Effects and Meaning: Metaphors as Implicit Speech Acts

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Abstract

In this paper I show that the typical accounts of meaning do not provide us with what is most important about metaphors. The meaning of a metaphorical utterance is nothing more than what it says. What is important about metaphors looks more like effects, the realizations of significant or surprising similarities between objects they inspire in their interpreters. The effects may vary from interpreter to interpreter or even between interpretations done by the same interpreter at different times as long as there is something like a family resemblance among the core similarities noticed in each case. The use of a metaphor requires exploiting Grice's maxims of conversation and following certain conventions that parallel those required of other speech acts. Metaphors are best categorized as implicit speech acts because they rely on the illocutionary act of the utterance in the same way that jokes or insults do. What a metaphor communicates is more important than what it says.

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Introduction

What a metaphor means is often confused with what effects that metaphor has on its interpreters. This conflation has lead to all sorts of insufficient caveats to theories of meaning as well as explanations of metaphors. The caveats in theories of meaning attempt to bring what looks more like the effects of the metaphor into the bounds of its meaning while the theories explaining metaphors end up making these common occurrences seem almost mystical in their powers. These caveats and cults are unnecessary. I will argue that the problem the caveats are trying to solve can be solved simply by distinguishing between what a metaphor means and what effects it is used to create.

There is a difference between what is said by a metaphor and what it communicates. We do not have to come up with a special theory of meaning that applies to metaphors, nor do we have to rule metaphors out of the realm of rational talk or treat them as magic. If we retain any of our usual theories of meaning and then separate meaning from the intended effects of the metaphors, the problems with meaning disappear. What a metaphor communicates is the effects that it si used to inspire in interpeters.. The meaning of the metaphor is nothing more than what is said by the utterance expressing the metaphor. What is said is not always the same as what is communicated. Often, always in the case of metaphor, what an utterance communicates is more important than what it says. Drawing a distinction between what an utterance says and what that same utterance communicates is common practice among philosophers of language as well as linguists. There are several forms of figurative language including loose talk, similes, and juxtaposition that are handled by drawing a distinction between what they say and what they communicate. Each of these differs from metaphor in extensive enough ways to merit handling metaphor on its

own. I believe the language habits just listed, as well as other forms of figurative language, could probably be handled similarly. But that exploration is outside the scope of the current project.

What is at stake when discussing the difference between a metaphor's meaning and the effects of its use is the ability to determine when someone has understood a metaphor and whether or not that metaphor is successful. What an utterance communicates is not always the same as its meaning on any typical theory of meaning. In cases where meaning and the point of the communication come apart it is important to address both aspects of the utterance to gain a full understanding of it. The interpreter must process both the meaning of the utterance and what that utterance is intended to communicate in order to fully understand the utterance. I believe metaphor to be a key, possibly even paradigmatic, case of this sort of dualistic situation. In the case of metaphor I would even go so far as to claim that what is communicated, or the effects of the utterance, are more important than the meaning, though they are certainly tied to it. If we rely only on meaning in our evaluations of metaphors then our evaluations are limited, partial, and unenlightening. By changing our focus to the metaphor's effects and evaluating those effects on a continuum of success we can get a clearer picture that better captures what we are after when discussing whether someone has understood or used a metaphor well.

For the sake of clarification, I will be limiting my discussion of metaphors to those instances of metaphor that occur in roughly sentences or propositions and follow the form 'X is Y.' I am limiting my project to these cases because I think they will provide a good starting point. I believe metaphors of the 'X is Y' pattern will provide the easiest cases, but even these will be difficult. While quite interesting, discussing more extended metaphors,

often the length of entire poems or recurring and expanding figures throughout a work of fiction, is simply outside the bounds of my current project, as are metaphors that do not follow the specified pattern.[1]

Before getting too much further it would be best to clarify how I will be using some terms. Some have already been used and some others will be appearing soon. By the verb 'utter' I mean to speak, write, or otherwise form a statement or proposition. An utterance is any instance of speaking, writing, or other issuance of such a statement. Metaphors will not be the only kind of utterances mentioned. Among other kinds of utterances to contrast against metaphors I will discuss constative utterances. Constative utterances are the typical declarative report or information, and are evaluated most often and probably most fittingly as either true or false. Constative utterances seem to have long been the main focus of philosophy of language until fairly recently in the decades beyond Austin and Searle. For the sake of completeness I will also make it clear that by 'utterer' I mean to refer to the speaker, writer, or otherwise issuer of the utterance. The interpreter is anyone hearing, reading, and otherwise interpreting the utterance.

Lastly, and most importantly, I want to draw a distinction between what is said and what is communicated. What is said is what any utterance means under any of the standard theories of meaning. The next section will make this abundantly clear. What is communicated is not, or not always, equivalent to what is said. It is much harder to characterize and differs from case to case. Let's take the greeting 'hello' as a quick example. What is communicated by 'hello' is some sort of social acknowledgement, whether it be

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[1] I am not sure whether the views presented in this paper can be applied to these extended metaphors or not. But I suspect that it is no more worrying than the issues that surround discussions of story or theory truth versus sentence truth.

friendship, acquaintanceship, or proactive civility between strangers on the street. The utterance is used to acknowledge that you are aware of the other person and at the very least intend them no harm (barring the villainous sarcastic form of the greeting).

Later in this paper, I will be characterizing what is communicated by a metaphor as the effects it has on its interpreter. "To anticipate: I depend on the distinction between what words mean and what they are used to do" (Davidson 247). The distinction between what words mean and what they are used to do will be the key to determining what a metaphor means versus what effects that metaphor inspires in its interpreters. The effects of a metaphor are the more interesting and important part of a metaphor. What a metaphor means is nothing more than what it says. The effects are what the excitement is about. On my account, this focus on the effects makes metaphors implicit speech acts as characterized by Austin.

Theories of Meaning

One conception of what is said is that of standard or literal meaning. The standard or literal meaning of a word is something akin to its dictionary definition; it is closely related to how the words are typically used by speakers. [2] The standard meaning of an utterance is something like what the words within the utterance mean as recorded in a dictionary or some other heuristic tool that reports on standard language usage, organized according to syntax. It is nothing more. To learn the meaning of 'The goat is in a tree' we could look up each word. Then by adding them together (and using some knowledge of syntax) we learn that the sentence means that a particular sort of horned, hooved, four-legged mammal occupies a place indicated as within the bounds of a particular rather tall,

[2] Although not exactly the same, a view quite similar to this shows up in many structured views of propositions, most notably Frege and Russell.

very sturdy, long-lived plant with a permanent woody stem. [3]We do not need to make any

changes to the theory of meaning or the definitions of words to find out what a

metaphorical utterance means. Take 'Justin is a rhinoceros' for example. Looking up the

words or asking a competent speaker will give a standard meaning that is something like 'A

specific person or animal as identified by the proper name can be identified as one of a

class of horned, four-legged, nearly bulletproof, endangered grey creatures with poor

vision living in Africa or India'. Words do not usually change meanings or easily acquire

new ones simply by being used in a metaphor.[4] If this were true then even the Oxford

English Dictionary would be a hopeless endeavor; it could never come close to reporting

for us all the meanings of any word. And yet we comfortably continue to rely upon such

tools as useful and informative in cases of meaning as based on usage.

