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**What Metaphors Are:
Situating Donald Davidson**

by

Madeleine Arseneault, B.A. (Moncton), B.A. Hons. (Carleton)

A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
acceptance of the thesis

WHAT METAPHORS ARE: SITUATING DONALD DAVIDSON

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In partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts

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Abstract

In philosophy of language, most metaphor theorists are talking past each other. I argue that this is principally due to two disagreements: an explicit debate on how metaphors work largely consisting of a disagreement over whether metaphorical meaning exists in addition to literal meaning, and an implicit disagreement over what metaphors are. To show this, I ask a new question ("what are metaphors?") and lay out the obvious answers in a taxonomy. Chapter one consists of a historical survey of the key figures in the debate. Chapter two explains Donald Davidson's contemporary account. Chapter three concludes that, for Davidson, there is no obvious isolatable class of linguistic entities which metaphor could be.

Preface

I first came to the topic of metaphor in literature studies. For the past year or so, I have been interested in how analytic philosophy of language can account for metaphor. In my thesis, I have three goals. I want to introduce a new question, show why this question matters, and consider what Donald Davidson's answer to the question might be.

The new question I want to ask is: "what are metaphors?". I want to ask this question to a specific audience - analytic philosophers of language. This is a new question in the sense that it has not explicitly been addressed in the existing literature. This question is important because I take it to be at the root of a disagreement in the literature. When I read the literature I was frustrated and found it confusing. My frustration was with a marked lack of consensus, and no obvious progress towards constructive consensus. The reason for the confusion I felt was less obvious, but I eventually came to realize that the authors of the papers I was reading were talking about different *things*. Some were talking about thoughts, some about thought processes, some about words, some about sentences. But they were not explicitly acknowledging that they may be taking metaphor to be a different kind of thing than the others whom they are addressing or rejecting.

I think that the question of what metaphors are is an

important question, a question that matters because unless people have asked themselves this question and make it clear what their answer to the question is, people risk talking past each other. I actually suspect that this has already and continues to happen.

My other goal is to see whether Davidson can answer the question, and what his answer would look like. Given that Davidson's account is popular, I think his account in particular deserves special close attention. Ultimately, I think that Davidson does not have a clear answer to my question. That is not to say that there is no possible answer he could give. At the end, I indicate Davidson's most likely answer is, but I think it is ultimately unsatisfactory.

The first chapter of the thesis addresses the two first goals: I introduce the question, and suggest that key figures in the debate are talking past each other. In order to illustrate this, I propose a possible way of taxonomizing what the key figures in the literature have taken metaphor to be. The second and third chapters address my third goal: the second chapter lays out a necessary overview of Davidson's account of metaphor, and in the third chapter I attempt to extract Davidson's answer to my new question.

Some final remarks: this has been a difficult project. My initial impulse when first reading Davidson's paper was that he must be wrong. My training in literature studies inclined me to

think that metaphor was best treated through a semantic account. However, the more I came to understand Davidson's paper as I reread and reread it, I became less convinced that he had to be wrong - at least I do not think he is wrong on some points. Attempts to establish my final goal, finding Davidson's available answer to the new question, pushed the third chapter through many modifications. I had originally thought that Davidson did not have any answer to give at all. I have now come to think that this claim is too strong. I am, however, still unsatisfied with his answer. Furthermore, even if Davidson ultimately has a suitable answer to my question, I remain convinced that the question is worth posing, and that precisely the difficulty in extracting Davidson's answer points to a difficulty in the paper itself.

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Introduction

"Why we should use the same form of verbal expression to convey such different meanings is more than I can say. It seems to me very curious that language should have grown up as if it were expressly designed to mislead philosophers; and I do not know why it should have."

G. E. Moore

With a few notable exceptions, metaphor has either been held in low esteem or completely ignored by philosophy. A serious philosopher who sought the path of the truth was well advised to avoid their use and purge their writings of metaphor, which could only confuse thought and lead it astray.

I

As background, I begin with a brief historical sketch of attitudes towards metaphor. Philosophy's disdain of metaphor goes as far back as Plato. Passages in *Cratylus* suggest that Plato's dismissal of metaphor stems from his views on the function of language¹. Words, especially names, are instruments which we use to teach and to distinguish things as they are (291). Names teach and are informative because there exists a similitude of qualities between them and the objects which they denote (385). Plato believed that there is a "propriety of appellation" naturally subsisting for everything that exists (283). If names belong to

¹ Many, of course, have pointed out that Plato himself makes extensive use of metaphors in his own writings: see for example Kittay 1987.

objects "from nature", then philosophy should use names which are naturally suited to each thing (296). As metaphors use words which are not naturally suited or similar to the object named, they cannot but impede the quest for knowledge. Since the only useful function of language is its contribution to the search for truth, figurative language and word-play are of no use, and even harmful to this end. Other philosophers, such as John Locke, agreed with Plato that metaphor is a *deviant* use of language that should be avoided in doing philosophy (Kittay, 1). In *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Locke holds that the philosophical use of language is "a use of words such as may serve to convey the precise nature of things" (Wood, 29). For Descartes, clarity and distinctness of ideas is key. Metaphor only endangers this clarity, and so philosophy should free itself from the figurative (Wood, 29).

Of course, not everyone in the history of philosophy has held metaphors in such low regard. Aristotle spoke favorably of metaphor in both the *Poetics* and *Rhetoric*². In both poetry and

² Contrary to Plato, Aristotle thought that metaphor actually had explanatory power, that it made things clearer by drawing our attention to (dis)similarities. The reason that this has explanatory power is that, for Aristotle, language, thought and reality are intimately linked. For example, speakers of English share the idea 'cat', and this idea corresponds to cats in the world. Finally, the idea gets conventionally paired with the sound 'C-A-T'. This suggests that metaphor is useful because any similarities and distinctions it presents will reflect or capture similarities and distinctions in the world. This is why Kittay suggests that Aristotle is a precursor of the appreciation of the cognitive importance of metaphor (see Kittay, pages 2-4).

rhetoric, metaphors and figurative language are useful in drawing our attention to similarities, and are not mere decoration³. Literary critics and rhetoricians continued from Aristotle's starting point and took metaphor as a serious topic of inquiry. Some philosophers also followed Aristotle and took metaphor to be both a worthy philosophical topic as well as a worthy philosophical tool. Jean-Jacques Rousseau⁴ thought that all language originated in metaphor (Kittay, 5). For Nietzsche, the basic move of language is metaphorical (Wood, 31), and philosophy itself is permeated with metaphors (Wood, 32).

I am interested in how contemporary analytic philosophy of language, with its roots in verificationism and logical positivism, can account for the role and significance of metaphorical speech. Gottlob Frege was interested in reducing mathematical statements to rules of logic: "How must I think in order to reach the goal, truth? We expect logic to give us the answer to this question" (228). It is in the context of the truths of logic that we get the primacy of the assertoric form: "it is really by using the form of an assertoric sentence that we assert truth" (229). This effectively banishes literature to the "realm of fiction". The

³ Paul Ricoeur reconsiders the split between poetry and rhetoric, and argues that since rhetoric is a tool of argumentation, and since metaphor is discussed in this context in *Rhetoric*, then metaphor can be legitimately used in philosophy (see Ricoeur, 10 and 28).

⁴ See *Essay on the Origin of Languages*, 1781.

general strategy was this: some philosophical problems arise from a sloppy use of language, such as applying inappropriate concepts and predicates to objects. In order to avoid or dissolve these problems, we should be careful of our language use, and purge from it any confusing expressions, including figurative expressions.

Semantic theories grounded in observation sentences and truth-conditions were, of course, initially interested only in assertoric sentences. For Logical Positivism, the theory of verification is central. The verificationist criterion of meaningfulness is the claim that a meaningful sentence is one which is capable of being verified or falsified, and that to understand a sentence is to grasp what information states would verify it (Hale, 690). Metaphorical sentences are not obviously capable of being verified or falsified. Meaningful philosophy should therefore be purified of metaphor.

With the emergence of Ordinary Language philosophy out of Oxford in the 1950's, English philosophers of language began paying serious attention to forms of speech other than the assertoric⁵. The field of legitimate inquiry in philosophy changed from a

⁵ Of course, this is not to say that no one paid any attention at all to forms of speech other than assertoric. Frege, for instance, worried about what is presupposed as well as what is asserted. He also considered orders and questions. However, these "other" forms of speech were generally addressed only to be put aside, and the key point for my purposes is that these forms of speech did not themselves constitute a legitimate subject of focussed and sustained inquiry before ordinary language philosophy and speech act theory.

closely delineated area of formal and purified languages, to "natural" languages as they are spoken by "ordinary" language users. John Searle's work on speech act theory explored other performative forms of speech, such as promises and commands, which either do not assert that something is the case, or do more than that⁶. If ordinary language use is now a proper subject for analytical philosophical inquiry, and if metaphor is commonly used in ordinary language, then metaphor has become a proper and legitimate subject for analytic philosophy of language.

As we have seen, early discussions of metaphor saw the participants divided mostly between those who thought that metaphor was a "deviant" use of language which hampered philosophical thought, and those who thought that, quite to the contrary, metaphor made things clearer by drawing our attention to resemblances. Most now agree that metaphors do have a positive cognitive import, and that given the pervasive use of metaphor in everyday use and in analogical reasoning, metaphor is a legitimate topic. The explicit debate now mostly lies in how metaphors achieve their effect.

II

If metaphor has been rescued from the shadows and has become a worthy topic for philosophy of language, reading the literature, however, can be confusing and frustrating. Although publications

⁶ See Searle (1965).

on metaphor have exploded in number over the last 20 years, a survey of the contemporary literature quickly reveals that there is no consensus on how metaphor works its magic. I argue that this is because of (at least) two types of disagreements.

The recent flourish of English philosophy of language writings on metaphor has almost exclusively dealt with the question of how metaphors work: this is what I call the explicit debate. The first disagreement divides the participants of the explicit debate over what I call the eliminativist question. Philosophers in the explicit debate divide into eliminativists and non-eliminativists. Let's call the eliminativists those who think there are no metaphorical meanings. The non-eliminativists think that there are metaphorical (or figurative) meanings. The eliminativist debate is the disagreement over whether metaphorical expressions have metaphorical meanings. Since non-eliminativist views hold that there are metaphorical meanings of one kind or another, and that these meanings play a role in how metaphors work, I call non-eliminativist accounts *semantic* accounts.

The non-eliminativists are divided into reductionists and non-reductionists. The reductionist non-eliminativists think that there are metaphorical meanings, but they just are the literal meaning of some expression. Some take the metaphorical meaning to be a second (or extended) literal meaning of the expression used. Others, such as Searle, take metaphorical meaning to be the meaning

of some non-used sentence.

The non-reductionist non-eliminativists think that there are metaphorical meanings, and that these are a different kind of meaning than the literal meaning of some expression. These kinds of metaphorical meanings are non-exhaustible (that is, they cannot be exhausted by a list of literal sentences), or imagistic. Philosophers are clearly divided on the eliminativist question, and this is the first kind of disagreement, a disagreement which is explicit in the literature.

The leading opponent of semantic accounts of metaphor is Donald Davidson, and his views are expressed in his paper "What Metaphors Mean". For this reason, his view deserves special attention. His commitments regarding the reductionist question are clear and explicit. But I want to tease out his commitments regarding what I will call the implicit debate. The implicit disagreement, which I take to be the cause of much confusion in contemporary analytic philosophy writing on metaphor, is the following. One thing that becomes clear in surveying the literature on metaphor is that, while much ink is spilt trying to discover how metaphors work, less attention is paid to the question (the prior question) of what metaphors are. The result is that most of the debates on metaphor are at cross purposes, and the debaters are speaking past each other. Davidson also, I believe, is guilty of this omission. He ignores the question of what metaphors

are, and when one tries to extract from his writings of what exactly he takes metaphoricity to be a feature, it is not at all clear what his answer could be.

