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THE SEMANTICS AND PRAGMATICS OF METAPHOR

by

David I. Sturdee

B.A. (Hons.), Wilfrid Laurier University, 1992

**THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
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ABSTRACT

In the last fifty years or so, metaphor has been granted a social promotion from the position of hindrance to understanding and philosophical clarity to that of an essential aid. This is a consequence of the recognition that the language in which our beliefs and prejudices are expressed cannot be separated from their content. Metaphor is of particular interest because of its capacity to inspire us to regard the world and each other in novel ways. Although there are hundreds of articles on metaphor written by philosophers, psychologists, cognitive scientists, and others, few attempt an encompassing account of metaphor. In contrast, my aim in *The Semantics and Pragmatics of Metaphor* is to provide a thorough account of metaphor which addresses the most important issues facing metaphor theorists: how metaphors are identified; what roles intention and interpretation play in the creation of metaphor; how metaphors work; the relation between simile and metaphor; the semantic nature of metaphor; whether metaphors are candidates for truth; and the functions of metaphor.

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The creation of this thesis went something like this: I wrote something down and then some very generous, very intelligent people told me how to change it to make it plausible. They were (in order of appearance): Mark Mercer, Bjørn Ramberg, Barb Secker and Ray Jennings. I am indebted to them, for without their assistance this would be a lesser piece of work. Of course, any mistakes that remain are a reflection of their ignorance, sloth or stupidity, not mine.

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The greatest thing by far is to have a command of metaphor. This alone cannot be imparted to another: it is the mark of genius, for to make good metaphors implies an eye for resemblances. (Aristotle, *Poetics*)

INTRODUCTION

My topic is metaphor.¹ It is a topic that has gained wide currency in philosophy in the latter half of this century. This, I think, is directly attributable to what is often referred to as *the linguistic turn* in philosophy. Thanks to Wittgenstein, language has been elevated to new levels of importance in the analysis of culture and knowledge (Wittgenstein, 1953). It is now generally agreed that language is not merely a tool for the communication of new ideas, but is rather an integral part of their formulation. Metaphors are of particular interest because, characteristically, they direct us to regard the world in particular novel ways.

Of the hundreds of publications on metaphor by theorists in philosophy, psychology, cognitive science and English, few undertake a truly comprehensive account. Instead, most theorists choose to address isolated questions—for example, ‘How do metaphors affect us?’, ‘What is the semantic nature of metaphor?’ or ‘What is the relation of metaphor and truth?’. As a consequence, their accounts lack the benefits that accrue from a fuller treatment of metaphor in which these questions are addressed collectively.

This thesis is about the semantics and pragmatics of metaphor. My goal is to provide a more thorough and coherent account of metaphor than normally is provided, an account in which the answer to each fundamental question about metaphor is informed by answers to other fundamental questions about metaphor.

¹ Although it is true that we sometimes call paintings, plays, and the like metaphors, I am interested only in metaphorical statements. I use ‘metaphor’ to refer to ‘metaphorical statements’.

The first part of the thesis, consisting of Sections I, II and III, is about the pragmatics of metaphor. In Section I, *Identifying Metaphors*, I list some of the features characteristic of metaphors, but argue that there can be no set of necessary and sufficient conditions. In Section II, *When Is Metaphor?*, I consider the roles of intention and interpretation, outlining the conditions required for the creation of metaphor. In Section III, having paved the way with discussions of the identification of metaphor and the conditions for their creation, I try to answer the most fundamental pragmatic question, *How Do Metaphors Work?*.

The second part of the thesis concerns the semantics of metaphor—that is, how to determine what particular metaphors *mean*. In Section IV, *Metaphor And Simile*, I consider and then reject two theories which posit a semantic link between metaphor and simile, and I argue that there is no more to the relation between simile and metaphor than a (sometimes) similar effect. In Section V, *Metaphor And Meaning*, I introduce the two most influential theories regarding the semantics of metaphor: first, the traditional theory which posits two meanings for every metaphor, one literal and one metaphorical; and second, Donald Davidson's controversial account of metaphor in which he claims that metaphors have only *one* meaning, their literal meaning.

The last two sections of the thesis explore what are perhaps the most interesting questions facing metaphor theorists. In Section VI, *Metaphor And Truth*, I ask the question whether metaphors are candidates for truth. The answer lies in the connection between the semantics and the pragmatics of metaphor, and highlights the importance of maintaining a distinction between the two. In the final section, I outline what I take to be the notable functions of metaphor. It is here that I argue that metaphors are by no means mere stylistic embellishments, but, rather, sometimes play an integral part in the

acquisition and creation of beliefs and prejudices.

Some points regarding terminology: some writers use 'metaphor' to refer to *all* tropes—that is, hyperbole, irony, personification, synecdoche, metonymy, and the like; I follow the more common convention of using 'metaphor' to refer to a particular class of tropes. I understand this class to include what we normally refer to as metaphors—for example, 'Life is a journey', 'Man is a wolf' and 'Juliet is warm'—as well as instances of personification, metonymy and synecdoche. Second, I preserve and use the distinction between *live* and *dead* metaphors. Live metaphors are employed to provoke our imagination—for example, 'Juliet is the sun', 'Television is a drug' and 'Religion is the opium of the people'. Dead metaphors, in contrast, involve no such provocation. Although they *were* metaphors when they were first introduced, they are now merely literal expressions—for example, the *root* of a problem, a *bottleneck* in traffic and the mental state of being in a *fog*. Dead metaphors, in fact, are not metaphors at all. To refer to them as *dead metaphors* is simply to pay homage to their origins in the causal history of the language. I do not pretend that it is always easy to determine whether a metaphor is live or dead, and I recognize that some metaphors are live for some people yet dead for others. Moreover, a dead metaphor may be restored to life by attending to its original (or some other) metaphorical reading. My thesis concerns live metaphors, although, at times, I will refer explicitly to dead metaphors. Third, throughout the thesis I contrast *speaker* with *interpreter*. This is not to deny that metaphors are also inscribed (and perhaps signed), but, rather, to simplify matters. None of my conclusions depends on this simplification. Fourth, because of the interdisciplinary nature of my topic, I refer to those who have written about metaphor simply as *theorists*. Finally, to avoid the clumsiness of alternating between 'he' and 'she' and the aesthetically objectionable 'she/he', I use the

terms 'they', 'them' and 'their' as gender neutral, singular pronouns.

I. Identifying Metaphors

The importance of metaphor has been defended by literary critics, psychologists, linguists and philosophers alike. Conspicuous in its absence from the literature, however, is a set of defining conditions. What do the metaphors 'Juliet is the sun', 'Richard is a lion', 'Her tongue is not a bayonet', 'Man is a wolf', 'His theory is a house of cards', 'There's a storm brewing' and 'The church is a hippopotamus' have in common? Practically speaking, metaphors are as easy to spot as jokes, yet few theorists have attempted to outline a set of necessary and sufficient conditions of metaphor. There are definitions of metaphor in literary handbooks—for example, "language that implies a relationship, of which similarity is a significant feature, between two things and so changes our apprehension of either or both" (Deutsch, 1962 p.73). There also are more colourful characterizations—for example, "a metaphor is an affair between a predicate with a past and an object that yields while protesting" (Goodman, 1976 p.124). But these fast and loose attempts to define metaphor fail for vagueness. It is unclear what Deutsch means by 'implies'. Does not the literal claim 'He is like a father to me' imply a relationship? Goodman's suggestion, if even considered a definition, is not rigorous. Nevertheless, the apparent difficulty of defining metaphor should not discourage us from trying to outline its salient features ('But all things excellent are as difficult as they are rare'). We can learn a great deal about metaphors by discussing what, intuitively, are their most significant features. Below, I propose four such features, all of which are closely related, and discuss each of them in turn.

1.1 Metaphors As Tropes

First, intuition tells us that metaphors are tropes². When we utter or inscribe (or sign?) a metaphor, we intend the interpreter to notice something different from what the sentence literally means³. Contrast the sentences ‘My lawn is green’ and ‘His theory is a house of cards’. If I say to you ‘My lawn is green’, I am informing you that my lawn is green (provided that I am not joking, mad, lying, telling a story or using ‘green’ metaphorically). To understand what I want you to notice, you need appeal only to the truth conditions of the sentence uttered—that is, ‘My lawn is green’ is true, if and only if, my lawn is green. If, however, I say ‘His theory is a house of cards’, then I am provoking you to look beyond the patently false statement that his theory is a house of cards, and notice how his theory is *similar*, in some salient respect(s), to a house of cards—for example, his theory collapses with the slightest challenge to its structure. In order to understand a metaphor, the interpreter, trusting that the speaker is competent and being informative, must look beyond the literal meaning of the utterance. As is the case with all tropes, understanding metaphors is a matter of making the utterance *fit* the conversation.

Paul Grice’s conversational maxims are helpful in understanding this characteristic of metaphors (Grice, 1975). Grice outlines various maxims which we abide by in order to

² The term ‘trope’ is difficult to define. Roughly put, it is a figure of speech which consists in the use of an expression in a sense other than that which is proper to it. In addition to metaphor, other species of tropes are irony, sarcasm and hyperbole.

³ I do not pretend that the notion of literal meaning is unproblematic. Successful attempts to characterize literal meaning are rare, and are always couched within specific philosophies of language. I agree with Donald Davidson’s rejection of language as dependent on conventional meanings, and embrace his alternative view of language as idiosyncratic and occasion-specific (Davidson 1986, 1991). Because of this, I take literal meaning to be akin to what Davidson calls *first meaning*—that is, the meaning of an utterance is determined by its place in the language of which it is a part. I will say more about this in Section V below. For now, an intuitive notion of literal meaning will suffice.

facilitate conversation. The three maxims relevant to metaphor are: (i) make your contribution as informative as is required; (ii) do not say that which you believe to be false; and (iii) be relevant. Because we generally abide by these maxims, we can communicate by means of metaphor. For example, suppose you say to me, after having fallen off your bicycle, 'My brain is broken'. Suppose further that it is clear to me that you have not, in fact, broken your brain. Grice argues that, because I think that you are still abiding by the three maxims above, I will interpret you as informing me that you are in pain (and perhaps even that you feel a little stupid). In short, your comment that your brain is broken, when understood literally, does not cohere with the context of the conversation.⁴ I agree with Robert Fogelin when he says,

that the utterance counts as a figure of speech is grounded in the fact that the parties engaged mutually understand that a corrective judgment is being invoked...The respondent will naturally *adjust* the utterance in an appropriate way. (Fogelin, 1988 pp.16-17)

Interestingly, there are cases of metaphors whose literal interpretation *does* fit the conversation, but which are intended, nonetheless, as metaphors. In such cases, determining the nature of the author's intention is sometimes difficult. Consider the example, 'There is a storm on the horizon' uttered in a tense meeting by someone looking out the window at what, in fact, is a storm on the horizon. Here, the interpreter must determine, as best they can, whether it is the literal or the metaphorical interpretation which is intended.

⁴ 'Context' is a term which is often used but rarely explained. I understand the context of an utterance to include the conversation prior to an utterance, together with the beliefs and prejudices that each participant has regarding others and the world. To elaborate, I take the context of your utterance to be not only what each of us has said up to that point (or in recent days), but also (a) my expectations about how you use certain words or expressions or body language, (b) my assumptions about what you believe and what it is about the world that is important to you, and (c) my beliefs about your impressions of me and what you believe about my knowledge and prejudices.

In having more than one reading, metaphor is like other tropes, such as irony and hyperbole. But, having more than one reading is also a feature of literal ambiguity. I say 'literal ambiguity' to suggest sentences like 'Cinda is a warm person', where both possible interpretations, Cinda is affectionate and Cinda is feverish, depend only upon literal meaning. I make this clarification because all tropes are ambiguous in a sense. *Literal* ambiguity and metaphor, however, are quite different. Literal ambiguity leaves room for more than one *sensible* interpretation of the same sentence given the context of the utterance. In fact, it is sometimes the case that the several meanings of a literally ambiguous sentence work in unison to illuminate more fully the complexities of the situation being described—for example, Shakespeare's use of 'The protestant destruction of monasteries' (Deutsch, 1962 p.22). In metaphor, although there are two possible interpretations of the sentence—the literal and the metaphorical—most often only one interpretation is sensible given the context (exceptions are of the sort described above—for example, 'There is a storm on the horizon'). For example, if I say to you 'My sister's mind is a sponge', it makes sense to interpret the utterance as a metaphor, whereas its literal interpretation is absurd. Furthermore, in the case of literal ambiguity, each sense is independent of the others in so far as no single interpretation rests on an understanding of another⁵. If I say 'I am going to the bank', you may be unsure whether I mean the river bank or my financial institution, but neither interpretation is dependent upon understanding the other (although recognizing that the utterance is ambiguous *does* require recognizing that it may be interpreted either way). In the case of metaphor,

⁵ Pun (or paronomasia) is a special case of literal ambiguity in which all reasonable readings are meant to be understood simultaneously. Karl Beckson and Arthur Ganz quote a passage by John Donne in which he uses a pun on 'Son' meaning both Christ and the sun: "But swear by Thy self, that at my death Thy Son / Shall shine as he shines now, and heretofore" (Beckson and Ganz, 1960 pp.166-167).

however, the metaphorical interpretation is *guided* by an understanding of the literal meaning of the sentence. One cannot understand the metaphor 'The river sweats oil and tar' as a metaphor without also being able to interpret it literally. Goodman makes this point when he says that in metaphor "there is both a departure from and a deference to precedent" (Goodman, 1976 p.125).

1.II The Banality Or Absurdity Of The Literal Interpretation Of Metaphor

A second important characteristic of metaphors is that, given that they are tropes, their literal interpretation is almost always banal or absurd. Consider the absurdity of the literal interpretation of 'Her hair is silk', 'The moon is a balloon' or 'The church is a hippopotamus', and the banality of the literal interpretation of 'Her tongue is not a bayonet'. Some theorists argue that an identifying characteristic of metaphors is that their literal interpretation presents us with a patent falsity (Black, 1977; Goodman, 1968; Loewenberg, 1975) or at least an implicit contradiction (Beardsley, 1976). They are wrong, however. Consider the following examples of metaphors which are literally true and free of implicit contradiction: 'No man is an island', 'People are not sheep', 'Jesus was a carpenter' (Cohen, 1976 p.253). These sentences, when interpreted literally, are true. Furthermore, although it may be true that *many* metaphors present us with a literally false statement, sometimes their negation is also a metaphor (and literally true). For example, the negation of 'Metaphor is the peephole through which we see reality', namely, '*It is not the case that* metaphor is the peephole through which we see reality', or the more readable 'Metaphor is *not* the peephole through which we see reality,' can itself be used metaphorically, and its literal interpretation is trivially true.

Further, Jan Crosthwaite argues that metaphors, when interpreted literally, not only

need not be false, but they need not be either false *or banal or absurd*. The example she offers is the sentence 'I find black sheep quite charming' in which she argues that 'black sheep' might be interpreted either literally or metaphorically (Crosthwaite, 1985 p.321 n.1). Although I find it questionable that there is a metaphorical reading of this sentence (since 'black sheep' commonly is used to mean disreputable persons, it is, arguably, a dead metaphor), I think Crosthwaite's point is correct. Recall the earlier example of 'There is a storm on the horizon'. The literal interpretation of this metaphor, in the context described above, is both true and informative. Merrie Bergmann provides another example of such a metaphor: 'Spring has finally arrived in Washington' (Bergmann, 1979 p.215). In citing Wordsworth's line 'The road lies plain before me', Joseph Stern demonstrates that such metaphors are found not only in common conversation, but also in poetry (Stern, 1983 p.587). Nonetheless, these examples are the exception rather than the rule. We can conclude that virtually all metaphors, wherever they occur, when interpreted literally, are banal or absurd, and many are also patently false or trivially true.

