven hoofs, and a broad, blunt snout. 2. (informal) a greedy, dirty, or unpleasant person. 3. (slang, contemptuous) a policeman. 4. an oblong mass of metal from a smelting furnace, pig iron.' Cf. Oxford American Dictionary (New York: Avon Books, 1980), p. 675.

'match', 'bank' or 'bat').[109] Whether and how the multiple

meanings of a word may be associated, however, while perhaps

an interesting question of etymology, does not alter the

fact that we do frequently encounter and readily

disambiguate polysemes. For defenders of the causal view,

this is just what occurs in the circumstance misleadingly

described by their opponents as 'using a metaphor to convey

a message.' Once such utterances are properly recognized as

mere polysemes, they contend, use of the term 'metaphor'

will be restricted to the novel case, for which no governing

rules or principles can be had.

    The simple problem with this response, however, is that

it is disconfirmed by an enormous amount of empirical

evidence. Between the most obvious cases of stone-dead

metaphors that have become polysemes (such as Searle's 'Sam

is a pig') and strikingly novel metaphors that can only be

imaginatively pondered (such as Breton's 'My wife with the

sex of a mirror / ... / With eyes that are purple armor and

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[109]Some linguists invoke this contrast to distinguish
polysemy from homonymy: the former exists where a word or
expression has more than one distinct sense, the latter where
distinct words or expressions are phonetically and
orthographically identical. Owing to the difficulty of
deciding many cases, this distinction has been abandoned by
others in favor of a single standard of lexical ambiguity that
would assimilate all cases to either one or the other. Here I
follow the general trend in the literature on metaphor of
adopting 'polysemy' for all such cases. For a more detailed
discussion of the distinction, cf. John Lyons, Semantics, Vol.
2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 550ff.,
and Cooper (1986), pp. 123-126.

a magnetized needle'), there stands an extended range of ordinary metaphorical talk that is neither firmly established nor entirely original--talk, that is, which is used to convey messages, though it is not quite assimilable to polysemy. To gather examples we need only recall our frequent tendency to describe one type of experience or activity in terms of another: talk of amourous relationships 'going nowhere,' 'off track,' 'on the rocks,' at a 'crossroads' or a 'dead-end', or for that matter, 'blasting off,' 'sailing smoothly,' or 'cruising into overdrive,' all governed by the underlying conceptual correlation 'Love is a Journey,' according to which lovers are travellers, and their relationship a vehicle of some kind; or similarly, reports of how someone known to have no involvement in theatre 'stole the show,' 'brought the house down,' 'held the spotlight', or alternatively, 'played the fool,' 'missed his cue,' or 'suffered stage fright,' all regulated by the implicit correlation 'Life is a Play,' for which that someone is an actor, and his behaviour at some key moment a performance.[110] Each of these expressions can be used to communicate a clear message; few, if any of them,

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[110]Cf. Lakoff (1993), pp. 209-212, and Lakoff and Turner (1989), pp. 20-21 respectively. Cf. also my discussion of the views of Lakoff, Johnson and Turner concerning the priority and ubiquity of conceptual metaphor in section 1.2 above, and the instructive commentary on their work provided by Cooper (1986), most notably, in his section on 'dead metaphor,' pp. 118-139.

however, may rightly be counted as polysemes (akin to the examples of the preceding paragraph, which can be found in any standard English dictionary). True, they are employed as analogous extensions of their standard literal meanings, and this manner of employment is often a source of polysemy. But there is an important difference: here an entire array of related expressions is organized around a single analogy, which authorizes indefinitely more talk conforming to the same inferential correspondence. Our habitual ways of describing one experience or activity in terms of another thus allow us to produce and understand ever new extensions of the same practice. In virtue of the above correlations, for instance, we have no trouble making sense of Aretha's refrain 'we're in the fast lane on the freeway of love,' or Sinatra's 'and now I face the final curtain,' just as we can easily infer what it might mean to describe a marriage as having 'had a frozen O-ring at lift-off,' or to claim that a sudden delay in plans was 'not in the script.' The same applies equally to innumerable novel utterances, which are readily understood to convey a message, though there can be no question of multiple established meanings.

