Contexts of Metaphor
Current Research in the Semantics/Pragmatics Interface

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The aim of this series is to focus upon the relationship between semantic and pragmatic theories for a variety of natural language constructions. The boundary between semantics and pragmatics can be drawn in many various ways, the relative benefits of each gave rise to a vivid theoretical dispute in the literature in the last two decades. As a side-effect, this variety has given rise to a certain amount of confusion and lack of purpose in the extant publications on the topic.

This series provides a forum where the confusion within existing literature can be removed and the issues raised by different positions can be discussed with a renewed sense of purpose. The editors intend the contributions to this series to take further strides towards clarity and cautious consensus.
The Way has never had borders, saying has never had norms. It is by a ‘That’s it’ which deems that a boundary is marked.

Chuang-tzu
(transl. A.C. Graham)
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PREFACE

If there is one topic that falls in the disputed border territory between semantics and pragmatics, it is metaphor. Over the years, competing theories have been developed that take the principles of metaphorical interpretation to be essentially semantic, essentially pragmatic, or even as wholly distinct in nature; at present, there is nothing remotely like a consensus on how to approach the problem. This study attempts to clear the terrain, by comparing the different approaches in a comprehensive theoretical framework, and by focusing on the more principled arguments that are, or can be, given for treating metaphor in either semantic or pragmatic terms. It proceeds from the assumption that meaning is not a unitary phenomenon; such notions as semantic entailment, presupposition, and implicature display a clearly different behavior. One of its aims is to clarify how such distinct aspects of meaning are articulated in metaphorical interpretation.

Although it seems difficult to give knock-down arguments for treating metaphor along either semantic or pragmatic lines, I believe that there are rather persuasive reasons for analyzing metaphor in terms of semantic and broadly conventional and language-specific rules rather than intention-driven and universal pragmatic principles. Chapter 3 attempts to give such an analysis; it emphasizes the essential role of context-dependence in metaphorical interpretation, and argues that this context-dependence can be captured in terms of a compositional semantic theory. Neither a semantic nor a pragmatic approach can give us a fully explanatory account of metaphor, however; in the final chapter, I therefore present a supplementary treatment at the conceptual level. For various reasons, the currently fashionable views of concepts or categories are unsatisfactory; I present an alternative approach, inspired by the work of the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky. Special attention will be given to the role of so-called 'ad hoc concepts' and of social practices in concept formation, and in particular in so far as they can help us account for the understanding of metaphor. In other words, although the main thrust of this book is linguistic, it also incorporates ideas and insights from the social sciences.

I have made an effort to keep this book accessible to non-specialist readers, or to readers specialized in only one of the fields discussed. I presuppose some familiarity with theoretical terminology, but as this study covers a rather broad territory, I explain the central notions in some detail as I go along.

In the course of writing and rewriting this book, I have profited from the comments and criticism of various people. I owe a special debt of gratitude to Earl MacCormac, who not only
was my first mentor in philosophy, but also guided the start of my thinking about metaphor. Although my views at present differ widely from his, I am indebted to him for rolling the ball in the beginning. Renate Bartsch and Martin Stokhof guided the thesis upon which this study is based. Discussions and correspondence with Jay David Atlas, Veit Bader, Bipin Indurkhya, Rob van der Sandt and Josef Stern did much to shape and clarify the ideas developed here. Babette Greiner, Donald Verene and Cornelis Verhoeven commented on different parts of the manuscript, and made valuable suggestions for improvements. Pieter Muysken and Gerard de Vries gave important support at a later stage. Karel van der Leeuw helped with the Chinese characters, and Ben Schomakers provided me with some last-minute Aristotelian scholarship. I am also indebted to the series editors Kasia Jaszczolt and Ken Turner, and Chris Pringle and Leighton Chipperfield of Elsevier for their enthusiasm about this project.

Sultan kept me company for much of the way, with both forbearance and the necessary impatience; now, Shilan is here to show us wholly new ways. My mother was always there; it was in her house that I did an important part of the thinking and writing of this study. Now she is no longer with us. I miss her. It is to her memory that this book is dedicated.
INTRODUCTION

Before the twentieth century, metaphor has rarely commanded the attention of philosophers. For the most part, this neglect has resulted less from any conscious choice than from an (often unarticulated) folk theory, or ‘language ideology’, that each word has, or should have, a well-determined ‘proper’ or ‘literal’ meaning of its own. An assumption like this is already present in Plato’s Cratylus, but it also appears in Hobbes (1991 [1651]: 24-31) and Locke (1975 [1689]: 508), both of whom reject metaphor as unfit for rational argument. This is not to say, however, that metaphor has been uniformly ignored, let alone deliberately repressed, in ‘the Western tradition’: authors like Aristotle and Vico devoted a fair amount of attention to it, while for some Islamic philosophers, many of whom were strongly influenced by Greek philosophizing, metaphor was a topic of central philosophical and theological importance with respect to the interpretation of the Qur’ân. For the most part, however, metaphor was delegated to rhetoric and literary theory, while literal language was seen as a norm or standard for ‘serious’ language usage, and as an ideal for rational argument. Ideals should not be mistaken for realities, however: many words have nowhere near as clearly delimited a meaning as we would like to believe, and word meanings often change over time. This insight was anticipated by the romantic claim that language is metaphorical in origin (Rousseau (1990 [1781]); cf. Müller 1861), and gained in importance with the development of historical and comparative linguistics from the early nineteenth century onwards. At the same time, however, romantic literary critics tended to portray poetry, and metaphor along with it, as essentially different from everyday language: both poetry and metaphor came to be seen as expressing an ‘emotive’, rather than a ‘cognitive’, meaning.

These two beliefs, the folk theory that each word has its ‘proper’ meaning, and the romantic idea that metaphor is qualitatively different from literal language, have survived as guiding - if largely implicit - theoretical assumptions in much of twentieth century philosophy of language and linguistics. Modern theories of meaning have also been greatly influenced by the development of formal logic, where expressions are simply postulated to have a single, well-defined meaning. Aside from the influence of logical semantics, there were two other factors that contributed to this development: first, the shift in attention from diachronic to synchronic linguistics, and secondly, the shift in theoretical status of language from a primarily social and communicative to a primarily individual and cognitive phenomenon. The former factor tended to downplay the obvious fact that linguistic meanings easily can and do change in the course of time: with the shift of attention to synchronic meaning, such meaning changes
became something of secondary importance, not to be accounted for in a theory of langue (Saussure 1916) or competence (Chomsky 1965). The latter factor tended to downplay the equally obvious fact that, even at the synchronic level, languages display great variation in style, register, dialect and sociolect. Such variations were equally taken to fall outside the domain of ‘core linguistics’.

Given these pre-theoretical assumptions and theoretical choices, metaphor has remained a problem for semantic theory; consequently, it has often been delegated to neighbouring disciplines like pragmatics, literary theory, or cognitive science, and assumed to have no place in semantics proper. Partly in consequence of all this, the status of metaphor within linguistic theory is highly controversial at present. There is a large number of rival frameworks that fundamentally disagree not only on how to incorporate metaphor in a general theory of language, but also on what such a theory should look like to begin with. Here, I start from the intuition, with which many theorists would agree in one way or another, that metaphor has something to do with change of meaning. I will defend a more specific version of this thesis, however, namely the claim that metaphorical interpretation actually involves a change of meaning, and this is something far fewer present-day theorists would agree with. Furthermore, I will try to integrate this approach to metaphor within a more general theory of language; that is, I will try to restrict the number of notions specific to metaphor for as far as possible. This reflects another idea I want to defend: literal and figurative language do not involve any qualitatively different processes of interpretation.

But even the belief that metaphor can or should be treated within a linguistic theory has not gone unchallenged. Recently, it has been argued that metaphor is a cognitive rather than a linguistic phenomenon, and that linguistic metaphors are merely reflections of more general cognitive processes. While such views contain more than a grain of truth, I think it is still useful to look at metaphor within one relatively well-defined and well-studied domain of experience, viz., language, and see what its characteristics are in that domain; afterwards, we can try to integrate this view within a general cognitive framework. On the other hand, there are good reasons for doubting the feasibility of a complete reduction of linguistic metaphor to purely cognitive processes, the most important one being the fact that languages constitute elaborate systems of conventions and intersubjective knowledge that cannot easily (or perhaps not at all) be reduced to individual cognition. We will discuss this in more detail below.

My focus on linguistic metaphor reflects a belief that there are significant differences between linguistic and other metaphors: for example, in the pictorial and cinematographic metaphors discussed by Indurkhya (1992: 21-6), the tension or anomaly at the ‘literal level’ that many authors see as a defining characteristic of linguistic metaphor is usually absent. Thus, it is very well possible to appreciate Jan van Eyck’s famous portrait of Giovanni
Arnolfini and Giovanna Cenami (plate 2 in Indurkhya 1992) as just representing a husband and wife in a room, without attaching any symbolic meaning to specific items of the painting, such as the one burning candle mounted on a seven-candle candelabrum which symbolizes pride, one of the seven cardinal sins. Likewise, one can see Piero della Francesca’s View of Jerusalem just as part of a historic painting depicting the discovery of the True Cross without being aware that at the same time the city of Arezzo is being portrayed. In other words, much of what Indurkhya calls ‘visual metaphor’ might probably better be called ‘visual symbolism’. This does not exclude the possibility of similar processes of interpretation occurring in both, but I think the latter term is a much broader one. As will appear from the discussion below, I do not think that literal falsity or anomaly can be considered a defining criterion for metaphor, but this does not preclude that many metaphors do manifest some kind of tension. Moreover, linguistic metaphors typically involve a much more elaborate ‘code’ than nonlinguistic ones.

The variation and flexibility in the rules of a language on a synchronic level is the basis for diachronic change: if the rules of a language are not rigidly defined to begin with, changes in the rules need no longer be seen as secondary or anomalous. The rules of a language display a degree of looseness at any one moment; this holds for phonological and syntactic rules as well as for semantic ones. A general line of argument in the following will be that all language is vague and context-dependent to some extent, and that metaphorical language essentially exploits these general traits. Seen in this light, it may perhaps become less obvious to treat metaphor as exclusively a matter of language use rather than linguistic meaning (or, put in Saussurean terms, as a matter of parole rather than of langue). In consequence, the strict and apparently tidy distinction between literal and figurative language becomes blurred.

This study is, among others, an attempt to get clear about what kind of rules or principles are involved in the metaphorical interpretation of language. A focus of attention will be the relative weight of semantic or ‘conventional’ rules, as opposed to language-independent pragmatic principles, such as Grice’s maxims of conversation. Much of the discussion in chapters 2 and 3 will therefore be concerned with what has been called the ‘semantics-pragmatics interface’, that is, the disputed border territory between, and competing claims to logical priority of, semantics and pragmatics. One of the methodological problems at stake here is how we can distinguish semantic phenomena like entailment from pragmatic ones like presupposition and conversational implicature. This problem is the more complex as there is a looser connection between theory and evidence in pragmatics than in syntax or semantics: pragmatic rules can typically be flouted or exploited, so apparent counterexamples to pragmatic principles can often be explained away as really conforming to them (Thomason 1990: 333). Thus, it may be difficult to actually prove or disprove the claim that metaphor involves a specific kind of pragmatic principle, and in general it is not always clear what
constitutes evidence for or against a specific view; the most one can hope to do is to present a persuasive picture that accounts for a large number of phenomena in a relatively straightforward manner. My own approach falls largely within the more familiar semantic views. The reasons usually adduced for giving a pragmatic account, I will argue below, are at best inconclusive; and the move to an analysis in pragmatic terms turns out to create at least as many problems as it is supposed to solve.

As regards the semantic theory employed, I will mostly assume an intensional, model-theoretic semantics of the kind first formulated by Richard Montague, to be enriched with some of the insights concerning context-dependence due to David Kaplan's work on demonstratives. By pragmatics, I understand theories of intention-governed principles of communication, specifically, Grice's theory of implicature and Searle's theory of speaker's meaning. Of course, this is but one among many competing ways of characterizing the distinction between semantics and pragmatics (cf. Turner 1999); but I think we are justified in doing so for the moment. The central point here is that pragmatics, in the more restricted sense, essentially involves speaker's intentions, and consequently, a crucial question to be answered below is in how far intentions play an irreducible role in, and specific to, metaphorical interpretation. But even within this restricted domain, semantic and pragmatic phenomena are not always separated as neatly as one would want. The context-dependence of various linguistic expressions is already a bone of contention, and recent work in dynamic semantics, where the meaning of a sentence is defined not in terms of its truth conditions but as the way in which it changes the information of the hearer, has indicated that various phenomena that have long been considered purely pragmatic may allow for a treatment in semantic terms after all. For this reason, particular attention will be paid to the question of whether a principled, theoretically based choice to treat metaphor in either semantic or in pragmatic terms can be made.

Problems of Metaphor

First, of course, we should get some idea of the phenomena to be studied and the problems surrounding them. The existing definitions of metaphor are too theory-dependent to be discussed at this stage. For example, calling a metaphor 'an utterance in which one or more expressions temporarily undergoes a change in meaning' presupposes a semantic treatment of metaphor, while the claim that metaphor is a matter of 'saying one thing and meaning another' is based on the assumption that metaphor follows pragmatic principles of interpretation that are essentially different from semantic rules. Likewise, there is hardly anything like a well-circumscribed set of problems related to the phenomenon of metaphor like there is for topics
such as presupposition; of the problems noted, not all are considered equally relevant by each author; others would seem relevant, but are rarely noted, let alone discussed. Some of these challenges, however, which any adequate theory of metaphor should come to terms with, are:

- giving a coherent account of the various constructions that can be interpreted metaphorically (simple predications, negated and quantified sentences, antecedents of conditionals, etc.);
- the problem of recognizing metaphors: if metaphor is held to involve distinct principles of interpretation, it should be distinguished from literal language on the one hand, and from other figures of speech on the other;
- the question of what kind of rules or principles are involved in metaphorical interpretation;
- the question of what information, or perhaps what kind of information, is necessary for the correct interpretation and perhaps recognition of metaphor;
- the question of whether a specifically ‘metaphorical meaning’ exists, and if so, where it should be located within a linguistic theory;
- the question of what ‘effect’ or assertive power metaphors have, and more specifically of whether they can be true;
- the fact that the specifically metaphorical effect of a sentence is to some extent indeterminate, and often cannot be fully paraphrased in literal terms.

Consequently, I will not try to define metaphor even preliminarily, but rather list a number of relatively uncontroversial examples. These should also help to give the reader some idea of the wide variety of syntactic constructions that can be interpreted metaphorically. Many discussions, in fact, limit themselves to examples of the \textit{A is B} kind that are literally false, but this is only one, relatively easily recognizable, construction among many.

Which linguistic items can be used metaphorically? It appears that in general, all expressions that have some descriptive content or information\(^2\) associated with them, may receive a metaphorical interpretation under appropriate circumstances. An obvious class of expressions in this respect is that of simple or complex common noun phrases used as predicates:

\begin{enumerate}
\item Paul is \textit{a pig}.
\item Juliet is \textit{the sun}.
\end{enumerate}

\(^1\)Actually, some of these examples may look rather worn off, but the point to be made here is merely to show the different syntactic constructions that may be interpreted metaphorically. For a much more detailed description, see Brooke-Rose (1958). White (1996) likewise discusses the variety of grammatical constructions involved in metaphor, and argues that an adequate analysis should take this variety into account.

\(^2\)'Descriptive content' is the more common expression, but in order to avoid confusion with the technical notion of content to be discussed in 3.1. below, I will speak of 'descriptive information' in the following.
(3) John Searle is the ayatollah of speech act theory.

One might take (2) to express an identity statement rather than a predication if one takes the sun as a proper name; for reasons of uniformity, however, I will take it to express a definite description; thus, like a pig and the ayatollah of pragmatics, it functions as a property expression. Note, however, that figuratively interpreted noun phrases need not be the sentence’s predicate, but may also occur in subject or object position:

(4) That donkey won’t listen to me.
(5) I have reached the top of the greasy pole.

Likewise, verbal and adjectival phrases (which like common noun phrases can be seen semantically as property expressions) are prime candidates for metaphorical interpretation:

(6) The chairman ploughed through the discussion.
(7) This is a hot moment for studying metaphor.

But also expressions that do not at first sight seem to have descriptive information, such as proper names, can be used metaphorically. Interestingly, however, the metaphorical interpretation of a name typically requires an article:

(8) John thinks he’s Napoleon.
(9) John thinks he’s a Napoleon.

If we hear (8), we are likely to think that John belongs in an asylum, whereas with (9), we will at most dislike him for his tyrannical manners. Apparently, the metaphorical application of a name does not usually lead to an identity statement, but rather to a predication. This suggests that the addition of an article makes a name function as a property expression with descriptive information, rather than as a purely referring term. But, parallel to (4)-(5) above, names may also occur in subject or object position, and in that case, they do not require an article:

(10) I saw count Dracula again today.
(11) Einstein has failed his mathematics exam.

Still, both classes of examples suggest that the metaphorical interpretation of referential expressions like names has something to do with the descriptive information that is associated
with them, even if that information need not, strictly speaking, be part of the meaning of such expressions (cf. ch. 2 and 3 below).

Other referential terms, such as personal pronouns, likewise appear to allow for metaphorical interpretation primarily in so far as they carry descriptive information, e.g., indicating gender or physical distance:

(12) There she comes. (said of an effeminate male)

(13) Ἄλλη ἦδε μέντοι μὴ λέγῃ· οὐ γὰρ ἔστη ἔτη.

‘But do not say “this [woman here]”; for she is no longer.’

(Sophocles, Antigone, vs. 567)

(14) That picture is you. (cf. Cooper 1986: 57)

The Greek demonstrative ἦδε, ‘this’, in (13) expresses physical proximity, whereas Creon, who utters this sentence, means that Antigone has been banished to the realm of the dead by being buried alive, and is thus figuratively ‘remote’. Example (14) is rather problematic: the personal pronoun you has little descriptive information, so it may be that in order to determine the metaphorical interpretation of this sentence (and indeed any interpretation at all - see chapter 3.1), we will first have to determine the contextually given referents of you and of that picture. But I am not sure whether we should call such cases as (12) - (14), which are rare and not very rich anyway, metaphors in the strict sense: they are largely conventionalized, and hardly display the openness and indeterminacy characteristic of more familiar metaphors.

Prepositions in English, and corresponding elements in other languages, like postpositions and case endings, also seem to allow for metaphorical interpretation to some extent:

(15) In 1984 he lived in poverty in a toolshed.

Intuitively, the different senses of in seem to be related; but one may object that such uses are fully conventionalized, and hence are not properly speaking metaphors, but merely cases of polysemy (cf. Cooper 1986: 9). The question of whether these cases count as genuine metaphors hinges not only on their degree of conventionalization, but also on a more precise formulation of the relation between metaphor and polysemy, and on the question of whether a preposition like in has any clearly delineated ‘core meaning’ or ‘literal meaning’ to begin with.

Important counterexamples to theories that define metaphor in terms of grammatical deviance or semantic anomaly are sentences that may be literally correct, but allow for a metaphorical interpretation in context:
8 Contexts of Metaphor

(16) Life is not a bed of roses.
(17) This is a pigsty. [said of a messy room]
(18) Anchorage is a cold city.

On a literal interpretation, (16) is trivially true, while (17) and (18) are contingently true or false rather than structurally incorrect; but an adequate theory of metaphor will have to account for such cases. Other sentences receive a metaphorical interpretation only because the literal one is explicitly ruled out:

(19) My hands are tied, figuratively speaking of course.
(20) Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita mi ritrovai per una selva oscura.

(‘Halfway down the path of life, I found myself in a dark forest’) (Dante, Divina commedia)

Without the possessive phrase di nostra vita, (20) could just as well be taken as a literal description of somebody getting lost during a walk.

It is also possible to quantify over metaphorically interpreted expressions, or to refer back to them anaphorically:

(21) Qui n’a pas son minotaure? (Marguerite Yourcenar)
(22) [I dedicate this book] to all my Juliets. (J. Stern)
(23) So God has arrived. I met him on the 5.15 train. (Keynes on Wittgenstein)

Such examples of metaphors involving quantification are almost totally ignored in the literature, and their theoretical significance is therefore not immediately clear. One would like an adequate theory to give at least some indication, however, of how to account for them. A particularly difficult case in this respect is:

(24) Brulé de plus de feux que je n’en allumai. (J. Racine, Andromaque, vs. 320)

(‘Burned by more fires than I lighted...’)

The linguistic context of (24) makes clear that the implicit second occurrence of feux is to be taken in the literal sense, but the first in a figurative sense of being in love. I will return to the above examples in the course of chapter 3.

Metaphors in indirect discourse contexts raise even more complex problems than those in quantified or anaphoric ones:
(25) Peter said that John is a wolf.

Intuitively, this sentence does not seem quite as ‘metaphorical’ as the bare assertion that John is a wolf: it may be seen as ambiguous between a literal and a metaphorical reading in a way that the simple predication does not seem to be. Is, then, the speaker who utters (25) not committed to a metaphorical interpretation of John is a wolf as Peter, who is claimed to have uttered just that last sentence? Such cases involve the much broader problems of indirect quotation and opaque contexts, and I will not discuss them in detail here.¹

I hope the above list, although far from complete, at least gives an idea of the expressions and constructions that may be interpreted metaphorically. Like most authors, I will limit my discussion to metaphors in declarative sentences, while acknowledging that questions and commands, such as (26) and (27), may equally well allow for a metaphorical interpretation:

(26) Is Sally a block of ice?
(27) Freeze!

As the semantics of questions and commands presents a whole field of questions and problems that are not specific to metaphor, however, I will not discuss such cases here either.

Classifying Theories of Metaphor

Now how do we fit examples like those listed above into a general theory of language? Surely, it seems a desirable goal to do so, unless one prefers to treat metaphor as a totally outlandish phenomenon that defies all attempts at analysis, or believes that metaphor ‘proves’ that such general theories as usually conceived have to be replaced by something altogether different. At first sight, various options are open, and especially in the second half of the twentieth century, a bewildering variety of theories and approaches has blossomed. One would like to be able to compare the relative merits of these, and in order to do this systematically, it would be useful to have some kind of classification of theories.

Of such classifications, there is no shortage either. The most famous distinction is perhaps Max Black’s division (1962) into ‘substitution views’, according to which a metaphorical expression replaces a proper or literal term, by which it can always be paraphrased; ‘compar-

ison views', which treat metaphors as abbreviated similes, and their meanings as those of the corresponding comparisons; and 'interaction views', according to which at least one term of a metaphor changes its meaning, often leading to a result that cannot be properly paraphrased (cf. Beardsley 1962). Other ways of classifying theories have been proposed by, among others, Scheffler (1979), Mooij (1976), and Ankersmit & Mooij (1993). Considerations of space preclude an extensive discussion of these; but while each of these classifications has its merits, none of them seems sufficiently based upon general theoretical considerations.

Mooij (1976: ch. 3) makes an important attempt at such a theory-based classification by distinguishing between 'monistic' and 'dualistic' theories: on dualistic theories, metaphorically applied words retain their literal reference, but 'may carry a second reference, because of their specific (metaphorical) function', whereas on monistic theories they lose their normal referential capacity, and 'allow for at most a singular (abnormal and nonliteral) reference in the metaphorical word' (1976: 31). But also theories that Mooij takes to be monistic will appeal to some aspect of literal meaning; this aspect just need not lie at the level of reference. It might be more practical, then, to focus on these different levels or aspects of meaning (such as reference, sense, and concept) than to restrict one's attention to reference, even if one construes this notion rather broadly, as Mooij does. Moreover, his scheme cannot adequately deal with pragmatic approaches that locate metaphorical interpretation entirely in language use rather than in linguistic meaning; on such views, the words in a metaphor only have literal meanings.

At the risk of seeming pedantic, I would therefore like to propose yet another classification scheme, guided by two central questions: first, at what level of a linguistic theory is metaphorical interpretation accounted for? Second, in virtue of what does the hearer determine a metaphorical interpretation? Possible answers to the first question are: in syntax; in semantics; in pragmatics; or outside linguistic theory altogether. Possible answers to the second question are: in virtue of the properties that the referents have; in virtue of the descriptive information associated with the expressions used; or in virtue of the concepts or mental representations that are expressed by the words. Thus, one may hold that the hearer understands a metaphor in virtue of some similarity between the objects referred to, that is, in virtue of some property that the referents of the metaphor have in common; Black calls this a 'comparison view', and Beardsley (1962) speaks of an 'object comparison view'. More generally, one can speak of such views as referentialist, because they crucially involve the referents of the expressions used. Another answer is that it is the meaning of linguistic expressions, or the descriptive information associated with them (which may include commonplaces or stereotypes), that determines metaphorical interpretation. This comes close to Black's 'interaction view', or to

1In fact, the first position has only been adopted in the 1960s, when transformationalists, e.g., Chomsky (1965: 149) suggested treating metaphor as a violation of selection restrictions.
what Beardsley calls ‘verbal opposition theories’. Here, I will speak of descriptivist views, as these approaches take metaphorical interpretation to be guided by the descriptive information associated with an expression. Note, however, that a descriptivist view does not commit one to the position that such content is actually part of the meaning of the expression. Finally, one might hold that metaphorical interpretation arises not from resemblance between objects or from the descriptive information of expressions, but rather from general cognitive mechanisms such as reasoning in analogies, the ability to see one thing as another, etc. Such approaches I will refer to as conceptualist views: they assign a crucial role to the interpreter’s mental or conceptual capacities.

The different approaches also differ as to what kind of knowledge is involved in the interpretation of metaphor. Very roughly, semantic approaches focus on conventionalized knowledge of some sort (not necessarily aspects of meaning in the more restricted sense, but also ‘stereotypes’, ‘connotations’ and the like); pragmatic approaches emphasize the role of nonlinguistic or world knowledge; while conceptualistic approaches regard mental representations and the ability to think in analogies as the key to our metaphorical competence. This brings us to the following classification scheme:

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<th>Basis of interpretation</th>
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<tbody>
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<td><strong>Level</strong></td>
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<td><strong>(syntax)</strong></td>
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<td>referentialist</td>
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<td>(‘comparison’)</td>
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<td>Chomsky</td>
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Obviously, this scheme is no more than a rough guideline. We will discuss the different possible positions and their relative merits in chapter 2 below; for now, it may suffice to signal some doubts about ascribing particular positions to particular authors. For example, should we classify Davidson’s views under pragmatic theories or outside linguistic theories? Davidson explicitly states that metaphor is a matter of how we use words rather than of what those words mean (1979), but on the other hand, he denies metaphor anything like a cognitive content or meaning even at such a presumably pragmatic level. Likewise, Lakoff & Johnson may be seen as holding a semantic conceptualist view, or alternatively as maintaining that there is no place at all for metaphor in semantic theory as usually conceived. There is ample room for discussion here, but I hope the scheme may at least provide some clarification of the issues at stake, and serve as a guideline through the chapters to come.

The reader will note the absence of what Black calls a substitution view in the above scheme. There are several reasons for this: to begin with, if framed in Black’s terms, a substitution view is clearly incoherent: a metaphorical expression $M$ is used as a substitute for some literal expression $L$, as in Richard is a lion used to communicate Richard is brave (1962: 31); but one of the reasons why people use metaphors at all is, on many such accounts, precisely the absence of a literal equivalent (ibid., p. 33). While Black himself hesitates to call such cases of catachresis, or the plugging of lexical gaps, as genuine cases of metaphor, there are at present very few authors who would wish to maintain that there is a literal equivalent to be substituted for every metaphor; but in that case, it simply makes little sense to speak of substitution. Moreover, a substitution view as such does not say how the hearer arrives at the intended meaning; to account for this, most authors claim that the substitution takes place in virtue of some resemblance or analogy between the referents. But in that case, of course, a more sophisticated statement of a substitution view will almost inevitably turn out to be merely a variant of a comparison or referentialist view. In fact, the two authors Black refers to as defending a substitution view (Richard Whately and the Oxford Dictionary) both explicitly state that the analogy or resemblance between the literal referent and the object metaphorically referred to serves as the basis of the transfer. What is specific to substitution views, then, boils down to the claim that someone uttering a metaphor communicate[s] a meaning that might have been expressed literally’ (1962: 32, emphasis added), and this is precisely the central trait of pragmatic views: the sentence meaning is what it is, but the speaker uses a metaphorical expression to convey an intended speaker’s meaning or implicature.

1This claim should be distinguished from the thesis (discussed in 2.1, below) that for every metaphor we can find a corresponding comparison. Such a view does not require a literal expression for the property which the members of the comparison have in common.

2In 2.2, it will appear that pragmatic approaches indeed seem bound to assume that the specifically ‘metaphorical content’ can always be paraphrased in literal terms.
For various reasons, older authors do not fit in well; Aristotle, for example, seems to hover between a semantic and a pragmatic account, but as he makes no clear distinction between linguistic meaning and language use in his theory of metaphor, it would be an anachronism to assign him to either position. This tallies well with another possible objection, namely that some theories, especially those expressing a mentalist view of meaning, would reject the distinction between the second and third column; on such accounts, there is little or no difference between concept and descriptive information to begin with. In such cases, one might collapse the second and third column into one single ‘representationalist’ view. However, good arguments can be given for maintaining a distinction between the semantic notion of meaning (or descriptive information) and the epistemological or psychological notion of a concept.

Overview

After this elementary background information, I would like to give the reader some idea of what to expect in the following. The theory presented in chapter 3 below comes closest to a semantic descriptivist approach, but it incorporates notions such as context-dependence and the distinction between presupposed and asserted information, which others might think of as pragmatic. In chapter 4, I then give a reconstruction at the conceptual level of what happens in metaphorical interpretation. While the semantic and conceptual aspects of metaphorical interpretation should be kept distinct, it seems that the level of concepts ultimately has more explanatory force. A full-fledged theory of metaphor, then, should include both a semantic and a conceptual component. But before jumping to such conclusions, a lot of preparatory work must be done. The first chapter presents a brief historical overview, obviously not intended to be anywhere near complete, of several important theories of metaphor dating from a more remote past. This overview is preceded by a, somewhat speculative, discussion of how metaphor came to be seen as a distinct phenomenon at all; I will argue that historically, the rise of literacy was an essential prerequisite for the development of a concept of metaphor. The authors discussed in chapter 1 (Aristotle, ‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī, Giambattista Vico) may not all seem equally obvious choices for an historical overview, but the importance they attach to the phenomenon of metaphor, or their influence on subsequent theorizing on the subject, justifies to some extent the attention devoted to them.

Chapter 2 presents a systematic discussion of some of the most influential twentieth-century theories of metaphor within the framework of the classification scheme presented above. After the problems facing purely semantic treatments like Black’s and Beardsley’s have been noted, it will be seen that pragmatic theories in the tradition of Grice and Searle
mark no significant step forward with respect to these problems. Moreover, they do not present any principled argumentation as to why metaphor should be treated in terms of language use rather than linguistic meaning; an approach which, after all, involves an appeal to quite distinct principles. It seems unlikely that any knock-down argumentation can be given; but on the whole, metaphorical interpretation appears to depend more centrally on ‘conventional’ rather than on ‘intentional’ factors. Donald Davidson’s influential views face essentially the same difficulties as pragmatic accounts. Worse, his denying of cognitive content to metaphors as such leads to a number of rather counterintuitive results. Another influential approach, Lakoff & Johnson’s ‘cognitive semantics’, wants to dispense with all talk of reference and truth as traditionally conceived, and treats metaphor as primarily a reflection of the way we conceptualize the world. While their approach yields some interesting insights, it presupposes many questions regarding metaphor as solved. Moreover, its stress on cognitive aspects downplays the crucial role of linguistic, social, and conventional factors. Both Davidson’s and Lakoff & Johnson’s views rightly call attention to particular aspects of metaphorical interpretation (respectively, its indeterminacy and its relation to concept formation), but both overshoot the mark. It appears that a semantic treatment of metaphor along relatively well-established lines can come a long way in accounting for the specifics of metaphor, though it will have to be enriched with more explicit contextual parameters.

Part 3 proceeds to sketch such an alternative semantic treatment, which I call a ‘direct contextual interpretation’ approach. It stresses the context-dependence of property expressions in both literal and metaphorical interpretation. But metaphors not only depend on the context; they may also change it. Consequently, section 3.2 discusses the assertive power of metaphor, and the distinction between asserted and presupposed information in metaphorical interpretation. I will argue that metaphorical interpretation is triggered by what is presupposed, rather than by what is - or seems to be - asserted, as most earlier semantic and pragmatic accounts hold. The semantic account cannot capture all aspects of metaphorical interpretation, however, notably with respect to novel and ‘cross-categorial’ metaphors. Part 4 therefore attempts to supplement this semantic treatment of metaphor with an account in terms of concepts and concept formation. Such a theory should take into account the context-dependence of metaphor at the semantic level, as well as broader sociocultural factors like literacy and education. Vygotsky’s theory of concept formation is a plausible candidate for this; I will modify his account on the basis of more recent insights. In conclusion, I will look at how the notion of the literal fares in the light of this account of metaphor. If, as is suggested here, metaphor is in no important way deviant or distinct from literal language, then the notion of literal meaning loses much of its theoretical importance as well.
CHAPTERS FROM THE HISTORY OF METAPHOR

1.1. THE PRE- AND PROTOHISTORY OF METAPHOR

Theorizing about metaphor is usually believed to have started with Aristotle. But obviously, metaphorical language, or at least language we would call metaphorical, has been used since much earlier times. The oldest written texts, such as the Mesopotamian epics and the Homeric poems, are replete with language that looks roundly figurative to us. But how was this language experienced and interpreted by those who first heard or read these texts? How was poetic language experienced before it was written down? To assume that the original audiences recognized metaphor as distinct and deviant from literal language may involve an unwarranted projection of our own theories onto other people's ways of thinking. Now some authors, like Rousseau, Vico, and Max Müller, have indeed argued that 'primitive' man thought in distinct terms, and more specifically that language is metaphorical in origin. But then what gave rise to the recognition of, and theorizing about, metaphor as somehow different from literal language?

In this section, I will look at some of the cultural prerequisites for a notion of metaphor. I will not directly address the question of the presumed metaphorical origin of language, but rather discuss findings from contemporary nonliterate languages and 'primitive societies'. There is of course a danger in this: how can we know that the linguistic behavior of illiterate members of contemporary rural, non-industrialized societies, which have a long process of historical development behind them, is at all comparable to the way ancient peoples used and experienced language? Nevertheless, authors like Luria (1976) and Goody (1977) have argued that ancient contemporary nonliterate thought and language use do display important structural parallels, and that this parallelism is precisely located in the absence of literacy in both. I will therefore focus on the role of literacy in linguistic development. It will appear that in preliterate societies, it is difficult to make any strict distinction between literal and figurative language, so that the very question of whether or not 'language is metaphorical in origin' would seem to prejudice the problems to be addressed. These findings also have wider repercussions for the
conceptual aspects of metaphorical interpretation; but except for some brief discussion in sections 1.4 and 2.4, I will only return to these questions in the final chapter.

1.1.1 Prehistorical and Preliterate Societies

Ethnographic descriptions often report metaphorical utterances that to us appear as bizarre as they sound poetical; to the peoples uttering them, however, they do not seem to be very odd or deviant. The widespread occurrence of such metaphors, and their apparent lack of perceived oddity, present difficulties to many existing theories of metaphor, most of which view metaphor as derivative from literal language, and as based on an awareness of the utterance being inappropriate in its literal interpretation. It has also led authors like Rousseau and Vico to view ‘primitive man’ as a poet, and to think of metaphor rather than literal languages as lying at the origin of language in general. A modern adherent of such a view is perhaps George Lakoff, who thinks of linguistic metaphor as a manifestation of a basic cognitive capacity to ‘see one thing in terms of another’. But a notion of metaphor as involving a mapping from one conceptual domain to another would seem to presuppose a ‘literal domain’, so it is not immediately clear how a romantic view of metaphor as the original form of language could be coherently formulated. For how could metaphor as a mapping between two - logically prior - domains be ‘original’ in any coherent sense? Here, I would therefore like to look at the status of metaphor in ‘primitive’ societies, and at its relation to literal meaning and classification. What are the category distinctions that members of primitive (that is, nonliterate and non-urbanized) societies impose on the external world, and how, if at all, does metaphorical language involve a clash with, or a transfer between, such categories?

Let me start with some examples, to begin with what is probably the most famous metaphor in anthropology: the remark pa e-do nabure (“we are parrots”) uttered by Brazilian Bororo Indians. This sentence is uttered in rituals where Bororo males adorn themselves with feathers of the bird in question. Even there, however, it is asserted only of males; outside of this specific context, the Bororo seem far less inclined to assent to it, let alone utter it spontaneously (Crocker 1985: 38). To Karl von den Steinen, the ethnologist who first noted this usage, and to Durkheim & Mauss, who discuss it in their study of ‘primitive classification’ (1963 [1903]: 6-7), it suggested that the Bororo could not distinguish between men and animals, and more in general had difficulties in categorizing the world around them. It seems rather implausible, however, to conclude that some people do not really categorize the objects
in their surroundings at all. More specifically, the utterance ‘we are parrots’ in context correctly applies to men only, and it involves a tensed copula form e-do which suggests a ‘customary form’ rather than a permanent state of being: ‘the first morpheme, e, denotes “existence”, [...] while the second morpheme, do, denotes the activity of making or doing’ (Turner 1991: 135-6). It would seem more adequate, then, to treat this utterance as a figure of speech rather than as a false categorial statement or as an indication of the absence of classification. Subsequent research has largely focused on the question of precisely which figure the utterance involves,¹ but the most salient fact to be noted here is that the Bororo do not appear to consider it false, deviant or inappropriate given the linguistic and actional context of the ritual.

