

ON METAPHOR

by

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Current debate on metaphor, involving philosophers from very different traditions, is a response to Black's challenge of Aristotle's view. Following this lead, the absurdity of metaphor--the clash within the sentence--is stressed, downplaying the role of perceived similarities. From different perspectives, Ricoeur, Davidson and Searle emphasize the innovative aspects of metaphor, treating it as deviant, distinct from literal language.

This emphasis risks forfeiting explanatory power. Taking our ability to understand metaphors as a starting point, the assumptions behind talk of 'live' and 'dead' metaphors is challenged. The treatment of metaphor as a poetic device, and the focus on innovative metaphors are questioned. Recent work in linguistics suggests new resources in accounting for our understanding of metaphors, without denying their novelty. The dichotomy between the creative aspects of metaphor and our understanding of them may only be apparent.

INTRODUCTION

Metaphor is the arena of a tournament, where sundry knights joust in honour of their causes. The champions often come to the ring armed with developed theories of language, eager to prove their mettle in this latest testing ground. The recent surge of interest in the subject has brought philosophers of very different stripes into conflict, and the encounters are often as colourful as the mock-battles of chivalry. And yet the horses seem to pass too wide; and no-one is really sure which maiden is up for grabs. In surveying the recent literature, it isn't always obvious that the contestants are even in the same ring.

The above paragraph is an extended use of a single metaphor. Taking the theme of a tournament, it compares philosophers to champions jousting for victory. In the course of elaborating this, the metaphor is used to make several points about the nature of the current debate. It is suggested that the exchanges are somewhat haphazard; that the philosophers involved are absorbed in different projects and not always in agreement on what they are arguing about; and that the encounters are perhaps more fascinating to watch than productive.

How the metaphor achieves this effect is a little more difficult to state. The sundry knights are, we are told, brought into contact by a recent surge of interest in the subject, rather than by any particular affinity of thought. Each has a personal cause to defend; there is no suggestion of an agreed general purpose or goal. There are set rules of procedure governing the event--the nature of the tournament, the code of chivalry. And yet there is an air of comedy to the whole affair. The principals miss each other as

if they weren't in the same ring, and they don't know what they're jousting for. The encounter is visually appealing, but involves little real contact. Much dust is stirred by such mock-battles, but few issues resolved.

The metaphor juxtaposes two different kinds of human activity: a chivalric tournament and a philosophical colloquium. The latter is not merely likened to, but described as if it were the former. Metaphor is the arena of a tournament. Interspersed phrases serve to indicate the real subject of the passage: metaphor, theories of language, philosophers, the recent literature. These serve to anchor the comparison. Yet once the referent is established, the metaphor proceeds according to its own terms. The argument is discussed as if it were a form of jousting and the participants were on horseback. Different aspects of a tournament are invoked to fill out the point of the original statement: knights, causes, champions, the ring. There are many possible dimensions to the scene that aren't involved--heralds, squires, sawdust, sweat, cheering crowds--although these could potentially be worked in to make other points about the nature of a philosophical exchange. The range of terms is both defined and somewhat limited by the metaphor. Once invoked, it directs the discussion along certain lines.

We use such metaphors frequently in similar situations; how is it that the initial comparison is so readily appreciated? We accept the equation of philosophers with knights fighting for victory. It has been suggested by recent work in linguistics that our recognition of the metaphor is facilitated by its use of a common convention of discussing scholarly debates as battles.¹ We commonly talk of attacking or defending views, defeating scholarly opponents, or winning arguments. Thus, the opening metaphor takes place within the limits of a convention that does not need to be

¹George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, Metaphors We Live By (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), pp. 4-6.

expressed, because it is one with which we are familiar. The passage has an unusual twist in that it specifically invokes a mock-battle, lightening the somber subject with the gaudy hues of a tournament in which no-one gets hurt, and the belligerence--couched in the quaint and artificial idiom of chivalry--is faintly comic. Some of the details of the battleground convention are altered, but the general assumptions are maintained. Thus, we can readily appreciate what the metaphor is telling us.

These notes on the workings of a single metaphor are offered with due caution. The attempt is to stay within the boundaries of commonsense reflection rather than to decide the very issues that are under discussion, in order to establish some basis for a more theoretical approach to metaphor and its functioning. Yet the subject is currently so troubled that this is actually quite difficult. No discussion could entirely avoid treading on the cherished corns of one or other of the armour-plated participants. Yet all writers recognize that we can and do make sense of metaphors and communicate through them. Our ability to understand metaphors such as that offered in the opening paragraph will be taken as the starting point of this discussion.

There are a number of issues that concern philosophers interested in metaphor. This discussion shall focus primarily on our ability to understand them. How is it that we can make sense of such expressions, that we can identify as, in some sense, odd or perhaps false statements? How is it that we know more or less what is meant by an unusual or even unique metaphor, equating two very different kinds of things? The opening pages give a reading and an explanation of a metaphor about philosophical debate. If taken literally, it would clearly be false; conventions and colloquia don't have the space, never mind the stabling facilities, for an actual joust. Yet in reading such an atypical description of philosophy, we can understand what is meant. There may be

some leeway involved in restating that meaning, but the explanation that follows the opening metaphor is offered as a correct interpretation. How is this possible?

This question will guide the reading of the current debate on metaphor. Some very general comments will be offered, and placed within the context of history of the philosophical work on metaphor. Such a historical perspective will help to illuminate the current status of the debate. In taking our ability to understand metaphors as a starting point and the central problem about metaphor, a different perspective is taken from that of many contemporary writers. A number of recent treatments of metaphor focus on its innovative aspects, on the absurdity of metaphorical statements, and on the nonsemantic functioning of metaphor. These approaches, centring on the oddity of metaphor, have definite limitations in accounting for our ability to understand metaphors. There seems to be something of a dichotomy between explaining our understanding of metaphors in somewhat systematic ways, and allowing for their innovative capacity. If metaphors are new, how would it be possible for us to make sense of them, and to expect another person to read them in much the same way? Wouldn't any reading that we offer be necessarily serendipitous and subjective? If a metaphor is genuinely new, wouldn't it transcend the established meanings of the words or expressions involved, and thus be difficult to paraphrase adequately?

This is the concern of several current philosophers writing on metaphor. However, recent work in linguistics seems to offer a way out of this dichotomy--to suggest how we might make sense of expressions that are yet new. Given the limited success of attempts to account for metaphors as functioning nonsemantically, it may be worth rethinking the "absurdity" approach altogether, and reconsidering other possibilities that were largely rejected. In focusing on the innovative capacities of

metaphor, the dependence of metaphors on "systems of associations" is denied.

However, in the light of this new work, such an approach may be worth reviving.

One point of this paper is to question this perceived dilemma between the innovative aspects of metaphor and the possibility of systematic and nonsubjective understanding of them. As such, the challenge to the notion of live and dead metaphors is important. This distinction is used by almost all writers on the subject, and seldom discussed or questioned. Yet it seems to prejudice the consideration of metaphor unreasonably. It is assumed by many commentators that there are certain "live" metaphors that should be taken as paradigmatic, and that "dead" metaphors can be considered as, in effect, literal statements. The assumptions implicit in this will be discussed, as they are problematic.

Another common presupposition is that metaphors belong to poetry, and only occur secondarily in other kinds of discourse. This position has certain ties to the view of metaphors as innovative. The assumption about the proper "location" of metaphor will be discussed explicitly in regard to Paul Ricoeur's work on metaphor. Donald Davidson's article will be considered in some detail, as it focuses some important claims about the truth of metaphorical statements. John Searle's treatment of metaphor invokes the distinction of meaning and use to explain its working; this possibility will be examined. Finally, the linguistic work of Lakoff and Johnson will be examined, as it seems to suggest new reasons for considering the idea of systems of associations in metaphor. Perhaps our knights could use fresh horses.

CHAPTER I

THE NATURE OF METAPHOR

What is a metaphor? No attempt is made here to address metaphors in art, in experience, in music, or in other extended senses of the term. The focus is entirely on metaphors that occur in language. At the most general level, metaphor describes one thing in terms that are felt to be more appropriate to another. A philosophical colloquium can be described as a tournament, although, literally, it isn't. This element of inappropriateness exists in our awareness; it is recognized by the users of metaphors. The important difference between a literal and a metaphorical statement is that we recognize the latter as a special case, using words in a way that is at least somewhat peculiar. Our ability to identify certain statements as metaphorical is the basis for the differentiation.

Picking up on this sense that a metaphor borrows terms from something else, some writers have adopted Ryle's term "category mistake" to describe metaphor.² The first writings on metaphor we have, by Aristotle, emphasize the borrowing of terms between categories;³ thus the Ryleanism is partly apt. However, the suggestion that metaphor is an error should be treated cautiously. Other writers have identified

²Colin Turbayne, The Myth of Metaphor (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1970), p. 22; Paul Ricoeur, The Rule of Metaphor: Multidisciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language, trans. Robert Czerny with Kathleen McLaughlin and John Costello (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), p. 21.

³Aristotle, Poetics, in The Basic Works of Aristotle, ed. Richard McKeon and trans. Ingram Bywater (New York: Random House, 1966), pp. 1476-77.

metaphors as false or defective statements; this notion will be explored in some depth later.

It is clear at least that not every inappropriate--or defective--use of words would qualify as a metaphor. We differentiate metaphors from other "odd" statements such as mistakes, confusions, or simple fallacies. A metaphor is a very particular kind of expression, and is distinct from such misuses. Some writers make this point by offering statements of a form very similar to common metaphors that seem to resist metaphorical interpretation. Fogelin's "a chair is a syllogism"⁴ or Searle's "Sally is a prime number between 17 and 23"⁵ are examples of this. These statements could be given an interpretation: it might be possible to construct a context in which they might make a certain kind of sense. Yet such a context would be highly unlikely, farfetched or implausible. There is no clear and satisfying way to read these expressions as metaphors, and any attempt would sound forced. The point being made is that these do not strike us as metaphors in the obvious way that many statements do; they do not succeed in making a point. "Metaphor", as Davidson expresses it, "implies a kind and degree of artistic success."⁶

A second aspect of metaphor that is often considered is its novelty. The notion of "live" and "dead" metaphor is generally accepted as an important distinction separating unusual from trite comparisons. This issue will be considered later; however, it should be noted that novelty alone is not what makes a metaphor. Not every new usage qualifies; nor does a metaphor cease to be such with repetition. Philosophers frequently cite familiar metaphors from famous poets or from everyday conversation.

⁴Robert Fogelin, Figuratively Speaking (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).

⁵John Searle, "Metaphor" in Philosophical Perspectives on Metaphor, ed. Mark Johnson (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1981), p. 248.

⁶Donald Davidson "What Metaphors Mean" in Philosophical Perspectives, p. 200.

We identify certain statements as metaphors whether or not we have heard them before. This is recognized even by those like Davidson who are most concerned to emphasize the uniqueness of metaphors and their avoidance of linguistic rules.⁷ There is a presumption that metaphors are at least somewhat unusual. This needs to be examined more closely, but it can at least be said that there is more at issue here than novelty alone.

Metaphors are traditionally considered as figures of speech. The Aristotelian account appears in his Poetics and Rhetoric, where metaphor is considered as a somewhat general category encompassing metonymy, the naming of a part for a whole or vice versa, and synecdoche, the substitution of an attribute for the thing. Analogy is considered as a subcategory of metaphor: the largest and most important group. In his analysis, analogies are considered as structured metaphors, in which an implied proportion of the form "a is to b as c is to d" is abbreviated into a statement "a is the c of b." Implicit in the statement that "evening is the old age of day" is a ratio that "evening is to day as old age is to life."⁸ Aristotle's theory of metaphor has been tremendously influential on subsequent philosophical treatments. But for these purposes, the relationship of metaphor and analogy will be left as an open question, retaining only the general point that analogy is a more structured usage. Metaphor is also often discussed in relationship to simile. The latter includes a word such as "like" in its comparison, thus stating a similarity rather than an identity between two things. How significant this difference is taken to be will become clear as the discussion proceeds.

⁷Ibid., pp. 207-8.

⁸Aristotle, Poetics, p. 1457.

Aristotle views metaphor as making a comparison between two things, based on a perceived similarity. We recognize a parallel between cyclical activities like the day and human life, and express this succinctly. A metaphor does not introduce new information so much as it expresses our awareness of likenesses. In his view, the metaphor might almost be no more than a convenience of naming. A frequent use of metaphor is as a shorthand description taking the place of a term missing from the language. We have no word for the giving forth of the sun's rays, so this is referred to as "the sowing of the sun."⁹ The similarity gives rise to the metaphor.

It is, however, very obviously significant that the *locus classicus* of metaphor theory in philosophy is within texts on poetry and rhetoric. Histories of its philosophical consideration show that this is rarely, if ever, questioned. Thus, theories of metaphor tend to reflect the attitude of the philosopher concerned towards poetic or rhetorical uses of language. The notorious hostility of the empiricists to the "seductions" of language is reflected in their discussions of metaphor. In their view, truth is to be found only by resisting the beguilement of words, especially when used poetically. Recent commentators remind us of the resentment and suspicion with which past philosophers regard figurative language. Hobbes enjoins reasoners not to "use words metaphorically; that is, in other sense than that they were ordained for; and thereby deceive others."¹⁰ Locke argues that "all the artificial and figurative application of words eloquence has invented, are for nothing else but to insinuate wrong ideas, move the passions, and thereby mislead the judgement."¹¹ More succinctly,

⁹Ibid., p. 1457.

¹⁰Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, cited in Mark Johnson "Introduction: Metaphor in the Philosophical Tradition" in *Philosophical Perspectives*, p. 1.

¹¹John Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, cited in Ted Cohen, "Metaphor and the Cultivation of Intimacy" *Critical Inquiry* 5, no. 1 (1978), p. 4.

Berkeley urges that "a philosopher should abstain from metaphor."¹² The equation of metaphor with misleading, rhetorical and poetic language passed unquestioned.

Interest in metaphor among twentieth century philosophers is often based explicitly on a reexamination of some of the assumptions of the Aristotelian view, and a reconsideration of the empiricist approach to language. I. A. Richards' work on rhetoric is frequently credited with reviving the topic as an issue for philosophers. He gave credence to the idea that thought itself might be metaphorical.¹³ The subsequent work of Max Black and also of Nelson Goodman more explicitly challenges the received wisdom that had prevailed since Aristotle. The notion of a preexisting similarity is the centre of this attack, and with it the idea that the metaphor makes an implied comparison between two things.

Black argues that the attempt to explain metaphors by some idea of similarity is vacuous;¹⁴ it means very little to say that a metaphor expresses something "like" a literal paraphrase. He also questions the discussion of metaphors as comparisons in that this implies that they could be adequately paraphrased as literal statements.¹⁵ Such a procedure reduces metaphor to a kind of shorthand for a comparison that could be stated literally. This seems wrong to Black in that it denies the cognitive function of metaphor, reducing it to a kind of literary flourish rather than an epistemological device. What Black proposes instead is a view that does not treat metaphor as reducible to a paraphrase, but considers the distinctive form of the metaphor as essential to its meaning. There is something in the very fact that a metaphor is used that has cognitive importance. Its functioning, he suggests, relies on an interaction of one particular

¹²George Berkeley, "Of Motion" cited in Mark Johnson, "Introduction," p. 11.

¹³I. A. Richards, "The Philosophy of Rhetoric," in Philosophical Perspectives, p. 51.

¹⁴Max Black, "Metaphor" in Philosophical Perspectives, pp. 63-82.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 79.

word or phrase--the "focus"--with the rest of the sentence--the "frame" of the metaphor.¹⁶ The process we are made to go through in understanding this is significant to our understanding. It is also significant to him that a metaphor can only be treated at the level of the sentence, not, as Aristotle does, as a transfer of individual words. It is only within a statement that the notion of interaction makes sense.

Black's concerns continue to influence the current discussions of the nature of metaphor. A number of writers follow Black explicitly in opposing something like his "interaction" position to the "comparison" or "similarity" views. The attempt is to recognize the metaphor on its own terms, not as a substitute for a literal statement. It should be noted that there are several different issues involved here, which are treated differently by various authors. These will be discussed in detail throughout this work. It is enough to note the issues raised by Black: whether metaphor has a cognitive content; whether it is based on a similarity or asserts a comparison; whether it can be paraphrased; where the metaphor is located; and the notion of an interaction between the focal word and the sentence.

Nelson Goodman's account of metaphors in terms of transfers of schemata suggests the possibility that figurative language is highly structured, and that it might be possible to give fairly precise specifications to its applicability.¹⁷ He is prepared to discuss "standards of truth" for figurative language.¹⁸ His discussion is also influential in the sense that some current work is an explicit response to this suggestion.

A number of treatments of metaphor followed from this challenge. In the 1950s and 60s a number of accounts of metaphor appeared by writers in aesthetics and

¹⁶Ibid., p. 73.

¹⁷Nelson Goodman, "Languages of Art" in Philosophical Perspectives, pp. 123-35.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 129. Cohen discusses the influence of this in "Metaphor and the Cultivation of Intimacy," pp. 5-6.

literary criticism. The works of Aldrich, Barfield, Beardsley, Berggren, Henle, Hester and Wheelwright are frequently cited in the literature. There has been considerable interest in the implications of the notion of metaphor in particular fields of philosophy, including philosophy of science and religion. Work in linguistics has spurred interest in the use of metaphor in 'structuring' our approach to the world. Increasing interest among anglo-american philosophers in continental thought has spurred interest in the work of contemporary writers more influenced by Kant and Cassirer, Nietzsche and Heidegger. In the last two decades, there has been considerable interest in the implications of metaphor for philosophy of language, and the subject has drawn attention from philosophers concerned with semantics, with truth conditions, and with performative aspects of language. It is on these latter concerns that this study shall focus. However, it is important to understanding this work that it be situated within the context of the more general debate. The influence of other writers on metaphor is considerable, in shaping the terms of the discussion and the issues that are considered.

Two attempts to classify philosophical theories of metaphor will be considered as potential guides. These may assist in sorting out the issues under consideration; however, they can be expected to reflect the biases and theoretical predilections of the particular authors, and will be treated with due caution. Paul Ricoeur's mammoth study The Rule of Metaphor appeared in 1975. He examines work on metaphor in a linguistics, aesthetics and literary criticism as well as philosophy, drawing on both the anglo-american and continental traditions.¹⁹ Robert Fogelin's Figuratively Speaking appeared in 1987, partly in response to more recent treatments by American

¹⁹Ricoeur, The Rule of Metaphor.

philosophers of language; his concern is specifically with the issue of metaphorical comparison.²⁰ Thus their classifications are to some extent of different work.

Ricoeur follows Black in seeing an opposition between the Aristotelian comparison or similarity view, and what might broadly be called the interaction views held by most recent writers. He goes into some detail in examining the objections to the first kind of approach. Black is not completely clear about the tie between the notion of comparison and that of similarity; his article seems to imply that the two claims cohere, but he does not examine this in detail. Ricoeur's analysis centres on two assumptions that are intrinsic to the Aristotelian position. His concern is, first, whether an account of metaphor should be based on some perceived resemblance between things; and secondly, whether metaphor can be considered as a borrowing or transfer of a word.