I.III Novel Predication Or Novel Comparison

A third characteristic of metaphors is that they present us with a *novel predication* or *novel comparison*. Metaphors like 'Biff is an orangutan', 'Man is a wolf' or 'The countless gold of a merry heart' involve *predications* which strike us as unique and odd. Metaphors like 'Juliet is the sun', 'The stars are diamonds' or 'Hands are tools' consist of *comparisons* between members of seemingly incomparable classes. Goodman suggests colourfully that "metaphor requires attraction as well as resistance—indeed an attraction that overcomes resistance" (Goodman, 1976 p.124). It is this feature of metaphor, I submit, which most clearly distinguishes it from other tropes. Nonetheless, there are exceptions; that is,

sometimes when a term is introduced it involves a novel predication or novel comparison but is not a metaphor—for example, saying that a particular goalie is ‘eucnemic’ is, arguably, *not* a metaphor.

Someone might resist the latter half of the above characterization—that is, that some metaphors involve comparisons—because they consider comparison, strictly speaking, to be a symmetrical relation. In metaphor it is most often the salient characteristics of *one* subject of the metaphor that are mapped onto the other, but not *vice versa*. Beardsley shows signs of this resistance when he says that "it does not follow that because *As* are metaphorically *Bs*, therefore *Bs* are metaphorically *As*" (Beardsley, 1962 p. 297). What Beardsley has in mind are metaphors like my earlier example, ‘His theory is a house of cards’. The purpose of this metaphor is to get the interpreter to notice how weak a certain theory is, *not* how much a house of cards is like a certain theory.

It is true that metaphors often involve a one-way mapping of salient characteristics—for example, from the sun to Juliet in ‘Juliet is the sun’—but this does not mean that the comparison is not symmetrical. What it means is that we are concerned primarily with one direction of the comparison. This is not unique to metaphor. I might make the literal comparison between the way that my friend Woody plays hockey and the way that Wayne Gretzky plays hockey, but I do not intend you to notice that Wayne Gretzky plays hockey like Woody. Fogelin offers an example of what he considers an asymmetrical literal comparison: ‘Clothespins look like beach chairs’ (Fogelin, 1988 p.62). This statement brings to our attention the resemblance of clothespins to beach chairs, but not the resemblance of beach chairs to clothespins. Fogelin argues that the comparison is thus asymmetric. However, he is wrong. If clothespins look like beach chairs, then it follows that beach chairs look like clothespins. And, if Woody plays hockey like Wayne

Gretzky, then it follows that Wayne Gretzky plays hockey like Woody. Fogelin's mistake is to suppose that because something *draws our attention* to only one direction of comparison, the comparison is asymmetric. But, if 'His theory is a house of cards', then a house of cards is, in some respect(s), similar to his theory, although the speaker might not intend us to notice this latter comparison.

I.IV The Extendability And Systematicity Of Metaphor

A fourth characteristic of many metaphors is their extendability. Consider the metaphor 'Juliet is the sun'. From this single metaphor, further metaphors may be generated—for example, 'Romeo's world revolves around Juliet', 'Juliet is warm', 'Juliet is 93,000,000 miles away' and so forth.⁶ It takes minimal effort to imagine how metaphors like 'Television is a drug', 'All the world is a stage' and 'Religion is the opium of the people' might inspire the creation of further related metaphors. When a metaphor is extended explicitly it is called an *analogy*. This is a common and useful way of understanding one thing in terms of another. A famous example of analogy is taken from Khrushchev's correspondence with Kennedy during the Cuban missile crisis. In a telex to Kennedy, Khrushchev compares the situation to two antagonists pulling on either end of a rope with a knot tied in the middle. Khrushchev explains to Kennedy that the more each man pulls, the tighter the knot gets, until eventually even those who tied the knot cannot untie it. Starting with the metaphor of two men pulling on a rope with a knot tied in the middle,

⁶ Of course, if we want to know what Shakespeare intended, we need to refer to the text:
But soft! what light through yonder window breaks?
It is the East, and *Juliet* is the Sun!

(Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, II, ii)

In its original context, then, the metaphor makes us attend to Juliet's illumination and warmth (like that of the rising sun).

Kruschev is able to extend the metaphor and communicate a clear message to Kennedy.

Paul Henle argues that it is the extendability of metaphor which differentiates it from other tropes (Henle, 1958 p.90). I agree with Henle in so far as metaphors often are extendable, but it is not clear that all metaphors are *meant* to be extended. Consider the metaphor 'She has an acid tongue'. This metaphor is meant to suggest that the individual in question is harsh with her words, and to suggest little, if anything, more.

Nonetheless, extendability is a feature of many metaphors. Metaphors which *can* be extended often result in systematic and coherent sets of sentences. Perhaps the most famous defenders of this fact are George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980a, 1980b). Lakoff and Johnson group metaphors according to cardinal metaphors from which they are derived. An overriding metaphor is understood as a metaphorical *concept*. For example, the metaphor 'Time is money' is responsible for further metaphors like 'I am *spending* my time in Vancouver', 'You *cost* me two hours', '*Budget* your time well' and 'Use your time *profitably*'. Granted, these are dead metaphors, but Lakoff and Johnson's programme can be used to support the claim that when the above metaphors first appeared, 'Time is money' became the governing metaphor, and additional metaphors followed easily, maintaining a consistent view of time as money. Other examples of metaphorical concepts include 'Happy is up', 'Ideas are commodities', 'Life is a gambling game' and 'Understanding is seeing' (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980a pp.46-51). Each of these is cited as evidence of the extendability and systematicity of metaphors.

Philip Hanson points out, however, that Lakoff and Johnson are overenthusiastic about their claims, noting that "a number of their examples seem forced" (Hanson, 1987 p.53). For example, they include the sentences 'I don't *have enough* time to *spare* for that', 'You're *running out* of time' and '*Thank you for* your time' under the metaphorical

concept 'Time is money' (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980a p.8). Fogelin makes a stronger criticism that Lakoff and Johnson "have not shown, as they claim, that most of our normal conceptual system is metaphorically structured but instead, that most of our normal conceptual system is structured through comparisons" (Fogelin, 1988 p.86). Although this may be right, Fogelin's criticism stems from a denial that Lakoff and Johnson's examples are metaphors at all. His criticism is weakened considerably if we recognize that many of Lakoff and Johnson's examples, although literal expressions now, were once metaphors.

The examples of metaphor cited above all are couched in indicative sentences. Metaphors, however, are not restricted to any particular type of sentence. They are found in interrogatives—for example, I might inquire about the snow conditions on your recent ski trip: 'Were you skiing on flour or on glass?'. Metaphors also are found in imperative sentences—for example, I might think that you stay at home too much, and utter in disgust, 'Don't be a groundhog!'. Furthermore, although we can distinguish most metaphors from other tropes, they are not always used independently of one another. With a simple change in my tone of voice, the metaphor, 'You are my sunshine' becomes sarcasm. Or I may say hyperbolically, 'He is a skyscraper!'.

It should now be clear why there is no set of necessary and sufficient conditions for identifying metaphors found in the literature. Of the above mentioned four characteristics, only the first—that metaphors are tropes—is true of every metaphor, and this feature does not differentiate metaphors from irony, hyperbole, sarcasm and other tropes. There are no syntactic or semantic markers for metaphor. Metaphor is our linguistic paintbrush. The best we can do, it seems, is to say that most metaphors involve uttering a sentence which enlists a novel predication or a novel comparison in an effort to

get the interpreter to notice something beyond the literal meaning of the utterance.

Furthermore, many metaphors can be extended, and their extensions are systematic. There are, however, exceptions.

II. When Is Metaphor?

In addition to a discussion of *what* metaphor is, a discussion of *when* metaphor is is important to an account of metaphor. That is, under what conditions should we say that a metaphor is created? I want to suggest an answer to this question, appealing to the roles of intention and interpretation in the creation of metaphor. Following this, I will give an account of the roles of literal interpretation and context in metaphor recognition.

II.1 Intention, Interpretation And The Creation Of Metaphor

Does metaphor creation lie in intention or interpretation? Suppose I say 'Jesus was a carpenter' and I mean to say nothing more than that Jesus was a carpenter, but my utterance makes you notice that Jesus was like a carpenter in that he created structure from disorganization. Have *I* created a metaphor? Have *you*? What if I *do* mean to make you notice that Jesus created structure from disorganization, but, instead, you notice only that Jesus indeed was a carpenter. Have I nonetheless uttered a metaphor? What if I say to my fellow physician 'She has a warm heart', intending to draw their attention to her warm heart, and an obvious metaphorical interpretation eludes both of us? Is there a metaphor there anyway? With these questions in mind, I want to discuss the roles of speaker's intention and interpretation in the creation of metaphor.

Must a speaker *intend* to utter a metaphor if what they utter is to qualify as a metaphor? Lakoff and Johnson mention an Iranian student who understands 'The solution of my problems' metaphorically. He thinks of "a large volume of liquid, bubbling and smoking, containing all of your problems, either dissolved or in the form of precipitates, with catalysts constantly dissolving some problems (for the time being) and precipitating out others" (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980a p.143). If someone says to this student 'I have

found the solution of my problems', with the intention of informing him that they have discovered a way to solve their problems, have they created a metaphor? Lakoff and Johnson argue that, in this case, a metaphor indeed has been created, but they do not answer the question of who created it. I agree that a metaphor was created, but it was not the speaker who created it. In fact, by interpreting the utterance as a metaphor, the Iranian student *misunderstood* what the speaker intended to inform him of. Nonetheless, the Iranian student may adopt this phrase and use it himself with the intention of getting someone to notice something like the image described above—that is, the *Iranian student* has created a metaphor.

A different case occurs when a speaker utters a sentence with the intention of being interpreted metaphorically but, instead, is interpreted literally. For example, suppose someone says, in a telephone conversation, 'I am pinned down right now', with the intention of informing the interpreter that they are very busy, but is interpreted as asserting that they are actually pinned down. As in the case of the Iranian student, the speaker has been misunderstood. This case is different from that of the Iranian student, however, in that the speaker *has* created a metaphor because it was their intention to inform the interpreter that they were busy, not that they were literally pinned down. Bergmann answers the question "When does an expression count as a metaphor?" with "Simple: when it has been given a metaphorical interpretation" (Bergmann, 1979 pp.214-215). I think Bergmann is right if we allow her some leeway with her use of 'interpretation'. The leeway is required because some metaphors are private—sentences which we decide not to speak because no one is nearby or because of voluntary or imposed restraints. In such cases, the only 'interpreter' is oneself.

The final case to consider is when an obvious metaphorical interpretation escapes

the notice of both the speaker and the interpreter. Consider a situation in which a child is hired to deliver flyers and is paid with peanuts. When asked by a neighbour what their daughter is earning for her work, the mother might reply, 'She is earning peanuts'. And suppose that the obvious metaphorical interpretation eludes both the neighbour and the mother. In this case, as is suggested by the previous examples, no metaphor is created.

Now I am in a position to outline the necessary and sufficient conditions for metaphor creation, from both the speaker's and the interpreter's standpoint. From the speaker's standpoint, it is *necessary* for metaphor creation that they *intend* to utter a metaphor. It is tempting to say that a speaker's intention is also *sufficient* for metaphor creation, but this is not clearly the case. It seems we can intend to make a metaphor, but can fail because of obscurity. I might say to someone, for example, 'The day is a scroll' with an inordinately vague notion of what it is that I want them to notice as a result of the utterance.⁷ Upon reflection, I might realize that my intentions were too inchoate for the metaphor to make any sense. Such cases, however, are the exception rather than the rule, and most often it *is* enough that a speaker intend to utter a metaphor for a metaphor to be created. From the interpreter's standpoint, it is a sufficient condition for metaphor creation that they interpret an utterance as a metaphor, whether it is intended as a metaphor or not. It is not, however, a necessary condition for metaphor creation that they interpret an utterance intended metaphorically as a metaphor.

Let me explain my reason for offering this account of metaphor creation. The impetus is simple: we cannot assign responsibility for everything that is noticed as a result of an utterance, nor for everything that is done as a result of an utterance, *to that utterance*. Everything we say has the potential to result in a chain of events that we do

⁷ I owe thanks to Mark Mercer for this example.

not expect or intend, in making that utterance. Every utterance potentially has an indefinite intention attached to it. Simon Blackburn echoes this sentiment when he says, "we do not allow that people assert everything that they reliably suggest, and are known to be reliably suggesting" (Blackburn, 1984 p.173). Someone who said to Mick Jagger, in frustration, 'I can't get no satisfaction', prior to the Rolling Stones hit, did not create a song lyric. Mick Jagger took those same words and created the lyric. The case of metaphor is no different. A metaphor is not an abstract entity to be grasped, rather, it is a creation manifest in a particular utterance (or thought) by a particular person at a particular time.

II.II Literal Interpretation, Context And Metaphor Recognition

Most often, it is speakers who create metaphors. Nonetheless, speakers create metaphors to be *interpreted* as metaphors (unless, of course, they are being deceitful). It is important, then, to understand what is necessary for metaphor *recognition and interpretation* to occur. The leading question is whether metaphor recognition and interpretation are exclusive events—that is, do we first recognize that an utterance is intended metaphorically, and then interpret it as such, or do metaphorical recognition and interpretation occur simultaneously?

There are theorists who, based on psychological research, contend that people recognize and interpret metaphors as quickly and as easily as they do literal language. One such theorist, Raymond Gibbs, argues that "understanding figurative language does not require the recognition of these utterances as violating norms of cooperative

communication" (Gibbs, 1992 p.585).⁸ Boaz Keysar and Sam Glucksberg agree (Keysar and Glucksberg, 1992). They cite an experiment in which people were asked to read sentences, focus on their literal meanings, and then say whether they were true or false.⁹ Some of the sentences were literally false, but made sense metaphorically—for example, 'The mountain road is a snake'. They note that it took respondents longer to determine that such sentences were literally false than to determine that comparable sentences were both literally false and non-metaphorical—for example, 'The mountain road is a tree'. Because respondents actually had to *concentrate* to interpret the metaphors literally, they conclude that metaphors seem to be "as automatically grasped as the literal", and as a result, that metaphors are not recognized by first being interpreted literally (Keysar and Glucksberg, 1992 p.639).

These experiments are suggestive, but potentially misleading.¹⁰ Even if it is true that interpreting a metaphor literally is not *temporally* prior to interpreting it metaphorically, literal interpretation is certainly *logically* prior—that is, one cannot

⁸ Gibbs (1992 p.580) cites Allissa McCabe, "Conceptual Similarity and the Quality of Metaphor in Isolated Sentences versus Extended Context," *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research*, 12 (1983): 67-94 and Howard Pollio and Barbara Burns, "The Anomaly of Anomaly," *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research*, 6 (1977): 247-60.

⁹ Keysar and Glucksberg (1992 p.639) cite Sam Glucksberg, Patricia Gildea and Howard Bookin, "On Understanding Nonliteral Speech: Can People Ignore Metaphors?," *Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behavior*, 21 (1982): 85-98.