As a second example, Rosaldo (1972, 1975) presents specimens of metaphor among the Ilongots, a loosely structured and unstratified society of hunters and swidden agriculturalists in the Philippines. She notes that the Ilongots have as many as 13 different names, each indicative of body parts, for orchids; these names are used in magical spells for curing people. Used as category names to indicate specific kinds of orchids, however, they are used quite inconsistently by different speakers, and even by single speakers on different occasions; instead, specific names ‘appeared as descriptive titles, designating sets of plants as appropriate to a certain context or kind of spell’ (1972: 86). Thus, the same kind of flower may be called either ge-lawagide, ‘their fingers’, or qudungde, ‘their thighs’, both on the basis of some perceived similarity with the named body part; to distinguish among closely related plants, Ilongots may also employ color terms or the adjectives ‘male’ or ‘female’. The plants used in spells are generally taken from places inhabited by a specific spirit, and steamed so that the spirit’s body enters that of the patient; the plant name is then used to threaten the spirit:

(1)  Here are your fingers, spirit; I steam your fingers, spirit.  
They will be knotted, spirit.  
Make him well now (1972: 85)

The Ilongots thus appear to use body-part names metaphorically for the ordering of an otherwise unstructured domain of orchids, on the basis not so much of specific similarities as a ‘contextually relevant equivalence’ (1972: 94). The use of one name rather than another is determined by the specific purpose of the spell, rather than by the properties inherent in the

¹ Crocker (1985) argues for its metaphorical character; Turner (1991) holds that it is partly metaphor, partly metonymy, and partly synecdoche.
plants. The Ilongots, then, classify orchids not on the basis of shared abstract features or properties, but rather as the occasion arises, and for specific contextually determined purposes; and the same seems to hold for the Bororo classification of men as parrots.

The apparent appropriateness of such metaphors in context, paired with an apparently unsystematic and highly situated and context-dependent way of categorizing objects, poses a problem for the numerous theories that treat metaphor as violating abstract linguistic rules or category distinctions, or as exploiting universal principles of rational communication. These theories, several of which will be discussed in chapter 2 below, assume that at the level of literal meaning, metaphors are ‘defective’ in one way or another, which again presupposes a notion of a relatively stable and context-free ‘literal meaning’. More specifically, they assume that the ‘literal defectiveness’ of metaphors typically consists in a categorial mistake. Thus, the language user is supposed to possess a number of more or less fixed and stable semantic and conceptual categories; but these assumptions do not square well with the way the above-quoted metaphors function in their natural habitat.

Classification and Literacy

Assumptions like these are also present in some anthropological studies of ‘primitive classification’, such as the seminal work of Durkheim & Mauss (1963 [1903]), already referred to above. Durkheim & Mauss argue that systems of primitive classification reflect the organization of the societies in which they occur, rather than abstract logical principles. Members of the simplest societies, they hold, do not distinguish at all between animals, people and inanimate things (1963: 6). It is only when a society becomes differentiated into distinct subgroups that subdivisions come to be made among the objects in the world; but these subdivisions reflect the social order rather than any inherently cognitive processes. Thus, Durkheim & Mauss argue that the Australian Wakelbura Aboriginals, who are divided into two moieties (‘halves’) and four marriage classes, classify humans, animals, and plants in precisely the same ‘categories’ held by links involving (for us at least) metaphor or metonymy: objects associated with the same moiety or marriage class are also ‘conceptually’ placed together (1963: 13). Durkheim & Mauss stress that these associations are not seen as figurative by the native speakers: ‘whereas for us [the expressions referring to social and other ties] are hardly more than metaphors, originally they meant what they said... Logical relations are thus, in a sense, domestic relations.’ (1963: 84). In other words, the grouping of ontologically different objects under the same category is not perceived as involving any kind of figurative transfer;
application of a term belonging to one 'category' to an object associated with another would be considered a social rather than a cognitive transgression.

As noted, this view implies that in the least differentiated societies, few or no category distinctions are made at all. But this does not seem plausible: if an expression can be made to mean anything, it means nothing. It also implies the wildly implausible conclusion that members of primitive societies would be entirely unable to tell a kangaroo from a stone, or a tortoise from a tree. In general, Durkheim & Mauss overemphasize the phenomenon of 'social thinking' as pervasive and homogeneously spread over an entire society, and consequently do not allow sufficiently for variation and change originating from individual contributions; their rigid social determinism would make individual variations in language use, extremely difficult to account for (Goody 1977: 23; cf. Needham 1963, Worsley 1956). It suggests that novel classifications literally cannot be thought in the absence of a change in social structure.

The British anthropologist Jack Goody (1977: ch. 4) has raised the interesting objection that the very act of theorizing about primitive classification radically transforms its character, by describing it in abstract terms that presuppose fixed meanings and stable categories (in 4.3 below, this point will reappear in a more general form in the work of the French sociologist Bourdieu). Durkheim and Mauss represent nonliterate classifications in the graphic (i.e., script-based) form of a table, and thus impose an order on 'primitive thought' which it may not possess in itself. In oral societies, Goody argues, classification is not as systematic, exhaustive, and decontextualized as it is in literate ones, so the attempt to force a more or less coherent, fixed system based on essentially graphic representations onto these processes automatically involves a certain ethnocentric bias. The 'contextual flexibility' that Goody attributes to nonliterate language users is also indicated by the Ilongot orchid metaphors, and by the fact that in many languages, basic vocabulary items such as kinship terms like father or mother may equally well be used to indicate 'real' kin relations in domestic contexts as more generally to express relations of affection or interest in public contexts, without the 'domestic' sense necessarily being primary (cf. Leach 1982: 138-9). In short, Durkheim & Mauss make a number of important suggestions regarding the social basis of classification, but their claim of social factors as actually causing classifications, their downplaying of its potential for change, and their assumption of classifications as systematic and coherent, seem mistaken.

Another approach to nonliterate classification, which is based on the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky's (1986 [1934]) work on concept formation, seems more promising as a way of capturing what is specific to nonliterate language behavior. Vygotsky distinguishes between what he calls complex concepts and scientific concepts; complexes, he argues, are context-
dependent, and based on concrete factual bounds that may vary over different applications, whereas scientific concepts involve the conscious employment of abstracted and decontextualized features. Scientific concepts are only acquired at a late stage of conceptual development, and require literacy and formal education. Complexes thus represent an earlier stage of concept formation; but also adults who have learned scientific concepts may resort to complex thinking for everyday problems (see also Ch. 4.2 below). Vygotsky's 'cultural-historical approach' to concept development naturally lends itself to other terrains than the ontogenetic development of the child, although it need not imply a view of ontogenesis as merely recapitulating phylogensis. Vygotsky specifically addresses the phenomenon of 'primitive thought', in particular the apparently illogical Bororo utterance quoted above. He warns against approaching nonliterate societies in terms of our own most developed scientific concepts: 'primitive people think in complexes, and consequently the word in their languages does not function as a carrier of the concept, but rather as a family name for a group of concrete objects belonging together, not logically, but factually' (1986: 129). Once we realize that nonliterate peoples think in complexes rather than in systematic scientific concepts, he argues, we no longer need to ascribe an 'illogical' or 'prelogical' way of thinking to them, as Lévy-Bruhl (1918) and to a lesser extent Durkheim do. He takes Lévy-Bruhl to task for analyzing the Bororo utterance "we are parrots" in terms of a literacy-based logic that involves identity assertions and the like, whereas on his own view the Bororo term for 'parrot' expresses a complex that includes parrots and male Bororo: 'it does not imply identity any more than a family name shared by two related individuals implies that they are one and the same person' (1986: 130). I agree with these remarks as far as they go, but they do not sufficiently stress the context-dependence of the language involved in the Bororo ritual. I would add that, in the ritual and for the purposes of the ritual only, the male Bororo become parrots by dressing up with feathers and assuming other parrot attributes, that is, by becoming factually related to parrots in the (to us) stricter sense. The Bororo do not seem to feel a need for a decontextualized classification of parrots in abstraction from specific situations, ritual or other.

The Vygotskyan line of thought is taken up by Jack Goody, who concentrates on the role of writing in processes of classification. The basis for his argument is the role that early forms of writing seem to play. Goody notes that lists are prominent among the earliest written texts such as Sumerian clay tablets,- indeed surprisingly prominent, as they form a kind of language use quite remote from spoken communication, and cannot be seen as in any way continuous with oral discourse (see 1.1.2 below). The Sumerian lists were of various kinds, such as inventories, lists of traded goods, and household statistics. Goody holds that such lists, which
constitute an essentially graphic mode of representation, force a greater systematization of the language on the speakers, since they require unequivocal decisions as to whether or not some item belongs to a certain class or category. Writing thus makes language more decontextualized and more discontinuous, as it both enables and requires the employment of strict categorial boundaries that are abstracted from particular contexts. In such a perspective, writing is a precondition for the systematic, consistent codification of words and their meanings, and thus for the recognition of ‘deviant’ usages as such. This suggests that literacy is also an essential precondition for the ability to distinguish between the literal and figurative use of expressions. In the absence of such strict and decontextualized categorial boundaries, the notion of a ‘categorial mistake’ that many authors see as a prerequisite for metaphorical language does not make much sense. In other words, nonliterate individuals would hardly consider a particular - contextually appropriate - utterance like “we are parrots” as figurative or otherwise odd at all.

It would be good to see if such broad claims are corroborated by ethnographic findings. Fortunately, there have been several empirical investigations along the lines of Vygotsky’s and Goody’s work. In the early 1930s, the Russian psychologist Alexander Luria, set out to test Vygotsky’s hypotheses in extensive field investigations among illiterate peasants in Uzbekistan. He wanted to find out whether the profound socio-economic and cultural changes following the Soviet Revolution had any cognitive consequences, as a materialist theory of psychology would predict. For this purpose, he conducted various experiments among people with different degrees of exposure to the novel and quickly changing social situation: illiterate peasants from remote villages, collective-farm activists, and persons with a larger amount of education (Luria 1976).

Luria specifically tested for the effects of literacy and schooling on classification, and his findings were spectacular indeed. In one experiment, several unschooled and illiterate peasants were presented with pictures of a hammer, a saw, a log, and a hatchet, and asked which one did not belong there; later, the same question was put to subjects with more schooling. Among the peasants, the response was practically unanimous. To quote a typical case:

“They all fit there! The saw has to saw the log, the hammer has to hammer it, and the hatchet has to chop it. ... You can’t take any of these things away. There isn’t any you don’t need!”

At the time, Vygotsky’s theories were considered insufficiently Marxist in character, while Luria’s field investigations were criticized for an alleged bias against national minorities (see Kozulin’s introduction to Vygotsky 1986: xli, xliii). Consequently, Luria only published his findings in the late 1960s.
But one fellow told me the log didn’t belong here.

“Why’d he say that? If we say the log isn’t like the other things and put it off to one side, we’d be making a mistake. All these things are needed for the log.”

**Look, you can use one word -tools- for these but not for the log.**

“What sense does it make to use one word for them all if they’re not going to work together?”

**What word could you use for these things?**

“The words people use: saw, hammer, hatchet. You can’t use one word for them all!”

**Could you call them tools?**

“Yes, you could, except a log isn’t a tool. Still, the way we look at it, the log has to be there. Otherwise, what good are the others?” (Luria 1976: 58-59)

The last remark is particularly revealing: even when explicitly presented with an appropriate abstract categorial term, illiterate peasants would typically reject it as irrelevant, and at times even as false. They were equally unwilling, for example, to classify both fish and crows as animals. Their classifications thus appear to have a functional rather than taxonomic character. One might surmise that the same persons would feel equally comfortable in classifying a log of wood together with, say, a stove, a furnace, and a fireplace,- items that belong together functionally, though not categorically. At the same time, illiterate language users appeared to have no qualms about the figurative application of words. Ichkari women living in remote villages in Uzbekistan, for example, freely used object names like ‘spoiled cotton’ or ‘decayed teeth’ to indicate color hues for which their color term vocabulary was inadequate; at the same time, they had great difficulties in dividing different colors into groups (1976: 24-7). This suggests that they indeed freely extended expressions to new experiences, but were unable or unwilling to classify them according to more abstract principles in isolation from immediate experiences and purposes.

Literate subjects displayed a totally different behavior. Even those with merely one or two years of schooling unhesitatingly grouped objects in terms of abstract categories like ‘tools’. Luria also investigated processes of syllogistic reasoning, imagination, and perception among subjects with varying amounts of schooling. The results were uniform throughout: by and large, illiterate subjects were unable, or unwilling, to abstract from immediate experience, concrete situations, and concrete goals.¹ This strongly suggests that illiterate agents employ a situational

¹Luria argues that Gestalt experiences likewise depend on sociocultural conditions; experiments involving optical illusions, for example, yield rather divergent responses among the investigated groups (Luria 1976: 31-47). This
The kind of thinking directed towards concrete goals, rather than classifying objects by the conscious employment of abstract, context-free principles such as similarity or shared features.

The upshot of all this is that in nonliterate societies, classification does not appear to be as strict and systematic as in societies where writing allows the listing and codification of linguistic expressions. Classifications seem to be related to personal experience, the actual context of use, and the language user’s more immediate situational interests, goals and needs. When nonliterate individuals have to make a categorial distinction or sorting among objects, they may well be able to do so, although perhaps not to state in abstract, general terms why. In everyday communication, such abstract and decontextualized criteria of classification are usually not of much relevance to them. As noted, this position does not commit us to Lévy-Bruhl’s claim that illiterates have a ‘pre-logical’ mode of thought where familiar logical principles like the law of noncontradiction do not hold. When confronted with two contradictory sentences in a single context, an illiterate individual will presumably try to maintain consistency by discarding one of them, or to reconcile them, e.g., by restricting their ranges of application, much as a literate person would. In other words, Luria’s work does not imply that illiterate individuals cannot think in terms of abstract taxonomic categories; they simply do not classify objects on grounds they consider useless or uninteresting. In the absence of codified norms and means of registration, utterances largely remain tied to a specific context, and are relatively difficult to check for mutual consistency. When utterances are written down, such comparison becomes much easier.

**Does Literacy Cause Cognitive Change?**

But a nagging question remains: did Luria and Goody really establish that it actually is literacy, rather than, for example, formal schooling or urbanization, that determines the presumed radical changes in cognitive style? Research carried out by Sylvia Scribner and Michael Cole (1981) among the Vai in Liberia presents evidence against such a sweeping conclusion. The Vai are rather distinct in having their own syllabary script, which is learned outside institutional settings, alongside the Arabic and Latin alphabets which are learned in Qur’anic schools in the villages and in the state schools where English is taught, respectively. Some members of the community are literate in the native script; others are literate in Arabic, English, or in several scripts, while yet others are completely illiterate. This state of affairs enabled Scribner and
Cole to separate the variables of literacy and formal education. They also took factors like age and socio-economic background (such as an urban, trade-related lifestyle versus an agricultural, ‘traditional’ one) into account. By thus isolating literacy as a variable from other sociocultural factors, they could test whether it had any specific influence on cognitive capacities.

Most of Scribner & Cole’s findings appear to contradict the broader claim that literacy by itself leads to a major change in general cognitive abilities like that of classification; rather, specific kinds of literacy turn out to lead to an improvement in specific skills. Literacy in Arabic, for example, which mostly involves the memorization of verses from the Qur’an, yields an increase in the ability for literal verbal recall, but not in classification abilities. Other kinds of literacy, they argue, also lead to small changes, but not to the qualitative leaps that Luria and Goody postulate: in itself, literacy is no substitute for schooling as a way of forming general cognitive skills (1981: 116-133). The only factors that do seem to enhance the ability to classify objects in terms of abstract superordinate categories and to give a general verbal explanation for doing so (e.g., the classification of eggplants and kolanuts as food, and motivating this choice by saying something like ‘both are food items’) are schooling at secondary level and urban, trade-related living. But even these increases are not dramatic, and require prolonged education. Rather than concluding that Vai illiterates are almost equally good in context-free classification and explanation as literates, then, one might hold that most literates perform almost as poorly as illiterates. Theoretical (i.e., decontextualized and abstract) concepts, in other words, are a limit or ideal case rather than the most obvious way of classifying objects.

Other experiments, however, especially those testing the ability to reason with syllogisms abstracted from particular contexts and personal experience, did show significant differences between schooled and unschooled subjects (though less between literate and illiterate ones). Scribner & Cole also found confirmation for Luria’s hypothesis that the ability to define expressions in terms of abstract class membership varies with the kind of concept expressed: ‘academic concepts’ such as government or name, which belong to organized bodies of knowledge typically transmitted through schooling, were more readily defined in abstract terms than ‘mundane’ concepts concerning common objects from everyday experience (1981: 150; cf. Luria 1976: 85-6). So Scribner & Cole’s findings moderate Luria’s to some extent, but they are not completely at odds with them. Specifically, they do not run counter to the suggestion made above that mundane concepts of nonliterates, and to a lesser extent those of literates, are to be seen as complexes rather than as ‘scientific concepts’ (that is, as organized in terms of abstract features and rigid boundaries).
In the light of these findings, Scribner & Cole prefer to see literacy not as an ability but as a practice, that is, a ‘recurrent, goal-directed sequence of activities using a particular technology and particular systems of knowledge’ (1981: 237). Different kinds of literate practice, that is, tend to enhance specific abilities. The difference between complex and scientific concepts, in other words, may depend as much on the specific practice in which concepts are employed (that is, on their particular function and on the institutional setting) as on the general developmental status of the cognitive agent.1

Literacy and Metaphor

What does the above imply for the status of metaphor in nonliterate societies? For as far as I am aware, this question has not been investigated empirically, but some tentative hypotheses may be formulated. Given the findings discussed above, one may assume that - in nonliterate societies at least - literal meanings, abstract categories and conceptual domains play a less prominent role than they are assigned in most modern theories of metaphor. The strict distinction between literal and metaphorical language usage presupposes an awareness of abstract features and categorial boundaries like ‘living’, ‘nonliving’, ‘human’, etc., all of which emerge at a relatively late stage in concept formation only. Moreover, the employment of such abstract features as the main basis for classification crucially involves cultural variables like literacy and schooling. In other words, metaphor as a deviation from literal language, and as involving a category mistake or a mapping between conceptual domains, cannot be considered a universal or culture-independent notion.

The findings reported by Luria and Rosaldo do indeed suggest that illiterate subjects are unlikely to reject ‘figurative’ sentences as deviant, ungrammatical, or as ‘category mistakes’ on the basis of which they will reconstruct the speaker’s intended meaning. Rather, what counts is whether a sentence is situationally appropriate, that is, whether it is somehow applicable in its context of utterance. Recognition of figurative language use as such seems to be relatively independent of, and in any case posterior to, the successful use and understanding of an utterance, as it depends on formal education and explicit knowledge of linguistic norms. The interpretation of the Bororo utterance “We are parrots”, and even of many of the everyday metaphors that literate individuals encounter and interpret with little difficulty or conscious deliberation, involves, I would suggest, complexes rather than scientific concepts. Rather than

1Street (1984) more radically views ‘literacy as ideology’: he takes literacy not as a cause of conceptual change or as a neutral skill, but as embedded in a complex of cultural and ideological practices.
Contexts of Metaphor

starting from categorial boundaries which are perceived as given, and violated by the utterance, the hearer relies on some contextually present or relevant feature in virtue of which, say, Bororo males and parrots may be grouped together (the Bororo would probably look for feathers and parrot-like behavior). This feature need not be consciously employed, as it would be if a scientific concept were involved, as the basis for the metaphor: for complex thinking, it suffices that there be some factual or perceptual basis for the grouping together of humans and parrots under the same label.

How, then, do illiterate individuals handle metaphorical language? I would suggest: much like literal language. In context, a sentence which literates would rank as deviant or figurative on the basis of some categorial anomaly may be just as acceptable to individuals in an oral society as ones we would consider fully literal. No real or apparent category mistake at the level of literal meaning is involved, because there are no fixed and stable literal meanings and categories to begin with. This is not, of course, to deny the existence of linguistic norms of correctness in oral societies. Rather, such norms of correctness are just of a different kind than those in literate societies: they are not explicit or codified, but flexible and highly context-bound. In the Bororo ritual, the actants actually become parrots in a sense; for us, this contextual sense may be at odds with the ‘literal’ sense indicating a biological species, but for the Bororo there is no such decontextualized literal sense to begin with: use in a figurative sense involves no violation of any strict rules for literal language. In other words, the very distinction between literal and figurative would seem to be meaningless for illiterate language users. The restriction of the Bororo utterance to a well-circumscribed ritual also speaks against naively attributing to the Bororo a ‘magical’ world view which involves a ‘confusion’ between man, parrots, and other categories. The language used here seems at least as much of a performative as of a descriptive character. More in general, the language of ritual is often performative: in ritual, social facts are created and reproduced (cf. Tambiah 1968).

In short, the romantic claim that preliterate individuals ‘speak in metaphors’ is accurate up to a certain degree only, and rests on a measure of ethnocentrism in that it assumes the notion of metaphor to be a given, culture-independent notion, which it is not. By the same token, the notion of literal meaning is not unproblematic or culture-independent. It seems that it is writing, which allows language users to list or spell out the current or ‘literal’ uses of an expression, that constitutes the crucial cultural prerequisite for an awareness of literal and figurative meaning, and of a distinction between the two, as will appear in the next paragraph.\(^1\)

\(^1\)The prime locus where ‘literal meanings’ are listed and codified is, of course, the dictionary.
The realization that 'scientific', abstract concepts and literal meanings are culturally determined ideal cases rather than universal or given notions should cast doubt on their relevance for a general theory of metaphor. It may very well be that even adult literate language users rely on complex thinking rather than on scientific concepts in interpreting everyday occurrences of metaphor: what counts in such cases is contextual appropriateness rather than context-free categorial or conceptual boundaries. An adequate theory of metaphor, and by extension an adequate theory of literal meaning, would do well to take such contextual influences on conceptual processes into account, rather than taking a literacy- and education-based ideal of stable, abstract concepts as its starting point. In other words, the above findings regarding language understanding and classification in nonliterate societies may have important consequences for a theory of metaphor in literate societies as well. They suggest that it is the context of utterance, rather than abstract categories or mappings between conceptual domains, that plays a primary role in interpretation, both literal and metaphorical. In chapter 3, a theory of direct contextual interpretation will be outlined that takes these ideas into account. By way of illustration of the possible role of literacy, I will now briefly discuss the historical origins of writing, and the results this development may have had on the literal-figurative distinction.

1.1.2 Metaphor in Mesopotamia: Sumer and Akkad

It was in Southern Mesopotamia, towards the end of the fourth millennium BCE, that one of the most momentous revolutions in the development of human societies took place: the invention of writing. Around 3300 BCE, clay tablets with pictographic symbols appear in the archives of the E-Anna temple in Uruk. The symbols which were used quickly became more abstract, and through the introduction of grammatical particles and the like, a full-fledged written language gradually emerged. From the start, however, the same sign could be used for different but related concepts (e.g. a sign of a foot could also mean 'to go' or 'to bring') or for unrelated concepts pronounced with the same sound, e.g. a sign of a bow could (metonymically) stand for 'arrow' (ti), or for 'to live' (ti or til). The precise interpretation of a sign was determined by its linguistic context or by grammatical particles; for this reason, it is not possible today to interpret with precision the earliest texts, which lack such particles (Roux 1992: 75).

For the present discussion, the relevance of this development is that it made possible the codification of words and the determination or fixation of their meanings, and thereby the
recognition of ‘deviant’ usages. In other words, writing is an essential precondition for the ability to distinguish between the literal and the figurative uses of expressions. It should not be thought, however, that the introduction of writing implies a radical dichotomy between ‘oral’ and ‘literal’ or ‘primitive’ and ‘advanced’ societies. Goody (1977: ch. 1) has argued the need for a developmental perspective, as literacy remained the privilege of a small social class for a long time, and did not become widespread until the nineteenth century. And in effect, we can still see traces of oral traditions in the earliest written versions of Mesopotamian epics: apart from a high degree of repetition, these show a ‘magical’ attitude to spoken words held to be characteristic of oral societies, although this attitude may more adequately be said to reflect the performative character of such ritualized language. For example, a name was believed to express the nature of the named object; consequently, the same individual could be given different names in different contexts (cf. Bottéro 1987: ch. 3). Thus, in tablet VII of the *Enuma Elish*, the Babylonian Epic of Creation, the patron god Marduk is given no less than fifty names, each expressing a different power. One might be tempted to conclude from this that ‘primitive’ proper names function as property expressions that ascribe specific attributes to individuals in virtue of their descriptive content, but perhaps such a statement already prejudices the question of how these expressions signify, as it takes the notion of abstract attributes for granted. Authors like Vico and Vygotsky raise doubts about such an assumption (see also 1.4 and 4.2 below).

As noted, Goody (1977, 1987) has stressed the significance of the fact that there are disproportionately many lists among the earliest written texts: lists, he argues, are an important aid in decontextualizing and systematizing the employment of linguistic items. Of particular interest to us are the lexical lists that appear around 3000 BCE, but first occur in appreciable quantities in Shuruppak around 500 years later (cf. Goody 1977: ch. 5). These lists seem to have been primarily used for educational reasons: a good many of them contain bilingual Sumerian-Akkadian glossaries ‘which could be organized according to words with similar meaning or even root structure, or as homonyms’ (Geller 1987: x). To items grouped in a particular lexical category, a determinative is often added, e.g., the sign mushen, ‘bird’, which does not feature in the same way in the spoken language. In other words, writing is not just the phonetic reproduction of spoken sounds, but actually imposes new structures and constraints on the use of language.
Lists and Metaphors

It need not surprise us that figurative language occurs quite frequently in early Sumerian and Akkadian writings, whether literary or administrative in kind. We already saw that a single written sign could stand for various semantically related concepts; but a similar variability occurs in all known spoken languages. It is often difficult, however, to assess whether we are dealing with live metaphors, dead ones, or simply with polysemic expressions that do not have any clear-cut ‘basic’ meaning. Thus, Assyrian traders in Anatolia introduced terms like ‘dying tablets’ or ‘killing tablets’ to fill in gaps in their commercial vocabulary; in this case, a technical expression for the cancelling of records was introduced that did not imply the physical destruction of the tablets on which they were written, as the near-synonymous terms ‘erase’ or ‘break’ would (Veenhof 1987). Moreover, according to Veenhof, this usage expresses the Assyrian belief of the power inherent in the tablets, and draws the economic notions of guilt and debt into the religious sphere.¹ He does not explicate, however, in how far tablets were actually believed to be living objects, as the vocabulary suggests; but then it may be not at all easy to say anything substantial in these matters. As much of the basic lexicographical work in Assyriology is concerned precisely with establishing the ‘exact’ meanings of expressions in Sumerian and Akkadian texts, these problems are far from trivial: they involve extensive investigations of the linguistic and cultural context of the written documents, of the available synonymous expressions, of the basic world views of the language users, etc. The question of whether a specific metaphorical usage is alive or dead at the moment it is written down is certainly not the easiest question to be answered in this connection. It may not be the most fruitful question either, as it assumes that a clear-cut distinction between metaphorical and literal, and between novel and conventionalized metaphor can be made; and this may not be the case.

Plainly, both ‘spoken’ and ‘scriptural’ kinds of metaphor arise from the need to express a large number of concepts with a small number of signs, but there are some interesting differences between the two: spoken language already has a rich vocabulary, but faces difficulties for the expression of highly specialized, culture- and domain-specific concepts. Written signs, by contrast, are initially pictograms representing concrete objects, and subsequently come to represent abstract concepts without their number becoming unmanageable.

¹Wilcke (1987) presents other examples of the catachretic use (i.e., use to fill lexical gaps) of metaphors in the technical and scholarly vocabulary of Mesopotamian languages.
A different question altogether is whether the Akkadian scribes were at all aware of the figurative processes underlying the different applications of lexical items. There is some evidence for thinking that they were. Geller (1987: x-xii) quotes from a lexical commentary explaining the rare word *li-id* (Sumerian reading *NI*), meaning *li-ti-ik-tu* (‘true measure’) in Akkadian:

(The sign) *NI* (to be vocalized as) *l i d* (means) *li-ti-iktu* (which means *gis*mas (‘twin-rod’). (Quote): ‘Father Enlil carried the *lidda*-rod...; the lord of the land carried the *lidda*-rod’. (Quote); ‘In order to [...] the “twins” of lentil and sesame.’ (Materials for the Sumerian Lexicon 14 268)

He argues that *lid*, meaning ‘*li-ti-iktu*’, is explained by *gis*mas (‘twin-rod’) as the first quote is explained by the second; at the same time, *l i d* relates to the first quotation as *gis*mas relates to the second. Thus, a relatively unfamiliar word *A* is explained by the analogies *A : B = C : D* and *A : C = B : D*. As Geller notes, this explanation reminds one of Aristotle’s definition of analogon-metaphors in the Poetics (see 1.2 below).

According to Geller (ibid.), this example ‘represents textual criticism based upon the conscious use of metaphor and analogy’; there is no evidence, however, of an awareness of deviance of any kind. To this it may be replied that metaphor involved here is probably conventionalized in any case; but if what was said above is correct, this may not even be the right kind of distinction to make. At this stage, words were just beginning to lose their ‘event-like’ character, and still in the process of being turned into isolated and relatively autonomous units of meaning. In other words, strict and decontextualized norms of ‘literal meaning’ were only just beginning to emerge from the varying contextual uses of words. The lists may thus be said to be as much descriptive as they are normative: the lexical lists are an essential aid in distinguishing the different meanings of a word to begin with. There was not yet any strict distinction between ‘live’ and ‘dead’ metaphors, as each use of a word in spoken language was to some extent a ‘unique event’ (cf. Malinowski 1930).

In other words, the Akkadian scribes appear to have organized lexical items at least in part employing ideas of figurative transfer; however, they do not seem to have had a single general term to indicate this transfer, nor a general distinction between the literal and the figurative application of a word. These ‘theoretical’ notions require a further elaboration of, and abstraction from, the items of the various lists. At this point in time, it seems, such reflection upon what was being done did not yet occur: the different uses were still in the process of
being codified, which is a necessary, but not yet a sufficient, condition for reflective thinking on one’s own language use. Consequently, we may call this phase the ‘protohistory’ of metaphor, as the scribes do seem aware of the figurative processes involved in the different uses of a single lexical item, but do not yet have a general concept of ‘figurative’ or ‘metaphorical’ language use. The distinction between literal and figurative language, in other words, is not the starting point of linguistic development, but the end product of a process of codification and systematization. The concepts of metaphor and literal meaning essentially depend on script-based and decontextualized categories.

1.2 ARISTOTLE ON METAPHOR, COMPARISON AND SIMILARITY

Many authors credit Aristotle with being the first to outline a theory of metaphor, and note its influence on subsequent writings on the topic; others criticize him for precisely the same reason. Thus, Johnson (1981: 5-8) sees Aristotle as responsible for initiating a pernicious and all-encompassing Western tradition that treats metaphor not only as based on similarity, but also as deviant from literal language, and as a matter of language rather than thought. Such opinions, however, are not fully justified, because Aristotle’s remarks are insufficiently detailed and precise to allow the ascription of any such doctrine to him with certainty: his brief discussions hardly add up to a full-fledged theory of metaphorical language. Nonetheless, his views merit discussion, if only for the tremendous prestige they enjoy: hardly a single twentieth-century study of metaphor passes over Aristotle in silence.¹

Although the word μεταφορά in a linguistic or rhetorical sense occurs in a few presocratic fragments, Aristotle was probably the first Greek philosopher to discuss the notion of metaphor at some length. The main source for his views is the famous discussion in Chapter 21 of the Poetics. This treatment is limited to metaphor in poetical language, especially the language of tragedy. But even for the restricted purposes of poetics, the brief passage in the Poetics (1457b1-33) remains rather incomplete. Aristotle merely lists four types of metaphor, and discusses the ways in which these work, without addressing questions such as what makes

¹For the text of the Poetics, I have followed D. W. Lucas’s edition (Oxford 1968). For the Rhetoric, I have used the Loeb translation by J.H. Freese (1926); Further, I have used J.L. Ackrill’s translation and commentary of Categories and De Interpretatione, and W.D. Ross’s English edition of Organon (1928) and Rhetoric (1924). Although I have profited from various commentaries and interpretations (e.g., Stutterheim, Vahlen, Lucas, Ricoeur, and Cooper), I will only refer to them incidentally, to avoid an inordinate lengthening of this section.
a good metaphor, what happens to the meanings of the words involved in figurative speech, and whether metaphors can be true. Some of these questions are discussed in Book III of the Rhetoric (1404b25ff.), which deals with prose language used for convincing an audience in debate. Moreover, stray remarks on metaphor and related notions like ambiguity and similarity appear in other works of the Organon.

Poetics

It is difficult to avoid anachronism in discussing Aristotle’s views, and consequently, one can hardly assign him an unambiguous place in the classification scheme presented in the introduction; for example, he does not make a distinction between what we would call ‘semantic’ and pragmatic’ aspects of meaning, and at times it is unclear whether he talks about the words themselves, their meanings, the concepts associated with them, or their referents. With these caveats in mind, let us turn to the Poetics. There, Aristotle treats metaphor at the level of words (ὀνόματα); later authors, by contrast, see the distinguishing traits of metaphor at the level of sentences or utterances. Another, and rather surprising, feature is the absence of a general distinction between literal and figurative language. All words, he says (1457bl-3), are either current (κνριον), strange (γλώττα), metaphorical (μεταφορά), ornamental (κόσμος), coined (πεποιημενον), lengthened (έπεκτετομενον), contracted (ύφηρημενον), or altered (εξηλλαγμενον). Two things stand out here. First, it is less a classification based on any single or unified criterion than a descriptive enumeration. As will become clearer below, it appeals to rather different levels of linguistic analysis: phonological, semantic, and ‘sociolinguistic’. Although it seems a classification of word types, at times it implicitly appeals to utterances or tokens of words; for example, a word can hardly be metaphorical in itself, apart from its occurring in a specific sentence. Secondly, in this passage kurion, ‘proper’ as it is often translated, is not contrasted with metaphor as much as with glōtta, ‘strange’ or ‘uncommon,’ so in this context ‘current’ is a more appropriate rendering. The label kurion applies to a word’s status within a language (sub-)community: for example, the word σιγυνον is the current word for ‘spear’ in the Cypriot dialect of Greek, but strange for the Athenian dialect (1457b4-7). Stutterheim (1941: 68) argues that Aristotle, in Chapter 22, makes a general stylistic

1Stutterheim (1941: 70) argues that ὄνομα should be taken to mean ‘name’ rather than ‘word’ here, but Aristotle himself gives examples of metaphorically used verbs, such as ‘the sun sowing its rays’ (1457b30). It seems wise to follow the generic definition of ὄνομα as ‘spoken sounds significant by convention’ (De Int. 16b19), which includes both nouns and (uninflected) verbs.
distinction between *kurion* and *xenikon* uses (‘foreign’ or ‘uncommon’, defined as ‘everything that goes against current usage’; a blanket term covering all the other kinds listed); but even such a broad distinction would not yet establish the former as signifying ‘literal’ in a purely linguistic rather than a stylistic or sociolinguistic sense. Aristotle postulates that metaphors employed in the distinguished language of tragedy and other forms of poetry should be ‘uncommon’ (1458a21ff.), not that metaphors in general are in any way out of the ordinary. I will return to this in the discussion of the *Rhetoric* below. In other words, ‘current’ as characterized in Chapter 21 does not seem to be opposed to ‘metaphorical’, let alone to ‘figurative’.

Next, Aristotle generically defines *metaphora* as a ‘transfer of a name belonging elsewhere’ (1457b8). By this he means, according to Lucas (1968: 204), both the process of transfer of a word and the word thus transferred. This ambiguity shows that we cannot with certainty describe Aristotle’s theory as either semantic (i.e., involving words and their meanings) or pragmatic (involving the use of language). Significantly, this definition does not involve ‘referents’ (things) or ‘meanings’ (concepts). On his view, metaphors just involve a relocation of *words*, and his definition does not yet yield any precise doctrine as to how the interpretation of metaphor works. It does not give rise, either, to seeing metaphor as ‘deviant’ or improper: the phrase ‘elsewhere’ merely implies that a metaphorical word (or word use) involves placing a word in a new (verbal) context, without in any way suggesting that it is out of place there.