In attempting to develop a view that recognizes the creative role of metaphor, Ricoeur is interested in the metaphor's ability to bring new resemblances to our attention. He rejects the thoroughgoing nominalism of Goodman's account, which attempts to treat resemblances as adhering solely in the verbal categories organizing our perception of the way things are.²¹ Ricoeur argues that a nominalist account would not be adequate to explain the sense of appropriateness that comes with a well-made metaphor--the surprised recognition that many writers mention as an aspect of figurative language. He does not think the idea of resemblance between things can be abandoned altogether, even by "interaction" views.²²

His prime interest in the theories following from Black's work is that they consider not the transfer of an individual word from one sphere to another, but that

²⁰Fogelin, Figuratively Speaking.

²¹Ricoeur, The Rule of Metaphor, p. 239.

²²Ibid., pp. 193-200.

they consider the functioning of the word within the sentence. This, he regards as an advance in the sophistication of analysis, from a semiotic to a semantic plane.²³ The emphasis is on the oddity of the word within its sentential context, rather than the validity of the similarity that motivated the borrowing. Aristotle's account goes so far as to suggest that the metaphor is ideally a borrowing from something as close as possible to the thing being characterized; as if the perfect metaphor would be the literal word. These later views, in contrast, emphasize the very absurdity or falsity within the metaphor, refusing to consider it as reducible to a paraphrase, insisting on the recognition of its oppositional structure as essential to its nature.

Ricoeur does not, like Black, want to discuss the cognitive content of a metaphor; it is part of his programme to deny that metaphor has a role in "speculative discourse." He considers its creative aspects to be aesthetic rather than cognitive. Thus, while he adopts Black's classification, it is for different reasons and with considerable qualification. His interest is in the role of metaphor in creating resemblances, and in the notion of semantic interaction. Thus he sees contemporary positions as an advancement on the Aristotelian view, but has reservations about adopting an oppositional stance wholesale.

Fogelin, conversely, rejects the dichotomy of similarity views and opposition views of metaphor. He wants to resuscitate the comparativist position; he thinks the concern with reductivist paraphrases is simply misplaced. He argues that a comparison is not vacuous, nor does it reduce metaphor to the literal.²⁴ The concern for the cognitive aspect of metaphor need not lead to a denial that it asserts a comparison. Fogelin suggests a classification of metaphor theories as to whether the meaning of the

²³Ibid., pp. 65-100.

²⁴Fogelin, Figuratively Speaking, pp. 59-67.

focal word is held to have changed or not. Many writers following Black--including most of those Ricoeur considers, Beardsley and Goodman among them--talk of a "meaning shift" in the word being used. When it is used in a metaphor, they argue, the word has a different meaning. In contrast to these, Fogelin places "literalist" accounts that deny that any change of meaning has taken place. These further divide into those of Davidson and Searle, that treat the metaphor as false, and look for other mechanisms by which it functions; and his own comparativist view.²⁵ The three "literalist" views he mentions have appeared since Ricoeur's work, which may help account for the difference in focus.

These taxonomies of theories of metaphor are offered less for typological purposes than as indications of the general issues that are perceived by philosophers surveying the field. A third survey that is of interest is Ted Cohen's. His remarks at a symposium on metaphor were published in 1978. He cites empiricist hostility to metaphor:

The works of many twentieth century positivist philosophers and others either state or imply that metaphors are frivolous and inessential, if not dangerous and logically perverse, by denying them (1) any capacity to contain or transmit knowledge; (2) any direct connection with facts; or (3) any genuine meaning.²⁶

He remarks that this attitude has almost disappeared: that philosophers approach the topic with more open minds and a greater interest in discovering how metaphor works, rather than dismissing "poetic" language.²⁷ However, he cautions that, despite this apparent sympathy, the philosophical attitude is still prejudiced against a true appreciation of metaphor. He argues that the attempt to talk about the cognitive content of metaphor, instead of dismissing it as mere literary frill, is actually part of that

²⁵Ibid., pp. 75-76.

²⁶Cohen, "Metaphor and the Cultivation of Intimacy," p. 3.

²⁷Ibid., p. 5.

hostility that contemporary writers earnestly disavow. He reads this concern as a holdover from the empiricist devaluation of the aesthetic, as if the cognitive were the only value worth possessing. He reads the greater apparent sympathy for the cognitive value of metaphor as a snobbery against the aesthetic. Cohen is concerned that philosophers who try to "rescue" metaphor by recognizing its cognitive content simply imply that artistic and emotive values are unimportant and that knowledge is all that matters.

The traditional accounts, as we have seen, locate metaphor within poetry, and discuss its functioning from that assumption. Philosophers interested in the applications of metaphor in philosophy have addressed the relationship between its aesthetic and cognitive roles in several different ways. Black insists that metaphors do actually have a cognitive dimension and aren't mere artistic frills.²⁸ He opposes the attempt to treat metaphor as a shorthand for a literal phrase that would lose only brevity or wit in the paraphrase; he insists on the nonaesthetic dimensions to metaphor. Cohen's concern is that such reasoning is a denigration of the aesthetic; he emphasizes the noncognitive properties of metaphor.²⁹ Ricoeur asserts the creative aspects of metaphor, denying its role in more abstract and speculative kinds of discourse.³⁰ It would be well not to confuse a discussion of the cognitive or aesthetic functions of individual metaphors with a discussion of the differing functions of kinds of discourse. These are different issues; this latter is Ricoeur's claim.

It is at least curious to notice that most of the philosophers writing on the subject begin by seeking metaphors in poetry. Few, if any, writers seem to challenge the Aristotelian positioning of figurative language. In accepting the identification of

²⁸Black, "Metaphor," p. 78.

²⁹Cohen, "Metaphor and the Cultivation of Intimacy," pp. 5-6.

³⁰Ricoeur, The Rule of Metaphor, pp. 257-313.

metaphor with poetry, it then becomes a matter of considering the possibility of its extension into other kinds of work. However, there are two dangers to this procedure. One is that the view of metaphor evolved will be overly reflective of the peculiarities of specifically poetic metaphors, and will have limited extension or applicability to metaphors as they occur elsewhere. The other is that, in extending such an account of metaphor to different fields such as philosophy, the discussion will be unduly influenced by the prevailing view of the relation of poetry and philosophy. This latter danger is exemplified by the empiricist hostility to beguiling language.

Clearly metaphors occur in a number of areas of discourse--everyday conversation and scholarly writing as well as literary work. Why, then, should an account of the phenomenon begin from its poetic functioning? In questioning this identification, the aim of this study is neither to denigrate aesthetic aims or methods. And there is more at stake here than mere interdepartmental territoriality. Rather, the goal is towards an account of metaphor that would be appropriate to its role in philosophy. In examining this literature, the hope is to glean some insights into the kinds of issues that would need to be addressed by an account of philosophical metaphors. This choice of a starting point will to some extent influence this discussion and shape the direction of inquiry.

Metaphors do occur, and frequently, in philosophical work. This paper began with a metaphor that clearly carries "cognitive" force, and continued to restate--in more-or-less literal language--what that metaphor says. While there may be other aspects of metaphors, whether these be interest, intimacy, or the excitement of the chase, the figure can be discussed without reference to its aesthetic or emotive dimensions. There is insufficient reason--and "following Aristotle" has gotten bad

press as a reason--for locating metaphor within a discussion of poetics or giving primacy to its poetic forms.

There may be actual biases involved in treating metaphor as primarily poetic. Discussions of poetics, especially in the romantic tradition, often link the aesthetic to creativity, interpreted as newness and innovation. Thus, if this is assumed to be the place of metaphor, there may be an unquestioned acceptance of the idea that metaphors are exemplarily new, innovative, unfamiliar, even bizarre. This emphasis can only be carried so far, however, before a question arises whether such metaphors succeed--are actually metaphors at all. As argued above, a metaphor must succeed in certain respects: not every linguistic oddity qualifies. Nor is it the case that we identify only new expressions as metaphors. Most of those quoted in the literature are the tried and true. We should be wary of accepting uncritically an assumption about metaphor that may have arisen from a particular conception of poetry.

To specify the standard for the success of a metaphor is not an easy task. However, the parameters set for this discussion are of some help here. The philosopher's interest in metaphor stems from our ability to understand what are in some sense unusual uses of language. While we are aware that it is somewhat inappropriate to describe one thing as another, we are able to grasp what it is telling us. The "problem" of metaphor here is our ability to know what is at issue in such nonstandard uses of words. The philosopher's interest is piqued when a writer or speaker "gets away with it": is able to say something that we could recognize as ambiguously true, and can still be understood.

This criterion helps greatly in focusing the notion of success. An obscure or incomprehensible metaphor is not of interest here, however valid or significant such obscurity may be in certain contexts. There may be poetic metaphors that could only

work for a small group of people: those with detailed knowledge of Dublin mythology, Welsh drinking customs, or the author's home life, perhaps. Some contemporary poets are criticized for just this obscurity. In playing off personal ties, they embroider associations to the detriment of their readers. This is not the kind of metaphor that is at issue here.

Such obscure comparisons may have a legitimate role in poetry. It may be that certain kinds of writings work by cultivating a level of opacity, forcing the reader to more reflective or intuitive kinds of understanding, perhaps, by resisting clear and obvious readings. Cohen talks of the "cultivation of intimacy" in expressions that bind the listener to the speaker, requiring the former to "unpack the figure."³¹ The level of interpretive involvement, humour, surprise, and complexity of metaphors can vary enormously; it is plausible that some of these features might be more pronounced in poetic uses of metaphor. And yet the concept of metaphor does not seem to depend on these features. We can discuss figurative language without reference to them. This is not to deny or diminish their value.

What is interesting about metaphor, then, is our ability to understand what it means. Accounts that begin by assuming its place in poetry not only import unnecessary assumptions drawn from their notions of poetics, but also risk focusing on asymptotically incomprehensible metaphors. Beginning from a different place is not part of any project of downgrading the poetic, but merely seeks to develop a more broadly applicable account of metaphor.

In beginning from the position that metaphors can be understood, has the concept itself been destroyed? Is this to focus on "dead" rather than "live" metaphors--on those that have receded into alternate meanings? Is this to fall foul of the fallacy of

³¹Cohen, "Metaphor and the Cultivation of Intimacy," p. 9.

what Fogelin calls the "flat-footed literalist,"³² disallowing the most interesting features of metaphor?

This charge is a difficult one to counter adequately, as it depends upon a preconception of metaphor's constitution. However, even commentators who emphasize the newness and nonstandard features of metaphorical functioning agree that the curiosity about metaphor is its ability to influence us in organized ways. Davidson, who insists that our understanding is subjective, denies that it can be paraphrased adequately.³³ Ricoeur, emphasizing poetics, is concerned with the fertility of metaphorical understanding.³⁴ But none take obscure metaphors as paradigmatic.

One important and recurring element in the discussion is this distinction of live and dead metaphor. Ricoeur or Davidson might criticize the position taken here as an undue emphasis on dead metaphors. Because of this, the distinction needs to be examined. The "life cycle" metaphor of metaphor is a common one, and generally passes unchallenged. The underlying assumptions go roughly as follows. Metaphors are created at a particular time and place, generally by poets. (Shakespeare has hundreds to his credit.) These brand new mintings are gradually absorbed into the language, until, with time, they fade into alternate meanings. As dead metaphors, they thus come to be taken literally. Davidson's discussion of this captures this picture neatly.

Once upon a time, I suppose, rivers and bottles did not, as they do now, literally have mouths. Thinking of present usage, it doesn't matter whether we take the word "mouth" to be ambiguous because it applies to entrances to rivers and openings of bottles as well as to animal apertures, or we think there is a single wide field of application that embraces both. What does matter is that when "mouth" applied only metaphorically to bottles, the application made the hearer notice a likeness between animal and bottle openings. Consider Homer's reference to wounds as mouths.) Once one has the present use of the word, with literal

³²Fogelin, *Figuratively Speaking*, p. 55.

³³Davidson, "What Metaphors Mean," pp. 200-1.

³⁴Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*.

application to bottles, there is nothing left to notice. There is no similarity to seek because it consists simply in being referred to by the same word.

Novelty is not the issue. In its context a word once taken for a metaphor remains a metaphor on the hundredth hearing, while a word may easily be appreciated in a new literal role on a first encounter.³⁵

This passage is quoted at length because it encapsulates what the author takes to be an accepted position. In advancing this view, he refers to the received wisdom on the creation of metaphors--the "once upon a time" aspect--and modifies this in light of his own particular concerns with the idea of noticing. He is justified in expecting that this history of a metaphor would pass as commonplace. Most commentators on metaphor use the live and dead distinction, implying some such chronology. The passage bears scrutinizing for the assumptions it embodies. A careful reading reveals some problematic aspects of the life cycle metaphor that pervade work on this topic.

As the two opening clauses suggest, this is not an argument from linguistic analysis or etymological research. The fable is offered as a fanciful re-creation, but one which sheds light on current usage. In order to know all that is embedded in this, it must be asked why Davidson is comfortable in supposing that rivers and bottles once did not literally have mouths. It is important to notice that in positing this he is extrapolating from his own, contemporary, knowledge of the word "mouth." He does not ever question his certainty that the word originally applies to animal apertures. This in itself is interesting, and suggests a revision of the second sentence. There, he asserts that it doesn't matter whether the word is now considered ambiguous or simply broad. However, if a word were either of these two things--genuinely ambiguous or broad--it would not be at all obvious that there is one "original" and two "applied" uses. We would not be expected to know which use came first. There would be nothing--short of

³⁵Davidson, "What Metaphors Mean," p. 207.

philological research on old manuscripts--to tell us whether "mouth" first applied to animal apertures or bottles.

The fact that Davidson just knows that the word was once extended metaphorically to other uses is a fair indication that the metaphor is not completely dead. It retains enough "metaphoricality" that we can recognize it as such, identify the original use and postulate its history. As Goodman argues, genuinely ambiguous terms are "coeval and independent."³⁶ The etymologies of truly dead metaphors might come as a surprise to all but the specialist. These are mere historical or philological curiosities. But this is clearly not the case with the vast majority of common metaphors. The suggestion that these are dead should be treated with care.

Not only are dead metaphors recognizable as such, but they retain the potential for revitalization. By pointing to our use of a common metaphor, its metaphorical nature can be highlighted or problematized. The battle metaphor discussed at the beginning of this paper is a good example of just this practice--by calling attention to ingrained usages, their assumptions are called into question. Limp metaphors can also be revived by the use of new expressions that fit the recurrent pattern. The implications of the metaphor of death could be emphasized with talk of coroners and coffins. This possibility will be explored at some length in the final section. A third possibility is that usages that are once taken as literal may come, with the evolution of word use, to be taken as metaphorical at a later time.

In considering the life cycle metaphor, then, it is well to be wary of its hidden implications. Like any metaphor, it tends both to limit our associations and direct the discussion along certain lines. Life and death form a real dichotomy for organisms; the boundary is clearly marked and quickly crossed. Moreover, the process is one way and

³⁶Goodman, "Languages of Art," p. 125.

irreversible. In talking of the life cycle of metaphors, it would be easy and natural to import these implications into the consideration of figurative language. Yet with metaphors, there is no reason for accepting these inferences. If expressions can come to seem more or less metaphorical over time, with changes in patterns of use, the assumption that metaphors are necessarily born--created at one time and place by a strong poet--becomes problematic. And while expressions may be taken as more or less metaphorical at different times, there is a danger in using terms like live and dead that imply a clear dichotomy. With metaphors, there is no reason for assuming we can always and clearly distinguish the quick from the dead. Depending on the criteria used in specifying decrepitude, it may well turn out that the vast majority of metaphors lurk in the no-man's-land between the two extremes, and like rich relatives, take an unconscionably long time about dying.

The notion of dead metaphor is a difficult one, and its invocation may bolster the credibility of certain approaches to a greater extent than is warranted. The acceptability of an account of metaphor is, from any point of view, greatly increased if it can provide an explanation covering all examples which we would spontaneously label metaphorical. Most writers assume agreement on what would count as an example, and choose their illustrations without apology. If, however, an example looks to most people like a metaphor but would cause problems for the writer's theory, it can be dismissed by calling it "dead." But dead metaphors, by most accounts, are actually literal. Thus, in calling a proffered example a dead metaphor, we are effectively denying that it is a metaphor. The theory has failed to account for this example. This may not seem disastrous. But a theory that constructed coffins for most examples that we offer would limit its own claim to be called a theory of metaphor.

There are, of course, ambiguous cases and considerable grey areas in any kind of account. But a genuine problem would exist for a philosopher who wanted to dismiss the bulk of examples as actually dead and thus literal. Such an approach would be unable to explain what is peculiar about the examples that distinguishes them from other literal expressions: from whence comes our awareness of metaphor in the supposed corpses? If, on the other hand, we begin from the position that rigor mortis has not set in, there is plainly something unusual about even common metaphors that a comprehensive account of the phenomenon should encompass. It is difficult to avoid the appearance of ad hoc or even circular argument if the coroner is brought in to certify any counter examples to the proffered theory. Attention should be paid to our knowledge of the language, and the last rites read with caution.

Beardsley attempts to save the life cycle metaphor by introducing a third category. He distinguishes the genuinely dead from the trite or banal and the novel metaphors.³⁷ His classification is interesting. He points to the perceived difference between commonplaces such as "smiling sun" and vivid variations like "spiteful sun" or "inconstant moon." He recognizes that the term "novel" does not entirely capture the difference here: Shakespeare's vivid metaphors may actually be repeated more often than the banalities, without eroding the difference. He attempts to make sense of this distinction through a notion of staple connotations" and a "potential range of connotations."³⁸ The difference between the novel and the trite is a real one; and it seems an improvement not to classify the latter as dead metaphor. This distinction is different than the one made earlier between obscure and understandable metaphors. The tripartite classification seems somewhat helpful, as it avoids the problem of equating

³⁷Monroe Beardsley, "The Metaphorical Twist" in Philosophical Perspectives, pp. 105-122.

³⁸Ibid., p. 112-14.

all common metaphors with literal usages. Beardsley's other suggestions will be explored more fully in the concluding sections of this paper.

Searle's discussion of metaphor is somewhat influenced by Beardsley's, but he misses the point of the three part division. Unlike many writers on metaphor, he begins his discussion from trite rather than novel metaphors. He justifies his emphasis on the banal with the remark that "dead metaphors have lived on. They have become dead through continual use, but their continual use is a clue that they satisfy some semantic need."³⁹ Searle's discussion seems to suggest that metaphors are indeed filling some felt deficiency in the vocabulary. While it may be true that all metaphors do this to some degree, there is a real danger here of passing from the trite to the moribund. If the metaphor's only function is to fill some semantic hole, there may be very little to distinguish it from the literal. The assumption here is that there is generally more at work in metaphor than a stopgap for the inadequacies of language. This view seems to treat the metaphor as a poor relation with no redeeming features other than its usefulness around the house. It is as if the ideal metaphor would be the literal word--in Derrida's terms, as if it were an attempt to return to the literal.⁴⁰

The opening metaphor of the tournament does not arise from a lack of literal language, and is also more than an arresting rhetorical flourish. It suggests a whole conception of philosophy as a sparring ground. This whole convention is invoked by the use of a single metaphor; it is this possibility that forms much of the fascination of the phenomenon. Little of this is captured by analyses of metaphor as catachresis. The life support system for an expiring metaphor must be a little more extensive than this.