¹⁰ I have some reservations about the methodology of the experiments cited in support of Gibbs' and Keysar and Glucksberg's conclusions, particularly the experiment cited by Keysar and Glucksberg—for example, it begs the question of which sentences admit of metaphorical interpretation and I distrust the method of asking people to respond "as quickly and as accurately" as they can in order to determine whether metaphors take longer to interpret (as far as I know, most psychologists and linguists agree that we simply do not know enough about the interpretive process to know whether we interpret a metaphor according to its literal reading first) (Keysar and Glucksberg, 1992 p.639).

interpret an utterance metaphorically without also being capable of interpreting it literally. So, for example, to interpret the metaphor 'Television is a drug', we must know what television is and what a drug is. As I argue below in Section III, metaphors like 'Television is a drug' are interpreted by mapping salient characteristics of the term(s) being used metaphorically—in this case 'drug'—onto the subject—in this case, 'television'. To do so, we must know some relevant characteristics of television (including how it affects people) as well as some relevant characteristics of drugs (including some of the kinds of effects that drugs have on people). The logical priority of literal interpretation applies to the recognition and interpretation of *all* tropes. In fact, it can be argued that it applies to the recognition and interpretation of *most*, if not all, linguistic communication. I do not believe that there is a unique way to distinguish the conditions necessary for metaphor *recognition and interpretation* from these other cases, but such a distinction is not at issue.

Of course, the recognition and interpretation of a metaphor depends on more than just understanding its components literally. It also depends on the context of the utterance. In fact, the role of context in the understanding of metaphor is no different in kind from the role of context in the understanding of literal uses of language; context is the navigator. Every utterance presents an interpreter with an indefinite number of possible interpretations, some of which might be metaphorical. The context provides a guide to which interpretation(s) is (are) most likely intended by the speaker. For example, suppose we are walking along a crowded sidewalk and I say to you 'Lots of traffic today'. You believe that I am an impatient person and notice that I appear somewhat frustrated. You also believe that I probably have little interest in how many cars are on the road. As a result, you interpret my remark as meaning that there are a lot of people on the sidewalk.

Perhaps you respond with 'Yeah, I wish they'd get out of the way, I can't wait!' This sentence, understood on its own, provides us with even less information than the last. But I know that we are on our way to see a movie, and that you like movies, thus, I interpret you as expressing eagerness about going to see the movie.

The role of context cannot be easily overstated. If one biology student says to another, while classifying organisms according to the biological kingdom to which they belong, 'Charles Manson is an animal', then no metaphor is created. Yet we can imagine contexts in which the same sentence is meant to portray Manson as inhumane and savage. Also, a sentence might be used to nudge the interpreter to notice one thing in one context and something very different in another context, thus resulting in two different metaphors. For example, 'She is on fire', in one context, might get us to notice that she is very angry, but, in another context, it might make us aware that she is passionately in love.

This raises a question about the extent to which context can permit utterances to be interpreted metaphorically. There is widespread agreement that each language possesses an infinite potential for new metaphors just as it does for new sentences. There is less agreement, however, about whether *every* sentence of a language can be a metaphor given some appropriate context. Crosthwaite argues that "it may be possible to envisage a context of metaphorical use for any sentence" (Crosthwaite, 1985 p.321 n.1). Others, including Stern, deny this claim (Stern, 1983). Stern argues that there are grammatical restrictions as to what can count as metaphor. Sentences that violate "strict sub-categorization rules", that is, rules that "analyze the category of a given lexical item in terms of the categorical frames in which it can occur—e.g., whether the item can or must be preceded or followed by a Noun Phrase, Prepositional Phrase, Sentential Complement, and so on"—do not admit of metaphorical interpretation (Stern, 1983 pp.584-85). For

example, Stern argues that the sentences 'John found sad', 'John persuaded great authority to Bill' and 'Howard elapsed that Bill will come' cannot be interpreted metaphorically (Stern, 1983 p.584). Max Black comes close to this claim when he says that "one cannot couple any two nouns at random and be sure to produce an effective metaphor" (Black, 1977 p.23). But Black stops short of the claim that there are sentences which cannot admit of metaphorical interpretation: "almost any 'move' is acceptable if one can get away with it; that is, if a competent receiver will accept it" (Black, 1977 p.23).

I agree with Crosthwaite that any sentence can be a metaphor in some context. I also agree with Black's comment that any 'move' is acceptable if the speaker can get away with it. I think this latter claim is important in understanding why we must avoid Stern's rigid denial that certain types of sentence admit of metaphorical interpretation. The mistake that Stern makes is to focus on *sentences* rather than *utterances*. Stern assumes that language is a shared, structured entity within which we can discuss the syntactic and semantic structure of specific sentences. But Stern underestimates the power of context. When analyzing utterances, including metaphors, intentions and interpretations are important. The words a speaker chooses and how an observer interprets an utterance depend as much (or more) on the context as on the perceived place of the speaker's words in their language. Consider an example of a sentence which Stern claims does not admit of a metaphorical interpretation: 'John found sad'. Consider further that I make it a habit of saying 'sad' instead of 'sadness', 'mad' instead of 'madness', and so forth. As a friend, you know this habit and, thus, when you ask 'How is John' and I respond 'John found sad', you interpret me as meaning that John found sadness. Then, knowing that sadness is not a type of thing one finds, you interpret my utterance metaphorically. To understand me, you do not appeal to the place of the sentence 'John found sad' in some shared and

structured language. If you tried this, you would fail to understand me—that is, you would interpret my utterance as nonsense. Instead, the context of the utterance provides the necessary guide for understanding what I intend to inform you of. There is, then, no principled reason why any particular sentence or any group of sentences cannot be intended and interpreted metaphorically in some context.

III. How Metaphors Work

Now that we have a good idea of what metaphors are (Section I) and when metaphors are created (Section II), I want to consider how metaphors work. We know how some other tropes work—for example, when encountering hyperbole we interpret it as an exaggeration of some determinate piece of information. Interpreting metaphor, it seems, is not as simple. It is no surprise, then, that many theorists use the topic of the interpretation of metaphor to guide their account of metaphor (Beardsley, 1978; Black, 1955, 1977; Carney, 1983; Fogelin, 1988; Keysar and Glucksberg, 1992; Novitz, 1985b; Tirrell, 1989). There is some continuity to their approaches and, as it is, each theory falls roughly into one of two categories: comparison theory or extension theory. I discuss an example of each type of theory below.

III.I Comparison Theories of Metaphor

Traditional comparison theories of metaphor, and their offspring, are the most common. Aristotle wrote that "metaphor consists in giving the thing a name that belongs to something else; the transference being either from genus to species, or from species to genus, or from species to species, or on grounds of analogy" (Aristotle, *Poetics*, 21, 1457b). Metaphors work, it is argued, by inviting us to explore comparisons. One theorist who finds inspiration from this argument is Black (Black, 1955, revised in 1977). He outlines what he terms an *interaction view* of metaphor.

Black bases his interaction view on five claims (Black, 1977 pp.28-29). First, a metaphor has two distinct subjects, one primary and one secondary. Black's example, 'Man is a wolf', has the primary subject 'man' and the secondary subject 'wolf'. Second, the secondary subject is a system or programme, rather than a simple thing. Black, in

illustration of his claim, says that Wallace Stevens' line 'Society is a sea' is "not so much about the sea (considered as a thing) as about a system of relationships...signalled by the presence of the word 'sea' in the sentence" (Black, 1977 p.28). Third, a metaphor projects upon the primary subject a set of implications associated with the secondary subject (called the 'implicative complex'). Fourth, the creator of the metaphor "selects, emphasizes, suppresses, and organizes features of the primary subject by applying to it statements isomorphic with the members of the secondary subject's implicative complex" (Black, 1977 p.29).¹¹ Fifth, guided by the context of the utterance, the two subjects interact in three ways: the presence of the primary subject (a) invites the interpreter to choose some of the secondary subject's properties; (b) invites the interpreter to construct a corresponding implication complex that fits the primary subject; and (c) results in parallel changes in the secondary subject.

Black fails to give an example that illustrates all five of his claims about how metaphors work. I want to fill this gap by testing them with the metaphor 'Life is a game'. In this metaphor, the primary subject is 'life' and the secondary subject is 'game'. According to Black's theory, when a competent interpreter is faced with this metaphor, something like the following happens. First, recognizing that it is a metaphor, the interpreter thinks both about the salient characteristics of games—for example, they are won or lost, they involve taking chances, they involve both luck and skill and they are guided by rules—and about the place that games hold in our culture—for example, they are not to be taken too seriously, they are something one does during leisure time and

¹¹ Black's claim that the set statements applied to the primary subject are "isomorphic" with the secondary subject's implicative complex is too strong. The set of statements applied to the primary subject, as generated by the metaphor, need not have the identical structure of the implicative complex for the secondary subject. The mapping of statements is perhaps better understood as surjective—that is, *onto*. I owe thanks to Ray Jennings for pointing this out to me.

those who are particularly good at certain games are revered. This set of associations is called the implicative complex of games. Black argues that the metaphor works because the interpreter projects these characteristics onto the primary subject—for example, life involves taking chances, life involves skill, in life there are rules that we must abide by, life is not to be taken too seriously, we exalt those who succeed, and so on. The result is an implication complex of the primary subject that corresponds to the implication complex of the secondary subject; that is, similar with some appropriate editing given the context—for example, we might not want to imply that life is won or lost, nor that life is something one does during one's leisure time. Finally, and this is the unique feature of Black's interaction view, the metaphor makes us notice how much games are like life.

Black would resist my characterization of the interaction theory as a comparison theory, but for reasons that I think are either wrong or not significant. He objects to certain implications of the traditional comparison theory. First, according to the traditional comparison theory, a metaphor is equivalent to a set of literal statements, but Black rejects this characterization because it ignores the emphatic nature of metaphor (Black, 1977 p.28). That is, a set of literal statements lacks the power of a good metaphor to grab the interpreter's interest and trigger their imagination. Second, Black denies that metaphors can be explicated adequately by a set of literal statements (Black, 1977 pp.31-32). He argues instead that the interpretation of metaphors, particularly poetic metaphors, is so open-ended that no set of sentences can possibly capture all of their implications. Third, the traditional comparison theory fails to recognize that the metaphor 'Man is a wolf' not only gets us to notice that men are like wolves, but also "makes the wolf seem more human than he otherwise would" (Black, 1962 p.44).

I think that Black's first criticism is right; even if we *can* provide a set of literal

statements which captures what we are supposed to notice given a metaphor, it will lack the power of the metaphor. After all, one might argue that the uniqueness of metaphor does not consist in *what* it gets us to notice, but *how* it gets us to notice it. But I disagree with his second claim that metaphors are all so open-ended that they are not capable of literal paraphrase. Consider the example 'Your eyes are the windows to your soul' as spoken at the end of a poker game. In this case the speaker is informing another player that they could tell by the look in the other player's eyes whether the other player had a good hand or not. Thus, the metaphor might be replaced with the literal paraphrase 'I could tell how good your hand was by the look in your eyes'. The significance of Black's third criticism of the traditional comparison theory—that is, that it fails to recognize that the metaphor 'Man is a wolf' also gets us to notice how much wolves are like men—is questionable. Granted, we might notice, as a result of the metaphor 'Man is a wolf', that wolves are like men, but this is not what the speaker *intends* the interpreter to notice (otherwise they would have said 'Wolves are men'). If we do notice that wolves are like men, then it is a residual effect, an afterthought, of the metaphor 'Man is a wolf'. Recall the reasons given in Section II why we should *not* attribute everything that is noticed as a result of an utterance to the utterance itself.

There is a further difficulty with Black's interaction theory in particular, and with comparison theories in general, namely, it is not clear how they apply to metaphors which do not seem to involve comparisons. Consider the example of a detective who says 'My mind is going a million miles an hour'. It is quite clear what we are supposed to notice as a result of this utterance, but it is not clear that we notice it by means of comparison. This example involves a novel *predication* rather than a novel comparison. Granted, we could *find* something to compare—for example, the detective's mind is going a million

miles an hour like a really fast car racing on blocks—but it is not clear that this is *how the metaphor works*.

III.II Extension Theories of Metaphor

There are other approaches to characterizing how metaphors work, namely, extension theories. Whereas comparison theories emphasize the function of projecting salient features of the secondary subject (to continue to use Black's terminology) onto the primary subject, extension theories emphasize the interpretation of a metaphor via the creation of further metaphors—that is, they focus on the extendability and systematicity of metaphor.

Lynne Tirrell offers a particularly good account of an extension theory of metaphor (Tirrell, 1989). She begins by contrasting literal interpretation with metaphorical interpretation: "unlike literal interpretation, metaphorical interpretation puts the expressive commitment in the forefront of the interpretive process" (Tirrell, 1989 p.23). Tirrell argues that when someone creates a metaphor, their principal commitment is to the appropriateness of talking about the primary subject using terminology normally found in discussions of the secondary subject. Because of this, further metaphors are generated. The initial metaphor is termed the 'metaphor-proper' (Tirrell, 1989 p.23). Resulting metaphors at the first level, those closely associated with the metaphor-proper, are called the 'immediate extensions'. From each immediate extension, sets of further metaphors are generated, called 'basic extensions'. Each basic extension consists of related metaphors, and may be characterized as a branch of the tree that is rooted in the metaphor-proper. As Tirrell explains, "at issue is a kind of coherence-by-descent: these chains and trees are genealogical and the genealogy should be recoverable" (Tirrell, 1989 p.28).

Tirrell uses her extension theory to explain how William Blake's metaphor 'An

untold wrath is a poison tree' works (Tirrell, 1989 p.24). The metaphor itself, 'An untold wrath is a poison tree' is the metaphor-proper. Using terminology that normally applies to trees, we might think of the following immediate extensions: 'An untold wrath grows' and 'An untold wrath dies'. Each of these immediate extensions results in further metaphors. From the immediate extension, 'An untold wrath grows', we get 'An untold wrath needs nutrients' and 'An untold wrath needs to be pruned'. From the second immediate extension, 'An untold wrath dies', we get 'An untold wrath can be chopped down' and 'An untold wrath can be uprooted'. Although there may be constraints¹², there is no principled limit to the extendability of each immediate extension, nor to the number of immediate extensions.

Although perhaps we are not as rigorous as Tirrell suggests when actually interpreting metaphors, we have in her extension theory a means to organize the wealth of metaphors engendered by the metaphor-proper. Tirrell's extension theory can "account for an indefinite number of extremely if not infinitely complex extended metaphors" (Tirrell, 1989 p.25). In general, the principal advantage of an extension theory is that it accounts for the systematicity of the extension of a metaphor—that is, an extension theory "accounts for the richness and open-endedness of metaphors without letting that richness overwhelm" (Tirrell, 1989 p.25). Furthermore, the extension theory helps explain certain aspects of the expressive commitment to creating a metaphor. For example, the creator of the metaphor "undertakes an obligation to continue the metaphorically interpreted chain if a legitimate challenge or request is made" (Tirrell, 1989 p.27).¹³

¹² In the example, 'An untold wrath is a poison tree', 'wrath' is a mass term and 'poison tree' is a count term. This is a constraint on the extension of the metaphor because 'wrath' does not admit of a plural form. I am grateful to Ray Jennings for bringing this to my attention.

¹³ It is not clear what kind of obligation Tirrell means here (surely not a moral obligation!).

Which theory of how metaphors work is better, Black's interaction theory or Tirrell's extension theory? Despite my criticisms and possible counter-examples, I think that Black's interaction theory is more plausible than Tirrell's extension theory. Tirrell's extension theory, although interesting, does not really tell us how metaphors *work*. Although useful for explaining how the explication of metaphors is systematic, the extension theory relies on the false assumption that all metaphors need to be extended to be understood. Consider the metaphors 'She has an acid tongue' and 'The sermon was a sleeping pill'. Although perhaps we can create immediate extensions of these metaphors, they convey determinate messages and do not require extensions to be interpreted. Nonetheless, both Tirrell's extension theory and Black's interaction theory are meant simply to *characterize* how metaphors work. As John Searle points out, "The question, 'How do metaphors work?' is a bit like the question, 'How does one thing remind us of another thing?' There is no single answer to either question" (Searle, 1979 p.113).