III

Given this, my project and goals are as follows. I raise the new question of what metaphors are. In order to grasp what metaphors are, I will consider what kinds of entities are metaphorical - what kinds of entities can have metaphoricity as a feature - and lay out the obvious options. Through a historical survey, I highlight why this question matters; namely, that people are talking past each other. Finally, a careful case study of Davidson's contemporary account will show that no obvious position on the new question is ready to hand.

The first chapter will consist of a survey of selected key views on metaphor. This survey will be novel in that it will attempt to extract the ontological status of metaphor which lies presupposed and unarticulated in these views. In short, I will be forcing these philosophers to answer the question of what they take metaphoricity to be a feature. In mapping this survey, difficulties arise precisely because these philosophers, when they all take themselves to be making claims about *metaphors*, are in fact making claims about different things. Some are making claims about words, some about sentences, some about strings of sentences. Some, including Davidson, when they make claims about metaphors,

make claims about words here, and about sentences there. Others still are making claims about thoughts and thinking, and not about words or sentences at all. This survey will try to impose a taxonomy on a necessarily confused and disparate group of views, following the general mapping of views that metaphors are something linguistic (which exist at the level of words, of sentences, or of strings of sentences) or something mental.

The second chapter will explain Davidson's view in detail and articulate his arguments as found in "What Metaphors Mean". We will see how he attacks the "central mistake"; namely, that metaphors have, in addition to their literal meaning, a metaphorical meaning. He goes through the semantic thesis of metaphor in its various forms: metaphorical meaning as simile, extended meaning, and as ambiguity. After discrediting these various semantic accounts of metaphorical meaning, and after showing that metaphor *at least* relies on literal meaning, he takes himself to have shown that the only semantic story possible for metaphor will be a literal story. Davidson's position in the eliminativist debate is made clear: he thinks there is only one kind of meaning - literal meaning.

Having seen Davidson's various claims about metaphor, in the third chapter we return to the implicit debate. I will attempt to tease out Davidson's commitments regarding the question of what metaphors are in order to determine what kind of entity could have

the feature of being a metaphor and be accountable to all of his claims. We can eliminate the semantic accounts of metaphor surveyed in the first chapter. As we see in the second chapter, Davidson either explicitly or implicitly rejects all of these accounts.

To anticipate, if we hold Davidson to his various claims about metaphor, then there does not remain any *obvious* thing of which metaphoricity can be a feature. This is not to say that there is not an ontological class of things of which it might be a feature. Rather, the point is that as his view stands there is no obvious candidate of that class at hand. Perhaps more surprising than Davidson's claim that "metaphors mean what the words, in their most literal interpretation, mean, and nothing more" (30), is the conclusion that, for Davidson, *metaphors* may not be an isolatable class of things at all.

Chapter 1: What "Metaphor" Means

"Given the prevalence of metaphorical statements and their manifest versatility, a student of the subject would find some generally accepted classification helpful in making even the simplest distinctions: But at present, he is in an even worse situation than a biologist before Linnaeus. For the only entrenched classification is grounded in the trite opposition (itself expressed metaphorically) between "dead" and "live" metaphors. This is no more helpful than, say, treating a corpse as a special case of a person ..."

Max Black, 1977

Max Black complained about the lack of classification in theories of metaphor, and he would hardly be appeased by the state of the philosophical literature today. This chapter hopes to contribute by proposing a taxonomy of what kinds of things metaphoricity is a feature. Key figures from the on-going debate about how metaphors work will be introduced. Accounts of metaphor will be classified according to whether they consider metaphoricity to be a semantic or pragmatic feature, and whether it is a feature of words, sentences, or thoughts.

In order to determine where a philosopher stands in relation to our taxonomy, I will analyse the use of the word "metaphor" in their account. We will see how the word "metaphor" is used to refer to a variety of things: expressions, meanings, uses, thought processes. I suggest that this is, in part, what makes it

difficult to classify the accounts.

1.1 Definitions and Distinctions

The first thing that should happen in any philosophical discussion is the establishment of definitions and distinctions. However, this is precisely the problem in a discussion of metaphor. I argue that the question of the definition of metaphor is the question in particular which has been ignored or presupposed by most (if not all) recent philosophical discussion of metaphor, including Davidson's. Most probably, no one has stopped to consider the question because they thought it already settled. Certainly, philosophy, rhetoric and literary studies have been tossing around the word "metaphor" for a long time already.

Here are a handful of existing definitions of "metaphor":

- "the application of a name or descriptive term or phrase to an object or action to which it is imaginatively but not literally applicable" (*Concise Oxford Dictionary* 1990);
- "figure of rhetoric which designates an object by the name of another with which it has an analogical rapport, or briefly, a word for another" (Durozoi 1990, translation mine);
- "nonliteral meaning" (Fromkin 1993, 510);
- "figurative comparison of unlike things" (Inglis 1952, 774);
- "nonliteral comparison without the use of 'like' or 'as'" (Bohner 1989, 1155).

To anticipate, not only is there a variety of definitions of "metaphor" in linguistics and literary criticism, there also exists

no standard philosophical definition of "metaphor". As we shall see, the philosophers we examine are not all abiding by the same definition.

Trying to establish the definitive philosophical definition of metaphor is a project which goes well beyond the scope of this thesis. We will content ourselves with shedding some light on the issue by pointing out that philosophers are using "metaphor" to refer to different kinds of entities, and by explicating what these different entities are.

Before proceeding, I want to establish a few preliminary distinctions which will help in deciphering the various definitions of "metaphor" explored below. The explicit debate (over how metaphors work) brings us to our first distinction. This debate revolves around the question whether *metaphorical expressions* (words or sentences) work by appeal to *metaphorical meanings*. It may seem too obvious to be worth mentioning that metaphorical expressions and metaphorical meanings are two distinct kinds of entities. What is crucial for our purposes is to notice when philosophers use the word "metaphor" in reference to the expression or to the meaning of the expression.

I use the terminology of "*metaphorical expression*" here in order not to prejudge another point of disagreement in the literature. Some take metaphoricity to be a feature of words (example, "giant" used metaphorically in "Sam is a giant"), of a

collection of words such as noun phrases (example, "rosy-fingered dawn"), of sentences (example, "Juliet is the sun"), or even of a collection of sentences (such as an extended metaphor which runs the length of an entire poem)¹. At this point, I use "expression" to cover words, sentences and strings of sentences.

Semantic accounts of metaphors which hold that metaphorical expressions have special metaphorical meanings will vary according to whether they associate metaphorical meanings with words, sentences, or collections of sentences. For example, there is the view that it is languages as a whole which are metaphorical².

Another key distinction is the type/token distinction. This distinction is usually presented through an example: consider "A, A, A". There are three tokens of the same letter type in the quotation. A further distinction is made between a token and an utterance of a token. The utterance is generally considered the

¹ I am indebted to Paul Ricoeur's analysis of metaphor in three levels as presented in *The Rule of Metaphor*. Ricoeur's third level differs from mine: his third level is the level of discourse, whereas my third level is limited to extended metaphors.

² Warren Shibles, for one, vehemently attacks the notion of literal meaning. Words have no fixed meaning, and we cannot define the literal as that which is used in normal language use, because metaphor is also used in normal language use. He criticizes analytical philosophy of language's reliance on logic, which he thinks leads inevitably to the view that metaphor is a deviant use of language. Instead, he takes *language as a whole* as basically metaphoric, and that which he calls a literal sentence is one which is appropriate to the universe of discourse of the subject. See Shibles, 1971.

act of producing or using tokens. Tokens are instances of their type.

Finally, still others use the word "metaphor" to refer to a *metaphorical thought* or thinking process. It is the thoughts themselves, or the thought processes, which are already metaphorical. What we call the metaphorical expression is only a putting into words of this metaphorical thought. David Hills distinguishes verbal metaphor from metaphorical thinking³: metaphorical thinking is a "conceiving-as-and-in-terms-of" or *modeling* (138). The name of "verbal metaphor" is restricted for the putting into words of a thought.

Hills insists that there is something "*verbally distinctive about verbal metaphor*", regardless of whether metaphorical thinking is truly at work in instances of verbal metaphor (142). He points out that metaphorical thinkers can find ways to formulate their models and strategies without using figurative language (142). Like Hills, I am concerned principally with verbal metaphors, figures of *speech*⁴.

1.2 Aristotle

Eva Kittay suggests that we take a bow to Aristotle (1987, 2).

³ Hills also further distinguishes these two from metaphorical experiencing or *fancying*, "experiencing-as-and-in-terms-of" (138). I am grateful to Naomi Scheman for bringing this article to my attention.

⁴ This is not restricted to spoken metaphors: I include written metaphors under the label of verbal.

His explanation of metaphor as found in both the *Poetics* and in *Rhetoric* set the first paradigm of what metaphors and their characteristics are. Since philosophers to this day take up these characteristics in either (implicit or explicit) support or challenge to this paradigm, any discussion of metaphor must first consider what Aristotle has said on the topic.

And just what is a metaphor for Aristotle? He defines four types of metaphor in the *Poetics*⁵: metaphor is "the application of an alien name by transference either from genus to species, or from species to genus, or from species to species, or by analogy (that is, proportion)" (1457b8). It is this last case, that of analogy, which corresponds more closely to our modern concept of metaphor⁶. Indeed, by the time he wrote *Rhetoric*, Aristotle only speaks of the fourth analogical type of metaphor.

The *Poetics*' discussion of metaphor occurs within the context of a discussion of the art of poetry. A key characteristic of metaphors is brought up right away; namely, that metaphors deal in similarities. Attention to similarity comes up in two ways: as

⁵ All quotes from *Poetics* are taken from the translation found in Adams 1992. The page numbers, however, are given according to the academic pagination for ease of reference. The quotes from *Rhetoric* are from the translation in *Aristotle's Rhetoric and Poetics*, and the academic pagination is given.

⁶ In his paper "Aristotle's Theory of Metaphor", Samuel R. Levin argues that the four types of metaphor presented by Aristotle are all consistent with the fourth type, metaphor by analogy.

part of the general imitative function of poetry, and in the analogical type of metaphor as specified by Aristotle.

For Aristotle, poetry is a mode of imitation (*Poetics*, 1447b), an imitation of "men in action" (*Poetics*, 1448a). Imitation is grounded in similarity: one could not recognize something as an imitation of another without recognizing similar characteristics shared by the two. Imitation, for Aristotle, is not slavish imitation⁷: in poetry, the poet "takes a form from nature and reshapes it in a different matter or medium. This medium, which the form does not inhabit in nature, is the source of each work's inward principle of order and consequently of its independence from slavish copying. The poet is thus an imitator *and* a creator" (Adams, 49). Poetry, and consequently metaphor, springs from two causes which lie deep in our nature: the instinct for harmony and rhythm (*Poetics*, 1448b20), and the instinct of imitation which is implanted in us from childhood (*Poetics*, 1448b6).

The metaphor by analogy works when four terms are related such that the second term (B) is to the first (A) as the fourth (D) is to the third (C) (*Poetics*, 1457b16). Consider Aristotle's example, as old age (D) is to life (C), so is evening (B) to day (A).

⁷ Note here the contrast with Plato: for Aristotle, the poet imitates the form in a different matter and medium, he is not as concerned as Plato that the form of the words closely imitate the form of the thing named. Also, for Aristotle, name-giving is not the only function of language, words can imitate humans in action. However, both speak of the didactic use of imitation. See Plato's *Cratylus* (385), and Aristotle's *Poetics* (1448b10).

According to this scheme, one can describe evening as "the old age of the *day*" (D+A), or describe old age as "the sunset of *life*"⁸ (B+C) (*Poetics*, 1456b23). An analogy points to a correspondence between two things. Inferences from analogy function by drawing on similarities and by concluding that because two things share one or more characteristics, they share another (Martin, 18). Analogy in metaphor functions in the creation and interpretation of metaphor, whereby the similarity in relation between two objects or terms allows us to reach one term from another: according to our example, we can get from old age (D) to day (A) through old age's similarity with evening (B). And so, from Aristotle onwards, metaphor has as a criterion that it be in the business of creating or pointing out similarities.