An account of standard meaning is insufficient as an account of what a metaphor is

meant to convey. A list of definitions put together following the syntactical clues of the

original utterance leaves the interpreter wanting; it would not show a sufficient

understanding of the utterance. For instance, 'Justin is a rhinoceros' does not literally mean

that Justin wears a lot of grey or that his shoulders are big and his legs are short. It doesn't

mean he is easily frustrated or somewhat aggressive if bothered. It also doesn't mean that

he is stubborn or that he is near-sighted. The standard or literal meaning of the utterance

'Justin is a rhinoceros' is given in the previous paragraph. But these other features seem to

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[3] The definitions provided in this paragraph are loosely based on those found on
dictionary.com. This applies to 'goat', 'tree', and 'rhinoceros.'

[4] Sometimes words or phrases do gain new meanings from their use in metaphor, such as
the 'mouth of a bottle'. When what was originally a meaning or understanding derived from
metaphor turns into the standard meaning of that word or phrase then the metaphor has
died. This process is very complicated and takes an incredible amount of time and common
usage of the metaphor. I think it is safe to say this has happened only to a tiny minority of
metaphors.

be an important part of what the metaphor conveys. As we can see there is no systematic way to get from what is listed in the standard account of meaning to what is listed in this paragraph by way of standard meaning. The idea of standard literal meaning will never get us to the propositions just mentioned. Yet that does not destroy the idea of standard literal meaning; it still has an important role in language. So it seems like there is something more to metaphor than standard literal meaning.

Lakoff and Johnson bring up a similar point when discussing conceptual metaphors such as LOVE IS A JOURNEY.[5] A conceptual metaphor is one through which we systematically understand abstract concepts by relating them to things we experience more directly through our senses. Conceptual metaphors are root metaphors that inspire additional related metaphors. Some of these are so ingrained and popular that we often don't think of them as being metaphors. The conceptual metaphor LOVE IS A JOURNEY inspires other related metaphors such as "look how far we've come' or 'where are we now' or 'it's (the relationship) been a rocky road' A dictionary would not help us see how sayings like 'look how far we've come' or 'where are we now' could apply to relationships.

Despite these shortcomings we feel meaning can rightfully be at least partially characterized by things like dictionary definitions. But there is no good intuitive way to expand, improve, or tweak standard literal meaning so that it continues to produce the meaning given by dictionary definitions and syntactical relations, and at the same time yields propositions like 'Justin wears a lot of grey' or 'Justin is a bit near-sighted', which seem important to understanding the metaphors that inspire them. There are no tricks or

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[5] A longer discussion of this exact metaphor and further issues with reliance upon dictionaries, etc to reveal the important aspect of conceptual metaphors can be found on pages 115-117 of *Metaphors We Live By.*

suspicious moves involved in the utterance 'Justin is a rhinoceros', nor does the sentence any dubious syntactical structures that may alter the definitions of its words. All of the interesting propositions and realizations that come to mind when we hear the utterance 'Justin is a rhinoceros' (his general build, love of grey, and a few personality traits) are brought to our attention intentionally by the utterer, but they are not the meaning of the utterance. They are effects of the use of the utterance as a metaphor. These effects are more important than the metaphor's standard meaning. What is communicated with this metaphor matters more than what is said by it. The effects, as brought about by the use of an utterance, are where metaphorical utterances differ from constative utterances. Such utterances do not differ in meaning or in how we determine meaning.

Another theory of meaning can be derived from Tarski in the form of truth conditions and T sentences. [6] According to Tarski if we can determine conditions that would make a statement true then we know that statement's meaning. Tarski's theory is disquotational and states that any sentence 'S' is true if and only if S. The truth conditions provide a way to fix what it would be like for an utterance to be true. This works for constative utterances like 'The goat is in the tree' as well as statements of opinion like "Peanut butter M&Ms are the best.' To understand either statement we simply need to know its truth conditions. We can decide whether the sentence 'The goat is in the tree' is true or not by seeing if the goat is in the tree. By knowing the truth conditions for the utterance we know the meaning of that utterance.[7] 'Justin is a rhinoceros' would be true iff Justin is in fact a rhinoceros. The same treatment would apply to 'Juliet is the sun.'

[6] It is important to keep in mind that Tarski does not think disquotation is equivalent to meaning, but truth conditions do guide his theory of meaning. This is more closely related to his theory of truth which can easily be taken to guide a theory of meaning.

Accounting for meaning in terms of truth conditions provides no new bridge from meaning to what we are really looking for when we say an interpreter understands a metaphor. Truth conditions may explain what is said in a sentence, but they do not necessarily help in determining what is communicated by that sentence, especially in the case of metaphor.

Under Tarski's truth conditions, the interesting part of what the metaphor conveys is not its meaning. This account of meaning sheds no more light on understanding the metaphor than any of the previous accounts discussed. A truth conditional account of either 'Justin is a rhinoceros' or 'Juliet is the sun' will neither yield anything about Juliet being the center of Romeo's life nor give us insight into Justin's character or clothing choices. The significant similarities we notice between Juliet and the sun or Justin and a rhinoceros remain outside the bounds of meaning. This is because the meaning of an utterance is nothing more than what is said in that utterance, no matter what form the utterance takes. What we find intriguing about metaphors are the effects they have on us. Juliet's importance and Justin's build and character are revealed only when we process metaphors for something other than meaning. What is important about these utterances of metaphors is their effects on our thoughts and the things they inspire us to notice about the objects involved in them. But these important effects are not the meanings of these utterances, and there seems no systematic way to get to these effects from the starting point of meanings.

One attempt to make the meaning of a metaphor yield something closer to its effects without losing sight of the dictionary or standard use of the terms in the metaphor is to add into the account connotations of words. Some scholars have labeled connotations as being as what is 'semantically encoded' in utterances. The strategy for providing the semantic

encoding, which includes connotations, is the same as that of determining standard meaning; we add the meanings of each word together in accordance with the relationships shown by syntax to reveal the meaning of the utterance. Let's see what semantic encoding gets us for the metaphor 'Juliet is the sun.' 'Juliet' in this case is the character Juliet Capulet who believes herself deeply in love with Romeo Montague despite their families' hatred for each other. Any familiarity with the play will bring impressions of young love, innocence, naiveté, and beauty, but also defiance and tragedy to mind. Looking at the utterance it is clear that the 'is' of this sentence is that of identity, so the two nouns should pick out the same referent. Lastly, 'the sun' picks out the giant ball of burning gases at the center of our solar system that nourishes plants, gives us heat and light, sometimes burns us, and is essential to life on this planet. It tends to make us think of happiness (a sunny day puts people in a good mood and we have the metaphor of a sunny disposition), warmth both physical and emotional, and optimism. So 'Juliet is the sun' means by semantic encoding something like 'That naïve young woman deeply in love with Romeo despite her family disowning her is identical to or the same as the warm bright essential happy giant ball of gas at the center of our solar system.' Semantic encoding does give us more information to include in what is said than we get from things like dictionary definitions, but it still doesn't give us what we are in the habit of labeling the meaning of the metaphor.