Notice, however, that there is an important feature underlying both comparison theories and extension theories, namely, the role of *salience*. When we interpret a metaphor, there are certain features which are salient and others which are not, or, to put it another way, certain extensions of the metaphor which are salient and others which are not. For example, that the sun is a large body of gases is not salient when interpreting Shakespeare's metaphor 'Juliet is the sun'. Thus, this feature of the sun is not mapped onto the primary subject, nor does it show up in any extensions of the metaphor-proper. Neither Black nor Tirrell properly addresses the role of salience in the interpretation of metaphor. I want to do this now. For the sake of simplicity, I will use only Black's interaction theory as the basis for the discussion.

III.III The Role Of Salience In The Interpretation Of Metaphor

Consider the metaphor 'Richard is a lion'. When interpreting this metaphor, why do certain perceived properties of lions—for example, that they are calm and strong—get mapped onto Richard while others—for example, that they are very heavy and have fur—do not? When interpreting a metaphor, what is it that makes us recognize one property as salient¹⁴ while others remain irrelevant? I want to argue that which properties we recognize as salient is not a random matter, but, rather, is grounded in a rationale that can be articulated and justified according to the context of the utterance. Recall that I characterized the context of an utterance as including the conversation prior to the utterance and the beliefs and prejudices that each participant has about each other and the world. Given this characterization, there are three distinct elements of context which might affect our recognition of a property as salient: (a) shared beliefs and prejudices; (b) personal beliefs and prejudices; and (c) the conversation and activities leading up to the utterance.

First, that we recognize a certain property as salient might be attributable to shared beliefs and prejudices. For example, being fierce, nasty and prone to violence are among the stereotypical characteristics of gorillas. In contrast, being a mammal, having arms and not being able to fly airplanes are *not* stereotypical characteristics of gorillas. Thus, if someone says 'Hank is a gorilla', we interpret them as informing us that Hank is nasty, fierce and prone to violence (or something similar), not that Hank is a mammal with arms and cannot fly airplanes.

Beardsley claims correctly that the properties we recognize as salient are not "*actual* properties of things denoted by the metaphorical term, but *believed* properties"

¹⁴ I take salience to be a sort of celebrity status for a property.

(Beardsley, 1978 p.8, emphasis mine). As James Carney reminds us, "zoologists tell us today that gorillas are not fierce, nasty, and prone to violence but are shy, sensitive creatures who love their family and community" (Carney, 1983 p.260). Nonetheless, it is not these actual features which influence how we interpret the metaphor 'Hank is a gorilla'. Henle uses the example 'You're the cream in my coffee' to illustrate the importance of shared beliefs and prejudices when interpreting metaphors (Henle, 1958 p.95). In our culture, this is assumed to be a compliment because, for most of us, cream adds a nice flavour to coffee. Henle points out that "entirely the wrong impression would be obtained in a community which drank its coffee black" (Henle, 1958 p.95).

Second, personal beliefs and prejudices can affect what properties we take to be salient. My favourite food in the whole world is doughnuts. As a friend, you are well aware of this. Thus, when I say of my friend Barb 'What a doughnut!' you interpret me as paying her a very high compliment. This is because you recognize that the most important feature of doughnuts, for me, is that they are my favourite food. Someone else who overhears my utterance likely will misinterpret me. Based on *shared* prejudices about doughnuts, they might think that I intend to tell you that Barb is plump and round. Most often, when interpreting a metaphor, our understanding of the speaker's personal beliefs and prejudices will override what we take to be the shared beliefs and prejudices about the secondary subject. Thus, one zoologist can say to another, 'My husband is a gorilla' and convey successfully the message that their husband is shy, sensitive and loving.

Third, the conversation and activities leading up to the utterance of a metaphor might affect what we recognize as salient. Bergmann asks us to suppose that the conversation leading up to the utterance of the metaphor 'John is an Einstein' consists of telling anecdotes about Einstein's eccentricity (Bergmann, 1982 p.237). We quickly

realize that the metaphor is meant to inform us that John is eccentric rather than (or as well as) to inform us that he is a brilliant scientist.

The conversation and activities leading up to the utterance of the metaphor, perhaps more than shared or personal beliefs and prejudices, can get us to recognize a seemingly insignificant property as salient. Consider a case in which we are classifying the food in my fridge according to whether the various items are alive or not. As we come across some fudge, you say sadly, 'My brother is a piece of fudge', recalling that his body is still at the morgue. In this context, you intend to inform me that your brother is dead, even though this is not normally regarded as a salient characteristic of fudge.

Our understanding of the role of salience when interpreting metaphor is aided by comparing it to the role of salience when interpreting literal comparison. If I say 'Darryl plays baseball like Ed Sprague', then I make a literal comparison. To interpret my remark, you appeal to the salient features of the way baseball is played—for example, how well someone bats, how well they field and how well they run—and thereby derive the axes along which to compare the way Darryl and Ed Sprague play baseball—for example, both bat well, neither is particularly good defensively and both are average runners. It is at the first level that salience is important—that is, determining *on what grounds* the two things are meant to be compared. In the case of literal comparison, these grounds are shared and, thus, salient for *both* things being compared. The case of metaphor, however, is different. Consider the example 'A book is a friend'. Again, salience determines the axes along which the two items—books and friends—are meant to be compared. But there is a salience imbalance; that is, we are meant to compare books to friends according to what features of *friends* we recognize as salient—for example, we learn from our friends, friends are good to talk to, and friends are there when we need them. From these

characteristics, we choose those that are appropriate to map onto books—for example, we can learn from books and books are there when we need them.¹⁵

III.IV The Marks Of A Good Metaphor

What are the marks of a good metaphor? Few theorists have addressed the question of what makes some metaphors better than others. Perhaps this is because they think that metaphor is a form of art and, thus, not subject to impartial appraisal. It is true that assessing a metaphor, like assessing a painting, is not a matter of sizing it up against an agreed upon set of criteria. But we *do* evaluate paintings. And, I think, we evaluate metaphors. In fact, one might argue that it is the ability to create good metaphors which separates good writers from mediocre ones. When Romeo says 'But soft! what light through yonder window breaks? It is the East, and *Juliet* is the Sun!' we likely find the metaphor more thought provoking than my earlier example, 'Hank is a gorilla'!

Surely the freshness of a metaphor has some bearing on its appeal. Shakespeare's metaphor 'Poor soul, the centre of my sinful earth' is more thought provoking on the first reading (or, at least, the first careful reading) than on subsequent readings. But, as Beardsley remarks, "even if we were to repeat the phrase ['Juliet is the sun'] from *Romeo and Juliet* over and over until we were tired of it...that alone would not make it trite" (Beardsley, 1962 p.301). Whether a metaphor is good or bad does not just depend on how new it is. Some metaphors retain their vibrancy long after they become familiar, while others are banal from the point of introduction—for example, compare the allure of 'Her lips are cherries, charming men to bite' with the triteness of 'The sun is peeping from

¹⁵ Ortony makes a similar argument for the difference between the role of salience in literal interpretation and its role in metaphorical interpretation (Ortony, 1979b).

behind a cloud'.

Bergmann argues that we should measure the greatness of a metaphor according to its ability to transform our view of something: "metaphors sometimes give us a new orientation toward familiar subject matter, making us revise, ignore, or even forget, the beliefs that went along with the old orientation" (Bergmann, 1982 p.244). I find Bergmann's suggestion appealing, but too strong. Although metaphors which meet her criterion are indeed great, they are rare. Moreover, it is impossible to measure the effect that a metaphor will have from our first encounter with it. Black proposes a more reasonable yardstick. A "strong metaphor" is one which "is both markedly emphatic and resonant" (Black, 1977 p.27). An emphatic metaphor is one that does not allow variations or substitutions for the words used. For example, we cannot substitute 'the body at the centre of our solar system' for 'sun' in 'Juliet is the sun' and expect the new metaphor to have the same effect. Emphatic metaphors "are intended to be dwelt upon for the sake of their unstated implications" (Black, 1977 p.26). A resonant metaphor is one that "supports a high degree of implicative elaboration" (Black, 1977 p.27). Resonant metaphors are extended easily, as in the case of analogy. For example, the metaphor 'The road lies plain before me' generates further metaphors like 'Life is a journey' and 'Life is a long, bumpy road'. Black adds that emphasis and resonance are matters of degree, and not to be considered independently of one another. Weak metaphors, in contrast, are those that fail to meet Black's criteria and are, as a result, un insightful or obscure. Consider the following examples of weak metaphors: 'The moon is a balloon' and 'Her hair is silk'.

Meeting Black's two criteria means that a metaphor is *strong*, but it does not mean that it is *good*. Black's criteria of emphasis and resonance are applied independently of the speech act. But metaphors are couched in speech acts, and so they must be evaluated

according to their applicability. I propose, on inspiration from Wayne C. Booth, that good metaphors also are *appropriate*—that is, they are suited to the task at hand (Booth, 1978 p.55). A metaphor is *inappropriate* if, for example, it is tasteless. Although the metaphor ‘The sun is peeing from behind a cloud’ is emphatic and resonant, it might well be distractingly coarse. A good metaphor, then, is one that is emphatic, resonant and appropriate. As a philosopher, I am tempted to add the requirement that a good metaphor must also be true, but this would beg the question of whether metaphors are candidates for truth (the relation between metaphor and truth will be discussed in Section VI below).

When we ask how each metaphor works, we are particularly interested in how it attains its specific power over us—that is, we want to know *how* it makes us notice *what* it makes us notice. Having discussed the ‘how’ part of this equation, it seems right to turn to the ‘what’ part. What can we say about the nature of the message that a metaphor conveys? I try to answer this question in the next two sections.

IV. Metaphor And Simile

Perhaps the most fundamental problem facing metaphor theorists (certainly the most discussed) is the semantic nature of metaphor. What do metaphors *mean*? 'The clouds are a blanket' means, on the one hand, that the clouds are a blanket. But this sentence is literally false. The clouds are not a blanket, they are clouds. Of course, the literal meaning is not what the speaker wants us to notice. Do *they* mean that the clouds are *like* a blanket? Some theorists say they do and argue that, to understand what a metaphor is supposed to make us notice, we need only appeal to the meaning of its corresponding simile. If many metaphors are implicit comparisons, then we are committed at least to the possibility that they can be reduced to similes. In this section I address the nature of the relation of metaphor to simile by means of discussing two simile theories of metaphor.

*IV.I The Reductive Simile Theory of Metaphor*¹⁶

Supporters of the reductive simile theory of metaphor argue as follows.¹⁷ First, they claim that metaphor and simile play the same linguistic role—that is, they both prompt us to make comparisons. Second, any metaphor can be paraphrased as an identity or predication—that is, in the form *A is a P* or *A is B*. Third, there is a function from every metaphor of the form *A is a P* or *A is B* to a corresponding simile. Thus, metaphors are reducible to similes. They add that similes that result from the above function can be explained in purely literal terms. They argue, for example, that Black's metaphor 'Man is a wolf', the interpretation of which is not obvious, is reducible to the corresponding simile

¹⁶ I borrow this title, and the subsequent 'Nonreductive Simile Theory Of Metaphor', from Tirrell (1991b).

¹⁷ For a thorough reductive simile theory of metaphor, see Miller (1979). My characterization of the general argument is inspired by Tirrell (1991b p.339).

'Man is like a wolf', the interpretation of which *is* obvious. Some theorists observe that this reducibility is why patently false sentences like 'Man is a wolf' ring true. Tirrell agrees: "upon encountering a new, somewhat obscure metaphor, say 'Juliet is the sun', we do not ask whether Juliet is or is not the sun but rather ask how Juliet is *like* the sun' (Tirrell, 1991b p.338).

There is a distinct advantage to the reductive simile theory of metaphor. If, as reductive simile theorists argue, metaphor reduces to simile and similes can be explained in purely literal terms, then a semantic account of metaphor is within reach, parasitic on a semantic account of simile. To determine the message that a particular metaphor conveys, we need look only to the meaning of its corresponding simile. Moreover, the meaning of a simile is evident because it is a literal comparison.

The prospect of a semantic account of metaphor based on a simple semantic account of simile is attractive. But the reductive simile theory of metaphor rests on two false claims: one, that all metaphors have corresponding similes; and two, that similes can be explained in purely literal terms. Not every metaphor has a corresponding simile. Tirrell offers a particularly good example of such a metaphor: 'The rubies and pearls of a loving eye' (Tirrell, 1991b p.347). Tirrell adds, "with some extra work we can get 'whatever a loving eye has that is like rubies and pearls'" (Tirrell, 1991b p.347). But the 'whatever' is quantificational, and it remains quantificational because there is no object (however abstract or fictional) to which we can attach a name and so generate a substitution instance of the quantified formula. Examples abound of metaphors which either do not admit of a corresponding simile or involve some significant coaxing—for example, 'Metaphor is the peephole through which we see reality', e.e. cumming's 'pity this busy monster, manunkind, not', Marx's 'Religion is the opium of the people' and

Virginia Woolf's 'A highbrow is a man or woman of thoroughbred intelligence who rides his mind at a gallop across country in pursuit of an idea'.

The second claim, that similes can be explained in purely literal terms, is problematic for two reasons. The first problem is internal to the reductive simile theory of metaphor. Even if we grant that similes *are* explicable in purely literal terms (a claim which I deny below), a meaningful semantic account of simile is no easier than a meaningful semantic account of *metaphor*. The reason for this is simple: everything is like everything. It is not at all apparent how a semantic account of simile will explain what 'Juliet is like the sun' means. Of course Juliet is like the sun, in an endless number of ways. For example, both are physical entities, both contain carbon and both abide by the law of identity.¹⁸ But these characteristics are not the ones we are meant to notice when confronted with the simile 'Juliet is like the sun'. The second problem with the claim that similes can be explained in purely literal terms is that it is inconsistent with how similes in fact are explained. Similes are not literal comparisons. If someone says 'Juliet is like the sun', we are supposed to notice that their world revolves around her, that Juliet is bright, that she is warm, and so forth. But these are metaphors, not literal claims. In fact, I submit, the explication of *any* simile leads to the creation of metaphors.

There is a further indication that similes are not literal comparisons. Literal comparisons are most often intended as symmetrical—for example, when someone says 'My car engine is like my boat engine' they might well have said 'My boat engine is like my car engine'. Similes, however, are rarely intended as symmetrical comparisons. For example, the simile 'A mind is like a sponge' is not meant also to suggest that a sponge is

¹⁸ At this point the reader might counter that Juliet does not have any of these properties because she is a fictional character. But I do not believe that there is any special problem about discussing fictional discourse in this manner. In the context of the play, Juliet has these properties.

like a mind. Robert Burns, writing the simile 'My love is like a red, red rose', is not hoping that we also notice that a red, red rose is like his love.

The reductive simile theory of metaphor purports to solve the mystery of metaphor by equating the metaphor's message with the meaning of its corresponding simile. But I have argued that there are two fundamental difficulties with this. First, not all metaphors have corresponding similes. Second, similes are not literal comparisons, but are themselves figurative. Thus, even if we *can* construct a corresponding simile, we need not be any further along in our understanding of the metaphor.

IV.II Fogelin's Nonreductive Simile Theory Of Metaphor

Fogelin agrees with advocates of the reductive simile theory of metaphor both that (a) simile and metaphor play the same linguistic role, and (b) since any metaphor can be paraphrased as an identity or predication, a corresponding simile can be constructed. But he also is aware that similes cannot be explained in purely literal terms. Fogelin writes, "the treatment of metaphors as elliptical similes is *not* a reduction of the figurative to the non-figurative" (Fogelin, 1988 p.35, emphasis mine). The metaphor 'Man is a wolf' is figurative and, he argues, so is the simile 'Man is like a wolf'.