The above discussion questioned the dichotomy of live and dead metaphors, talking instead of more-or-less metaphorical uses. The "more-or-less" is significant,

³⁹Searle, "Metaphor," p. 255.

⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 112-14.

suggesting that the recognition of metaphors may be actually more fluid than is sometimes assumed. In locating the identification of metaphors in our awareness of them as users of the language, rather than some notion of the "proper" use of words, there is no impetus towards assuming a fixed boundary.

Derrida's "White Mythology" discusses another metaphor of metaphor with implications similar to those of the life cycle figure. The eighteenth century view uses the notion of coinage in relation to the meaning of words. They are minted, and then worn smooth with use, obliterating their value. The transfer of words as metaphor is described as exchange and usury, expenditure and profit.⁴¹ This metaphor of metaphor does not exactly parallel the life cycle: it has a different view of the minting process, and other explanatory resources available in the notion of exchange value. The differences and similarities between the French and English language traditions are interesting: how much of this could be due to a difference of metaphor?

Derrida effectively problematizes the opposition of literal and metaphorical. Writing in French, he opposes metaphor to the "proper"--a notion he is concerned to undermine--and argues that in Aristotle's Greek there is no opposite to metaphor; it meant simply a transposition of words.⁴² Many contemporary accounts actually challenge this spatial aspect of the metaphor of metaphor; there are few remarks more often cited than that the term for metaphor is itself figurative. The possibilities of paradox in such self-referentiality are part of the attraction.

Fogelin suggests that the true opposition is actually between literal and figurative language, with metaphor usually considered as the largest category of the figurative.⁴³ In this he seems to be basically correct; this opposition will be adopted

⁴¹Ibid., pp. 210-19.

⁴²Ibid., pp. 246-47.

⁴³Fogelin, Figuratively Speaking, p. 3.

here. Focusing on the opposition between the literal and the figurative--while these terms are themselves figurative--may help to illuminate the metaphor of metaphor. The terms "by the letter" and "by the figure" seem to apply to standards of interpretation, paraphrase, or translation. Their extension seems not to be precisely delineated; we can understand the form more than the letter of their application. In this they seem to share much with the pair "de facto" and "de jure"; exactly how these ideas work out is determined by the particulars of the application. To apply the term "figurative" literally would be difficult in discussing language, which has, after all, only letters and no actual figures. Accounts of metaphor do make reference to some notion of imagery, mental pictures, and the like; but we should be cautious against relying on these highly figurative notions as definitive of metaphor, lest the metaphor prove misleading. The general sense of the literal-figurative dichotomy is between a precise, technically accurate, and detailed correspondence, and a freer, broader, more idiomatic version that may take some liberties with the rules but perhaps better captures the spirit. The usual treatment of metaphor as a subclass of the literal absorbs it into this dichotomy.

Fogelin attempts to revive an account of metaphor that defines the phenomenon independently of the literal-figurative opposition. In treating metaphor as a comparison, it is possible to treat it intelligibly as either literal or figurative. Thus, the notion of a literal metaphor is not incoherent. Fogelin himself resists this notion as it is developed by Lakoff and Johnson; he is uncomfortable with the idea of a literal metaphor.⁴⁴ This seems to suggest that there is more at work in metaphor than comparison alone; were metaphor simply a juxtaposition, the issue of its literality

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 86.

would not arise. The viability of the "comparison" view will be discussed in more detail later.

Another attempt to specify metaphor relies on the absurdity or defect of the metaphorical statement. However, such an approach would depend on our being able to specify what a literal statement is all about independently of the opposition to the metaphorical. Unless we can say what a literal statement is and how we would identify it as such, it behoves us little to define metaphors in terms of the failure of the literal interpretations.⁴⁵ Attempts to clarify this notion often focus on the usual, standard, common, or most frequent uses of a term. However, as has been suggested above, sheer quantity of repetitions does not seem to be all that is involved. Davidson's coinage of "first meaning" suggests temporal priority.⁴⁶ This may be a difficult notion to carry through historically, as was suggested above with regard to his fable of the bottle's mouth. We rely on our current knowledge of the word, not on etymological research. He tells a story of a visitor from Saturn which suggests that the priority arises in our learning of language, as we are taught literal uses before the metaphorical.⁴⁶ It is worth noting that their absurdity accounts assume the priority of literal versions in a dual sense. The literal reading is attempted first, the metaphorical only after its failure; and the metaphorical is derived from the literal reading. Whether this idea can be made good will be discussed later.

An alternative strategy for clarifying the idea of metaphor has to do with the placing of statements. Here, it is the context rather than the specific defects of the individual statement that help identify, and perhaps indirectly define, the difference

⁴⁵Donald Davidson, "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs," in Truth and Interpretation: Perspectives on the Philosophy of Donald Davidson, ed. Ernest LePore (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), pp. 433-46.

⁴⁶Davidson, "What Metaphors Mean," p. 206.

between metaphorical and literal. This strategy is not sufficient, and thus does not exclude others, but it constitutes a difference of emphasis. The aims and methods of different forms of communication thus help to define the difference of metaphorical and literal. Ricoeur's argument for the separation of poetic and speculative discourses is the most explicit instance of this, although other writers rely on their understanding of poetics to elucidate the peculiarities of metaphor. There are echoes of this in Searle's advice on identification: we are tipped off to the presence of metaphor by the known proclivities of the speaker, especially if she is a romantic poet.⁴⁷ This general strategy for defining metaphor by location has real difficulties, as it limits our ability to discuss the presence of metaphor in other kinds of discourse.

All three of these strategies are used in the literature to identify metaphors: by their nature as comparisons; by the absurdity of the statement, and by the nature of the discourse. Some limitations of all three have been indicated. They are not of course exclusive, as they operate at different levels. It is not implausible that our understanding of metaphor might depend on a number of factors. Certainly the identification of metaphor in any one case could refer to different aspects: one person knows the speaker's rhetorical tendencies, another has heard the metaphor before, while a third is disturbed by the statement's oddity and tries to puzzle it out. The difference between the literal and the figurative may not be reducible to a single defining feature, or an easily applied decision procedure. Yet this doesn't mean that the distinction doesn't exist, or that we don't, for the most part, get it right.

The strategy adopted in this discussion relies on our ability to identify metaphors. We recognize an element of borrowing in some expressions. The concept of transposition is not "hypostatized into an ontology of the proper," as Derrida might have

⁴⁷Searle, "Metaphor," p. 275.

it: there is no theory presupposed as to the correct relation of words to things. The sense of partial inappropriateness that adheres in metaphors relies solely on the current linguistic intuitions of contemporary speakers. Thus, as is frequently noted, it is almost impossible to tell whether writing in dead languages is metaphorical or not. No amount of etymological excavation will tell us how a phrase sounded on the ears of its first audience. Metaphor--to coin another metaphor of metaphor--is the guest who comes to dinner in her working clothes. We can recognize a breach of etiquette without theorizing on the inherent suitability of our customs of dress.

This chapter began with a metaphor of the debate on metaphor, intending to suggest that we can make sense of metaphors and understand what they are saying. Metaphor is provisionally defined as a description of one thing in terms that we sense are more appropriate for something else. Our recognition of this inappropriateness is taken as the identifying attribute; and it is our ability to make sense of such statements that constitutes the problem of interest here. The task of this paper is to discover what would be required for a general account of our ability to understand metaphors.

To this end, a cursory survey of the history of philosophical writing on metaphor was undertaken to situate the current debate. The contemporary work appears as a reaction to the traditional Aristotelian "comparison" view of metaphor, with many writers attempting to recognize the importance of the opposition within the sentence, rather than the transposition of a word. Black's notion of the cognitive content of metaphor is raised in the context of this challenge. While the empiricist hostility to the seductions of poetic language is generally disavowed, the identification of metaphor with poetry is still largely unquestioned. It is suggested that this imports undue problems into a consideration of metaphor in other disciplines. The intent here is to focus on our ability to understand metaphor, rather than its aesthetic values.

One of these assumptions has to do with the vitality and novelty of metaphor; the life cycle metaphor was discussed in some detail, with the suggestion that it might be somewhat misleading. The distinction of trite and novel metaphors, on the other hand, seems helpful. Different strategies for identifying metaphor were compared briefly.

These introductory considerations are intended both to provide some general background to the discussion of metaphor, and to set some parameters to this inquiry. From here, a more in depth discussion of some work in the recent literature can be undertaken. The champions are not always jousting in the same ring; a diligent spectator must define some of the boundaries to the arena for herself, and decide which plumes to follow. In observing the knightly exercises that will follow, these initial chalk marks can be reconsidered as the participants prove their mettle. Without some of these, the event would be simply bewildering.

Three essays will be considered in the following chapters, as exemplifying different problems for the discussion of metaphor. Ricoeur discusses the relationship of metaphor and poetry; Davidson the truth of metaphorical statements; and Searle offers another suggestion for an account of metaphor based on use rather than meaning. The boundaries of these articles do not correspond precisely to the discussion of these issues; each of the following sections focuses on, but is not limited to, an individual article. The final section suggests a possible direction for inquiry drawing on recent work in linguistics, which, while still exploratory, seems to offer a resolution of difficulties that recur in the philosophical literature. The dichotomy of metaphor's understandability and its innovative capacities needs to be explored.

CHAPTER II

THE ROLE OF METAPHOR

In Study 8 of The Rule of Metaphor, Ricoeur responds to a question about the role of metaphor in the text of philosophy.⁴⁸ At the close of a thorough philosophical investigation of the issues involved in accounts of metaphor, he examines its place in philosophy itself. The response is negative: his study reaffirms the separation of poetry and philosophy. Three case studies that might suggest a bridge between the two are considered and rejected, Derrida's "White Mythology" among them. Metaphor is not properly part of speculative discourse.

The word "reaffirms" is significant. Ricoeur's position reflects a common line of thought towards metaphor, which assumes that its proper or paradigmatic place is in poetry. His study explicitly considers a set of assumptions that are shared to some degree by other writers on the subject. As this starting point influences the applicability of any theory of metaphor to non-poetic discourse, Ricoeur's reasoning bears examination. There is much that seems wise and illuminating in his general account of metaphor, as he takes up the traditional Aristotelian analysis and more recent revisions in anglo-american and continental philosophy, literary criticism, and linguistics. Yet his reply to Derrida's challenge is, at one level, simply baffling. There are metaphors in the text of philosophy. If this observation is a possible starting point--and Derrida's remarks on this will need to be considered--then Ricoeur's

⁴⁸Ricoeur, The Rule of Metaphor, pp. 257-313.

position merits closer scrutiny. What does he mean in excluding metaphor from a place where it seems to exist?

His reasoning draws on a distinction between rhetorical and semiotic theories of metaphor on the one hand, and semantic theories on the other. He examines contemporary work in the light of his historical survey of philosophical thinking on the subject, and in terms of the differing projects of the various schools of thought. His reading of Derrida's project is coloured by his reservations about semiotics. It is possible to have some sympathy for his reasons for rejecting deconstruction, and yet to see insights of Derrida's that Ricoeur's approach does not adequately answer. It may be something of a tight-rope act to discuss either theory without seeking to adjudicate between their larger accounts of meaning in language, yet there are reasons for attempting this. To consider approaches to a particular problem in relative isolation is to see what help these perspectives can lend to an issue. The point is not to use metaphor as a test case. Rather, it is to clarify the issues that would need to be addressed by a discussion of "metaphor in the text of philosophy."⁴⁹ In explicitly rejecting this possibility, Ricoeur's account is of interest.

The focus of the book is on the creative and aesthetic aspects of metaphor. Poetry, he suggests--following Aristotle--is the place of metaphor. He sees the twentieth century reexamination spearheaded by Richards, Black, Beardsley, Berggren as challenging the traditional rhetorical classification and the treatment of metaphor as a transposition of terms.⁵⁰ This anglo-american work recognizes the importance of a metaphor's sentential structure to its functioning, treating the phenomenon as an

⁴⁹Jacques Derrida, "White Mythology" in Margins of Philosophy, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 209.

⁵⁰Paul Ricoeur, Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action and Interpretation, ed. and trans. John B. Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 170.

interaction between semantic fields. He presents this as an advancement from the traditional "tropologies" of rhetoric, which begin from the meaning of the word as denomination, and regard metaphor as the displacement of the name to a different object. This, Ricoeur argues, incorrectly assumes the notion of proper meaning in a polysemic language.⁵¹ More, it assumes the primacy of naming, of the sign. He draws on work in linguistics and anglo-american philosophy which denies that the meaning of sentences can be reduced to the meaning of words. He begins from the metaphorical statement, not the word, as the primary unit. The functioning of language as discourse can't be reduced to the relationship of signifier and signified.⁵²

In accepting the revision from theories of the transposition or substitution of names to the interaction accounts that follow Richards and Black, he denies that the notion of resemblance can be abandoned altogether. Metaphor both "is and is not"; or in more technical language, Ricoeur talks about "the play of semantic pertinence and impertinence."⁵³ In the Aristotelian account, it was some similarity that motivated the borrowing of a term from its proper category. This possibility is denied altogether by theories in terms of verbal convention--Goodman's most particularly⁵⁴--or those based on the logical absurdity of metaphors.⁵⁵ These focus on the creative aspect of metaphor, in defining whatever similarity is then perceived. Ricoeur thinks this dichotomy is wrong--that we do not need to choose between discovery and fabrication. The sense of surprised recognition which metaphor produces in us indicates that the resemblance does not adhere entirely in the words, and that the notion of similarity cannot be abandoned altogether.

⁵¹Ibid., pp. 43-51, 65-70.

⁵²Ibid., pp. 65-100.

⁵³Ibid., pp. 224, 290.

⁵⁴Ibid., pp. 19, 59, 196.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 191.

In explicating this, Ricoeur suggests an interaction between the sensory and the verbal analogous to Wittgenstein's duck-rabbit. He draws on the notion of "seeing as," where a word organizes our perception of a particular drawing that we might have seen differently.⁵⁶ The use of a word causes us to notice different aspects of the world.

The application of this idea to metaphor is borrowed from Aldrich and Hester, and is shared by Donald Davidson. It's a suggestive analogy, but requires some qualification. The duck-rabbit example is a case of gestalt switch which is possible because the drawing is ambiguous, and yet allows a limited range of successful interpretations. The drawing couldn't, for example, be seen as an elephant. The word causes us to notice certain things, but not in a vacuum; the visual text has definite properties which resist distortion. There is a basis for deciding which gestalts are possible. While there are options in organizing the same field, there are also restrictions governing the choice.

So far, the analogy to metaphor is a strong one. Where a problem arises is in the notion of a visual text. There seems to be nothing analogous that would justify applying the duck-rabbit situation to metaphor. Unless we are directly "looking" at something, it would be difficult to know how the gestalt takes place. If this is understood as implying that there is some kind of perception--usually an image--present to be organized by the metaphor, there are problems in extending the analogy. It would be difficult to argue that all metaphors can be interpreted in sensory terms: that there are pictures somehow corresponding to them. It is not clear that we are actually seeing, or playing with mental images, when we understand metaphors.

Talk of imagery has a strong association with romantic poetics, but it is not clear that this notion can be used in explicating metaphor. Is a visualization process of some sort necessary to understand figurative language? Ricoeur seems basically right

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 212.

in suggesting that metaphors help organize experience, drawing attention to particular aspects and associations. But to detail this claim is more difficult. There seem to be real problems with elaborating this notion in a way that suggests something like the reinterpretation of a visual field. We cannot assume the presence of the sensory in discussing the workings of a linguistic category like metaphor.

Ricoeur's account of metaphor is developed with the aims and characteristics of poetry in view, although he does not explicitly discuss this locus of his theory. In asking whether there is a role for metaphor in philosophy, he does not wonder whether this--or any other--account of metaphor has application in understanding philosophical writing. Instead, he discusses and rejects three theses that seem to use metaphor to bridge the gap between poetic and speculative discourse.

The distinction here is important. There are two different facets to the exclusion of metaphor from philosophy. These can usefully be considered as separate views, with distinct histories. These are the categorization of metaphor within poetics, which goes back to Aristotle; and the exclusion of poetry from philosophy, with its roots in Plato. Ricoeur is concerned to argue against the first; he does not examine the second. Ricoeur's account takes its cue from a view of metaphor as archetypally poetic: as the creative interpretation of sensory experience. Yet in making the above distinction, it becomes possible to resist collapsing poetry and philosophy, and yet to see a role for metaphor in philosophy.

The first two case studies Ricoeur considers bear less directly on the issue. These concern, not the philosophical use of metaphor, but the philosophical use of the idea of analogy to explain certain kinds of ambiguity. These are two versions of the problem of the analogies of being. In the Aristotelian variant, the attempt is to use

analogy to "introduce an intermediate modality between univocity and equivocalness";⁵⁷ to explain the unity among the many meanings of "being" as analogous. Ricoeur denies that this shows the presence of poetic functions at the heart of systematic metaphysics. The analogy here is an ordered process with no ties to the equivocity of poetry. He is concerned to show that Aristotle does not draw on poetics to explain being; yet this case does not really test the role of metaphor in philosophy.

Aquinas' version more obviously adopts the Aristotelian proportional metaphor to discuss the predicates that apply to god. The four-term ratio is adapted to a discussion of god's attributes, as the terms used to describe human qualities must be substantially modified when applied to the divine.⁵⁸ Perfect goodness is to god as human goodness is to man; it is not to be expected that the word 'goodness' means the same thing. Again, analogy is brought in to explain a difference somewhere between the univocal and the equivocal. Ricoeur's concern is to resist the implication that poetic understanding is needed to appreciate the attributes of a divinity, the core of the medieval ontology. At the very point where metaphor seems to enter speculative thought, the philosopher tames and systematizes the appropriated concept, emphasizing the distance of poetry from philosophy.

Yet this is not the only issue. From a different starting point, it might again seem that this is not a case of a philosophical use of a metaphor. Aquinas' flirtation with the figurative is not for the illumination that a specific metaphor might bring. He draws on the concept of analogy to account for an ambiguity. This is not, in Ricoeur's terms, an interaction of semantic fields or a play of semantic pertinence and impertinence. Aquinas is attempting to elaborate the idea of god: to describe the indescribable. Using Aristotle's proportional analogy to situate the change in goodness

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 259.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 278.

from the human to the divine is only possible if the divine is known. Here, "a is to b as something like a is to an unknown." There is a double absence, and the concept of analogy breaks down. This is not a use of metaphor in philosophy, but a use of the concept of analogy to address a perceived problem. As such, Aquinas' version of the analogies of being is pervaded by the theory of metaphor at work. It is this we are drawn to address, not the work of an actual metaphor.

While considering these two case studies, the possibility arises that Ricoeur's position may rest partly on terminology. Could the exclusion of metaphor from philosophy be merely a matter of restricting the term metaphor to poetry and analogy to philosophy? Might the one term be used for the philosopher's systematized, ordered comparisons, and the other reserved for the poet's multiplication and celebration of resonances and ambiguities? This possibility has its attractions, in so far as the aims of poets and philosophers are different. Yet it seems to forfeit too much for little gain. Not all analogies are metaphorical, containing some element of borrowing between kinds of things. The distinctions among analogies, analogical metaphors and metaphors are useful in any discipline. This is the vocabulary for discussing comparisons and figures. Poets are as varied in their use of these as philosophers: some poets such as Donne are notorious for their elaborate and controlled metaphors, like the comparison of lovers to stiff twin compasses.⁵⁹ On the other hand, philosophers doubtless brush off the occasional metaphor lightly: Goodman's description of metaphor as "an affair between a predicate with a past and an object that yields while protesting"⁶⁰ is not developed into an account of linguistic rape. There seems little justification for restricting the terminology merely to prevent a philosophical issue from arising.