The meaning shown by semantic encoding does not express what is communicated by 'Juliet is the sun.' If a literature student claimed that what is semantically encoded by the metaphor fully captures its import, he or she would likely not do well on the relevant assignment. We would say the student had missed the point, though we would be hard pressed to tell that student how he or she had gone awry in determining the meaning. This

is because what is important in this case, what is communicated, is not the meaning of the sentence. This is even the case when meaning is characterized as semantic encoding and allows for somewhat personal tweaks to the meanings of the terms on top of strict definitions. Even this more inclusive interpretation of the meaning of a sentence still will not get us to the sorts of things we find most important about metaphors.

What is significant about the utterance 'Juliet is the sun' is not its semantic encoding. If a literature professor were confronted with a response like the meaning I have just assigned to the utterance they might acquiesce but ask what this utterance shows about Juliet, or about Romeo's feelings for her, or why this is an important line in the play. None of these questions are about the meaning of the metaphor. They are about the effects of the metaphor. What is important about Romeo's utterance of 'Juliet is the sun' is how it influences our thoughts on Juliet. It shows among other things that Juliet is essential to Romeo's life. That she is radiant. Possibly that she is nurturing or nourishing and definitely that she is central to his existence. But none of that can be found in the meaning alone. All the instances of 'is' in the preceding propositions are the 'is' of predication, not the 'is' of identification as in the original utterance. These predicative claims about Juliet could not be extracted from the simple identity claim. These realizations and revelations about Juliet are the effects of Romeo's use of metaphor. These effects are related to the meaning of the utterance, but the meaning is clearly not the most important aspect of the utterance. The previously listed propositions are communicated by the utterance; they are not what is said by the utterance. They are effects, not meaning. These effects are what we need to see to say that someone has understood the metaphor. We do not need is a list of definitions and connotations for the words involved in the metaphor.

Homonymy is used in one interesting attempt to reconcile something like the previous conceptions of meaning with the responses we are actually looking for when we ask what a metaphor means. Lakoff and Johnson provide an interesting discussion of the idea in *Metaphors We Live By.* There are two versions of the homonymy approach. The first is that of strong homonymy. The strong homonymy approach claims that each differing use of a word shows a different concept. So 'the sun' in 'Juliet is the sun' is not the same sun as in 'The sun is the center of our solar system.' It is simply by accident that these two words appear to be the same word just as it is an accident that the financial institution we call Wichita Bank is called by the same name as the side of a river or the tilted curve of the Wichita Roller Derby rink. The account that relies on strong homonymy account bears a close resemblance to the claim that words have a special meaning when used in metaphor that they do not have when used in literal speech. But how would we ever get to that special meaning if it weren't at all related to the normal meaning? The strong homonymy account of meaning provides no answer to this question and therefore ignores our intuition that there is some relationship between the different uses of the same word, even if that relationship is not immediately apparent. If strong homonymy is part of the correct account of metaphor, then there are an absurd number of accidental homonyms and a great lack of creativity in the way people use language. Neither of these implications seem true.

The strong homonymy account of metaphor also ignores the systematicity that Lakoff and Johnson clearly display in the workings of our most common metaphors. If an account of metaphor based on strong homonymy were correct then it would just be by

sheer accident that we both buttress a building and buttress an argument.[8] It seems,

however, fairly clear that there is some sort of relationship between the two instances of

'buttress'. More reasonably, an account based on weak homonymy states that the use of the

same word in literal, standard, semantically encoded speech and in metaphorical speech

suggests the concepts in each utterance are related, but not the same. The weak homonymy

approach is fine with there being some related root to both concepts of 'buttress'

mentioned above. Each instance of 'bank' or 'buttress' is a different version of a very

abstract and general concept. The problem with this approach is that a general and abstract

enough concept of 'bank' or 'buttress' that would include and apply to all instances of either

word, both in literal speech and as used in metaphors, would be so general and abstract as

to be (nearly) contentless. Any concept of 'rhinoceros' that could also include a person

named Justin would no longer be recognizable as a concept of 'rhinoceros.' The only aspect

of a concept of a rhinoceros I can think of that would remain if the concept must apply both

to the animal and to Justin is that of being a mammal. Surely any sufficient concept of

'rhinoceros' involves more than being a mammal. So even the weaker version of an account

based on homonymy cannot both stand up to our requirements of an account of meaning

and provide us with a way to get to what I have labeled the effects of metaphor.

It is clear that no typical account of meaning is going to provide a clear or systematic

way to get from the sorts of things an utterance of a metaphor means to the things we think

are important about interpreting a metaphor. This is not due to any of these accounts of

meaning being flawed in some particular way. It is simply because the meaning is not the

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[8] I take these two examples from Lakoff and Johnson in their excellent discussion of strong
and weak homonymy as well as problems with both that can be found on pages 110-114 of
Metaphors We Live By.

important part of a metaphorical utterance. Any of these theories of meaning will get us roughly what the utterance means. The trouble is that meaning is not what we are looking for; what we find important about metaphors is their effects. We use a metaphor not to convey the meaning of words, but to inspire certain effects in our interpreter. That is why these theories of meaning seem unsatisfactory when evaluating metaphors. The effects are the important part of a metaphorical utterance. I have shown that meaning by any typical account is not what we are after when considering the role of metaphor. What is important are the effects a metaphor inspires in an interpreter. Now more on that.

Characterizing the Effects of Metaphors

If no standard account of meaning can lead us to the sorts of evidence we look for to say someone has understood a metaphor then there must be something else going on. There is no doubt something is being communicated when an utterer uses a metaphor, but what is being communicated seems to be something beyond and distinct from what is said alone, on any typical account of meaning. What is important about metaphor then is not the meaning of the utterance. It looks like what is important in a metaphor, or what is being communicated, could more accurately be described as something like its effects. A metaphor is intended to inspire certain sorts of thoughts and realizations in the interpreter. What we want any student in a Shakespeare class to get from the utterance 'Juliet is the sun' is not provided by any of the standard versions of meaning. We want the student to notice and think of certain sorts of similarities between Juliet and the sun. There is no need to demand a specific list of similarities that must match between all interpreters, but there are some things we think should make it into any interpreter's thoughts if we are to say that interpreter understood the communication. The effects of the metaphor as

briefly characterized above, which will be explored more thoroughly later, are the important part of what any metaphor communicates, not its meaning by any of the typical accounts of meaning. From now on I will be using 'meaning' for the sorts of things that the typical theories of meaning offer and 'effects' to for what is communicated and what I believe is the important aspect of metaphors.