Only when more concrete examples are discussed does anything like a theory of figurative interpretation emerge. Aristotle distinguishes four kinds of ‘metaphorical’ transfer, from which it appears that his notion of *metaphora* is much broader than the present-day ‘metaphor’:

1. from genus to species, i.e., using a more general term instead of the available more specific one. For example, the use of the general term έσταναι (‘to stand’) applied to a ship, instead of the more specific ὑπαρξεῖν (‘to lie at anchor’);

2. from species to genus, e.g., a specific number (‘a thousand’) for the more general ‘many’;

3. from species to species, i.e., ‘the use of a term of a different class’ (Lucas *ad loc.*), as in the swapped usage of *begging* and *praying* in ‘begging to the gods’ and ‘praying for an alms’;
4. ‘according to the analogous’ (kata to analogon) or ‘proportionally’: for example, Ares and the shield are related in the same manner as Dionysus and the phial, so one can call the shield ‘the phial of Ares,’ and the phial ‘the shield of Dionysus’; in other words, where there is an equation $A : B = C : D$, the term $A$ (e.g., ‘phial’) may be used instead of $C$ (‘shield’) in the verbal context of $D$, yielding ‘the phial of Ares’. One may also deny a proper (oikeion) attribute of the transferred word, and call Ares’s shield ‘the wineless phial.’

Obviously, not all of these transfers belong to what we would nowadays call metaphor. Benson and Prosser (1972: 245n2), following Cope (1867: 375), prefer to see the first two kinds as synecdoche, and the third as metonymy. However, the third case is not necessarily restricted to metonymy, i.e., transfer on the basis of factual contiguity; it may also apply to cases of transfer which we would consider genuinely metaphorical. In fact, in Aristotle’s own example, there is no factual relation between cutting and drawing off, but merely a resemblance between the two. Indeed, species-to-species transfer seems a prime example of metaphor on a referentialist view, as it is based on a similarity. If two terms are used for species of the same genus, they must be similar in some respect. In fact, it is the third rather than the fourth type of μεταφορά which is based on similarity in the stricter sense of sharing a property. Both notions involved in a species-species metaphor are similar precisely in falling under the same genus; in the Rhetoric (1405a23), actions like praying and begging are called similar in so far as they belong to the same genus, that of asking.¹ This kind of transfer, however, also seems to be constrained by other factors, which Aristotle does not mention: calling a dog a cat, which would be allowed in the above scheme because both are species of the genus animal, would seem to be not a metaphor but a literal falsehood. It remains unclear how he would distinguish the two. Neither does he discuss cases where two objects only figuratively share a property, as in sweet words: whatever property words may have that makes them ‘sweet’, it is not the same kind of sweetness as that of sugar or other foodstuffs. Presumably, this is where type-4 metaphors come in.

The fourth type discussed by Aristotle is the one of most interest to us. In fact, most present-day authors consider this type the only ‘genuine’ case of metaphor. However, it is not immediately clear how this type is actually distinct from the third; perhaps the species-to-species metaphors are best seen as a subtype of the analogon-metaphors, as they are restricted to terms falling under the same genus; analogon-metaphors do not have this restriction, as they

¹A contemporary follower of Aristotle in this respect is John Searle (1979: 96), who argues that literal language involves similarity just as much as metaphor does, so similarity is not a distinguishing feature of the latter.
seem to involve an identity of relations rather than properties. Still, it is rather easy to reconstruct many type-3 metaphors as type-4 ones: one might argue that praying stands to gods as begging stands to passers-by, and because of this analogy the two verbs may be used interchangeably!

It should be clear that the term analogon is not identical with ‘similarity’ or ‘comparison’; Aristotle uses the term homoiotès for the former, and eikôn for the latter. He defines the notion as follows (1457b17): ‘I speak of analogy, when the second is related to the first in a similar/identical way as the fourth is to the third’ [emph. added]. The central word, homoiós, may mean either ‘similar’ or ‘identical’. It seems that Aristotle himself tends towards the latter meaning, witness, for example, the otherwise identical definition of proportion in the Nicomachean Ethics V.3.8 (1131a32) as an ‘equality of ratios, implying four terms at the least’. Consequently, in the Poetics he does not claim that a shield is like a phial, but rather that both are related to Ares and Dionysus in the same way. In other (perhaps overly anachronistic) words, analogy is not strictly speaking a relation of resemblance, i.e., an identity of (one-place or ‘internal’) properties, but an identity of (two-place) relations (cf. 4.2 below; Miller (1979)).

This still leaves us with the question of how we find the appropriate analogy, i.e., how we supply any possibly missing parts of the equation. If all four terms are known or explicitly given, the transfer is obvious; but in other cases, where not all the related items are present, it is less clear precisely which relation is involved. This is a familiar objection against a comparison view (cf. Black 1962, Levinson 1983), but it would equally well apply to a conceptualist version: just as the referents of words may stand in an indefinite number of relations to other objects, so concepts may have an indefinite array of associations. To pick out the right one from all of these possibilities, the hearer will need additional linguistic or contextual clues. Aristotle seems to presume that typically, all four elements of this equation are given, unless no word is yet available for a specific object or activity: for example, there is no word for what the sun does with its light, so by analogy with the sowing of seed, it may be said to ‘sow light’ (1457b30). Thus, the analogy would be an equation of four members with at most one unknown (or at least not linguistically realized) variable.

The example of the sun makes clear that Aristotle does not deny the name of ‘metaphor’ to cases where there is no conventional (κειμενον) expression to be replaced by the transferred

1Levin’s (1982) attempt to derive all four types distinguished by Aristotle from the fourth kind would give the theory a unity that it does not possess at first sight. It leads to some rather far-fetched reconstructions, however, e.g. of species-genus metaphors to ‘proportions’ like deed : ten thousand : : deed : many. Levin himself already notes that this does not really involve an analogy, as ‘deed’ figures twice in the relation (1982: 28). It remains unclear, therefore, what this reanalysis adds to Aristotle’s account.
one (1457b25); moreover, there is no reason why such a metaphorical term cannot become *kurion*, that is, the current way of expressing, if it is taken over by the speech community at large. In this he also differs from many recent authors who restrict the proper use, so to speak, of the term ‘metaphor’ to cases in which a literal expression is available, and are reluctant to consider catachresis, i.e. the use of a word to fill a lexical gap, as genuine instances of metaphor (Black 1962: 33, Davidson 1979: 32, and Searle 1979: 97-8, 100). In so far as a metaphorical transfer fulfills a semantic need by filling a lexical gap, they argue, it will lose its metaphorical status, and become the ‘literal’ way of expressing a fact. Aristotle is not committed to any such sharp distinction between ‘live’ and ‘dead’ or ‘genuine’ and catachretic metaphors.¹

Superficially, the definitions of species-species and *analogon* transfer may seem to justify the attribution of a referentialist view to Aristotle: they strongly suggest that metaphors work in virtue of some similarity between the literal referents of the expressions used. Many twentieth-century authors have indeed claimed that Aristotle was the first adherent of a ‘comparison’ view of metaphor (e.g., Black 1962: 36n., Beardsley 1967: 285, Mooij 1975: 64f., Johnson 1981: 6). Now the ascription of a referentialist view to Aristotle requires that it is indeed the *referents* that determine the metaphorical interpretation, rather than some other aspect of meaning, or the concept associated with the word; but Aristotle nowhere unambiguously commits himself to such a view. A related, though distinct, question is whether in metaphor (some aspect of) word meaning changes, and if so, which aspect: the sense, the reference, or the concept. As Aristotle defines metaphor as just the transfer of a word, it is difficult to credit him with any specific doctrine regarding these questions. In general, the problem with ascribing a referentialist view to Aristotle is that it presumes an unequivocal answer to the question of exactly what is transferred in a metaphor, and on the basis of what, or in virtue of what, this transfer occurs.² To determine whether or not Aristotle actually held a referentialist view, we should be careful to distinguish two questions: first, whether metaphors are interpreted on the basis of a similarity between objects; and second, whether they are a kind of abbreviated *comparison*. For now, I will concentrate on the former question; the latter will be addressed in the context of the *Rhetoric*.

¹ Levin (1982: 27), too, notes that novelty ‘is not an overriding consideration’ for Aristotle.

² One source of this general attribution of a referentialist view to Aristotle may be the fact that many authors use Bywater’s (1909) translation of the *Poetics*, which erroneously translates *onomatōs allotriou epifora* as ‘giving the thing a name that belongs to something else’. The phrases in italics do not appear in the Greek original. Bickerton (1969: 50n) already noted that Bywater ‘smuggles into [the translation] several illegitimate suppositions about the nature of language... with no shadow of foundation in the original text’. 
One remark in Chapter 22 of the Poetics has widely been taken as evidence that Aristotle holds a referentialist view: he says that the gift for appropriate (πρεπη) metaphor cannot be learned from others, because ‘to metaphorize well is to observe the similar’ (1459a8). It seems to have been almost universally overlooked, however, that this remark is merely a claim about what makes a good metaphor, not one about the workings of metaphor in general.\footnote{In fact, the only place where Aristotle does seem to express a clearly referentialist view is Topica (140a9): ‘metaphor somehow makes the signified object known because of similarity; for all who metaphorize do so according to some similarity’ (emph. added). The explicit use of ‘the signified’ here suggests that it is indeed the referents that are similar; but as said, the Rhetoric and Poetics are less explicit on this point.}

The central question is precisely which are the elements of the analogon-relation $A : B = C : D$. Are they the words themselves, the referents of the terms used, or the concepts expressed by the words? Aristotle nowhere explicitly says which one of these is involved, nor does he distinguish them by typographical or other means, so the matter is not easy to decide. Apparently, at least three members of the analogon-relation have to be either linguistically realized or otherwise retrievable from the context of utterance, otherwise the equation $A : B = C : D$ cannot be solved. Moreover, in several of Aristotle’s own examples, it can hardly be the referents of the terms that are involved, as there simply are no actual individuals called ‘Dionysus’ or ‘Ares’; the same holds for the names of fictional heroes in some other examples, such as ‘Achilles’ and ‘Odysseus’. This suggests that the interpretation of a metaphor like ‘The phial is the shield of Dionysus’ cannot proceed just in virtue of the referents and their properties, but must involve representations or concepts. Aristotle himself does not appear to notice this problem; but it seems to constitute a more general difficulty for his theory of meaning, which does not contain an account of fictional objects.

Indeed, several of the main difficulties with Aristotle’s views on metaphor derive in part from his more general ideas on the relation between language, thought and reality. In chapter 1 of De Interpretatione, he states that words in different languages are merely different symbols of the same ‘affections of the soul’, which in turn are likenesses of things; he considers both the affections and the soul and the things to be the same for all people.\footnote{Cf. De Int. 16a6ff.: ‘but what these [spoken sounds] are in the first place signs of - affections of the soul - are the same for all; and what these affections are likenesses of - actual things - are also the same’ (transl. Ackrill). Ackrill (ad loc.) notes how problematic this claim is; on Aristotle’s view that language and thought are isomorphic, cf. Benveniste (1966).} Aristotle thus assumes an isomorphism between linguistic terms, mental entities, and things. Because of this isomorphism, referentialist and conceptualist views of metaphor would seem to collapse on his treatment; his remarks in different places are equally germane to both views. It would be somewhat
more difficult to attribute a descriptivist view to him, as he does not talk of reified meanings as
distinct from concepts; usually he employs the transitive verb ‘to signify’ (σημαινειν) rather
than phrases like ‘to have a meaning’.

It is difficult to decide whether Aristotle takes the ‘things’ or the ‘affections of the soul’ as
the basis for metaphorical interpretation. It is unfortunate that he does not discuss the special
status of non-denoting terms in this connection; for, as will be seen in 2.1 below, these provide
an important argument against strictly referentialist views. Obviously, the word Achilles may
very well stand for a meaning, concept or ‘affection in the soul’ without there being any object
of which the concept is a likeness. Perhaps this would justify us in ascribing to Aristotle a
more strictly conceptualist theory of meaning, which would allow for expressions to have a
meaning (i.e., to symbolize a concept) even in the absence of a referent. Analogon-metaphors
involving non-denoting terms could then be thought of as expressing analogies between
concepts rather than objects; but as said, Aristotle makes no explicit claims about this.

In short, the brief discussion of different kinds of metaphor in the Poetics leaves many
questions unanswered. Some of Aristotle’s remarks point to a referentialist view, but in other
respects his views look more conceptualistic. Likewise, he makes no single, unequivocal
distinction between literal and metaphorical language. It is thus questionable to describe him as
a hard-nosed referentialist, for whom metaphor depends on similarity, is a matter of language
rather than thought, and is deviant by definition, as some authors (in particular Johnson 1981)
have done. Because Aristotle’s views cannot be called strictly ‘semantic’ or ‘pragmatic’ either,
one objection that has been raised against them can quickly be dispensed with. Harris and
Taylor (1989: 32ff.) believe that his treatment of metaphor clashes with his conventionalist
theory of meaning: if words, being spoken sounds significant by convention, are symbols of
affections in the soul (De Int., Ch. 1), what kind of affections do words symbolize in
metaphorical use, which is not in general entirely based on convention? This objection can be
raised against any semantic approach to metaphor, and we will encounter it again below: how
can a theory that explains metaphor in terms of (conventionalized) meanings deal with novel
metaphors and the ‘creation of new senses’? Harris & Taylor’s argument, however, in part
rests on the unresolved problem of whether metaphor in Aristotle’s theory involves a transfer
of meanings, as they believe (ibid.), or merely a transfer of words. More importantly, De Int.
16a26 merely requires that a sound functions as a symbol in order to be conventional, not that
it has a wholly fixed conventional signification. Further, conventions may obviously change
over time, and there is no reason to think that Aristotle would deny that metaphorical use may
involve precisely such a change of convention: especially metaphors used to name the nameless may easily become the conventional or current way of expressing something.

Rhetoric

Aristotle returns to the notion of metaphor in Book III of the Rhetoric, where he mostly discusses the 'pragmatics', so to speak, of metaphor, i.e., its successful employment in discursive or argumentative prose. It is in this context that the notion of the 'proper' (πρέπον) use of metaphor appears. For Aristotle, the main virtue of oratory prose is clarity or perspicuity, because its purpose is convincing the audience; for this reason, he considers it best to speak with a somewhat exotic or 'foreign' air, while at the same time hiding the artifice (ποιησις). This effect can be created by the use of words that are either current, familiar or metaphorical. Strange, compound or coined words are to be avoided; these are best employed in poetical language, which is not used to persuade but to give pleasure by showing its artifice, i.e., by its loftiness and deliberate 'artificiality'. Thus, the Rhetoric shows even more clearly than the Poetics that Aristotle does not think of metaphor as a deviation from regular usage: he explicitly says that 'everybody uses metaphors, current and familiar terms in conversation' (1404b33ff.); as in the Poetics, a general distinction between literal and figurative is absent.¹

From this discussion it also appears that prepon, 'proper', is a property of style, not of language, and thus cannot serve as an equivalent of 'literal'. A proper or appropriate style should, among others, be in accordance with the subject matter, so it should vary with the purpose of discourse. Aristotle was well aware that a style involving no figures of speech at all was definitely not 'neutral:' he calls the styles of Cleophon and Sthenelos, which apparently lacked all figuration, 'mean' (1458a20). This is another indication that he does not consider metaphor deviant from any supposedly fixed, unequivocal and context-free norm of strictly 'literal' language: such a norm would itself yield a very marked style.²

Aristotle further requires that a metaphor be appropriate (harmottousas), otherwise the utterance will be 'improper' (aprepes), improper, that is, to the purpose of the message (1405a13ff.). This appropriateness arises from the proportional: a metaphor puts things in a

¹ This belies the interpretations of more recent authors like Johnson (1981: 6), who mistakenly attribute to Aristotle a view of metaphor as being deviant by definition.

² Likewise, Ricoeur (1975) repeatedly stresses that there is no such thing as a strictly 'neutral' and literal style. The rather restricted stylistic or 'pragmatic' meaning of prepon also casts doubt on Derrida's attempt (1974) to attribute an entire 'metaphysics of the prepon' to Aristotle.
certain light, and thus can give us a specific appreciation of the object described. To call a praying man a beggar, or a beggar a praying man, is to debase and to adorn, respectively. There is no inappropriateness in this, other than its possibly not fitting the pragmatic purposes of the utterance. Aristotle gives several other examples of such euphemistic metaphors and their opposites, e.g. calling actors either ‘artists’ or ‘Dionysus groupies’: he says, significantly, that both expressions are metaphors (the former being a species-genus metaphor, and the latter presumably involving an analogon-transfer), but only the latter is a term of abuse. In this context, then, ek to analogon is an evaluative phrase rather than a descriptive one, unlike kata to analogon in the Poetics: an inappropriate metaphor puts something else before the hearer’s eyes than the speaker should want. Perhaps, then, we can reinterpret the remark ‘to metaphorize well is to perceive the similar’ in Chapter 22 of the Poetics as expressing that the competent speaker remains attentive to due proportion, i.e., to the effects to be achieved, in constructing his metaphors.

In other words, Aristotle does not adhere to the naive view of metaphor as merely an embellishment of, or deviance from, an otherwise neutral norm of literal language. For him, metaphor is stylistically or pragmatically apt for some conversational purposes. But are its effects exclusively stylistic, or can it also have a more properly ‘cognitive’ function? Some of his remarks point in the direction of the latter. In the Rhetoric, a main virtue of metaphor is that it can make things clear: ‘metaphor most of all possesses clarity, sweetness and the exotic; and it cannot be learned from another’ (1405a8). Apparently, metaphorical speech can even be clearer than conventional, ‘literal’ (i.e., kurion and oikeion) language. A good metaphor achieves this clarity by putting things ‘before our eyes’ or making things ‘vivid’ (1411b1ff.). This suggests that metaphors do not just involve similarity, but can actually conjure up images, which is a rather stronger claim than a referentialist would make. Elsewhere, Aristotle says that metaphors put things before our eyes if they signify them as actual (1411b26). But what does this claim amount to? Space permits no discussion of Aristotle’s metaphysical notion of actuality, but in any case it remains open what he means here by ‘signifying actuality’. He says that Homer creates actuality in speaking of inanimate things as animate, as in ‘the eager spearpoint’; but does he mean that this expression signifies that spearpoints are really or

1 Once again, the Topica directly contradicts this: ‘everything that is expressed metaphorically is obscure’ (139b35).

2 Interestingly, Aristotle gives exactly the same characterization of plot quality in the Poetics: in composing the plot, the writer should keep the stage setting ‘in front of his eyes for as far as possible’ (1455a23); this will enable him to perceive which actions are appropriate (prepon), and to avoid inconsistencies.
actually eager, or merely that it signifies them as if they are eager? A suggestion that Aristotle would hold the former appears in III.11 (1412a17ff.), where he argues that metaphors can give new knowledge that goes against the hearer’s expectations: ‘For it becomes more evident to him that he has learned something, [...] and the mind seems to say “How true it is! but I missed it”’ (Loeb transl.). This suggests that a metaphor may express novel knowledge that the hearer did not have beforehand, but nonetheless comes to accept as true. Probably, then, Aristotle would have granted metaphor a stronger epistemological function than merely expressing, or creating awareness of, similarities: he saw them as capable of expressing new knowledge in so far as they can signify actuality. On this interpretation, Homer asserts, rather than suggests or implies, that the spearpoint is eager: he makes an essentially stronger claim than likening a spearpoint to an eager living being. A precise statement of such a view, however, requires a more explicit distinction between asserting and implying (see 3.2 below).

Metaphor and Comparison

It is time now to return to the question of the precise relation between metaphor and simile or comparison. Aristotle’s remarks concerning this relation have caused a lot of confusion. As said, various authors think that he sees metaphor as an abbreviated simile, but in the Rhetoric, he actually says the very opposite of this: ‘simile, too, is a kind of metaphor; for it differs only slightly’ (1406b20); he repeats the claim that simile is a kind of metaphor in 1407a13. What are we make of this suggestion that not simile, but metaphor is the more general notion? Let us look at Aristotle’s argument. If a poet says, using a simile, that ‘Achilles rushed on like a lion’, he does practically the same thing as with the metaphorical ‘the lion rushed on’ said of the same human being (1406b21ff.): ‘for because both are brave, [the poet] metaphorically [lit., carrying over] names Achilles a lion’. Unfortunately, this passage does not really make a clear distinction between metaphor and simile at all. We might be tempted to attribute the ‘slight difference’ precisely to the fact that the metaphor, unlike the simile, involves a transfer; but then it becomes difficult to see how one can call a simile a kind of μεταφορά at all. This would force us to conclude that, for Aristotle, similes also involve a transfer of words. Few modern authors, and certainly few defenders of a referentialist view of metaphor, would defend such a

1The Loeb translation, ‘for because both are courageous, he transfers the sense and calls Achilles a lion’ (emph. added), is not quite accurate here. Aristotle nowhere explicitly speaks of sense transfer. Many translations in fact have this tendency to reify meanings; thus, the adverb κυρίος is translated as ‘in the proper sense’ (Topica 139b36, Loeb transl.), and σημαίνειν as ‘to have a meaning’, etc. Bickerton’s point that Bywater’s translation introduces semantic notions not warranted by the original, applies rather generally.
claim, for referentialists precisely assume that no change of meaning takes place in a comparison: they take the literal referents as determining the interpretation of the metaphor. One modern voice that agrees with Aristotle, however, is Nelson Goodman, who in fact rejects referentialist theories (see 2.2 below): ‘instead of metaphor reducing to simile, simile reduces to metaphor; or rather, the difference between simile and metaphor is negligible’ (1976: 77). Still, it remains difficult to make sense of Aristotle’s claim that comparisons involve a transfer of words, as his own definition suggests. Perhaps we should take it to imply that both simile and metaphor involve a ‘renaming’ of the object, and that the explicit term of comparison ‘ως (‘like’) merely functions as a hedge, i.e., as a particle that weakens the assertive power of a sentence. Thus, the speaker can avoid a commitment to the assertion that Achilles actually is a member of the class of lions, although both are species of the genus of brave animals. But this explanation is just a matter of conjecture.

A yet more puzzling remark on the relation between metaphor and simile appears in 1407a15, where he calls similes ‘metaphors that require logos’, i.e., metaphors without description, ‘explanation’ (Ross), or ‘details’ (Loeb). But what is the logos that is present in the metaphor ‘the lion rushed forward’ and absent in ‘Achilles rushed on like a lion’? Clearly, all this requires a lot of elaboration which is not given; but in any case, Aristotle is nowhere near as unambiguous a referentialist as many later authors assume.

Two other questions that occupy a central place in later research remain unanswered by Aristotle’s discussion: first, apart from his remark that the hearer may come to accept a surprising metaphor as true (1412a20), he does not tackle the question of whether metaphors in general can be true, or instead have some other effect, such as working on the hearer’s emotions, or promoting rather than expressing insights. Although he seems more interested in other kinds of appropriateness, witness his extensive discussion of how metaphors may fail to be prepos, nothing in his writings suggests that he thinks of metaphor as false, or incapable of being either true or false, by definition. In particular, it seems likely that he would have considered an expression like ‘sowing light’ true: it obviously applies to the process indicated, and there is no other, ‘truer’ way of naming the relevant property of the sun.¹

Secondly, Aristotle says nothing about how metaphors are recognized. When, for example, does the hearer know that ‘ten thousand’ in ten thousand deeds has Achilles wrought

¹Cooper (1986: 199), following the Ross edition, takes Aristotle’s remark that metaphors ‘must fairly correspond to the thing signified’ (Rhet. 1405a11) as expressing a desire to ascribe truth to metaphors. In fact, this injunction occurs in a discussion about the appropriateness of metaphors for their rhetorical purpose, rather than about truth; ‘corresponds’ is just a loose translation of the phrase ek tou analogou discussed above.
metaphorically signifies *many* rather than just the number ten thousand? The only type of metaphor where the need for a nonliteral interpretation appears relatively clearly is the fourth one, which involves an explicit linguistic context. Verbal modifications like ‘the shield of Dionysus’ or ‘the evening of life’ may force a figurative interpretation on the hearer; but even here, the wider context may force the hearer to interpret the expression literally, if it makes clear that the object spoken about really is a shield belonging to Dionysus, rather than the phial associated with him.

In all, Aristotle hardly presents anything like a full-fledged or coherent theory of metaphor. Although one cannot ascribe a naive ‘metaphor-as-deviance’ or ‘metaphor-as-abbreviated-comparison’ view to him, it is not easy to say what kind of theory he does hold. His remarks about the relation between metaphor and comparison, and the fact that he treats words, concepts and referents as isomorphic with each other, make this task even more difficult. Further, he gives no general account of why people use metaphors, but it is clear that he considers metaphor useful if not necessary for various stylistic and ‘cognitive’ purposes: it can make things clear by putting them before our eyes; it may give language a lofty and dignified quality; it can fill semantic gaps, as in the case of the sun’s activities; and finally, it can make an unfamiliar object familiar. Lastly, he gives no hint of considering metaphor deviant by definition, or of denying that metaphors can be just as true or false as literal language. His scattered remarks, then, remain tantalizingly incomplete, at times contradictory, and are, in the final analysis, rather unsatisfactory.

1.3 ‘ABD AL-QAHIR AL-JURJANI’S MYSSTERIES OF ELOQUENCE

Little is known about the life of ‘Abd al-Qâhir al-Jurjânî (d. 471 AH/1078 CE). He was born in Gurgan, south-east of the Caspian Sea; it seems he never left his native city, which was far away from the great centers of learning of his age, like Baghdad and Cairo. He gives no signs of familiarity with the Arabic translations of Aristotle’s works either. Consequently, his views on metaphor appear to have been relatively uninfluenced by the Greek tradition. He wrote mainly on rhetoric and grammar; among his writings most relevant to us are the *Dalâ’il al i’jâz* (‘Proofs of Inimitability’), an early treatise on the inimitability of the Qur’ânic language, and the later
Asrâr al-Balâgha (‘The Mysteries of Eloquence’), which expresses his views on metaphor and its relation to comparison. The present discussion will primarily be based on the latter work.\(^1\)

**Theological Background**

Jurjânî’s theory of metaphor is not merely an exercise in literary theory; it appears against the background of a much broader philosophical and theological discussion in the Islamic world of his time, which focused on the unity of God and the status of the language of the Qur’ân.\(^2\) The Qur’ân repeatedly stresses God’s absolute unity and transcendence, and stresses that he is unlike anything of His creation; and Jurjânî repeats this dogma (Asrâr, 21.13). In this respect, the Islamic view of God takes the Judaeo-Christian monotheism to its logical conclusion. At the same time, however, the Qur’ân often describes God in terms that make Him look much like a human being: He seems endowed with sight and hearing, He is said to ‘sit on His throne’ (sûra 20.5), and seems to have other human attributes, witness sûra 39.67:

\[(2)\quad \text{was-samawâtu matwîyâtun bi-yamînih.}\]

‘and the heavens shall be rolled up in His right hand.’ (transl. Arberry)

How should these Qur’ânic verses be interpreted? If we take them literally, God would indeed have human attributes like hands, eyes, and ears; but this clashes with the dogma of His unity and transcendence. The Qur’ân abounds with such highly poetic language and rich metaphors, the precise interpretation of which is a theological as much as a literary-theoretical matter.\(^3\)

The early Muslim community was more concerned with practical legal and political problems than with such theoretical questions: it tried to live according to the precepts of the Qur’ân, without asking how they could be arranged into a full-fledged doctrinal system. Over time, however, the need arose to establish precise doctrines in juridical and theological matters, and a way of defining and defending religious doctrines on the basis of systematic and rational criteria, called kalâm, developed. The early mutakallimûn, or practitioners of kalâm, were

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\(^{1}\) I have mostly employed Ritter’s convenient translation (1959); references are to paragraph numbers of the *Asrâr al-Balâgha* in Ritter’s edition. For more extensive discussion, see especially Abu Deeb (1979) (primarily dealing with the *Dalâ’il*), 1990; also Bonebakker (n.d.). There are few treatments of Jurjânî in a philosophical context; the discussions in Stutterheim (1941: 100-112) and Mooij (1976) are not based on the full text of the *Asrâr*, so I have kept discussion of their interpretations to a minimum.

\(^{2}\) Fakhry (1983: 42-66; 203-9) gives a clear and detailed overview of these questions.

\(^{3}\) For an extensive listing of such metaphors see Sabbagh 1943.
opposed by the *muhaddithûn* or *Ahl al-hadîth*, the adherents of *hadîth*, who resisted such attempts at rationalizing dogma with methods they considered alien to the Qur’ân, and took the Qur’ân itself and the *hadîth*, the reports of Muhammad’s sayings, as the only legitimate basis for judgment in religious and juridical matters. They tended to interpret the Qur’ân literally, to ascribe attributes to God, and to deny free will to man, without wishing to integrate these doctrines into a full-fledged system. An influential defender of *hadîth*, and opponent of *kalâm*, was Ibn Hanbal, the founder of the Hanbali school of jurisprudence.¹

Under the ʿAbbâsid empire, especially under the caliph Ma’mûn (813-33 CE), one specific school of *kalâm*, the Muʿtazila, blossomed, and at one time even came to define state dogma. The Muʿtazila, who were active mainly in Baghdad and Basra, were rationalist in outlook; they emphatically affirmed the doctrine of *tawhîd* (God’s unity), and denied Him all positive attributes. As speech could not be an attribute of God either, they also held that the Qur’ân was not co-eternal with him, but created. They further argued that man has free will and responsibility of his own. In their rationalist emphasis on God’s unity and transcendence, they specifically reacted against the ‘anthropomorphic’ interpretation of the Qur’ân, a literalist approach that seems to have been especially widespread among early Shiʿites. The anthropomorphists took literally all *sûras* that describe God in human terms, and thus credited Him with various human attributes.

For a time, the Muʿtazila predominated among the ʿAbbâsid intellectual elite, but in time, another current in *kalâm* arose, with the aim of countering the Muʿtazilites’ extreme monism and rationalism. These were the Ashʿarites, who tried to reconcile Muʿtazilite methods with more ‘traditionalist’, especially Hanbali, doctrine. They rejected anthropomorphism, but accepted that God has positive attributes, such as wisdom and power, that are distinct from His essence; they held that man has no free will, and cannot create anything himself: all actions, they believed, are created by God, and ‘acquired’ by man; they employed rational argumentation, but acknowledged the limits of human reason. If one cannot rationally understand God’s actions, one should simply ‘not ask how’ (*bilâ kayfa*). Jurjânî seems to have been influenced mostly by the Ashʿarites.² We will see below how this theological background influenced his views on metaphor.

¹ It may be tempting to interpret the confrontation between *muhaddithûn* and *mutakallimûn* as a clash between tradition (or faith) and reason, but in fact it was not nearly as clear-cut. Both sides accepted the same religious doctrines and the need for reasoning in theological and legal questions; where they differed was on the relative importance of such reasoning, and on the specific methods it was to involve.

Jurjâni’s Classification of Tropes

Jurjâni (Asrâr 24.1) takes over the distinction traditionally made in Arab rhetoric between majâz (tropical or figurative language) and haqîqa (literal, or as Ritter phrases it, ‘veritative’ language). Each word is majâz, he states, ‘with which something else is meant than what the word was coined for, on the basis of a perceptual connection between the first and the second [nominatum]’ (21.4). Tropes involve a temporary transfer of a word to a meaning different from the ‘basic’ or literal one, on the basis of a perceptual connection of some sort, a mulâhaza (from lahaza, to perceive, to observe, to supervise), or Augenverbindung in Ritter’s translation, between the literal and the tropical meaning; if there is no such connection, we are dealing with homonyms, as in the English bank, the two distinct senses of which are unrelated (ibid.). Such a temporary application thus need not involve a redefinition of word meaning!

The Arabic expression for ‘literal’, haqîqa, which may also mean ‘truth’ or ‘the facts’, might suggest that figurative language is by definition not true, or incapable of being true or false. But this certainly is not Jurjâni’s view: he defines haqîqa words more modestly as ‘each word by which is meant what was assigned to it in an original coining by the person who coined it (or in an agreement with others), in such a manner that no relying on something else takes place’ (21.1). This might suggest that haqîqa just indicates the original or temporally prior meaning, but in fact it may include words that are given a new meaning by convention (ibid.). The distinction between literal and figurative words, then, involves no more than a difference in degree of conventionality and an appeal to another meaning, and should not be seen as drawing a line between the truthful and the false.

This becomes even clearer from Jurjâni’s definition of haqîqa and majâz with respect to sentences. He calls haqîqa ‘every sentence in which it is intended that the judgment expressed in it is in agreement with the judgment of reason’ (23.3). Those sentences are tropical, or majâz, in which ‘the expressed judgment deviates from the demands of reason, on the basis of a change in meaning which is carried out in it’ (23.5). In a figurative sentence, the speaker does not mean to express the judgment of reason expressed literally; but she does not intend to utter a falsehood either. Figurative expressions are not false or inappropriate, but uttered with the purpose of making a comparison (23.8). On Jurjâni’s definition, then, tropes seem to

1 Jurjâni does not define his notion of meaning or sense (mana’); he mostly seems to equate it with that of concept or thought; but some of his remarks suggest that his conception of semantic content comes much closer to a collection of intersubjectively shared commonplaces and norms. His remarks on literal meaning as accepted in a language community (21.2), for example, point in this direction.
depend on the speaker’s intentions, which suggests that he holds a pragmatic view of figurative language! He does not elaborate on this aspect, however, nor does he indicate how the hearer should recognize the speaker’s ‘figurative’ intentions, other than on the basis of contextual clues. In any case, tropes like the Qur’anic metaphors should on no account be confused with mere falsehoods: ‘those who would deny the presence of a trope here, and speak of a falsehood, would tread upon a dangerous stray path, and be close to falling into something I need not elaborate on’ (23.11). Clearly, Jurjānî’s desire to distinguish figurative language from falsehood is as much theologically as linguistically motivated.

Among the tropes, Jurjānî selects three closely related figures for particular attention in the Asrâr: isti‘âra (metaphor), tashbih (comparison), and tamthîl (‘abstract comparison’ or simile). He initially defines metaphor as a word that ‘is applied to something other than was originally meant by it, and temporarily carried over onto something else, so that it appears there, so to speak, as if it were borrowed’ (2.4). The metaphorical transfer is carried out for the sake of a comparison; its grounds and purposes are threefold: comparison, brevity, and intensity of expression (14.2).

This talk of ‘perceptual connections’ and comparison suggests a referentialist theory, as it seems to imply that it is the utterance’s referents having some property in common that warrants the metaphorical application. Jurjānî’s subsequent discussion shows that things are more complicated, however. To begin with, Jurjānî explicitly denies that metaphors are just abbreviated comparisons: in uttering a metaphor, he argues, the speaker has a different purpose (namely, comparison, intensity, and brevity) than in making a comparison, which only has the pointing out of some similarity as its goal (14.2). But there are more important reasons for not simply attributing a referentialist view to him. First, his definition of majāz as temporary borrowing suggests that words in comparisons and similes also undergo a change in meaning; below, we will see that Jurjānî indeed thinks that this is the case. Second, his distinction between perceptual and abstract similarity implies that metaphorical interpretation does not always involve just the properties of the referents: tashbih is a comparison based on some perceptual or otherwise immediately recognizable property that the referents, both familiar to the hearer, have in common (5.1); in Her hair is like the night, both black hair and the night

1 As with Aristotle, one should beware of the anachronistic character of such ascriptions, as Arabic linguistic theorizing hardly involves langue-parole or semantics-pragmatics distinctions resembling the ones current today; according to al-Azmeh (1986: ch. 3, esp. pp. 114-23), the Arabic sciences of language did not have the language system but the speakers’ positing (wad’) of a specific meaning for words as their subject matter, and thus in a sense dealt with parole only.
have the property of being dark. In \textit{tamthil}, however, one of the referents may be unknown, or unfamiliar, or there may be no property that the two referents have in common; in such cases, a process of reasoning is required for the explication (\textit{ta’awwal}) of the figure. For example, in His words are like honey, it cannot be sweetness that words and honey have in common, for the kinds of properties related to audible and edible objects are quite different. Rather, specific words and honey share some function or property that is in one way or another associated with them, such as pleasantness for the senses (5.5). Because in these cases a process of thinking or explication is required, the similarity involved is of a more `abstract' kind, and cannot be reduced to shared (perceptual) properties. \textit{Tashbih} and \textit{tamthil}, then, appear to involve different faculties of the soul: the perceptual and the intellectual, respectively.

Now, as said, Jurjānī holds that metaphor is based on similarity, but as this similarity may be of either the \textit{tashbih} or the \textit{tamthil} kind, he steers clear of the more obvious pitfalls of a referentialist theory, which would reduce metaphor to \textit{tashbih}. Some of these pitfalls have been noted by Beardsley (1962), who argued that one of the referents may be unfamiliar or not explicitly mentioned, thus making a comparison between objects difficult if not impossible, and by Levinson (1983: 155), who stressed that comparisons themselves may be figurative, if the objects referred to belong to domains so different that they have no non-trivial properties in common. In \textit{tamthil}-metaphors, there is no single property common to both objects, so Jurjānī can meet this objection, provided he gives a satisfactory account of what does happen.