Fogelin thinks that the claim that everything is like everything "is perfectly stupid—altogether useless" (Fogelin, 1988 p.61). He claims that 'Juliet is like the sun' is *not* a trivial truth grounded in some obscure property that they share—for example, that they both have spatial locations in our universe. Rather, for this utterance to be true, Juliet and the sun must be similar in some *salient* respect(s). To say, 'Juliet is like the sun' is to insinuate that Juliet and the sun are similar in some salient way(s), more than just that they both have names in my vocabulary, they both move, or that both are physically warm.

The similarity arises from the salient characteristics of Juliet and the sun—for example, Juliet is a source of warmth and brightness.

Fogelin's nonreductive simile theory of metaphor addresses one of the two criticisms levelled against the reductive simile theory of metaphor, namely, that similes are not literal comparisons. But there are still problems with his account. First, he does not consider the fact that some metaphors do not have corresponding similes. Second, although he recognizes that similes, like metaphors, are figurative, admitting this nullifies the primary advantage of a simile theory of metaphor. If the meaning of 'Juliet is like the sun' is no more apparent than what the metaphor 'Juliet is the sun' is supposed to make us notice, then why look to the simile to understand the metaphor? Recall that the motivation for a simile theory of metaphor is that it is supposed to make a semantic account of metaphor readily available by appealing to a semantic account of simile based on simile as literal comparison. But if similes are themselves figurative, then there is no indication that a semantic account of simile is any easier to devise than a semantic account of metaphor.¹⁹

There are good reasons to deny a *semantic* relation between simile and metaphor, but what of the claim that they play the same linguistic role? Would it have mattered if Marx had said 'Religion is *like* the opium of the people' rather than 'Religion *is* the opium of the people'—that is, would it have had a different effect? In some cases, it does not appear

¹⁹ Keysar and Glucksberg argue, in contrast to reductive and nonreductive simile theorists, that simile reduces to metaphor: "we argue that similes are taken as implicit metaphors" (1992 p.651). It is doubtful that this gets us any further in our understanding of the relationship between simile and metaphor for the simple reason that not all similes seem to admit of a metaphorical counterpart—for example, consider the similes 'The night is like coal' and 'Our love is like a fire by the lake at night'.

to matter whether a metaphor or a simile is used—for example, Black's 'Man is a wolf' might not be any more effective than the simile 'Man is like a wolf'. In other cases, the metaphor does seem to have a more powerful effect—for example, Romeo's love-struck claim that 'Juliet is the sun' is more beautiful and effective than if he had said 'Juliet is *like* the sun'. In any case, there is no principled way to determine whether a metaphor and its corresponding simile have the same effect. However, even if they do have the same effect, it does not mean that they operate in the same way (arguing from similar effect to similar cause is not a valid form of argument). Tirrell says correctly, "it may be of heuristic value to treat a particular metaphor (or even every particular metaphor) as a simile in order to fix its meaning but it does not follow from this that metaphor is just implicit simile" (Tirrell, 1991b p.358). Similarity of effect, it seems, exhausts the relationship between simile and metaphor.

V. Metaphor And Meaning²⁰

I began Section IV by noting that the most interesting question facing metaphor theorists concerns the semantic nature of metaphor—that is, what do metaphors *mean*? In the same section I presented and rejected two answers, each of which posits a semantic link between metaphor and simile. In this section I consider two more approaches to explaining metaphorical meaning: first, one which I term the ‘traditional’ theory of metaphorical meaning; and second, Davidson’s controversial account of metaphor and meaning. I argue that the traditional theory of metaphorical meaning suffers greatly from the absence of a sophisticated semantics for metaphor, and that such a semantics is not easily formulated. Then, I turn to Davidson’s account of metaphor, an account which, according to some, suffers greatly just because it relies on a sophisticated semantics.

V.1 The Traditional Theory Of Metaphorical Meaning

Supporters of the traditional theory of metaphorical meaning claim that metaphors have two meanings, one literal and one metaphorical.²¹ This approach to metaphor and meaning is *prima facie* plausible—for example, it seems right to say that the metaphor ‘My life is a television sitcom’ means, on the one hand, that *literally* my life is a television sitcom and, on the other hand, that I keep finding myself in similar comical situations (or something like this). On this view, interpreting a metaphor successfully requires recognizing that it is the metaphorical meaning which is intended by the speaker. If one fails to recognize this, then, in most cases, one is left with a banal or an absurd

²⁰ I am greatly indebted to Bjørn Ramberg for his assistance during the writing of this section, particularly with respect to the discussion of Davidson’s philosophy of language.

²¹ In broader contexts, some theorists write about *literal meaning* and *speaker’s meaning*.

remark.

Numerous theorists have espoused this view. Henle writes about two senses, 'literal' and 'figurative', both of which "refer to meanings of terms" (Henle, 1958 p.85). I.A. Richards, when defining metaphor, says, "in the simplest formulation, when we use a metaphor we have two thoughts of different things active together and supported by a single word, or phrase, whose *meaning* is a resultant of their interaction" (Richards, 1964 p.51, emphasis mine). Both Henle and Richards consider the notion of metaphorical meaning self-evident, but a somewhat more sophisticated account—that is, one which explains the nature of metaphorical meaning—is given by Black (Black, 1962, 1977, 1978). Black uses the tasteless metaphor 'The poor are the negroes of Europe' to make his point. He says,

in the given context the focal word 'negroes' obtains a new meaning, which is not quite its meaning in literal uses, nor quite the meaning which any literal substitute would have. The new context...imposes extension of meaning upon the focal word. (Black, 1962 pp.38-39)

When someone says the metaphor 'The poor are the negroes of Europe', they *extend* the meaning of the word 'negroes' to include the poor of Europe. In Black's early work, the nature of this extension is not entirely clear—that is, it is not obvious whether Black argues that the speaker induces a permanent or a temporary change in the meaning of 'negroes'. Later, Black clarifies the point by insisting that when someone makes a metaphor "he is *attaching* an altered sense to the words he is using in context...without thereby inducing any permanent change in the standard meaning of the words used metaphorically" (Black, 1978 pp.187-188). In the above example, then, 'negroes' means, metaphorically, people of African descent and the poor of Europe, but only momentarily, for the purposes of making that particular utterance. Interpreting a metaphor, Black

argues, requires looking past the literal meaning of the words used to the meaning that the speaker intends. There is "a shift in the *speaker's* meaning—and the corresponding *hearer's* meaning—what both of them understand by words, as used on the particular occasion" (Black, 1977 p.29).

Harold Skulsky's proposal is similar to Black's, but bolder. He argues that when we create a metaphor we switch languages, to what he calls 'metaphorese' (Skulsky, 1986 p.365). Languages are like games, he says, and "the violation of the rules of one game can signal the beginning of another, with different rules" (Skulsky, 1986 p.366). When faced with metaphor, we recognize that the words are not meant to be interpreted literally—that is, in our normal language—so we interpret them in metaphorese.²² He adds, "if I am right about metaphorese, it is misleading to say that the figurative speaker is violating rules" (Skulsky, 1986 p.366). Although Skulsky's specifics are different—that is, one meaning in each of two languages rather than two meanings in one language—his central intuition is the same as Black's: metaphorical utterances have two meanings.

V.II Problems With The Traditional Theory Of Metaphorical Meaning

There are some questions we might wish to ask before embracing the traditional theory of metaphorical meaning. In particular, we would want to know what notion of 'meaning' underwrites its claims about metaphor and meaning. As it is, none of the above theorists offers a semantics to support their claims about metaphorical meaning. Black comes the closest with his definition of "meaning" as "whatever a competent hearer may be said to have grasped when he succeeds in responding adequately to the actual or hypothetical verbal action consisting in the serious utterance of the sentence(s) in question" (Black,

²² Presumably there is also ironese, hyperbolese, and so on.

1977 p.24). But this definition is highly suspect. First, what is to count as responding adequately? It cannot be that what counts is an indication that the speaker was understood, because that is circular. Second, even if Black could say what it means to respond adequately without appealing to meaning, we might ask whether it would do as a definition of "meaning." It is arguable that we sometimes "respond adequately" to an utterance even though we do not know what the utterance means. Unfortunately, Black never fully explicates his notion of meaning.

Perhaps Richards, Henle, Black, Skulsky and others who posit metaphorical meaning assume that a semantics for metaphor is nearby, but those who have tried to construct one are more cautious (Bergmann, 1979; Guentner, 1975; van Dijk, 1975). Bergmann says she is interested only in "showing what such a formal language *might* look like" (Bergmann, 1979 p.226, emphasis mine). Guentner also is careful, writing that his aim is "to provide some simple semantic techniques, based upon methods in formal semantics with which an analysis of the notion of metaphor *might* be profitably developed" (Guentner, 1975 p.199, emphasis mine). Teun van Dijk opens his discussion with the general agenda of discussing "*some of the problems* in the formal, i.e., logical, semantics of metaphorical languages" (van Dijk, 1975 p.173, emphasis mine).

Why is providing a semantics for metaphor difficult? First, presumably the semantics should provide a way to distinguish metaphors from nonsense and from other utterances intended neither literally nor metaphorically; however, as I argued in Section I, there is no sufficiently determinate set of sufficiently subtle criteria for determining what counts as metaphor to support a semantically principled distinction. Second, setting aside the demarcation problem, a semantics for metaphor in any case must include a means of determining which term(s) is (are) intended metaphorically, but, again, it is not clear how

this can be done. How can we formulate rules which systematically determine that it is, for example, 'sheep' which is meant metaphorically and not 'people' in the metaphor 'People are sheep'? Third, the greatest challenge facing a semantics for metaphor is that the metaphorical meaning of an utterance cannot arise from the same degree of systematicity that underlies literal meaning—that is, the meaning of a metaphor cannot be generated by appealing to its subsentential components and logical structure. If metaphorical meaning *could* be determined by appealing to its subsentential components and logical structure, then the semantics for metaphor would have to determine, prior to generating the metaphorical meaning of the utterance, whether the utterance is literal or metaphorical. Otherwise, an utterance's metaphorical meaning would, *ex hypothesis*, be the *same* as its literal meaning! It is not clear, however, how this would be done. As it is, metaphorical meaning, unlike literal meaning, is utterly dependent on context. But, if this is the case, then a semantics for metaphor cannot generate metaphorical meaning without the creativity and input of an interpreter, and so it loses its functionality as a formal mechanism.

What, then, is the benefit of calling what a metaphor makes us notice 'meaning'? It seems that there is no benefit other than satisfying certain pre-theoretic intuitions. In fact, I have shown that there are good reasons to *resist* positing metaphorical meaning. With this in mind, I will turn to Davidson's account of metaphor and meaning, an account which, unlike those of Henle, Richards, Black and others, is informed by a general semantic project.

V.III Davidson's Account Of Metaphor

Davidson's thesis is, "metaphors mean what the words, in their most literal interpretation,

mean, and nothing more" (Davidson, 1978 p.245). In stark contrast to the traditional theory of metaphorical meaning, Davidson argues that there is no such thing as metaphorical meaning. The metaphor 'Man is a wolf' *means* (literally) that man is a wolf, and nothing more.

Davidson says that we must distinguish between "what words mean and what they are used to do", and that "metaphor belongs exclusively to the domain of use" (Davidson, 1978 p.247). In this respect, metaphor is similar to lying, criticizing, hinting, asserting or promising. Metaphor, like these other cases, is something which we *do* with words, not something which we can interpret just by examining the words themselves. Davidson argues that positing figurative meaning explains nothing: "[figurative meaning] is not a feature of the word that the word has prior to and independent of the context of use" (Davidson, 1978 p.255). He does not quarrel with what Black and others claim are the *effects* of metaphor, rather, his criticism centres on the way they explain *how* these effects are accomplished. Although Davidson argues that, for example, 'Man is a wolf' just *means* that man is a wolf, he adds that someone might use this sentence to make us notice how much men and wolves are alike. Metaphor, then, "is brought off by the imaginative employment of words and sentences and depends entirely on the ordinary meanings of those words and hence on the ordinary meanings of the sentences they comprise" (Davidson, 1978 p.247).

Davidson's insistence that there is no such thing as metaphorical meaning entails the denial that metaphors can be paraphrased. Metaphors cannot be paraphrased, not because they say something too novel for literal expression, but because there is nothing to paraphrase. Paraphrase is appropriate to what is said, but "a metaphor does not *say* anything beyond its literal meaning (nor does its maker say anything, in using the

metaphor, beyond the literal)" (Davidson, 1978 p.246). What others refer to as a paraphrase of a metaphor, Davidson might call an explication of the intended effect of the metaphor—that is, what the metaphor is meant to get us to notice; "the legitimate function of so-called paraphrase is to make the lazy or ignorant reader have a vision like that of the skilled critic" (Davidson, 1978 p.264).

Davidson's reason for rejecting metaphorical meaning is simple: what a metaphor gets us to notice is not propositional in nature. Metaphors make us notice something about the world, not about language. He supports his denial of metaphorical meaning by adding that "it should make us suspect the theory [that there is metaphorical meaning] that it is so hard to decide, even in the case of the simplest metaphors, exactly what the content is supposed to be" (Davidson, 1978 p.262, insert mine). There is no limit to what a metaphor calls to our attention: "when we try to say what a metaphor 'means', we soon realize that there is no end to what we want to mention" (Davidson, 1978 p.263).

Davidson understands that his account of metaphor might provoke a reaction that it is "no more than an insistence on restraint in using the word meaning", but he adds that "this would be wrong" (Davidson, 1978 p.262). To understand why it is wrong, we need to know more about Davidson's general approach to the semantics of natural languages. To that end, I now will outline what I understand to be the salient features of his semantics with respect to metaphor.

As I noted in Section I, Davidson rejects the traditional view that languages are dependent on conventional meanings. Alternatively, he claims that no two people speak the same language, and that each of us speaks different languages at different times. He supports his denial of the traditional notion of a language with two observations: one, no two people share exactly the same vocabulary; and two, malapropisms are pervasive in

successful interpersonal communication (Davidson, 1991 p.3). For Davidson, then, literal meaning, or 'first meaning' as he prefers to call it, is not conventional but, rather, "applies to words and sentences as uttered by a particular speaker on a particular occasion" (Davidson, 1986 p.434). Semantically speaking, then, there is *only* literal (or first) meaning. Davidson uses the meaning/use distinction to separate first meaning from whatever intentions the speaker has when they make the utterance, other than the intention to utter something that has specific truth conditions. In doing so, he clearly demarcates the role of semantics as the systematic account of first meaning.

How, then, according to Davidson's semantics, do sentences acquire their meaning? A sentence gets its meaning from its place in the language of which it is a part—that is, the meaning of a sentence is determined by its composition (the subsentential components and logical structure of the sentence). Davidson writes, "a competent speaker or interpreter is able to interpret utterances, his own or those of others, on the basis of the semantic properties of the parts, or words, in the utterance, and the structure of the utterance" (Davidson, 1986 p.436). It is our understanding of a sentence's composition that allows us to determine its truth conditions and thus, according to Davidson, its meaning. An interpreter learns the semantic role of each of a finite number of subsentential components along with the semantic consequences of a finite number of modes of composition (Davidson, 1986 p.437). A notable advantage of this characterization of the systematicity of language is that it accounts for our ability to interpret sentences that we have never heard before.