Of course, meaning does play a role in communication by metaphor. The meaning of the metaphor provides the base for an interpreter to realize that there is more to a metaphorical utterance than meaning. In fact, through the process of recognizing meaning, an interpreter is tipped off to the insufficiency of such processing, and then is prompted to reassess the utterance in a different way. "The ordinary meaning in the context of use is odd enough to prompt us to disregard the question of literal truth" (Davidson 258). The context of use for a metaphor is odd because metaphors are not used for the same reasons or in the same ways as constative utterances. They should be evaluated in a different way from constative utterances as well. The success of metaphors should not be assessed on a true/false measure the way that constative utterances are. Evaluating along those lines is rather unhelpful. Metaphors are very often either unenlighteningly true (something more or different than trivially true as is the case of tautologies, but hardly more useful), like the metaphor 'no man is an island,' or they are patently false (obviously, openly, and clearly without intent to deceive) like 'this book is a sea cucumber.' The ineptitude of truth or falsity as evaluations for metaphor arises from the fact that meaning is not the raison d'etre of metaphors. The effects metaphors inspire are the reason for their use and existence, and the measure of a metaphor is its success or failure in producing such effects. A metaphor is successful if it does cause the intended effects and unsuccessful if it does not. There are

degrees to success or failure as well. 'Juliet is the sun' is likely a more successful metaphor than 'this book is a sea cucumber'. The reasons why a metaphor is more or less successful are myriad and will be addressed in a later section.

Metaphors seem not to be about what is said but about what is communicated. The effects of a metaphor are what we look for to determine whether the metaphor is successful as well as whether or not an interpreter has understood that metaphor. One characterization of effects that almost suffices to explain metaphor, but isn't entirely satisfying, is Grice's Conversational Implicature.[9] Grice's theory is useful and interesting when trying to explain how metaphors work because it provides a set of maxims that participants in any conversation follow to properly maintain that conversation. So his theory is a useful way to begin taking apart what is said versus what is communicated. This is not to say that the rules must be or always are followed religiously. In fact, Grice notes that much of what is communicated in a conversation is communicated by how we break these maxims.

Grice even briefly explains how he thinks metaphors work: they break one of the four maxims that together support the cooperative principle in his discussion of conversational implicature in "Logic and Conversation." "The cooperative principle states that a speaker should make his or her contribution as is required at the stage it occurs by

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[9] I will not be using terms like 'meaning,' 'speaker meaning,' or 'communicative intention' the same way that Grice does. What Grice wants to call 'meaning' is closer to what I would label effects. If pressed to say what I would replace his 'communicative intention' or 'speaker meaning' with I would have to say those attributes a speaker noticed which inspired the metaphor. These need not match up perfectly with the inspired effects caused in the interpreter by the metaphor. In general, I find Grice's terms too narrow and restrictive to sufficiently handle metaphors. See introduction for further clarification on terms and there will be more on the effects and how much matching must take place later in this paper.

accepted purpose of exchange in which he or she is engaged" (Grice 45). When engaged in a conversation each person should take his or her turn contributing to the interaction at the right time and in an appropriate way to maintain the conversation or move it inoffensively to a close. What counts as appropriate for each stage will partially depend upon the type of conversation happening, but there are some general rules that all conversation partners must use. Grice lists four maxims that make up the cooperative principle, which highlight different ways in which a person should conduct himself or herself in a conversation. First is the maxim of quantity. A person should provide the necessary amount of information appropriate for his or her turn. The second maxim is that of quality, which states that a speaker should try to make true contributions to the conversation. The maxim of relation says that the relevance of a speaker's statements to the conversation is imperative. And lastly the maxim of manner points out that speakers should avoid obscurity and ambiguity while also being brief and orderly.

Obviously, these maxims are not always followed. Breaking a maxim in a certain way suggests that there is more to be communicated than what the utterer says while breaking that maxim. This breaking of a maxim for the sake of further communication beyond what is said is called 'exploiting.' There are a few ways to go about exploiting maxims but we only need to look at one: flouting. Flouting is when a speaker blatantly fails to fulfill one or more of the maxims so that the interpreter is meant to notice the break. A speaker exploits a maxim when flouting is done with the intention of making the hearer think beyond what is said, that is, beyond the meaning of the utterance. Exploiting a maxim requires that the speaker's failure to fulfill that maxim is not intended to be taken as a violation of the overall cooperative principle, and should not be taken as an accident. Grice

states, and I agree, that metaphors are examples of exploiting maxims. He specifically lists

metaphors as flouting the maxim of quality due to the high number of patently false

metaphors.[10]

I believe metaphors also flout the maxim of manner. Novel metaphors often contain

at least one obscure reference in regards to the utterance's surrounding linguistic situation.

The unexpected comparison that metaphors invite is part of what is so intriguing about

them and part of what flags them as nonliteral speech without breaking the overall

Cooperative Principle. While a comment about Justin may be expected in any conversation

about colleague interactions, the mention of a rhinoceros probably is not. The surprising

comparison object is often somewhat obscure considering what has come previously in the

conversation. Metaphors are also inherently imprecise, violating the maxim of manner,

since they are intended to inspire certain kinds of thoughts, but not necessarily certain

specific thoughts or propositions. Imprecision here may not be quite equivalent to

ambiguity, but the results are similar enough in that both provide a fuzzy sense of options

for the interpreter to choose from.

Grice gets us on the right track, but his account is not quite satisfying in showing the

richness of the effects of metaphors. Most of the other examples Grice provides of

implicature provide more guidance about what is being communicated than his example of

metaphor does. For instance, if when asked about the latest Gatsby movie I respond that at

least the costumes were well done, it is clear that I am not impressed with anything else. If

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[10] Grice provides a list of examples in which the maxim of Quality is flouted. Metaphor makes it in as #2 on the list. "2. *Metaphor*. Examples like *You are the cream in my coffee* characteristically involve categorical falsity, so the contradictory of what the speaker has made as it to say will, strictly speaking, be a truism; so it cannot be THAT that such a speaker is trying to get across" (53). All italics and capitalization are Grice's.

said with the right tone and a long preceding pause I can even make it clear that I thoroughly disapprove of every other aspect of the movie. Metaphors, even when we allow consideration of tone of voice and manner of delivery, do not provide this sort of guidance. We cannot paraphrase the effects of a metaphor as we can with other forms of implicature. We need a more satisfactory account of the effects of metaphor than Grice provides with conversational implicature. Our account must show what the effects of metaphor are and how they are being communicated beyond the correct though insufficient point that the utterer of a metaphor exploits one or more of the maxims that compose the cooperative principle. [11]

I believe Davidson's model as shown in "What Metaphors Mean" provides us with at least the beginnings of a positive account of the effects of metaphor. Davidson takes disquotation to provide a theory of meaning somewhat reminiscent of Tarski's theory of truth. But remember this model of meaning delineates what is said, not what is communicated. Davidson intends to rule out what is communicated or the effects of the metaphor when accounting for its meaning. He states multiple times and in multiple ways that a metaphor means nothing more than what it says, but that what is interesting about it is the effects it has or what is communicated by it.