\textit{Jurjānī’s Classification of Metaphors}

One of the most interesting aspects of Jurjānī’s theory is the fact that he distinguishes various different kinds of metaphor, and does not attempt to describe all of these in terms of a single mechanism; the different kinds of metaphor are, moreover, illustrated by various examples. This theoretical sophistication and descriptive richness make his work of enduring value for systematic studies of metaphor.\footnote{\textit{Tashbih}, incidentally, is also the standard theological expression for `anthropomorphism', but Jurjānī uses the term in a more restricted technical sense here.} First of all, Jurjānī distinguishes between non-expressive and expressive metaphors. The former kind he does not consider very interesting, and therefore he discusses it only briefly: it does not express a new meaning, he states, but merely relies on the synonymy of two words. Thus, expressions like English \textit{snout} used instead of \textit{nose}, and \textit{claws}
instead of *hands*, do not really add anything interesting because of their relative obviousness.\(^1\)

Expressive metaphors, by contrast, do express a new meaning, based on similarity. For example, *I saw a lion* said of a man not only can be seen as attributing bravery to that man in an extreme degree, but also as conjuring up in the hearer’s mind the image of a lion, in the terms of which he can continue to see the man. In other words, in this metaphor *lion* comes to mean ‘brave to an extreme extent’, but also retains its literal meaning. This kind of metaphor cannot be paraphrased adequately, as no literal expression has the same intensity, and doubleness of meaning. *I saw a brave man* does not lead to any gain in meaning, nor does it conjure up any suggestive image in the hearer’s mind.

Expressive metaphors, Jurjâni holds, concern meaning, not words or word forms; they are therefore not language-specific, and can be more easily translated than non-expressive ones. This requires more explication and explanation than Jurjâni gives; moreover, he nowhere gives an explicit definition of ‘meaning’, nor does he relate it to, or distinguish it from, thought. It is thus difficult to tell whether his theory should be classified as descriptivist or conceptualist.

The next distinction Jurjâni makes among expressive metaphors is that between those with and those without a ‘referential substrate’ (3.1), and here the distinction between *tashbîh* and *tamthîl* is essential. In the former type, both objects referred to are familiar to the hearer, and the property they have in common is perceptual or otherwise easily grasped: in *her hair is the night*, the referents are immediately clear, as is the similarity between them, viz., darkness. In *tamthîl*, by contrast, such a ‘referential substrate’ is lacking, and the similarity does not consist in a shared property, or may otherwise be hard to retrieve: for the phrase ‘the hand of the North wind’ (from a verse of Labîd), there is no object that is to the wind what a hand is to a human body. The hearer has to *think* to find the right similarity, which in this case lies rather in the function or power of the objects involved. This metaphor, according to Jurjâni, hyperbolically expresses the force or power of the wind, but also conjures up in the hearer’s mind the image of the wind as a being with hands. In other words, the property of having a hand is not shared by human beings and the wind; rather, a property that is related in some other, non-perceptual way to the possession of hands is expressed. It will be clear that the similarity on which this metaphor is based cannot be of the *tashbîh* type, but crucially involves the more abstract, reasoned similarity characteristic of *tamthîl* (3.2): they involve the capacities of the intellectual rather than the perceptual faculty of the soul.

\(^1\)Cf. Aristotle’s remarks on species-species metaphors, and on adorning or debasing objects by using different descriptions. This view seems to clash with Jurjâni’s opinion in *Dalâ’il al-i’jâz*, that no two constructions using different terms are wholly synonymous (cf. Abu Deeb 1979); but here, I limit myself to the *Asrâr*. 
In *tamthîl*-metaphors, the hearer must recover a property that is related in some way to the object expressed by the *majâz* word. This relation may be one of cause and effect or part and whole (3.5), or it may link the unknown property to something more familiar to the hearer, for ‘the soul becomes most easily familiar when one takes it from the hidden into the open […], and that one reduces the thing that one wants to teach it about to something else that is more familiar to it, and of which it has secure knowledge’; a *tamthîl* metaphor thus has the same effect as the unveiling of a hitherto covered object (9.1). But apart from such descriptions, Jurjânî does not explain in detail how the reasoning involved in *tamthîl* is supposed to work.

*Tamthîl*-metaphors thus require a creative effort on the part of both speaker and hearer, and for this reason, they are superior to *tashbih*-metaphors, where the relevant property is readily found. Understanding them requires ‘a measure of precise thinking, perceptive vision, and attentiveness’ (9.15) not needed for simpler metaphors. But does this imply that a creative speaker, or hearer, can actually *create* new similarities by expressing or interpreting, a novel metaphor? This is a question that has vexed many authors. At times, Jurjânî comes close to saying that *tamthîl*-metaphors can indeed create similarities that were not there before. But this would mean that a poet, or a perceptive hearer, can actually *create*, and not just discover, similarities; and this clashes with the Ash’arite dogma that only God can create out of nothing. Consequently, Jurjânî makes the more modest claim that creative metaphors involve the discovery rather than the creation of new and unsuspected similarities; but they remain equally praiseworthy for that: ‘I do not mean that one can invent a hidden similarity which has no origin in the intellect. What I mean is that there are hidden similarities which have very subtle paths to them. […] to find something where it has not previously been found is equal, in exciting the sense of wonder and great enjoyment […], to the creation of something which did not exist’ (9.18; cf. Abu Deeb 1990: 383-4). But whatever Jurjânî’s motivations, his point seems valid; metaphors may provide new insights and information or, assuming that they can be true, novel truths to the hearer. Nevertheless, there must be something in virtue of which they are true, and this ground cannot be created by merely uttering, or ‘conceptualizing’ a metaphor. This point will reappear in chapters 3.2 and 4.2 below.

*Tamthîl*-based metaphors are also of theological relevance for another reason: if the correct similarity expressed in a metaphor is not based on the properties or attributes of objects, but can only be discovered after a process of reasoning, then there need not be any specific object or attribute corresponding to the word used metaphorically. The Qur’ânic verse quoted above, ‘and the heavens shall be rolled up in His right hand’, merely speaks of God’s power *as if* it were embodied in a hand, without thereby attributing to Him any thing or property
corresponding to human hands (21.13). A *tamthîl*-based metaphor does not require a ‘referential substrate’ of actually existing or familiar objects and attributes properly belonging to them. The failure to distinguish between these two kinds of metaphor led some to anthropomorphic interpretations of the Qur’ânic metaphors, and to the attribution of human properties to God (3.4). With the proper theoretical distinctions between different kinds of expressive metaphor, Jurjânî argues, one can avoid the erroneous and indeed heretic attribution of human properties to God and comparing Him to His creations: he holds that ‘God is above all similarity with what He has created’ (21.13). While our present-day theoretical concerns may not lie with these theological problems, Jurjânî’s distinction is useful to keep in mind, as it marks a crucial point of conflict between referentialist and descriptivist theories.

Jurjânî sees three distinct subtypes among *tamthîl*-based expressive metaphors. First, some metaphors are based on a real property residing in both ‘source’ and ‘target’, but to a different degree; thus, *flying* is a more intensive way of describing an object that is moving fast. In the second case, both objects referred to literally possess the property indicated by the metaphor, but belong to different natural kinds or ‘domains’. Thus, *I saw the sun* said of a beautiful woman involves the shiny or brilliant surface of both the woman and the sun; while both referents literally possess a brilliance, the kinds of brilliance involved are not quite the same. The third kind of metaphor Jurjânî considers the purest of all, as it involves a similarity entirely based on an ‘intellectual image’ (*sîra aqliya*), which makes it much more free, variable and adaptable for idiosyncratic poetic purposes than any of the other kinds. Among this most abstract type, yet again three subtypes can be distinguished (and the reader will perhaps be relieved to know that this is the last distinction to be made here), distinguished by different source and target domains. The first case is that of a transfer from perceptual to intellectual, or from concrete to abstract domains or properties, as in *I see the light* said when one has understood some difficult problem. The second is a transfer between two distinct perceptual domains mediated by a conceptual similarity, e.g., *We have lost our salt* as an expression of the loss of what makes people virtuous. The third kind of transfer is from one conceptual domain to another, as in calling a forgotten man ‘dead’.

Jurjânî’s examples do not always fit seamlessly into his classification: for example, *flying* as a more intensive way of expressing rapid motion does not seem any more, and actually rather less, expressive than calling a human nose a ‘snout’; further, it is not clear why virtue is a more ‘perceptual’ kind of property than death or being forgotten, and why *we have lost our salt* should therefore involve an (abstract) similarity between two perceptual domains rather than between a perceptual and a conceptual one. Another descriptive shortcoming is that Jurjânî
does not allow for transfers from abstract to concrete domains, as in *I am counting on you* (cf. Alverson 1991: 101). On the whole, however, his classification seems insightful and of a wide descriptive coverage, even if it is based on somewhat heterogeneous considerations, and even if his examples do not always unambiguously fit into his categories. It will be helpful for the discussion below, as more recent authors often take one specific type of metaphor to be the paradigm case, whereas Jurjānī seems quite aware that there are different kinds of metaphor, which cannot all be reduced to one single kind.

**Summary of Jurjānī’s classification**

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language

haqiqa         majaz
(literal)       (figurative)

tashbih       tamthil      isti'ara
(comparison)('simile') ('metaphor')

nonexpressive expressive

based on:

expressive

tashbih       tamthil

involving:

difference in difference in intellectual
degree      domain     image

transfer:

concrete-abstract     concrete-concrete     abstract-abstract
```
Metaphor and Comparison

The relation between metaphor, comparison and simile in Jurjâni deserves some further discussion; in fact, he devotes an extensive part of his book to a discussion of the working of similarity, but this would lead us too far afield here. In 2.4, he defines isti‘âra as a subclass of tashbih and tamthîl, but in 14.3, he argues that metaphor has some additional traits not present in either literal or figurative similarity statements, thus implying that it forms a category of its own and cannot be entirely reduced to others.\footnote{Such changes of opinion occur repeatedly in the \textit{Asrâr}; apparently, Jurjâni develops and refines his ideas in the course of his work.} Essential to metaphor, he holds, is that it can be interpreted literally as well as figuratively: the metaphorical \textit{I saw a lion} is interpreted both as a strong or hyperbolic attribution of bravery to the warrior Zayd, \textit{and} as a literal statement that Zayd actually \textit{is} a lion, allowing the hearer to conjure up a picture of a lion in his mind’s eye, and possibly to associate various other properties of the lion with the man, e.g. the impressive manes, the fierce roar, an indomitable and ferocious look in the eyes, etc. In other words, a metaphor, unlike a comparison, means two different things at the same time. The comparison \textit{Zayd ka-l asad, ‘Zayd is like a lion’,} does not state that Zayd actually \textit{is} a lion, but merely signals one or more correspondences between the two; it therefore lacks the brevity, intensity and pregnancy of the metaphor. Thus, although for Jurjâni metaphor is based on comparison, it cannot be fully reduced to it (14.2). The presence of an explicit particle of comparison fundamentally affects the ‘intensity’ or assertive power, of the sentence. Only the metaphor can describe Zayd as if he is \textit{really} a lion (14.12).

Jurjâni’s remarks should thus not be taken as implying a referentialist theory of metaphor, or a view of metaphor as merely a condensed simile with additional niceties because of its brevity. Like Aristotle, Jurjâni assimilates comparison to metaphor, rather than the other way round. He heads both comparison and simile under the general concept of majâz, which by definition involves a temporary change of meaning. But then what is the figurative meaning of a comparison? Jurjâni is not altogether clear on this; some of his remarks might even be taken to imply that in ‘regular comparisons’, no word is transferred from its literal use, and the sentence as a whole is \textit{haqîqa} (cf. 14.3). If one wants to maintain that comparisons (whether of the \textit{tashbih or tamthîl} kind) are also cases of majâz, and thus have a figurative, ‘borrowed’ meaning, one should argue that their literal meaning involves the applying of the word like \textit{lion} to Zayd, and that the use of the particle \textit{ka-} expresses the speaker’s intention that she does not classify Zayd as a lion, but merely wants to point out a similarity between the two; and this similarity...
is the intended, figurative meaning. On such a construal, there remains a divergence between the expressed and the intended judgment, as Jurjâni’s definition of majâz requires (23.5). But perhaps this interpretation does not yet yield an altogether convincing picture of the literal and figurative meaning of comparisons.

In any case, Jurjâni has a remarkable view of what makes a sentence into a metaphor rather than a comparison. The literal meaning of Zayd sharing some literal or ‘central’ properties with a lion, he holds, is ruled out, not because of an explicit particle of comparison (e.g. ka- or mithl- in Arabic, or like in English), but because both Zayd and the lion are mentioned explicitly in the sentence, which makes it impossible to ‘borrow’ the name lion and use it as a name properly belonging to Zayd (19.5). The comparison can only be interpreted as Zayd sharing the property of braveness with lions. In this, it differs from metaphor which allows for both a literal and a figurative reading; in the case at hand, the term lion is used for Zayd as if there were no other, properly or literally applicable, term available. Because I saw a lion contains no occurrence of the name Zayd, with its presupposition that Zayd is a human being, the hearer can imagine that Zayd really is a lion. In both Zayd is a lion and Zayd is like a lion, by contrast, the name Zayd is used, with the presupposition that the individual himself is meant here, and this blocks the literal application of lion to Zayd, and leaves room for the figurative interpretation, viz. that Zayd is brave, only (19.5; 19.7).

In other words, a sentence’s being a comparison rather than a metaphor depends on the presence of both the term used figuratively and the ‘literal’ name of the object, rather than on the presence of a particle of comparison. Thus, for Jurjâni, sentences of the simple predicative kind, like Zayd is a lion, which most other authors consider the prototypical form of metaphor, are not even metaphors at all; he considers them to be merely intensified comparisons. Because the referent is already properly named with Zayd, the hearer can no longer think that it can properly be named a lion. In other words, Jurjâni sees in the ‘clash’ of two names the surest mark that we are not dealing with a metaphor, but with a comparison. On this point, he is at odds with practically every theorist of the subject since John Locke.

This doctrine, as original as it is, is also one of the most problematic aspects of Jurjâni’s theory. To begin with, would the same exclusion of ‘proper naming’ apply in the case of literal predication, e.g., in ‘Zayd is a warrior’? Obviously, one would not want to maintain that warrior can no longer be applied to the individual already properly named Zayd. But then how are we to distinguish the two cases? One could argue that between Zayd and warrior, there is

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1 This should not be construed as implying that Jurjâni did not distinguish between proper names and common nouns. He seems to have believed that proper names have no Sinninhalt or descriptive content (24.12-13).
no clash of semantic features or ‘presuppositions’ of being human or not, as there is between Zayd and lion. Jurjâni’s own brief remarks on ‘presupposition’ (19.7) do not lead in this direction, however: he argues that the utterance of a name like Zayd presupposes that the speaker wants to say something about this, already familiar, person. Likewise, the use of the word gazelle presupposes that the speaker wants to speak of a class of animals. From the uttering of the sentence A gazelle appears alone, the hearer cannot determine that the speaker is really speaking about a woman; that is, ‘this name [i.e., gazelle] fulfills exactly the same function with respect to the woman as with respect to the animal’. The ‘borrowed’ word gazelle, then, has to appear as applying equally well to the woman. In other words, for Jurjâni, metaphor precisely does not involve any clash or tension; he seems to think of situational or contextual appropriateness as more important for metaphorical interpretation than a conflict of presuppositions.

But why should we take I saw a lion as a metaphor, rather than as a potentially false literal statement? In other words, how do we recognize it as a case of majâz? On this general problem, Jurjâni does not say much. He states that the hearer recognizes a metaphor from the situational context, e.g., Zayd’s just having passed by, or from the linguistic context, e.g., Zayd’s just having been introduced as a topic of conversation (14.4). Further, he would probably argue that it is the speaker’s intentions that make a sentence tropical rather than literal: given his definition of majâz as involving a divergence between the expressed judgment and the ‘judgment of reason’, the hearer has to recognize that the speaker intends to convey something else than the ‘expressed judgment’. But this still gives us no account of how the hearer can recognize such intentions, other than on the basis of contextual clues; and in 2.2 below, it will appear that there are serious difficulties for any approach that tries to account for the recognition of metaphor on the basis of speaker’s intentions.

In itself, the claim that metaphorical interpretation depends on contextual factors is reasonable (in fact, an argument much like it will be made in chapter 3 below), but it does not tally well with Jurjâni’s earlier strictures on metaphor, such as the demand that it be correct at the level of literal meaning. On the one hand, it essentially divorces literal meaning from the linguistic and extralinguistic context, a move which will be seen to be incorrect in view of the pervasive context-dependence of linguistic expressions, even in their literal interpretation (see part 3 below). On the other, it makes a distinction between sentence and discursive or linguistic context that may be reasonable to draw for syntactic purposes, but is hard to defend on semantic grounds. For what is the essential difference in availability of the name Zayd between Zayd is a lion and I saw Zayd. He is a lion? Yet Jurjâni maintains that the former case is a
comparison, and the latter a genuine metaphor. Moreover, his taking the recognition of metaphor as an entirely contextual matter clashes with his earlier remarks regarding the recognition of verbal metaphors, where the presence of a specific (human) subject or object determines whether the sentence as a whole should be taken literally or figuratively (3.6). It also clashes with the remarks that a possessive construction such as the hand of the North Wind may receive a metaphorical interpretation, for it would seem that the possessive clause of the North wind precludes the literal interpretation: it may be considered common knowledge that the wind does not have hands. In other words, Jurjānī presupposes rather than articulates a solution to the problems of distinguishing between literal and figurative, and of recognizing a metaphor as such.

On the whole, however, Jurjānī’s theory of metaphor is of a remarkable theoretical sophistication and empirical coverage. His distinction between different kinds of metaphor anticipates insights gained, or regained, only much later, which makes it all the more deplorable that his work has received so little attention from later theorists. One might accord Jurjānī a conceptualist view, since, like Aristotle, he seems to have assimilated comparison to metaphor rather than the other way round; but one might also argue that he held both a referentialist and a conceptualist position, because of his distinction between tashbih-based metaphors that involve the referents and their properties, and tamthil-based metaphors that require more extensive cognitive activity. In that case, Jurjānī’s writings would constitute a generalization over different kinds of metaphor, and a way of including the different kinds of approaches in a broader, more fully explanatory framework. As such, they are still of potential value today, as we will see in the systematic discussion below.

1.4 GIAMBATTISTA VICO: METAPHOR AND THE ORIGIN OF LANGUAGE

The philosophical doctrines of Giambattista Vico (1668-1744) are as original as they are neglected. In his main work, Principi di scienza nuova d’intorno alla comune natura delle nazioni (‘Principles of New Science concerning the Common Nature of the Nations’), he develops, among other things, a theory of primitive concept formation and metaphor, based on the doctrine (which he himself considers the ‘master key’ to his new science) that ‘the principle of the origins both of languages and of letters lies in the fact that the first gentile

1For convenience of reference, I indicate paragraph numbers as given in Bergin and Fisch’s English translation (1968); quotes are from this translation. For the Italian text I use Paolo Rossi’s 1977 edition.
Giambattista Vico peoples, by a demonstrated necessity, were poets who spoke in poetic characters' (§34).
Although he was 'the first to grasp the revolutionary truth that linguistic forms are one of the
to the minds of those who use words, and indeed to the entire mental, social and cultural
life of societies' (Berlin 1976: 51), his ideas have never gained any generally accepted currency,
perhaps in part because he combine an extremely broad vision with a rather disorganized, at
times even contradictory argumentation, and at times with rather far-fetched examples and
etymologies to support his claims. Vico's ideas on metaphor have not drawn much attention
either. A few modern authors (Soskice 1985; Danesi 1986, 1993) do discuss his views, and
argue that he takes metaphor to be logically or chronologically prior to literal language; but
despite the obvious interest of his work for students of metaphor, it has gone largely unnoticed
even in the more historically oriented studies, like Ricoeur (1975), Mooij (1976), and Johnson
(1981). In the Scienza Nuova, Vico sets out to develop a general theory of history. He describes the
history of each nation as running through three periods, each period having its own
characteristic kind of language, writing, and jurisprudence. The first, or divine, period marks the
origin of a nation, for which Vico holds religion to be an essential prerequisite (axiom XXXI,
§177). This period involves a 'hieroglyphic' or sacred writing, and a language of gestures rather
than spoken sounds. In the second period, the heroic one, a repubblica or commonwealth
properly speaking is formed; this phase features an aristocratic organization of society, such as
monarchy, and a primarily symbolic language consisting of 'poetic characters'. This kind of
language, which can be found in, for example, the Iliad and Odyssey, is, to us at least, highly
poetic and allegorical, but to the people living in this period, it was the most natural way of
expression. Thus, the 'wisdom' expressed in the Homeric poems is not an esoteric knowledge
that was accessible to a few highly creative individuals only, but rather the popular wisdom of
the Greek nation during its heroic phase. The third, human phase, marks the rise of civil
society as we know it, based on the equality of individuals. The language of this period is
'vulgar', i.e., conventional and prosaic ($440)$; its writing is 'demotic' or epistolar. After this
phase, a volta or recourse into barbary occurs, and a new nation is born which in its turn runs
through the different periods. Vico thus adheres to a more or less cyclical view of history: there

1E.g., his claim that 'the use of head for man or person, frequent in vulgar Latin, was due to the fact that in the
forests only the head of a man could be seen from a distance' ($407$).
2Stutterheim (1941: 142-7) summarily dismisses Vico for confusing the logical and psychological aspects of
metaphor, and consequently does not quite do justice to the originality of Vico's theories.
3Vico develops this theory in Book III of the Scienza nuova, 'Discovery of the true Homer'.
is no linear historical development of humanity as a whole, and different nations can be in
different stages of their history at the same moment. For example, he considers eighteenth-
century Germany a nation still in its heroic phase, and the German vernacular of his time a
living heroic language (§445).

Unfortunately, Vico says little about how these different kinds of language and social
organization develop out of their predecessors; at one point, he even suggests that all three are
present at the birth of a nation, and originate together with the groups that speak them: gods,
heroes, and men, respectively (§446). The relation between the divine and the heroic phase is
particularly obscure: at times, it is unclear whether Vico speaks of ‘primitive man’ as belonging
to the divine period or rather to heroic times. He often speaks generically of the ‘first gentile
nations’, and of the people living then as ‘the first poets’. But these difficulties do not obscure
the intimate link he perceives between social organization, language and thought, a topic we will
return to in chapter 4. The ancient peoples, he argues, thought and spoke in a way radically
different from ours, he argues, and for this reason, it is difficult for us - literate and educated
individuals - to understand their way of thinking: it requires a tremendous anthropological
effort not to project our rational, abstract kind of reasoning onto a fundamentally different
mindset.

Vico calls the failure to appreciate these differences between ancient and modern thought the
‘conceit of scholars’ (It. *boria de’ dotti*). It may lead to the attribution of esoteric wisdom to
ancient poems that are really expressions of ‘vulgar wisdom’, i.e., the popular mentality of the
ancestors (§427, 436-7). Ancient poetry, lofty and sublime as it appears to us, was not the
creation of a few highly talented individuals, but rather the only way in which the first peoples
could speak. These ‘theological poets’, Vico argues, were not capable of abstract reasoning or
of perceiving causal relations: their minds were ‘not in the least abstract, refined, or
spiritualized, because they were entirely immersed in the senses, buffeted by the passions,
buried in the body’ (§378). Because of this inability, they perceived natural objects and
phenomena as endowed with life, and even as divine (§401). Thus, out of ignorance and fear,
the first people saw the sky as Jove, the highest god; they believed that natural phenomena like
thunder were signs given to them by the gods, and out of this belief grew the practice of
divination, or the interpretation of such ‘natural signs’. The same holds for heroic poems like
the *Iliad*: what appears to us to be a sublime and highly figurative poetical style is for Vico the
natural way of expression of a wholly distinct way of thinking and speaking, one that was
natural to the ‘first nations’.
Imaginative Universals and Poetic Characters

Vico calls the concepts of the heroic age ‘imaginative universals’ (generi fantastici). These concepts are quite distinct from the scientific concepts or ‘intelligible universals’ in which the literate individuals of the age of men think: ‘the first men, the children, as it were, of the human race, not being able to form intelligible class concepts of things, had a natural need to create poetic characters; that is, imaginative class concepts or universals, to which, as to certain models or ideal portraits, to reduce all the particular species which resembled them’ (§209). Thus, because the ancient Egyptians could not abstract the intelligible genus ‘civil sage’, they ‘imagined it forth as thrice-great Hermes’,¹ to whom they attributed all the discoveries of civil wisdom (ibid.). Imaginative universals thus function as images of ideal individuals having specific properties, rather than as abstract concepts denoting those properties themselves. Individuals seen as similar to this image in one way or another will thus be grouped together under that universal, so that e.g. all civil sages would be called ‘Hermes Trismegistus’ by the Egyptians. Although Vico demands that individuals or objects classified under an imaginative universal are similar to it, he holds that the isolation of a single common feature, e.g., ‘wisdom’ or ‘braveness’ belongs to a later phase, in which intelligible universals are formed. These ideas are comparable to the suggestion of 1.1 above, that illiterate individuals categorize in terms of concrete experiences and needs rather than abstract shared features. I will return to such cross-cultural differences in concept formation and the role of literacy in chapters 2.4 and 4.2.

Imaginative universals may strike us as being mere personifications of abstract properties, but according to Vico, they actually function in a wholly different manner. Nowadays, ‘when we wish to give utterance to our understanding of spiritual things, we must seek aid from our imagination to explain them and, like painters, form human images of them’ (§402). This personifying of abstractions is not what the theological poets did, however. They had no understanding of ‘spiritual things’ in the first place, as they did not yet have any powers of abstraction, and could not yet form abstract class concepts. Rather, they attributed human senses and passions to nonliving things. The first peoples, like children, imagined physical substances such as the sea and the sky as living beings, and thus attributed senses and passions to them. In other words, the personification of abstract notions is the reverse of primitive imagination in so far as it presumes an understanding of abstract notions, whereas the

¹Unknown to Vico, the historical Hermes Trismegistus (if he was any single individual at all) in fact lived in the early centuries after Christ, long after the demise of the ‘classical’ Egyptian civilization; but the general point of Vico’s example is clear enough.
‘theological poets’ projected their ‘imaginative understanding’ (which lacked the abilities of abstraction and systematic classification) of human beings onto non-human objects.

For Vico, then, this way of thinking does not involve abstract notions or ‘spiritual things’, such as living, human, etc.; in other words, the general categories of objects that we take for granted played no role in the thinking and speaking of the first peoples. The theory of imaginative universals thus sharply contrasts with the aristotelian theory of concept formation, in which universals are formed on the basis of shared attributes (cf. Verene 1976: 305-6). For Vico, such intelligible universals come to be formed only with the development of ‘rationality’ through writing and schooling. On this view, the perception and conscious use of similarities (i.e., shared abstract properties that are recognized or perceived as such) is not an innate or given ability, but a skill that has to be acquired.1

The development from imaginative to intelligible universals involves not just a radical alteration in style of thought, but also a qualitative change in linguistic symbolism, from poetic to vulgar characters (cf. Verene 1976: 306). Paired with the poverty of thinking of the first peoples, Vico holds, was a poverty of expression in primitive languages. The first poets did not speak in abstractions like ‘brave’ or ‘prudent’, but in poetic characters like ‘Achilles’ or ‘Ulysses’. Poetic characters thus appear to be closely related to imaginative universals.2 Vico does not quite consistently link the two notions, however: at times, he speaks of poetic characters as linguistic signs (cf. §34: ‘the first gentile peoples... were poets who spoke in poetic characters’ [emphasis added]), but elsewhere he identifies them with imaginative universals, or states that the first peoples thought and spoke in them (§412). Here, I will understand the notion of poetic character as the linguistic expression of the universale fantastico, although this does not fully coincide with Vico’s own use. On this interpretation, the first people thought in imaginative universals and spoke in poetic characters; and as the imaginative universal Achilles is an image rather than an abstract or intelligible class concept, so the poetic character ‘Achilles’ denotes the men who are Achilles in being brave, rather than the abstract property of braveness.

Poetic characters should thus be seen as linguistic signs rather than mental concepts. At times, however, Vico even seems to consider historical individuals themselves, i.e., the referents

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1Imaginative universals to some extent resemble the notion of complex that Vygotsky (1986: ch. 5) opposes to ‘real’, abstract concepts. In complex formation, the agent groups together objects on the basis of concrete, factual bonds rather than abstract features. Vygotsky himself explicitly states that ‘primitive people think in complexes’ (1986: 129; see also ch. 4.2.1 below).

2Verene (1981) presents an indispensable discussion of these two crucial notions.
of linguistic symbols, as poetic characters: he repeatedly speaks of the first ‘vulgar sages’, like Zoroaster, Aesop, and Solon, in those terms. His discussion makes clear, however, that to think of them as specific historical individuals is an example of the conceit of scholars: the vulgar sages, he argues, were not specific individuals who possessed a supreme wisdom, but rather the first nations themselves, which projected their own experiences and desires onto heroic individuals. Thus, the Athenian lawgiver Solon is not so much a historical civil rights activist working for the Athenian plebeians, but rather a poetic character of the plebeians themselves, under the aspect of demanding their rights (§414). Consequently, the poetic character ‘Solon’ does symbolize a historical reality (the emancipation of the lower classes of Athens), but only in the form of a ‘poetic history’, in which historical processes like class struggles are spoken of as the acts of a single man.¹

In the Vichian perspective, the ancient myths and fables are the poetic histories of the first nations. They do not express ‘poetical untruths’, but truths that are of a different order than the historical works of the age of men: ‘fables are ideal truths suited to the merit of those of whom the vulgar tell them; and such falseness as they contain consists simply in not giving their subjects their due... the true war chief, for example, is the Godfrey that Torquato Tasso imagines; and all the chiefs who do not conform throughout to Godfrey are not true chiefs of war’ (§205). What distinguishes myth from history, then, is not the question of truth, but the manner of symbolization. Myths, and poetic characters in general, are the ‘proper language’ of the fables. They are the linguistic expressions of imaginative universals, which ‘signify the diverse species or the diverse individuals comprised under these [imaginative] genera’ by ‘identity, not of proportion but of predicability’ (§403). They must therefore ‘have a univocal [rather than an analogical] significance, connoting a quality common to all their species and individuals (as Achilles connotes an idea of valor common to all strong men, or Ulysses an idea of prudence common to all wise men)’ (ibid.; cf. §210).² Here, Vico’s discussion is stated in the terms of medieval scholasticism: an expression is used univocally if it has the same meaning in different applications; in equivocal usage, the word has different and unrelated senses in its

¹According to Croce (1927: ch. 5) and Verene (1981: 71), Vico did not see myths as signifying actual historic events; below, I will discuss this matter in more detail.

²The English translation does not quite match the original here: the Italian original does not speak of the word ‘Achilles’ expressing or connoting a quality, but rather suggests that an individual, as a poetic character, ‘comprises’ a property: ‘[le mitologie] devon avere una significazione univoca, comprendente una ragion comune alle loro specie o individui (come d’Achille, un’idea di valore comune a tutti i forti).’ The translation may be preferable to the original, however, in view of the confusion that arises from the ambiguity of the term ‘poetic character’ between a mental and a linguistic status.
different applications; in analogical use, the ‘several senses signify different relations to some one thing’ (cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* IA. 13, 5). Poetic characters, in other words, have a single meaning: they signify various particulars that in later times would be considered as determined by distinct senses of an expression.

**Metaphor and Poetic Characters**

Vico’s remarks on metaphor should be seen against the background of his discussion of poetic characters.¹ He considers the metaphors in the languages of the age of men as remnants of earlier ages; thus, the etymology of contemporary, ‘vulgar’ languages provides a key to understanding the language and thought of the first peoples. Further, he argues that all the tropes, of which metaphor is ‘the most luminous, and therefore the most frequent’, are corollaries of this poetic logic; the first peoples used a ‘fantastic speech’ to speak of the world around them, and ‘attributed to [inanimate] bodies the being of animate substances, with capacities measured by their own, namely sense and passion, and in this way made fables out of them’ (§404-5). Next, he gives a list of examples of such bodily metaphors that occur in all languages, such as head or top for beginning, mouth for any opening, speaking of whistling wind, murmuring waves, of fields being thirsty, etc., and adds that ‘man becomes all things by not understanding them... when he does not understand he makes the things out of himself and becomes them by transforming himself into them’ (ibid.). With these - at first sight rather obscure - remarks, Vico seems to reject wholesale Aristotle’s approach to concept formation as outlined in *De Anima* and the long-standing scholastic tradition it has inspired. According to this tradition, the human mind or intellect forms a concept from an object by assuming the object’s form; but as for Aristotle the form determines the identity of a thing, the intellect in a sense becomes identical with whatever it thinks of. Thus, the mind is potentially whatever is thinkable (*De An.* 429b30), and this might lead an Aristotelian to say that ‘the mind becomes all things by understanding them’.

Vico trades this (apparently passive) role of the human intellect in acquiring forms of things for a more active role of the imagination which, so to speak, imposes forms on things by conceptualizing them in terms of human experience. This suggests that, although Vico takes issue with Aristotle’s doctrine of concept formation, he still formulates his own views within the confines of an Aristotelian-scholastic conceptual framework. For Vico, metaphor is

¹Discussions of Vico’s ideas on metaphor can also be found in Berlin (1976), Danesi (1986, 1993), and Levin (1988).
primarily a product of the human imagination, and of the projection of elements from the
domain of human bodily experiences onto other domains like that of natural phenomena. This
looks rather like a conceptualist theory of metaphor. Elsewhere, however, Vico claims that the
Latin language is full of metaphors ‘drawn from natural objects according to their natural
properties or sensible effects’ (§444, emphasis added), which would make him rather more of a
referentialist: here, metaphors are based on the properties of the objects being spoken about
and metaphorically signified rather than on the mental processes of individuals trying to
understand and describe the outside world. On this interpretation, metaphors and poetic
characters rely on visual, concrete similarities in the objects they signify (§404; cf. §206); but
while they work on the basis of similarities, they assert identities, as they treat these objects as
instantiations of the same imaginative universal.1 Perhaps in these cases, Vico falls back on the
view of metaphor as based on similarity current in the rhetorical tradition of his time, instead of
maintaining his own, more original view of metaphor as the projection of specifically human
experiences onto nonliving objects.

Apart from these brief remarks, Vico says disappointingly little about the notion of
metaphor itself. He formulates no full-fledged or coherent theory of the recognition and
interpretation of metaphor. Nonetheless, metaphor does play a fundamental, if rather implicit,
role in the Scienza Nuova, because of its close relation to the concepts of imaginative universal
and poetic character. Both heroic metaphors and poetic characters are defined as fables, which
are ‘true narrations’; and both are linguistic realizations of imaginative universals. As seen
above, they have a single, undifferentiated meaning for the first poets, whereas we attribute
several distinct meanings to them. This close relation between metaphor and poetic character
might make it tempting to completely identify the two. For Vico, however, metaphor - at least
from a ‘vulgar’ perspective - typically involves the transfer of a label across categories (e.g.,
from living to non-living), whereas poetic characters like ‘Achilles’ need not involve any such
cross-categorial transfer, as Achilles and other brave men all belong to the same category of
human beings. Poetic characters constitute a general and quite distinct way of symbolization.2

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1 Vico does not seem to have meant that the *property* of being an Achilles or a Godfrey was predicated (cf. §205).
Verene (1981: 77) also argues that poetic characters involve the assertion of identities rather than predications or
categorical attributions.

2 Poetic characters to some extent resemble Goodman’s notion of exemplification (1976: 52-7), which also
involves concrete objects standing for general properties, as a red swatch from a tailor’s booklet of cloth samples
exemplifies the property of redness (or the label red). The two notions assign a different role or status to abstract
properties, however: for Goodman, a red object may exemplify redness, but for Vico, this abstraction is only a
‘vulgar’ construct.
They cannot be equated with the notion of metaphor on any of the more recent accounts (as discussed in chapter 2 below): these accounts typically involve the recognizing of ‘deviant’ expressions or usages, and the transfer of abstract properties or features. But precisely these notions of deviance and abstraction, Vico holds, are absent in the language of the first peoples. The first men, then, spoke in poetic characters, not in metaphors.

This difference between poetic character and metaphor has not always been sufficiently appreciated by Vico scholars. As already noted, authors like Soskice (1985) and Danesi (1993) have concluded from Vico’s remark that the first people spoke in poetic characters that he also considers the metaphorical to be prior to the literal. Thus Danesi (1986, 1993) formulates what he calls the ‘basic Vichian premise’: the first verbal utterances of *homo sapiens* were metaphorical, i.e., they formed a language sprung from imaginative cognition. Vico himself, however, seems to take the names for human body parts and bodily experiences as basic, and thus *not* metaphorical. From these basic meanings the metaphorical applications are in a sense derived,— although they were not perceived as such, abstract categorial distinctions not yet being made (§404). Moreover, language functions differently in heroic and vulgar societies: to us vulgar and literate folks the processes involved in, e.g., calling dry fields ‘thirsty’, seem to involve a metaphorical transfer. To the people originally using such expressions, however, the application of the same term ‘thirsty’ to living beings and inanimate fields (what we would call the literal and the metaphorical applications, respectively) is equally valid, and neither is held to be more literal or basic than the other. As the first nations did not yet classify the world around them in terms of ‘animate’ and other abstract notions (which Vico himself calls ‘intelligible universals’), they saw no distinction in the different applications to begin with. In other words, saying that the first peoples spoke in what we call metaphors involves the projection of script-based categories onto orally-based processes, and thus involves what Vico himself criticizes as ‘the conceit of scholars’.

As a consequence of this, it turns out that Vico’s metaphors of the first nations can hardly be called metaphors at all. As fables later became false with the development of prose speech, so poetic characters later became figurative expressions, in conjunction with the development of literal language. Originally, according to Vico, fables were true narrations, but they subsequently lost their original meanings (i.e., the meanings in terms of imaginative universals) and became mere stories with allegorical or ‘improper’ meanings (§221, 814). Likewise, the tropes at first were necessary modes of expression, ‘but later became figurative when, with the further development of the human mind, words were invented which signified abstract forms or genera’ (§409; emphasis added). This way of putting it suggests that in third-phase societies
figurative language is artificially and consciously contrived, and that poetic language is strictly speaking deviant language use. However, Vico explicitly rejects as erroneous the view of poetic speech as improper (ibid.); this can only be reconciled with his other remarks if we take him to speak about the original (i.e., heroic) poetry; in the later vulgar societies, he sees literal prose as the ‘proper’ speech. He can hardly mean that in third-phase societies, metaphors and personifications are not ‘artfully contrived tropes’ but instances of the heroic mentality: he describes them as typically involving an awareness or understanding of abstract features and ‘spiritual things’.

The parallels between Vico’s speculations and Luria’s and Goody’s empirical research on nonliterate thought processes discussed in 1.1 above should be obvious. Both approaches see abstract, scientific concepts or intelligible universals as playing little or no role in the cognitive processes of ‘primitive’, or at least illiterate, people; and both imply that primitive language use cannot be called ‘metaphorical’ without an ethnocentric appeal to literacy-based categories. Vico’s argument likewise runs counter to theories that take ‘primitive metaphor’ as false or deviant, and perceived as such by those who employ it. This claim would also seem compatible with the empirical findings reported in chapter 1.1. His ideas thus remain of interest even for contemporary empirical research, but his work has largely been ignored in the recent literature on metaphor. This is the more surprising as his idea of ‘bodily metaphors’ curiously foreshadows Lakoff and Johnson’s ‘cognitive semantics’, which claims that extensive systems of metaphorical concepts derived from bodily experience underlie much of our everyday language use (see 2.4 below). The differences with cognitive semantics should not be overlooked, however: for Vico, such metaphors are only predominant in the first stages of a language. In a more ‘civilized’ period, i.e., in the age of men, people think in intelligible rather than in imaginative universals. Unlike Lakoff and Johnson, Vico also relates these different styles of thinking to different ways of speaking (in poetic and in vulgar or ‘prosaic’ characters, respectively), and to different forms of social organization. He thus emphasizes the discontinuity between ‘primitive’ and ‘modern’ language, and the historical development from the one to the other.

1Levin (1988: ch. 5) notes this crucial difference between modern (i.e., literate and literary) metaphor and the ‘language of the first poets’. Danesi (1993), by contrast, ignores it in the presentation of his own, avowedly ‘Vichian’, theory of metaphor as the original form of language, and consequently assimilates the workings of heroic metaphors to abstract, ‘intelligible’ operations in a rather un-Vichian manner.

2In its emphasis on social factors, Vico’s theory resembles that of Vygotsky and Luria (cf. 1.1 above); but unlike them, he does not speak of the socio-economic base as determining the cognitive ‘superstructure’, but rather suggests a structural relation between them, without either one necessarily causing the other (Verene 1981: 73).
I would like to conclude with a remark on Vico’s concept of the mythical imagination and its relation to the outside world. As seen above, Verene (1981), in agreement with Croce (1927), believes that Vico’s theory does not treat myths as poetic accounts of real historical events: ‘fables are not embellishments of actual events or historical figures... Events themselves are given form through fables’ (1981: 70-71). This is consistent with his view (much in the line of Cassirer 1954) of the mythical imagination as the free play of the human mind in the creation of symbolic forms: ‘thought... begins with the imagination, with fantasia, as an original and independent power of mind. In Vico’s thought, images [i.e., imaginative universals] are not images of something; they are themselves manifestations of an original power of spirit which gives fundamental form to mind and life’ (1981: 33; cf. Verene 1976). This view of the imagination as an independent power seems to downplay the representational aspects of the imagination that Vico himself emphasizes. As said, he defines myths and fables as ‘true narrations’, which strongly suggests that they correspond to some extralinguistic reality. On this view, myths accurately, if poetically, describe history as it is created by humans. The element of untruth in these poetic accounts only entered later, with the development of more abstract ways of thinking and more prosaic ways of speaking.

Vico’s other remarks likewise suggest that the imagination is not altogether independent or free from external constraints: he sees imagination as based on sensory impressions (§363), and closely related to, if not identical with, the memory of past perceptions: ‘imagination is nothing but extended or compounded memory’ (§211). Here, once more, there seems to be a tension in Vico’s views, between seeing the imagination as the active creation of similarities, and as the passive perception of similarities that are already there. This tension may perhaps to some extent be resolved by the idea that the first peoples did not yet have strict categorial distinctions, so that they may have perceived objects as similar or identical that to us are not similar at all. Imaginative universals can be loosely applied to objects that are perceived as resembling remembered experiences, even though this application may operate across what we would consider categorial borders. The perception of outside-world objects remains a central factor, however. On the whole, then, Verene treats the mythical imagination as less constrained by the outside world than Vico himself seems to allow for; but he is certainly right in arguing against myths as ‘embellishments’, and in treating them as actually giving form to experience.

1This last qualification is important in view of Vico’s ‘verum-factum principle’, i.e., his view of the true (and the knowable) as what man has created himself; a fuller discussion of Vico’s rather complex ideas on truth, however, would take us too far afield here.
In all, Vico’s ideas are difficult to organize into a harmonious whole, but they contain many valuable insights concerning cultural variations in cognition and language use. Likewise, his remarks on metaphor, while nowhere near a complete or coherent account, contain suggestive ideas on the relation between language, concept formation, and society—ideas that are still worth thinking about today.
TWENTIETH-CENTURY VIEWS OF METAPHOR

2.1 SEMANTIC APPROACHES

After this brief overview of the historical vagaries of the concept of metaphor, the present chapter presents a more systematic discussion of contemporary approaches, along the lines of the classification made in the introduction. In the first section, I discuss the approaches that can be called 'semantic', although at times, several of the authors treated here come close to a pragmatic view. I deal with referentialist and descriptivist approaches in turn. In 2.2, I discuss pragmatic approaches, with an emphasis on the question of what makes them pragmatic, rather than on the distinction between referentialist and descriptivist views. In 2.3, the merits and shortcomings of Davidson's approach, which retains some of the basic assumptions of a pragmatic approach but takes it to a logical extreme, are assessed. Conceptualist views of metaphor, whether they call themselves semantic or pragmatic, make an essential appeal to extralinguistic processes of cognition and conceptualization, and for this reason, I treat them separately in 2.4 (focusing on Lakoff and Johnson's influential views), and return to them in chapter 4.

2.1.1. Referentialist Views

Referentialist views, which describe the effect of a metaphor primarily in terms of a resemblance between the referents of the expressions it contains, are of a long and respectable standing. Although, as seen in 1.2, we cannot unambiguously ascribe a view of this kind to Aristotle, his Latin successors Cicero and Quintilian come quite close to a genuine referentialist view, which has been a favorite among philosophers and rhetoricians ever since. Cicero reverses Aristotle's classification of simile as a subspecies of metaphor: he sees *translatio* (a rather exact Latin rendering of Greek *metaphora*) as a condensed comparison. For him, metaphor is a matter
of individual word types, not of words or sentences in context, or of tokens (De oratore III. 149). He argues that metaphor originates from the need to express notions for which no words are in existence, but acquires its popularity because of its aesthetic power. If there is no proper expression, he argues, the similarity between the objects indicated with the word used figuratively makes the 'unknown' property clear; for example, in a rich harvest, there is no expression indicating abundance specific to harvests, so a word is borrowed from the economic sphere (§155). Thus, for Cicero, it is the similarity between the referents which warrants the correct interpretation of the word used metaphorically (§155, 167). He defines metaphor as the compression of a simile into a single word which is put in a 'strange' (Latin: alienus) place; this might suggest that he considers metaphor 'deviant' by definition. If the basis of similarity is recognizable, the metaphor gives pleasure, if not, it is rejected. Cicero does not see any constraints on the possible 'source' and 'target domains' of a metaphor: we can use the names of anything in nature with respect to something else (§161). However, there are constraints as to what makes a good metaphor: the speaker should avoid false analogy, far-fetched similarities, and vulgarity. The latter may give unaesthetic effects precisely because a metaphor puts things so visibly before our eyes: to say that because of Scipio’s death the Roman State is 'castrated' may express a valid insight, but is just not comme il faut (§162). For Cicero, the interpretation and evaluation of a metaphor are tightly knit together: an incomprehensible metaphor gives the hearer no pleasure. He does not explain, however, how the dislocation involved in a metaphor arises from the mere compression of a simile, where presumably no dislocation takes place; he thus faces the opposite problem of Aristotle, for he does not make sufficiently clear how a metaphor is actually based on a similarity.

Quintilian’s position is in essence the same as Cicero’s: ‘on the whole, metaphor is a shorter form of simile, while there is this further difference, that in the latter we compare some object to the thing we wish to describe, whereas in the former this object is actually substituted for the thing’ (Inst. Or. VIII.vi.8; emph. added). He also agrees with Cicero that metaphor is ‘so natural a turn of speech that it is often employed unconsciously by uneducated persons’, and that it is used ‘because it is necessary, or because it is clearer [in meaning] or (as I said) because it is more beautiful [Lat. decentius]’. Quintilian gives no hint that metaphor is deviant or improper by definition; only its use in particular contexts and modes of discourse may be.

1 An expression-in-context is not yet a token of that expression: there are two tokens of the expression I in the same context in I can tell a metaphor when I see one.
2 Strictly speaking, the Latin text does not mention one thing being substituted for another, but rather something being said ‘instead of [or ‘to replace’] the thing itself’ (pro ipsa re dicitur).
Characteristics of Contemporary Referentialist Views

Since Cicero and Quintilian, statements of a referentialist view have dominated the literature until the mid-twentieth century, and even nowadays one still finds various authors defending it, like Henle (1958), Mooij (1976), and Fogelin (1988). Referentialist views need not be stated in semantic terms: authors like Grice and Davidson, who propose a more pragmatic approach to metaphor, share some central referentialist assumptions. Referentialist views have a number of distinct characteristics; all concrete statements of this view share three traits which are of particular relevance to our discussion. First, they all stress a close correspondence between metaphor and simile or comparison, by either defining metaphor as an abbreviated or elliptical comparison, or claiming that the meaning of a metaphor is equal to that of a corresponding simile. These two claims should not be confused with each other (cf. Davidson 1979: 36): the view of metaphor as an elliptical simile suggests the equation of the literal meaning of a metaphor with that of a simile, while the other leaves room for identifying its figurative meaning to the latter’s literal meaning. An important corollary of this identification of metaphors with similes is that a metaphor like (1)

(1) Man is a wolf.

is held to assert not that man is a wolf, but at most that man is like a wolf. The actual assertive power of a metaphor as a similarity statement is thus held to be fundamentally weaker than its apparent one as a class-inclusion statement. In fact, for many authors, especially the more pragmatically oriented ones, a metaphor expresses a yet weaker assertion than a similarity statement, or perhaps even no assertion at all, because it implies rather than asserts a similarity. A precise formulation of such a view requires an explicit pragmatic theory, which is not given by the authors mentioned thus far. This aspect will come to the fore in 2.2 below.

A second characteristic of referentialist positions is that they take the referents of the expressions used, i.e., the objects denoted by them, as determining the interpretation of the metaphor: John is a lion is understood in virtue of John and the lion sharing a property like bravery. In fact, this point is assumed rather than argued for by most authors. It is treated as a natural corrollary of the first characteristic, which generally receives much more attention; but although it often remains implicit, semantically it seems the more important aspect. As we saw, Quintilian explicitly speaks of the objects (res) as being compared; likewise, Henle (1981 [1958]) repeatedly speaks of the words in a metaphor denoting ‘objects or situations’; he also
approvingly quotes Bywater's (erroneous) translation from Aristotle 'metaphor consists in
giving the thing a name that belongs to something else' (cf. p. 36 above). Puzzlingly, he adds
that the term thing refers 'not merely to physical objects but also to any topic of thought'
(1981: 83-4). I take this to mean, not that sometimes thoughts or mental representations are
involved in metaphor (which would turn his account into a hybrid referentialist-conceptualist
position) but rather that non-physical entities, serving as the objects of thought, may function
as the referents of expressions.

Later authors who emphasize the role of comparison likewise appeal to the referents, albeit
largely implicitly. Thus, Mooij (1976: 19) states that the subject $A$ of a metaphor may be 'a
thing and its properties, a situation and its causes and effects,' etc.; but the thing referred to
'does not need to exist in reality'; in the latter case, the metaphor is merely 'A-about' without
being committed to the actual existence of $A$ (following Goodman 1961). Further, he argues that
the linguistic and non-linguistic context should indicate what the utterance is about. While this
is certainly true, Mooij does not further specify the notion of aboutness or the role of the
context. Another indication that for Mooij it is the referents that play the fundamental role in
metaphors is his focus on the question of how metaphorical use affects the reference of the
expressions involved (see his Ch. 3; I will return to the question of 'whether metaphors refer'
in chapter 3.2 below). Fogelin (1988: 82) likewise states that 'when a comparison is used to
convey information, the speaker [sic] is expected to find an object of comparison which
provides a good match with the subject'. He argues that metaphors involve comparisons
between entities which may or may not exist (1988: 42-3). In essence, he sees the referents as
crucial in metaphor, even though Tversky (1977), on whose treatment of similarity Fogelin
heavily relies, consistently speaks of representations of objects for which similarity must be
assessed, and thus comes much closer to a conceptualist view.

The third characteristic is a natural corollary of the second: in metaphors, the expressions
typically retain their literal reference, as it is the properties of the term as applied literally
that determine the metaphorical interpretation. In other words, metaphors have a kind of double
meaning: the literal meaning serving as the basis, and the figurative one derived from it; but
somehow, both meanings are active (as seen above, Jurjâni held a comparable view).¹
Referentialists thus see metaphor as derivative in the sense that it is a function of the literal
interpretation. These authors do not always explicate the precise relation between the literal
and the figurative interpretation of a metaphor, but a natural line of thought is to see the latter

¹As said, Mooij (1976: 31) called this kind of view 'dualistic': it sees metaphorically used expressions as both
retaining their literal reference and acquiring a figurative reference.
as an essentially pragmatic phenomenon; this line was developed by authors like Grice and Searle (see 2.2 below).

The problems with a referentialist stance are well known. First of all, the notion of comparison or similarity does not in any way explain or reduce the figurative aspect of metaphor: comparisons may be just as figurative as metaphors themselves (cf. Levinson 1983: 155). Sentences like (2)

(2) Dictionaries are like gold mines.

cannot be interpreted by simply finding a property that dictionaries and goldmines share. This is, of course, just what Jurjani notes with his distinction between perceptual (tashbih) and abstract (tamthil) similarity. It thus appears that ‘similarity’ cannot function as an explanatory notion, but itself stands in need of further analysis (cf. also 4.2 below). One may therefore legitimately ask what theoretical gain is made by reducing metaphor to similarity.

Second, in many metaphors, much more has to be inferred than a deleted term of comparison. Most referentialists base their arguments on metaphors of the form A is B, which can relatively easily be transformed into A is like B; but as appeared in the introduction, there are many metaphors, like (3)

(3) The chairman ploughed through the discussion.

for which the mere addition of like is nowhere near enough to find out what is compared to what. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that finding a semantic equivalence between a metaphor and a corresponding comparison is a far from trivial task. At first sight, John is a lion and John is like a lion are obviously truth-conditionally different: in the same circumstances, where John is a human being that shares the property of bravery with lions, the metaphor is literally false and the simile true (cf. Searle 1979: 103). Thus, the metaphor and the simile do not seem to have the same assertive power. One can tackle this problem in two ways: either one claims that the metaphor’s figurative meaning, rather than its literal one, is equivalent to that of a comparison, or one can try to explain metaphor away as an elliptical simile, and postulate that its ‘literal’ meaning is the same as the literal meaning of a comparison, where for example a transformation of deleting the word like has taken place between deep structure and surface structure, leaving the meaning of the deep structure representation intact. But if one