Davidson adds that a theory of truth similar to Tarski's provides the necessary mechanism for characterizing how the meaning of a sentence depends on its composition. It should be made clear that in outlining his specific proposal, Davidson does not make

claims about how we *do* interpret what someone's utterances mean—to say that an explicit theory for interpreting a speaker is a model of the interpreter's linguistic competence is not to suggest that the interpreter knows any such theory"—rather, his claims are "about what must be said to give a satisfactory description of the competence of the interpreter" (Davidson, 1986 p.438). Davidson introduces Convention T by which a Tarski-style T-sentence can be generated for any sentence of the language. T-sentences have the form "'s' is true in *L* if and only if *p*" (where '*s*' is the sentence in question, '*L*' is the language to which the utterance belongs and '*p*' is the set of truth conditions satisfying *s*). For example, the sentence 'The rain in Spain falls mainly on the plain' is true in the language I am using if and only if the rain in Spain falls mainly on the plain. Davidson explains that a truth theory "provides a recursive characterization of the truth conditions of all possible utterances of the speaker, and it does this through an analysis of utterances in terms of sentences made up from the finite vocabulary and the finite stock of modes of composition" (Davidson, 1986 pp.437-438).

It is evident, then, why Davidson rejects a semantic account of metaphor. A semantics must provide a recursive way to determine the meaning of sentences. Davidson wishes to provide a semantics for natural languages which meets the following criteria: the meaning of an utterance is given by its truth conditions (captured by its corresponding T-sentence), and its truth conditions are *determined* by its subsentential components and logical structure (in other words, by its place in the language). In Davidson's view, metaphors do not have meaning because what we notice as a result of a metaphor *cannot* be determined by appealing to its subsentential components and logical structure. For example, we cannot determine what the speaker intends us to notice when they utter the metaphor 'Television is a drug' simply by appealing to the (literal) meanings of its

subsential components and its logical structure. If we *could* determine what we are meant to notice as a result of a metaphor simply by examining its subsential components and logical structure, then we could not differentiate the utterance's literal meaning, which is determined the same way, from its metaphorical meaning. How, then, do we interpret, for example, the metaphor 'Television is a drug'? Attending to the context of the utterance, we, so to speak, look to the world for salient similarities between television and drugs.

Of course, Davidson does not deny that context also plays a role in literal interpretation. However, the role of context in literal interpretation is different than its role in metaphorical interpretation. In the case of literal interpretation, the context provides inductive evidence for the truth conditions of an utterance. But this is evidence for the meaning of the sentence only, and precisely in so far as, it is evidence for a truth-theory which allows us to derive the relevant T-sentence as a theorem. Evidence for a T-sentence is evidence for the meaning of the utterance only in conjunction with evidence for other T-sentences which, taken together, allow us to formulate a truth-theory. Thus, the evidence is evidence for the meaning of an utterance in so far as it permits us to situate each utterance in the structure that relates each semantically to one another via the principle of compositionality. The meaning of the sentence just is this structural location in the language of which it is a part. Inductively determining the T-sentence that gives the truth conditions of an utterance, and theoretically determining the meaning that an utterance has, are distinct according to Davidson. The former involves empirical observation and developing theories about the speaker's beliefs and prejudices, both of which require attending to the context of the utterance. The latter is a semantic claim, projecting beyond any particular context which inductively supports it. Roughly put, the context of an

utterance provides clues to which language the speaker is using, but it is the place of the utterance in the language that determines the meaning of the utterance—that is, to give the meaning of an utterance is to say thereby how the speaker would use those words in possible utterances and contexts. In the case of metaphor, the only place that the utterance has in the language is its *literal* meaning and, so, the only meaning that a metaphor has is its literal meaning. Davidson allows a *pragmatic* notion of metaphorical meaning (and of metaphorical truth)—"*once we understand a metaphor we can call what we grasp the 'metaphorical truth' and (up to a point) say what the 'metaphorical meaning' is*"—however these are pragmatic labels, not semantic ones (Davidson, 1978 p.247, emphasis mine).

V.IV Criticisms Of Davidson's Account

Those who criticize Davidson's account of metaphor tend to take one of two approaches. Either they deny Davidson's claim that what metaphors make us notice is indeterminate (the claim which, they say, grounds Davidson's rejection of metaphorical meaning), or they argue that Davidson's own semantics is receptive to metaphorical meaning. I will consider each of these objections in turn, showing that ultimately they are grounded on misinterpretations of Davidson's semantic project.

Davidson supports his claim that what metaphor makes us notice is not propositional in nature with the observation that "it is hard to decide, even in the case of the simplest metaphors, exactly what the content is supposed to be" (Davidson, 1978 p.262). The content of a metaphor, he says, is indeterminate. This claim has received ardent objection from his critics, many of whom use it to bolster their attack on Davidson's account of metaphor and meaning. Such theorists argue that it is often the

case that speakers use metaphors to convey messages that, in their context, are as determinate as comparable literal language. David Novitz uses the example of asking someone about a mutual friend who is an accountant, 'Is he still chewing numbers?' (Novitz, 1985a p.108). In this case, what the speaker intends is as clear as if they had simply asked 'Is he still working as an accountant?' Other metaphors which are presented in the literature as determinate include 'His theory is a house of cards' (Farrell, 1987 p.625), 'His sermon was a sleeping pill' (Keysar and Glucksberg, 1992 p.647) and 'The ship ploughed through the sea' (Searle, 1979 p.97). In each of these cases, given an appropriate context, it is quite clear what the speaker intends us to notice.

That metaphors can convey determinate messages is not just argued of a handful of carefully chosen examples. Hanson makes a more general claim about metaphor: "typically there is a high degree of *intersubjective agreement* on the interpretation of a given metaphorically intended utterance in a given context" (Hanson, 1980 p.444). Bergmann agrees, arguing that metaphors *often* have determinate contents (Bergmann, 1980). She contends that the richness of metaphor is compatible with its use in making assertions: "the fact that metaphors 'generate' further and further readings does not...conflict with the claim that an author *can* successfully use a metaphor to convey a fairly specific cognitive content" (Bergmann, 1980 pp.230-231). The determinacy of the message which a metaphorical utterance conveys is dependent on its context—that is, as I argued in Section III, the context guides our recognition of which characteristics of the metaphorical term(s) are salient. So, although we might think of all sorts of perceived properties of horses in the absence of any particular context, it is our use of horses for transportation that you recognize as salient when you interpret my late Friday afternoon utterance, 'Time to get on my horse and ride home' as an indication that I am ready to

leave the university to drive home. Furthermore, the recognition of the salience of particular characteristics is not arbitrary, but, as Nalini Bhushan and Lillian Speck note, is "grounded in a rationale that can be articulated and justified with respect to the beliefs of the community" (Bhushan and Speck, 1993 p.5).

How should Davidson respond to the charge that metaphors, in their context, often convey determinate messages? First, I think, Davidson should admit that, in his writing, he does not recognize that we indeed do use metaphors to convey determinate messages. Nonetheless, Davidson has room to admit this and yet retain his original claim that what metaphors make us notice is not propositional in nature—that is, convincing Davidson that metaphors *can* convey determinate messages does not commit him to adopting the notion of metaphorical meaning. In fact, it should not surprise us that he *can* allow the sort of determinacy pointed to by Hanson, Bergmann and others; this should not surprise us because his semantic treatment of metaphor commits him to similar semantics for other tropes whose messages most often are determinate. Davidson must argue, for example, that many instances of irony are intended to make us notice the negation of what it is that is uttered—for example, 'Bruce a nice person', uttered ironically, *means* that Bruce is a nice person, but is intended to make the interpreter notice that *it is not the case that* Bruce is a nice person. In cases of irony, hyperbole, sarcasm and other tropes, the speaker often intends the interpreter to notice something determinate. For example, in many instances of irony and sarcasm, we are simply meant to notice the opposite of what is said and, in many cases of hyperbole, we are supposed to notice that the utterance is an exaggeration of some determinate piece of information. Recall, however, that Davidson appeals to the indeterminacy of what metaphors make us notice only as an *indication* that there is no such thing as metaphorical meaning—"it should *make us suspect* the theory [that there is

metaphorical meaning] that it is so hard to decide, even in the case of the simplest metaphors, exactly what the content is supposed to be" (Davidson, 1978 p.262, emphasis mine). In fact, Davidson gives *one* reason for his denial of metaphorical meaning: *what we notice as a result of metaphor is not propositional in nature.*

What, then, does Davidson mean when he says that the content of a metaphor is indeterminate? He means that what a metaphor is supposed to make us notice is *not* determined by its subsentential components and logical structure. However, according to his semantics, composition is exactly how *meaning* is determined—for example, the meaning of the utterance 'Darryl and P.J. are walking to the beer store' is *determined* by the role of the names 'Darryl' and 'P.J.', the predicate 'are walking to y' and the term 'beer store' in the language of the utterance. In Davidson's semantics, no such mechanism exists for determining what metaphors make us notice, *even those whose message is clear.* The metaphor 'His sermon was a sleeping pill' has the meaning, generated by its subsentential components and logical structure, that his sermon was a sleeping pill.

Let me now turn to the second approach Davidson's critics take. Unlike Bergmann *et al.* who simply deny Davidson's claims about metaphor, Novitz argues that what Davidson says about metaphor and meaning is inconsistent with Davidson's own semantic programme (Novitz, 1985b). Novitz contends that T-sentences *can* be generated for metaphors. His example is as follows: "Suppose that Bill Brandt comes across a well known politician in a compromising situation, photographs the scene, and says: 'I have locked you into my picture'" (Novitz, 1985b p.326). Attending to the context of the utterance, assuming that Brandt's beliefs are, for the most part, the same as our own, and assuming that Brandt is being informative and truthful, Novitz argues that we can construct, in accordance with Davidson's programme, the following T-sentence: "I have

locked you into my picture' is true for Brandt at time t , if and only if the speaker has indelibly recorded (on film) the visual image of some or other person in a way which accurately reveals certain aspects of the situation, at t " (Novitz, 1985b p.327). Novitz adds that this T-sentence can be altered to capture any connotations that we might respond are not included in the formulation he presents. Furthermore, he argues that the fact that we can construct the T-sentence demonstrates that we have "grasped the implicative relationships between the use of this sentence and other sentences" (Novitz, 1985b p.327).

Novitz is right to claim, with Hanson, Bergmann and others, that metaphors often carry messages that are as clear as comparable literal language, but his contention that Davidson's semantic programme allows for metaphorical meaning rests primarily on a misinterpretation of how T-sentences are constructed. Novitz argues correctly that interpreting an utterance metaphorically requires attending to its context, as does interpreting an utterance literally, but he mistakenly claims that this is how utterances get their meaning. Recall that, although context provides inductive evidence for which T-sentence applies to an utterance, the T-sentence itself is constructed from subsentential components and logical structure—that is, it is determined by the place of the sentence in the language of which it is a part. The place that the sentence has in a language is determined by its subsentential components and logical structure. Davidson denies metaphorical meaning because the message that a metaphor conveys *cannot* be determined by appealing to its composition. The role of context in the interpretation of a metaphor is to direct us to which features *of the world*, not of the language, are salient given the metaphorical utterance. There can be only one meaning: literal meaning. If a literal interpretation does not fit the context, but a metaphorical interpretation does, we (so to speak) refer to the context for further clues about what we are meant to notice as a result

of the utterance. Novitz's approach fails to maintain the distinction between pragmatics and semantics.

In closing, I want to consider two more objections that have been raised against Davidson's account of metaphor. First, Goodman objects to Davidson's claim that metaphors cannot be paraphrased. He plays down the importance of paraphrase to meaning, saying that the "paraphrase of many literal sentences also is exceedingly difficult" (Goodman, 1978 p.222). But, like the others who make this objection, he misinterprets Davidson's motivation for denying that metaphors can be paraphrased. Davidson does not deny that metaphors can be paraphrased because they are too vibrant and open-ended, but, rather, because, while paraphrase is appropriate to what is *said*, in the case of metaphor nothing is said except its literal meaning. A metaphor does not abbreviate a paraphrase, it generates one. Second, Black's "gravest objection" to Davidson's account is that "it supplies no insight into how metaphors work" (Black, 1977 p.189). This is largely true, but Davidson is interested in the semantics of metaphor, not the pragmatics of metaphor—that is, Davidson's explicit concern is to determine what metaphors mean, not how they work. In fact, Davidson's semantic treatment of metaphor is entirely compatible with Black's pragmatic account of how metaphors work.

VI. Metaphor And Truth

Are metaphors candidates for truth? We certainly *behave* as though some metaphors are true and others are false. For example, imagine a situation in which I say, of a particularly abrasive colleague, 'So-and-so has a sandpaper personality', to which you respond, 'That's true'. Or perhaps I say 'Sandy earns gold bars for his work!' to which you respond, 'That's false, he earns no more than you or I'. Granted, your responses to my metaphors might not indicate your agreement or disagreement so explicitly—for example, you might disagree with my metaphorical claim that Sandy earns gold bars for his work with a sarcastic 'Sure!', a polite 'You are mistaken' or a simple *are-you-out-of-your-mind?* facial expression.²³ Nonetheless, we often exhibit behaviour that indicates clearly that we agree with certain metaphors and disagree with others. For example, most readers will agree with the metaphorical claims, 'Nolan Ryan is a machine', 'Automobiles have personalities' and 'Love is intoxicating', and most will disagree with the metaphorical claims, 'The Rockie Mountains are ugly zits on the face of the earth', 'Girl Scouts are Nazis' and 'Gilligan was an Einstein'. Metaphorical claims are not excused from justificatory assessment—that is, we expect people to be able to support their metaphorical claims just as we expect them to be able to support their literal claims. As Tirrell says, the creator of a metaphor is *obliged*, in a sense, to explicate and defend their metaphor if they are challenged (Tirrell, 1989 p.27). For example, I might respond to your challenge to my metaphorical claim, 'Sandy earns gold bars for his work', by citing his \$100,000 a year salary.

Although there is copious empirical evidence that we take metaphors to be

²³ I ask the reader to grant me some leeway when I equate *agreement* with a metaphor with assessing it as *true*. I will explain this relation in greater detail below.

candidates for truth, Davidson's semantics seems to deny the possibility that metaphors, interpreted metaphorically, can be true. Truth, according to Davidson's semantics, applies to *sentences*. To discover whether a particular sentence is true, we must appeal to its meaning. Moreover, according to Davidson's semantics, the meaning of a sentence *just is* its truth conditions—for example, 'It is raining outside today' is true if and only if it is raining outside today. However, Davidson argues (and I have accepted his arguments), metaphors have only one meaning, their literal meaning. Thus, the answer to the question whether metaphors are candidates for truth is a potentially misleading 'Yes'. According to Davidson's semantics, metaphors are candidates for truth *based on their literal interpretation*. Most of the metaphors I have used, then, are patently false—for example, 'Man is a wolf', 'Juliet is the sun', 'Metaphor is the peephole through which we see reality' and 'Television is a drug'—while some are true, though trivially so—for example, 'No man is an island' and 'People are not sheep'.

The truth or falsity of a metaphor's *literal* interpretation—that is, its *semantic* truth—is not the subject of our concern when we ask the question whether metaphors can be true. What we want to know is whether a metaphor, *understood metaphorically*, can be true. For example, we are not concerned whether 'No man is an island' is literally true; we want to know if the message that it conveys is a candidate for truth. Fogelin thinks that if we adopt Davidson's account of metaphor we are "at a loss...to explain our normal practice of calling certain metaphorical utterances true" (Fogelin, 1986 p.75). But Fogelin allows Davidson only one kind of truth, namely, semantic truth. Davidson, however, speaks of another kind of truth when he says of his account of metaphor, "this is not to deny that there is such a thing as metaphorical truth, *only to deny it of sentences*" (Davidson, 1978, p.257, emphasis mine).

I want to suggest a way to characterize metaphorical truth consistent with Davidson's semantic project. The most important thing to note is that we assess metaphors *according to the message they convey*, not according to their semantic content. There are, then, two questions we can ask of any particular metaphorical utterance: first, 'Is the sentence true?'; and, second, 'Is the message that the metaphor conveys true?' It is the latter question, I submit, that is of concern to our investigation of the relation between metaphors and truth. Metaphorical truth, then, is a matter for *pragmatics*, not semantics.