⁵⁹Fogelin, *Figuratively Speaking*, p. 102.

⁶⁰Goodman, "Languages of Art", p. 124.

Another possible solution--or dissolution--of the difficulty would be to refine or restrict the notion of philosophy: not to treat the philosophical text as a unit, but to differentiate between the philosophical and the poetic elements within it. This approach has links to the separation of argument and rhetoric. From such a perspective, the fact that a philosopher occasionally "lapses" into metaphor is not important to the argument, which could have been presented without such extrusions. To carry through this distinction within a text, rather than at a more general level between the aims and methods of different disciplines, requires that the notion of philosophical discourse be clarified and distinguished from the rhetorical.

Whether this is even possible is too large a question to address here. For this endeavour to appear plausible, philosophical argument would need to be conceived as having some structural form which would enable a separation to be made between essential features and accidents of presentation. To undermine the possibility of such a dichotomy would be to show that metaphors can be structural, organizing philosophical positions: that their work can be necessary and not peripheral to philosophical argument. Ricoeur himself does not seem to base his claim on a separation of argument and rhetoric; he is concerned to draw the distinction at the level of kinds of discourse. To him, the poetic and the speculative are so different as to exclude a meeting place in philosophy.

The first two case studies were to test the idea that the understanding of the metaphysical might be metaphoric. The third begins with the opposite problem: whether, in Heidegger's words, "the metaphorical exists only within the borders of metaphysics."⁶¹ Ricoeur locates the question in Derrida's "White Mythology," but his reading of the latter is prefaced and informed by Heidegger's account of metaphor. The

⁶¹Ibid., p. 282.

latter, Ricoeur argues, is ill at ease with Heidegger's own use of metaphor. This is less at issue here than the questions raised about the place of metaphor in the text of philosophy. Derrida's essay opens questions not entirely settled by Ricoeur's reading.

In this, the Heideggerian difficulty with metaphor arises from what Derrida presents as an eighteenth century view: that all abstract concepts are metaphors drawn from the realm of the sensory.⁶² This view supposes that the proper meaning of words is their sensory meaning--their designation of physical things--and that all philosophical, conceptual or metaphysical terms are derivative. Derrida presents this in its monetary metaphor, as the erasure or *usure*' of meaning from terms, like coins worn out in circulation. There are a number of assumptions implicit in this, especially "that a purity of sensory language could have been in circulation at the origin of language."⁶³ Following Saussure, Derrida discusses the economic metaphors informing this: the notions of value and exchange, and the Marxian fetishism of commodities. There's an implicit parallel to Smithian economics in the idea that value arises from the production of physical goods. Applied to language, it becomes a theory of the wealth of designations.

Heidegger is said to be suspicious of metaphor for just this reason: that its very identification seems to presuppose the dichotomy of *phusis* and *nomos*--the physical and the conceptual--that he wants to undermine. Derrida's "unbounded 'deconstruction'"⁶⁴ argues against the possibility of any theory of metaphor that does not presuppose a metaphysics. No analysis of metaphor could yield philosophical insights without begging the very questions being asked.⁶⁵ Thus the eighteenth century debunking of metaphysics as "mere metaphor" is itself naive and problematic.

⁶²Derrida, "White Mythology," pp. 210-19.

⁶³Ibid., p. 210.

⁶⁴Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, p. 284.

⁶⁵Derrida, "White Mythology," pp. 219-20.

Ricoeur reads Derrida as accepting the analysis of metaphysics as "white mythology"--anaemic metaphor, leeches of life--and yet rejecting the attempt to "revive metaphor...to unmask the concept."⁶⁶ Yet Derrida explicitly distances himself from the "false" view which he took "the risk of unearthing" in order "to deconstruct the metaphysical and rhetorical schema at work."⁶⁷ He invokes Aristotle's schema in contrast, as a view not based on the same *phusis-nomos* distinction, in order to show that any metaphors presupposes a metaphysics. It is not because philosophical terms are leeches metaphors that the "discourse on metaphor is itself infected by the universal metaphoricity of philosophical discourse."⁶⁸ The 'auto-implication' of metaphor arises because any philosophical theory inevitably binds metaphor--as transfer--to a taxonomy of the proper meaning of words, and hence, in Derrida's view, to an ontology.

Ricoeur, like Derrida, rejects the idea of proper meaning. However, he views Derrida as still implicated in the position under deconstruction. The latter remains within a semiotic approach with its primacy of denomination, "which a more precise semantics dispels."⁶⁹ He places Derrida within his schema of linguistic theories, despite deconstructionist claims. Both writers present themselves as having escaped the net of propriety, Derrida by deconstructing it, Ricoeur by a more prosaic progression to a more sophisticated level of analysis.

Do either succeed, and to what end? The aim here is, again, not to adjudicate between disparate projects, but to glean insight into the problems raised by an account of metaphor in philosophy. Ricoeur's concern is that a semiotic account is inevitably bound to the dichotomy of signifier and signified, and to denomination. His own view,

⁶⁶Ricoeur, The Rule of Metaphor, p. 286.

⁶⁷Derrida, "White Mythology," pp. 214, 210, 215.

⁶⁸Ricoeur, The Rule of Metaphor, p. 286.

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 290.

importantly, does not entirely abandon these categories, but places the word within the framework of the sentence⁷⁰ and considers the "polarities" of sense and reference as one of the "paradoxes, that is, apparent contradictions" "of the general properties of discourse."⁷¹ His main quarrel with Saussurean semiotics is that the fact of polysemy requires the context of the sentence to pass from signifier to signified;⁷² and, further, that the sign is defined by the domain of other signs, without "intrinsic definition."⁷³ In Ricoeur's view, it is in the context of use in which meaning is understood, not by distance from other signs.

These may not actually be incompatible insights into the placing of meaning in words. The need for the sentence to decide among multiple lexical meanings does not negate the need to clarify the "space" of the word. There seems no need to assume, a priori, that the difference of semantics and semiotics will forbid comparison between two views. The central issue for an account of metaphor is the need to explain the functioning of a word in a context that, in some sense, is not its own. The problem raised by the attack on "proper" meaning is one which needs to be addressed. To this end, "White Mythology" will be read in more detail.

The philosopher, Derrida tells us, situates metaphor within a circle.⁷⁴ It is accepted as an expedient, a makeshift for the real word: for the unique, univocal name that is the philosopher's paradigm of meaning. The shortfalls of actual language from the ideal are met with the stopgap of metaphor. The philosopher will dabble in its muddy waters in the hope that the circle can be completed and the loss made good,

⁷⁰Ibid., pp. 65-66, and Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences, p. 166.

⁷¹Ibid., p. 167.

⁷²Ricoeur, The Rule of Metaphor, p. 125.

⁷³Ibid., p. 69.

⁷⁴Derrida, "White Mythology," p. 268.

reestablishing literal meaning.⁷⁵ In the Aristotelian universe, univocal language refers to an ontology centred on the sun, the epitome of Being. It is the impossibility of describing the sun in nonmetaphorical terms that leads to the discovery of the system's collapse.⁷⁶ There is no simple, proper meaning; no designation that escapes the circle.

It's actually a light mythology. Being itself, on which the philosopher's account of meaning depended, is seen, from the archetypal situation of the sun, to be elusive. The impossibility of designating the sun problematizes the notion of proper meaning or reference. More than this, the very terms for distinguishing the proper from the figurative are metaphorical. The ways of naming proper meaning--clarity and all the metaphors of the eye, light, mirroring, resemblance, reflection--are heliotropic, turning to the sun, And the sun isn't--literally--there.

The attack is directed against the attempt to ground a theory of metaphor. The problem is that some notion of proper meaning is assumed to exist independently of the metaphorical, as a relation between words and things. Derrida sees all language as implicated in the movement of metaphor, which includes "everything in language except the verb *to be*."⁷⁷ But to him--contra Ricoeur--this is not to argue for an archaeological attempt to recover original meanings. Not only does this "privilege *diachrony* at the expense of system,"⁷⁸ but it assumes there is an Archimedean purity of language to be recaptured. He is not suggesting that we can't discuss metaphor in philosophy, but that we can't avoid doing so. His quarrel is with the attempt to do this as a return to the univocal. Metaphors are necessarily plural;⁷⁹ a single metaphor

⁷⁵Ibid., pp. 268-71.

⁷⁶Ibid., pp. 250-51.

⁷⁷Jacques Derrida, "Force and Signification" in Writing and Difference, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 7.

⁷⁸Derrida, "White Mythology," p. 215.

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 268.

would be the proper word. On this reading, Derrida is not trying to unmask the concept by reviving metaphors, as Ricoeur suggests; rather, to transcend the schema of signifier and signified by reading metaphor "as the resemblance between two signs, one of which designates the other."⁸⁰ The mistake is to try to tie language to a static ontology and a system of "pure nomination: without differential syntax."⁸¹

This is to read Derrida for his most fruitful insights, and perhaps to assume that his critique can be divorced from a more nihilistic project. There are problems here; complaints that Ricoeur might legitimately raise. Wherein, for example, lies the "resemblance" Derrida talks about between signs? And did there ever exist the stock figure of the philosopher, or the entity called western metaphysics, against which the critique is directed? Derrida's work denies our ability to give a philosophical account of metaphor, or to draw a clear distinction between literal and metaphorical. Here, he seems to be referring to a particular conception of philosophy that there is no need to adopt. We can discuss our distinction of linguistic categories without reference to an ontology, and can begin a study of metaphors in philosophy from something less grandiose than a transcendental aesthetic. Yet Derrida raises real problems about the possibility of distinguishing metaphor from its other without reference to proper meaning, and about the attempt to control and limit metaphor--to return to the literal.

Ricoeur attempts to address the first through the notion of lexical meaning. He attempts to differentiate the metaphorical as that which has no place in the dictionary. The usage is created by its context. He explicitly rejects accounts of metaphor like Black's which draw on the "associated commonplaces" of things,⁸² in favour of a view of metaphor as creating anew by rearranging the sensory text. This process is

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 215.

⁸¹Ibid., p. 270.

⁸²Ricoeur, Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences, p. 172.

comparable to that by which, he suggests, concepts are originally formed: he sees metaphor as re-hedging the "semantic fields" Gadamer discusses.⁸³ Whether this view makes sense is too large an issue to address here. In locating a theory of metaphor within a Kantian schema of this sort, Ricoeur's account of metaphor seems to rely on the viability of such a notion of concept "formation" and of his view of the relationship of sensory experience to concepts. The problems of assuming the sensory in metaphor have been discussed above. Not only is this idea problematic in itself, but it restricts the field of metaphor to places where some kind of mental imagery seems appropriate.

Is Ricoeur's attempt to exclude his poetic version of metaphor from philosophy, and to discuss philosophical uses of analogy as systematized and ordered, an instance of the search for univocity? Derrida's critique is too broad to catch the particulars of Ricoeur's concern here. There is a Kantian motif that both refer to, which may help illuminate their differences.

After detailing the eighteenth century "empiricist" view of metaphor, Derrida elaborates his pun on philosophical history, on the way to discuss the Hegelian account of metaphors in the ideal realm. He warns of the impossibility of a "prolegomena to some future metaphysics," and spells out his critique of the philosopher's attempt at a rhetoric of philosophy in Kantian terms.⁸⁴ No schema of a priori categories could structure the apprehension of an empirical metaphoric; there is no transcendental aesthetic of the time and space of meaning.⁸⁵ There is no prephilosophical place to situate such a rhetoric. No critical prereflection on metaphor is possible without prejudicing the philosophical issues under consideration.

⁸³Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, p. 198.

⁸⁴Derrida, "White Mythology," p. 219.

⁸⁵*Ibid.*, p. 227.

Ricoeur reads this, through Heidegger, as an unmasking of the Kantian concept. He is uneasy with the Derridean claim that everything is metaphorical. Tied as he is to a theory of metaphor as creative and drawing on the sensory, he wants to remove the conceptual from its influence. He is concerned to maintain that concepts "can never actually be derived from perception or from images";⁸⁶ that the abstract is fundamentally different from the sensory perception of similarities. This is, however, a problem arising from his view of metaphor. His separation of the poetic and the speculative is thus seen to be, not a distinction between two kinds of discourses among many, but an attempt to see the two as functioning at completely different levels. His view of the poetic, and of metaphor, is of a discourse below the level of the Kantian categories. If we reject this association of metaphor with the sensory, or necessarily with poetry, his problem of the relations between metaphor and philosophy is bypassed.

Ricoeur seems to have dropped the aesthetic aspect of this programme when he uses metaphor as a paradigm for our understanding of a text.⁸⁷ Here, he explores our ability to gain new meaning from familiar, finite elements via a unique, particular and contextual event. This is presented as a general problem of the relationship of meaning and event, of general and particular, sense and reference, the contents and the force.⁸⁸ Metaphor is read as a model for this possibility. The general strategy is intriguing; the problem is that he seems to take a radical position on the separability of these dichotomies. He seems to view metaphor as operating apart from any established range of possible meanings, as an absurd use.⁸⁹ What this could add to our understanding of texts is unclear; its viability as an account of metaphor is also questionable.

⁸⁶Ricoeur, The Rule of Metaphor, p. 300.

⁸⁷Ricoeur, Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences, p. 171.

⁸⁸Ibid., pp. 167-68.

⁸⁹Ibid., pp. 172-73.

In discussing meanings, an undue stress on novelty becomes nihilistic, denying any connection with existing conventions. In this, his theory of metaphor has ties to others which attempt to make sense of it by distinguish meaning and use. This might be attempted in one of two ways. It could be argued that the associations, commonplaces, systematic relationships or connotations of a word and its object carry over into the metaphor. This is roughly the line taken by Black and Beardsley, and--arguably--by Searle, Fogelin and Goodman. It is unclear how much of these associations are entailed in the meaning of the word: this issue shall be examined later. The other position, espoused by Davidson and apparently by Ricoeur, denies the viability of such notions to account for our understanding of metaphor. In Ricoeur's words, this fails to recognize "the novelty of the emergent meaning...we do not really free ourselves from the theory of substitution."⁹⁰ Metaphor transcends existing categories of similarity.

This position is motivated by the attempt to portray metaphor as innovative, taking this to infer that it is outside the boundaries of mundane language. Such theories become obstructive is when they locate metaphor away from the possibility of reflective thought. There may be other ways to discuss its innovative abilities without seeking extra-linguistic explanations.

Ricouer's theory of metaphor is interesting because of his denial of a philosophical role to metaphor. This seems to have much to do with his placing of metaphor within poetics, and with the particular theory of metaphor he espouses. The concern to save conceptual abstraction from the creative influence of imagist metaphor is only an issue from his starting point. Nonetheless, there are issues here that would need to be taken account of by any account of metaphor in philosophy. In the discussion of the philosophers' uses of analogy, it becomes important to clarify the different uses

⁹⁰Ibid., p. 174.

to which metaphor might be put. The relationship of metaphor to analogy needs further development, as does the notion of a sustained and controlled use of a metaphor. These issues do not exactly coincide with the difference between poetic and philosophical uses of metaphors; little is to be gained by restricting the terminology to the different disciplines. On the other hand, there may be real differences in the uses to which metaphors can be put, which should be explored.

The dialogue between Ricoeur and Derrida raised issues about the relationship of semantic and semiotic approaches to language: whether metaphor could be addressed as a relationship between words and things--signifier and signified--or only as an interaction within a semantic unit such as the sentence. Any approach to metaphor would need to take account of this problem, in explaining our ability to identify metaphors, and the element of what Ricoeur calls semantic impertinence. Where does the metaphor derive its sense of transfer, and of aptness? A theory of metaphor should be able to discuss these in absence of an Aristotelian notion of proper meaning. Ricoeur's concern with the violation or even the re-formation of linguistic categories is suggestive, although this need not be situated within a Kantian schema of aesthetic and conceptual levels of apperception.

From Ricoeur's point of view, some of these criticisms might be simply misplaced. His particular approach to metaphor is seen to be informed by a Kantian view of the relationship between the aesthetic and the conceptual. This seems to lie deep in his understanding of the nature of different kinds of discourse, and of the techniques proper to each. Ricoeur would resist, on programmatic grounds, the attempt to develop an account of metaphor that would extend beyond poetic discourse into speculative discourses such as philosophy. Perhaps this concern could be taken into account by revising the terminology, as suggested above. In discussing the use of analogies in speculative work, and their relationships and similarities to metaphors in poetry,

Ricoeur's more general insights into the working of figurative language could be extended without violating his theoretical concerns.

There are features of his view of metaphor that are open to extension. His discussion is able to incorporate the insights of a wide variety of perspectives and disciplines, and keeps in focus what it is about the figurative that, from any point of view, we would want to account for. A Ricoeurian account of analogies could draw on these insights. His insistence that metaphors must be addressed as an interaction between semantic fields, and not merely as the transfer of a single word, would be applicable to analogy. Likewise, the recognition that the notion of resemblance cannot be abandoned altogether--that a metaphor neither entirely discovers nor exactly creates a similarity--would need to be addressed. However, his solution to this dichotomy would need to be reconsidered. In applying the notion of "seeing as" to metaphor, Ricoeur specifically has a sensory account of poetics in view, and would resist applying this to the philosophical use of analogy.

This attempt to extend Ricoeur's view to include nonpoetic, figurative language would need considerable development. Could the notion of "seeing as" be made good in a context where there is no assumption of sensory features present to be reorganized? This possibility is suggested by Davidson, in a context that does not involve Ricoeur's particular views of the nature of poetic imagery. The idea that the metaphor--or analogy--causes us to notice different aspects of things is an interesting one; however, it is somewhat vague. Its helpfulness would depend on how it is worked out.

Most writers are comfortable discussing the use of metaphors in speculative work, and unlike Ricoeur, do not find the differences between poetic and nonpoetic uses marked or clear enough to warrant restricting the terminology. Ricoeur does not discuss philosophers' uses of figurative language in enough detail to clarify whether he would call all of them analogies--even if they are apparently peripheral or offered

lightly--or whether he would say that the philosopher is writing poetically within a philosophical argument. His account would need to be elaborated before it would be clear whether his concerns could be accommodated, or should be bypassed.

Ricoeur's general discussion of theories of metaphor noted problems with comparison or similarity views, and the more recent interest in developing theories based on the interaction within the sentence, and the absurdity, rather than the similarity, of the metaphor. This absurdity is taken up by Davidson in a more recent article, which begins from a problem about the truth of metaphors. This article raises some of the difficulties with the concern about veracity; these shall be considered next.

CHAPTER III

THE TRUTH OF METAPHOR

It seems initially unlikely that thinkers as different as Ricoeur and Donald Davidson should espouse a similar theory of metaphor. They don't; yet it is striking that their two approaches, though different in important respects, should share a central analogy. Both are interested in the duck-rabbit and the idea of "seeing as" to elucidate metaphor. In both cases, the attraction of Wittgenstein's example is that it seems to promise an explanatory technique that would distinguish metaphor from the workings of more mundane language. The two philosophers want to deny that metaphorical language operates at the same cognitive or conceptual level as other kinds of discourse. Their reasons for this are, however, very different.