wants to claim that the meaning of a metaphor is equal to that of a comparison, one has to state precisely how and when this meaning, rather than its apparent one, is arrived at. Both options place a heavy theoretical burden on the recognition of metaphor and on constraints on deletions, but none of the authors discussed thus far addresses this problem in a satisfactory way.

Third, it is very well possible to use terms with an empty extension metaphorically, as in (4) and (5)

(4) John is a Don Giovanni.
(5) Sally is a dragon.

In such cases, there is no actual object or set of objects serving as the referent of the expressions Don Giovanni and dragon, so it can hardly be the referents and their properties that determine the metaphorical interpretation. The referentialist has two ways out: he can either employ a richer, intensional semantics, in which the properties of some possible object in some world determine the interpretation of the metaphor in the actual world; or he can claim that it is not objects and their properties, but rather representations and features associated with them, that are involved in the assessment of similarities. But in the former case it is the sense or intension, and in the latter the concept or representation, rather than the reference or extension, that figures in the interpretation process. The first alternative would thus bring a referentialist view closer to a descriptivist position, while the second would assimilate it to a conceptualist one.

A related but distinct problem is that metaphorical interpretation often involves not the actual properties of the term used metaphorically, but rather the stereotypical properties that are commonly associated with it. In such cases, a metaphor may be true or apt, even though the corresponding comparison is false. Thus, (6)

(6) Richard is a gorilla.

may be (metaphorically) true if Richard is fierce and violent, even if actual gorillas are shy and sensitive creatures. A property that is conventionally associated with gorilla may thus

1Fogelin (1988: 42-3) construes this argument as a claim that, on a comparativist account, someone uttering a metaphor ‘A is B’ is committed to asserting the existence of A and B, whereas it is more correct, of course, to say that the utterance of ‘A is B’ presupposes A’s and B’s existence. About the real problem, the absence of objects whose properties determine the interpretation, Fogelin remains silent.

2A point like this is raised by Beardsley (1962: 294), Black (1962: 40), and Searle (1979: 102).

3Searle adds that the shyness of gorillas is common knowledge, but this seems rather unlikely: the ‘correct’
successfully be attributed to Richard, even if in fact the literal referent does not have that property; as Searle (1979: 102) observes, metaphors like (6) are not really statements about gorillas at all. In other words, in at least some cases, it is not the referents and their properties, but rather the culturally given stereotypes, that yield the metaphorical interpretation.

Among the other objections that have been raised against referentialist approaches, one point deserves discussion: the claim that metaphors often create new similarities, and therefore cannot be accounted for by an appeal to already existing ones. As Black (1962: 37) put it, ‘it would be more illuminating... to say that the metaphor creates the similarity than to say that it formulates some similarity antecedently existing’. It is not clear whether Black intends this claim as an ontological or as an epistemological one. If taken as an epistemological claim, it does not appear particularly threatening to a referentialist: there does not seem to be anything wrong with saying that a similarity statement may give the hearer new information; similarity statements may be just as novel or surprising as metaphors, or as literal statements of fact. If taken as an ontological claim, however, it becomes more difficult to defend: for how can the utterance of a sentence actually create, or change, the properties that make its referents similar? Later, Black (1979a) argued that, in a sense, this is precisely what happens. We tend to think of similarity as the sharing of physical properties that the referents ‘objectively’ have. But many objects and properties (e.g., bankruptcies, views, and slow motion vision) only come into being by human constructions and institutions. The similarities created by metaphors, Black argues, are of this kind (1979a: 36-40). He has a point here, but it is not at all clear whether we can capture such creation of similarity in purely semantic (or linguistic) terms. I will return to this question in sections 3.2 and 4.2 below.

Three Referentialists: Henle, Mooij, and Fogelin

The aforementioned objections are familiar from the literature, but they have not been convincingly addressed by the recent defenders of a referentialist account. For example, Henle (1981 [1958]) presents a sophisticated version of a referentialist theory: he argues that metaphors crucially involve iconic signs, or signs that share some property with their referent:

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1 There is of course a class of speech acts where the mere utterance of a sentence brings about a change in its referents, viz. the class of explicit performatives such as baptisms ('I hereby christen this ship The Greaty Bastard') or other - usually ceremonial - acts. Indeed, a case could be made for thus treating metaphorical language as a kind of (re-)naming an object, or dubbing (see e.g. Hausman (1989: 83, 95; cf. 3.2.5 below).

Scientific knowledge does not seem to be part of the average speaker’s stereotype of gorillas. In many cases, stereotypical information may survive among a language community at large even if its more knowledgeable members know it to be unfounded.
‘in a metaphor, some terms symbolize the icon and others symbolize what is iconized’ (1981: 90-1). Thus, in Keats’s ‘hateful thoughts enwrap my soul in gloom’, the expression *enwrap* symbolizes a person wrapped up in a cloak or a blanket, and this situation (rather than an object) iconizes the mood of the person described. Henle correctly notes that some metaphors involve more than just shared properties of objects, but leaves it unclear how the hearer recovers the blanket from the symbolized situation. He also believes that similarity in itself is not enough. Rather, ‘some special or striking similarity is required’: the similarity must be non-trivial or salient (Henle 1981: 89). He does not further explicate these notions, however. Henle’s treatment thus gives no answer to the most important objections against referentialist views.\(^1\)

Mooij (1976: ch. 5) tries to defend a referentialist view against some of the above criticisms, but likewise fails to meet them satisfactorily. He takes Black’s comment on the near-vacuity of the notion of similarity as an objection against the careless application of comparison theories, rather than as an invitation to give a more precise characterization of similarity, and he does not address the problem of figurative similarity. Moreover, Mooij construes Beardsley’s argument that there need not be any object available for comparison as merely a warning against unconstrained postulation of such objects, which may lead to ‘idiosyncratic’ interpretations (1976: 56). The real problems surrounding expressions with a null extension thus remain unresolved. Perhaps the reason for this is that Mooij’s notion of reference is rather broad, and includes part of what has been defined above as ‘descriptive information’. At first, he stresses that only expressions \(X\) with sufficient descriptive information can be used metaphorically (1976: 20), but elsewhere he consistently speaks about *reference* to \(X\)’s as involving ‘all sorts of ideas, conventional or idiosyncratic, [which] are often presupposed in using the term ‘\(X\)’’ (p. 55). But these ideas and associations are part of an expression’s descriptive information, rather than properties of the objects it denotes. Mooij’s position, then, appears to waver between a referentialist and a descriptivist view.\(^2\) It requires more explication of the notions of similarity and context, and a more principled distinction between the reference or extension and the sense or descriptive information of expressions, especially regarding terms with null extension (which may perhaps be supplied by using an intensional semantic framework).

\(^1\)In fact, at some points Henle suggests that the icon is not just presented, but recovered in virtue of the term’s descriptive content. He argues that in Virginia Woolf’s description of a worm as a ‘a coil of pinkish rubber’, the icon for the worm (a piece of rubber) is not presented but *described* (1981: 87). Such remarks open the way to a descriptivist interpretation of (some of) his ideas. Beardsley (1962: 296) already noted that at some points Henle comes close to a ‘Verbal-Opposition theory’, i.e., a descriptivist view.

\(^2\)Beardsley (1978: 5) already notes the ‘extremely broad fashion’ in which Mooij uses the term *reference*. 

\(\text{References}\)
Fogelin (1988) presents something of an innovation: he claims that metaphor reduces not to literal comparison, but to statements of what he calls ‘figurative comparison’. That is, a metaphor is an elliptical simile, so that its literal meaning equals the literal meaning of a simile, and it conveys a statement that the items mentioned share some ‘salient features’, so that its figurative meaning equals the figurative meaning of a simile or figurative comparison. In other words, Fogelin does not attempt to reduce the figurative meaning of a metaphor to the literal meaning of a similarity statement, and thus maintains what Tirrell (1991) calls a ‘nonreductive comparison theory’. However, little seems to be gained by such a move. First of all, Fogelin is confused about what constitutes the literal and figurative meaning of similarity statements: at one point, he says that similarity statements are literally just as defective as metaphors taken literally, and that the utterance of ‘A is like B’ merely implies a statement that A shares some of B’s salient features (1988: 79). It is difficult to see, however, how ‘A is like B’ could be defective (except for being relatively uninformative), and its presumed figurative meaning does not seem to have the features of ‘real’ conversational implicatures.1

Fogelin’s definition of similarity in terms of salient features marks no significant advance either. He states that similarity cannot always be defined in terms of shared properties (1988: 78), because, he thinks, this would commit him to a symmetry in similarity judgments. Instead, he proposes that ‘A is similar to B just in case A has a sufficiently large number of B’s salient features’ (ibid.), but we are left entirely in the dark as to when features are salient. Can we say, for example, that in Sally is a block of ice, Sally literally shares any of the salient features of a block of ice? Further, Fogelin does not explain how features are distinct from properties. He may intend features as belonging to concepts rather than to objects, but does not say so explicitly; in any case, doing so would bring him much closer to a conceptualist view. Fogelin’s central notions of ‘figurative meaning’ and ‘sharing of salient features’ remain largely unexplained.

The recent statements of a referentialist view, then, fail to meet the criticisms mentioned above. Similarity cannot serve as a primitive notion explaining, or reducing, the figurative element in metaphor, but itself requires further analysis. Moreover, various metaphors involve culturally determined stereotypes rather than the actual properties of referents. I am not saying that accounts of all this cannot be given; but as suggested above, trying to meet such challenges would probably imply changing a referentialist view beyond recognition.

1Fogelin largely fails to state his claims in testable terms. He comes close to a Gricean view of the figurative meaning of metaphor as a case of conversational implicature, but elsewhere he explicitly refrains from committing himself to a Gricean framework (1988: 30n).
2.1.2. Descriptivist Views

The first, and really crucial trait that distinguishes descriptivist views from referentialist ones is their insistence that it is not the reference or extension of the metaphorically applied expression, but rather some other aspect of meaning, to wit, its sense or intension, or more generally the descriptive information associated with it, that determines the interpretation. This descriptive information may, but need not, be part of the meaning of an expression in the stricter sense of the word, as that what determines the (literal) extension of an expression. It may also be more loosely associated with it, and constitute its connotation rather than its denotation (Beardsley), i.e., what Black (1962) calls its ‘system of associated commonplaces’, or what Putnam (1975) calls a ‘stereotype’. In other words, on a descriptivist view, metaphorical interpretation does not involve the properties that actually apply to the objects referred to, as much as the properties that are associated with the word, and held to apply to the objects by the average member of a speech community.

Earlier labels for accounts of this kind are ‘verbal-opposition theory’, ‘tension theory’ (Beardsley (1962, 1976), and ‘interaction theory’ (Black (1962, 1979); but we will see below that tension is not really an essential feature of metaphor, and that the notion of interaction remains rather unclear. Beardsley (1962) also spoke of a ‘word-approach’ rather than a ‘thing-approach’, but this is not altogether felicitous either: even in his own theory, it is not the word itself but the descriptive information associated with it, that plays the central role. Consequently, I will adhere to the more general notion of ‘descriptivist accounts’.

Secondly, on descriptivist approaches, metaphor involves a change in the meaning or sense, and not just in the reference, of at least one expression. In Man is a wolf, it cannot be the literal sense of the expression wolf that determines the interpretation, as this would merely lead to a false literal statement; instead, it is argued, the term wolf (called the ‘focus’ by Black (1962), and the ‘metaphorical segment’ by Beardsley (1978)) acquires a new or metaphorical sense within its specific verbal context (its ‘frame’ (Black) or ‘metaphorical sequence’ (Beardsley)).

Descriptivists thus argue that what happens in metaphorical interpretation occurs at another level of meaning than referentialists claim: for them, it is the level of sense rather than that of extension that plays the main role in interpretation.

Ricoeur (1975) argues that in such metaphors, it is the copula is that changes its meaning into ‘is not, but is like’. The objection that this does not yet account for metaphors lacking an explicit copula (and thus shares all the difficulties of referentialist views mentioned above) might be dismissed as a logistic problem; but a more serious problem is that this analysis fundamentally alters the assertive power of a metaphor. I return to this rather problematic claim in 2.2 and 3.2 below.
A third feature of practically all versions of a descriptivist view (and likewise of conceptualist views) is the lack of emphasis on similarity as an explanatory notion; indeed, dissimilarity is considered at least as important a basis of metaphorical interpretation. Like Aristotle, modern descriptivists tend to reduce simile to metaphor, rather than vice versa; in general, they are well aware that similes need not be any more literal than metaphors. Consequently, similarity plays different roles in referentialist and descriptivist theories: on a referentialist view, the similarity of the referents is the basis for the interpretation, but in descriptivist accounts it is precisely a lack of similarity, expressed as a 'logical opposition' or 'semantic clash' between the words, that warrants the recognition of a metaphor. It is this incongruity in the linguistic structure of a predication that forces the acquisition of a new intension or 'metaphorical twist', as Beardsley (1962: 294) calls it. Literally, men are not wolves, and this gives the hearer the clue that a nonliteral sense of wolf is to be construed in *Man is a wolf*. The actual interpretation then consists in the transfer of some meaning elements from the metaphorically used expression *wolf* to its 'literal context' *man*. Descriptivists thus typically phrase the interpretation of a metaphor in terms of a meaning transfer, and its recognition in terms of a semantic clash at the level of literal meaning. Also typical, though not essential, for descriptivist positions is the habit of taking the notion of metaphor in a rather broad sense, so as to include various kinds of figurative language that were traditionally separated from it (e.g., metonymy, simile, and irony): metaphorical change of meaning comes to be seen as the central kind of meaning transfer, and other kinds can be described in the same vocabulary.

Problems with Descriptivist Views

Descriptivist treatments have taken over the primacy of referentialist accounts in the second half of the twentieth century, but they have equally been confronted with a number of serious problems. First of all, it is doubtful whether there is, as most descriptivists believe, any linguistic feature that distinguishes metaphor from literal language on the one hand, and from other kinds of figurative language on the other. The search for such a feature seems doomed from the start: a logical clash, category mistake, or semantic anomaly is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for a sentence or statement being a metaphor.¹ Not all metaphors are patently false or absurd, and conversely, not all obviously false statements receive a metaphorical interpretation; a literally false sentence statement may just as well be interpreted as expressing a factual mistake, as conveying a particularized conversational implicature like

¹This point was raised by, among others, Reddy (1969), Binkley (1974), and Stern (1983).
irony or hyperbole, as involving the referential use of a description, etc. On the other hand, many metaphors do not clearly display any 'semantic clash'; the most obvious counterexamples are metaphors containing a negation (7), but there are also various sentences that can be literally as well as metaphorically true or what Binkley (1976) called 'twice-true' metaphors (8), and metaphors containing an indexical element (9):

(7) Life is not a bed of roses.
(8) Anchorage is a cold city.
(9) This is a pigsty.

Such cases may at best be said to become ‘inappropriate’ given a context of utterance; and even for many examples that are adduced as prime examples of semantically deviant sentence types (i.e., sentences held to be necessarily false), such as Sally is a block of ice, it is easy to think of a context in which they are literally true: imagine discovering Sally after she has been locked up in a cold storage room for two weeks.

Descriptivists have tried to counter this objection in various ways. Beardsley (1978) introduces the notions ‘metaphorical sequence’ (an extension of Black’s notion of ‘frame’, which includes the literally interpreted parts of the sentence and possibly the situational or linguistic context) and ‘metaphorical segment’ (the metaphorically interpreted item) in order to capture metaphors that are not false at sentence level. Thus, (10)

(10) The rock is becoming brittle with age.

is interpreted metaphorically (i.e., becomes a metaphorical segment) only if the context (sequence) makes clear that the subject of conversation is a staunch old university professor. Further, Beardsley argues that alleged counterexamples like (7)-(9) are comparatively rare, or really dead metaphors, and even that negations like (7) have a ‘second-order character’, which supposedly leaves the logical incompatibility of the component parts intact (1981: xxxv). On this view, life is not a bed of roses is just as deviant or pointless as life is a bed of roses. But such refinements do not look very principled or convincing.

More recent descriptivist accounts, like Kittay (1987: 77ff.), which for the most part aims at refining Black’s approach, do not mark any significant advances in this respect.¹ Kittay

¹Some of the novel aspects of Kittay’s theory, such as her association of metaphor with the referential use of descriptions, and her view of metaphor as establishing ‘anaphoric chains’, will be dealt with in 3.2.
defines metaphor as a case of 'second-order meaning', and thus maintains the assumption that the literal interpretation must precede the metaphorical one. She tries to deflate the objection raised by Reddy, Cohen, and others, that grammatical deviance is often not a defining characteristic of metaphors, by construing metaphor as inappropriate in its context of utterance rather than as semantically deviant; but this still does not yield an adequate criterion of recognition. She mentions, but does not respond to, Stern's (1983) rather forceful arguments that the search for a criterion of this kind is doomed from the start.

Attempts to find a less stringent criterion than falsity or absurdity at sentence level thus fail to yield a reliable diagnostic. In fact, they lead to the opposite problem: they yield a criterion (say, ‘falsity in context’) which is weaker than the original one, and will be even less successful in distinguishing metaphor from other figures. Descripivists, in short, fail to come up with an adequate criterion of recognition either at the sentential or at the contextual level. Perhaps, then, something is wrong with the very assumption that some kind of incongruity is necessary as a diagnostic criterion for metaphor. Ultimately, this assumption may reflect the romantic idea, noted in the introduction, that metaphor is somehow essentially different from literal language. But is such an assumption really necessary for a descriptivist account (or, for that matter, for any account) at all? In chapter 3, I will argue that it is not, and present a theory which takes metaphors as appropriate, rather than false or incongruous, in context.

Secondly, the notion of 'metaphorical meaning' or 'metaphorical sense' has come under heavy attack. At first sight, it seems that metaphorical interpretation cannot be described compositionally as a function of the meanings of the individual terms in a metaphorical sentence; instead, on a descriptivist approach, it is treated as noncompositionally or nonmonotonically arising from the literal semantic content which typically yields an untrue, or even absurd, sentence. The literal, compositionally determined meaning is held to be somehow cancelled or overruled by the 'semantic clash' or 'logical opposition' between its components, and instead, a 'metaphorical meaning' is arrived at. It is not at all clear, however, how such a theory can be stated in purely semantic terms, as many descripivists want: for if the metaphorical interpretation of the sentence is not a function of the literal meanings of its component parts, how does it come about? Presumably, the hearer first has to 'delete' the information conveyed by the sentence on its literal interpretation, and to construct a nonliteral interpretation instead. It makes little sense, however, to describe the process of cancelling semantic information as a purely semantic process. It could perhaps be done if we adopt a nonmonotonic logic as a semantic metalanguage, but for as far as I know, this has not yet been tried; in any case, it would introduce a host of new questions.
Instead, later authors have thought it more promising to rephrase a descriptivist view in pragmatic terms, and to see the ‘metaphorical sense’ as a pragmatic inference arising from a ‘defective’ semantic content. This would also seem to account more adequately for the fact that a single occurrence of a metaphor need not lead to a change in the word meanings of the terms used metaphorically. With the development of pragmatics in the 1970s, such pragmatic restatements of a descriptivist view became prominent, but they still share several important defects with ‘classical’ or semantic descriptivism (see 2.2 below). In fact, the phrasing of many semantic descriptivist theories already suggests a pragmatic approach: Beardsley (1978) speaks of metaphors being carried by statements rather than sentences; as seen, he holds that words acquire a ‘metaphorical sense’ only given a specific context or ‘metaphorical sequence’. Likewise, Black (1979a) has reformulated his original ‘interaction view’ in the even more pragmatically-sounding terms of speaker’s and hearer’s meaning, as opposed to sentence meaning. Elsewhere, however, both Beardsley (1962: 298-9) and Black (1979a: 22) explicitly reject a pragmatic viewpoint. Instead of taking an implicit or explicit pragmatic stance, one might also try to describe metaphorical interpretation as involving something like an intensional construction, in which one of the expressions contextually acquires an ‘indirect sense’ (cf. Frege 1962 [1892]: 43). This might allow for an account along more traditionally semantic lines, but few authors have explored this option. The second difficulty of descriptivist views, then, appears to result from the other guiding assumption discussed in the introduction, viz., the folk theory of literal meaning. It casts doubt on the unquestioned belief in a literal meaning which is automatically and unproblematically assigned to a sentence in the absence of extraordinary circumstances. In chapter 3, I will argue that this assumption, too, had better be abandoned.

The problem of where metaphorical meanings originate comes to the fore with novel metaphors: if it is some aspect of word meaning (i.e., a feature that is already conventionally associated with an expression) that determines the metaphorical interpretation, how can we account for metaphors giving some new insight, or drawing our attention to something we had not noticed before? A more or less conventionalistic position would seem to rule out the possibility of a metaphor ever conveying anything really new. But especially metaphors occurring in poetry and scientific discourse, like Hoffmansthal’s description of minds as ‘nothing but dovecots’, often have just such an innovative character. Ricoeur argues that such ‘innovative metaphors’ do not get their interpretation from the given stock of connotations associated with a word, but actually add connotations to it (Ricoeur 1975: 115, 125; cf. Cooper

1At times, Beardsley (1962, 1978) comes close to such a view. Stern (1979, 1985) and the account to be developed in 3.1 below take this idea as their point of departure.
1986: 54ff). In order to capture novel metaphors, Black (1962: 43) introduces the notion of ‘specially constructed implications’, and Beardsley (1962: 300) a similar notion of ‘non-staple connotations’. Ricoeur’s objection (1975: 124-8) to these notions is not altogether clear: he seems to protest that no principle or formula for metaphorical interpretation can be given for such ad hoc implications, or alternatively, that such principles cannot be formulated in semantic terms, but crucially involve an activity of sense construction (‘travail du sens’) on the part of the reader, which he seems to think of as a more pragmatic kind of process. Whether or not Ricoeur’s objections hold, novel metaphor seems as much of a problem for descriptivist approaches as for referentialist ones, and we will return to it on several occasions.

A related question is how a descriptivist account can capture the transfer of commonplaces to new domains (what Jurjani calls tamthil-metaphor). In (11)

(11) Juliet is the sun.

the property that is ascribed to Juliet is of a different kind than the properties that apply to the sun. Inanimate heavenly objects and adored human beings do not literally share any relevant properties; but then how does sun come to denote a property of human rather than of inanimate beings? Beardsley and Black argue that such cases involve the addition or construction of new attributes; but then the question arises what kind of entities such associations are: sets of descriptions, of properties, or of concepts? This question is far from trivial, but it is a central one in accounting for metaphorical interpretation. With respect to novel metaphor and the ‘creation’ of (cross-categorial) similarity, descriptivist accounts thus face problems similar to those of referentialists.

In short, the original statements of a descriptivist view appear to put too much emphasis on incongruity of literal meanings as a criterion for the recognition of metaphor. They present a two-step analysis of metaphor: upon recognizing the incongruity of the literal meaning, the hearer constructs a ‘metaphorical sense’; this analysis presumes that ‘literal meanings’ take logical precedence over contextual factors. The fact that not all metaphors are semantically or linguistically anomalous, however, suggests that it is not a sentence type, but a sentence in context, or perhaps even a statement (the utterance of a sentence in context), that receives a metaphorical interpretation. Likewise, the questions of precisely what a metaphorical sense is and how it can be novel remain unresolved.

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2Example due to Cooper (1986). Actually, this metaphor already occurs in Plato’s Theaetetus.
Three Descriptivists: Black, Beardsley, and Goodman

After this brief general overview of descriptivist views, I will look at the particularities of three influential statements, viz., those of Max Black, Monroe Beardsley, and Nelson Goodman. Black's 'interaction theory', first outlined in 'Metaphor' (1962), constitutes the first major account of metaphor in terms of meanings rather than referents. His treatment is clearly descriptivist in intent: he abandons talk of referents in favour of words and their associations. In a metaphor like *Man is a wolf*, the expression *wolf* is the 'focus' that acquires a metaphorical meaning, while *Man* (and presumably *is*) constitute the 'frame', or literal verbal context; *Man* (or men) is the 'principal', and *Wolf* (or wolves) the 'secondary subject'. Black suggests that the frame given by *Man* imposes an extension of meaning on the focus *wolf* (1962: 39). The effect of this extension is that the hearer constructs a system of implications for the principal subject, which are determined by the implications associated with the literal use of the focal expression (say, cruelty). Such interactional metaphors cannot be fully paraphrased (that is, translated without loss of cognitive content) into literal language. In such paraphrases, there is a different balance between what is asserted and what is implied: 'the implications... are now presented explicitly as though having equal weight' (1962: 46). In other words: paraphrasing *Man is a wolf* as *Man is cruel* does not preserve the categorial assertion that man is a member of the class of wolves, and asserts rather than implies that man has the specific property of being cruel, while *Man is like a wolf* retains the appeal to wolves (albeit in the 'literal' sense), but likewise fails to preserve the assertion that man in some sense belongs to the class of wolves.¹

Black does not give a systematic account of how metaphors are recognized. Initially, he claims that 'the rules of our language determine that some expressions must count as metaphors' (1962: 29), but he does not spell out any such rules. He immediately adds that, as these rules leave a considerable latitude for individual variation and creation anyway, the recognition and interpretation of metaphor also require attention to the context of utterance and the speaker's intentions. In a later paper (1979a), he denies that there is any single 'diagnostic criterion' for the occurrence of a metaphorical statement, recognition of a metaphor being dependent on 'our general knowledge of what it is to be a metaphor', and on a specific 'contextual judgment' that a statement should be interpreted figuratively rather than literally because of its obvious falsity, pointlessness, or incongruity with its verbal and nonverbal

¹It is not clear why this point should not apply to 'substitution and comparison metaphors' which, Black (1962: 46) believes, can be replaced by 'literal translations', i.e., paraphrased without loss of cognitive content.
context (1979a: 36). These remarks, programmatic as they are, suggest that Black relies on a rather weak diagnostic criterion (oddity or falsity of some kind), which need not even be strictly semantic or linguistic in nature.

The formulation of these ‘diagnostic criteria’ also strongly suggests, despite Black’s claims to the contrary (1979a: 22), that metaphor can best be treated along pragmatic lines, in terms of a contextually determined, partly intention-governed speaker’s meaning based upon a somehow deficient literal meaning. On such a pragmatic view, the speaker ‘says’ one thing (the literal meaning), and ‘means’ another (the metaphorical interpretation). Against criticisms that a single metaphorical usage need not lead to a change in word meaning, Black emphasizes that metaphor merely involves a shift in speaker’s and hearer’s meaning (1979a: 29); but he does not define these rather pragmatic-sounding notions. In his later papers (1979a, 1979b), Black also speaks of metaphorical statements rather than sentences, but he hovers between calling a statement just a sentence-in-context and the full-blown speech act of uttering a sentence in a context with specific intentions. This difference is crucial, however: while an account of ‘statements’ as sentences in context still leaves the option of treating metaphor in semantic terms, an account in terms of speaker’s intentions suggests a purely pragmatic analysis. Black tilts over to the latter option. Repeatedly, he suggests that interpreting a metaphor requires recognizing the speaker’s intentions (1962: 29; 1979a: 36); elsewhere, however, he explicitly rejects treating metaphor as a case of ‘saying one thing and meaning another’, for begging the central question of whether metaphor actually is a deviation from ‘proper’ usage (1979a: 22). Because of these conflicting claims, Black’s theory is not unambiguously semantic or pragmatic.

In addition to this uncertainty as to the level of metaphorical interpretation, Black’s terminology raises more questions than it answers. First, the notion ‘implicative complex’ is rather vague: in one place, Black defines it as ‘a set of what Aristotle called endoxa, current opinions shared by members of a speech community’ (1979a: 29), that is, something much like intersubjective stereotypes. Within the next two pages, however, he also speaks of it as consisting of propositions, statements, and even assertions; the possibility of a conceptualistic interpretation is opened by his remark that the outcome of the interaction ‘is of course produced in the minds of the speaker and hearer’ (ibid.). Obviously, an implicative complex cannot be asserted, as it remains implicit, and, in a sense, presupposed. It can hardly consist of statements, as this would bring Black close to the kind of substitution view that he rejects (1962: 30-4); for then, one could paraphrase a metaphor by listing the relevant statements of the implicative complex. Apparently, such a complex should consist either of propositions or of concepts. I will discuss these options in 3.2 and 4.2 below.
It remains likewise unclear whether by the notions of ‘primary’ and ‘secondary subject’ Black means the linguistic expressions themselves, their referents, their meanings, or the concepts associated with them. He seems to rule out the first option (1962: 44); an explicit development in any one of the latter directions would turn Black’s account into a referentialist, descriptivist, or conceptualist one, respectively. Likewise, the central notion of ‘interaction’ between subjects remains tantalizingly implicit in the 1962 paper.¹ Only later (1979a: 29) is interaction explicated as inciting the hearer’s selecting some of the secondary subject’s properties, because of the presence of the primary subject; inviting him to construct a parallel implication complex fitting the primary subject; and reciprocally inducing changes in the secondary subject (note that the emphasized expressions, once again, suggest a pragmatic rather than a semantic view). Here, primary and secondary subject may be construed either as the referents of (part of) the frame and the focus, or as the concepts associated with them. Black himself (1962: 44) calls subjects ‘systems of things’ rather than things, but even this formulation would mean a relapse into a referentialist position, and in any case it remains unclear how (systems of) referents can ‘interact’ with each other. A conceptualist interpretation clashes with his remark that the ‘picture of two ideas working upon each other is an inconvenient fiction’ (1962: 47n). The most accurate interpretation would probably be that the interacting subjects should be seen as meanings, but Black nowhere really elaborates on this. Finally, Indurkhya (1992: 70) criticizes the third component of interaction, the idea of reciprocal influence: this contradicts Black’s earlier claims that metaphor involves an essentially asymmetric reorganization of the target domain.

A final problem for Black is that of novel metaphor. For Black, metaphors need not rely on the conventional knowledge associated with words, but may also introduce ‘specifically constructed implications’ that are established ad hoc by the speaker (1962: 43). As seen, Ricoeur (1975: 114) argues that this does not say anything about how novel implications are created. Indeed, Black does not further explicate the creation of implications, but seems to think that it merely involves the adding of - literal - descriptions (1962: 43); but one would think that the nonlinguistic context, which can make it clear that a specific kind of property is at issue, may also introduce such implications. A more serious problem is the fact that Black’s analysis does not seem to reduce the transfer of meaning in metaphorical sentences, but merely relocates it in the associated commonplaces. Black tries to reduce metaphorical transfer to mere extensions (that is, literal transfers) of the meaning of associated commonplaces (1962: 42-3);

¹This notion is inspired by I.A. Richards (1936), whom, however, Black criticizes for terminological confusion, and for formulating the process of interaction in terms of concepts rather than meanings.
but obviously, this cannot account for ‘cross-category’ metaphors such as Juliet is the sun: the commonplaces associated with the sun are sun-properties, and in general these cannot be literally transferred to Juliet. An adequate answer to this question, however, requires a more principled answer to the question what kind of things these commonplaces are. In short, while Black’s account does not fall prey to the difficulties that have been noted for referentialist views, it suffers from terminological vagueness, and uneasily hovers between a semantic and a pragmatic point of view.

Beardsley

Monroe Beardsley’s views resemble Black’s rather closely in many respects, but they put more emphasis on literal absurdity as a diagnostic criterion, if not defining trait, of metaphor, and they are more explicitly framed in terms of a general theory of language. Beardsley thus comes close to defining metaphorical interpretation as a kind of operation on intensions or propositional contents, but does not develop this line of thought in any detail. He defines metaphors as attributions that are literally false or even absurd; because of this absurdity, a ‘metaphorical sense’ arises in the specific verbal context of the metaphor. He distinguishes two sets of properties belonging to the intension of an expression: the defining properties or ‘central meaning’, and its connotation or ‘marginal meaning’. In metaphor, the logical opposition between the central meanings of the terms used gives the modifier (what Black called the ‘focus’) its metaphorical twist, that is, its shift from central to marginal meaning as the contextually appropriate sense.

For Beardsley, metaphor thus essentially involves a logical clash of central meanings; this clash not only allows us to recognize metaphors, but also accounts for the emotional tension or shock the metaphor presumably gives the hearer. In other words, in specific linguistic contexts, a word acquires a new intension. Beardsley holds that the metaphorical sense is derived from the literal sense, and consequently speaks of them as two distinct ‘levels’ of meaning (1962: 294). Later, Beardsley grants a more explicit role to contextual factors, but he does not systematically link them to the interpretation process, and still considers literal senses to be less context-dependent than, and logically prior to, metaphorical ones (1976: 219). If one would take the context-dependence of literal meanings more systematically into account, however, the need for a distinction between two levels of meaning would decrease, and with it the crucial role of a logical clash of meanings (see 3.1 below).
As seen above, not all metaphors involve literal falsity or absurdity, and this objection was soon raised against the idea of logical opposition as the basis of the ‘metaphorical twist’ (Binkley 1974, Cohen 1976). Sentences like (10) involve no logical opposition at the literal level, but can be interpreted metaphorically nonetheless.

(10) The rock is becoming brittle with age.

When presented with such counterexamples, Beardsley (1976, 1978) argued that (10) is in itself not yet a metaphor, but can become a ‘metaphorical segment’ in a specifically constructed verbal or situational context. Only the ‘metaphorical sequence’, or combination of segment and context, is logically absurd in a literal interpretation. But, as Stern (1983) has observed, this turns the claim of grammatical deviance from an account of how hearers identify metaphors into an a priori criterion for an expression’s being a metaphor. Moreover, Beardsley’s attempts to refine his original view suffer from conceptual confusions in his use of the notions of sentence, statement, metaphorical segment, and metaphorical sequence. Thus, he states that sentences like He’s a clown can be used both literally and metaphorically in different contexts, but given a context which provides a ‘metaphorical warrant’, no literal statement can be made with this sentence any longer. Elsewhere, however, he argues that for any statement, a verbal or situational context can be devised in which it becomes a metaphorical segment (1978: 4). But then a ‘statement’ can obviously not be a sentence-in-context, because ‘a context can be constructed’ for it. Beardsley’s remark that ‘unintended metaphors are perfectly possible’ (1962: 299) likewise obstructs taking ‘statement’ in the sense of a full-blown speech act, i.e., the intentional uttering of a sentence with a specific content. Further, if a sentence can become a ‘metaphorical segment’ in a context, exactly what is its metaphorical sequence: the sentence plus its context, or rather the statement the sentence expresses given that context? The latter option, which would seem the more desirable one, is ruled out, given Beardsley’s idea of what constitutes a statement.

Although Beardsley seems to state his theory in semantic terms for the most part, his view of metaphorical meaning as arising out of a contradictory or otherwise defective literal meaning closely parallels the pragmatic approaches that will be discussed in 2.2 below. It is not quite clear why in his later papers he resists a more pragmatic reformulation, which after all seems a rather obvious move, given his frequent appeals to statements and contexts. Apart from his attempt to incorporate such contextual factors into sentence grammar as a base for a purely linguistic characterization of metaphor, his continuing preference for a semantic treatment
seems largely due to his earlier rejection of metaphor as related to speaker’s intentions rather than to the meanings of expressions. For him, what makes a metaphor a metaphor, and recognizable as such, is a matter of words and their meanings, not of speaker’s intentions. Consequently, he rejects the view that ‘to call A a B metaphorically is to say that A is a B without meaning it’, and the concomitant idea that the hearer interprets a metaphor by recognizing the speaker’s intentions; for this requires the hearer to know what the speaker is thinking before he can recognize an utterance as metaphorical. Instead, he prefers to say that ‘the opposition that renders an expression metaphorical is within the meaning-structure itself’ (1962: 298-9). In other words, for Beardsley, an expression becomes metaphorical not because of speaker’s intentions, but because of a conflict in the expression itself, or between the expression and its context. Although the criterion of conflict does not stand up to closer scrutiny, the point against intentions is worth keeping in mind: before pragmatics as we know it today was in existence, Beardsley already presents an important argument against a strictly pragmatic analysis of metaphor.

Beardsley’s account, like Black’s, runs the risk of overgenerating possible metaphorical interpretations. Given the fact that an expression may have an indefinitely wide range of connotations, the hearer must select the ‘right’ ones in interpreting a specific metaphorical usage. For this task, Beardsley suggests the two complementary principles of congruence and plenitude, which he thinks of as principles of literary explication rather than of linguistic interpretation: ¹ ‘the problem of construing a metaphor is that of deciding which of the modifier’s connotations can fit the subject, and the metaphor means all the connotations that can fit - except those that are further eliminated by, because they do not fit, the larger context’ (Beardsley 1981 [1958]: 144; note again the reference to contextual factors). But these two principles do not yet sufficiently constrain the range of possible metaphorical interpretations: the only real constraint they impose is that of ‘fit’, or consistency, among connotations. They fail to weed out consistent but irrelevant properties, like being identical to itself (cf. Scheffler 1979: 103ff.). Thus, more explicit and systematic constraints seem to be called for. Beardsley also faces similar problems as Black in dealing with semantic innovation (cf. Ricoeur 1975: 124-8): metaphors may involve properties that are not yet associated with a word, or do not yet have any linguistic expression. Indeed, the main point of many metaphors may well be precisely giving such ‘anonymous’ properties (or combinations of properties) a ‘name’. To deal with this, Beardsley introduces a distinction between the ‘staple connotations’

¹In 3.2, similar principles will appear as Stalnaker’s strictures on assertions and as Stern’s notion of ‘filter presuppositions’ meant to filter out redundant and inconsistent interpretations of a metaphor.
that are readily recognized of a word, and its ‘potential range’ of connotations which are merely waiting to be actualized. In case there are no staple connotations, ‘we must consider the properties of the objects denoted by the modifier’ (1962: 302). In other words, for novel metaphors, Beardsley’s account collapses into a referentialist view. But new connotations need not be actual properties of the object; they may just as well be introduced by descriptions, or by the wider linguistic or situational context. For example, one can start telling stories about how stupid Einstein was, and then metaphorically say of one’s neighbour ‘He’s an Einstein, too’: the novel connotation added to the word Einstein is not, one would think, an actual property of its referent.

In all, Beardsley seems to rely too much on information that is already an aspect of word meaning, whether actual or potential, and thus restricts semantic innovation to what is in a sense already available at that level. Also, like Black, Beardsley does not adequately address the phenomenon of connotations being transferred to a different domain, and thus fails to present a satisfactory account of what happens in novel and ‘cross-category’ metaphors. In this respect, his difficulties are the same as those of referentialists. His approach also suffers from an excessive reliance on ‘logical absurdity’ as a basis for recognition, and from the misguided attempt to incorporate contextual factors into sentence grammar; but on the whole his approach contains the promising possibility of integration in a more general theory. For the most part, Beardsley relies far less on idiosyncratic (and unclear) terminology than Black.

**Goodman**

Nelson Goodman’s short account of metaphor (1976: 68-85) marks some important further advances over those of Black and Beardsley. It is rather programmatic, though, and based on very simple examples (largely metaphorical applications of color terms like blue and grey); neither does it discuss in detail how metaphors are recognized and interpreted. Nonetheless, his approach at least hints at ways of solving the problems we have encountered thus far. On Goodman’s account, metaphors are what they seem to be: classification statements. As such, they do not differ from literal classifications: ‘the metaphorical and the literal have to be distinguished within the actual. Calling a picture sad and calling it grey are simply different ways of classifying it’ (1976: 68). Consequently, metaphors can be as true, or as false, as literal classification statements. Then what is the difference between literal and metaphorical? Here, Goodman takes the same line as Black and Beardsley: ‘metaphorical application of a label to an object defies an explicit or tacit prior denial of that label to that object... Application of a term
is metaphorical only if to some extent contra-indicated' (1976: 69). Metaphorical application, in other words, involves the successful reassignment of a label to an object to which it was previously not held to be applicable.\(^1\)

An important new insight of Goodman's approach is that predicates, which he calls *labels*, do not function in isolation, but belong to a *schema*.\(^2\) He loosely characterizes a schema as a set of alternative labels, such as the different color terms; a schema determines a *realm*, or ‘domain’, which consists of the objects sorted by that schema (1976: 71-2). An individual label may have either a unique *range* (or extension), if it belongs to a unique schema, or several ranges, if it functions in several distinct schemata. Thus, a label like *mauve* is used exclusively as a color term, but the label *grey* functions in both a schema of color labels and of mood or emotion labels; in these schemata, it has the range of grey things and of sad things, respectively. A schema thus functions as a kind of context that delimits a classification. Actually, Goodman holds that schemas *themselves* are context-dependent: in one context, the purpose of the classification may be just to sort objects in red and non-red things, and thus yield the implicit set of alternative labels red and not red; but in another context, objects will have to be sorted as red, yellow, blue, etc.

These ideas suggest a more principled account of the context-dependent nature of application, whether literal or metaphorical. Moreover, if words can function in different schemas, they need not *strictly* carve up the world into wholly disjunct categories of things. The context-dependence of schemata, then, opens the possibility of treating metaphor as *just* the application of a label in a new schema or context; but this is not the road that Goodman takes. Rather, he sees metaphor as a ‘calculated [i.e., deliberate] category mistake’ (1976: 73), and thus assumes, much like Black and Beardsley, a privileged and relatively context-independent domain of the literal: a schema that determines the ‘literal’ range and realm of its component labels.\(^3\) In fact, this picture of metaphor as a ‘calculated category mistake’ marks a significant step back with respect to his view of labels as context- or schema-dependent in that it reintroduces the problematic idea that metaphors involve a ‘logical clash’ in one privileged schema of ‘literal application’. This criterion, however, runs into obvious problems with metaphorical application of a label that correctly applies both literally and figuratively, as in

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\(^1\) On Goodman’s characterization, as opposed to Black, Beardsley, and most pragmatic approaches, conventionalized metaphors still count as metaphors.\(^2\) Goodman’s idiosyncratic terminology stems in part from his project of formulating a general theory of symbols rather than a theory of language, and in part from his nominalistic rejection of intensional notions like ‘property’, ‘proposition’, etc.\(^3\) Goodman does not say whether the hearer should first *recognize* a metaphor as a category mistake, so it is not clear whether he thinks of its interpretation as a secondary meaning.
Goodman’s own example of a picture that is both literally and metaphorically grey. Instead, it is perhaps more correct to say that metaphorical application overrules the (usually implicit) assumption or presupposition that a label functions in one particular schema, and that the object it denotes belongs to a given realm, say, that objects denoted by grey belong to the category of colored things only. The point that schemas are presupposed remains implicit in Goodman’s account, but becomes clear from the negation of labels: the car is not red denies that the car belongs to the range of the label red, but not that it belongs to the realm of colored things that is determined by the implicit schema of color labels. Like all presupposed information, the information supplied by a schema thus survive negation (cf. 3.2 below).

Goodman’s explicitly extensionalist approach might suggest that his position is really a referentialist one; but unlike referentialists, Goodman argues for a change in both the range and realm of application of a label, and sees the metaphorical interpretation as to some extent guided and constrained, but not determined, by the properties of the objects in the literal range of application. Goodman also explicitly rejects similarity as a notion capable of explaining metaphor. Echoing Aristotle, he observes that ‘simile reduces to metaphor; or rather, the difference between simile and metaphor is negligible’ (1976: 77-8). He fails to note that metaphors and similes differ in assertive power: unlike a metaphorical (or literal) predication, a simile is not a classification statement.

Another, and rather more serious, problem for Goodman’s account is his rejection of intensional notions like properties, which commits him to the view that a metaphorically applied label must apply in virtue of a label rather than a property. But the point of some metaphors is precisely that they can name properties for which no label yet exists, or at least - if we accept Black’s arguments - no labels that apply with precisely the same balance between assertion and implication. But Goodman is bound to maintain that if a metaphor like the painting is grey applies, it does so in virtue of a label (viz., sad), rather than a property (sadness). He thus comes dangerously close to a substitution view, which will leave him at a loss to account for catachretic metaphors that name hitherto anonymous properties. A strictly extensionalist approach, then, does not seem very promising as a descriptivist account of metaphor.

Goodman’s descriptivism is rather holistic in nature: the metaphorical transfer of the range and realm of a single label, he holds, will also lead the other labels in its ‘home schema’ to acquire new ranges and realms in the new schema. At one point, Goodman ascribes even more