> "We must give up the idea that a metaphor carries a message, that it has a content or meaning (except, of course, its literal meaning). The various theories we have been considering mistake their goal. Where they think they provide a method for deciphering an encoded content, they actually tell us (or think they tell us)

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[11] Camp addresses implicature and the relationship between what is said and what is communicated further in her article "Contextualism, Metaphor, and What is Said." It is not relevant to go into further detail in my project.

something about the *effects* metaphors have on us. The common error is to fasten on

the contents of the thoughts a metaphor provokes and to read these contents into

the metaphor itself" (Davidson 261). [12]

Davidson points out later that an initial interpretation of a metaphor shows it to be either

patently false or uninterestingly true, and that this alerts the interpreter to evaluate the

utterance in another way if they want to fully understand the utterer. This search for

meaning beyond what is said is prompts interpreters to arrive at the ideas of significant

similarities between the things mentioned in the metaphor. When the typical approaches to

meaning do not yield the sort of information that seems appropriate, the interpreter must

reevaluate the utterance in a different way to find what the speaker means to

communicate. The difference between the initial interpretation of the uttered metaphor

and the interpretation after reevaluation is the distinction between what is said and what is

communicated. I will expand Davidson's theory further by providing an account of the

effects of metaphors as well as what this distinction between meaning and effects tells us

about how best to view metaphors.

The effects of a metaphor can be characterized or thought of in a few different ways

that all point to the same things. One way the effects of a metaphor are characterized is as

framing one thing in terms of another. This is a common way of characterizing what

metaphors do, but I also find it to be unclear. Supposedly, we frame our view of Juliet with

the sun. An analysis of 'Juliet is the sun' would go something like this: framing Juliet in

terms of the sun would rule out consideration of such aspects of Juliet as her being young

or her hair and eye color and possibly limit our thoughts on her relationship to Romeo.

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[12] All parenthetical comments and italics are Davidson's own.

None of these aspects of Juliet are going to map on to any of the sun's characteristics. In addition to ruling out these features, the frame highlights the similarities between Juliet and the sun(such as I have already mentioned several times before). But this account of the effects of metaphor seems to have a problem. In general, and especially when dealing with novel metaphors, framing characterizes the effects of metaphor too restrictively. By giving such heavy guidance on how to match up the similarities between the objects in the metaphor it limits the sorts of similarities we would be expected to notice and therefore cuts off the very thing that makes metaphors so interesting and useful. As mentioned above, framing would stress Juliet's radiance because radiant is a term applicable to the sun and to people in the right situations, but a framing account of 'Juliet is the sun' is likely to ignore her particular coloring which we may think is important as well as limit our thoughts on her relationship with Romeo. We may be allowed to consider her nurturing or nourishing to him in some way, certainly necessary to survival, but I am not sure we could make the claim that she is central to his life in the sense that he thinks about her all the time. Romeo may orbit around Juliet like the Earth around the Sun, but how much does the Earth think about the Sun? None at all. So that significant effect would not be a similarity framing would bring about for the metaphor. Framing undoubtedly will call our attention to the similarities between the objects or ideas mentioned in the metaphor, but it also rules out possible routes that interpreters can and do take in exploring metaphors.

One helpful way of thinking of the effects of metaphor is to think the interpretation process as seeing one thing as another. Davidson uses the phrase 'seeing as' and other philosophers have picked up this term. Seeing one thing as another is also how Lakoff and Johnson explain the way we map aspects from the tenor of the metaphor on to the vehicle.

The process of 'seeing as' highlights the similarities between the objects, but in a less restrictive way than framing. This comparative leniency is because as Davidson points out "Seeing as is not seeing that" (263). Seeing as is not something literal. We do not see Justin as a rhinoceros by imagining his face on a rhinoceros body or by a rhinoceros saying the sorts of things Justin would say in his voice. It is something more like a picture that can be seen as two different things. Davidson uses the apt example of a drawing that can either be seen as a rabbit or a duck. If I see it as a rabbit and you see it as a duck we can show each other the opposite ways of seeing it. What I have noticed or learned by your showing me that the drawing can bee seen as a duck is not something literal, but a realization of the different ways one object can be seen. A metaphor does the same thing. It takes one object and shows us a way of seeing it as something else. Often this is difficult or even impossible to state in propositions.

Despite the difficulty just noted in some instances, one way to think of the effects of a metaphor is to imagine something like a list of certain propositions that come to mind by comparing the objects mentioned in the metaphor. Whatever list we provide will be an insufficient paraphrase of what is communicated, but it will give us an idea nonetheless. In fact, this listing of propositions is common practice for clearing up what a metaphor is intended to communicate or to prove that the interpreter has reached an adequate understanding of what the utterer was trying to communicate. I have provided many such lists throughout the discussion of meaning to show that the effects are distinct from the meaning. We take 'Juliet is the sun' to communicate things like her centrality to Romeo's life, his dependence upon her, and even her radiance. 'This book is a sea cucumber' conveys that the story is uninteresting, provides little more than superficial interest for the reader,

and has an amorphous shape rather than a proper story arc. It could even convey that the cover is quite bright and eye catching, but the contents are entirely bland. This list of propositions tends to be how I think of the effects of metaphor because comparing a list of what we think are the significant effects is a quick and easy way to make sure we have both interpreted the metaphor in the right sort of way. Some other characterizations of the effects of metaphor capture the same sort of ideas but in different ways that highlight different aspects of those effects. It will be useful to look at some of these other characterizations.

Often the context of the metaphor helps us in ranking the significance of the similarities. This ranking ability is important because everything is infinitely similar to everything else while also being infinitely dissimilar. The context helps us know which of these similarities is the most significant by somewhat suggesting guidelines of relevance. The context of an utterance helps highlight certain similarities and plays a role in how we arrive at noticing them. The surrounding conversation can be quite helpful when it comes to determining the significant similarities. For example, 'he's a lion' could inspire effects along the lines of admiration for work ethic or leadership skills in a conversation about the role different employs play at a workplace and simply note shaggy blonde hair and feline shaped green eyes if the conversation is a whimsical discussion of people on the street. Another guide for determining which similarities seem the most important is for the interpreter to think about what this particular utterer would be attempting to communicate in the given circumstances. A friend who utters a metaphor in a casual conversation is probably not after profound sorts of revelations, while a serious author is likely aiming for those profound deep realizations we associate most commonly with good

poetry. It may also be relevant to rank the effects the metaphor inspires by importance or significance of revelation. Odds are the utterer was not trying to show some sort of trivial similarity because if so, there would be much easier ways to go about it. Metaphors are used to flag something as important though difficult to understand. The very fact that the utterer intends to make the interpreter take more time processing the utterance seems to point towards a belief that whatever is communicated by that metaphor is important. What is communicated merits the extra time and effort in processing which also means more time spent thinking about the topic itself.