Davidson's theory arises from a view of truth which is concerned to restrict the notion of meaning to very specific kinds of language. Uses outside this range--metaphor, irony, malapropism--are anomalies requiring explanation. Davidson is not denying that we can make sense of nonliteral statements; conversely, he affirms their importance in many fields.⁹¹ However, he does assert that a sentence has only its literal meaning; most metaphors are, simply, false. There is no metaphorical meaning--no "cognitive content"--to the metaphor. Hence attempts to restate its effect are necessarily partial and personal, much like an art critic's riff on a painting or a

⁹¹Davidson, "What Metaphors Mean," p. 202.

therapist's interpretation of a dream. No paraphrase can adequately capture a metaphor. The attempt reflects as much on the interpreter as on the originator.⁹²

Through much of his essay, Davidson strives to undermine the common view that there is such a thing as metaphorical meaning. He does this by creating a paradox from the idea of live and dead metaphor. If the metaphor has a meaning, he argues, then it stands as an alternate usage, and has no special status or functioning. If, on the other hand, it is a genuinely special use of language, then "no theory of metaphorical meaning or metaphorical truth can help explain how metaphor works."⁹³ He illustrates this with a language lesson: if we are teaching the many uses of a word and our student accidentally acquires a metaphorical use without knowing the difference, this would undermine our pedagogic endeavours.⁹⁴ Metaphor is a special case; its work must be accomplished by something other than the meaning of words.

Most theories, Davidson suggests, depend on the notion of metaphorical meaning. After arguing that it is fact paradoxical, he offers a way out. He offers the notion of "seeing as" as an alternative explanation of how metaphor does its stuff. This initial suggestion is not unlike Black's notion that a metaphor acts as a filter or screen of sorts, redirecting our awareness.⁹⁵ Davidson's most literal claim is that "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."⁹⁶ In this, he is explicitly denying that the calling and causing are achieved by semantic means.

His work is interesting mainly in its explicit treatment of the notion of metaphorical truth. He is explicitly responding to the claim raised by the work of

⁹²Ibid., p. 200.

⁹³Ibid., p. 214.

⁹⁴Ibid., pp. 205-6.

⁹⁵Black, "Metaphor," pp. 73-75.

⁹⁶Davidson, "What Metaphors Mean," p. 218.

Black and Goodman, which suggests that metaphors are not only not just frills, but that there is the potential for expressing thought in metaphor. Black writes of a cognitive content to the very structure of figurative language, which is irreducible to paraphrase.⁹⁷ The very process of understanding a metaphor requires us to think in certain ways; no literal paraphrase could capture the emphasis and nuance of the intellectual work involved. When Davidson discusses the cognitive content of a metaphor, he is, conversely, referring exactly to something that can be paraphrased, assigned truth conditions, and, in principle, verified. Presumably, the kind of information that Black is looking for, internal to the structure of metaphor, would be disqualified from Davidson's truth conditional account of cognitive content, precisely because it is not susceptible to paraphrase. The same criterion of paraphrasability is used to make opposing claims.

Black's concern is with the irreducibility of the process of understanding metaphor. The inadequacy he finds in an paraphrase is a real one: more is sacrificed than brevity or wit. Our intellect is actively engaged by the juxtaposition. At a personal level, this may be much like what Cohen calls the "cultivation of intimacy" that arises, interpersonally, from bringing speaker and hearer into interpretive collusion.⁹⁸ All of this would be missing in any literal equivalent. The loss is undeniable; yet this is not the same as renouncing the possibility of restatement altogether. We can, and often do, translate metaphors into comparable expressions; the match may not be perfect, but few translations are. As Fogelin wisely remarks, ineffability is not unique to metaphor;⁹⁹ and, after all, the metaphor is as poor a paraphrase of the paraphrase as the paraphrase is of the metaphor. Black is not

⁹⁷Black, "Metaphor," p. 79.

⁹⁸Cohen, "Metaphor and the Cultivation of Intimacy," p. 5.

⁹⁹Fogelin, *Figuratively Speaking*, p. 97.

denying that there are systematic comparisons and organized associations at work in a metaphor, which can be explicated helpfully;¹⁰⁰ his work gives important clues to this possibility.

Davidson is denying more than this. In claiming that the interpretation of metaphor is subjective, he explicitly rejects a view based on anything like these "systems of relationships" or "associated commonplaces";¹⁰¹ these would imply the presence of cognitive content, and should be possible to restate. In rejecting the paraphrasability, he is not merely underlining the loss of nuance, but asserting that most of what we learn from the metaphor isn't of a kind that could be expressed in words. His emphatic assertion of the subjectivity of any reading of a metaphor is a much more radical denial of paraphrasability, and is predicated on a different view of what constitutes cognitive content.

Davidson's general account of language requires us to be able to give truth conditions to meaningful sentences; these actually constitute the meaning.¹⁰² From this perspective, the existence of metaphorical truth would appear to be a problem, implying that the conditions of truth could not always be specified. Unlike someone such as Ricoeur, who takes the polysemy of language as a given, Davidson's approach treats ambiguities as special cases that need to be explained. Rather than follow the attempt to discuss the truth of figurative statements, Davidson instead rejects the idea of metaphorical meaning or truth altogether. Metaphors interest him as an instance of our ability to be affected by expressions in ways that do not rely on their meaning. In his account, meaning is intimately tied to truth; there are three separate claims he

¹⁰⁰Black, "Metaphor," p. 79.

¹⁰¹Davidson, "What Metaphors Mean," p. 215.

¹⁰²Donald Davidson, "Semantics for Natural Languages" in Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), pp. 55-64.

makes that should be distinguished. Metaphors are literally false; they do not possess metaphorical truth; and they have no metaphorical meaning.

The first is perhaps the weakest. "Absurdity" views in general often refer to the falsity of metaphorical statements as a criterion of identification; Davidson is not as explicit in using this as a watermark of metaphor, although his view seems to imply this. The assumption made by other similar views is that we would normally interpret statements as literal unless tipped off to the presence of metaphor by some obvious shortcoming, whether defect or falsity. It is this problem with the sentence that motivates us to seek for a metaphorical reading.

Some philosophers have questioned whether this could possibly be true. Cohen and Goodman both deny that metaphors are literally false.¹⁰³ Davidson adds the heading "patent truth" to deal with such examples as "no man is an island" or "business is business."¹⁰⁴ However, there are other metaphors that are not trivially true, or particularly problematic as literal statements. Disraeli's "I climbed to the top of the greased pole,"¹⁰⁵ or Shakespeare's "the barge she sat in, like a burnish'd throne / Burn'd on the water"¹⁰⁶--Davidson's own example--pose greater difficulty to an absurdity claim. In both cases, we can recognize the metaphor, despite a perfectly acceptable literal reading.

Examples such as these are, moreover, clearly original and "live" metaphors: both are plausibly unique statements and innovative uses of language. We cannot reduce the ambiguity by calling them dead metaphors or alternate meaning. It isn't that a flaw in the literal reading makes the metaphor evident, but rather that a figurative reading

¹⁰³Cohen, "Figurative Speech and Figurative Acts" in Philosophical Perspectives, p. 184; Nelson Goodman, "Metaphor as Moonlighting" in Philosophical Perspectives, p. 224.

¹⁰⁴Davidson, "What Metaphors Mean," p. 213.

¹⁰⁵Searle, "Metaphor," p. 254.

¹⁰⁶Davidson, "What Metaphors Mean," p. 212.

would simply make more sense. Not all metaphors are obviously absurd. It is more likely that a Victorian prime minister would be boasting about his political career than about unseemly athletic feats; burnished thrones are more likely to glow than to ignite, especially in the context. These may be novel expressions, but they still seem to have a right reading: there is very little room for subjectivity here.

In examining the claim that the metaphor is literally false, there is more at stake than our ability to succeed at spotting metaphors. There are two possibly detrimental consequences of espousing the absurdity claim. One is that, in accepting falsity as an identification criterion, we might be blind to something else which tips us off. The other is in the insistence that metaphors are false statements. It is at least a distraction to focus on the false or defective literal interpretation, if that is not what is at issue when we read metaphors. This assumes, perhaps wrongly, that there is a primacy to a literal reading, and that its meaning is what strikes us in appreciating the metaphor. If there were a metaphorical meaning, to take the sentence as literal and thus false would be to miss the point. The position that metaphors are false, as Davidson would recognize, is closely tied to the claim that there is only a literal meaning.

The fact that we often and readily identify metaphors as such out of context is suggestive. If it can't be claimed that they are clearly false or defective in some way, then it seems that there is something in the very statement which we recognize. If we can readily give two possible interpretations to a sentence--Disraeli's "I climbed to the top of the greased pole" for instance--then it is hard to know where the justification comes from to deny the presence of a metaphorical meaning. Davidson claims that the latter can be given, but that it would be subjective, a matter of the "use" of words, and not part of the meaning of the statement.

Could there be such a thing as metaphorical truth? This question is an important one from the point of view of someone like Davidson who links the notion of meaning to truth conditions. He wants to deny that either are applicable to metaphor. Others insist that metaphors can be true: that we can and do say of the same sentence that it is true metaphorically and false literally. While it seems necessary to insist on our ability to understand metaphors, there is less need to hold to this notion of metaphorical truth.

There are two reasons why this issue can be forfeited without great loss. One is that it is ambiguous. Fogelin, Goodman and others discussing metaphorical truth are concerned to suggest that there are appropriate standards for metaphors as for other kinds of statements--they are talking about the possibility that such statements are true if taken metaphorically. The other possibility is that there is a metaphorical version of "truth" itself that might apply to such statements. This first option attempts to extend the same version of truth as specifiable conditions to metaphors; the second broadens the notion of truth itself. Thus, it isn't really clear what metaphorical truth means anyway. Moreover, the notion of truth may not be the only pertinent category for discussing statements or sentences. It may be more natural to say that metaphors "have a lot of truth to them" than that they are true. What all this indicates, if anything, is a moot point. At least, if any weight is to be placed on the claim that metaphors either are or aren't metaphorically true, that these issues would need to be addressed. We seem more prone to evaluate metaphors by other standards: as apt or inappropriate, revealing or pointless, successful or failed.

What is important is whether metaphors can be said to have a meaning. Unless we are tied to a notion of truth conditions similar to Davidson's, this need not be the same as asking whether they are true. Fortunately, he tries to undermine the notion of metaphorical meaning independently of the issue of truth. One way is through the claim that metaphors can't be adequately paraphrased. Davidson cites the widespread

agreement amongst commentators that all restatements are to some extent partial. Everyone puts an "etc." at the end of their paraphrases.¹⁰⁷ This issue has already been addressed at some length; it seems important here to distinguish the incompleteness of a paraphrase from its impossibility. If we can state the essentials of a phrase, is perfection required? A completeness requirement would bar us from defining even the most literal words.

Davidson's other objection against the notion of metaphorical meaning is, generally, that this makes metaphor too much like the literal. His argument is suggested principally through an example of a language lesson. Here, we are to suppose that we are teaching the meaning of the word "floor" to a visitor from Saturn. By the process of ostensive definition, our student picks up the point of the examples we are pointing to and naming, and acquires a certain competency in the use of the word. Then, we are transported to his home planet, and, looking at the earth, remember Dante's reference to it as a floor. We would, however, be distressed if our language student adopted the metaphorical use as if it were literal. This seems, at least, to indicate that we want to separate literal and metaphorical uses.

It is not clear that the example indicates much more than this, however. In teaching a word with multiple meanings--particularly to an interplanetary stranger--we would want to be sure that different meanings of any kind are sharply distinguished. Until we were sure that certain distinctions were agreed upon and recognized, we would be reluctant to teach the word for certain nocturnal rodents at the same time as baseball bats. Yet we do not thus deny that the ambiguity exists. There is nothing about the pedagogic need to distinguish metaphors that would deny the existence of metaphorical meanings.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., pp. 217, 220n.

The particular example is too farfetched to be much help; there are real problems with interplanetary communication, and we can't be sure that, in Dante's universe, the earth wasn't literally a floor. Whether we would teach a human child the metaphorical uses of the word "pig" at the same time as we teach her about the barnyard animal might have to do with the child's level of development or her ability to handle complexities. In actuality, children may often learn about the metaphorical stereotype--the big bad wolf--before they learn about the animal. We may, that is, teach children connotations before denotations, and do not limit ourselves to uses we consider literal. A child's language learning takes place in wildly fictional and figurative contexts that do not seem to interfere with their ability to acquire language skills; they live comfortably in an anthropomorphized world of sleepy beds, crying clouds, and happy meals. There are particular needs built into a language teaching situation; we can't assume that these indicate any epistemological or ontological primacy of any one kind of language.

Davidson places considerable weight on this claim about the situation of learning language. He wants to separate the situation of learning a word from that of using it to say something about the world.¹⁰⁸ This separation could not, of course, be made completely. In learning from ostensive definition, we pick up meanings from particular uses: there is nothing intrinsic to the situations we choose for pedagogic purposes that makes them inherently paradigmatic. Nor does the process of learning a word's range of application exactly stop: we constantly readjust our sense of a word's domain based on further experience. The distinction of meaning and use here is in no way a separation. The meaning may only be evident from the context of its use; and the

¹⁰⁸Ibid., p. 206.

ability to use the word relies on its meaning. It is not at all obvious that we could treat the two independently.

Davidson's argument against metaphorical meaning has been considered as a claim about paraphrasability and about the reduction of metaphor to the literal. The other concern of his with truth conditions would be harder to establish without circularity. The intention here is not primarily to question his understanding of meaning in terms of truth conditions; however, it should be noted that this seems to assume the primacy of a certain kind of utterance.¹⁰⁹ If assertions are considered to be the archetypal kind of statement, from which we derive our sense of meanings and transfer these to other speech situations, a particular picture of language acquisition is implied. First, it does assume that some kinds of situations are inherently paradigmatic for the learning of words. Second, it presupposes that learning is an activity confined to a small number of kinds of utterances--that we could not learn meanings from promises or questions. Third, the criterion for knowing meanings would remain the narrow one of understanding truth conditions, rather than more subtle aspects like relevance or appropriateness. These at least suggest that the focus on truth conditions implies a rather limited conception of language use.

Davidson's programmatic concern with truth conditions as constitutive of meaning has two consequences for his account of metaphor. One is the issue of the rule-breaking nature of metaphor: the insistence on innovative figures, and the quest for a nonlinguistic means by which they work. A second has to do with the relationship between metaphor and simile. From a truth-conditional point of view, they are radically different; the former are almost always false, whereas the latter are trivially

¹⁰⁹Donald Davidson, "Moods and Performances" in Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation, p. 121.

true.¹¹⁰ This issue is, for Davidson, tied to his rejection of the possibility of paraphrase. It is sometimes assumed that the corresponding simile might be a literal paraphrase for the metaphor.

Davidson sees this as the heart of the "comparativist" view, and presents this as having two variants. In the first, the metaphor simply is an elliptical simile; no reference to "metaphorical meaning" is required; when we say "man is a wolf," we actually mean "man is like a wolf." His objection to this is that it eliminates the false, literal sentence which supposedly creates the tension or interaction in the statement.¹¹¹ In the second, which he considers more sophisticated, "man is a wolf" is said to mean the same as "man is like a wolf." It is an approximation. Davidson's problem with this view is that the simile is "trivial because everything is like everything else."¹¹² The paraphrase is inadequate because it is tautological and vacuous.

Fogelin dismisses this objection decisively, in challenging the notion that everything is like everything else. He argues that there are few properties that the Washington Monument and the fourth root of seven could nontrivially be said to share. Davidson's claim could only be made good in terms of elaborate disjunctive properties.¹¹³ Even allowing this notion of similarity, Fogelin suggests that it is actually a nonsymmetrical relationship, and introduces the notions of salience and prototype to counter Davidson's claim.¹¹⁴ An assertion of similarity is neither tautological nor trivial.

¹¹⁰Davidson, "What Metaphors Mean," p. 210.

¹¹¹Ibid., p. 209.

¹¹²Ibid., p. 209.

¹¹³Fogelin, Figuratively Speaking, p. 60.

¹¹⁴Ibid., p. 64.

Fogelin's concern is to resuscitate the comparativist view. In arguing that similes do in fact carry assertive force, he also suggests that the comparison is not between a figurative metaphor and a literal simile, but between a figurative metaphor and a figurative simile.¹¹⁵ The point here is that the simile "man is like a wolf" is not understandable without reference to the same--figurative--conventions which govern metaphor. It is much more specific than a general statement of likeness. This view acknowledges the perceived similarity between a metaphor and a corresponding simile: the two may affect us in very similar ways, so that we generally do not even notice whether the word "like" appeared in the comparison or not; this one word seems to have little relevance to its experience effect. This point does not greatly advance our understanding of metaphor; however, it does clear up a confusion admirably. Similes are not simply literal statements.

It is only for a certain interpretation of a truth conditional account that such commonsensical observations would raise difficulties. It would not be impossible to refine the notion of truth conditions so as to make sense of both similes and metaphors as figurative expressions. It would, however, require recognition of the alternate meanings of these expressions to an extent that Davidson finds pyrrhic to the notion of metaphor.

His concern to deny the continuity of metaphors with literal language has been examined in some detail. In denying the existence of metaphorical meaning, Davidson is interested in the idea that we could use expressions to achieve effects without relying on their meanings. This notion will be reexamined in the context of Searle's discussion. As a general claim, the idea that whatever we do with words might be independent of their meaning is troubling; its plausibility only rests on the author's ability to offer a viable

¹¹⁵Ibid., p. 58.

alternative. In Davidson's case, this is the notion of "seeing as." In general, the idea that the metaphor 'causes us to notice' different aspects of something sounds fine. However, when this is attempted apart from the meaning of words, some other alternative must be offered.

Davidson's article suggests, metaphorically, that this works like our understanding of art work under an expert's guidance. The analogy depends on the presence of something comparable to a picture for us to reinterpret. If this relies on some idea of our reorganizing our mental images or contents, there are problems with it. The imagist associations are common in discussing metaphor, but they seem to have limits as explanation. Without the presence of some kind of nonlinguistic "field" to be reinterpreted, the Wittgensteinian analogy loses its appeal. Davidson's discussion relies heavily on a different medium within which metaphors could work. He tells us that "words are the wrong currency to exchange for a picture";¹¹⁶ an odd claim, considering that the subject of this analogy is a linguistic expression. His argument depends on his ability to present metaphor as something more like a picture than like words; the imagist conventions help his view rhetorically, but they are problematic as philosophical arguments. Too many metaphors defy visualization altogether; and there are problems in discussing our "mental contents" in terms of images or pictures. The success of Davidson's article rested on his offering a viable alternative to the 'paradox' of metaphorical meaning; he presents his solution as a "simple way out of the impasse."¹¹⁷ His answer is far from simple; it is worth reconsidering whether there is even an impasse.

There are two factors which lend credence to Davidson's position. One is our recognition that metaphor has something peculiar about it. It clearly works in slightly

¹¹⁶Ibid., p. 218.