In answer to this reply, defenders of the causal theory might be expected to concede the obvious--that certain types of idiomatic or colloquial metaphor can in fact be used for communicative purposes--in order to retreat to a qualified

version of the view that metaphors convey no message, nor mean anything other than what they literally say. We can imagine such a qualified version to hold, more plausibly, that the causal view applies only to poetic metaphor. This position is no less defective, however, as many terms and expressions used in poetry retain a symbolic value that enables us to determine with reasonable assurance what certain metaphors are intended to mean. The word 'rose', for example, in ordinary speech denotes only a type of flower; in poetry, however, it has over the years come to signify youth, beauty, perfection, and evanescence of life. This kind of specialized poetic signification may be distinctive to the work of a particular poet or period, or it may be drawn from the myths of a widely shared culture or tradition.[111] Many poetic metaphors can be understood as elaborations upon the same habitual ways of describing one experience or activity in terms of another that turn up in our everyday speech. The frequency and ease with which we produce and understand utterances conforming to the correlation 'Life is a Play,' for instance, helps us to ascertain what kind of future 'role' in life Prufrock imagines for himself when he tells us 'No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be; / Am an attendant lord, one

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[111]Cf. J. Paul Hunter, ed., Poetry (New York: Norton, 1973), pp. 521-22.

that will do / To swell a progress, start a scene or two,'
in the same way that our familiar euphemistic talk of 'Death
as Departure' informs our understanding of his statement 'I
have seen or the eternal Footman hold my coat, and snicker,
/ And in short, I was afraid.'[112] The point is that we do in
fact understand these (and a great many other) poetic
metaphors to convey a message. In reading poetry, just as
in everyday conversation, we generally take it for granted
that the author of a metaphorical statement intends to
communicate a belief, desire or informative content distinct
from what that statement literally says; in doing so,
moreover, we tend to assume that there are interpretive
procedures available to us for determining what that content
is, even if our best determinations occasionally turn out to
be imprecise or in want of elaboration. For failing to
provide insight into the nature of these procedures, the
causal theory of metaphor, even in its restricted form, is
inadequate.

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[112]Cf. Lakoff and Turner (1989), pages 22 and 10,
respectively.

CHAPTER 3

A PLURALISTIC ACCOUNT OF METAPHOR

In this concluding chapter, I outline a pluralistic
account of metaphor. An important preliminary question for
any attempt to explain the work of metaphor is whether there
is in fact only one relevant kind of linguistic phenomenon
that may properly be called a metaphor. Each of the four
general types of position examined above maintains that
there is just one such phenomenon, which may be explained
within a single, unified theory. Before proceeding to argue
for what I take to be the comparative advantages of a
pluralistic account of metaphor, it will be worthwhile to
review the strengths and weaknesses of the monistic theories
we have been concerned with to this point.

The traditional view of metaphor, in defending the idea
of 'reducible metaphorical sense,' affirms many of our basic
intuitions about metaphor. Metaphors are ornaments of
language, produced by a transfer of terms that are related
in virtue of an underlying similarity among their referents,
a similarity which might have been alternatively expressed
in equivalent literal terms. Metaphors are thus employed
primarily for aesthetic or rhetorical ends, in order to
persuade, please or influence--though occasionally, they may

be of value as models, as a kind of suggestive heuristic fiction. For all such uses, however, they must be considered with caution, for in shifting terms from one referent to another, metaphors suggest that something is the case when it is not, and thus tempt us with confusion and deception. The problem with this common-sense approach, as we have seen, is that adequate literal translations are simply not available for most instances of metaphor. Our efforts to provide such translations, whether they assume the form of straight literal substitutions, or abridged literal comparisons, tend towards approximations that are indistinct, prejudicial, reductive or incomplete. Metaphors, it seems, are capable of conveying something that literal language cannot.