Amidst all this discussion of the effects a metaphor has on an interpreter it is important to remember that metaphors are not paraphraseable. The list of propositions that roughly captures the similarities we notice is not a paraphrase of the metaphor itself. It is just a rough characterization of the metaphor's effects. The ineffability of a metaphor is due to the effects and not its meaning. This is an important distinction. Camp characterizes adequate paraphrase as one that

> "capture[s] the content of the speaker's intended illocutionary act: it should state how the world would have to be for the content of the speaker's claim to count as true (or otherwise satisfied). The paraphrase should not, however, include contents the speaker merely insinuated, or merely caused her hearer to entertain…[A]n adequate paraphrase must state that content in a literal and explicit fashion" (2006, 2).

Using these requirements Camp declares metaphors to be ineffable because we could never capture the meaning of the metaphor. Paraphrases are intended to convey the meaning of an utterance using different words. But as Davidson points out just after declaring that he

agrees that metaphors are ineffable, "I think this is not because metaphors say something too novel for literal expression but because there is nothing there to paraphrase. Paraphrase, whether possible or not, is appropriate to what is *said*: we try, in paraphrase to say it another way. But if I am right, a metaphor doesn't say anything beyond its literal meaning" (246). Davidson later goes on to point out, and I agree, that what we end up doing when attempting to paraphrase a metaphor is capture some of its effects. As we have seen these effects are not equivalent with its meaning, and paraphrase is about capturing meaning.[13]

When determining whether someone has fully understood a metaphor we do not need their list of propositions or framing or seeing as to perfectly match ours or anyone else's. The fact that metaphors are ineffable means such a neat match-up is impossible. What we do look for is something like a family resemblance in a core set of propositions, or significant similarities between them. So we can disagree about whether 'Juliet is nurturing/nourishing' belongs on the list of effects communicated by 'Juliet is the sun', but surely her centrality to Romeo's life must be noted. As long as different interpreters take similar ideas to be the most important or most telling of the effects then we can safely say that they have grasped adequately what is being communicated. The idea of looking for resemblance also allows us a continuum of degrees of resemblance that parallels the success or failure of a metaphor. One person may better understand the metaphor if they notice more of the significant similarities or if they notice new and interesting similarities. But if someone simply said 'Juliet is important to Romeo' we might think that interpreter

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[13] "What we attempt in 'paraphrasing' a metaphor cannot be to give its meaning, for that lies on the surface; rather we attempt to evoke what the metaphor brings to our attention" (Davidson 262).

has not fully understood, or grasped as completely, what the utterer is attempting to communicate.

The effects a metaphor has on the interpreter are much more interesting than its meaning. By acknowledging the meaning and the effects separately we can get at what is interesting and important in the utterance of a metaphor without wreaking needless havoc on the typical accounts of meaning. Since the effects of a metaphor are of primary importance and the meaning is only secondary, it makes sense to consider metaphors a sort of implicit speech act.

Metaphors as Implicit Speech Acts

It seems pretty clear now that the effects a metaphor has are the important and interesting aspects of metaphors. The meaning of the metaphor provides only a starting point. It's the effects that we find interesting in metaphors and also provide the motivation for their use. This focus on effects that we find when handling metaphors is mirrored in Austin's theory of speech acts[14] and hinted at when Davidson says "I think metaphor belongs exclusively to the domain of use" (247). I want to explicitly expand this sentiment in Davidson to show that an appropriate characterization of metaphor is that of an implicit speech act. I will develop this account in light of the distinction between meaning and effects as well as how and why we use metaphor.

The first and largest contribution speech act theory makes to understanding metaphors is an idea that has made an appearance earlier in this paper but has not been given due attention yet. According to Austin, speech acts should not be evaluated according to the dichotomy of true or false. This dichotomy does not work and simply does not apply

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[14] Searle will make a brief appearance as well and his contribution will be noted, but the vast majority of what I take from speech act theories comes from Austin.

to speech acts. A speech act is not true or false but felicitous or infelicitous. The speech act may go smoothly; following all the right conventions and therefore accomplishing its intended effects. Or it may go wrong in numerous different ways, which cause the speech act to be incomplete, invalid, or infelicitous. Truth and falsity play no role in these evaluations because the meaning of a speech act is neither the reason we use the utterance nor is it the most important part of the utterance. All of this holds for metaphors as well. I have chosen to use 'successful' and 'unsuccessful' as applied to metaphors, but the motivating idea is much the same. A metaphor must be done in the right sort of ways, involve the right things, and follow other conventions to carry out its intended effects. As long as all goes well and the use of metaphor is appropriate then the metaphor will be successful. If something goes wrong or the metaphor is inappropriate then it will be unsuccessful. Considering the fact that what seems to be important about metaphors is that they inspire intended effects I think success or failure is a more fitting evaluation of metaphors than their truth or falsity, which only depends on meaning.

The rules or guidelines applied to speech acts are called conventions. Austin provides a systematic list of conventions for performatives in Lecture II of *How to do things with Words.* Austin's list is intended to apply to explicit speech acts (things like marrying, christening, or judging in the legal or official sense) and the conventions for these are much more obvious and easily systematized than those for implicit speech acts. The more apparent systematicity and precision in rules for explicit speech acts are due to the fact that the locutionary act has a closer relationship to the illocutionary act of the same utterance in explicit speech acts. The act of christening depends upon saying something like 'I christen this ship' while the implicit speech act of insulting someone can be carried out through

nearly any utterance given the right tone and situation. An explicit speech act often has the speech act imbedded into its necessary wording. Implicit speech acts do not have this transparency. One only feels the need to express that an utterance was a joke if the interpreter does not laugh. Implicit speech acts rely on the illocutionary act of an utterance; what the utterance is used to do or its force.[15] This is not to say that all of Austin's rules are inapplicable to metaphors as implicit speech acts. I will briefly recount the rules that do still apply then add alterations where necessary to allow for the greater leniency of implicit speech acts versus explicit speech acts.

The first rule of performatives is that "there must be an accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect, that procedure to include the uttering of certain words by certain persons in certain circumstances, and further the particular persons and circumstances in a given case must be appropriate for the invocation of the particular procedure invoked" (Austin 14-15). It is clear that this is to be read quite strictly as applied to performatives, but if we loosen it a bit the main ideas will apply to metaphors as well. Austin's rule is meant to make apparent the who, what, and when of the speech act. In a wedding ceremony the certain words, people, and circumstances are quite precise and must be carefully fulfilled. Unlike that, the use of a metaphor can involve something more like the right types of people, words, and circumstances. Even if the specifications are loose, there must be conventions for what types of participants, words, and circumstances are in place if an utterance is to be considered a speech act either explicit or implicit. The conventions involved in using a metaphor exploit the maxims Grice lists, which tip off the interpreter to the idea that the utterance is something other than a constative statement. If

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[15] Austin appeals to what the utterance is used to do as a characterization of the illocutionary act on pgs. 109-110 and it's force as illocution on page 120.

there were no conventions then the interpreter would not realize that the utterance needs to be evaluated in any way other than that of truth or falsity.