to metaphor than a change of the range and realm of (sets of) labels: it also involves ‘a migration of concepts, an alienation of categories’ (1976: 73), and would thus have a significant conceptual aspect as well. Perhaps, though, it is a bit overenthusiastic to claim that (a single utterance of) the metaphor itself brings the hearer to change his classifications and categories; rather, this will occur upon further reflection concerning this particular application. Because of this talk of concepts, Goodman might even be classified as a conceptualist, if it were not for his nominalistic emphasis on linguistic labels as primary: ‘talk of schemata, categories and systems of concepts comes down in the end, I think, to talk of such sets of labels’ (1976: 72).

Despite its descriptivist flavor, Goodman’s approach is not particularly conducive to any systematic account of how metaphors are interpreted in general. Indeed, it suggests what Scheffler (1979: 118) calls a ‘contextualist approach’, in that it rejects similarity, but also all other general principles of explication. The context of a specific metaphor may give cues regarding its interpretation, but no general, context-independent principles of metaphorical interpretation can be stated. Indeed, this is merely a reflection of Goodman’s more general argument that one cannot explain why labels refer to specific objects (1976: 78).¹ This stance precludes the very question of what happens to labels across categories that was so problematic to Black and Beardsley. But the idea that this context-dependence precludes giving any ‘formula’ or rule for metaphorical interpretation clashes with our intuition that such interpretations are somehow motivated, so it should be argued for rather than assumed.

These difficulties notwithstanding, Goodman’s account contains the rudiments of a descriptivist account that avoids the difficulties that those of Black and Beardsley face: it sees metaphorical predications simply as classification or categorization statements, which may apply equally correctly as literal assertions. Their actual denotation depends on an often implicit, or more precisely presupposed, schema, which determines what kind of properties are classified; moreover, a metaphorical application involves a change of schema. In chapter 3, an account will be developed that attempts to make this picture more explicit and precise.

¹Elgin & Scheffler (1987: 331) elaborate on this claim: ‘there are no recipes for determining metaphorical meaning. But there are heuristics.’.
approaches have difficulties in specifying adequate criteria of recognition. In essence, these difficulties stem from the unquestioned assumption that metaphors must be recognized as such before they can be correctly interpreted. A final recurrent theme is the equivocation between a semantic and a pragmatic formulation of descriptivist views. All approaches dealt with here implicitly or explicitly define metaphorical meaning as a ‘secondary meaning’ that arises from a logical clash or other incongruity in the literal interpretation, which is thus logically prior. Goodman may be an exception, but his position is not wholly unambiguous. With the development of pragmatic theory, it became an obvious next step to describe metaphor as a pragmatic reinterpretation of a semantically defective sentence. The authors discussed so far reject such an outright pragmatic account; we will assess its merits in the next section.

2.1.3. Intermezzo: Metaphor in Generative Grammar

The late 1960s witnessed a brief flourishing of attempts to treat metaphor within the syntactic framework of Generative Grammar. These were never fully worked out, but some of them interestingly foreshadow more recent developments. Generativists tended to locate metaphor itself in performance, but also tried to account for it in terms of the competence notion of grammatical deviance. Thus, (12)

(12) Sincerity may frighten the boy. (Chomsky 1965: 149)

was seen as grammatically deviant, because it violates selection restrictions, such as the feature [+ ANIMATE] that is assigned to the subject position for frighten. At first sight, such selectional rules would seem to capture semantic rather than syntactic information, but Chomsky at least (1965: 151) tends to treat them as syntactic phenomena, as they play a role in the functioning of the syntactic component. Thus, they can explain the ungrammaticality of (13)

(13) *The book who you read is a best seller.

1I only discuss treatments that presuppose the framework of the so-called ‘standard theory’ of Generative Grammar. This model is largely outdated, but I am not aware of any attempts at treating metaphor in more recent versions of GG like the Government-Binding model or the minimalist program.
Chomsky calls sentences that violate selection restrictions *semigrammatical*; they do not violate any strict subcategorization rules, and are ‘analogous’ to well-formed sentences that do observe the relevant selection restrictions. They may consequently receive a metaphorical or other nonliteral interpretation in an appropriate context (Chomsky 1965: 149). As the violation of selection restrictions is held to yield a particular kind of deviance, it might provide criteria for the recognition of metaphors. It was quickly noted, however, that many metaphors are not at all grammatically deviant, in essence, the same argument as was raised against Beardsley’s idea of logical clash or opposition as a precondition for metaphorical interpretation, and against Goodman’s idea of a category mistake: grammatically, there is nothing wrong with (10)

\[(10) \text{ The rock is becoming brittle with age.} \]

Rather, a specific metaphorical interpretation of this sentence may arise given an appropriate context where *the rock* refers to a university professor. In other words, it appear to be extra-linguistic factors like context and the actual referents, rather than violations of linguistic rules, that give rise to a metaphorical interpretation (Bickerton 1969, Reddy 1969). In an attempt to rescue the ‘standard generative view’, Matthews (1971) counters these objections by arguing that the ‘nonmetaphorical’ (10) contains an ‘underlying’ metaphor, presumably at the level of deep structure, which does involve a violation of selection restrictions, in this case, *the old professor emeritus is a rock*. Thus, like Beardsley, Matthews attempts to incorporate contextual factors into a purely linguistic level. He can do so only at the cost of making his approach untestable, however, for he gives no criteria whatsoever as to how or when the hearer is to recover such an ‘underlying’ metaphor.

In a generative framework, the interpretation of metaphors is as problematic as its recognition. It could be argued that a metaphor at the level of surface structure corresponds to a simile at deep structure level, but this faces all the objections raised above against referentialist approaches. Moreover, such a reconstruction, treating apparently deviant metaphors as well-formed deep structure similes, would not tally with the above treatment of deviance; for if deviance is considered a competence notion, the deviant sentences should themselves be generated at deep structure level. Instead, metaphorical interpretation could be seen as the ‘cancellation’ of incompatible features (or alternatively as the selection of the contextually appropriate ones), or, more in the line of Black’s theory, as the transfer of a feature from the metaphorically used expression (the focus) to its literal context. The former option runs into the difficulty that the mere cancellation of a feature does not yet suffice for the construction of
an appropriate property in an entirely different domain, as will be necessary in e.g. *Sally is a block of ice*: if the feature or restriction that *block of ice* applies to nonliving objects is removed, that does not yet tell the hearer how the feature of coldness *does* apply to Sally. The latter option, among other things, will have to account for the apparently noncompositional way in which features are transferred, especially across the copula *is* in simple predicative metaphors like *Man is a wolf*.1 Matthews is extremely vague about the process, but seems to lean towards the former option; Bickerton (1969) seems to prefer the latter.

Like Beardsley, Bickerton observes that the attributes involved may be merely stereotypes accepted in a language community, and need not be fixed elements of word meaning or categorical features of the referents. Thus, the stereotypical attribute of ‘hardness’ associated with *iron* is temporarily assigned or ‘attached’ to *determination* in the metaphorical *iron determination* (Bickerton 1969: § IV). He believes that the presence of such attributes makes words like *iron* ‘marked’, and allows for their being interpreted metaphorically, unlike ‘unmarked’ signs (as an example of which he mentions *steel*), which presumably do not have such attributes. Like Bickerton, Reddy (1969) makes the sensible claim that the interpretation of metaphor cannot rely on purely linguistic features, but has to take the referents and especially the context of utterance into account, but unfortunately he phrases his subsequent discussion of this ‘referentiality’ in rather idiosyncratic and impressionistic terms.

None of the generativist accounts mentioned, then, describes in any detail exactly what happens in metaphorical transfer; like Black’s interaction theory, they appear merely to relocate the transfer instead of explaining it, and thus leave ‘figurative’ transfer across domains unaccounted for. They also fail to relate the metaphorical interpretations systematically to the context of utterance, and to state consistently what exactly is being transferred: a feature, a property, or a linguistic expression. Finally, the presumption that all features are linguistically labelled implies almost automatically that the content of a metaphor can be paraphrased by the appropriate feature, thus yielding a kind of substitution theory; as we saw, such a paraphrase may approximate the metaphor’s content, but not its assertive power.

More specifically semantic restatements of this perspective (e.g., Cohen & Margalit 1972, Levin 1977) share the fundamental difficulties of trying to incorporate all transferred information into word meaning, and of insufficiently taking contextual influences into account. For Cohen & Margalit, metaphorical interpretation amounts to just the cancellation of semantic features of word meaning: ‘the metaphorical meanings of a word or phrase... are all contained, as it were, within its literal meaning or meanings. They are reached by removing any [relevant]

1This difficulty was first noted by Reddy (1969).
restrictions...’ (1972: 735). This approach likewise fails to address the problem of transferring features across domains or categories, and has to rely on features as in principle fixed and context-free elements of word meaning: it incorporates potential contextual information as features waiting to be cancelled! The alternative suggested by Bickerton and Reddy was not systematically exploited any further, in part because a precise semantic theory of context-dependence had not yet been developed at that time.

Reinhart (1976) raises an objection to both the adherents and the critics of metaphor-as-deviance: both deal with what she called focus interpretation only, viz. the transfer of contextually relevant features to the focus expression, e.g., the aspect ‘new’ to green in he expressed a green thought. This kind of interpretation is not specific to metaphor, she argues, unlike the vehicle interpretation that may arise from poetic metaphors: a double perception of the two concepts associated with the focus and the frame, and the construction of an ‘entirely new concept’ from the linking of these concepts. Reinhart admits, however, that the workings of this kind of interpretation are poorly understood, and thus her conclusions remain somewhat speculative; further, she appears to share the assumption that metaphorical interpretation typically involves a transfer of features that are already linguistically expressed.

On the whole, the generative-grammar approach to metaphor, and with it the notion of selectional restrictions, has disappeared quietly from the scene. Traces of it can be found in more recent work, however. Thus, Stern (1985) argues that metaphors express a ‘metaphorical character’, which he locates at the GG level of Logical Form, or more generally of deep structure. A more detailed discussion of Stern’s ideas, and a reformulation of Reinhart’s two kinds of interpretation, will appear in chapters 3.2 and 4 below.

2.2 Pragmatic Approaches

The most important general claim that defenders of a pragmatic theory hold against semantic views of metaphorical interpretation is that a single utterance of a metaphor does not yet lead to a change in the meanings of the words involved. Instead, they prefer to keep the semantic rules simple, stable and compositional, and delegate metaphor to some other mechanism of interpretation. Semantic approaches appeared to waver in answering the question of precisely

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1 It is significant in this respect that Cohen & Margalit conflate context-dependence with ambiguity: for them, a sentence that may have different referents in different contexts displays an ambiguity that should be resolved in actual speech (1972: 736).
what happens to word meanings in metaphor: on the one hand, they are reluctant to conclude
that a single utterance of, e.g., ‘man is a wolf’ can change the lexical meaning of wolf to include
cruel human beings, but on the other hand, they are equally reluctant to treat metaphor as a
deviation from ‘proper usage’, or as ‘saying one thing and meaning another’, and prefer to
locate the basis for metaphorical interpretation in the ‘meaning structure’ of the expressions
involved rather than in the intentions of the speaker (Beardsley 1962: 299, Black 1979a: 22). In
fact, however, theories starting from the falsity or anomaly of metaphor at the literal level, and
the metaphorical interpretation as being derivative from the recognition of this anomalous literal
interpretation, quite naturally lead to a pragmatic analysis. In such a pragmatic perspective, the
hearer interprets the speaker’s utterances literally (i.e., he takes her to intend to communicate
just what she says), unless the literal interpretation is so odd that a ‘pragmatic reinterpretation’
(i.e., a nonliteral construal of her utterance) seems called for. As a simple example, on such a
pragmatic analysis, a speaker uttering ‘Man is a wolf’ says something that is literally false, but
means, or intends to communicate, something that can be true, e.g., that men are cruel.

The development of pragmatic theory as a general theory of language use from the 1960s
onwards, especially in the work of H.P. Grice and John Searle, opened the possibility of a
principled formulation of such a pragmatic perspective. Both these authors take utterances
(full-blown speech acts, performed on a specific occasion by a specific speaker with specific
communicative intentions), rather than sentences or propositions, as the starting point of their
analysis. Ignoring the further differences between Grice and Searle, one can say that both see
pragmatics, as opposed to semantics, as crucially involving the speaker, or more precisely the
speaker’s intentions, as a theoretical parameter. And indeed it is just this appeal to speaker’s
intentions that marks off such pragmatic notions as ‘implicature’ and ‘speaker’s meaning’ from
semantic ones like ‘sentence meaning’ and ‘entailment’. Consequently, I will here define
pragmatics positively as dealing with regularities in language use that are guided by speaker’s
intentions, rather than negatively as the study of meaning minus truth conditions (the view of
pragmatics as the wastebasket of semantics), or enumeratively as the study of context-
dependence, speech acts, presupposition, implicature, etc. This definition rules out context-
dependence, or deixis, in so far as that can be described in semantic terms (see 3.1 below).

1 As is well known, these authors were largely inspired by J.L. Austin and the later Wittgenstein, both of whom
had criticized the overattention to the cognitive, truth-expressing dimension of literal language in linguistic
analysis (neither, incidentally, took intentions to be basic with respect to conventions or language games). While
this shift of emphasis restored nonliteral language as a legitimate device of communication, the cognitive
dimension has become, if anything, even more dominant in subsequent studies of nonliteral language such as
metaphor. The present study is no exception to this trend.
Such a positive, principled definition of pragmatics is important for several reasons. A general reason is that defining pragmatics negatively, in terms of the aspects of meaning that fall outside the reach of truth-conditional semantics, will lead to a change in the boundaries of pragmatic territory whenever semantic theory changes. For example, in his original formulation of the theory of implicature, Grice assumes classical extensional first-order predicate logic as a semantic representation language; but the subsequent development of intensional and, later, dynamic logics as metalanguages for natural-language semantics (as in Montague 1974; Groenendijk & Stokhof 1991) has considerably enlarged the range of phenomena that can be captured in semantic terms. These richer semantic languages can account for at least part of the phenomena that used to be delegated to pragmatics, such as context-dependence and presupposition (both of which, incidentally, will be seen to play a significant role in metaphorical interpretation in chapter 3). Presumably, pragmaticists will prefer having a clearly delineated field of investigation to having to redraw boundaries upon every important new development in a neighboring field.

Another reason, of particular relevance to the present study, is that a motivated definition of pragmatics carries the promise of a more principled answer to the question of what kind of process is involved in metaphorical interpretation; for, as will become clear, pragmatic principles such as those governing conversational implicature are qualitatively different from semantic rules of interpretation. A general argument as to why metaphor should be treated within pragmatics rather than semantics has, for as far as I know, not been given, but a principled formulation of pragmatic phenomena as being governed by intentions rather than conventions would at least make such an argument possible. Below, we will discuss both Grice’s and Searle’s view on metaphor, and review the options they have for presenting a knock-down argument for a pragmatic analysis, that is, an argument based on general theoretical and conceptual considerations.

2.2.1. The Gricean Program

One of the most influential attempts at a principled pragmatic theory has been Grice’s theory of conversational implicature, as outlined in ‘Logic and Conversation’ (first presented in 1968; reprinted in Grice 1989). Grice starts with the question of whether natural language expressions like and, or, some, etc. really have the same meaning as their formal logical counterparts such as
‘∨’, ‘∧’, etc. He claims that the alleged divergences between, e.g., logical ‘∧’ and natural-language and, such as a temporal element that appears in (14)

(14) They married and had a child.

are not due to any difference in meaning so much as to the principles governing the use of English and in conversation. To make the difference between the two clearer, he makes a central distinction between what is said and what is implied. Thus, a speaker uttering ‘they married and had a child’ merely says that two events took place without specifying any temporal order between them, but typically implies that the marrying took place before the having of a child.

Unfortunately, Grice does not define the notion of ‘what is said’ in general, although he says it is ‘closely related to the conventional meanings of the words (the sentence) [the speaker] has uttered’ (1989: 25); in other words, it is roughly what we would informally call the ‘literal meaning’ of an expression.¹ What is implied is equally loosely characterized as what is conveyed minus what is said, and thus constitutes no uniform class of phenomena (cf. Sadock 1978: 282). Grice divides this class into conventional, conversational, and other (aesthetic, moral, etc.) implicatures. Here, it is primarily the class of conversational implicatures that concerns us.

Conversational implicatures are inferences that the hearer makes on the assumption that the speaker’s utterances are ‘rational’, that is, efficient and directed towards the overall conversational goal. Grice calls the basic assumption of rationality on the part of the participants in a conversation the Cooperative Principle, which he loosely characterizes as an injunction to the speaker: ‘Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged’ (Grice 1989: 26; emphasis added). As the emphasized clauses show, the Cooperative Principle - or rather each specific instantiation of it - is essentially context-dependent: what counts as a rational move in a conversation obviously depends on what has just been said before, what the goal of the conversation is, etc. But rather than defining what constitutes cooperative behavior at a given stage of the conversation, Grice characterizes the more specific assumptions about the speaker’s behavior in terms of the four well-known Maxims (Grice 1989: 26-7):

¹In the literature, ‘what is said’ is usually equated with the extensional truth-conditional meaning of the sentence; here, I prefer to identify it with either the proposition expressed, or the proposition asserted by the speaker in uttering the sentence. This will keep us more or less neutral with respect to the semantic representation language.
Quantity:
1. Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange).
2. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

Quality:
Try to make your contribution one that is true.
1. Do not say what you believe to be false.
2. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

Relation:
Be relevant.

Manner:
1. Avoid ambiguity of expression.
2. Avoid ambiguity.
3. Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity).
4. Be orderly.

Clearly, these maxims do not specify how people actually communicate, as practically all speakers at times say things that are untrue, irrelevant, or uninformative. Neither are they norms or conventions of a specific culture or language community. Rather, they are claimed to be universal, language-independent principles of rational communication: they yield assumptions or expectations regarding other participants' behavior that all language users simply make and have to make. When a speaker fails to live up to the Cooperative Principle or to the Maxims, she may be held accountable for doing so. Consequently, a speaker who violates one or more of the Maxims, for example by lying or digressing, is usually taken to task for doing so. Likewise, a speaker may opt out of the Cooperative Principle when unable or unwilling to say anything in accordance with the Maxims. The most interesting case, however, arises when a speaker flouts, or openly violates, a Maxim, by saying something blatantly untrue, irrelevant, or otherwise inappropriate. Under the assumption that the speaker is on the whole behaving rationally and cooperatively (that is, not opting out of the Cooperative Principle), the hearer will then infer that the speaker wanted to communicate something else than what she said. In such a case, a conversational implicature arises. For example, when a philosophy professor
writes a letter of recommendation for student X which merely states ‘Mr. X’s command of English is excellent, and his attendance at tutorials has been regular’, he clearly is not opting out (otherwise he would not have written the letter at all), and knowingly says less than is required in such a letter. Thus, the reader will infer that the professor thinks X is no good at philosophy (Grice 1989: 33).

Criteria for Conversational Implicature

Conversational implicatures may be either **particularized** (arising from the uttering of a sentence ‘on a particular occasion and in virtue of special features of the context’ (1989: 37) or **generalized** (arising normally, and in the absence of particular circumstances, from an utterance). Thus, one might perhaps say that the temporal sense of *and* in (14) above normally arises from the utterance of conjunctions, as a generalized conversational implicature. Next, Grice distinguishes conversational implicature, whether particularized or generalized, from semantic entailment and conventional implicature (i.e., non-truthconditional but conventional aspects of conventional meaning) on the basis of several criteria (1989: 39-40). First, conversational implicatures may be **cancelled** without contradiction: thus, the Quantity implicature *John has exactly two cars*, arising from the utterance of (15), may be explicitly ruled out with no sense of anomaly (16):

(15) John has two cars.
(16) John has two cars, if not three.¹

Sadock (1978: 294) has observed that, conversely, implicatures may also be reinforced without redundancy, as in ‘John has two cars, and no more’. Second, implicatures are **nondetachable**, that is, there is no way of saying the same thing without conveying the same conversational implicature. Third, although conversational implicatures are in an important sense based on, or derivative from, the ‘conventional force’ (roughly, the literal or semantic meaning) of the sentence uttered, they are not themselves *part of* the meaning of the expressions used. Fourth, implicatures are not carried by what is said, but rather by the saying of it; in other words, they are *based on utterances* rather than on sentences or propositions. Fifth, as there may be various

¹Grice himself (1989: 39) seems to think that implicatures can be cancelled only when the speaker *opts out* of the Cooperative Principle, but this is not how cancellability has subsequently been interpreted; in any case, this may be too strong a requirement, as speakers can deny the implicatures of what they have said without thereby becoming uncooperative.
explanations of a speaker’s violating a specific Maxim, implicatures are characteristically indeterminate. Finally, an implicature is calculable: if a piece of conveyed information is pragmatically, rather than merely conventionally or linguistically, associated with an expression, the hearer should be able to set up a line of reasoning to figure out what the speaker meant to convey. Levinson has added the criterion that implicatures, unlike semantic entailments, are not language-or culture-dependent, but universal patterns of inference: ‘if the maxims are derivable from considerations of rational cooperation [rather than from language-specific norms or rules] we should expect them to be universal in application’ (1983: 120-1). Consequently, implicatures such as that arising from (14) above may be expected to occur in different languages.

Now most of these criteria are not at all unproblematic. Sadock (1978) observes that the criteria of being utterance-based and not being part of the expression’s meaning merely restate the definition of conversational implicature as not part of the conventional meaning, and do not give any further basis on which to decide whether an inference is conversational or not. The fifth criterion, that of indeterminacy, does not distinguish implicatures from expressions that have a semantically vague or context-dependent content. The criteria of cancellability and nondetachability provide more reliable diagnostics, but they, too, fail to distinguish implicature from semantic ambiguity. Ambiguous expressions may equally well be disambiguated by adding an explanatory phrase (cf. Sadock 1978: 293):

(17) Everyone speaks one language, although no one language is spoken by everyone.

The central weakness of the nondetachability criterion is that it crucially relies on the undefined notion of ‘what is said’; in the absence of an independent definition, one cannot determine whether or not two expressions that merely differ in the implicatures they convey really mean the same thing. Moreover, not all kinds of implicature equally display all these characteristics. Thus, several authors have pointed out that many Quality implicatures lack the characteristic of cancellability, as cancelling the implicature that the speaker believes what she says would yield Moore’s paradox (Sadock 1978: 293, Van der Sandt 1988: 58):

(18) The cat is on the mat, but I don’t believe it.

Likewise, Manner implicatures are by definition detachable, as they arise from the way in which something is said. Calculability, finally, seems a necessary requirement for a pragmatic
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inference, but, as Sadock (1978: 285) has pointed out, the Maxims are so powerful that they allow for the calculation of almost anything on the basis of any meaning. In conjunction, however, these criteria, especially those of cancellability, nondetachability, and calculability, give a reasonably reliable test for an inference being an implicature in most cases.

Metaphor and Implicature

Now let us see how metaphor is treated in this framework. Grice sees metaphor, together with irony, meiosis, and hyperbole, as a particularized conversational implicature arising from the flouting of the first Maxim of Quality:

Examples like *You are the cream in my coffee* characteristically involve categorial falsity, so the contradictory of what the speaker has made as if to say [i.e. an ironic interpretation] will, strictly speaking, be a truism; so it cannot be that such a speaker is trying to get across. The most likely supposition is that the speaker is attributing to his audience some feature or features in respect of which the audience resembles (more or less fancifully) the mentioned substance (Grice 1989: 34).

Obviously, this is no more than a rough outline of the recognition and, to some extent the interpretation, of metaphor, but at least it suggests an account in terms of a general theory of language use. It does not give us an account of how the hearer comes to understand what the speaker is trying to get across, but only when the hearer will start to look for an implicature. It does not tell how the intended resemblance should be found, only how the search for an implicature is triggered off: by the obvious falsity of (the conventional content of) the utterance. But even as it stands, this outline faces several difficulties. After discussing these, I will turn to several attempts at extension or revision of Grice’s original ideas as they appear in the work of Levinson, Stroik, Martinich, and Sperber & Wilson, and then turn to the question of whether metaphor can be considered a case of conversational implicature at all.

First of all, the criterion of categorial falsity at most allows for the recognition of a subclass of all metaphors: as seen in 2.1, (categorial) falsity of the sentence interpreted literally is hardly an adequate criterion of recognition. Grice is careful enough to say that metaphors *characteristically* involve categorical falsity, for they clearly do not *always* do so. Metaphorically interpretable statements like:
(19) Life is not a bed of roses.
(20) Anchorage is a cold city.

are necessarily and contingently true, respectively, when taken literally. These examples could therefore just as well be headed under the floutings of the Maxim of Quantity (compare tautologies like “War is war”), and the second Maxim of Manner (“Avoid ambiguity”), respectively - if anything. For (20) is in itself not really strange in any way; it may quite well be uttered literally and appropriately in a context in which the climatological properties of Anchorage are discussed. In other words, calling metaphor a flouting of the Maxim of Quality is not a necessary criterion to tell a metaphor when we see one. On the other hand, it is not a sufficient condition either, as it gives no indication of how we can distinguish metaphors from other floutings of the same maxim, such as irony. To tell metaphors from other figures of speech, we need more information than Grice’s characterization supplies. Presumably, any further necessary information should be retrieved either from the context of utterance or from the speaker’s intentions. Grice himself would probably locate the distinction between, say, metaphor and irony in the different speaker’s intentions. But he gives no suggestions as to how the hearer can recognize such intentions before, or at least independently of, determining what she says, and in any case, the task would then remain of accounting for precisely how such intentions can actually determine a metaphorical interpretation. In order to interpret a metaphor, the hearer would have to know those intentions prior to, or at least independently of, the semantic content of the sentence. As seen above, Beardsley (1962: 28-9) had already argued against the likelihood of such a supposition. Below, we will encounter other arguments that it is contextual factors, rather than speaker’s intentions, that determine metaphorical interpretation, and that, consequently, such interpretations attach to sentences in context rather than utterances.

Moreover, the idea of metaphor as a particularized conversational implicature seems slightly at odds with the demand that the literal interpretation typically involves categorial falsity, which is a property of sentence types rather than of tokens or utterances in context. For unless one assumes that also the word meanings of property expressions can vary with the context of

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1 According to Eco (1984: 144), metaphors involve violations of all maxims, a claim which (apart from being untrue) does not help much in recognizing metaphors as such. There are other confusions in Eco, e.g., his observation (ibid.) that ‘who speaks metaphorically is literally speaking lying,- and everyone knows it’. But of course uttering a sentence which everybody knows to be untrue can hardly constitute a lie,- the purpose of lying being precisely the speaking of an untruth with the intention of making the hearer believe that the speaker considers it true.

2 Cooper (1986: 71-7) also argues that speaker’s intentions cannot determine metaphorical meanings or contents.
utterance, sentences like *man is a factory* cannot be uttered truthfully in *any* context; but then, the utterance of a categorically false sentence will give rise to a Quality implicature in the *absence* of specific circumstances, that is, to a *generalized* conversational implicature. To maintain consistency, a Gricean approach would then be bound either to further weaken the basis of recognition to, say, mere factual falsity, or to divide metaphor into a generalized and a particularized variety.

Second, Grice’s account suggests that the actual assertion made by uttering a metaphor differs radically from the apparent one. The speaker only *seems* to say (or assert) the content that is literally expressed, but *really* communicates an implicature. But implicatures are by definition cancellable, so on this account, the speaker can always deny having implied the metaphorical content.¹ Below, we will see that a metaphorical interpretation cannot be cancelled quite so easily. But the cancellability of implicatures leads to a more general difficulty: it suggests that the speaker is not really committed to any propositional content at all. On the basis of the Cooperative Principle, the hearer rules out that the speaker asserts the false literal content; but, by definition, the speaker cannot be asserting the implicature either. On a strict interpretation of Grice’s definitions, then, a speaker does not assert *anything* by uttering a metaphor.

The assumption that metaphorical interpretations depend on what is literally asserted by a sentence is equally problematic, as it appears possible to interpret both a sentence and its negation metaphorically:

(21) John *is/is not* a wolf.

But if an interpretation’s being metaphorical in nature survives negation, and other operations on the asserted content, it may be simply *independent* of what is or seems to be asserted, and involve presupposed information instead. This point already appeared in the discussion of Goodman; I will return to it below.

Third, Grice appears at first blush to state a referentialist view of metaphor: the implicatum of a metaphor (that is, the propositional content it conveys) equals the conventional content of a corresponding comparison statement. He thus faces all the problems of the semantic referentialist views discussed in 2.1 above: the notion of similarity is not any clearer than that

¹One might object that metaphor, being a Quality implicature, cannot be cancelled just like Moore’s paradox (18); but the reasons for noncancellability are rather distinct in each case. Cancelling a metaphorical implicatum would not take the form ‘John is a wolf, but I don’t believe it’, but rather ‘John is a wolf, but he is not cruel’. I will return to this point shortly.
of metaphoricity, and in order to understand a metaphor correctly, we often need to do much more than merely add an explicit element of comparison like. In particular, Grice makes no attempt to reduce the possibly figurative character of the comparison itself, although he is aware of the problem, witness his remark that the audience resembles coffee creamer more or less fancifully. Closer inspection, however, suggests that Grice may maintain an even cruder referentialist position, for he does not consider the speaker just to be comparing the addressee of You are the cream in my coffee with coffee creamer, but to be ‘attributing some feature in respect of which the two resemble each other’. Now the crucial question is whether this feature is a linguistically expressed property: if so, Grice comes close to a classical substitution view of metaphor, as is suggested by his remark that the implicatum of ‘you are the cream in my coffee’ is ‘you are my pride and joy’. (ibid.). But this still leaves us with the problem of accounting for metaphors that have no, or no obvious, literal paraphrase. Unless supplemented by an independent theory of figurative meanings, a Gricean position will thus have to postulate that there is always another propositional content that a metaphorical utterance conveys. And obviously, this content has to be literally expressible, for otherwise nothing would be gained by the implicature analysis.

As a fourth and final point, note that Grice’s account presupposes a semantic analysis: we have to know the literal meaning of a statement and its literal truth value before we can attempt to reconstruct precisely what the speaker intended to convey by it. In this sense, a truth-conditional (or other) semantic theory would have to precede a pragmatic account of implicature. Grice is fully aware of this, witness remarks like ‘in some cases the conventional meaning of the words will determine what is implied’, and ‘the calculation of an implicature presupposes an initial knowledge of the conventional force of the expression’ (1989: 25, 39).

Again, in itself this is not a shortcoming, but it clearly indicates that the actual shape a full-blown pragmatic account will take cannot be considered in isolation of a semantic analysis.

I think the aforementioned criticisms boil down to the one basic objection that we can neither recognize an utterance as metaphorical nor figure out its actual implicature on the basis of the Cooperative Principle alone: as we saw, Grice’s definition of the Cooperative Principle does refer to contextual factors such as the stage of the conversation, but it does not incorporate them as explicit parameters. But the context does not only operate at the level of

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1Elsewhere, Grice (1989: 117) suggests that utterer’s occasion meanings, rather than word or sentence meanings, are the really basic notions in a theory of communication; but the idea that implicatures (which are precisely such utterer’s occasion meanings) are calculated only after the determination of a literal sentence meaning has become predominant in the literature. Cf. Van der Sandt (1988: 84n2).

2In 3.2.2 below, I will briefly discuss ‘neo-Gricean’ views, which hold that processes of pragmatic inferencing may precede the semantic interpretation.
implicature: often, contextual factors will already determine the semantic content on the basis of which implicatures are to be calculated. The clearest case in point are sentences containing indexicals, expressions like *I, here, and now*: in isolation, such sentences do not express any propositional content at all, let alone a content that can be called false or defective. Significantly, Grice’s own example *you are the cream in my coffee* already contains two indexical elements, so that it cannot even be assigned a literal meaning or content in the absence of a context; but then, one can hardly say that it involves categorial falsity at the sentence-type level. In fact, someone picking a can of his favourite brand of coffee creamer from a supermarket display may very well address it literally by uttering ‘You are the cream in my coffee’. As noted in 2.1 above, for many metaphors that seem semantically deviant or otherwise irreducibly odd at sentence type level, it is in fact rather easy to construct a context in which they are literally true. ‘Sally is a block of ice’ may be literally uttered by someone who finds Sally frozen solid in a cold storage chamber; ‘The interviewer hammered the senator’ may apply literally when an exasperated journalist takes up arms against his interlocutor. In other words, contextual factors already go into determining the ‘literal’ semantic content of a sentence; consequently, a theory of metaphor should at least specify at what level the contextual factors that are specific to metaphorical interpretation play a role. This will be discussed in more detail in 3.1, but for now the important point to keep in mind is: *it is not sentences in isolation or sentence types that receive a metaphorical interpretation, but sentences in a context*. Turning a Gricean account into a full-fledged theory of metaphor requires at least a more precise definition of literal meaning (‘what is said’), a refinement of the criteria for recognition, a more detailed account of contextual factors, and a specification of the actual process of metaphorical interpretation. Most importantly, a motivated answer should be given to the question at what level of interpretation the processes specific to metaphor actually occur.

*Elaborating on Grice: Levinson, Stroik, and Martinich*

Subsequent authors try to elaborate and improve on Grice’s remarks. Thus, Levinson (1983: 147-62) acknowledges the fact that a theory of implicature cannot on its own account for metaphorical interpretation. He stresses that it should operate on the basis of a semantic theory for literal meaning, and must be supplemented by a psychological theory of analogical reasoning. On his view, at least part of a full account of metaphorical interpretation should be conceptualist in nature. But he does not give any principled reasons for treating metaphor in a
pragmatic framework. Rather than arguing why metaphor should be treated in pragmatic terms, he merely sketches the potential practical advantages of such an analysis after discussing the problems that existing semantic approaches run into: ‘We have found substantial problems for both of the two main semantic approaches to metaphor, and it is reasonable to see what a pragmatic theory [...] has to offer in contrast. [It] will be based on the assumption that the metaphorical content of utterances will not be derived by principles of semantic interpretation...’ (1983: 156; emph. added).

Thus, although Levinson assumes rather than demonstrates that the principles involved are pragmatic in kind, he is well aware that a pragmatic account by itself cannot be the whole story. In this, he differs from T.S. Stroik, who in ‘The Pragmatics of Metaphor’ (1988) does claim that Grice’s theory of implicature is the only one that can adequately deal with all kinds of metaphor, and moreover that all metaphorical interpretations can be reconstructed on the basis of the Cooperative Principle alone: ‘metaphorical readings are indeed calculable from the CP’ (1988: 29). Stroik’s claim that the Cooperative Principle yields a full theory of metaphorical interpretation clashes with the above observation that Grice’s account is not at all complete. Let us briefly consider his argumentation.

To motivate the need for a pragmatic approach, Stroik raises some of the familiar objections against the semantic analyses that treat metaphor as a type of semantic anomaly (category mistake, clash of semantic features, or violation of sortal or selectional restrictions, as discussed in 2.1 above; cf. also Levin 1977). Such analyses, he argues, run into problems with metaphors that seem perfectly normal semantically:

(22) Anchorage is a cold city.
(23) Boys will be boys.

He argues that only a theory of implicature, based exclusively on the Cooperative Principle, can recognize these nondeviant cases as also requiring a metaphorical interpretation, and that ‘the calculation of the metaphorical interpretation itself follows from the Cooperative Principle... the Gricean framework provides a principled way of explaining what metaphorical meaning is and how it arises for ALL metaphor types’ (1988: 32). His defence of these claims is not very convincing, however. To begin with, precisely the cases which he adduces as refuting other theories, like (22) and (23), and which we saw to present difficulties for Grice’s own account as well, are conspicuously lacking in his own discussion of how the metaphorical interpretation is arrived at (1988: 29). He notes that these examples involve violations of other Maxims than
that of Quality, but does not make clear how, in general, violations of different Maxims may
give rise to the same kind of implicature, or how violations of the same Maxim may give rise to
different kinds of implicature, apart from making the general claim that the Maxim of Relation
warrants the ‘most appropriate’ interpretation of pragmatically deviant utterances. In other
words, he still fails to provide an adequate basis for the recognition of all, and only, metaphors.
But more importantly, Stroik is forced in the course of his argument to acknowledge that not
only the Cooperative Principle, but also the context, constrains the range of potential
metaphorical interpretations. His claim that the metaphorical interpretation is related to the
uttered sentence by a so-called ‘metaphorical relation’ \( r_m \) that typically relates conventional
stereotypes or ‘culturally designated features’ to expressions, such as the association of dirti-
ness with the term \textit{pig} (1988: 29) would seem a point in favor of semantic rather than wholly
pragmatic principles. But although he claims that metaphorical readings are indeed calculable on
the basis of the Cooperative Principle (ibid.), elsewhere he is forced to conclude that the
‘metaphorical relation’ is not always a matter of conventional associations: at times, ‘we also
apply contextually-determined \( r_m \)s to utterances to get metaphorical meaning’ (1988: 30; em-
phasis added). The Cooperative Principle in itself at most tells us when to look for a non-literal
interpretation of a given utterance \textit{in context}; it cannot predict what interpretation the hearer
will select without appealing to various additional contextual factors. But as Stroik’s account
does not further specify precisely which contextual factors determine nonliteral interpretations,
it is hardly more informative than Grice’s outline.

Martinich (1984) likewise attempts to turn Grice’s suggestions into a full-fledged theory of
metaphor. Like the other defenders of a pragmatic approach discussed here, he assumes rather
than argues that metaphor should be treated along Gricean lines. Thus, on the theoretical level,
his ideas mark no advance over Grice; in fact they introduce a number of problematic
innovations. To begin with, like Grice himself, he seems to assume that all metaphorical
expressions can be paraphrased by some literal predicate. He also downplays Grice’s idea that
the implicatum should be calculable by reasoning about the speaker’s intentions; rather, he
argues that metaphors lead to valid, or apparently valid, patterns of argument of the kind ‘My
love is a red rose; a red rose is beautiful, or highly-valued...; therefore, my love is beautiful, or
highly valued’. But this would mean that metaphorical interpretation involves processes of
semantic entailment rather than pragmatic inferencing. On Grice’s own picture, implicatures do
not yield valid arguments but \textit{defeasible} lines of reasoning, so Martinich’s claim would
constitute an argument against treating metaphor as an implicature. But it is flawed to begin
with: elsewhere, Martinich says that the first premiss of the ‘metaphorical argument’ should be
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taken in its literal meaning. Taken literally, however, most metaphors are false, which would make arguments in which they function as a premiss trivially valid: in classical logic, any conclusion can be derived from a falsehood.

Descriptively, Martinich fares no better: first, he gives no suggestions as to how to distinguish metaphor from other floutings of the first Maxim of Quality, like irony and hyperbole; secondly, he runs into problems with metaphors that do not flout this maxim, like *Life is not a bed of roses*. Such cases he calls ‘non-standard’ metaphors. They are not really false, he argues, but merely supposed to be false, because of some other violation, like uninformativeness: ‘since the assumption that the proposition expressed is (simply) true would make it defective, the audience supposes that the proposition is false’. So in this case, a true sentence leads to a false implicature, which in its turn gives rise to the intended, metaphorical implicature. Quite apart from the complexity involved in such a calculation, this proposal goes against the very grain of implicature theory; after all, the notion of implicature is meant precisely to account for apparently inappropriate utterances; so implicatures that themselves violate the Cooperative Principle introduce a considerable complication of the theory.

Effectively, Martinich says that such ‘nonstandard metaphors’ are rare, and derivative from standard ones; he dismisses many examples of a nonstandard type (like *Moscow is a dead city*) as not really being metaphors at all, but rather dead metaphors, or cases of meiosis; but calling a metaphor dead only shifts the problem back in time. In other words, Martinich turns literal falsity into a defining characteristic of ‘real’ or ‘standard’ metaphor rather than a testable claim, so that it loses much of its potential descriptive value (cf. Stern 1983: 590). Thus, he presents no real solution to the main problems a Gricean proposal faces, but merely introduces fresh complications.

Relevance Theory

An influential reinterpretation of Grice’s work is Sperber & Wilson’s Relevance Theory (1986a, b), according to which human information processing automatically aims at maximal relevance, or the greatest cognitive effect for the smallest processing effort. In interpreting utterances, Sperber & Wilson claim, human beings do not employ the four maxims subsumed under the Cooperative Principle as Grice suggested, but rather a single ‘super-maxim’, the Principle of Relevance. This principle reflects the general cognitive mechanism of achieving maximal efficiency in interpreting utterances, rather than a way of making sense out of
seemingly defective linguistic behavior. Sperber and Wilson take Grice to task for adhering to a paradigm of literal language, and a ‘norm’ or ‘maxim’ of truthfulness, which treats all nonliteral language as deviant. Further, implicature-like inferences made on the basis of the Principle of Relevance are claimed to be mostly deductive, or monotonic, unlike Grice’s original notion of conversational implicature, which is defeasible or non-monotonic. Sperber & Wilson argue that this principle on its own can explain the interaction between linguistic structure and background knowledge, so that the need for distinct pragmatic maxims or rules disappears (1986b: 161). As metaphor receives particular attention in their framework, it would be interesting to see if this approach marks an advance over an orthodox Gricean account.

It appears at once, however, that Sperber & Wilson’s brief discussion of metaphor in *Relevance* (1986a: 231-7) is even more general and programmatic than Grice’s initial statement. Neither does the further development of their ideas (1986b) get more factual on the questions left open. They do not make clear, for example, precisely when the hearer will derive a metaphorical interpretation, but only give a broad sketch how metaphor fits in with their theory.

Sperber & Wilson reject Grice’s proposal for treating metaphor as an implicature, and thus as a deviation from a ‘norm of truthfulness’, and take issue with his apparent assumption that a metaphor can be fully paraphrased in literal language. Instead, they see in metaphor and other loose language use an exploitation of ‘the fact that every utterance resembles, with a degree of closeness determined by considerations of relevance, a thought of the speaker’s’ (1986b: 170). That is, the ‘propositional form’ (roughly, the propositional content expressed, given a context) of a literally true utterance fully resembles that of the speaker’s thought, but that of a vague or metaphorical utterance only does so to a certain extent. In uttering a metaphor, they argue, the speaker conveys a belief not in the proposition expressed, but in some other proposition related to the one uttered through a relation of ‘interpretive resemblance’. A metaphor like *Jeremy is a lion* does not convey the speaker’s belief in the literal truth of her utterance, but conveys, with various degrees of strength, the ‘contextual implication’ that Jeremy is brave, and possibly various other contextual implications ‘in the context of stereotypical assumptions about lions’ (1986b: 167). No literal paraphrase will capture all and only these implications, so metaphorical language use cannot be fully paraphrased. More creative metaphors require the hearer to construct an appropriate context for deriving those implications (1986b:168; again, no concrete proposal is made as to how the hearer in general goes about constructing such a context). Sperber & Wilson’s account might thus be baptized a ‘pragmatic conceptualist’ view: most of the work in the interpretation of metaphor is done at the level of thought.
Despite their claimed divergence from Grice, Sperber & Wilson, like Grice himself, delegate metaphorical interpretation to the domain of language use, and assume that there is always some other propositional content, expressed in a wholly precise and literal Language of Thought, that a metaphor conveys. Their position thus looks suspiciously like an orthodox substitution view, albeit at the conceptual level. They hold that looseness resides in language usage rather than in the concepts expressed in language, and that even apparently imprecise concepts like *cup* and *bald* 'may well have clear-cut boundaries and still be used loosely', as in uttering 'James is bald' when James still has one or more hairs on his head (1986b: 164-5). In other words, they differ from Grice only in claiming that the speaker's *thoughts* and concepts, rather than 'truthful' language, are wholly precise and literal. It is unclear, however, what this approach makes of inherently vague concepts, such as *tall* or *red*; these concepts, and their linguistic expressions, do not have any clear-cut boundaries of application to begin with.