Semantic-interaction views of metaphor seek to account for this capacity with their support for the idea of 'irreducible metaphorical sense.' In metaphor, they contend, features normally associated with disparate subjects are brought together in a unique and original synthesis, giving expression to a distinctive metaphorical content that is unattainable in ordinary literal terms. Such views thus emphasize the importance of metaphor for cognition. By engaging old words in imaginative new ways, metaphors are responsible for the production of meaning and the evolution of language. Indeed, once adequately

generalized, metaphorical interaction might even be considered to disclose the associative procedures that give coherence and structure to all of our language, thought and experience. The problem with this type of position, however, is that no metaphor can be both irreducible to literal terms and yet expressive of a cognitive content. The cognitive import of an utterance is not an association that holds individually or idiosyncratically--it is a matter of public convention. Words do not momentarily change their meanings on the occasion of a particular utterance. Metaphors either express a cognitive content because they are conventional, and thus literally reducible, or they are irreducible to literal terms because no known conventions apply, so no cognitive content can be discerned. This dilemma is substantiated in the efforts of interaction theorists to lay bare the mechanism according to which we produce and understand an allegedly irreducible metaphorical content. Their analyses of a range of examples show invariably that where a cognitive content can be identified, it follows from associations established in advance in accordance with convention.

The indirect speech approach, in treating metaphor as a form of 'reducible non-sense,' would offer a corrective to the various semantic-interaction views. Metaphors, we are told, express no cognitive content: utterances are

recognized as metaphorical only on the basis of the well-formed absurdity, or semantic incongruity, they profess. In virtue of this transgression of the limits of sense, metaphors function effectively as a type of indirect speech. The non-sense they express is reconfigured as we apply a pragmatic calculus, or set of interpretive principles implicit to context, to reveal the communicative intentions of their authors, the cognitive content that metaphors are used to indicate. So-called 'metaphorical meaning' is therefore just speaker's intended meaning, which is determined by the hearer when semantic conventions of meaning yield to pragmatic conventions of use. The problem with this type of indirect speech approach, however, is that for a great many metaphors, no such pragmatic conventions are available. Speaker's intended meaning is frequently elusive or inaccessible; in some cases, it may not even exist. Knowledge of authorial intent, moreover, does not prevent additional or divergent interpretation. Metaphors are often entertained, appreciated and interpreted in perfect ignorance of the intentions of their makers, by hearers or readers who rely solely upon the thoughts, images or feelings aroused in memory by the words employed, and upon the free play of the imagination, in its capacity to extend and organize this response in a coherent way.

Understanding metaphor, it seems, no less than producing it, is a vitally creative matter.

The causal view of metaphor is fashioned to recognize this creativity, by treating metaphor as a type of 'irreducible non-sense.' Metaphors are said to convey no coded message, nor mean anything other than what they literally say. What they say, though without sense, nonetheless serves to ignite the imagination, and inspire novel ways of seeing and conceiving that defy literal paraphrase. Metaphors thus evoke new ideas and images, without expressing them either directly or indirectly. They cause us to imagine familiar things in strikingly unfamiliar ways, against all prior procedure or principle. The problem for this type of causal view, however, is that not all metaphors serve exclusively as evocations. Metaphors are also prevalent in everyday conversation, where they are used quite commonly to transmit information. Our habitual ways of describing one experience or activity in terms of another tend to endorse ever new analogical extensions of the same habits, enabling us to generate novel metaphorical utterances that are readily understood to convey a message even when first heard. An adequate theory of metaphor must therefore attend to the interpretive procedures employed by speakers and hearers to produce and understand such

expression; for its failure to do so, the causal view is inadequate.

Each of these four types of position may be considered a source of valuable insight for understanding metaphor. Yet each in turn fails to provide a satisfactory explanation of how metaphors work. Only the semantic-interaction views, in defending the idea of 'irreducible metaphorical sense,' fail for reasons of internal consistency. The other three types of position, by contrast, are defective for ruling out utterances that most of us would consider legitimate examples of metaphor. At best, each of these (traditional, indirect speech and causal) views can offer only an incomplete picture of how metaphors work. These findings thus suggest a pluralistic account of metaphor, which would differentiate three relevant kinds of linguistic phenomena as authentic cases of metaphor. Such an account might be elaborated as follows.

'Established' metaphors are conventional utterances that describe something of one category or class of things in terms more appropriate to another. Here I employ the qualifier 'established' rather than 'dead' in order to avoid any negative predisposition that may be attached to the latter. Roughly speaking, established metaphors are those taken as paradigm cases of metaphor by representatives of the traditional view. They can be distinguished from

standard literal language only by those who remain aware of the original or primary meaning of the term or terms that have been analogically displaced. For these users, established metaphors convey a secondary conventional meaning that is based upon a selective range of associations drawn from this original or primary sense. As these origins are forgotten or disregarded, established metaphors pass over into ordinary literal usage.