To facilitate my characterization of the pragmatic truth of metaphor, I want to argue that all linguistic use involves two levels of intention. First, whenever we make a linguistic utterance, we do so with the intention of uttering something that is true if and only if its truth conditions obtain—for example, I say, "Biff looks tired today" with the intention of uttering a sentence which is true if and only if Biff looks tired today.²⁴ Second, all utterances are made with the intention to inform, tell a story, amuse, or nudge the interpreter to notice something about the world—for example, in addition to saying, "Biff looks tired today" with the intention of uttering something that is true if and only if Biff looks tired today, I make this utterance with the intention of informing you of something. There is a causal, but not a necessary, connection between what an utterance means and what its creator intends the interpreter to notice as a result of the

²⁴ I ask for some leeway here. Of course, when we ask questions or issue commands we do not *explicitly* intend to say something that is true if and only if its truth conditions obtain. Nonetheless, the (if you will) *content* of every question and every command is an indicative sentence—that is, questions and commands have two components: first, the intention to ask a question or to issue a command; and second, the content of the question or command. So, for example, the question, 'Did Steve go skiing last weekend?' is broken down into two components: first, 'The next sentence is intended as a question' (or something like this); and second, 'Steve went skiing last weekend'. Understood this way, questions and commands are also uttered with the intention of saying something—that is, the *content* of the question or command—which is true if and only if its truth conditions obtain.

utterance—that is, although the specific utterance I choose causes you to notice something, the same words can be used, in different contexts, with very different second level intentions. In the example, "Biff looks tired today", I might, on one occasion, simply intend to inform you that Biff looks tired today, and, on another occasion, intend to inform you that I think we should ask Biff to pull the car over so that one of us, who is more awake, can drive. All uses of language, literal or otherwise, involve both levels of intention. An utterance devoid of the intention of saying something that is true if and only if its truth conditions obtain is not linguistic—for example, shouting "Table top!" to startle you is not linguistic, rather, it is noise.

Metaphor is a particular kind of use of the second level of intention—that is, when we create a metaphor, we utter a sentence which may be literally banal or absurd in order to nudge the interpreter to notice something about the world. Notice, however, that there is no fundamental difference between many claims couched in literal language and claims couched in metaphor; in both cases we intend to inform the interpreter of something other than what the meaning of the utterance indicates. Recall my earlier example of walking down a crowded sidewalk and saying, 'Lots of traffic today'. Alternatively, I could have said 'Geez, there are a lot of people out and about today'. In all important respects, the same message is conveyed—that is, it makes no significant difference to our conversation which one I decide to utter. In both cases, I utter a sentence that is true if and only if its truth conditions obtain. Furthermore, in both cases I make the utterance with the intention of *informing* the interpreter that I am becoming frustrated by all the people that we have to walk around.

A common mistake is to suppose that messages couched in literal language are determinate, whereas messages couched in metaphors and other tropes are indeterminate.

This has led some theorists to suppose that metaphors, at best, are heuristic, and are not candidates for truth (cf. Loewenberg, 1975). As I argued in Section V, however, metaphors, in their contexts, often convey determinate messages. Moreover, it is naïve to suppose that literal utterances always convey determinate messages. For example, what I intend you to notice as a result of my utterance, ‘Mother Theresa is a very kind woman’ is determinate no more than what Shakespeare wants us to notice when he writes, ‘Juliet is the sun’. When I say ‘Mother Theresa is a very kind woman’ I might have any number of things in mind. For example, I might want you to think about her efforts to secure better food and water for thousands, perhaps millions, of poor people around the world. Alternatively, I might want you to think of her quest for better education for the children of less wealthy countries. Or, perhaps I want you to notice that her kindness arises from her devotion to the lives of others and the forfeiting of her own comfort. Of course, instead, I might want you to notice some combination of these. The point is, we often make literal claims like ‘Tim is a good spouse’, ‘I like Chinese food’ or ‘Beer makes me feel nice’ without having any particular proposition or set of propositions in mind. This indeterminacy might seem at odds with Davidson’s semantics because his semantics tells us how we can generate the truth conditions for *any* sentence of a language. But remember, although Davidson’s semantics assigns meaning by assigning truth *conditions* to sentences, it does not tell us how to determine whether those conditions are met. So, although we know that ‘Tim is a good spouse’ is true if and only if Tim is a good spouse, Davidson’s semantics does not tell us how to determine whether these conditions are satisfied.

Deciding whether a metaphorical claim is true is a matter for pragmatic consideration. First, we must decide what the metaphor is meant to make us notice. As I

argued in Section III, to do this we must appeal to pragmatic considerations such as the context of the utterance. Of course, we might not be able to determine the specific message that the metaphor conveys—that is, as I argued in Section V, the message that a metaphor conveys might be determinate, as in the case ‘His sermon was a sleeping pill’, or indeterminate, as in the case ‘Life is a journey’. Second, once we determine the message that the metaphor conveys, we assess the pragmatic appropriateness *of that message*. To do so, we appeal to *pragmatic* considerations of agreement, empirical evidence, what we read in the newspaper, what our teachers, authorities, friends and parents say, and so forth. In any particular case, the results of our analysis likely will prompt us to apply to the metaphor (even if hastily) a label like *true, false, legitimate, valid, fitting, apt, rude, creative, tasteless, uninsightful, or imaginative*. Or, alternatively, we simply might agree or disagree with the metaphor.

Note that the process outlined above and the labels just listed are not exclusive to metaphorical claims; that is, we engage in this process and apply these labels when we encounter *literal* claims as well. It is no surprise, then, that our assessment of the indeterminate metaphorical claim ‘Juliet is the sun’ might be the same as our assessment of the literal claim ‘Canadians are friendly people’—for example, we might say that they are *generally true*. And it is no surprise that our assessment of the metaphorical claim, ‘The ship ploughed through the sea’ might be the same as our assessment of the literal claim ‘It is a beautifully sunny day today’—for example, we might say that they are *true*. Of course, assessing that a metaphorical claim or a literal claim is true does not guarantee that it *is* true. We might be hallucinating, we might be misinformed, we might not have access to all the relevant evidence, or the like.

I am not the only one who resists differentiating between metaphor and literal

language based on how we assess and justify them. Goodman, for example, observes that "we may make mistakes in applying either 'red' or 'sad' to colored objects; and we may bring tests of all sorts to bear upon our initial judgments: we may look again, compare, examine attendant circumstances, watch for corroborating and for conflicting judgments" (Goodman, 1976 p.129). A strong indication that claims couched in literal language are not fundamentally different from claims couched in metaphors is that metaphors often go unnoticed—that is, we do not analyze someone's claims according to those which are made literally and those which are made metaphorically. In daily discourse, metaphors are inconspicuously and effortlessly mixed with literal language. Timothy Binkley writes, "a metaphorical (or other non-literal) expression could be clarified or corrected with either a literal or a non-literal one" (Binkley, 1974 p.175). For example, when you say to me, 'Biff is a pit bull', indicating, in the context, that you think that he is vicious, I can disagree with you by saying either 'No he isn't, he's an innocent bunny rabbit' or 'No he isn't, he's harmless'.

Answering the question 'Are metaphors candidates for truth?' is momentous because it allows us to understand how the semantics of metaphor relates to the pragmatics of metaphor. The importance of maintaining a distinction between semantic truth and pragmatic assessment becomes more apparent when we consider an interesting observation made by Thomas Kulka about what underwrites metaphorical falsehood (Kulka, 1992). Kulka is concerned that the negation of a true metaphor does not always strike us as false. For example, Kulka says that the negation of the metaphor, 'The lake is a sapphire', namely, '*It is not the case that* the lake is a sapphire', does not strike us as false, but, rather, is "taken as a plain literal truth or as a metaphor which is in some sense true" (Kulka, 1992 p.797). Treating the truth of metaphor as pragmatic rather than semantic

clears the way for a response to Kulka's concern. If we consider a certain metaphor true, it is because of *what the metaphor makes us notice*, not what the sentence says. Thus, to negate a metaphor, it is not sufficient to negate the sentence that the metaphor is couched in. Rather, to negate a metaphor, we must negate what it is that the metaphor makes us notice. So, if the metaphor 'The lake is a sapphire' is intended to make us notice how blue the lake is, then its negation is a claim that the lake is not very blue, whether made metaphorically or otherwise.

VII. The Functions Of Metaphor

Thus far I have discussed what metaphors are, when they are created, how they work, and what they mean, but I have not yet said anything about what we use them to do.

Primarily, of course, metaphors are vehicles for interpersonal communication, but having this function does not distinguish them from other modes of linguistic communication.

What I want to answer is the question what functions are *characteristic* of metaphor?

Roughly, there are four such functions. We use metaphors to embellish the style of our written or oral communication, to fill gaps in our vocabulary, to provide rough drafts of theories, and to alter our views about each other and about the world. I do not pretend that this list is exhaustive, but it does represent the most notable functions of metaphor. Moreover, I recognize that any particular metaphor often fulfils more than one of these functions. Nonetheless, I want to discuss each function separately, paying particular attention to the latter two because they best illustrate the power and influence of metaphor.

VII.I Metaphor And Stylistic Embellishment

The least controversial claim that can be made about the function of metaphor is that sometimes metaphors are used as stylistic embellishments. Theorists of metaphor from the Ancients onward consider this self-evident. It has always been agreed that metaphor is the poet's paintbrush. As the quotation which opens this essay attests, Aristotle thinks that the ability to create imaginative metaphors is a sign of genius because it indicates a keen eye for resemblances. To Aristotle's claim Deutsch adds that the making of good metaphors also implies an eye for *differences*; what metaphors make us notice "issues from more complex interactions of perceptions, feelings, and thoughts than were dreamt of in the good Greek's philosophy" (Deutsch, 1962 p.73). It is generally better to read poetic

metaphors in their context, but, nonetheless, let us pause for a moment to consider some excerpts which hint at the genius that Aristotle writes about:

A child said, What is the grass? fetching it to me with full hands;
How could I answer the child?...I do not know what it is any more than he.
I guess it must be the flag of my disposition, out of hopeful green stuff woven...
Or I guess it is the handkerchief of the Lord...
Or I guess the grass is itself a child...
Or I guess it is a uniform hieroglyphic...
And now it seems to me the beautiful uncut hair of graves.
(Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*, 1959)

Eye, gazelle, delicate wanderer
Drinker of horizon's fluid line.
(Stephen Spender, "Not palaces an era's crown," *Collected Poems*,
1928-1953)

Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.
(Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, 5, 5)

The use of metaphor as a stylistic embellishment, however, is not limited to poets. Writers of all sorts use metaphors to make their claims more colourfully, as do those of us brave enough to leave the treaded path of literal language during our daily discourses.²⁵

VII.II Metaphor And The Creation And Economy Of Vocabulary

Many theorists argue that metaphor is a (or *the*) central force behind the evolution of language (cf. Rorty, 1991). Henle writes that metaphor is used "to say what cannot be said in terms of literal meanings alone" (Henle, 1958 p.95). Henle suggests that when we have an idea which we cannot express literally, or when we find something in the world

²⁵ Fogelin directs our attention to a specific non-literary use of metaphor, namely, that of avoiding saying something explicitly (Fogelin, 1988 p.98). As an indication that metaphors have this function, he notes that euphemisms are often couched in metaphors (many of them dead), as in, for example, 'He *passed away*'.

which has no corresponding term in our language, we have two options: first, we can stipulate a new term which refers to that idea or thing; or, second, we can use a metaphor to, in a sense, *derive* a new term for that idea or thing. Henle argues that there is a distinct advantage to the latter option, and that this advantage explains why we often use metaphors to introduce new vocabulary.

The advantage of using a metaphor to introduce a new term into a language is that a metaphor provides the interpreter with a clue as to what the term refers to, even on their first encounter. Henle's example is the *hood* of a car. He says that when cars were first built, the term 'hood' was applied to that part of the car which stands in a similar relation to the engine of a car as the hood of a jacket does to a person's head. Henle is right, and I think his point is illustrated by noting the pervasiveness of expressions in our language that clearly are couched in dead metaphors. Many terms have a causal history which began with the introduction of a metaphor—for example, rivers have *mouths*, sometimes we are caught in a *bottleneck* in traffic, sometimes our mental state is that of being in a *fog*, television is *addictive*, chairs have *legs* and night *falls*. These are obvious examples of dead metaphors, but, in fact, the etymology of *many* words suggests that they have gone through metaphorical stages—for example, the term 'metaphor' itself has the root terms '*meta*' meaning 'along with' or 'by aid of' and '*pherein*' meaning 'to carry a load' (Liddell and Scott, s.v.). Even such sentence connectives as 'still', 'yet' and 'but' seem to have gone through metaphorical stages in their migration from physical modifier to sentence connective.²⁶ This observation, I think, attests to the importance of metaphor in the evolution of language. Goodman contends that the use of metaphor (or something like it) to introduce new terms into our vocabulary is *necessary*: "if we could not readily

²⁶ I am grateful to Ray Jennings for bringing these examples to my attention.

transfer schemata to make new sortings and orderings, we should have to burden ourselves with unmanageably many different schemata, either by the adoption of a vast vocabulary of elementary terms or by prodigious elaboration of composite ones" (Goodman, 1976 p.130). Metaphor, then, keeps language manageable.

VII.III Metaphor And Rough Drafts Of Theories

Metaphors can be used as a stylistic enhancement, and metaphor provides a way to introduce new terms into a language. Metaphor can also function to provide us with rough drafts of novel theories. Some metaphors, because their interpretations are open-ended, are ideal for expressing theories which are not fully formulated. For example, at a recent conference on philosophy and psychology, Daniel Dennett characterized his emerging theory of consciousness with the metaphor, 'Consciousness is cerebral celebrity'.²⁷ Although this metaphor itself does not constitute a theory of consciousness, it suggests, not too vaguely, the direction and strategy of Dennett's research.

But what about the use of metaphor in the so-called *hard* sciences? Physicists, chemists, biologists and the like often laud themselves for steering clear of the use of *imperfect* language like metaphor. Science, they suppose, involves the development of rigorous, precise, and fully formulated theories, and, therefore, cannot accommodate theories couched in open-ended metaphors. Few scientists would deny that metaphor is used as a pedagogical device—that is, as a heuristic mechanism for teaching theories which already can be fully formulated in literal language, as in the case of 'worm holes' and 'electron clouds'. However, metaphors, they claim, are never *theory*

²⁷ Dennett made this remark during his talk at the Meeting of the Society of Philosophy and Psychology in May, 1993 at Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, British Columbia.

constitutive—that is, metaphors used in science are never unaccompanied by a complete literal explication. I can think of no better way to try to convince someone that metaphors play an important role in the development of knowledge than to challenge this view of the use of metaphor in science.²⁸

The progress of science involves the postulation of new theories, and the postulation of new theories requires the postulation of novel categories, classifications and concepts. Scientists, then, must have a way to express theories which are not yet fully formulated. Susan Haack, among others, claims that metaphor fills this function (Haack, 1988). She says that characterizing DNA as "the master molecule which governs cellular processes" is an example of how "metaphors are a useful way of expressing newly posited and so far only imperfectly understood similarities" (Haack, 1988 p.295). Fred Van Besien agrees (Van Besien, 1989). He argues that some metaphors used in science are *theory constitutive*—that is, sometimes metaphors are used to express theories which cannot yet be fully formulated in literal language. Theory constitutive metaphors are not only invitations to further research, but also suggestions for strategy for that research. Richard Boyd claims that when theory constitutive metaphors are introduced and taken up by the scientific community, they become the property of the scientific community; "variations on them are explored by hundreds of scientific authors without their interactive quality being lost" (Boyd, 1979 p.361). Boyd also claims that these metaphors "constitute, at least for a time, an irreplaceable part of the linguistic machinery of a scientific theory" (Boyd, 1979 p.360). Thomas Kuhn echoes this sentiment, saying, "the open-endedness or inexplicitness of metaphor has an important (and I think precise) parallel in the process by

²⁸ For a general discussion of the difference between metaphors used in science and those used in literary contexts, see Steen (1992).

which scientific terms are introduced and thereafter deployed" (Kuhn, 1979 p.409).