Another key characteristic of metaphor is highlighted in the above passage, namely that metaphors are creative and novel. A successful metaphor draws our attention to previously unnoticed similarities. The similarity was unnoticed previously because of the otherwise disparate nature of the two elements compared. As Aristotle puts it, the name that is transferred over is an "alien" name. The name does not belong to the object by nature: it must be transferred over. And so metaphor surprises and delights us by drawing our attention to novel similarities in a novel way.

⁸ The words "day" and "life" are italicized in the translation: this suggests that it is the words, not the whole expression, which are metaphorical.

Aristotle likens metaphors to riddles: a style wholly composed of metaphors is a riddle, where riddles express true facts under impossible combinations (*Poetics*, 1458a25). The creativity of metaphors can also work in another way: instead of making us notice (for the first time) existing similarities, metaphors create the similarities⁹.

This "transference", in which one word acquires the meaning of another "alien" word, generates two other characteristics of metaphor. Transference manifests itself in later accounts of metaphor, such as Monroe Beardsley's, which holds that words take on an extended or new meaning in a metaphorical context¹⁰. The notion of transferring the meaning of one term to another also generates the interactive characteristic of metaphors. Both I. A. Richards and Black propose "interactive" theories of metaphor. The interaction for Aristotle is between the alien term and the object to which it is being applied.

It is clear that for Aristotle, the basic metaphorical unit (in all four cases) is the word: "every word is either current, or strange, or metaphorical, or ornamental, or newly coined, or lengthened, or contracted, or altered" (*Poetics*, 1457b). He speaks

⁹ Max Black takes this line in his paper "More about metaphor".

¹⁰ As we shall see with Davidson, this view later becomes very contentious and gets attacked for collapsing metaphor and polysemy.

of replacing a metaphor with a current term (*Poetics*, 1458a21). And so, metaphoricity is a feature of words. Our first classification of Aristotle in our taxonomy will be to place him at the level of words.

However, in talking about metaphors, Aristotle does not always refer to the expression itself¹¹. In his definition of metaphor, he says that a metaphor is the *application* of an alien name by transference (*Poetics*, 1457b8): metaphoricity is a feature of the process of application. He also says that words can be used metaphorically for other words (*Poetics*, 1461a19). These passages suggest that Aristotle is here taking metaphoricity as not a semantic feature of the words, but as a feature of the uses of words¹², or of the processes by which metaphors work to achieve their effect. And so it seems that Aristotle does not always straightforwardly use the word "metaphor" to designate the metaphorical expression: he also uses the word "metaphor" to refer

¹¹ One thing that strikes us is that Aristotle does not speak of expressions per say, but of *sounds*. Letters, syllables, nouns, verbs, and sentences are defined as (non)significant and (non)composite sounds which do or do not mark time (*Poetics*, 1456b20). Remember: in Aristotle's time, poetry was something which was recited aloud. Poetry was primarily heard, not read.

¹² Peek ahead: one could argue that Aristotle is a precursor of the pragmatic accounts of metaphor. In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle talks about how words are used, and that this is important in addition to what the words mean. "For it is not enough to know what we ought to say; we must also say it as we ought; much help is thus afforded towards producing the right impression of a speech" (*Rhetoric*, 1403b15).

to the use of the words.

This discussion of Aristotle was meant to lay out the origin of some traditional characteristics of metaphors, and to place him in our taxonomy; namely, at the level of metaphoricity as a feature of words. We have also seen how Aristotle uses the word "metaphor" to refer to the metaphorical process.

Feature of...	Word	Sentence	Thought
semantic			
pragmatic	Aristotle		

1.3 Monroe Beardsley

Fast forward to 1962. In "The Metaphorical Twist", Monroe Beardsley is concerned with the question of what metaphors are. To give an account of metaphor "is to say what is peculiar to metaphorical expressions, how they differ from literal ones, how we recognize them and know what they mean" (73). Beardsley distinguishes between a *thing* approach and a *word* approach to metaphor (73). He defines the former as an *object-comparison* theory of metaphor, where the 'modifier' in the metaphor retains its standard reference, the same reference it would have in literal contexts. According to this view, there are two objects which undergo an implicit comparison whereby the metaphor drags an alien object into the context¹³. For example, in "Juliet is the sun", we

¹³ Notice the Aristotelian legacy: an "alien" is transferred over into a new context. The difference is that Aristotle speaks

are comparing Juliet and the sun.

Beardsley ultimately rejects object-based theories of metaphor and defends instead the *verbal-opposition* theory of metaphor. According to this view, there is no comparison of *objects*, but rather a verbal play between two levels of meaning in the "modifier" itself (74). Instead of comparing Juliet and the sun, we would oppose two senses of "sun".

"When a predicate is metaphorically adjoined to a subject, the predicate loses its ordinary extension, because it acquires a new intension ... And this twist of meaning is forced by inherent tensions, or oppositions, within the metaphor itself" (74).

The analysis of metaphor in a verbal-opposition theory of metaphor has the form of a metalanguage, which talks about the connotations of words (as opposed to the characteristics of, say, Juliet and the sun) (74). Beardsley uses the following example: the word "briar" is metaphorically introduced in Eliot's "frigid purgatorial fires / Of which the flame is roses, and the smoke is briars" (74). An object-comparison explanation would say something like: "briars have the capacity to scratch people, to retard their progress" and so on. A verbal-opposition explanation, however, would say: "the word 'briars' connotes such properties as being scratchy, retarding progress" and so on (74).

Beardsley has three major criticisms of any object-comparison

of the transfer of the term, and Beardsley of the transfer of the object.

theory of metaphor. Since this kind of analysis does not take into account the gap between characteristics and connotations, says Beardsley, it is an incomplete analysis. If we limited ourselves to what we know about objects, we would not fully understand the metaphor (75). In the briar example, knowledge about briars as opposed to connotations of "briars" would not get us the Christian allusions to the crown of thorns, and we would not fully understand the poem (75).

A problem with object-comparison theories which worries Beardsley is that we are committed to comparing two objects, and if one of the objects is not explicitly supplied by the context, then we invent it (75). Consider, for example, "the spiteful sun": to what object is the sun compared? Thus the object-comparison theory tempts us to import a spiteful person into the context of the comparison. The reason this is problematic for Beardsley is that it leads to idiosyncratic imagery (75).

Finally, Beardsley bemoans that object-comparison theories lead to questions of the appropriateness of metaphors (76): if we compare breeched legs and bloody daggers, as in "their daggers / Unmannerly breech'd with gore",

"the correct question is what is *meant* by the words - what properties are attributed to the daggers via the marginal meanings of the metaphorical attribute. It is of no moment whether bloody daggers in general are best so described; the question is what we learn from this description about *these* daggers, and their role in the whole story - or about the speaker who describes them this way" (76).

The metaphorical twist is a semantic twist. By turning to the meanings and connotations of the words in a metaphorical expression, Beardsley proposes a semantic account of metaphor. In looking for the metaphoricity which is absent from literal expressions, Beardsley turns to the significations of the words themselves (78). The "metaphoricalness" is within the meaning structure itself (79)¹⁴.

Beardsley provides a more contemporary version of a theory which postulates that metaphoricity is a feature of words, more precisely a feature of the *meaning* of words. According to his verbal-opposition theory, we have a "verbal play, involving two levels of meaning in the *modifier* itself" (74, italics mine). For Beardsley, "the correct question is what is *meant* by the words", and it is the attribute or modifier which is metaphorical (76). And so, Beardsley finds his place in our taxonomy.

Feature of...	Word	Sentence	Thought
semantic	Beardsley		
pragmatic	Aristotle		

¹⁴ As opposed to theories such as John Searle's (discussed below), Beardsley criticizes views which propose that metaphoricity is a feature of an idea in the speaker's mind. This, he thinks, reduces metaphor to a form of irony, and suffers problems of intention. Furthermore, we understand poems without knowing what the poet was thinking (79). So, Beardsley concludes, "metaphoricalness" is not situated in the speaker's meaning, but rather within the meaning-structure of the metaphor itself (79).

1.4 Max Black

Max Black first wrote about metaphor in a chapter entitled "Metaphor", in his book *Models and Metaphor* published in 1962. The overall goal of this book was to clarify the character of philosophical inference from grammar, where grammar is a combination of morphology (classification of meaningful units of speech) and syntax (rules for correct arrangement of such units) (1962, 1), in order to seek ontological conclusions from linguistic premises (1962, 2)¹⁵. His third chapter deals specifically with metaphor.

At that time, Black felt the need to defend metaphor as an appropriate and substantial philosophical topic. Forging new ground, "since philosophers (for all their notorious interest in language) have so neglected the subject, I must get what help I can from the literary critics"¹⁶. Black has many questions about metaphor that he should like to see answered; however, he is essentially interested in the question "what do we mean by 'metaphor'?" (1962, 25).

Given that it is precisely a philosophical definition of

¹⁵ However, the relation between language and the world is not one of mirroring: there need not be an identity of logical form between language and reality (Black 1962, 16).

¹⁶ As we proceed, I will point out Black's indebtedness to I. A. Richards in particular.

"metaphor" that is lacking and is sought, Black does not begin by giving a definition. Instead, he lists some "clear cases" of metaphor (1962, 26): these are to be accepted "as unmistakeable *instances* of metaphor, whatever judgments may ultimately be made about the meaning of 'metaphor'" (1962, 26). From these, Black extracts the *focus* and *frame*. The focus of the metaphor is the word being used metaphorically, while the frame consists in the words being used literally (1962, 28). For example, in "the chairman plowed through the discussion", "plowed" is the focus and the rest of the sentence is the frame.

Black's analysis of metaphor in terms of focus and frame is derived from a similar analysis provided by I. A. Richards. In *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, Richards says that "when we use a metaphor we have two thoughts of different things active together and supported by a single word, or phrase, whose meaning is a resultant of their interaction" (93)¹⁷. He introduces the terms "vehicle" and "tenor" to distinguish the two ideas active in metaphor. Consider his example of Denham's poem: "O could I flow like thee, and make thy stream / My great exemplar as it is my theme! / Though deep, yet clear; though gentle, yet not dull; / Strong without rage; without o'erflowing, full." (121). The flow of the poet's mind is

¹⁷ According to our taxonomy, Richards' views could be classed under the category of theories which take metaphoricity to be a feature of thoughts: "*Thought* is metaphoric ... and the metaphors of language derive there from" (Richards, 94).

the *tenor*, and the river is the *vehicle*. Richards points out that "Though deep, yet clear" literally describes the vehicle and metaphorically describes the mind (121). Black's frame roughly corresponds to Richards' vehicle, and focus to tenor.

Black addresses two views of metaphor which he ultimately rejects: the substitution and the comparison views. The substitution view holds that a metaphor can be substituted by a (longer) literal expression, and that the meaning of a metaphor is given in the literal translation. The comparison view is a special case of the substitution view, where the metaphor is substituted by an elliptical simile as an equivalent literal comparison.

Instead, Black adopts what he calls the 'interaction view' of metaphor. The interaction view is committed to the following claims¹⁸:

- a metaphorical statement has two subjects (primary and secondary)¹⁹;
- the secondary subject is a system of relationships, or implicative complex;
- a metaphorical utterance works by projecting upon the primary subject a set of associated implications

¹⁸ The following are the claims as they are presented in the revised version, "More about metaphor" (1977). The original list from 1962 had seven claims: the two that are left out of the 1977 list are that "the implications are usually commonplaces", and that "there is no ground for the shifts" (1962, 44).

¹⁹ For example, in "society is a sea", society is the primary subject, while sea is the secondary subject. In *Models and Metaphors*, Black called these the principle and subsidiary subjects (1962, 44).

comprised in the implicative complex of the secondary²⁰;
 - a speaker selects and organizes features of the primary subject by applying to it statements isomorphic with the members of the secondary subject's implicative complex;
 - the two subjects interact²¹ by a) the presence of the primary inciting the hearer to select some of the secondary's properties, b) inviting her to construct a parallel implication complex which can fit the primary, and by c) reciprocally inducing parallel changes in the secondary (1977, 28).