'Colloquial' metaphors are syntactically well-formed utterances which, though in violation of all relevant meaning conventions, are nonetheless both intended and understood to convey a message. Here I employ the term 'colloquial' in order to emphasize the prevalence of this type of metaphor in everyday conversation, where it is used quite commonly--though not exclusively--to transmit information. Roughly speaking, colloquial metaphors are those described by advocates of the indirect speech accounts of metaphor. They occur where an absurd or non-sensical utterance is reinterpreted on the basis of knowledge and inferential procedures implicit to context to accord with its speaker's intended meaning. While this intended meaning might have been stated in precise literal terms, such terms clearly would not have achieved the same effect as a colloquial metaphor, which requires that the hearer calculate the alternative interpretive possibilities

provided by context in order to infer what is meant from what is said.

'Open' metaphors are syntactically well-formed utterances, also in violation of all relevant meaning conventions, to which no determinate interpretation can be assigned. Here I employ the term 'open' rather than 'novel' in order to underscore the open-ended range of interpretive possibilities that this type of metaphor supports. (Novelty, moreover, is not at issue, since novel metaphors generated from previously established metaphorical correlations are often promptly understood to convey a determinate message, just as many familiar and enduring metaphors are memorable precisely because they continue to resist a single determinate reading.) In general, open metaphors are those taken as paradigm cases by advocates of the causal view of metaphor. They escape not only semantic convention, but any evident means of pragmatic construal; their intended meanings, consequently, remain difficult or impossible to decide. The words they employ thus express no beliefs, nor convey any information. Instead, they merely evoke thoughts, ideas, and images that may cause us to imagine fanciful states of affairs or conceive of old things in new ways that defy literal description.

These are distinct uses of language. Yet all three are exemplified by linguistic phenomena we do not hesitate to

identify as metaphor. The rationale for classifying these three types of utterance as one would seem to be that each stands out as inappropriate on a literal reading, and thereby prompts us to provide it with a nonliteral interpretation. Yet this rationale and manner of classification obscures important differences. As we have seen, established, colloquial and open metaphors are inappropriate to ordinary literal language in fundamentally different ways. The distinctive way in which each is inappropriate, moreover, tends to produce equally distinctive effects for human language use and social life.

Before considering these effects, it is important to recall that an expression can be inappropriate (in the ways outlined above) only in relation to a given set of linguistic conventions. Linguistic conventions include the shared beliefs of parties to an exchange concerning the various ways in which certain marks and noises pair up with certain communicative intentions. As these shared beliefs are variable over time and from place to place, no expression can be considered a metaphor in an absolute sense. Rather, an expression can be properly called a metaphor only in relation to a particular discourse. In the course of an average day, we tend to move freely in and out of a range of distinct, yet overlapping discourses--for instance, those specific to a particular occupation,

activity, or interest, to a given text, author or tradition, or to speech transactions involving others with whom we share different types and degrees of experience. This movement from one discourse to another will often alter the meaning of a word or expression. As a result, an expression inappropriate or non-sensical in one linguistic setting may be perfectly clear and acceptable in another.[113]

This point renders much of the discussion of the preceding chapters problematic, since the examples there cited may be considered cases of metaphor only when uttered in the context of a discourse to which they are inappropriate in one of the ways outlined above. Of course, it would be misleading to say only that what counts as a metaphor is determined by the composition of a discourse. The relationship is in fact a reciprocal one, for it is

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[113]One way to illustrate this point is to follow Wittgenstein in likening discourses to games. A description of someone having 'put it in the top hand corner' is apt to be construed (as metaphor) or dismissed (as nonsense) in the context of billiards, bowling, basketball or bridge--though it has a perfectly determinate sense when uttered in reference to a hockey game. Similarly, allusion to a 'veil of ignorance' in a linguistic context adequately removed from contemporary American political philosophy--say, that of a typical wedding ceremony, bank transaction, auto-repair manual, or travel brochure--will almost certainly be considered puzzling non-sense, worthy of corresponding construal or refusal. The same type of contrast applies for innumerable expressions in relation to a given geographical region, historical period, literary text, religious tradition, political ideology or technical skill--or for that matter, in relation to the special code shared only among small groups of friends, colleagues, family members and so on.

equally true that the composition of a discourse is determined in part by what counts as a metaphor. Metaphors do play an important role in the evolution of language; indeed, this role might be considered an additional reason for classifying the three types of metaphor identified above as one.