Perhaps the best recent example of a theory constitutive metaphor is that of calling the human mind a computer. Boyd offers some examples of claims that are made about the mind based on this metaphor: that thought is a kind of "information processing"; that certain motor functions are "pre-programmed" or "hard-wired"; that the mind makes "computations"; and that consciousness is a "feedback mechanism" (Boyd, 1979 p.360). These examples might not strike us as metaphors but, as I argue below, this itself is evidence that they have altered successfully the way we conceptualize the human mind. Granted, it is true that we must be cautious about which metaphors we attribute to the underlying metaphor, 'The human mind is a computer'. Van Besien reminds us that in the preliminary stages of the explication of this metaphor, computer scientists actually borrowed terms like 'memory', 'storage' and 'retrieval' *from psychologists*. It is fairly recently that psychologists and cognitive scientists have reclaimed these terms for their research into the nature of the human mind. Nonetheless, Van Besien also directs our attention to the relative newness of the metaphor that the human mind is a computer. He reminds us that, until the end of the eighteenth century, the mind often was thought of as a clock; until the end of the nineteenth century, the mind was regarded as a steam engine or as a tree; and, in the early twentieth century the mind was compared both to radio and to radar (Van Besien, 1989 p.12). So, although the claim that thought is a kind of "information processing," or the suggestion that certain motor functions are "pre-programmed," might not strike us as metaphorical today, they have a young history which begins with the metaphor that the human mind is a computer. That this metaphor dominates research into the nature of the mind is illustrated by the fact that "psychologists do not, generally speaking, now know how to offer literal paraphrases which express the

same theoretical claims" (Boyd, 1979 p.361).

The metaphor that the human mind is a computer demonstrates the power of theory constitutive metaphors. But how could the open-endedness of metaphors fit with the notion that scientific theories are rigorous and fully explicable? Although theory constitutive metaphors first are introduced as vague notions suggesting strategies for future research, it is not the case that such metaphors necessarily resist complete explication. In fact, as Boyd notes, "such explication is typically an eventual consequence of successful scientific research" (Boyd, 1979 p.357). For example, Bohr's metaphor 'An atom is a miniature solar system', unlike the metaphor 'The human mind is a computer', was explicated to the point that it was possible to explain *exactly* in what ways an atom was like a solar system (Boyd, 1979 p.359).²⁹ Currently, many cognitive scientists are conducting research into *exactly* how the human mind is like a computer. In fact, it might be said that it is a scientist's primary duty to explicate theory constitutive metaphors. When a theory reaches this point—that is, a point of complete formulation—its claims are no longer metaphorical. By virtue of their agreed upon place in the fully formulated theory, the metaphorical terms are reified and become literal.

VII.IV Belief, Prejudice And Metaphor

In addition to providing rough drafts for theories, some metaphors, when explicated, result in shifts in the way we view each other and the world—that is, the explication of some metaphors inspires, or even constitutes, new prejudices and beliefs. Bohr's metaphor 'An atom is a miniature solar system' is an example of a fully explicated metaphor that

²⁹ Of course, given quantum theory, the atom is no longer thought to be a miniature solar system.

changed the way we thought about part of the world. Black writes, "a metaphorical statement can sometimes generate new knowledge and insight by *changing* relationships between the things designated" (Black, 1977 p.37). Metaphors, then, can create knowledge by inspiring novel descriptions of the world.

For an example of how metaphors shape beliefs and prejudices, I want to examine the portrayal of women in metaphor. Following a general exposé of metaphor and the portrayal of women, I want to consider Phyllis Rooney's claim that our concepts of reason and rationality have been influenced greatly by metaphors which are demeaning to women.

There are two ways in which women are associated with metaphor. In the first type of case, women are the secondary subject—that is, the metaphor is not directed at women, but nonetheless uses perceived characteristics of women to convey its message. In the second type of case, the metaphor is directed at women themselves. It seems that in both cases the vast majority of metaphors are derogatory. Eva Feder Kittay argues that women's activities and women's relations to men are persistently used as metaphors for men's activities (Kittay, 1988 p.63). She says, "in these metaphors man mediates his engagements with the world through a representation of it as Woman and metaphorically transposes his relation to Woman onto his relation to the world" (Kittay, 1988 p.63). Perhaps the best way to understand these metaphors is to consider their history.

Although many metaphors that either are about women or use women as the secondary subject find their roots in texts such as the Bible and Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, such metaphors are perhaps most explicit in the writings of philosophers like Bacon and Machiavelli. Kittay quotes the following passage from Bacon, who is notorious for his use of rape metaphors in his writings about the exploration of nature:

You have but to follow and as it were hound nature in her wanderings, and

you will be able, when you like, to lead and drive her afterward to the same place again...Neither ought a man to make scruple of entering and penetrating into those holes and corners, when the inquisition of truth is his whole object. (Kittay, 1988 p.72)

Genevieve Lloyd expends considerable effort theorizing about Bacon's use of metaphor (Lloyd, 1984 pp.10-19). She cites the following passages from Bacon: "nature betrays her secrets more fully when in the grip and under the pressure of art than when in enjoyment of her natural liberty" and "I am come in very truth leading to you Nature with all her children to bind her to your service and make her your slave" (Lloyd, 1984 pp.11-12). Kittay quotes passages from Machiavelli, including one in which he says, "fortune is a woman and it is necessary if you wish to master her to conquer her by force" (Kittay, 1988 p.72). In each of these metaphors, knowledge is a man's pursuit, and is realized by controlling and forcing himself upon nature as he might upon a woman.

Of course, we do not need to look to the past to find examples of metaphors which either use women as the secondary subject or are directed at women. Many dead (or are they dead?) metaphors find their origins in demeaning views of women—for example, referring to myths as 'old wives' tales', to night clubs as 'meat markets', or to a woman as 'frigid', 'a baby', 'a tart', 'a chick', 'a fox', 'a dog', 'an old bag', 'a battle-axe', 'a china-doll', 'a bitch' or 'a gold-digger'. All of these metaphors are derogatory. Moreover, this list is just a small sampling of such metaphors.

The leading question is, 'Have these metaphors influenced our beliefs and prejudices'? Although it is perhaps impossible to generate unequivocal proof that they have, I think it would be wrong to suppose that these metaphors are merely stylistic. Bacon's metaphors were an integral part of the development a new model of knowledge as the domination of nature, a model which thrives today. Lloyd says of Bacon's writing,

"these metaphors do not merely express conceptual points about the relation of knowledge and its objects...they give male content to what it is to be a good knower" (Lloyd, 1984 p.17). Moreover, our acceptance of Black's model of how metaphors work commits us to the distinct possibility that these metaphors affect the way we regard women. Recall that a metaphor works by mapping perceived salient characteristics of the secondary subject onto the primary subject. So, for example, if someone says, 'Linda is my china doll' (and if it is a live metaphor), then we interpret them by mapping salient characteristics of china dolls—for example, that they are fragile and to be looked at—onto Linda. This metaphor certainly reflects how *the speaker* views Linda, and it may also affect our view of her. Remember also that metaphors have an interactive nature such that they can induce changes not only in our conception of the primary subject, but also in our conception of the secondary subject. So, even when women are used as the secondary subject of a metaphor, the metaphor can alter our beliefs and prejudices about women. For example, calling a popular myth an 'old wives' tale' suggests that old wives are backwards or superstitious. Given the derogatory nature of the vast majority of metaphors which are directed at women or which use women as the secondary subject, it is not surprising that Kittay, Lloyd and others argue that these metaphors have shaped and maintained a predominantly depreciatory view of women.

It is not difficult to recognize that the examples that Kittay, Lloyd and I give are metaphors or dead metaphors. Not surprisingly, however, the possibility that a metaphor has influenced our beliefs and prejudices is not always so easy to spot. To illustrate this, I want to consider Rooney's argument regarding the role of metaphor in the emergence of our concepts of reason and rationality (Rooney, 1991). Rooney's thesis is that "the politics of 'rational' discourse has been set up in ways that still subtly but powerfully inhibit the

voice and agency of women" and that "reason (sometimes with its allied concepts, truth and knowledge) has regularly been conceived and understood in terms of images, metaphors, and allegories that implicitly or explicitly involve an exclusion or denigration of some element that it casts as 'feminine'" (Rooney, 1991 p.77).

To support her thesis, Rooney cites historical examples of metaphors that describe the concepts of reason and rationality. She begins by noting a predominant theme in ancient Greek philosophy which is perhaps best characterized by the Pythagorean table of opposites—the alignment of 'one, rest, straight, light and good' with 'male', and 'many, motion, curved, darkness and bad' with 'female' (Rooney, 1991 p.79). She adds, "the original mythic theme involved associating the forces of unreason with the Furies, the earth goddesses who represented dark forces with mysterious subterranean female powers" (Rooney, 1991 p.79). Rooney also quotes Aristotle:

Metaphorically and in virtue of a certain resemblance there is a justice, not indeed between a man and himself, but between certain parts of him; yet not every kind of justice but that of master and servant or that of husband and wife. For these are the ratios in which the part of the soul that has a rational principle stands to the irrational part. (Rooney, 1991 p.81)

Rooney argues that early Greek philosophers set the stage for subsequent philosophical discourse on reason and rationality. She claims that "the metaphorical pattern is set in place: it structures the 'given' or desired relationship of reason and unreason that is to provide an invisible, if not visible, first premise for many philosophers to come" (Rooney, 1991 p.82). She supports this claim with examples, taken from the writings of Augustine, Aquinas, Rousseau, Descartes, Locke, Hume, Kant, Schopenhauer and Hegel, of metaphors which align rationality with males and irrationality with females (Rooney, 1991 pp.82-84). For example, Kant writes:

To behold virtue in her proper form is nothing else than to exhibit morality

stripped of all admixture of sensuous things and of every spurious adornment of reward or self-love. How much she then eclipses everything which appears charming to the senses can easily be seen by everyone with the least effort of his reason, if it not be spoiled for all abstraction. (Rooney, 1991 p.84)

Rooney says that in the writings of these philosophers the earlier uses of metaphor tend to portray the development of reasoning skills with the extrusion of some aspect that is regarded as feminine. The later philosophers, however, tend to characterize lapses in reason with the intrusion of some feminine element, usually sexual lure.

At the end of her brief historical survey, Rooney asks the important question: "granted that the use of sex and sexist metaphors was fairly persistent in philosophical conceptions of reason,...does that necessarily [*sic*] mean that the way philosophers actually proceeded *in* their reasoning practices was in some sense biased or defective?" (Rooney, 1991 p.85). She argues, and I agree with her, that these metaphors are not merely stylistic embellishments. To support her position, she appeals to the "general agreement that metaphor contributes in some way to content and argumentation in philosophical and scientific discourse" (Rooney, 1991 p.86). The association of reason with maleness "was often intended to bolster the argument concerning reason's 'natural' status in relation to sense, the 'lower' passions, instinct, or whatever" (Rooney, 1991 p.86). Being rational, it was (and generally still is) supposed, requires exorcizing oneself of emotion.

Rooney notes that the intractability of reason makes theorizing about it susceptible to a dominant metaphor. Although this in itself is not bad, she adds that we must be aware of the distinct danger that an archetypal metaphor can become insulated from empirical refutation. The danger arises from a looming circularity of reasoning—that is, it is not clear

whether the supposed superiority of men to women is being assumed in

order to argue for the 'proper' relation of reason to body, passions and instincts; *or* whether it is assumed that reason is superior to the passions (and related 'feminine' elements), and it is also assumed that males embody reason (or more of it) and females embody unreason (or more of it), and then one infers that man is superior to woman. (Rooney, 1991 p.86)

Black is sympathetic to this possibility, saying that it is "unsettling to suppose that a metaphor might be self-certifying, by generating the very reality to which it seems to draw attention" (Black, 1977 p.37).

If Rooney is right, and our concepts of reason and rationality emerged, at least in part, from metaphors which denigrate women, then we must consider what important effects these concepts have had. The most important effect would seem to be that our concepts of reason and rationality work against women, not only by affecting the way men regard women, but also by affecting the way women regard themselves. Rooney argues that our concepts of reason and rationality facilitate the view that the contents of the mind can be partitioned into discrete groupings—that is, the idea of pure reason goes hand in hand with the notion that we have distinct types of mental states called 'beliefs', 'desires', 'instincts', and so forth (Rooney, 1991 p.94). From this categorization of mental states, an important dichotomy arises, namely, that of reason versus emotion. Rooney argues that the ideal of a *universal reason* results in a highly distorted view of what we do when we think and act, particularly when we think and act *well*. Consider someone who smothers a live grenade in a crowded school yard, saving the lives of dozens of children. We would say that this person *acted well*. It is highly doubtful, however, that their action was the result of calculated reasoning isolated from any emotional or instinctive factors. Rooney concludes by noting that it is ironic that "in [the history of reason's] attempt to gain distance from myth and fable, it has propelled itself, not by the power of reason (whatever

that would be), but by the power of a myth" (Rooney, 1991 p.98).

Rooney's argument, at the very least, is suggestive. It is important to note that the difficulty of her task is compounded by the fact that she is forced to use the very vocabulary and model of rationality that she is challenging. She alludes to this when she says, "our history has given us what, at best, can only be described as a very impoverished discourse" (Rooney, 1991 p.97). Her historical approach presents us with an alternative to the predominant description of rationality as abstract, objective and universal. Furthermore, if she is right, then it is possible that *other* of our basic concepts were born of metaphor.

Until the latter half of the twentieth century, metaphor was considered by most theorists to be, at best, ornamental and, at worst, a hindrance to understanding and philosophical clarity—that is, suggestions of cognitive functions of metaphor, for the most part, were disregarded.³⁰ I have shown that, although stylistic embellishment is one function, metaphor has other significant functions. Metaphor is a central driving force behind the evolution of language. Metaphor's cognitive functions include the representation of rough drafts of theories, as well as the creation and maintenance of beliefs and prejudices. Perhaps Fogelin is right when he says that "the vast majority of metaphors are routine and uninteresting," but his conclusion that we need to "calm down about metaphors" indicates an overly conservative attitude and a lack of appreciation of the power of some metaphors

³⁰ Nietzsche is the most obvious exception. He writes, "What therefore is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphisms: in short a sum of human relations which became poetically and rhetorically intensified, metamorphosed, adorned, and after long usage seems to a nation fixed, canonic, and binding; truths are illusions of which one has forgotten that they *are* illusions; worn-out metaphors which have become powerless to affect the senses" (from Clive, 1965 p.508).

(Fogelin, 1988 p.97).

CONCLUSION

The study of metaphor is exciting, not only because metaphors themselves are an intriguing linguistic device, but also because examining metaphor reveals some fundamental issues regarding language and knowledge. In my account, I have endeavoured to demonstrate how much linguistic communication is dependent on context, how *difficult and important* it is to explicate a substantive notion of meaning and how important it is to keep matters for semantics distinct from matters for pragmatics. I hope that I also have challenged successfully some basic assumptions about how knowledge is created and acquired.

Let me conclude by making it clear that I do not want to suggest that we (or language) cannot survive without metaphor, but I do want to insist that life would be less interesting without it. Metaphor is not water, it is beer.

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