¹¹⁷Ibid., p. 216.

different ways. There may, however, be other ways to account for this oddity without denying meaning. The other is the tie between metaphor and creativity or innovation. There is an apparent tension between the notion that metaphors have a meaning--something we could discuss as if it already exists, say, in the dictionary--and the view that metaphors are ground-breaking and surprising. This seems to be the real appeal of Davidson's view. If a metaphor can be understood by people who haven't heard it before, then it might seem to function via something other than an established meaning. Again, if it were possible to account for this situation some other way than denying meaning, this appeal would diminish.

It is metaphor's linguistic oddity that motivates Davidson's account. He is interested in uses that "get away with" violating rules. This focus on innovation places an emphasis on an aspect that is shared by very few, if any, metaphors. It is notoriously difficult to come up with examples of completely new metaphors; and this is not, of course, the situation of the vast majority of expressions we would identify as such. Davidson is attached to the live and dead dichotomy, which assumes that metaphors are one time creations that gradually sink into literalness. It has been suggested above that this account may not be adequate to the actual functioning of metaphors, and that the metaphor *ex nihilo* may be a red herring.

The reason for the puzzle about metaphor stems from our ability to understand them. Obscure or unsuccessful equations that would require elaborate explication--such as "Christ was a chronometer"¹¹⁸--do not count for this purpose. The interest is in those we readily appreciate, and in understanding how this is possible. The quest for the pristine metaphor should not lose sight of this. By the criteria Davidson and Ricoeur adopt, not only must the phrase itself be coined, but the metaphor does not

¹¹⁸Ibid., p. 204.

depend on the associations and commonplaces we attach to the things involved. Davidson rejects any discussion of such as Black's, that looks to the systems of relationships we perceive amongst things to explain metaphor. These "methods and devices for drawing out the content of a metaphor."¹¹⁹ These are just so many attempts to attribute a cognitive content to metaphor, which he denies, because of the difficulties of paraphrase. Such "associations" presuppose the existence of a meaning, and thus ignore what is peculiar to metaphor.¹²⁰

In denying the role of such systems of relationships and associations, Davidson rejects an aspect that several writers have explored in accounting for our understanding of metaphor. To make an effective case for the view that these are not important, Davidson could reasonably be asked to supply successful metaphors that clearly do not rely on some such relationships, or that could work without them. Few of Davidson's own examples meet this standard. We commonly speak of people--metaphorically--as children, old men, adolescents, babies; and of solid bodies as having faces, or surfaces, or facets. We don't know that Dante described the earth as a floor metaphorically; in his cosmic picture, unlike Davidson's, this could well be a literal usage. The commonplaces may be slightly disguised: the barge, we are told, is burnished, ie. gold; this is commonly equated with fire and the sun, and might conceivably burn in the sun. Our shared associations or commonplaces seem to play a powerful role in accounting for these metaphors. This alone does not show that Davidson's view is inadequate; yet it seems odd that he does not provide examples that are clearly independent of such associations. His argument against them relies on an attack on the paraphrasability claim. As such, it does not seriously consider the view about associations, which he sees as misguided.

¹¹⁹Ibid., p. 214.

¹²⁰Ibid., p. 216.

Davidson's reasons for rejecting theories that rely on something like shared knowledge--Blacks "systems of commonplaces" or Verbrugge and McCarrell's "systems of relationships"¹²¹ is that these seem to imply a cognitive content to the metaphor that should be paraphrasable. In recognizing that paraphrase is susceptible to degree, the demand becomes easier to meet: we could be expected to restate roughly what it is about a man and a wolf that motivates the comparison. Davidson's reservations with such attempts to account for figurative language are that they make the metaphorical too much like the literal; presumably his worry is that seems to render such expressions liable to truth conditional analysis.

Should such a concern dominate an account of metaphor? Davidson is responding to attempts to treat metaphor as in some way organized and cognitive. In rejecting these, his concern that metaphor should not be reduced to the literal needs to be taken seriously. Yet, in so far as his wholesale rejection of any cognitive content leads him to discount the kinds of perceived associations and relationships among things which seem to account for metaphor, his general programme seems too restrictive. His most interesting suggestion--that metaphors cause us to notice different aspects of things--might perhaps be made good in terms such as these. Although we do not seem to be able to rely on some kind of images as a source for our noticing, perhaps such associations and commonplaces might serve in this context.

In focusing on the interaction in the metaphorical statement, recent theories acknowledge an important dimension that the notion of comparison alone would miss. There is more going on in metaphor than a statement of similarity. Yet, as Ricoeur himself argues, the notion of resemblances might not be avoidable. In treating metaphor as "fecund falsity or calculated "category mistake," the fertile possibilities

¹²¹Ibid., p. 215.

are rightly recognized. However, there may be ways to access this without taking falsity as definitive. The issue of the truth of metaphor is far from clear; it may even help the discussing by abandoning it altogether.

Davidson's concern with metaphor has to do with our ability to deal with kinds of language that do not readily fit his notion of "satisfactory description of the competence of an interpreter" which must be "by appeal to a recursive theory of a certain sort."¹²² Metaphor is an obvious aberration from his point of view: a case where we can understand a statement that is clearly false. He tries to explain this ability by nonlinguistic means. The attempt is a bold one; it is not, however, convincing.

In a later article on malapropism, he takes a more radical stance. In discussing our ability to understand mistakes, he comes to deny that we could ever give a full theory of language in the sense he uses it. In explaining our ability to cope with linguistic oddities--mistakes, half-sentences, garbled phrases--Davidson distinguishes "prior theory" from "passing theory."¹²³ The latter is the set of *ad hoc* exceptions, qualifications and conditionals by which we patch up our prior theory of language to meet the needs of the occasion. "Every deviation from ordinary usage, as long as it is agreed on for the moment...is in passing theory as a feature of what the words mean on that occasion. Such meanings, transient though they may be, are literal."¹²⁴ Applied to metaphor, would this imply that each metaphorical use is not only purely "passing," but in its context literal?

At the very least, Davidson insists that any attempt to explicate our use of language must have recourse to the literal--what he now calls "first"--meaning. The purpose of the passing theory is to reconcile the peculiarities of an interpretive

¹²²Davidson, "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs," p. 438.

¹²³Ibid., p. 442.

¹²⁴Ibid., p. 442.

situation to the cut-and-dried prior theory which the interpreter brings to the occasion. In this sense, the understanding of aberrations is in terms of a normal or standard situation. Davidson maintains this position in the face of his realization that we may not be able to provide such a theory of language at all; that neither prior nor passing theory bear much resemblance to natural language.¹²⁵

It is important to notice that his position follows from assigning a priority to certain kinds of language, and from a willingness to treat other linguistic phenomena as derivative or aberrant. However, it has been suggested here that the criterion of falsity be abandoned as definitive of metaphor: it is not only ambiguous and perhaps irrelevant, but sometimes inapplicable. Other aspects of this general approach to metaphor are less troubling. Its innovative nature is worth considering, if this is not taken to an extreme which obliterates our ability to understand the metaphor. And Davidson's concern to differentiate metaphorical from literal functioning of language should be considered. Whatever account is offered, this consideration needs to be addressed. How is it that we are able to recognize the difference between literal and metaphorical; in what does this distinction rest, and how do the two differ in function?

Davidson's general assertion that metaphors cause us to notice different aspects of things has interesting possibilities. The particulars of his explication of this via a visual analogy need to be reconsidered, but the general suggestion seems productive. Other ways of elaborating this idea could be considered. The relationship of such "noticing"--however it is instigated--to the meaning of the words should also be explored.

The general concern with cognitive content of metaphor is related to the issue of paraphrasability, and, in Davidson's position, to the issue of whether metaphors are

¹²⁵Ibid., p. 443.

true or have meaning. Sundry revisions to Davidson's view have been made, drawing on the work of other commentators. Fogelin's discussion of the simile suggests that Davidson's position on the truth conditions of figurative language could not be maintained, as do Cohen's examples of "true" metaphors. The completeness criterion does not appear sufficient reason for denying our ability to paraphrase metaphor.

Davidson might regard his account of truth conditions as sufficiently powerful to warrant rejecting an approach to metaphor that threatened to undermine this notion. Yet it may not be impossible to reconcile such an approach to the semantic presence of figurative language. Goodman's approach certainly seems to attempt this, while still retaining the possibility that metaphors are innovative. Such an approach would forfeit the simplicity of Davidsonian semantics, and would seem to require a broader field of context for interpretation than the sentence. But this is true for alternative meanings as well as figurative language. To know when and whether snow is white, it is necessary to know whether the reference is to precipitation, cocaine, or paperwork.

From Davidson's perspective, the truth conditional view of meaning is central, and would override these criticisms. It is not impossible, as suggested above, that a truth-conditional account of metaphors could be developed; however, Davidson would argue that this would forfeit exactly what makes metaphor interesting. His later emphasis on the importance of "passing theory" and the virtual impossibility of a complete theory of language suggests increasing concern with what linguists call pragmatics. Such a concern might involve a narrower scope of semantics than is sometimes at work: an attempt to recognize that there are other linguistic resources besides the meaning of a word.

Cohen's counterexamples challenge the Davidsonian claim that metaphors are false; the category of "patent truth" would need to be elaborated if it is to encompass the exceptions. If the concern with truth is to influence our understanding of metaphor, a

Davidsonian theory would perhaps need to justify its particular conception of truth conditions. But the heart of the claim that metaphors don't have a meaning lies in the attempt to explicate another account of how they work.

Davidson suggested a theory of metaphor's functioning that draws on the distinction of meaning and use. This possibility arises from his attempt to explain metaphor as a nonlinguistic or extrasemantic phenomenon, working apart from the literal--the only--meaning of the expression involved. The next section will examine attempts to explain metaphor via this dichotomy of meaning and use.

CHAPTER IV

METAPHOR AS USE

Several accounts of metaphor focus on the distinction between meaning and use to explain its workings. This approach has suggestive possibilities, as it seems to place metaphor within a whole category of utterances whose specific workings transcend the general meaning of the statement. In Searle's words, metaphor "is a special case of the general problem of explaining how speaker's meaning 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."¹²⁶ The distinction of meaning and use is particularly attractive to philosophers generally interested in the "speech acts" perspective, although it is also taken up by Davidson, who denies the reducibility of meaning to intention. Searle and Cohen take this approach; Ricoeur flirts with it; while Fogelin, who shares a general commitment to speech acts, develops a somewhat different view. The distinction of meaning and use is sometimes introduced in the process of denying metaphorical meaning.

Searle's account will be discussed in some detail, as exemplifying this approach. A peculiarity of his that was referred to earlier is his willingness to focus on banal metaphors: his prime examples are simple and familiar statements of the form "x is a y." His choice of the meaning-use distinction does not arise solely because of a concern for metaphor's innovation or creativity.

¹²⁶Searle, "Metaphor," p. 249.

He tries to specify in some detail how we are able to understand statements that he holds are, literally, defective. He does this by differentiating between the meaning of the sentence and what Searle calls the utterance meaning. The latter is a matter of the speaker's intentions. Once we have been alerted to the presence of a metaphor, we proceed to figure out what the sentence is being used to mean. Searle elaborates on the process involved in this.

The first task is to identify the metaphor. Searle suggests that we normally read statements as literal, and only look for metaphor if the literal interpretation is "radically defective" through "obvious falsehood, semantic nonsense, violations of the rules of speech acts, or violations of conversational principles of communication."¹²⁷ As has been argued above, it is not always possible to identify metaphors simply on the basis of falsity or defect. He recognizes that there may be other strategies for identifying the phenomenon, and other clues such as the known propensities of the speaker--romantic poet or otherwise--to metaphor. He lists a very large category of defects, and Searle unfortunately does not specify how we are to distinguish metaphor from other linguistic shortcomings--irony or hyperbole, basic mistakes, lies, gobbledegook, etc.. The criterion of being "grossly inappropriate"¹²⁸ does not really differentiate the sundry linguistic phenomena. He recognizes that there are many more subtle cues and conventions at work; however, it is something of a shortcoming of his account that he recognizes himself that these cannot be easily specified. The lack of adequate criteria for identifying metaphor is a weakness in Searle's account.

His second step involves seeking out possible characteristics that the metaphor is trying to convey. Searle is committed to the idea that a metaphor can be paraphrased, albeit incompletely, and that the metaphor "S is a P" is a shorthand for the literal

¹²⁷Ibid., p. 274.

¹²⁸Ibid., p. 282.

assertion that S has certain R features which are found in P. The second stage involves generating a list of "salient, well-known, and distinctive features of P things."¹²⁹ The third part requires referring this list back to the subject S, and deciding which of these characteristics could plausibly apply to it. This is restricting the range of R. In his later discussion, Searle effectively collapses the second and third stages into one, so that the process of generating characteristics is already with reference to the subject. This is a minor revision that should not change the shape of Searle's account.

The procedure can be better appreciated via an example. Having decided that Sam is not literally a pig, we begin on an "indefinite range of features" applicable to porcines: "fat, slovenly, gluttonous, filthy...distinctive shape and distinctive bristles."¹³⁰ By referring back to Sam, we realize that it is the first set of characteristics that the metaphor is after, not the shape and the bristles. The whole process is effectively a more systematic version of the method Beardsley employs to elucidate the remark "My sweetheart is my Schopenhauer"--we ask "what possible meanings of 'Schopenhauer' can apply to the sweetheart, and are not ruled out by the context."¹³¹

The difference between Beardsley's case and Searle's points to a second problem. Is this procedure meant to represent the way we actually interpret metaphors? Schopenhauer is clearly a rarer object of metaphor than a pig; it is not unreasonable that we should need to figure out the meaning of the occasional obscure metaphor as best we can from the clues available. Searle himself suggests expressions that defy obvious understandings. We might conceivably go through some such procedure in trying to

¹²⁹Ibid., p. 275.

¹³⁰Ibid., p. 275.

¹³¹Beardsley, "The Metaphorical Twist", p. 108.

interpret these, if we even thought they were metaphors at all. But does this possibility imply anything about our usual approach to metaphors?

Searle presents this as an interpretive procedure that we would generally go through to understand a metaphor. His view would require revision if it were shown that we do not, in fact, perform any such inference, but understand some metaphors more directly or immediately. The issue here may be more than phenomenological. This issue may be related ultimately to the identification problem: if we do not need an algorithm to understand how Sam is a pig, it may be because of some feature of metaphor that distinguishes it for us from mistakes or meaningless statements.

A third difficulty is one Searle is aware of. He notes eight different procedures--his "principles"--for handling stages two and three. The problem is that the characteristics the metaphor is said to convey do not necessarily belong to either the object P or the subject S of the metaphor. Nor does the procedure of referring back to the subject sufficiently narrow the range of possible features. There is a real difference between the impact of the metaphors "Sam is a pig" and "Sam is a swine."¹³² Clearly there is more involved than the features of porcines. What is more, Searle offers no help in distinguishing between the literal or the metaphorical application of characteristics to either the subject or the object of the metaphor. What sense would it make to call a barnyard animal filthy or gluttonous? Searle treats these labels as if they could be unproblematically applied to pigs. Are there even any 'standard' cases of metaphor where the notion of factual knowledge makes sense as a cue to the speaker's meaning? That is, are there instances where Searle's procedure works at all--where we can indeed refer to some unambiguously factual knowledge--or must it be modified out of existence?

¹³²Searle, "Metaphor," p. 277.

In contrast to the "pig" situation, Searle recognizes cases where the characteristics are falsely predicated. We say "Richard is a gorilla" to mean that he is "mean, nasty, prone to violence," relying on "gorilla mythology,"¹³³ when actually, we may know that gorillas are actually "shy, sensitive creatures, given to bouts of sentimentality."¹³⁴ Searle is sensitive to animal prejudice; this problem may, however, require some revision of his account of metaphor. The appeal to, as he calls it, our "factual knowledge" of the object is inappropriate if our knowledge sometimes conflicts with, and at least underdetermines, the characteristics the metaphor might be evoking. Even supposing there were ideal cases where factual knowledge can come into consideration, this notion seems inadequate to the other "principles." Something more like a stereotype, rather than "factual knowledge" seems to be operating.

What is at issue in the discussion is our ability to make sense of metaphors by some other means than our semantic resources; our knowledge of the meaning of the words involved. In appealing to factual knowledge, Searle seems to suggest something objective or external to language. If the knowledge involved is something more like a stereotype, that appearance of objectivity diminishes.

These three problems--the identification of metaphor, the generality of such procedures, and the selection of relevant traits--indicate that an account like Searle's would at least require substantial modification. Whether such a heuristic could be specified in any detail is another issue. If we accept Searle's basic assumptions, then a metaphor is a false statement from which we deduce that the speaker intended to make a literal comparison. Fogelin's work emphasizes this aspect of Searle's position, by pointing out that there are also figurative ways to make comparisons.¹³⁵

¹³³Ibid., p. 277.

¹³⁴Ibid., p. 260.

¹³⁵Fogelin, *Figuratively Speaking*, p. 30.

In Searle's view, the terms of the comparison are related to the metaphor in systematic ways, and from the latter we can figure out the former. The use is not unrelated to the literal meaning of the expression. Searle's is basically a comparison view, although sharing important features of the interaction or absurdity views. Searle himself holds that his account encompasses both positions: comparison views correspond to the second stage of generating a range of possible characteristics for the metaphor, while interaction accounts focus on the third stage of restricting the range of features.¹³⁶ Without suggesting that this schema is adequate to all theories of metaphor, Searle's attempt to embrace both is interesting.

The weakness of the notion of "object comparison" is that, as Searle's account demonstrates, the objects may or may not have such properties, and this alone seems to be insufficient to delineate the metaphor. It seems peculiar that we should know what properties are meant to apply to an object--pigs, gorillas, or whatever--when that object may not even possess such features. The idea that this is a kind of factual knowledge is difficult to make sense of. Nevertheless, there does seem to be something right about the claim that we know quite well which traits are picked out by the metaphor. At least in the kinds of cases that Searle considers, we seem to know this quite apart from the context of the particular metaphor, or the individual aims of any speaker. That metaphorical pigs are sloppy and gluttonous, "gorillas" mean and nasty, seems to be part of our culturally acquired commonplaces of what these beasts are about. This can be true even if pigs aren't "pigs," and gorillas aren't "gorillas." These stereotypes need not have much relationship to the animal concerned; in each case it seems to be the "gorilla mythology" that we invoke by the metaphor. Fogelin's discussion suggests a way to address this oddity with the idea that the comparison itself

¹³⁶Searle, "Metaphor," p. 276.

might be figurative.¹³⁷ Thus, we can't necessarily import standards of literal truth to the comparison being made.

These are just the problems with the object comparison view pointed out by Black--there are no "objectively given" similarities to tell us in what way two things are alike. We don't just puzzle out the possible feature of the metaphor. Black prefers "to say that the metaphor creates the similarity than to say that it formulates some similarity antecedently existing."¹³⁸ He holds that we can't understand the metaphor if we are ignorant about pigs or gorillas or wolves--Black's favourite member of the bestiary-- in that the "knowledge" required consists of shared, if possibly mistaken, stereotypes. "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 call the system of associated commonplaces."¹³⁹

The differences of this view from Searle's are two: it recognizes that the association of the commonplaces is conventional rather than natural, factual, or objective. This is true for pigs as well as gorillas. If Searle were to accept this, his view would lose the sense in which factual knowledge seems more obviously distinct from semantic competence. If the associations were recognized as conventional, they would seem less clearly separated from language acquisition.