To see this, it will perhaps be useful to draw an analogy--one requiring that we extend Wittgenstein's famous image of our diverse speech situations as games, bound by local limits to clear expression. During an English football match in 1823 at Rugby, a boy named William Webb Ellis is said to have been the first player to catch the ball and run with it, thus originating the distinctive feature of 'the Rugby game'. Although William's act was a clear violation of football rules, play somehow continued anyway, as opposing players sought to release the ball by physically arresting him. Amid the confusion, William's teammates responded in kind, surrounding him tightly and pushing away adversaries, thereby assisting his slow advance upfield. Startled observers undoubtedly saw all of this as just an unfortunate, chaotic brawl. Moreover, this judgement was in fact correct, insofar as these events had no significance under football rules beyond their status as obvious violations. Yet these actions, wholly inappropriate or unintelligible in the context of the game, were in fact

the very first manifestations of what would only later be integrated and refined--under transformed rules, in a reconstituted game--as tackling, scrummaging and mauling.

The lifetime of a successful metaphor may be considered in similar terms. An open metaphor begins as no more than a provocative violation of meaning conventions, to which no determinate interpretation can be assigned. Eventually, after a certain amount of research or reflection, it may be interpreted to convey a particular message--that is, it may be construed as a colloquial metaphor. Over time, if retained and frequently repeated in association with a regular context of use, that colloquial metaphor may come to acquire a fixed role in a given discourse; in other words, it may attain the conventional status of an established metaphor. Finally, should these metaphorical origins be forgotten or disregarded, the very same expression will pass over into ordinary literal usage. In this way, established, colloquial and open metaphors might be understood as just three synchronic moments in the same diachronic process of linguistic innovation, conflict and change.

Why, then, should we adopt a pluralistic account of metaphor? There remain at least two good reasons. First, as I have argued in some detail, the three types of metaphor identified above constitute three distinct uses of language that resist assimilation to a single, unified theory. In

their efforts to carry out such an assimilation, proponents of the monistic theories discussed throughout the preceding chapters invariably offer explanations that are either too general to be useful, or too specific to hold true. As a result, no single, definitive account of metaphor is available.

Second, and perhaps more importantly, these same three types of metaphor tend to serve distinct social functions. This becomes apparent when we recall that discourses are bound by local conventions of correct usage, which determine the limits of what can meaningfully be said. These conventions, and the limits to clear expression that they establish, are fluid: they develop over time as the product of a variably consensual project to give expression to the publicly-recognized roles and norms, goals and interests, practices and purposes--in short, the social reality--of a particular linguistic community and context. Established metaphors, as they fade into ordinary literal usage, inaugurate new meaning conventions that tend to garner unreflective acceptance for the particular goals and interests those conventions may happen to promote. Colloquial metaphors, insofar as they are accessible only to those in possession of the supplemental knowledge required to determine their intended meanings, at once disclose and reinforce the shared identification of speaker and hearer

with a particular speech community, and with the practices and purposes endorsed in and through its discourse. Finally, open metaphors, by effecting a suitably well-designed failure to communicate, employ language as a provocation, a selective moment of non-sense that effectively displays and implicitly calls into question the meaning conventions of a discourse, thereby suggesting a reconstitution of the particular goals and interests they frame.

These are distinct functions, worthy of further study. In this project, I have argued that none of the dominant contemporary theories of metaphor is satisfactory, and moreover, that in attempting to explain the work of metaphor, we would do best to adopt a pluralistic approach. To the extent that I have been successful, perhaps interest in a general theory of metaphor might be replaced by questions about the workings of specific metaphors, in relation to the particular discourses in which they are issued, and the various social functions they are used to perform.

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