According to the interaction view, the reader is forced to connect two ideas, and the secret of the metaphor lies in this connection. The focus obtains a new meaning, and extension of meaning (1962, 39). Black illustrates how the implication-complex works for the example "marriage is a zero-sum game":

- (G1) A "game" is a contest;
- (G2) between two opponents;
- (G3) in which one player can win only at the expense of the other.

Black explains that the corresponding system of claims about marriage depends on the interpretations given to "contest", "opponents" and "winning":

- (M1) A marriage is a sustained struggle;
- (M2) between two contestants;
- (M3) in which the rewards (power? money? satisfaction?) of one contestant are gained only at the other's expense (1977, 29).

However, Black insists that this interaction is not reducible to any literal comparison (1962, 46). Here we see explicitly where he is situated in the eliminativist debate: metaphors have an

²⁰ Here we find Aristotle's transference in a new form.

²¹ Black takes himself to be giving an explanation of what Richards called the "interanimation of words" (1977, 28).

additional metaphorical meaning which is not reducible to a literal paraphrase.

Black addressed criticisms to his earlier paper and revised his interaction theory in the later paper "More about Metaphor", published in 1977. In his first paper, Black felt he had to defend metaphor against those who would banish it from philosophical texts. Since most now accept the cognitive contribution of metaphors, he spends less time in this paper defending the cognitive import of metaphor and more in trying to defend *how* he thinks metaphor achieves its effects.

Where does Black fit into our taxonomy? On the one hand, the focus is defined as the word being used metaphorically (1962, 28). It is the focus which gains the new meaning or extension, and it is the frame which "imposes extension of meaning upon the focal word" (1962, 39). It would seem, then, that metaphoricity is a semantic feature of words. Black says that "although we point to the whole sentence as an instance of metaphor, our attention narrows to a single word" (1962, 27). On the other hand, however, Black takes *the whole sentence as an instance of metaphor* (1962, 27)²². The interaction in his explanation requires that there be (at least) two subjects which interact (1962, 44). In the later paper, Black explicitly identifies sentences as his target: his concern is with

²² See also Ricoeur 1977, study 3, for an analysis of how Black takes metaphoricity to be a feature of sentences.

full metaphorical statements (1977, 24). He says he will use "metaphor" as shorthand for "metaphorical expression". Black is only derivatively interested in "statement-ingredients" (words or phrases used metaphorically), and only as they occur in context, in specific, relatively complete, acts of expression and communication (1977, 24).

"A 'statement' in my intended sense, will be identified by quoting a whole sentence, or a set of sentences, together with as much of the relevant verbal context, or the nonverbal setting, as may be needed for an adequate grasp of the actual or imputed speaker's meaning" (1977, 24).

To complicate things, Black loosely uses the term "metaphor" sometimes (as above) to refer to a sentence (as an instance of metaphor), yet maintains that is the focal word which is metaphorical (1962, 28). Another example: one of the claims to which the interaction view is committed holds that a *metaphor* organizes features, where earlier Black specified that it is the focus (word) which organizes our view of the frame. Furthermore, this claim is also a claim about the metaphorical process: the metaphor is a process, namely the process of applying associated implications (1962, 44). I. A. Richards, at least, is well aware of the slippage between calling the focus or the whole sentence the "metaphor":

"We need the word 'metaphor' for the whole double unit, and to use it sometimes for one of the two components in separation from the other is as injudicious as that other trick by which we use 'the meaning' here sometimes for the work that the whole double unit does and sometimes

for the other component - the tenor, as I am calling it - the underlying idea or principle subject which the vehicle or figure means" (96).

Black also seems to suggest in places that metaphorical meaning is really a matter of speaker's meaning, and not a matter of the meaning of the metaphorical expression. In a later response to Davidson's claim that it is of no help to posit metaphorical meanings in trying to explain how words work in metaphors, Black concedes that *ad hoc* figurative meanings are of no help (1978, 190). However, Black maintains that it would help us to understand how a particular metaphorical utterance works in its context if we could satisfy ourselves that the *speaker* is attaching a special or extended sense to the metaphorical focus (1978, 190). Black does not see an objection in principle to invoking what the speaker intends by the words used when speaking metaphorically (1978, 191). These claims suggest that Black could be classed under the "thought" category of our taxonomy, and under the sentence category.

Feature of...	Word	Sentence	Thought
semantic	Beardsley	Black	Richards Black?
pragmatic	Aristotle		

1.5 John Searle

John R. Searle developed his own view of metaphor as part of the bigger question for him concerning how speaker and sentence

meaning come apart, of how we can say one thing, mean another, and still have successful communication. Given this interest, it is easy to see how metaphor becomes a relevant topic. In "Metaphor", Searle distinguishes between sentence (or word) meaning and speaker meaning, and thinks that metaphor has to do with the latter. Unlike others, he does not think that metaphoricality is a feature of expressions: "whenever we talk about the metaphorical meaning of a word, expression, or sentence, we are talking about what a speaker might utter it to mean, in a way that departs from what the word, expression, or sentence actually means" (84). Instead, metaphoricality is a feature of speaker's meaning. According to Searle, "a speaker utters a sentence of the form "*S* is *P*" and means metaphorically that *S* is *R*" (88). Literal meaning, on the other hand, is when speaker and sentence meaning coincide.

The relation between sentence meaning and speaker meaning is systematic and guided by principles (84). Searle takes the task of the metaphor theorist to be the statement of the principles that relate speaker and sentence meaning, explicating how this relation differs from other instances of divergence between speaker and sentence meaning (like irony). The difficult problem, he thinks, will be to explain the process of how a word or sentence with its truth-conditions can *call to mind* other meanings and truth-

conditions²³. After pausing along the way to criticize the comparison and interaction theories of metaphor, Searle proposes eight basic principles which cover all possibilities of this "calling to mind":

- 1) things which are *P* are by definition *R*; for example, "Sam is a giant" is taken to mean that Sam is big, since giants are by definition big (104);
- 2) things which are *P* are contingently *R*; for example, "Sam is a pig" is taken to mean that Sam is filthy, gluttonous, and so on (105);
- 3) things which are *P* are often believed to be *R*, even though we may know that *R* is false of *P*; for example, "Sam is a gorilla" is taken to mean that Sam is mean, prone to violence, and so on (105);
- 4) things which are *P* are not *R*, but it is a fact of our sensibility that we just do perceive a connection; for example, "Sam is sweet" is taken to mean that Sam is gentle and pleasant (105);
- 5) *P* things are not like *R* things, but the condition of being *P* is like the condition of being *R*; for example, saying "you have become an aristocrat" of someone who has received a promotion (106);
- 6) *P* and *R* are similar in meaning, but *P* does not literally apply to *S*; for example, "addled" only applies literally to eggs, but we can say "Sam's brain is addled" (106);
- 7) in cases which are not of the form "*S* is *P*", the hearer goes from "*S* *P*-relation *S*'" to "*S* *R*-relation *R*'"; for example, "Sam devours books" (107);
- 8) cases of metonymy and synecdoche may be construed as cases of metaphor (107).

We might be tempted to place Searle in our taxonomy in the

²³ Searle's background assumptions include the Aristotelian legacy that language is used for conveying thoughts: the speaker wants to convey the thought that *S* is *R* through the expression "*S* is *P*".

category of those who take metaphoricity to be a feature of sentences. The standard form of metaphor Searle talks about is the form "*S is P*". He uses the word "metaphor" to designate the whole sentence, and say something of its form.

However, metaphoricity cannot be a semantic feature of the sentence, because the sentence does not have a metaphorical meaning. Remember: Searle keeps the distinction between *metaphorical expression* and *metaphorical meaning*.

"Many writers on the subject try to locate the metaphorical element of a metaphorical utterance in the sentence or expressions uttered. They think there are two kinds of sentence meaning, literal and metaphorical. However, sentences and words have only the meanings that they have. Strictly speaking, whenever we talk about the metaphorical meaning of a word, expression, or sentence, we are talking about what a speaker might utter it to mean, in a way that departs from what the word, expression, or sentence actually means" (84).

By disassociating the metaphorical expression and the metaphorical meaning we get the result that the metaphorical expression expresses a literal meaning, and the metaphorical meaning is found "in the speaker's head". To the extent that speaker meaning is metaphorical meaning, metaphoricity is a semantic feature of thoughts.

<i>Feature of...</i>	<i>Word</i>	<i>Sentence</i>	<i>Thought</i>
semantic	Beardsley	Black	Richards, Black?, Searle
pragmatic	Aristotle		

1.6 Closing Remarks

In contemporary philosophy of language, there is an explicit on-going debate on how metaphors work. Much of this debate is centred on the eliminativist question - whether metaphorical expressions have a special metaphorical meaning in addition to their literal meaning. The contemporary accounts surveyed in this chapter are all non-eliminativist semantic accounts, in that they all hold that there are metaphorical meanings. However, they each propose a different basic metaphorical unit as the bearer of metaphorical meaning: the word, the sentence, and speaker's meaning. I suspect that part of the disagreement between the eliminativists and non-eliminativists, and the disparities found among the semantic accounts of the non-eliminativists, are due to an implicit disagreement on the question of what kind of entity they take metaphoricity to be a feature. As we saw, some take the expression, the process of implication, or the thought to be metaphorical.

In this chapter, I have proposed a preliminary taxonomy. The survey of philosophers is far from exhaustive; however, I have introduced key figures from the philosophical literature on metaphor as representatives of the different classifications. In order to determine their place in the taxonomy, and have examined how they use the word "metaphor". I have shown how some

philosophers are not consistently using the word "metaphor" to refer to the same kind of thing. Despite this, I have attempted to show where they best fit in our taxonomy.

Chapter 2: Donald Davidson

The purpose of this chapter is to lay out in some detail Donald Davidson's views on metaphor as presented in his paper "What Metaphors Mean"²⁴. I will first summarize the general structure of the paper. After situating Davidson's views on the interpretation of metaphors within the context of his general account of the interpretation of language, I will explain the three major theses he wishes to defend: that metaphors do not convey thoughts, that literal meaning is necessary to metaphorical interpretation, and that metaphors do not have an additional metaphorical meaning above and beyond the literal meaning of the expression. This last thesis is the main claim of his paper. The remainder of this chapter will consist of a detailed articulation of Davidson's key arguments against semantic accounts of metaphor.

2.1 General Overview of "What Metaphors Mean"

Davidson's main thesis is that "metaphors mean what the words, in their most literal interpretation, mean, and nothing more" (30).

This is in stark contrast to the commonly held view that metaphor operates via a special metaphorical meaning. Davidson defends his view by critically evaluating and ultimately rejecting competing

²⁴ This paper was first read at a conference on metaphor at the University of Chicago in 1978, and first published in *Critical Inquiry* 5 (1978): 31-47. Unless otherwise indicated, all quotes and page references are to Davidson's "What Metaphors Mean", in Sacks 1979.

traditional, yet mistaken, views of metaphor. In particular, he mentions the two key mistakes of which he wants to disabuse us: that metaphors have, in addition to their literal interpretation, a metaphorical meaning, and that metaphors are primarily used to convey ideas. In rejecting these two traditional claims, Davidson does not intend to dismiss or devalue the cognitive import of metaphors. Instead, the disagreement lies in *how* he believes metaphors achieve their remarkable effect. On Davidson's view, metaphors owe their cognitive impact not to their special semantic features, but to pragmatics. Before launching into the main argument of his paper, Davidson anticipates his final position. Essentially, any semantic account of metaphorical expressions will be restricted to a literal semantics, whereas metaphors belong exclusively on the pragmatic side of the semantic/pragmatic divide.

The rest of the paper consists principally of his negative views of how metaphors work, through a criticism of semantic accounts of metaphor, only to introduce some positive claims of his own at the end. He first criticizes the role that similarity plays in theories of metaphor, and that it is talk of similarity which sneaks into play talk of metaphorical meanings. Then Davidson takes up, one after the other, the view of metaphorical meaning as extended meaning, views of metaphor as an ambiguity, a Fregean alternative to the ambiguity view, and the view of metaphor as simile. He ends with some reflections on the patent falsehood of

metaphors, and with final speculations regarding mistaken semantic theses of metaphor.