Secondly, Black's view asserts that the metaphor creates these similarities. This later point is difficult to argue for. It is clear that, at least, the traits associated with the object would have to precede the particular instance of the metaphor--that it is not from the individual case that we decide what is meant by the metaphor. There may be a need for context to resolve certain ambiguities--whether the speaker is

¹³⁷Fogelin, Figuratively Speaking, p. 48.

¹³⁸Black, "Metaphor," p. 72.

¹³⁹*Ibid.*, p. 74.

invoking the "gluttonous pig" or the "sexist pig" stereotype, for example--but the speaker did not invent these anthropomorphisms.

The issue between Black and Searle threatens to dissolve into chicken-and-eggism. It is at least plausible to maintain that the associated commonplaces of pig or wolf preceded, and are the justification for, their use in metaphor. Searle argues for something like this with his notion of factual knowledge. From this point of view it is the--at least perceived--similarities that spur the metaphor. It is thus readily understood. With all the emphasis on the pristine metaphor, it is worth asking if a figurative expression would be comprehensible if it did not, to some extent, tap into such systems of associations. Would a metaphor be recognizable that did not accord with some of the ways in which we habitually describe the objects of our world?

In critiquing Goodman's nominalist position, Ricoeur cites our surprised recognition of the aptness of the metaphor as an argument for maintaining some notion of resemblance.¹⁴⁰ Without some kind of preexisting similarity, we could not make sense of the tension extant in metaphor: the dual sense of "rightness and wrongness to the expression. There may be even more entailed in this duality that our affective relation to metaphor, if the sense of displacement is used as an identification criterion for metaphor. Yet this recognition of "rightness" and "wrongness" need not be elaborated in terms of the inherent properties of things. If it can be elucidated via some account of learned and shared associations, this may perhaps avoid assuming any innate characteristics to objects, or any prelinguistic categories to our perception and organization of the world.

The discussion of these common or trite metaphors suggests a direction of inquiry that will be pursued further in the last section. There are several issues

¹⁴⁰Ricoeur, The Rule of Metaphor, p. 196.

raised, however, which have an immediate bearing on the discussion of meaning and use. To maintain this distinction seems to require a differing account of the functioning of literal and metaphorical.

If, with Searle, we were to reject the idea of metaphorical meaning and yet accept that our understanding of metaphor is in some way systematic and shared, then it becomes a problem to explain the basis of the "use." We understand literal uses in terms of shared meanings, but the metaphorical is said to come through in some other way. Searle's candidate is the comparison of objects in terms of our factual knowledge. The argument above qualified this, maintaining that the information involved was a matter of cultural learning rather than empirical investigation. Gorillas are cast as fierce and nasty, however much we may be told otherwise by patient anthropologists with plenty of bananas. We are quite capable of differentiating between the two: the stylized, mythological or literary gorilla, and the jungle animal. Still, a question remains as to the philosophical status of the system of commonplaces that we so readily invoke in using metaphor.

Those who deny the existence of metaphorical meaning would have a harder time finding a place for such a set of associations. Even Black is concerned to differentiate the commonplaces from the literal, dictionary definition of the term. This position is easier to hold in considering wolves and gorillas, where we might subsequently have learned that our stereotypes bear little resemblance to the actual beast. But in less problematic cases, it is harder to separate the stereotype from the real object; the sense from the reference; the connotation from the denotation. Would we say someone knew the meaning of the word who did not know the traits and characteristics normally associated with the thing? How could a person use a word correctly without knowing some of its common associations and perceived relationships to other things? If the case of ostensive definition is taken as paradigmatic, we may learn to pick out a

particular kind of thing, without knowing a great deal about it. But in order to use the word effectively--to make statements about things--we need to know much more.

The reason for introducing the concept of the 'use' of metaphor arises when it is denied that metaphors could be explained by the same mechanisms as more mundane linguistic phenomena. If we begin from the view that metaphors are innovative and false, it seems that the metaphor must transcend meaning; and thus it might appear that metaphors with meanings are necessarily dead. If, on the other hand, we begin the discussion from the view that metaphors work by learned connotation, then a metaphor is somehow related to the meaning of the word, and is at least partly true. Searle, in treating metaphor as a matter of factual knowledge--which have come to look much like these connotations--seems to embrace aspects of both poles. He focuses on common associations embodied in banal metaphors, yet denies that these are part of the literal meaning. They are instead a matter of speaker's intention and of use. This view risks resulting in a very restricted sense of meaning: including only the raw denotation, relegating all aspects of a word's sense to the realm of associated knowledge. It would be difficult to maintain the view that metaphors are nonsemantic and are understood through our shared knowledge, without accepting a very limited notion of meaning.

The reasons for denying metaphor a meaning have been discussed above: that metaphors are defective as statements, and that their special status is best preserved by an account in terms of other resources than language. There seems to be a real difficulty in discussing meaning in this context without circularity. If meaning is thought to embrace ambiguous and metaphorical variants, it would need to be defined so as to include connotations and associations. If, on the other hand, it is thought to refer only to literal uses, then the attempt might be made to define it purely as literal denotation.

There does not seem to be an independent way to argue against the idea of metaphorical meaning. The argument against metaphorical meanings must generally depend on a presupposition that metaphors lack certain features--cognitive content or truth conditions--that are closely related to what it is to have meaning. Davidson's only independent evidence is that metaphors are hard to paraphrase. This alone is highly circumstantial. Not only are other aspects of language hard to paraphrase, but the "ineffability" factor could well have other bases than lack of meaning. The issues that Davidson raises about truth conditions, and the necessity of distinguishing metaphors from routine linguistic expressions, both depend upon a preconception of metaphor as fundamentally different from other kinds of language. The justification for this would be hard to find, aside from a possible positivist bias in favour of the literal and a view of language that assumes simple, unambiguous denomination to be the norm. If, on the other hand, we were to assume that language is deeply plurivocal, and that words and expressions have various interpretations, literal and metaphorical, the other position seems implausible. There does not seem to be an external place to assess the reasons for these views; it could only be the viability of the position as a whole that would indicate its validity.

Searle's reasoning in denying metaphors a meaning is simple rather than clear. He states that "sentences and words have only the meanings that they have...what the speaker means is not identical with what the sentence means, and yet what he means is in various ways dependent on what the sentence means."¹⁴¹ He not only asserts that there is a 'speaker meaning' at work in the metaphor, but explicitly denies that a metaphorical meaning can be found in the statement itself. This view is expressed in the context of a general theory of the ways in which sentence meaning and speaker's

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p. 249.

meaning diverge. This assertion is predicated on a particular version of speech acts theory that distinguishes sentence and utterance meaning radically. Whether this is viable as an approach to language is too big an issue to address here. However, it should be noted that such a view would suppose that the meanings of words and sentences can be determined apart from the performative context of utterance. The meaning could be determined prior to the context of use. Thus, there is a problem in identifying which are literal meanings. This identification must be made apart from the context of use which would give clues as to the metaphorical or literal nature of the utterance. Literal meanings, for such a view, must be taken as givens.

It is important to note that Searle is not, as Ricoeur and Davidson tend to do, asserting the independence of the metaphorical use from the meaning. The "various ways" are detailed in terms of the interpretive procedure outlined, centring on the notion of our factual knowledge of the objects named. Yet this specific claim seemed to risk relegating so much--all our shared associations, and perhaps the sense of the word with them--to the domain of use. Is he intending to adopt such a thin version of meaning as denotation?

Searle's attempt to place metaphor within a general problematic of the relationship of meaning and use is a common one, attempted by other philosophers. His version, in relegating "shared knowledge" to the domain of use suggests an oddly narrow account of meaning; or else that the distinction of meaning and use is only partial or aspectual. The explanatory power of the distinction might, in the latter case, be limited. It is worth examining in more detail the way this dichotomy is used by other philosophers in relation to metaphor and figurative language generally.

Searle equates the case of metaphor to irony and other indirect speech acts, which also work in oblique relationship to meaning. It is not, however, obvious that the case of other kinds of figurative language will have a direct bearing on the

understanding of metaphor. Irony or hyperbole--as Goodman's diagrams illustrate--involve an orderly disproportion of the standards of predication.¹⁴² The change is one of degree, not of kind; there is no question as to the predications being made, only to their standards of application. The meanings could not change. But it is not possible to argue from the case of irony to that of metaphor, as Fogelin uses this instance to suggest that the meaning of a metaphor does not alter either.¹⁴³ The form and nature of irony is significantly different--it involves saying the opposite of what is meant, and there is no need of a new negative meaning to understand the intent. But metaphor is, even in Fogelin's classification, a different kind of thing: a figurative comparison rather than a figurative predication. The case of irony does not seem to help us here.

Against Searle and Fogelin, Cohen discusses the difference between metaphor and irony: the latter depends very directly on the literal meaning. Cohen thinks metaphor can be derived from the literal, but denies that this can be accomplished systematically.¹⁴⁴ Sharing a general commitment to an Austinian schema of locutions and illocutions, he also attempts to account for metaphor in terms of the utterance.¹⁴⁵ However, he regards metaphor as a phenomenon that defies procedural rules of formation,¹⁴⁶ and from this rejects the possibility of any such heuristic as Searle's. In this, he argues, metaphors are not unique: the relationship to the locution may be either direct or oblique with both perlocutionary¹⁴⁷ and illocutionary¹⁴⁸ acts also. Thus while he draws on the general speech acts position to discuss metaphor, he would not attempt to give any systematic account of our ability to understand metaphor. His

¹⁴²Fogelin, *Figuratively Speaking*, p. 14.

¹⁴³*Ibid.*, p. 74.

¹⁴⁴Cohen, "Figurative Speech and Figurative Acts," p. 183.

¹⁴⁵*Ibid.*, p. 197.

¹⁴⁶*Ibid.*, p. 183.

¹⁴⁷*Ibid.*, p. 186.

¹⁴⁸*Ibid.*, p. 196.

rejection of this attempt is based on the claim that no procedure could predict metaphors. It seems, however, premature to take this as indication that our understanding of them could not draw on organized relationships. He offers many helpful observations, but is basically at odds with the attempt to elaborate on our ability to understand metaphors.

Davidson's version of the meaning-use distinction attempts a greater separation between meaning and use: he also rejects any heuristic or any reference to associated commonplaces that might relate the two. There is a tension in his article between the assertion that metaphors perform important functions in many fields, from philosophy to law,¹⁴⁹ and the notion that our interpretation of them is highly subjective, and independent of rules.¹⁵⁰ The first assertion would seem to require some kind of systematic account to make good the idea that metaphors are effectual in disciplines where consistency of interpretation is at a premium.

Davidson elaborates his claims about metaphor in highly suggestive and metaphorical ways. He offers a number of analogies to things which affect us in various nonlinguistic ways. These are put forth to clarify the notion that metaphor works in ways that are independent of its meaning. "Joke or dream or metaphor can, like a picture or a bump on the head, make us appreciate some fact--but not my standing for, or expressing, the fact."¹⁵¹ These are very different cases: the force of the analogies offered would need to be addressed separately.

The problem with the picture analogy has been discussed above. The analogy would work admirably if we could suppose that there were something like a visual text present for us to reinterpret. Unfortunately, we could not base a general account of

¹⁴⁹Davidson, "What Metaphors Mean," p. 202.

¹⁵⁰*Ibid.*, p. 200.

¹⁵¹*Ibid.*, p. 217.

metaphor on some such assumption. The art critic shows us how to notice things--nonpropositional things--about a picture. But what are we comparably "looking at" while the metaphor does its work? If all that is "reorganized" or noticed differently are our systems of relationships and associations, this is not a nonlinguistic effect.

The dream--a metaphor with which Davidson opens--is an anomalous case. To explain its effects on us would implicate us far more deeply in psychological theory than is helpful here. In using this analogy, Davidson plays off on an ambivalence towards systematic dream interpretation.¹⁵² It should, however, be remembered that what the interpreter has access to is not the dream itself, but a verbal account of it. To say that particular events or items appearing in the dream affect us in an organized way--are symbols of something else--is to have a theory, whether mechanistic, organic, or literary, of psychic associations. Davidson's opening paragraph suggests a distancing from causal theories of dream interpretation. In insisting that the reading reflects on the interpreter, he is undermining the notion of a systematic or organic basis for a dream's effect on us. How, then, does it work? Other versions of dream interpretation would be reluctant to separate the work of the symbol from the meaning of the word. Such semantic approaches to dream interpretation would not help Davidson's case.

A joke may be a better analogy to the functioning of metaphor. These often play on multiple meanings of words, and are thus semantic; these would not advance Davidson's objective. Cohen discusses other kinds of jokes in this context, that work by a shared knowledge between the maker and the hearers.¹⁵³ If this is to be a plausible analogy for a nonlinguistic theory of metaphor, it must be possible to differentiate such

¹⁵²Ibid., p. 200.

¹⁵³Cohen, "Metaphor and the Cultivation of Intimacy," pp. 10-12.

commonplace knowledge--or in Davidson's terminology, beliefs about the world--from the meaning of the words. This reverts to the issue of connotations discussed above.

Joke, dream and picture all have limitations as an analogy for the nonlinguistic functioning of metaphor; this leaves us with the bump on the head. This suggestion, perhaps offered lightly, would compare metaphor to something we could swing like a two-by-four, causing someone to notice in the crudest sense possible.

Davidson's analogies are not, then, very illuminating. He is not completely clear about the way the meaning-use distinction is to be applied to metaphor. In the context of illocutionary acts, he posits a semantic dependence between the utterance and the truth conditions of the locutionary core.¹⁵⁴ In applying this model to metaphor, this is abandoned; the metaphor is to be appreciated without reference to its meaning.

The article on metaphor seems to vacillate between three different versions of the way meaning and use are interrelated. On the one hand, he seems to place metaphorical use within a account of performatives, comparing it to "assertion, hinting, lying, promising, or criticizing."¹⁵⁵ This seems to suggest that the utterance--the metaphor--should be truth conditionally dependent on the sentence--the literal meaning. On the other hand, his goal is towards an account of metaphor that would explain its work independently of the meaning. His emphasis on the falsity of metaphors underlines this: the metaphorical use violates the literal--the only--meaning. A third sense of the distinction is made between learning the meaning of a word and using it to say something about the world. As discussed above, these are only partially separable. To ground a theory of metaphor on the meaning-use distinction would require greater clarification of its criteria and import.

¹⁵⁴Davidson, "Moods and Performances," p. 121.

¹⁵⁵Davidson, "What Metaphors Mean," p. 214.

While the invocation of performative theory of language looked promising, these attempts to elaborate its application to metaphor are somewhat dissatisfying.

Davidson's is ambivalent, while Cohen's rejects systematic relationships. Ricoeur referred to this distinction, placing metaphor within a general problem of the relationship of general and particular; this is intriguing, but presupposes uniqueness to metaphor that may not be justified. Searle's reliance on factual knowledge requires revision; and it is less clear where the distinction of meaning and use comes in if connotations and associations are substituted: these seem constitutive of meaning.

In so far as the meaning-use distinction is invoked to circumvent the falsity of metaphors or their absence of meaning, the motivation may be misguided. In treating figurative language as unique event, there is a danger of sacrificing our ability to understand what is conveyed, or of taking asymptotically new expressions as paradigmatic. There are two issues that emerged through this discussion, that seem to be indicative of the direction of a theory of metaphor. One is whether there are organized or systematic relationships, associations, or commonplaces of some kind in focus, which guide our understanding of metaphor, and perhaps their creation. The other is how these are related to the meaning of the words involved.

Searle's view is an absurdity view in the sense that he denies that there can be a metaphorical meaning to a sentence, and emphasizes the defective nature of metaphors as our clue to the speaker's intentions. Yet he is not inimical to some version of the idea that aspects associated with things guide our reading of a metaphor in systematic ways. The difference between Searle and someone like Black or Beardsley is that Searle considers these aspects to be typically factual; although he recognizes other possibilities, he seems to treat the genuinely factual knowledge as the paradigm case. And he seems to want to deny that this knowledge, however it is characterized, is an intimate part of the meaning of the words involved. Those who begin from the

assumption that the associations and relationships are highly conventional do not deny that metaphorical meaning exists. Although no causal claim could be made here, it seems that, in acknowledging the conventionality of the 'associated commonplaces', there is less impetus to suppose that these are acquired by some other process radically separate from that of language learning.

An account such as Searle's that recognized the conventionality of the relationships that guide our understanding of metaphor might reconsider whether they are independent of the meaning of the words involved. If we think it is a matter of "objective fact" that pigs are filthy, then it seems plausible to separate the learning of the word--by ostensive definition--from the empirical process of discovering things about pigs. If, on the other hand, it is a cultural prejudice that pigs are gluttonous and sloppy, would we know what a pig is--in our culture--if we did not know something about it? Being able to pick out the pig in the pen would not, then, seem to be sufficient to know something about it, nor we think we simply discover all about pigs once we have learned the word. The stereotype would seem much more closely allied to the meaning of the word. From this viewpoint, there is little reason to assert that metaphors are simply defective, or that they have no meaning.

The idea of associated commonplaces or systems of relationships among things tends to sound somewhat empty, and explanations resting on these to seem *ad hoc*. As discussed by earlier writers, it is more suggestive than decisive. However, there may be ways to develop these ideas into a more substantial account of metaphor. It is to this that the discussion turns next.

CHAPTER V

UNDERSTANDING METAPHOR

In examining several recent philosophical approaches to metaphor, a number of issues have emerged. Some initial parameters were adopted to assist in sorting through the different issues raised by sundry philosophers, most of whom approached the topic with developed--and conflicting--theories of language. In order to begin to address the multitude of questions under consideration, some general assumptions were made. These were offered as commonsensical observations following from a reading of an extended metaphor. As the discussion proceeded into more in depth interaction with particular philosophical approaches to metaphor, some of these parameters were challenged. On some of these issues, it seemed that no resolution would be possible: that the positions involved follow from different starting points, and could only be judged on their respective merits as explanatory schemata.

Discussion began from the assumption that we can understand metaphors, and, to some extent, restate what they convey in more literal terms. This ability to understand a somehow odd construction was taken as the source of the philosopher's interest in metaphor; metaphors that are obscure or incomprehensible were excluded from consideration. It was also assumed that metaphors involve a sense of transfer or borrowing of words that are more appropriate to a different kind of thing. This sense of oddness or unusual use referred solely to the awareness of the users of language, not to any account of the proper meaning of words.

The first of these assumptions--that we can understand metaphors--is somewhat in tension with the position taken by some theorists, that metaphors are paradigmatically new, innovative and creative uses of words that transcend established boundaries of sense. These two positions are not incompatible, but they seem in some ways to point us in different directions. The former view would readily include established metaphors in its consideration, and might hesitate to include a radically new metaphor, lest this not be comprehensible. With metaphors that can be understood, this view might seem to indicate scepticism towards its "innovation" claims. The latter position takes new metaphors as the ideal, dismissing established figures as moribund. In Davidson's paradox, any metaphor for which we can give a meaning--state its truth conditions--must already be dead. There is a real dilemma here between innovation and understandability.

It was initially suggested that metaphor is marked by a perceived sense of transfer of words from one category to another. Although the Aristotelian analysis has come under attack for various reasons, his definition captures our sense of what metaphor is all about. The problems with the notion of preexisting categories or of inherent similarities between things led to a careful emphasis that the sense of transfer existed only in the metaphor users' sense of language. It has been suggested that the notion of a resemblance that motivates metaphor might be explicated in terms such as these. The suggestion that metaphors tap into systems of relationships and shared associations amongst objects has resurfaced repeatedly. The argument against it is that it ties metaphor too closely to existing categories, denying its creative role. The notion of perceived resemblances is again in tension with that of innovation.