The requirements on who can successfully use a metaphor are not strict. A successful use of metaphor will obviously require an utterer and at least one interpreter, both of whom must have the vocabulary and background knowledge necessary to discover the significant similarities that a metaphor gestures towards. Basically, any competent speaker of a language is in theory able to use a metaphor with any other competent speaker of the language as long as they are justified in assuming the necessary background knowledge for the other person as well. The conventions surrounding who can use a metaphor are admittedly not particularly interesting. So let's move on to what type of words need to be uttered.

The utterer and interpreter(s) must all be aware that the utterance is a use of metaphor. At this point truth and falsity come into play by tipping off the interpreter to the fact that the utterance is intended to be a metaphor and not a constative statement. In fact Davidson claims that

> "Generally it is only when a sentence is taken to be false that we accept it as a metaphor and start to hunt out the hidden implication. It is probably for this reason that most metaphorical sentences are *patently* false, just as similes are trivially true. Absurdity or contradiction in a metaphorical sentence guarantees we won't believe it and invites us, under proper circumstances, to take the sentence metaphorically" (258).[16]

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[16] Italics are Davidson's.

From this we can also gather that the 'certain words' Austin refers to may be replaced with a looser class of things that might be characterized as 'an utterance the interpreter will recognize to be false'. This patent falsity is what Grice refers to when he says metaphors break the maxim of quality.[17] Another way that metaphors are flagged as metaphors is by the use of unexpected combinations of objects or concepts. [18] Hence my earlier claim that metaphors also exploit the maxim of relevance. Novel metaphors will display this most prominently. Metaphors like 'this book is a sea cucumber' or 'that student is King Kong' are easily identifiable as such due to the fact that under normal circumstances it is obvious by the odd pairings of objects that the utterances are not constative. So what certain words to metaphors use? They use unexpected combinations of words or obviously false propositions.

Lastly we need to determine the conventions surrounding the circumstances of the use of metaphor. As mentioned above some of the circumstances that are required for a metaphor to be successful are that the who and what are satisfactorily fulfilled. But that is not all. Above and beyond having the right people saying and recognizing the right things and being justified in doing so, there are rules about what situations are appropriate and

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[17] As Camp points out in *Two Varieties of Literary Imagination: Metaphor, Fiction, and Thought Experiments,* "not all metaphors are literally false, or even trivially true"(110). She then gives a few examples to demonstrate her point and believes it is a rebuke to Davidson. What she is ignoring is that while the claim all metaphors are false may itself be false, the falsity of metaphorical statements is not his point. He says "What matters is not actual falsehood but that the sentence be taken to be false" which begins the reevaluation process that leads us to what is communicated in a metaphor (252).

[18] This need for unusual combinations of things or patent falsity is also where Searle's added level of 'propositional acts' discussed on page 24 of *Speech Acts* might come in particularly handy. By highlighting and treating separately the acts of referring to and predicating from the locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts found in Austin's work Searle allows a way to easily specify what sorts of things should appear in a metaphor. Austin's theory does not have such an easy inroad for such conventions. I have tacked them onto the general convention about what is said for the sake of saving space.

inappropriate for metaphor. Much like the conventions surrounding who can use a metaphor and what words are used, the rules on situations are fairly loose. I cannot provide a list of appropriate situations and a list of inappropriate situations, but I can give some examples and general characterizations.

The types of situations where use of metaphor are appropriate are situations that do not require a high degree of detail or precision from the utterance. Due to the open-endedness of the effects of metaphor it would not make sense to use a metaphor when trying to communicate precise information. There is simply no way to do so with metaphor. Metaphors are great for expressing general ideas, making the abstract or unfamiliar seem more familiar, or even for making a person stop to think about how relationships are like spider webs, but a metaphor is not an ideal way to convey in feet and inches how tall a person is.[19] It would be inappropriate to use a metaphor in any situation that requires precision and specific information to be communicated. Filing a police report is not a good time to wax poetic, nor is solving an algebra problem. If the situation depends upon the truth or falsity of the utterance then clearly that would rule out the use of metaphor.

The use of metaphor is often appropriate in situations that involve learning abstract concepts. Lakoff and Johnson focus on the use of metaphor to make very abstract concepts more understandable through more concretely experienced things. Metaphor is also often used quite successfully to get an overview of a new concept by relating it to something more familiar, such as relating biological cells to a room of a house when teaching grade school science or Descartes' structure of knowledge to that of a building when teaching

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[19] I hesitate to entirely exclude the possibility because I'm sure there is some obscure counter example that consists of knowing the precise height of something then saying a person is that thing. But even then it seems dangerously optimistic to expect an interpreter to arrive at that exact similarity and note it as significant.

introductory philosophy. Any case in which the utterer wants the interpreter to come to his

or her own semi-guided conclusions about a concept or object using a metaphor could be

appropriate.

The second and last rule that applies to metaphor from Austin's list is that "the

procedure must be executed by all participants correctly and completely" (15). This is

worth stating because speech acts, metaphor included, are used for the sake of their effects

beyond their meanings. If those effects do not happen then the speech act is infelicitous or,

in our case, the metaphor is unsuccessful. If something goes wrong in the who, what, or

when conventions then the speech act does not count. There are, of course, numerous ways

a use of metaphor can go wrong. I will outline a few of the major mishaps that cause a

metaphor to be unsuccessful.

There are a few ways in which metaphors can go wrong and hence fail. The first

place in which problems can arise is with the utterer. The utterer may be wrong in

assuming his or her interpreter will realize the utterance is in fact a metaphor, or that the

interpreter has adequate background knowledge to arrive at the intended sorts of effects.

Beyond incorrect assumptions on the utterer's part, they themselves could make mistakes

in the utterance. The utterer may simply stumble over the words, choose the wrong

reference words, or use the grammatical structure of a simile instead. All of these mistakes

would botch the attempt at using metaphor. Any of these mishaps would also entail the

failure of that metaphor.

The utterer is not the only one who can bring about the failure of a metaphor. The

interpreter plays an essential role as well. It might seem odd at first that an interpreter can

cause the failure of someone else's utterance, but language in general and speech acts in

particular is a cooperative enterprise. Recall from the rules stated above that there *must* be

an utterer and an interpreter for the speech act to take place. If we hold a mirror to the

problems an utterer may cause we see the problems an interpreter might instigate. If the

interpreter does not realize the utterance is a metaphor then that metaphor has failed. It

will just be an odd probably wrong constative statement instead. The interpreter may not

have the necessary background knowledge to arrive at the sorts of significant similarities

the utterer intended to draw out. In this case, again, the metaphor is unsuccessful. The

responsibility for the failure of the metaphor in this case does not necessarily rest on the

utterer. Even the most carefully uttered metaphor can fail due to an interpreter's

incompetence whether that be simply that the interpreter failed to notice the metaphor as

a metaphor or he or she arrived at the wrong similarities through poor processing. Lastly, if

the interpreter mishears or misunderstands the utterer's words then again the metaphor is

quite likely to be unsuccessful. The interpreter plays a surprisingly essential role in the

success or failure of a metaphor.