2.2 Metaphorical Interpretation

It is helpful to remind ourselves of the general framework within which Davidson approaches the topic of metaphor. In the first paragraph, Davidson speaks of the understanding of metaphors as being a process of *interpretation*. This fits in with his accounts of languages and communication in general. Both literal and metaphorical interpretation "assume the interplay of inventive construction and inventive construal" (29). The collaborative process of interpreting metaphors is the same collaborative process at work in interpreting "ordinary" language use. Although stressing the creativity involved in the interpretation of metaphor, Davidson asserts that "[t]hese remarks do not, except in matters of degree, distinguish metaphor from more routine linguistic transactions" (29). In this way, the difference between what we commonly call figurative and literal language use is a matter of *degree* of creativity, not a difference of kind.

Davidson points out that, as is the case with the interpretation of dreams, the act of interpreting a metaphor is a work of the imagination, and as much a creative endeavour as the act of creating a metaphor. He thus stresses the point that interpretation reflects as much on the interpreter as on the originator. Although the direction of Davidson's analysis

privileges the interpreter's epistemic stance, here there is a care to balance and account for both the originator and interpreter of metaphors as equally creative and important. To anticipate, Davidson rejects views like Searle's which privilege the originator's stance because he rejects the view that language and metaphors are principally used as vehicles for conveying ideas.

2.3 First Thesis: The Inadequacy of the Vehicle Metaphor for Explaining Metaphor

This brings us to the first of the major theses exploited by Davidson in this paper. I say "exploited" here because this is a thesis for which, in this text at least, he does not explicitly argue. Davidson baldly states that the analysis of metaphor as primarily a vehicle for conveying ideas is *wrong* (30). The view that the author wants to convey a cognitive content associated with a metaphor, and that the interpreter must grasp this content, is *false* (44). Other than these claims, Davidson does not present any articulated argument²⁵. Instead, the promise of establishing this thesis will get fulfilled through his cashing out the main thesis that metaphors do not have an additional metaphorical meaning. To anticipate, if there is no metaphorical content, then there is no

²⁵ Some background assumptions which may underlie Davidson's claim that metaphors do not primarily convey messages include: his belief that language in general does not convey messages either, and his emphasis on the interpreter's epistemic stance, which de-emphasizes the speaker's intentions (including those of conveying messages through words).

metaphorical content to be conveyed.

To say that a metaphor is not a vehicle for conveying an idea is not to deny that metaphors have a point, nor that the point cannot be brought out by using further words (30). What Davidson denies is that a metaphor's point is a semantic one²⁶. "But if I am right," says Davidson, "a metaphor doesn't say anything beyond its literal meaning" (30). If so, there is no additional metaphorical meaning to be conveyed. This is why Davidson agrees that we cannot paraphrase metaphors: not because the process would be too complicated, nor because the metaphorical meaning cannot be put in other words, but rather because there is nothing there to be paraphrased (30). To anticipate, a metaphor does not say anything beyond the literal meaning of the words used, nor does the metaphor maker say anything beyond the literal meaning of the words used²⁷.

2.4 Second Thesis: What Metaphors Literally Mean

Apart from the question whether or not metaphors have any additional metaphorical meaning, Davidson holds that any account of metaphor must explain how the literal meaning of the words in a

²⁶ Instead, a metaphor has an epistemic point - to incite us to notice something. "Metaphor makes us see one thing as another by making some literal statement that inspires or prompts the insight" (45). However, what we notice is not propositional: seeing as is not seeing that (45).

²⁷ Although the former claim has gained acceptance by more contemporary philosophers of language, it is the latter claim, that *speakers* don't say or otherwise convey any message beyond the literal meaning of the words, which remains controversial.

metaphor remain "active", or at least how literal meaning *must* play a role towards achieving metaphor's effect. Davidson concludes: "The argument so far has led to the conclusion that as much of metaphor as can be explained in terms of meaning may, and indeed must, be explained by appeal to the literal meanings of words" (39). Throughout "What Metaphors Mean", Davidson emphasizes the importance of the literal meaning of a metaphor. Metaphor "is something brought off by the imaginative employment of words and sentences and depends entirely on the ordinary meaning of those words and hence on the ordinary meanings of the sentences they comprise" (31). Further, he says: "Whether or not metaphor depends on new or extended meanings, it certainly depends in some way on the original meanings; an adequate account of metaphor must allow that the primary or original meanings of words remain active in their metaphorical setting" (32).

It is not clear how Davidson reaches this conclusion. A positive argument is brought out at the beginning of the paper, when Davidson is staking out his commitments. He takes semantics as the theory of what words mean. Since literal meaning and literal truth conditions can be assigned to words and sentences apart from particular contexts of use, this is why a literal semantics has genuine explanatory power (31). However, metaphorical meaning would not be assignable apart from particular contexts of use. Semantics is determined by truth-conditions, and only literal

semantics can be determined by truth-conditions. Therefore, what the words in a metaphorical expression mean can only be cashed out in a literal semantics (31).

"The point of the concept of linguistic meaning is to explain what can be done with words. But the supposed figurative meaning (...) explains nothing; it is not a feature of the words that the words have prior to and independent of the context of use, and it rests upon no linguistic customs except those that govern ordinary meaning (...). The unexpected or subtle parallels and analogies it is the business of metaphor to promote need not depend, for their promotion, on more than the literal meanings of words" (38).

And so, any achievement by metaphor, even if unusual, is arrived at by using the same semantic resources as "ordinary language".

2.4.1 Metaphor and Truth

If the semantics of metaphor are restricted to the literal meaning of the words, and since Davidson thinks literal meaning just is truth-conditions, then we have an interesting consequence: the sentences in which metaphors occur will be true or false in the usual way, and usually false²⁸ (39). Davidson is not talking here of "metaphorical truth" (that metaphors say something "true" about the world or human nature), nor does he deny that the "visions, thoughts, and feelings inspired by the metaphor" can themselves be true or false. Rather, he denies a "metaphorical truth" of the

²⁸ Some metaphors are patently true: no man is an island. Davidson says that the point is that, either true or false, the ordinary meaning in the particular context of use is so obviously wrong that we go beyond the literal interpretation (40).

sentence used²⁹.

Even if metaphors are usually false, to purposefully utter a metaphor, however, is not to lie. In both the case of lying and of metaphor, Davidson says we are not concerned with the meaning of the words, but in how they are used (41). In fact, the same sentence can be used (with meaning unchanged) for both purposes. And so the difference between them cannot be one between the meanings of the words used, but in *how* the words are used. In a lie, it is not a matter of just uttering a falsehood, but of our knowing it to be false and representing ourselves as believing it to be true.

For the most part, the falsity of a metaphorical sentence is crucial to its function as a metaphor - otherwise the metaphor does not get off the ground. "Generally it is only when a sentence is taken to be false that we accept it as a metaphor and start to hunt out the hidden implication" (40). Be careful: this hunting the hidden implication is *not* hunting for a special metaphorical meaning, since there is no such thing.

2.5 Third Thesis: There Are No Metaphorical Meanings

According to Davidson, not only *must* metaphor depend on the literal meaning of the words, they need *only* depend on those literal meanings to achieve their effect. If the semantics of

²⁹ The truth of the metaphor need not be paraphrased: the truth of the metaphor is given in the literal meaning of the words (41).

metaphor are restricted to a literal semantics, then there are no metaphorical meanings³⁰. Davidson is not simply restricting the domain of semantics to suit his goals. In accounting for the function of metaphors, he maintains it is of no help to posit special metaphorical meanings which are operative when the expression is used metaphorically. To do so would be like explaining sleeping pills by positing their dormative virtue. It is because literal truth-conditions can be assigned to sentences independently of context, that appealing to literal meaning has genuine explanatory power.

Davidson's main thesis is that "metaphors mean what the words, in their most literal interpretation, mean, and nothing more" (30). The argument for this third thesis is largely negative. Indeed, the bulk of the paper is a criticism of semantic accounts of metaphor which postulate metaphorical meanings, and which ultimately fail.

2.5.1 How Metaphorical Meaning Sneaks Into Play

Davidson considers the impulse that so many have had of searching for the metaphorical meanings of metaphors. He thinks that, for some, the key to metaphors is the special insight they can inspire. Since ordinary language in its usual functioning

³⁰ The appearance of something like "metaphorical meaning" arises merely from the fact that, once a metaphor is interpreted and understood, we can call what we grasp the "metaphorical truth" and (up to a point) say what the metaphorical meaning is (31).

yields no such insight, then metaphors must have a special meaning which expresses this insight (30).

One catalyst for generating the wild goose chase after metaphorical meanings is one of the key traditional characteristics attributed to metaphors since Aristotle. "A metaphor makes us attend to some likeness, often a novel or surprising likeness, between two or more things" (31). From this observation, Davidson believes many have drawn misleading conclusions. Consider "ordinary" likeness or similarity: two infants are similar by virtue of their infanthood. Ordinary similarity, he says, depends on groupings established by the ordinary meanings of words (31). And so, "ordinary" similarity is unsurprising to the extent that familiar ways of grouping objects are tied to usual meanings of usual words. In this example, the predicate "is an infant" applies to both.

But what about the surprising similarity that metaphor is supposed to bring to our attention? Davidson takes the example: "Tolstoy was a great moralizing infant". The wrong move (which is all too often made, he thinks) is to think of a class of objects which includes all ordinary infants and the adult Tolstoy, and then ask what special property they may have in common (32). The apparent advantage of this view is that we could perhaps come close to specifying the appropriate property, and thereby find words that match up with the metaphorical meaning of "infant".

What is centrally wrong with this move is the assumption that there is something to be matched up. This assumption springs from using the comparison model we saw with ordinary similarity: since similarity in the ordinary case seems to depend on the meanings of the words used, we posit a metaphorical meaning which we can then similarly supply to explain the metaphorical similarity. Thus arises the view that, in a metaphor, words take on an additional or extended meaning: "since what we think of as garden variety similarity goes with what we think of as garden variety meanings, it is natural to posit unusual or metaphorical meanings to help explain the similarities metaphor promotes" (32).

To anticipate, Davidson thinks that metaphorical meaning is not encoded in the expression; rather, we are mistakingly attributing the content of the thoughts provoked by the expression to the expression itself. Now we will go through and show how Davidson thinks that traditional accounts of metaphor which are committed to a notion of metaphorical meanings are doomed.

2.6 Metaphor as Simile

Davidson attacks views that take metaphor to be a kind of simile. There are (at least) two different formulations of the simile thesis that should be kept distinct. The first is that: "the figurative meaning of a metaphor is the literal meaning of the corresponding simile" (36). In this case, the metaphorical meaning of "Christ was a chronometer" is synonymous with "Christ was like

a chronometer". However, it is not always easy or obvious what simile corresponds to the metaphor. Davidson cites an example from Virginia Woolf: a highbrow is "a man or woman of thoroughbred intelligence who rides his mind at a gallop across country in pursuit of an idea" (36). A corresponding simile, and hence its literal meaning, does not come pat.

The second formulation of the simile thesis takes the metaphor to be an elliptical simile. This view seems deceptively simple, and as Davidson wants to show, it is too simple to work. The major problem with this view is that, by saying that the literal meaning of the metaphor *just is* the literal meaning of the (elliptical) simile, then we have lost the literal reading of the metaphor. If "A is B" means "A is like B", then the literal meaning of "A is B" plays no role. As Davidson has earlier tried to show, literal meaning (of "A is B") is necessary to the interpretation of metaphor. Furthermore, the elliptical simile theory of metaphor "makes no distinction in meaning between a metaphor and some related simile" (36).

A problem with both formulations of the simile thesis is that they "make the hidden meaning of the metaphor all too obvious and accessible. In each case the hidden meaning is to be found simply by looking to the literal meaning of what is usually a painfully

trivial simile" (37)³¹. It trivializes metaphor to reduce it to a simile, because the strength of the similarity relation in a simile is trivial: everything is like everything (37). The simile views aims to make the interpretation of metaphors (and their paraphrasability) pat, and fails to do justice to the creative work of trying to capture or paraphrase endlessly complex and cryptic metaphors.