The initial emphasis is on the observation that metaphors can be understood: that they can be used to make significant points in a fashion that can readily be appreciated by readers and listeners. Not all metaphors succeed; but significant observations can

be made metaphorically. No position was taken as to whether metaphorical or literal statements are to be preferred: presumably, they have different strengths and weaknesses. This general position is widely accepted. The difficulty rises from the view that metaphors don't have meaning, affecting us in nonpropositional ways, any paraphrasing of which is highly subjective. In order to maintain this latter position and yet hold that metaphors do cognitive work, it seems necessary to provide an account of how metaphors affect us in systematic, yet nonlinguistic, ways. The attempts to provide this seem generally dissatisfactory, either relying on some version of an imagist view of our mental processes, or else referring to semantic means. The notion of factual knowledge seems not to be factual but to be more like the connotations of the words involved.

An alternative challenge, excluding metaphor from speculative work altogether, stems from a concern to save the purity of the conceptual that arises from its own, aesthetically grounded, view of metaphor. The position that metaphors don't have a place in philosophy is based on its assumptions. This position seems to be avoided by separating the issues of the relationship between poetic and philosophic work from the issue of the place of metaphor. The challenge to the cognitive force metaphors does not seem to succeed while still recognizing the work that metaphors actually perform.

The surveys of the philosophic literature discussed at the beginning grouped theories according to a number of issues: the similarity-absurdity dichotomy, or that or comparison-interaction; the notion of meaning and meaning shift; or the cognitive-aesthetic issues. Throughout this consideration of a part of the literature, two issues recur: whether our understanding of metaphor is systematic and paraphraseable, and by what means this is achieved; and how such means are related to the meaning of the words involved.

There are clearly ways in which the interest in a role for metaphor in philosophy shapes this consideration. A view seeking for metaphor's poetic talents might have more sympathy for the claim that it isn't cognitive--that its import isn't organized and couldn't be restated--all of which imply that it wouldn't be accessible in predictable ways to another listener. And in seeking for its role in philosophy, there is an obvious impetus to question its necessary ties to the aesthetic, and to challenge any theory that seems to place it primarily in that domain.

The above summary highlighted a problem with the novelty claims for metaphor: these seem to conflict with explanations of our ability to understand metaphor, and with discussions that include some notion of perceived resemblances. The assumptions imported from a romantic conception of poetics can be discarded; yet an issue still remains. How is it that metaphors can forge new avenues of comparison, and yet be understood?

On this score, recent work in linguistics seems to offer some explanatory resources. Empirical investigations of our use and recognition of common metaphors suggest an unexpected system to these usages. This seems to shed some light on our capacity to understand even rare and original figures of speech. The work of Lakoff and Johnson lays out these findings; they will be examined briefly here as indicating a direction for an account of metaphor that may address some of the recurrent philosophical difficulties. Their investigations should also be discussed in relation to the notion of our systems of associations and commonplaces. There are real problems in this linguistic work, particular in the philosophical conclusions the authors draw from it. Here, the attempt is made to separate Lakoff and Johnson's descriptive findings on our use of metaphor from the presuppositions and hypotheses of the authors. This is offered as a suggestive alternative to the recurrent paradox between our ability to understand metaphors and their capacity for innovation. Without wishing to place

undue stress on some of the particular examples used in the following, this work poses possibilities that philosophers should not ignore.

Lakoff and Johnson argue that common metaphors fall into groups. These can be characterized roughly as patterns of comparison between different kinds of things.¹⁵⁶ Thus, everyday metaphorical expressions fall readily into these clusters, adopting the terminology and the logic of the comparison. Many of our ways of describing time, for example--saving, wasting, investing, budgeting--fall within the general metaphorical category or "metametaphor" that time is money. We don't often make this claim explicitly; yet we often talk about it as if it were.¹⁵⁷ Importantly, we know and use the general metaphor, and can make sense of any particular expression that accords with it. We know what budgeting time is all about, without needing to say specifically that it is about careful management of a limited resource analogous to cash. Also significantly, we can have alternative metaphor cluster for the same thing--we can talk about time as a journey, or as a moving object. Expressions that fit within these groupings may actually give us very different, even conflicting, information. In the one case it is the human agent who is moving, in the other case, time itself flows; and neither is compatible with the financial metaphor. The existence of alternative patterns of metaphor is perhaps not surprising. Remembering the attack on metaphor as reestablishing the literal, this may even be the mark of metaphor. If there were only one system of terms to describe time, it would be difficult to establish that it is not, literally, a kind of cash. What is interesting is our ability to cope with conflicting metaphors. It seems that we are able to recognize which metaphor is at play, and to

¹⁵⁶George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, "Conceptual Metaphor in Everyday Language" in Philosophical Perspectives, p. 287.

¹⁵⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 290-92.

work within the logic of that system. There is a strong stylistic prejudice against mixed metaphors.

Lakoff and Johnson draw up an incredible array of clusters of metaphor, and sketch out the interrelationships between these groupings. Some of these are so common as to escape treatment by many commentators on metaphor. Others seem to have faded out of the range of what we normally identify as metaphorical. They associate the directions up and down with certain apparently unrelated dichotomies: happy-sad, big-small, good-bad.¹⁵⁸ In this light, expressions like "feeling down," "having high standards," "looking up," "rising to the top," "falling sales figures" are all metaphorical. The authors' explanation of the grounds for these associations need not be adopted for the descriptive account to be convincing. We do indeed seem to talk about a good many things according to a schema in which the desired state is higher.

Some of these interrelationships are commutative. There is a certain logic involved within these systems, although--given the existence of alternative metaphors--it clearly could not be a closed or complete system. How much stress can be placed on this systematization is unclear. What seems significant is that some degree of organization exists amongst the common comparisons and associations of language, and that, by knowing these general patterns, we can understand particular expressions that fall within them.

The authors differentiate the general cluster from the particular linguistic expression. In this way, they account for our ability to coin phrases, and yet be understood. A poet will typically invent a fresh figure that fits a common pattern, and thus be innovative and comprehensible at the same time. The general pattern of metaphorical comparison has unused aspects that could be included.¹⁵⁹ The opening

¹⁵⁸Ibid., pp. 296-300.

¹⁵⁹Ibid., p. 294.

discussion of philosophical debate as a tournament occurs within a general pattern of describing arguments as battles, yet has an original twist in its specific reference to a mock battle. Within this metaphor itself, there are parts of the comparison that are pressed into service--horses and knights--and others--sweat and sawdust--that are not invoked, although they could be. In showing how, in Beardsley's terms, the "staple connotations" could be distinguished from "potential" connotations,¹⁶⁰ this suggests a powerful way to escape the dilemma of meaning and innovation. This indicates how to account for the surprise and vitality of original expressions and yet show how they can so readily be appreciated, because of their ties to more familiar patterns of association. New phrases invoke potential aspects of the metametaphor, and thus have a unique and interesting twist, appearing innovative and unusual. And yet, at the same time, they are understandable because they refer to established patterns of comparison. This indicates a potent way to resolve the dilemma between metaphor's creative aspects and our ability to recognize what is meant.

There are a number of problems with the authors' presentation of their findings, the most potent of which is raised by Fogelin. Lakoff and Johnson take an unusual stance on metaphor, in not opposing it to the literal. The opposition, in their view, is between the literal and the figurative; a metaphor could conceivably belong to either. As discussed above, this is not an incoherent notion, although it involves some change in our use of the term. There is no inherent reason why metaphor need be categorized with other kinds of figurative language. Not to do so seems to involve a change in our understanding of it; and it is worth asking what would remain of the category of the figurative if one of its most prominent members were removed. Lakoff and Johnson consider the figurative as identical to the poetic. They argue that the common

¹⁶⁰Beardsley, "The Metaphorical Twist," p. 112.

metaphors they list are expressed in language that "is not poetic, fanciful, or rhetorical, but rather literal."¹⁶¹

Fogelin focuses on this point, arguing that their account is thus about comparisons, not about metaphor at all. Their main metaphors are, in his view, thoroughly moribund; he does not think their work illuminates the functioning of livelier figures. In this way, he thinks, they "share the intellectualist prejudice against metaphors--real metaphors,"¹⁶² while appropriating the name. They grant that metaphors could be used in what they consider figurative ways--that is, dressed up in poetic and fanciful language--but they focus mainly on the literal versions. In this, both Fogelin and Lakoff and Johnson seem to go wrong.

The argument of this paper has been against the identification of metaphor solely with the poetic or the "colourful"--with some notion of imagery. If the peculiarities of metaphor can be discussed aside from those of poetics, this confusion is less likely to arise, and it would then be possible to decide whether metaphors are actually metaphors--if they are figurative or literal--without resorting to our understanding of poetry. The interest here is not in some intellectualist prejudice: there is no hostility to the poetic, or a wish to exclude the imaginative, the ambiguous, or the figurative from ordinary discourse. The aim is to explain how we can understand metaphors--including unusual ones--and to discuss their presence in other kinds of discourse, without becoming embroiled in the particular conceptions of poetry that happen to be current. As such, the opposition between the literal and the poetic is unsatisfactory.

Lakoff and Johnson make other assumptions that need not influence an appreciation of their descriptive work. They are concerned to uncover the physical

¹⁶¹Lakoff and Johnson, "Conceptual Metaphor in Everyday Life," p. 289.

¹⁶²Fogelin, Figuratively Speaking, p. 86.

bases for our use of these metaphorical systems; this is highly speculative. Moreover, they are interested in the schematization of our concepts which they see as evolving through metaphor. In a sense, they are engaged in a project of "metaphorical raising" of the variety Ricoeur --and Derrida--explicitly undermine.¹⁶³ Nonetheless, their work points to a number of peculiarities of metaphor that should be considered.

It is, first, not the only way a given thing could be described. Multiple and conflicting metaphors are possible for the same thing. Second, we can recognize metaphors. With all due respect to the anti-reductionist resistance to literal paraphrase, the fact that we can oppose two versions of the same expression, and identify one as literal and the other as metaphorical, is important. We readily accept a parallel of the expression "time is money" to the paraphrase "time is a valuable commodity and a limited resource." There is much more in the first expression that has not been unpacked; but the possibility of paraphrase, however, inadequate, helps identify the metaphor. Third, the metaphor both "is and is not": there are ways in which time is like money, and ways--refundable, tangible, exchangeable--in which it is not. And fourth, metaphor retains some sense of the transfer of a word from one domain to another. Money remains something of an intruder, more properly associated with other relationships and other objects--coins, wallets, banks, balance sheets--than with clocks and days and the passing moment. These notions are far from exact, yet they do seem to indicate what is ordinarily meant by metaphor. It is important to note that they all refer to our awareness of the use of language, not to an ontology of the categorization of things.

Metaphors are multiple, in some sense borrowed, limited in applicability, and distinguishable from literal paraphrases. If this is roughly what we ordinarily

¹⁶³Ricoeur, The Rule of Metaphor, pp. 285-86.

understand by metaphor, then there is a way to decide whether Lakoff's metaphors are indeed metaphoric. That they are common and prosaic is irrelevant. There is no reason to suppose that this issue should be clearcut or easily decided. Yet these general criteria might help address the issue.

From this perspective, it would be hard for Fogelin to make a case that none of Lakoff and Johnson's examples are metaphors. Many of them may be trite or cliched, but still seem to fit the criteria suggested above. We recognize their examples as metaphoric; where conflicting versions exist--as with time--it would be hard to maintain that they are literal comparisons: that time actually possesses incompatible characteristics and belongs to competing systems of attributions and relationships. It may be that this work places metaphor within a larger schema of comparisons; but this does not mean that many of their examples are not legitimately metaphors.

Lakoff and Johnson's position is similarly hard to hold to: that these metaphors are literal. Although this is claim could make sense, it would involve a redefinition of our common understanding of the terms: we would forfeit our ability to distinguish between such kinds of expressions as "time is money" and "basalt is rock." All that would remain in apposition to the literal would be the sense of the fanciful and poetic use of language. This seems to give up too much of our linguistic vocabulary. To maintain that metaphors are literal undermines the term that distinguishes them from predications that do not share this sense of borrowing and of partial truth. This seems lose the word which labels what is interesting about metaphor.

The reasoning behind the authors' assertion has to do with the claim that the metaphor structures our experience of the thing it is about. However, this notion must be qualified by the recognition that the structuring is partial. Time is not a subcategory of cash in the way that basalt is a form of rock. If we recognize the metaphor as different from the literal, acknowledge a sense of borrowing, and maintain

alternative systems of metaphor, then time does not fit the cash nexus as closely as basalt does the geological. Metaphors may structure our experience and dictate the terms in which we discuss many things. However, they do so in a different way than literal categorizations.

The authors make a strong claim about the effect of metaphors on our experience of the world: because we use the battlefield metaphor of argument, we experience it in bellicose ways. "The essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing or experience in terms of another...this is the ordinary way of having an argument and talking about one. The normal way for us to talk about attacking a position is to use the words 'attack a position.'"¹⁶⁴ Yet in order to retain the sense of partial and borrowed attribution seems to require that the metaphor be differentiated from our experience of 'ordinary' predications. If this differentiation were not maintained, it would be difficult to convince us that there is a metaphor involved. It is not mere etymological data which reminds us that "attacking a position" has implications not borne by "responding to a view," "countering a claim," or "suggesting an alternative interpretation." The difference is significant, and is not obliterated by the frequency of the metaphor's use. To call metaphors literal seems a loss and not a gain in explanatory capability.

There are some examples in this work that seem to resist the label 'metaphor', in the sense detailed above. Where no alternative exists, the term is dubious. The authors cite the use of a spatial term like "in" to apply beyond its "original" sense of physical location, to social organizations or psychological states: from "Harry is in the kitchen" to "Harry is in the Elks" or "Harry is in love."¹⁶⁵ Yet there are no other terms for expressing these particular relationships. "In" happens to be the correct

¹⁶⁴Lakoff and Johnson, "Conceptual Metaphor in Everyday Language," p. 289.

¹⁶⁵Ibid., p. 314.

preposition. The word does not carry with it other associations, or much or a sense of belonging to some other sphere. The motivation for including such examples has to do with the claim about the primacy of physical terminology; this is not of interest here. It is not essential that all the examples offered qualify as metaphor, merely that the general schema helps in our understanding of the phenomenon.

Particular problems with the application of this linguistic work should not prevent an appreciation of the resources it offers. The ideas put forward are not startling in themselves, but the sheer quantity of data gathered is impressive, and the clarity introduced by this systematization is enormous. The idea that new expressions work within a framework of familiar metaphorical patterns helps circumvent the dilemma noted between our understanding of metaphors and their innovative capacities.

The existence of such metaphorical patterns may help account for our ability to recognize metaphor, without forfeiting their innovative capacities. This is the most interesting aspect of Lakoff and Johnson's work for philosophers interested in the working of metaphor. The existence of familiar patterns of metaphor also helps explain how we are able to identify them so readily. In rejecting the falsity or absurdity criteria as inapplicable, we were left without a clear account of how we identify the phenomenon. But if even pristine metaphors fit familiar--if unremarked--conventions, it becomes less surprising that we can recognize them as metaphorical. Disraeli's remark on his political career is a good example. The assertion "I climbed to the top of the greased pole" may well be the first use of that expression to describe a political career. It has a perfectly acceptable literal reading: had it occurred in his Eton memoirs, we might have taken it so. But if we know that Disraeli is a nineteenth century politician, the phrase has an acceptable rendition as a metaphor. There is a common practice of describing long-term purposive activities--careers, life,

relationships--as journeys, particularly ascents.¹⁶⁶ Other people might talk of climbing to the top of the heap, the summit, or the top of the dunghill. Disraeli's metaphor is original in its use of a greased pole, but the general pattern is well-established, and it makes sense that we should understand him. If we happen to know in addition that he was the first Jewish prime minister, the point of the metaphor becomes perfectly clear.

There are whole systems of relationships between careers and ascents, that influence our use of such metaphors. As suggested, other long term activities share this pattern: the journey implies effort and accomplishment in the context of a one-way progression towards a goal. The ascent notion perhaps taps into the use of directional terms to characterize the desired pole of a dichotomy.

This idea seems to offer considerable explanatory resources, and to give credence to the notion that metaphors rely heavily on existing systems of associations and shared knowledge, as discussed by Black and Beardsley, Goodman, Searle, and Fogelin. There is no need to accept the attempt to tie these to an essentialist view about human experience; this view may well be compatible with a nominalist account of our organization and categorization of the world. The relationships may be purely perceived, existing solely in our recognition of them through our use of language. As such, it would be hard to know how these could be distinguished from the connotations--the meaning--of the words. All that is entailed by Disraeli's phrase does not come through in the actual words he uses, however. Neither the words nor the sentence are sufficient to account for our understanding of the metaphor. Some metaphors do include interaction and absurdity at the level of the sentence, but this is not the case here. It is our knowledge of Disraeli, and, importantly, our knowledge as language users of the

¹⁶⁶Ibid., pp. 301, 319.

pattern of metaphorical comparison of careers to ascents, that enables us to understand the figure.

The work involved in explicating this as an account of metaphor would still be considerable. No attempt has been made to address the notion of salience that, as Fogelin points out, must be part of any account of comparisons.¹⁶⁷ An account in terms of salient and accidental or peripheral features would save the notion of associations from any charge of vacuity, and might also be of considerable help in clarifying what Lakoff and Johnson call "fanciful" uses of a metaphor: those that play off peripheral aspects of the scene, and seem less interested in the structural features. Some such account in terms of the essential aspects of metaphors is needed, not only to show how it is that we can so readily understand metaphor, but also to discuss the different ways in which they can be used.

In including common metaphors within the category, this view might be able to elaborate the idea of systems of associations, and thus avoid being vacuous. From a single metaphor, the idea of associations can only be discussed in general terms, and always risks appearing *ad hoc*. But if the general patterns of our use of metaphor can be considered, there are possibilities for recognizing and identifying such systems. There are real possibilities in this kind of linguistic research, that could take theories of metaphor beyond speculation.

In focusing on associations and relationships, does this account forfeit the insights of the twentieth century absurdity or interaction views? It has been suggested that undue focus on the falsity of metaphor is misleading. Moreover, the interaction within the sentence does not seem to be essential to metaphor, and missed the fact that it is often by referring to a wider context that they are understood. The systems of

¹⁶⁷Fogelin, Figuratively Speaking, pp. 64-67.

relationships are importantly not the Aristotelian comparisons or similarities: there is no dependence on the inherent properties or categories of things. There are resources in this approach to explain the peculiarities of metaphor without insisting on its defects as a sentence. The possibility of extension and elaboration is a feature that distinguishes it from literal statements, as is the sense of borrowed terms.

An interesting feature of this approach is that it seems to suggest that there are in fact right and wrong uses of metaphor. The subjectivity element may be higher than with some kind of language, because the possibilities exist for extension and innovative use. But if the idea of a core comparison to metaphor could be made good, the leeway for interpretation would be limited. Metaphors perform important functions, and they do so in a systematic way that is susceptible to paraphrase. There seems little to gain in denying that they have a meaning.

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