The last class of problems that contribute to the failure of a metaphor deal with the

utterance itself. An evaluation along the scale of successful or unsuccessful allows for

degrees. It is not a pass/fail standard the way truth or falsity often is. A metaphor may be

more or less apt than another. For example, 'this book is a sea cucumber' is not a very apt

metaphor. Even if it does not entirely fail in its context, it still is not particularly inspiring. It

requires a lot of effort for little payoff on the part of the interpreter and it requires some

odd background knowledge about an obscure animal. The effects are difficult to reach and

limited in scope. Therefore the utterance 'this book is a sea cucumber' is at least an inept

metaphor if it does not in fact fail. Successful metaphors should inspire the intended effects

through a balance of effort on the part of the interpreter and fruitfulness on the part of the

metaphor itself. To accomplish this balance, a metaphor will need to choose the right

objects or concepts to be used and possibly some tailoring for the particular intended

interpreter(s). If the metaphor fails to inspire the intended effects then it is unsuccessful,

and if it inspires a limited amount especially through great effort the metaphor is some

degree of inept. But if the metaphor inspires a fruitful examination of similarities and

fosters a new understanding of the concepts used then it is a success.

If all of these conventions are observed then the metaphor is likely to be successful.

Of course, the metaphor itself must be constructed aptly, and must be deployed in the right

situation to the right interpreter. The fact that the success or failure of the metaphor is

reliant upon such rules shows that metaphors should be considered speech acts. Due to the

loose rules and nontransparent nature of the illocutionary act, utterances of metaphors are

best categorized as specifically implicit speech acts, much like jokes and insults. It does not

so much matter what is said in an insult as it does the way that statement is used and in

what situation it is deployed. The same goes for metaphors.[20]

Possible Problem

The idea that we first process metaphors as constative utterances for truth or

falsity, note that as an incorrect evaluation, and reprocess as metaphors can be supported

by empirical findings. Elizabeth Camp has brought several studies to the attention of

philosophers that are relevant to showing the reprocessing thesis has support. In her

article "Metaphor in the Mind: The Cognition of Metaphor" she notes that it does take

people longer to process a metaphorical utterance than a regular descriptive constative

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[20] Categorization of metaphors as a type of speech act also allows room for the
systematicity noticed most prominently by Lakoff and Johnson.

utterance. This suggests that there are further steps to determining what is communicated in a metaphor than in a constative statement. The quicker processing time of a constative statement could be due to the fact that for the most part what is said is what is communicated. There is no need to look further into what is communicated with a constative statement.

Camp also notes that familiar metaphors such as examples from Shakespeare (love is a red rose, etc) or many of the sorts of metaphors listed in Lakoff and Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By* (ideas are food, up is good, the future is in front of us) are processed nearly as quickly as constative statements. There are a couple of possible explanations for this finding. One is that familiarity means we don't necessarily have to think of new things or in new ways when we hear these sorts of metaphors. We have heard these metaphors before and already done the processing we just have to recall some of the effects they inspired. The other explanation is that of Lakoff and Johnson, which is that some metaphors are more than linguistic habits but embedded in how we think. In fact, they claim that it is impossible to think of certain concepts directly, such as love, and that is why we use metaphor. Because there is no other way to understand indirect, less concrete concepts we appeal to the use of metaphor to provide ourselves with some sort of understanding. Therefore we can expect the processing times of these ingrained basic metaphors or more common and familiar metaphors to require less processing.[21] Having processed a metaphor once through to our satisfaction in discovering significant similarities we can simply recall those similarities the next time we encounter that same metaphor rather than

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[21] I would suspect we process any familiar cognition faster than new or novel ones. We can all answer the question "What is 2+2?" faster than "What is 613+593?" and yet no one would say that 2+2 must no longer count as an addition problem or that we processed it initially in a different way than 613+593.

starting from scratch each time.[22] So while it may be true that after the first time we hear

one of these familiar metaphors the only processing we have to do is recall, that does not

mean that the first time was not processed along the lines I have laid out in the previous

sections.

In these studies novel metaphors took the longest to process. I would suggest that

the longer processing time is attributable to the initial process as constative statement,

realization of the inadequacy of that evaluation, and reprocessing as a metaphor taking into

account the need to think a while to discover similarities between the objects and decide

which of those similarities are significant in the context of the utterance. Context can be

very important for the speed with which an interpreter understands a metaphor. Blasko

states that "When metaphors are presented in a sufficiently supportive context, they may

be read as quickly as literal statements" then goes on to cite two studies besides her own to

support this statement.[23] The problem I see here is with exactly what "sufficient support"

entails. I would imagine that given sufficient support you can get someone to process a

sentence in an unfamiliar language as quickly as in their native language. The instances in

the studies cited by Blasko and Camp would be considered outliers or special situations in

the sort of inquiry I am working on. In the normal situations in which we encounter

metaphor even the familiar and ingrained metaphors take slightly longer to process than

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[22] Although one of the advantages to using metaphor is that the effects are not clearly
bounded so we can reprocess as often and as much as we like and probably discover new
similarities each time given enough effort.

[23] The citations provided by Blasko are as follows:
1. Ortony, Andrew, Diane Schallert, Ralph Reynolds and Steven Antos. "Interpreting
metaphors and idioms: Some effects of context on comprehension." *Journal of verbal
learning and verbal behavior* 17.4 (1978): 465-477.
2. Inhoff, Albrecht Werner, Susan D. Lima, and Patrick J. Carroll. "Contextual effects on
metaphor comprehension in reading." *Memory & Cognition* 12.6 (1984): 558-567.

literal utterances. So I do not think speed under sufficiently supportive conditions does not diminish the claims of my project.

Conclusion

In this paper I have shown that the typical accounts of meaning do not provide us with what is most important about metaphors. The meaning of a metaphorical utterance is nothing more than what it says. What is important about metaphors looks more like effects, the realizations of significant or surprising similarities between objects they inspire in their interpreters. The effects may vary from interpreter to interpreter or even between interpretations done by the same interpreter at different times as long as there is something like a family resemblance among the core similarities noticed in each case. The use of a metaphor requires exploiting Grice's maxims of conversation and following certain conventions that parallel those required of other speech acts. Metaphors are best categorized as implicit speech acts because they rely on the illocutionary act of the utterance in the same way that jokes or insults do. What a metaphor communicates is more important than what it says.

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