There is a further difficulty faced by the simile theses. All that a simile does is tell us that there is a likeness or similarity between two things: "It no more tells us what similarities we are to notice than the metaphor does" (37). Once our attention is drawn to the fact that similarities exist, there remains the task of elucidating what the particular similarities are. If a compiled list of relevant similarities is supposed to "give us the figurative meaning of the simile, then we learn nothing about metaphor from the comparison with simile - only that both have the same figurative meaning" (38). So, the simile thesis takes us no further ahead in grasping the elusive metaphorical meaning.

After making this point, Davidson uses the comparison between

³¹ Except, as Davidson had already shown, that *many* metaphors are not obviously translatable into a simile. Given that we can have metaphorical expressions at the level of words or extended metaphors which do not follow the pattern of *x is y*, perhaps this can serve as proof that the simile thesis is bankrupt. Either that or we must grossly truncate the class of metaphorical expressions.

metaphor and simile to try to give us a compelling reason to drop any talk of extra metaphorical meaning. In a simile we notice what the words literally say (that two things resemble each other), then move to considering the objects themselves. Once we have "appreciated the difference between what the words meant and what the author accomplished by using those words, we should feel little temptation to explain what has happened by endowing the words themselves with a second, or figurative, meaning" (38).

Since the concept of linguistic meaning is to explain what can be done with words, and simile relies on no linguistic customs "except those that govern ordinary meaning" (38), then any linguistic meaning had by the simile is literal meaning. And if simile can achieve its desired effect with only literal meaning, then it must also be possible for metaphor, since metaphor directs our attention to the same sorts of similarity as its corresponding simile.

2.7 Breaking the Literal Law

Davidson dismisses one class of accounts of metaphor for violating the second of his major theses: that theories of metaphor must explain how the literal meaning of the words in a metaphor remain "active". We have already seen how the elliptical simile thesis of metaphor does not account for the role literal meaning plays in metaphor. The following views also do not respect the second thesis.

2.7.1 Metaphorical Meaning as Ambiguity

Davidson attacks another semantic theory of metaphor; namely, that metaphorical expressions are ambiguous, and that this is how they achieve their effect. An initial formulation of the ambiguity thesis goes as follows: "in the context of a metaphor, certain words have either a new or an original meaning, and the force of the metaphor depends on our uncertainty as we waver between the two meanings" (33). In this case, the effect of the metaphor is achieved by our first taking the word "infant" in its ordinary sense, and then taking it in a metaphorical sense.

The problem with this view, thinks Davidson, is that the ambiguity or hesitation is due to the fact that in one context (say, the ordinary) the word means one thing, and that in another context (say, the metaphorical) the word means another thing (33). In the metaphorical context itself, we do not hesitate; or, if we do, it is between different possible metaphorical interpretations. What we do not hesitate over is whether what we have on our hands is a metaphor. Furthermore, as with the extended meaning thesis, if metaphor were simply a matter of ambiguity, then the hesitation should disappear with time. However, "the effectiveness of the metaphor easily outlasts the end of uncertainty over the interpretation" (33).

The ambiguity thesis fails to respect Davidson's second thesis, and does not explain how the literal meaning of the words

remain active in the metaphor. Instead, the literal meaning has been split from the metaphor altogether. Metaphorical meaning arises in the metaphorical context, and the literal meaning is active in an "ordinary" context. Thus, the literal meaning of the words drops out of an explanation of metaphor within its metaphorical context. And so, this formulation of the ambiguity thesis must fail.

2.7.2 Modified Ambiguity Thesis

Next, Davidson considers a modified version of the ambiguity thesis described above. What if, within a single context, a word has two meanings such that we are supposed to remember and use both? He uses the example from Shakespeare's *Cressida*: "Our general doth salute you with a kiss". In this example, two sense of "general" are active in the *same* context. The "general" is both Agamemnon, and everyone in general. So in the same context, we have a conjunction of two sentences: "Agamemnon salutes you with a kiss", and "Everyone in general is saluting you with a kiss".

However, Davidson points out that, instead of providing an account of metaphorical meaning, this is an explanation of how a pun (paronomasia) works. In a pun, we need to spell out the two conjoined sentences, whereas in metaphor, Davidson says there is no such need of reiteration (33). And so, unlike the pun, a metaphor is not a conjunction of two sentences: the metaphorical meaning (and literal meaning) should be active in every reading or spelling

out of the metaphorical expression.

Whereas this modification dissolves the problem of the two contexts suffered by the earlier version of the ambiguity thesis, its inadequacy in light of Davidson's second thesis remains. Even if they occur within the same context, the literal and metaphorical interpretations of the metaphor remain separate and serial (i.e., reiterated one after the other). In a metaphor, "whatever meanings we assign the words, they keep through every correct reading of the passage" (33), even the metaphorical readings. And so the problem with this version of the ambiguity thesis is that we are conjoining two sentences, one literal and one metaphorical, and literal meaning is still severed from metaphorical interpretation.

2.7.3 Fregean Alternative: 2nd Modification to the Ambiguity Thesis

Davidson considers another modification to the ambiguity thesis. What if we believed that the key word in a metaphor has two different *kinds* of meaning at once in a single context? In this way, the words in a metaphor would have a special sense which becomes "active", all the while not losing their original literal sense. Both senses would be active: the literal meaning would remain latent (yet still working on us), and the metaphorical meaning would carry the direct load. This view differs from the ambiguity theses in that there is a rule which connects the literal and metaphorical meanings. The rule goes something like this: "in its metaphorical role the word applies to everything that it

applies to in its literal role, and then some" (34)³².

Davidson takes this view to have profound similarities with a certain view of Gottlob Frege. Frege had worried about reconciling compositionality for sentences about propositional attitudes, or containing other opaque contexts. His solution was to say that in these contexts, words exhibited their *indirect* reference. That is, the expression referred to the ordinary sense of the words, and not to its ordinary denotation or reference (whether it be an object or a truth value).

For the case of metaphor, Davidson translates the view under consideration into Fregean terms: "the meaning of the word in the special contexts makes the reference in those contexts to be identical with the meaning in ordinary contexts" (34). This rule conjoins, on the one hand, original meaning and reference, and on the other hand, two special fields of application - one for metaphors and one for opaque contexts. In both of the latter cases, "the original meaning remains to do its work by virtue of a rule which relates the various meanings" (34). In other words, metaphorical meaning would be something analogous to Frege's indirect reference, where the original meaning of the words remains connected or active.

After giving the best possible reading of this Fregean

³² Davidson attributes this view to Paul Henle, as presented in his paper "Metaphor", in *Language, Thought, and Culture*, ed. Henle (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1958).

alternative to the modified ambiguity thesis, Davidson goes on to show that this view, also, must ultimately fail to give a satisfactory account of metaphor³³. To illustrate his point, Davidson gives the example of the Saturnian learning how to use the word "floor". The idea is that, when you go around pointing at different floors, you are teaching the Saturnian something about language: namely, new extensions or meanings for a given word. Later, you can teach the Saturnian something about the world (once they have grasped the meaning of the word); namely, that *here* is a floor.

However, when you recall Dante's metaphor of the Earth as "the small round floor that makes us passionate", the Fregean alternative will be of no help to explain to the Saturnian that in this case you meant the word metaphorically, and not simply as a new extension for the word "floor". If learning the ordinary meaning of a word just is learning to which objects the word applies, then the Saturnian could not tell whether it was being shown another object (in this case, the Earth) in the same ordinary extension, or whether it was learning about a special metaphorical extension³⁴. We want to be able to tell the difference between

³³ This is part of a general Davidsonian suspicion about senses, meanings and intensions.

³⁴ Or, if we tell the Saturnian that this is a special metaphorical sense of the word "floor", then the word "floor" becomes ambiguous. In the metaphorical context, the Earth would be a literal floor.

learning the ordinary and learning the "metaphorical senses" of the word; otherwise, the notion of metaphorical meaning as a kind of meaning distinct from the literal evaporates. But the new extension just ends up being a new *literal* extension, and this collapses into polysemy. Even if we call this new extension the metaphorical meaning, it would remain separate from the original literal meaning, thus violating the second of Davidson's theses.

This problem affects all views of metaphor which postulate extended meanings for words in metaphorical contexts: they do not adequately account for the role of the literal meanings of words. According to "extended meaning" views, a word in a metaphor takes on an extended meaning which describes the object to which the metaphor applies. For example, in the context of the metaphor, the word "infant", on this reading, would now apply correctly to the adult Tolstoy. If this is right, then the adult Tolstoy literally was an infant. Davidson protests that this is to murder the metaphor. The problem is that if we take metaphorical words "as directly going about their business of applying to what they properly do apply to, there is no difference between metaphor and the introduction of a new term into our vocabulary" (32). In this case, metaphor collapses into polysemy: the word "infant" has simply acquired another (literal) definition.

What has gone wrong, according to Davidson's diagnosis, is that any appeal to the original literal meaning of the word has

been left out. "Whether or not metaphor depends on new or extended meanings, it certainly depends in some way on the original meanings: an adequate account of metaphor must allow that the primary or original meanings of words remain active in their metaphorical setting" (32). If a metaphorical meaning is simply a new meaning in the new context, then the tension of the metaphor is dissolved: interpreting a metaphor would be the same as learning a new definition or application of a word. Metaphorical meaning would be not a special or different kind of meaning, but simply a new "ordinary" meaning. So this view fails to secure a robust notion of metaphorical meaning.

2.8 Conclusion

Davidson suggests that the fact that any attempt to give a semantic account of metaphor runs into problems is in itself a reason for us to think that this endeavor is misguided. He brings up Max Black's interaction view of metaphor to illustrate. Black worries about the possibility of paraphrasing metaphors: the paraphrase cannot, he thinks, have the same cognitive impact as the original. Davidson challenges those who would give semantic accounts of metaphor: if there is a special content, then why can't we spell it out? If metaphors get to have a special semantic content, then why not simile, etc? If metaphor has a coded content, then why is it not the idiomatic one secured when the

metaphor dies?³⁵

The problem of "paraphrasability" is not the one that Black is worried about: the true problem lies in the fact that much of what we are caused to notice by a metaphor is not propositional in character. That is why Davidson says that: "A picture is not worth a thousand words, or any other number. Words are the wrong currency to exchange for a picture" (45). Any attempt to give literal expression to the content of the metaphor is misguided: "Since in most cases what the metaphor prompts or inspires is not entirely, or even at all, recognition of some truth or fact" (45).

Davidson sums up the problem with semantic accounts of metaphor by highlighting a key tension: "on the one hand, the usual view wants to hold that a metaphor does something no plain prose can possibly do and , on the other hand, it wants to explain what a metaphor does by appealing to a cognitive content - just the sort of thing plain prose is designed to express" (43). The correct way out of this tension, thinks Davidson, is to give up the idea that a metaphor carries a message, or has content other than its literal content. Perhaps the reason we keep chasing after an extra metaphorical meaning is due to the "common error [which] is to fasten on the contents of the thoughts a metaphor provokes and to read these contents into the metaphor itself" (43).

³⁵ We don't want to agree to this because we take metaphors to be so much richer than the "dead" metaphors.

Davidson's primary concern has been to kill the notion that a metaphor has, in addition to its indispensable literal meaning, an extra metaphorical meaning. He took up formulations of the ambiguity and simile theses as possible candidates for explaining and locating metaphorical meaning, and showed the untenability of these explanations of metaphor. After deflating any attempt at a semantic account of metaphorical meaning, he notes that what still remains is literal meaning. And so he concludes: "The argument so far has led to the conclusion that as much of metaphor as can be explained in terms of meanings may, and indeed must, be explained by appeal to the literal meaning of words" (39).

Again, Davidson reassures us that he agrees with others on the effects of the metaphor. He disagrees on how metaphors achieve this effect, and he disagrees particularly with the view that the metaphor achieves it by appealing to metaphorical meaning. Metaphor may make us appreciate some fact, insists Davidson, "but not by standing for, or expressing, the fact" (44). This goes hand in hand with a necessary rejection of the view that a metaphor's function is to convey a message.

From this, says Davidson, it would be wrong to conclude that we should give up trying to interpret metaphors. Some of us might need help from a critic to get what the author wanted us to see. The critic might do so by paraphrase, and also try to reproduce in us the effect the original had on them, and by doing so calls

attention to the hidden power of the metaphor itself.

Chapter 3: The Dreamwork of Language

Consider Davidson's following claims about metaphor³⁶:

(1) "I depend on the distinction between what words mean and what they are used to do. I think metaphor belongs exclusively to the domain of use" (31).

(2) Metaphors "mean what the words, in their most literal interpretation mean, and nothing more" (30).

(3) An "adequate account of metaphor must allow that the primary or original meanings of words remain active in their metaphorical setting" (32).

(4) Metaphor is "something brought off by the imaginative employment of words and sentences and depends entirely on the ordinary meanings of those words and hence on the ordinary meanings of the sentences they comprise" (31).

(5) "Metaphor makes us see one thing as another by making some literal statement that inspires or prompts the insight." (45).

(6) The "special use to which we put language in metaphor is not - cannot be - to "say something" special, no matter how indirectly" (41).

(7) "We must give up the idea that a metaphor carries a message, that it has a content or meaning (except, of course, its literal meaning)" (43).

(8) "What we notice or see is not, in general, propositional in character" (45).

Given all these claims, just what kind of entity answers to all of them? We might be tempted to say that a metaphor is some "bit" of language, and that we can recognize which "bits" of language are metaphors. Different linguistic ontologies include such "bits" as word and sentence tokens (as realized in sounds, ink

³⁶ Again, unless otherwise indicated, all Davidson quotes are taken from "What Metaphors Mean", in Sacks 1979.

marks), or word and sentence types. This cannot be Davidson's view, however. No linguistic item satisfies all of (1)-(8). A better question to ask Davidson is: of which part of language does he think metaphoricity is a *feature*. The perhaps surprising answer is that metaphoricity may not be a feature of anything.

In order to give a thorough evaluation of Davidson's account, we will modify and refine our taxonomy. The kinds of entities of which metaphoricity could be a feature initially divide up among the ontological categories of the *mental*, *abstract*, or *material*. This chapter's argumentative flow will be largely negative - going through the possible candidates in each ontological category in order to show that Davidson does not or cannot think that metaphoricity is a feature of any of them, if he is to remain committed to all of his claims. If metaphoricity is not a feature of these candidates, then it is not clear, at this stage, what sort of things it might be a feature. Since Davidson's view is a strong and popular case against semantic accounts of metaphor, it is important that if we buy his view, we be aware that we seem also to be buying a deflated concept of metaphor.

3.1 Metaphor: Feature of Something Mental

Some have proposed that metaphoricity is a feature of something mental, a feature of mental processes or a feature of thoughts. These theories take metaphoricity to be a feature of either a regular or of a special kind of thought or thought

process.

Essentially, Searle's account takes metaphoricity as the feature of some ordinary kind of thought conveyed through special means. Remember: according to Searle, metaphoricity is a feature of speaker's meaning. The speaker conveys the regular thought of the form "*S is R*" by using a sentence of the form "*S is P*". Insofar as speaker meaning is something mental (in the speaker's mind and intentions), then we can consider Searle under this view. In any case, Davidson must reject this option since he rejects the view that there is a message in the first place to be conveyed. See claims(6), (7), and (8).

Others have proposed that metaphoricity is a feature of special kinds of thoughts. George Lakoff³⁷ (in turn with Turner and Johnson) has proposed the view that metaphor "is a matter of thought" (Lakoff 1989, xi). We have metaphorical *thoughts* which get put into words. And so, the "metaphoricalness" is properly of the thought, and not of the verbal expression: "Conventional metaphorical language is simply a consequence of the existence of conceptual metaphorical thought" (Lakoff 1989, 138)³⁸. We can call this kind of view a *cognitive* account of metaphor.

³⁷ See also Lakoff's "The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor", in Ortony 1993.

³⁸ David Hills, in "Aptness and Truth in Verbal Metaphor", discusses how the views of Lakoff "and his followers" (Hills, 140) on how conceptual metaphors differ from verbal metaphors.

Hugh Bredin, Earl Mac Cormac and I. A. Richards propose different versions of the cognitive account of metaphor. Bredin takes up Black's suggestion that metaphorical thinking is a neglected topic of major importance. Metaphorical thinking "refers primarily to the thought process involved in the production of metaphors" (1992a, 97). Mac Cormac seeks to explain metaphor as a *cognitive* process by which new concepts are expressed or suggested (1985, 5). I. A. Richards has also said that "thought is metaphoric" (94).

Each have their version of how thought is metaphorical. Metaphor, for Bredin, is a feature of a thought: "every metaphor is a linguistic expression of the thought that A is B" (1992a, 102). For I. A. Richards, instead of the one thought, two thoughts are active together and supported by a single word or phrase (93). Metaphorical thinking, according to Mac Cormac, is "the conceptual ability to hold two disparate things in the mind at the same time" (1985, 34). For all three, metaphoricity is a feature of some special kind of thinking.

Davidson thinks that he provides an account of the cognitive force of metaphor. Metaphor gets its cognitive impact by causing us to notice something: see claim (5). We come to see something as something else. However, this cognitive impact is not achieved via cognitive content. There is no metaphorical thought being conveyed. "Seeing as is not seeing that" (45). It is a mistake to

"imagine there is a content to be captured when all the while we are in fact focusing on what the metaphor makes us notice" (44). Metaphoricity, therefore, is not a semantic feature of the content of thoughts, since there is no metaphorical thought conveyed by the metaphorical expression: see claims (6), (7), and (8).

3.2 Metaphor: Feature of Something Abstract

Metaphoricity might be a feature of abstract things. We have linguistic or non-linguistic abstract entities. An example of a view which took metaphoricity to be a feature of something non-linguistic would be a view which holds that metaphoricity is a feature of propositions.

Propositions are, roughly, the meaning of sentences³⁹.

"Propositions are the things which people believe or disbelieve, assert or deny; they are answers to questions; they're the things one can give evidence for, and justify with arguments; the things which people judge true or false ... propositions are not symbols; they are the *meanings* of certain symbols" (Stainton, 46).

On one interpretation, Searle takes metaphoricity to be a feature of *propositions* meant by the speaker. For Searle, the meaning of a metaphor is the proposition which the speaker wishes to convey through the use of a sentence which does not encode that proposition. Metaphoricity is not a speaker-independent feature of

³⁹ There is some disagreement over the nature of propositions: some maintain that a proposition is abstract - it is not the sentence in itself - others that it is no entity other than the sentence, others that it is a set of possible worlds (Carnap), and others that it is a collection of actual entities making up states of affairs (Neo-Russellian).

propositions; however, the proposition "*S* is *R*" still gets cashed out as a literal proposition with literal meaning for Searle. The proposition is metaphorical only insofar as it is the propositional content which corresponds to sentence not spoken, e.g., the sentence "*S* is *P*".

As we saw, Davidson rejects any suggestion that metaphors convey any propositional content: see claims(7) and (8). The words in a metaphor do not convey any meaning, above and beyond literal meaning - see claim (2). Metaphoricity for Davidson, therefore, can be neither a semantic nor a pragmatic feature of propositions.

A more promising option is that Davidson might believe metaphoricity to be a feature of some abstract linguistic thing, such as a sentence or word type. The defining features of linguistic types are semantics and syntax⁴⁰. Syntax is determined by categories (e.g., noun phrase) and mood.

Is metaphoricity a semantic feature of word or sentence types? Such a view would consist in the sentence type having a metaphorical meaning. Davidson has already ruled out that metaphoricity is a semantic feature for the reasons we saw in Chapter Two. Take, for example, the sentence "Hemingway is lost in Africa". If metaphoricity is to be a semantic feature of the sentence type, then we have an ambiguity problem on our hands.

⁴⁰ Types are also determined by phonology, but this feature is not relevant here.

Looking at the sentence out of context does not tell us whether it is of a literal or metaphorical type. However, types are conventional: we should be able to assign a type to a sentence out of context.

Furthermore, if metaphoricity is a semantic feature of word or sentence types, and if this type's meaning will be metaphorical meaning, then the literal meaning has dropped out of the metaphorical type. In the ambiguous context, we must choose whether we have a literal or metaphorical type on our hands. Once we determine that the type has a metaphorical meaning, we no longer have access to any literal meaning for that type. And remember: Davidson insists that the literal meaning must stay: see (2), (3), (4), and (5). Therefore, Davidson cannot say that metaphoricity is a semantic feature of a word or sentence type.

Consider whether metaphoricity is a syntactic feature of word or sentence types. For metaphoricity to be a syntactic feature of sentence types would be for the sentence type⁴¹ to have a metaphorical categorial syntax, or a metaphorical mood. Do metaphors have a special categorial syntax? Perhaps the paradigmatic metaphorical syntactic structure is:

⁴¹ It would be odd to speak of metaphor as a syntactic feature of words. Syntax has to do with how words are ordered within sentences.

Metaphorical Sentence Type

Noun Phrase	Verb	Noun Phrase
Juliet	is	the sun

There are two problems which arise immediately: the syntactic structure is too wide and too narrow. It is too wide because there is nothing about the proposed syntactic structure which excludes non-metaphorical sentence types. The same syntactic tree could serve for a whole host of literal sentences, such as "John is a baker". The proposed syntactic structure is too narrow because it excludes many, if not most, metaphors. Consider for example the list of metaphors mentioned by Black: (1962, 26). So metaphoricity cannot be a categorial syntactic feature of sentence types since there is no metaphorical syntactic structure.

Could metaphoricity be a mood of word or sentence types? Sentence types are classified by mood (Davidson 1979, 109). If metaphor is a feature of mood, then a sentence could be of a "metaphorical" mood, just like "imperative", "interrogative", or "declarative". As a mood feature of sentence types, metaphor should be recognizable, outside of context, as such. "If literal meaning is conventional, then the difference in the grammatical moods - declarative, imperative, interrogative, optative - is conventional. These differences are in the open and intended to be recognized" (Davidson 1981, 270). A mood is recognized often by

the syntactic structure of the sentence (Hale, 593). We have syntactic clues which indicate to us that "Is Julie coming to dinner?" is a sentence types in the interrogative mood; for example, the inversion of the verb and subject. However, as we just saw, there is no metaphorical syntactic structure to be recognized.

Furthermore, it seems that metaphors come in different moods. "The chairman plowed through the meeting" is in the indicative mood; however, we can change the mood to the interrogative ("Did the chairman plow through the meeting?"), or to the imperative ("Chairman, plow through the meeting."), and so on. There is no metaphorical mood in principle recognizable by its syntax, and a metaphor may take different moods. Metaphoricity, therefore, is not a mood feature of sentence types.

Could metaphoricity be a *pragmatic* feature of word or sentence types? At first pass, this seems like a promising davidsonian solution. For Davidson, metaphor is a matter of pragmatics, of how we use words, and of how we use the literal meaning of the words. See (1), (4) and (5).

However, metaphor cannot strictly be a pragmatic feature of sentence types themselves, because types are conventional. We can say something about the type because we can do so conventionally, independently of context. This is the same kind of independence which secures the explanatory power of literal meaning according to

Davidson: "Literal meaning and literal truth conditions can be assigned to words and sentences apart from particular contexts of use. This is why adverting to them has genuine explanatory power" (31). We cannot say that we are metaphorically using a literal type since we cannot conventionally tell ahead of time if we have a metaphorical use on our hands.

As Davidson explains in "Moods and Performances" (109), moods classify sentence types, and uses classify utterances. And in "Communication and Convention", Davidson goes to great lengths to show that no convention could link sentence types with illocutionary intention, and that there are no conventions which govern uses (268). If there were such conventions, we ought to be able to represent them with a sign. But there are no such signs, and even if we postulated some, they would be of no help (270). The consequence of interest to us is that we cannot use a sign to conventionally indicate that we are using word and sentence types metaphorically⁴².

⁴² Davidson is not the only one to make this kind of argument. Black himself is aware of the problem: "There is an important mistake of method in seeking and infallible mark of the presence of metaphors. The problem seems to me analogous to that of distinguishing a joke from a nonjoke. If a philosopher, whose children have trouble in deciding when he is joking, introduces the convention that a raised thumb indicates seriousness, he might sometimes be joking in raising his thumb! An explicit assertion that a remark is being made metaphorically ... cannot guarantee that a metaphor is in question, for that does not depend simply upon its producer's intentions, and the sign might itself be used metaphorically. Every criterion for a metaphor's presence, however plausible, is defeasible in special

Let's use Davidson's own example to illustrate: "Hemingway Is Lost in Africa". We need to consider the context to determine whether the expression is being used metaphorically or not, whether Hemingway is lost or dead. The problem is that we cannot recognize a type being used metaphorically without the help of the context⁴³. If type is comprised of meaning, syntax, mood - all of which are established by convention - and if none of these are metaphorical, then metaphoricity is not strictly a feature of the type itself.

Although not properly abstract objects, we will consider linguistic tokens here. Tokens are instances of their type, and share features with it, including semantic features. Could metaphoricity be a semantic feature of the *token* of the type? While we can say that tokens have meaning in virtue of being tokens of a type - tokens have semantic features derivatively from their types - they cannot have any semantic features beyond those of the type.

Consider an example: a piece of metal is worth 25 cents only in virtue of being an instantiation of the type "quarter". Does that mean that the piece of metal itself is not worth 25 cents? In one sense yes, the value of 25 cents is not a value of metal *qua* metal. It is completely arbitrary that a piece of metal, instead

circumstances" (1977, 34).

⁴³ Except, perhaps, for "dead" metaphors. However, it is not immediately obvious that dead metaphors are metaphorical types: they are generally treated as idioms, in which syntax and compositionality play almost no role.

of another, gets to be worth 25 cents. The value of that piece of metal is derivative on its being a token of a particular type. However, regardless of whether or not its value is derivative, we want to say that it is *it*, the token itself, which has the value. Still, it cannot have an assigned value distinct from the type "quarter".

Similarly for tokens, any conventional semantic feature had by the token is shared with its type. Because of the same worries of ambiguity which ruled out metaphoricity being a semantic feature of types, metaphoricity cannot be a semantic feature of the token either⁴⁴. Besides, Davidson does not think that metaphoricity is a semantic feature at all: see (1).

3.3 Metaphor: Feature of Something Material

Let's consider whether Davidson thinks metaphoricity could be a feature of something material. There are linguistic or non-linguistic material things. One could perhaps argue that metaphoricity is a feature of nonlinguistic material things. In "Juliet is the sun", perhaps it is Juliet herself, or the sun, which are metaphorical. Either Juliet is metaphorically *being the sun*, or she is a *metaphorical sun*. We should immediately worry, however, about allowing "metaphorical suns" in our ontology, or any other metaphorical "object" for that matter. What would they be,

⁴⁴ Whether or not metaphoricity is a pragmatic feature of token will be considered in section 3.4.

anyway? Nor is it clear that metaphor is a feature of Juliet, or of a state of Juliet⁴⁵. What would be the material conditions for Juliet's metaphorically being the sun? They could not consist in Juliet's actually being the sun (whatever that may be), since all sense of metaphor would evaporate. In any case, we can eliminate the possibility that Davidson takes metaphoricity to be a feature of some non-linguistic thing, since he clearly speaks of it as being a feature of language: see (2), (4), and (6).

A more plausible candidate might be that metaphor is a feature of some *linguistic* material thing. As a feature of some linguistic material thing, metaphoricity could be a feature of sounds and marks. Linguistic sounds and marks are material in the sense that they are the material objects which are produced by an utterance, such as ink marks on a page, or bursts of sound (Hale, 689)⁴⁶.

What would it be for metaphoricity to be a feature of sounds and marks? Let's consider two possibilities: metaphoricity could be either a semantic or pragmatic feature of sounds and marks. We

⁴⁵ One might argue that the similarity which they share is somehow a feature of either Juliet or the sun, or both. For example, Juliet and the sun are similar in that they are both warm. The warmth is a property of both Juliet and the sun. Regardless, this is not to show that the *metaphor* which makes us notice this similarity is itself a feature of either Juliet or the sun.

⁴⁶ For the purposes of a detailed analysis, I will adopt a controversial distinction: I will consider the material aspect of the token in isolation. Here we are considering the token sound or mark's sound or shape.

can eliminate the option that metaphoricity is a semantic feature of sounds and marks, since these are not the kinds of things which have *semantic* features. Consider the utterance "The cat is fat". Is the meaning of the sentence a feature of the sound or marks? Frege, for one, would deny that these are the bearers of semantic features like truth-conditions:

"it is clear that we do not, properly speaking, ascribe truth to the series of sounds which constitute a sentence, but to its sense; for, on the one hand, the truth of a sentence is preserved when it is correctly translated into another language, and, on the other hand, it is at least conceivable that the same series of sounds should have a true sense in one language and a false sense in another" (229).

Besides, we have already ruled out the possibility that metaphor is a semantic feature of sounds or marks: metaphor belongs to the domain of pragmatics. See (1).

Instead, one might want to argue that Davidson thinks that metaphoricity is a pragmatic feature of sounds and marks. Sounds and marks could act as the bumps on the head which cause us to notice similarities.

We can imagine situations where the same material mark gets used at different times, thus producing different utterances of the same mark. For example, Rob can use the same "gone fishing" sign outside his door on Wednesday, and then again on Friday, producing different utterances of the same material marks.

It might seem plausible, then, that we could have metaphorical

uses of sounds and marks. Davidson speaks of metaphor as "something brought off by the imaginative employment of words and sentences" (31). If he means that metaphor is a feature of how we use sounds and marks, then this would mean that metaphor would be a feature of how we use, for example, the sound "s-u-n".

Could Davidson think that metaphoricity is a pragmatic feature of how we use sounds and marks? I argue that he could not, because he explicitly argues that the literal meaning must stay active in the metaphor: see (3) and (4). The sound "s-u-n" does not have a literal meaning; instead, it is the word type "sun" (or the token of the word type considered as an instance of its type) which is the bearer of literal meaning. So if meaning (even if only literal meaning) is to be an active partner in metaphor, then Davidson cannot take metaphoricity to be a pragmatic feature of how we use sounds or marks construed purely materially.

3.4 Metaphorical Use

Consider Davidson's claims (1), (4), (5), and (6). He seems to take metaphoricity to be a feature of how we use words. As of yet, there is no obvious linguistic candidate of which it could be a feature. Notice that metaphoricity is not a straightforward feature of linguistic entities: it is not a feature of meaning, nor of linguistic sounds or marks, nor of linguistic types. It is not a feature of any obvious material, mental, or abstract linguistic entity.

We return to tokens for final consideration. There are two ways that metaphoricity might be a pragmatic feature of word or sentence tokens. The tokens *themselves* might have metaphoricity as a pragmatic feature, or token *uses* might have metaphoricity as a pragmatic feature.

In the first case, metaphoricity would be a feature of token utterances themselves just as indexicality is. In the example "Tomorrow, I'll have a beer", the indexicality of "Tomorrow" is a feature of the token utterance itself. However, the indexicality of "Tomorrow" is also a feature of the utterance type. If metaphoricity is a feature of the token itself in an analogous way to indexicality, then metaphoricity should also be a feature of the sentence type. However, as we saw in section 3.2, there is no obvious way that metaphoricity could be a feature of sentence types: metaphoricity is neither a semantic, syntactic, nor conventional feature of types. Therefore, it does not seem that metaphoricity could be a feature of tokens themselves.

Instead, metaphor might be a feature of token uses. See (5). In this case, the domain of metaphor is not linguistic, but rather it belongs to the domain of extra-linguistic purposes. Davidson speaks of the autonomy of language: "Once a feature of language has been given conventional expression, it can be used to serve many extra-linguistic ends" (Moods, 113). Conventional meaning and illocutionary purpose do not come in one to one ratios. The

conventional meaning gets assigned truth conditionally, independently of context. Autonomy of language assures that this meaning remains autonomous of its ulterior purpose or use. If our purpose is metaphor, the literal meaning remains intact and is not therefore metaphorical. The autonomous literal meaning is "the meaning which it has on all of its uses to communicate further non-linguistic intentions or, more accurately, *regardless* of how it is so used" (Stern, 24).

The autonomy of language grounds two key points about metaphor as a feature of token uses. The autonomy has secured the mandatory account of how literal meaning remains active in metaphor: see (3), (4), and (5). However, the autonomy of the type from its metaphorical use entails that there are no conventional uses of types.

And so, one might grant that there is an ontological *category* of which metaphoricity is a feature; namely, the category of uses. However, even if that's right, I suggest that Davidson does not provide a way of isolating which uses in this category are "metaphorical".

3.5 What Are the Characteristics of "Metaphorical Use"?

Not only is there no conventional use of words or sentences in metaphor, there are no conventional characteristics associated with metaphor. From the first chapter, characteristics emerged that most theorists agreed were key characteristics of metaphor:

Davidson dissolves almost all of them.

Traditionally, metaphors are creative and novel. They have been said to be creative in the sense of having or creating a new metaphorical meaning. Insofar as they are creative in this sense, it should be amply clear by now that Davidson rejects this characteristic: see (4), (7) and (2).

Many views have proposed that, in a metaphor, there is an interaction of words. Davidson does not think that metaphor results from an interaction of the meaning of words: metaphor is not a semantic phenomena at all. See (1). Perhaps metaphor "interacts" with the context in such a way that it stands out as false.

One staple characteristic is that metaphor deals with similarities. Although he concedes this, Davidson points out that many other things also deal with similarities. This is not a distinguishing feature of metaphor. "Metaphor and simile are merely two among endless devices that serve to alert us to aspects of the world by inviting us to make comparisons" (38). If the purpose of metaphor is to get us to notice similarities, then it seems that we cannot distinguish metaphor by its use, since its purpose is shared with other tropes, such as simile. However, Davidson does think that there is a difference between metaphor and simile, and rejects theories which conclude that metaphor is an elliptical simile. Part of the difference is that "simile tells us, in part, what a metaphor merely nudges us into noting" (36).

Finally, metaphorical or figurative language has been characterized as distinct in kind from literal language. On the one hand, Davidson is relying on a distinction between the two, in order to set up the explanatory power of literal meaning, setting metaphor aside from semantic considerations, and conserving the autonomy of language. See (1).

However, at other places, Davidson hints that there are not as many differences between the two as we might expect. For one thing, the semantic resources are the same: "Metaphor runs on the same familiar linguistic tracks that the plainest sentences do" (41). Metaphor's achievement "uses no semantic resources beyond the resources on which the ordinary depends" (29).

What metaphor achieves and how it does so is not sharply delineated from the literal. It is only by degree of creativity, not by kind of creativity, that we "distinguish metaphor from more routine linguistic transactions" (29). Metaphor makes us notice things, many things. Yet, this is not specific to metaphor: "I hold that the endless character of the paraphrase of a metaphor springs from the fact that it attempts to spell out what the metaphor makes us notice, and to this there is no clear end. *I would say the same for any use of language*" (45, fn16, italics mine).

Conclusion

Metaphor, for Davidson, is not a feature of linguistic entities. Even if metaphoricity is a feature of something within the ontological category of uses, given that Davidson rejects most of the traditional characteristics of metaphor, it is not clear how Davidson can isolate *which* uses in this category are metaphorical. That is not to say that he cannot point to clear cases of metaphor. Even so, Davidson still does not have a clear answer to the question "what are metaphors?". Nor do we have an answer to the question "to what does 'metaphorical' attach?". Whether this is a problem of detail which Davidson could work out, or whether this is a more serious problem, is a topic for future work.

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