The lack of concrete predictions is not balanced by a precisely developed theoretical vocabulary: Sperber & Wilson do not, or not satisfactorily, define some of their central notions like 'context' and 'processing effort', so it is rather difficult to see how their theory works in the face of concrete examples. Moreover, the crucial concepts of relevance and context seem to be defined in terms of each other, and thus face the threat of circularity, witness their characterizations: 'the selection of a particular context is determined by the search for relevance' (1986a: 141) and 'an assumption is relevant in a context to the extent that its contextual effects in this context are large [and] the effort required to process it in this context is small' (1986a: 125).

In other words, Relevance Theory shares the basic views and problems of the orthodox Gricean view. While it claims to make no distinction between literal and figurative language, it introduces a parallel distinction between full and partial interpretive resemblance in order to deal with figures of speech. The speaker's thoughts themselves are assumed to be completely precise and literal. No attention is paid to the problems of metaphor noted above, such as the fact that there may be no more literal equivalent available, that some metaphors may be literally true, or that the resemblance involved may itself be figurative; remarking that the hearer has to 'construct his own context' is too general to be of much help here. Regarding the problems specific to a Gricean approach, then, Relevance Theory offers no new solutions at all.

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1It remains unclear, for example, why *I live near Paris* should require a greater processing effort than *I live in Paris*, as they claim (1986b: 163).
Is Metaphor a Conversational Implication?

The conclusion to be drawn from the above considerations should be clear by now: Grice’s theory of conversational implication and its recent restatements at best give a quite incomplete account of metaphor, and they are beset by a number of rather serious difficulties. Worse, these difficulties are essentially the same as those facing the semantic accounts described above: both approaches have a hard time dealing with metaphors that are not literally false or odd, and with distinguishing metaphors from other tropes. Descriptively at least, pragmatic accounts thus do not mark a significant advance over earlier treatments. But even acknowledging this, one could maintain that a treatment along Gricean lines is in essence correct, and that we just need to enrich or refine it in order to meet the aforementioned objections. Now a more fundamental question arises, however: does metaphorical interpretation really obey the same laws as more familiar cases of implication at all? To give a motivated answer, we should check whether metaphors actually display the characteristics of implication listed above.1

1. Cancellability. Metaphorical interpretations do not appear to be as easily cancellable as, say, Quantity implicatures; in (24),

(24) John is a pig, although he is not dirty.

the metaphorical interpretation is obviously not really cancelled at all: it merely indicates that dirtiness is not the right paraphrase, and that we must look for some other metaphorical interpretation in order to make sense of the utterance. Stroik (1988: 26) seems insufficiently aware of this, when he argues that the metaphorical interpretation of examples like (24) is cancellable. His claim can only mean that the speaker, in uttering (24), wants to attribute some other property to John than dirtiness, say, that of being a slob. But as said, this does not amount to the cancelling of the interpretation’s being metaphorical, but merely to the ruling out of one possible ‘result’ that metaphorical interpretation might yield. On the other hand, it seems that, unlike implicatures, metaphorical readings may be explicitly indicated: (25) sounds less odd than the explicit indication of genuine Quality implicatures like (26) and (27):

1Few authors have actually attempted to test whether metaphorical interpretation is a case of conversational implication. Stroik (1988) argues that metaphorical meanings are calculable and cancellable; Sadock (1979: 56-9), assuming that Grice’s account of nonliteral language is in essence correct, discusses various tests for distinguishing conventional and figurative language in general, and concludes that ‘they can at most be taken as suggestive’.
Figuratively speaking/in a sense, John is a pig.

Exaggerating, John is the friendliest person in the world.

Ironically speaking, he is a fine friend.

Such differences may not yet provide a knock-down argument against treating metaphor as an implicature; but as already noted, cancellability and reinforceability do not yet distinguish implicatures from semantic ambiguities anyway, so we will also have to consider the other criteria.

2. Non-detachability. Above, it was already noted that this criterion depends on a more precise definition of ‘what is said’, that is, roughly, of literal meaning; moreover, it cannot even distinguish implicature from semantic entailment: for if two sentences have exactly the same meaning, their entailments will also be identical. Be that as it may, there is some evidence suggesting that metaphorical interpretation does not survive substitution of expressions with the same extension, or even with the same intension (Stern 1979 97ff.; 1985: 683-6). For example, if we replace the predicate *cold* in (22) by a coextensional predicate, a metaphorical interpretation for the result (28) will either be absent or different:

(22) Anchorage is a cold city.
(28) Anchorage is a city with a low temperature.

Stern further argues that metaphors are not even intensional constructions; while a detailed treatment of this claim will have to wait until 3.1 below, an important point to realize here is that synonymy itself often is context-dependent (cf. Bartsch 1987a): property expressions like *cold* and *good* may denote different properties in different contexts, and may thus have different synonyms in different contexts; consequently, expressions with the same content given one context may mean, and thus imply, quite different things in other contexts. In other words, metaphor appears to lack the second defining characteristic of implicatures: two expressions with the same meaning need not lead to the same metaphorical interpretation.

3. Nonconventionality. Often, the metaphorical interpretation *does* involve properties that are conventionally associated with expressions, although these need not be part of the expression’s meaning in the narrower sense; as dirtiness, laziness, being a slob, etc. are conventionally rather than universally associated with the expression *pig*, the metaphorical interpretation of *Paul is a pig* appears at least to *some* extent conventionally rather than
conversationally determined. The question is far from trivial, and we will return to it later; but in any case, this observation also seems to weigh against treating metaphor as an implicature.

For the same reason, metaphorical interpretation does not unambiguously display Levinson’s claim that implicatures are universal either: the metaphorical interpretations of expressions like sun and cold may vary across languages (Morgan 1979: 143). Against this, a Gricean might reply that it is not the content or the implicatum, but the process of calculating an implicature that is universal. There is room for discussion here, but the odds seem to be against the pragmatic view.

4. Utterance-relatedness. Again, Grice himself gives no clear-cut criteria, but in the light of the above definition of pragmatics as essentially intention-governed, an utterance, being a pragmatic notion, is distinguished from a sentence in that it crucially involves the speaker’s intentions. Consequently, Griceans should argue that what counts for inferring a metaphorical interpretation is not whether a sentence is actually false in context, but whether the speaker believes it not to be true, or at the very least they should make clear that she does not intend to convey a belief in the sentence as interpreted literally. But no convincing arguments for this have ever been given. As we saw, metaphorical interpretation does not involve the proposition in isolation, but rather the proposition expressed given a context; but this is not yet a reason for taking metaphor as based on utterances rather than sentences. In fact, there is strong evidence against taking metaphorical interpretations as attached to utterances: given a context of utterance dealing with personality properties (which may be established by the interlocutor’s asking ‘Is Anchorage a nice place to live in?’), the interpretation of Anchorage is a cold city seems to be metaphorical regardless of any speaker actually uttering it, or actually intending it as metaphorical.¹ This becomes even clearer if we consider nondeclarative speech acts and sentences containing operators that affect assertive power:

(29)  
a. John is a wolf  
b. Is John a wolf?  
c. Perhaps John is a wolf.  
d. If John is a wolf, his wife has good reason to be so afraid of him.  
e. Peter said that John is a wolf.

In none of these cases does the speaker assert that John is either literally or metaphorically a wolf; despite this, the metaphorical reading of these sentences is preserved. Examples like these

¹ Nogales (1999: 111ff.) likewise argues that metaphor is relatively independent of speakers’ intentions.
suggest that metaphors do not really involve the speaker’s intentions at all. They also suggest that the metaphorical interpretation involves not what is, or seems to be, asserted, but what is presupposed. Like the metaphorical interpretations of (29a-e), presupposed information is typically preserved under negation, modals, and embedding as the antecedent of a conditional. A preliminary suggestion then, is that (29a-e) are interpreted metaphorically in virtue of what they presuppose, rather than what they (seem to) assert. The challenge then becomes to isolate the common presupposed contextual variable of these sentences; I will discuss these suggestions in detail in 3.2. Such an analysis might also account for the fact that metaphorical interpretation typically survives negation:

(30) Life is not a bed of roses.

(31) X is geen aasgier. Aasgieren zijn tenslotte hoogvliegers. (W.F. Hermans)

‘X is not a vulture. After all, vultures are high-flyers.’

Negation does not cancel the metaphorical interpretation, but just leads to the opposite of the figurative interpretation expressed by the non-negated sentence. Cases like (29a-e) should also suffice against viewing metaphorical utterances as performing a speech act of ‘metaphorizing’ or ‘inviting comparisons’, as some authors, e.g., Mack (1975) and MacCormac (1985: ch. 6), have done. L.J. Cohen (1979: 65-6) already observed that metaphor, unlike irony, is typically preserved under quotation, as in (29e), so it cannot simply be a speech act with a specific illocutionary force. If it were, this illocutionary force would disappear in the indirect context.1

5. Indeterminacy. Metaphors do seem to have this characteristic, but it is not exclusive to implicatures. Everyday indexicals like here and I, and vague terms like bald and good are equally indeterminate in the absence of a context. This indeterminacy is purely semantic: it follows clearly definable linguistic rules, and has nothing to do with general principles of rational communication.

6. Finally, as noted, calculability seems too strong to warrant an inference being an implicature: it is a necessary but not a sufficient criterion for an inference being conversationally implied (Sadock 1978), so it will not help us in telling whether a metaphor is an implicature either.

1 Against this, Lamarque (1982: 17) argues that sentences like (29e) are ambiguous, and may report either the sentence John is a wolf, ‘with the addition perhaps that we understood the literal sense’, or the (metaphorical) statement that John is a wolf. The interpretation of (29e) then depends on what its speaker intends in the context. Lamarque attaches literal meaning to the sentence type, rather than to the sentence in context; below, I will argue that it is precisely the context that determines whether a sentence is interpreted literally or metaphorically.
In short, metaphor does not appear to fit Grice's criteria for conversational implicature. It unequivocally does not satisfy some criteria, and it only satisfies others that fail to tell implicatures from other kinds of inference. Moreover, Grice's approach does not really solve any of the problems that semantic theories face, but merely postulates an additional level of interpretation that does not add anything in terms of explanatory value; it presupposes rather than describes all the main processes necessary for both the recognition and the interpretation of metaphorical language. Thus, there appears to be no particular theoretical or practical advantage in treating metaphors as implicatures arising from the uttering of a sentence that is false, or otherwise odd, in its context of utterance. Later elaborations of Grice's ideas focus on general theoretical problems rather than on the specifics of metaphor, but they come no closer to solving them. The most important theoretical point to be raised against a pragmatic view, however, is that metaphorical interpretations do not seem to be functions of speaker's intentions at all.

2.2.2. Searle

John Searle's paper 'Metaphor' (1979) contains a second influential statement of a pragmatic approach to metaphor. Much like Grice, Searle considers metaphor a matter of speaker's utterance meaning rather than word or sentence meaning. Unlike Grice, however, he maintains a descriptivist version of a pragmatic approach and sees a greater role for conventions in the interpretation of metaphor. He also sets out to formulate a set of principles of metaphorical interpretation, and to characterize the notions of literal meaning and literal utterance. Because of these attempts to describe precisely and in detail what happens in metaphor, Searle's work remains one of the more valuable studies on metaphor, even if not all of his conclusions appear to be tenable.

For Searle, the question of how metaphors work is part of the more general question of how speaker's meaning and sentence meaning come apart; that is, of how a speaker can say one thing and intend to communicate something else. In this, he argues, metaphor is much like other nonliteral uses of language, such as irony and indirect speech acts. He seems to think the claim that metaphor belongs to speaker's meaning is a matter of definition rather than an empirical hypothesis. Diachronically, he holds, a metaphor may lead to changes in word meaning, but synchronically, it cannot do so: 'to the extent that there has been a genuine change in meaning... to precisely that extent the locution is no longer metaphorical' (1979: 100). Searle thus
maintains a strictly synchronic perspective, and actually needs such a perspective for his strict separation between literal word or sentence meaning and metaphorical speaker’s meaning. But even if this is an a priori claim, it is not unproblematic: it implies that dead metaphors, being conventionalized, are no longer metaphors. This clashes with Searle’s observation that metaphors may fill lexical gaps and thus fill semantic needs, and with his practice of illustrating principles of metaphorical interpretation by means of largely conventionalized metaphors (1979: 98).

Against the idea that there is a specific metaphorical meaning at the level of sentence meaning, Searle makes the true but uninformative remark that ‘sentences and words have only the meanings that they have’ (1979: 93). This remark should be seen, however, in the light of his conviction that the literal meaning of a sentence, or singular expression, only determines specific truth conditions relative to a set of background assumptions which are themselves nonrepresentational, or non-intentional (1979: 95-6; 1983: ch. 5). This picture allows Searle, in later work (1992: 178-9), to maintain that the expression cut has the same literal meaning (or intentional content) in different applications like cut the grass, cut the cake, and cut my skin; he further distinguishes these ‘literal’ occurrences from what he calls the ‘genuinely metaphorical’ ones in cut salaries, cut classes, a rather odd move, as all these meanings are fully conventionalized, and thus do not count as metaphors according to Searle’s own definition. In conventionalized ways of expression, it will be difficult to draw a sharp line between the ‘strictly literal’ and the ‘genuinely metaphorical’ applications. Moreover, it leaves open the possibility that, if cut the cake is uttered against a background of grass-cutting assumptions, we interpret cut as the kind of cutting related to grass rather than to cake; but this does not seem possible, given the linguistic context of cut. Consequently, it would be better to take the different occurrences as realizations of a single polysemic complex, each having a slightly different meaning.1

Morgan (1979), who on the whole agrees with Searle, argues in more detail against the idea of treating metaphor at the semantic level. He holds that a single metaphorical utterance cannot change the compositional semantic rules of a language, and that a divergent utterance meaning is not in any literal sense a change in sentence meaning (1979: 137-8). But the former is of course precisely what happens diachronically when a metaphor becomes conventionalized, so it should be accounted for in some way; the latter point merely repeats, rather than motivates, the claim that metaphor belongs to speaker’s meaning. Morgan, like Searle, assumes that the semantic rules of a language rigidly determine the same literal meaning for all applications of an

1See also 3.1 and 4.3 below.
expression in any context, and thus takes literal meanings to be more fixed and determinate than they really are.

Although Searle does not consider ‘metaphorical meaning’ a semantic matter, he allows for it to be expressible in truth-conditional terms; that is, metaphors indirectly convey propositional contents which are themselves literal. For example, in uttering ‘Sally is a block of ice’, the speaker means to communicate metaphorically a literal content like *Sally is an unemotional and unresponsive person*. This literal content itself is not a fully adequate paraphrase of the metaphor, because in order to reach this content, the hearer has to ‘go through’ the literal meaning: ‘the metaphorical utterance does more than just convey its truth conditions. It conveys its truth conditions by way of some other semantic content, whose truth conditions are not part of the truth conditions of the utterance’ (1979: 123). Once again, there is no argument why this impossibility to paraphrase is a **pragmatic** effect: one might as well say in a Fregean manner that the presentation of an object under a certain description is never fully equivalent in all contexts to its presentation under some other description.

Another aspect of this assumption is that speaker’s meaning can be captured in a *sentence*, that is, there is always some literal sentence functioning as an approximate paraphrase of the metaphorical speaker meaning’s truth conditions (1979: 96). This is somewhat at odds with Searle’s own observation that novel metaphors may fill a lexical gap; in such cases, a ‘literal’ paraphrase would have to be constructed rather than discovered. Searle gives no account of this construction process, which has to be accounted for regardless of whether such uses quickly die off into ‘literal’ meanings of words or sentences. He does not address the crucial question of whether this presumably different status of catachretic metaphors corresponds to any difference in interpretation.

Regarding the problem of recognition (which is as central for pragmatic theories as for semantic approaches based on the anomaly or falsity of the sentence in its literal interpretation), Searle is even less factual than Grice. He mentions defectiveness of the utterance if taken literally as the trigger leading the hearer to start looking for a nonliteral (speaker’s) meaning; this defectiveness may consist in ‘obvious falsehood, semantic nonsense, violations of the rules of speech acts or... of conversational principles’ (1979: 114). In 2.1 above, however, it already became clear that no such criterion of falsity or inappropriateness is in itself either necessary or sufficient to distinguish metaphor from literal language and from other figures of speech. Subsequently, Searle (who acknowledges this difficulty) rephrases his criterion as ‘there must be some shared strategies on the basis of which the hearer can recognize that the utterance is not *intended* literally’ (1979: 120; emph. added). The criterion of recognition thus
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turns out to appeal to speaker’s intentions, and thus becomes vulnerable to all the objections raised against treating metaphors as utterance-based. Worse, it still does not account for why the hearer construes a metaphorical interpretation rather than another nonliteral meaning. Presumably, Searle would invoke speaker’s intentions here as well.

Searle’s Principles of Metaphorical Interpretation

The next task Searle faces is to characterize a number of principles that capture what a metaphor ‘calls to mind’, that is, how the hearer infers from the utterance of ‘S is P’ that the speaker meant to convey S is R (1979: 113-20). He lists the following principles, while recognizing that there may be others: 1. R is one of the defining characteristics of P, as John is a giant will be taken to mean John is big. As defined here, however, the relation between S is P and S is R is simply that of semantic entailment, but obviously, such an entailment relation cannot be what is involved if the premise (in this case, the utterance in its literal interpretation) is false; moreover, the idea of a semantic entailment yielding the metaphorical meaning hardly squares with Searle’s postulate that metaphor is a matter of pragmatic speaker’s meaning. 2. R is a salient or well known property that literally applies to P; e.g., the term pig is conventionally associated with filth, gluttony, and sloppiness, and this assures the metaphorical interpretation for ‘Sam is a pig’. Such information may likewise be treated as playing a role at the semantic level, even if it does not form part of an expression’s meaning in the strict sense, that is, it does not help to determine its reference. 3. P’s are said or believed to be R, even though speaker and hearer know that R is false of P; thus, the hearer will take ‘Sam is a gorilla’ to mean that Sam is mean, nasty, and prone to violence. Thus stated, however, this principle is incoherent: one cannot believe that gorillas are fierce and nasty while at the same time knowing that this belief is false. Moreover, one may well doubt whether the average language user really knows, or believes, that gorillas are in fact shy and sensitive. This point applies to culturally formed stereotypes in general: while the information they carry may very well be factually wrong, they may still be accepted as true, or as describing how animals or groups of people ‘really’ are. This is of course how stereotypes may exercise their pernicious influence in communicating and reaffirming prejudices: someone may well be told that a belief about a group of humans or species of animals is mistaken, but any act of an individual of that group or species confirming the stereotype will assure the language user that the general belief is correct. The third principle, then, collapses into the second: both involve the (possibly erroneous) stereotypical information conventionally associated with expressions. This
information may be known not to be correct among a particular subgroup of the language community, but the community as a whole will tend to hold to it. 4. P is not R, and not like R, but it is a 'fact about our sensibility' that we perceive a connection between e.g. block of ice and unemotional. This principle reduces the very problem of cross-category metaphor or figurative similarity to the level of 'brute facts', and hence is of little explanatory value. 5. The condition of being P is like the condition of being R, although there is no identity or similarity between P and R things, as in calling someone who has just been promoted an 'aristocrat'. 6. P and R are the same or similar in meaning, but P is restricted in its application; that is, P is applied to different classes, or categories, of objects. As an example, Searle mentions how parliaments and brains can be called 'addled', even though this expression literally applies to eggs; he does not specify the relevant R, however, nor does he explain how it comes about on the basis of its literal meaning and its new linguistic context. Principles 7 and 8 attempt to carry this kind of analysis over to metaphors that are not of the simple 'S is P' type, and to other figures, like metonymy.

The first three of these principles openly appeal to features or properties that are conventionally associated with expressions. Implicitly, the fourth does, too: many of our 'sensibilities' regarding cross-categorial transfers of labels are language- and culture-specific, and thus conventionalized. There are important differences in the possible ranges of metaphorical meanings that color terms, animal names, and expressions like sun, cold, etc. can take in different languages like Nepali, Arab, and Chinese (Morgan 1979: 143). In different languages, the same terms can thus express different metaphorical contents; but conversely, the same metaphorical content may be translated using different terms: the Chinese translation of sweet words metaphorically means 'specious words', not 'pleasant words' as it would in English, while the Arabic equivalent of English son of a bitch is ibn al-labwa (lit., 'son of a lioness'; Stern 1979: 310-1). That is, there seems to be considerably more room for conventional factors in the interpretation of metaphor than pragmatic theories acknowledge. 2

Searle does not seem to notice that some of his principles involve what Beardsley calls 'connotations' and what Black calls 'associated commonplaces'. One difficulty of those approaches was to account for the contextual creation of new associations; Searle summarily dismisses this phenomenon, which he considers the core of Black's notion of 'interaction' (1979: 119). He argues that different literal expressions (Black's 'frames'), when combined

1I am unable to see the difference between the condition of being P and the property of P.
2Searle seems more aware of this than Grice, witness his remarks that 'the principles we seek are not included, or at least not entirely included, in a theory of semantic competence', and that 'irony, unlike metaphor, does not require any conventions' (1979: 93, 121; emph. added).
with the same metaphorically interpreted term, merely constrain the possible values of the metaphorical speaker’s meanings in different ways; on this account, ‘his voice is sandpaper’ and ‘his argument is sandpaper’ yield two distinct metaphorical interpretations because of the different literal contexts involved. But this analysis departs from the principles summarized above: those were stated exclusively in terms of the $P$- and $R$-expressions that relate the literal $S$ is $P$ to the metaphorical $S$ is $R$. In these last examples, Searle appeals to the $S$-term as well. In other words, in a real sense an interaction takes place here: the literal ‘frame’ plays a role already in the determination of possible values for the metaphorical expression, rather than merely in constraining the range of possible outcomes of this process, as Searle argues elsewhere (1979: 115). Moreover, his dismissal of the creation of novel associations still leaves catachretic metaphors unaccounted for.¹

A serious general shortcoming, apart from the specific difficulties already noted, is that Searle likewise fails to address the problem of figurative similarity, or what Jurjâni called *tamthil*-based metaphors: as formulated, his principles 4 and 6 beg the crucial question of what it is that makes the same expression applied to objects in different categories or domains the ‘same or similar in meaning’. Searle notes the existence of figurative similarity, but does not try to reduce it; he takes it to be just a ‘brute fact’ that hearers are able to deal with it. Theoretically, such a move is rather less than satisfactory. The main problem with these principles, then, is not so much that they are wrong, but rather that they are too broad or general, and too unconstrained (cf. Sadock 1979: 144); according to Martinich (1984), they are even so weak as to be totally vacuous. They comprise an arbitrary list rather than generalizations, and do not follow uniform rules or principles: some are semantic or have a decidedly semantic flavor, others appeal to pragmatic principles, and yet others involve general psychological abilities. One may of course argue that metaphor is not a unitary phenomenon, and that the pragmatic principles involved mimic such other processes, but then the question arises what theoretical gain is made by introducing a pragmatic level that can be reduced to other factors again.

In short, Searle’s analysis marks no real advance over its pragmatic rivals. Its main asset is its explicit characterization of the alleged stages and mechanisms of metaphorical interpretation; but at crucial points, it fails to be convincing. The upshot of the discussion of Grice’s approach was that metaphorical interpretation cannot be considered a case of conversational implicature; Searle likewise insufficiently motivates the treatment of metaphor as a case of speaker’s

¹Novel catachretic metaphors are also hard to reconcile with Searle’s ‘Principle of Expressibility’, that any meaning whatever can be exactly expressed in the language,— i.e., as a literal meaning (Searle 1969: 19-22; 1979: 121).
meaning. Further, he holds on to the assumption that the conveyed meaning can always be expressed in literal terms. Indeed, both Grice and Searle are forced to hold on to this conviction, for if they take a nonliteral implicatum or speaker's meaning to explain metaphorical utterance, their accounts become circular. Pragmatic accounts, then, boil down to sophisticated restate-
ments of a substitution view that the speaker says one thing and means another in uttering a metaphor. If one accepts that some metaphors cannot be paraphrased, this would in itself seem sufficient reason for rejecting a strictly pragmatic approach.

All the semantic and the pragmatic approaches discussed thus far fail to distinguish between what is said or asserted, what is presupposed, and what is implied by (a speaker uttering) a metaphor. Grice and Searle make little progress in this respect. Moreover, they maintain a
narrow synchronic and relatively context-free notion of literal meaning (a trait they share with Beardsley and Black). Both also take metaphorical interpretation as 'secondary meaning', or more specifically as derived from a false or anomalous literal meaning. In essence, their difficulties arise from their uncritical acceptance of the folk theory of literal meaning and of the romantic view that metaphor is essentially different from literal language. Metaphorical interpretations attach to sentences in context rather than to sentence types or utterances; below, I will argue that they can be accounted for without any appeal to speaker's intentions. It remains to be seen what happens if we take context-dependence seriously at the level of semantic interpretation.

2.3 THE DAVIDSONIAN PROGRAM: METAPHOR WITHOUT MEANING

Donald Davidson, in his 1979 paper 'What Metaphors Mean', further radicalizes pragmatic approaches like Grice's and Searle's, although he retains the central assumptions of synchronic semantics. Like them, he sees metaphor as belonging to the domain of language use rather than that of linguistic meaning: 'I think metaphor belongs exclusively to the domain of use. It is something brought off by the imaginative employment of words and sentences and depends entirely on the ordinary meanings of those words and hence on the ordinary meanings of the sentences they comprise' (1979: 31). However, Davidson goes beyond Grice and Searle in denying metaphors anything like a propositional or cognitive content even at the pragmatic level of speaker's meaning or utterance meaning. Whatever meaning a metaphor possesses, he argues, is just its literal meaning: 'metaphors mean what the words, in their most literal interpretation, mean, and nothing more' (1979: 30). Put differently, metaphors do not express or convey any
cognitive content apart from their literal meaning. They may lead to insights, but they do not express them: ‘metaphor can [...] make us appreciate some fact - but not by standing for, or expressing, the fact’ (1979: 44). Rather, a metaphor makes the hearer perceive a similarity, or ‘attend to some likeness’ (1979: 31); that is, it does not assert any likeness, but merely invites the hearer to find one. Typically, however, it does not make the hearer notice any specific fact; rather, it may yield an indefinite range of insights which are not, in general, propositional in nature: they lead to a ‘seeing-as’ rather than a ‘seeing-that’ (1979: 44-5). Thus, for Davidson, understanding a metaphor has more in common with perceiving an image than with interpreting a thought-expressing sentence: it involves a creative effort on the part of the hearer, and is not guided by any rules or conventions (1979: 29; cf. 1990: 313n).

If these claims are correct, most if not all of the analyses considered thus far must have been fundamentally misguided; for practically all authors before Davidson hold that one or more expressions occurring in a metaphor undergo a change in meaning, or at least that metaphors express a specifically ‘metaphorical’ content at some level of analysis, be it semantic or pragmatic. Davidson’s theses call into question some of the central assumptions concerning what a theory of metaphor, and by extension a theory of meaning for a natural language, should look like. Small wonder, then, that they have provoked heated debate: they have been severely criticized by some, and equally enthusiastically endorsed and elaborated by others. Here I will try to assess precisely what Davidson’s challenge amounts to, and to see whether his conclusions are really forced upon us.

To begin with, it should be noted that Davidson’s argument is largely negative: he is primarily concerned with how metaphors do not work, and with what they do not mean. He is far less specific on what a positive account of metaphor should look like. The positive claims he does make, however, are clearly referentialist in character: ‘a metaphor makes us attend to a likeness between two things’, or alternatively, ‘metaphor makes us see one thing as another’ (1979: 31, 45; emphases added). On such a view, metaphors obviously have much in common with comparisons and similes; but Davidson rejects two forms that a referentialist or comparison view could take. On the one hand, he dismisses the idea that metaphor is an abbreviated simile (which implies that the literal meaning of the metaphor is equal to the literal meaning of the simile) because of his earlier postulate that metaphor results from the creative use of expressions that are odd or patently untrue on their literal interpretation (1979: 37). As this claim merely repeats his earlier characterization of metaphor as being based on an odd literal meaning, it is in itself not

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much of an argument. But for Davidson, the metaphor-as-condensed-simile view has another, fundamental defect, which it shares with a second kind of referentialist view that he rejects, namely the idea that the figurative meaning of a metaphor equals the literal meaning of a corresponding simile (what Tirrell 1991 calls a ‘reductive simile theory’). Both varieties make the specific metaphorical meaning all too clear and obvious, he argues, as they identify it with the literal meaning of an often ‘painfully trivial’ simile: trivial, because everything is like everything in some respect (1979: 37). Such views, he argues, confuse the particular points of similarity that the metaphor (or, for that matter, the simile) may lead us to discover with the comparison’s literal meaning, which is merely the assertion that one thing is like another without getting into particulars. Metaphors cannot be paraphrased by similes or other linguistic expressions, not because they have some unique or mysterious metaphorical meaning, but because ‘there is nothing there to paraphrase’ (1979: 30). Davidson holds that the insights that metaphors lead to (i.e., the likenesses of which they make the hearer aware) are not usually propositional in kind.

We may thus call Davidson’s approach a ‘causal referentialist view’ of sorts: it takes metaphor to cause or inspire, rather than express, insights into likenesses between things. But, being in essence a referentialist position, it also shares the major shortcomings of such approaches as noted in 2.1 above. Davidson pays little if any attention to these difficulties: thus, he nowhere addresses the fact that likeness or similarity may itself be figurative, and thus can hardly serve to explain metaphor. Likewise, he largely ignores the problem of finding the similarity that is presumably called to the hearer’s attention by metaphors that are not of the simple form A is B.2

More in general, Davidson makes no attempt to develop a full-fledged theory of the recognition and interpretation of metaphor, although he acknowledges the importance of both tasks. He mostly takes the patent (actual or presumed) falsity of a sentence interpreted literally, to be an adequate criterion of recognition: ‘absurdity or contradiction in a metaphorical sentence guarantees we will not believe it and invites us, under proper circumstances, to take the sentence metaphorically’ (1979: 40; emph. added). But, as seen above, mere falsity or absurdity does not yet distinguish metaphor from irony, hyperbole, or simply false literal statements of fact. Davidson acknowledges that patently true sentences like ‘business is business’ or ‘no man is an island’ may also invite nonliteral construal: ‘the ordinary meaning in the context of use is odd enough to prompt us to disregard the question of literal truth’ (ibid.; emph. added). But this still does not suffice to distinguish metaphors from other figures, or to deal with contingently true

1 Although Davidson is reluctant to use this term, and prefers expressions like ‘lead to’, ‘bring off’, or ‘nudge’, he comes close to claiming that metaphors cause rather than express insights. Rorty (1987; 1989) takes the next logical step by explicitly making this claim.

2 Davidson mentions this last problem in passing (1979: 36), but does no more than note that it is a problem.
sentences like *Anchorage is a cold city*. Thus, to provide more adequate criteria for the recognition of metaphor, Davidson would have to appeal more explicitly to either contextual factors or speaker's intentions. The latter is the line taken by Cooper (1986), whose views are on the whole those of Davidson: he argues that an utterance is metaphorical (or more general, non-literal) if and only if the speaker utters it without intending to convey a belief in its literal truth (1986: 112). Likewise, Vicente (1992: 55) holds that 'it is speaker's intentions that make an utterance metaphorical [...] talk of a sentence being meant metaphorically can only mean that the speaker assumes that her intention will be recognized'. But both these formulations turn the criterion of speaker's intentions into an *a priori* characteristic rather than a criterion for recognition; on such an account, any counterexample of an unintentional metaphor will not be a metaphor by definition, even though it may be interpreted in the same way as a 'real' metaphor. This account does not tell us either how such a non-literal utterance should be interpreted: as metaphor, irony, an indirect speech act, etc. Moreover, it already appeared in 2.2 above how problematic an appeal to speaker's intentions is.

Regarding the interpretation of metaphor, Davidson is barely more factual. He merely repeats his claims that the use of a metaphor leads the hearer to see a likeness between two things, and that this happens on the basis of the literal meanings of the expressions used. Thus, the utterance of (32)

(32) Tolstoy was a great moralizing infant.

will invite the hearer to look for resemblances between Tolstoy as an adult and (moralizing) infants. But whatever specific resemblance is found between these things cannot be a cognitive content that is asserted or implied by the uttering of the metaphor; for, Davidson argues, if it were, it should be possible to paraphrase the effect of a metaphor in literal language,- and he holds that this cannot be done (1979: 44-5). However, from the idea that metaphors 'nudge' hearers into noticing likenesses, and from the fact that the range of such likenesses is indefinite or difficult to paraphrase, it does not necessarily follow that such effects are not cognitive contents. For one thing, a lot of literal language is equally vague, indefinite, or hard to paraphrase, but that is obviously no reason to deny that such mundane but vague sentences as (33)

1Note that, in both quotes, Davidson appeals to contextual factors as determining whether a sentence should be interpreted figuratively, without ever attempting to specify such factors.

2Cooper (1986: 178) does not consider this a problem; but his definition fails to distinguish 'genuine' metaphor not only from other figures, but also from all usages that involve mentioning rather than using an expression (acting, quoting, etc.).
Davidson is tall.

express no cognitive content: having no definite propositional or cognitive content is not the same, of course, as having no content at all. For another, there is no reason to assume that any specific likeness between Tolstoy and infants is necessarily nonpropositional in character. In fact, Davidson in some places appears to argue against his own thesis, as when he says that ‘a simile tells us, in part, what a metaphor merely nudges us into noting’ (1979: 36), implying that metaphors do have an effect that can at least in part be expressed by a simile. In short, difficulty of paraphrase is no argument against the idea of metaphors expressing a propositional content.

The only way to maintain that metaphors do not express or prompt any cognitive contents, then, would be to take up the idea that a metaphor leads the hearer to see one thing as another, which Davidson suggests at one point. This requires a separate argument that seeing-as is distinct from understanding a fact, and different from the mere awareness of some likeness, which can in principle be phrased as a statement of fact (cf. Blackburn 1983: 175). Blackburn indeed argues that seeing A as B, e.g., seeing knowledge as having foundations or time as flowing, is not really the same as knowing or believing a fact; someone believing that knowledge has foundations ‘simply believes he has a belief, when in fact he has none’ (1983: 176). But this would amount to arguing that even dead metaphors do not express cognitive contents, and that a lot of our everyday metaphors, for which probably no more literal equivalent could be found, do not express thoughts and beliefs. This would banish most, if not all, of our everyday talk to the realm of the non-cognitive. Apart from these extremely counterintuitive consequences, arguing that seeing-as is not real understanding requires far more motivation than either Davidson or Blackburn gives. One may equally well attribute the difficulty of paraphrasing Tolstoy was an infant to the fact that the adult individual Tolstoy is presented under the description of being an infant, and that no other, more literal, expression presents the same object under the same description, even though this presentation expresses a cognitive content as much as any other.¹

Using the terminology of asserting and implying, we can state more precisely what an adequate paraphrase should do: it should at least make the same assertion and, perhaps, carry the same implications as well. But then it is clear that even paraphrasing so familiar a metaphor as man is a wolf by man is cruel yields the explicit assertion that man has the specific property of being cruel, which is at most implied by the metaphor, while at the same time leaving implicit the categorial assertion that man in some sense belongs to the class of wolves which the metaphor

¹Cf. Kemp (1991) for more detailed criticism of the claim that metaphor involves an irreducible aspect-perception or seeing-as; see also Stern (1979: 293). This point will be elaborated in 3.1.3 below.
appears to make. Likewise, the paraphrase \textit{man is like a wolf} loses the categorial assertion of the metaphorical original. But there is nothing mysterious about these differences in meaning; they can be stated in the familiar terminology of assertive power.

The idea that metaphors do convey a more or less specific content in context gains in likelihood if we look at metaphors not as sentences in isolation but as occurring within larger pieces of discourse. When Keynes said (34)

(34) God has arrived. I met him on the 5.15 train.

doing his audience to find resemblances between Wittgenstein and God. The first sentence makes a specific assertion about a specific individual described as God, and the information it expresses is necessary for the correct interpretation of the second sentence. Likewise, if the first part of the sentence sequence (35)

(35) The chairman ploughed through the discussion. It was over in 15 minutes.

did no more than start the hearer on a search for similarities between chairmen and ploughmen, or between chairing discussions and ploughing fields, it would become difficult to account for how the second sentence can further specify the (rather concrete) information given in the first. If metaphors really did no more than what Davidson thinks they do, the hearer would often not be able to correctly interpret larger stretches of discourse in which they occur.\footnote{For as far as I am aware, Tirrell (1989) is the first to pay systematic attention to ‘metaphorical extension’, i.e., the fact that metaphors may establish ‘anaphoric chains’ in larger stretches of discourse; cf. 3.2.4 below.}

Davidson’s main objection against metaphor as involving an extended meaning in context is that such an extended meaning of, e.g., \textit{infant} would correctly apply to its object, the adult Tolstoy. In that case, he claims, we would merely be learning something about the meaning of the word \textit{infant}, or a new use of the word in a new context, whereas true metaphors involve the use of words already understood. If metaphors have a special meaning that correctly applies to the objects spoken about, ‘all sense of metaphor evaporates’ (1979: 32). Davidson argues against conflating the ‘learning of a new use for an old word with using a word already understood; in one case, our attention is directed to language, in the other, to what language is about’ (1979: 35). But this distinction assumes a rather fixed notion of literal meaning, and a clear awareness on the hearer’s part of such a distinction; it also seems to presume a strict analytic-synthetic distinction which he elsewhere, following Quine (1961), rejects. Even if an expression applies ‘correctly’ in a
derived sense, a feeling of clash or conflict with other, more ‘literal’ senses may well remain present, as happens with many dead metaphors that may still be recognized as metaphorical. Once again, Davidson’s argumentation is not conclusive.

The view of metaphor as prompting, rather than expressing or implying, insights leads to further difficulties when we look at dead metaphor. Davidson is forced to make an essential distinction between live and dead metaphors: he treats the latter as interpreted wholly along conventional lines, and thus as expressing literal cognitive contents themselves. However, he warns against seeing the literal meaning of a dead metaphor as a mere petrification of a supposed metaphorical meaning: whereas the dead metaphor he was burned up ‘suggests no more than that he was very angry’, when it was still alive ‘it would have led us to picture fire in the eyes or smoke coming from the ears’ (1979: 36). Surely, however, some effect of the live metaphor he was burned up must have been something close to the meaning of he was very angry, for how else could that have become the conventional meaning of the dead metaphor? But Davidson is committed to the claim that the metaphor, when still alive, does not express this or any other determinate content. One would think of the wearing off of metaphor as a gradual process, but a Davidsonian account is bound to postulate a qualitative jump at some point along the way: it has to treat all metaphors as either live or dead, and does not allow for anything in between. It cannot treat metaphor as gradually acquiring a cognitive content, as sentences either do or do not express a content: Davidson not only leaves no room for a transitional phase between live and dead metaphor, but is also bound to treat the two as wholly unrelated. This makes the question of how a dying metaphor acquires a content at all even more difficult to answer.

Background: Davidson’s Theory of Interpretation

Davidson’s strictures against metaphor as expressing or conveying a specific metaphorical meaning or cognitive content seem to be motivated less by the empirical difficulties that rival accounts encounter than by his more general views on meaning. Attributing a metaphorical meaning to an expression occurring in a specific context, he argues, merely names the effect, but does not explain it. Literal meanings and literal truth conditions, by contrast, ‘can be assigned to words and sentences apart from particular contexts of use. This is why adverting to them has genuine explanatory power’ (1979: 31; emph. added). This suggests that Davidson’s remarks on metaphor should be seen against the background of his conviction that a theory of meaning for a

1Goodman (1979: 177) has already noted the conflict of this claim with Davidson’s requirement that the literal and metaphorical application of a term be the same.
natural language like English can be stated in extensional terms, viz., by specifying the truth conditions of the sentences that can be formed in it. While Davidson occasionally acknowledges the pervasive presence of indexical or context-dependent expressions in languages, he maintains a belief that the truth conditions of sentences can be stated in terms of absolute truth, that is, truth not relativized to the context of utterance: if the object language contains indexical terms, the metalanguage should likewise be rendered indexical (cf. Davidson 1984 [1967]: 33-4).

The meanings of individual terms are subsequently defined in terms of conditions of reference and satisfaction, which he considers logically posterior to the truth conditions of sentences. Word meanings thus do not play any explanatory role in his theory of meaning. Davidson apparently holds that the meanings of individual terms are in principle context-free; but then he will have a hard time dealing with the pervasive and systematic context-dependence of various natural-language expressions, such as indexicals and demonstratives like I, here, this; tensed verbs; and indeed, property expressions, which, as seen in the introduction, are prime candidates for metaphorical usage. In abstraction from a particular context of use, a hearer will not always know the literal interpretation, or even the ‘most’ literal interpretation of adjectives like sharp: we speak equally literally about sharp knives, sharp criticism, sharp minds, sharp cold, etc.

The assumption that literal meanings can be formulated in isolation from particular contexts also clashes with Davidson’s own remarks, quoted above, that only ‘under proper circumstances’ or ‘in the context of use’ will the hearer recognize and construe a sentence as metaphorical. Davidson nowhere suggests how the recognition and interpretation of metaphor is related to the context, nor does he specify whether or not those contextual factors should include the speaker’s intentions. As seen, Cooper and Vicente conclude that intentions are crucial in making an utterance metaphorical; but Davidson probably cannot do so without giving up his central theoretical premiss that a theory of meaning can and should be stated in terms of absolute truth rather than truth relativized to a context (let alone intentions), a premiss he clearly wants to hold on to: ‘the ultimate source of both objectivity and communication is the triangle that, by relating speaker, interpreter, and the world, determines the contents of thought and speech. Given this source, there is no room for a relativized concept of truth’ (1990: 325).

Even more puzzling remarks concerning literal meaning and intentions appear in a later paper, ‘A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs’ (1986), which takes malapropisms, or deviations from standard meaning like saying ‘epitaph’ when one means ‘epithet’, as its starting point. There, Davidson argues against the attempt to explain linguistic communication in terms of shared linguistic rules or conventions: even if the speaker intentionally or unintentionally deviates from

1See the essays collected in Davidson (1984) for various statements of this position.
the conventional meanings of the words (as in figures of speech and in malapropisms, respectively), the hearer has no difficulty in finding out what she was trying to communicate. Communication, Davidson argues, primarily involves understanding the utterer’s occasion meaning, and to do so the hearer must construct a ‘passing theory’ of utterance interpretation. This passing theory, he claims, cannot be called a language in the sense of a set of shared linguistic rules or conventions: it may be idiosyncratic and include nonlinguistic knowledge, such as the ability to infer the (non-conventional) implicatures arising from what is said. On the other hand, the hearer’s ‘prior theory’ (his own set of rules and presumptions about the speaker’s rules, abstracted from specific contexts of use), being an idiolect, does not qualify as a shared set of linguistic rules either. This leads Davidson to conclude that ‘there is no such thing as a language’; that is, there is no set of shared and structured rules or conventions that plays a fundamental role in a theory of communication.

On such an account, communication primarily consists in the hearer’s constructing a passing theory of what Davidson calls the speaker’s ‘first meanings’ (that is, roughly, utterer’s occasion meanings in Grice’s sense). This construction of first meanings crucially involves the recognition of the speaker’s intentions, rather than the conventional meanings of expressions. Understanding what the speaker wanted to communicate may, but need not, be based on the hearer’s knowledge of the expression’s literal meanings (that is, on his ‘prior theory’): ‘of course it often happens that we can descry the literal meaning of a word or phrase by first appreciating what the speaker was getting at’ (1986: 435). Such a setup would also allow for metaphors to be interpreted in terms of the direct recognition of the speaker’s intentions rather than on the basis of the literal meaning of her utterance. If the utterance of a metaphor communicates specific speaker’s intentions, those intentions could thus be taken as a ‘first meaning’. This is completely at odds with Davidson’s earlier remarks in ‘What Metaphors Mean’, but it does indeed seem to be what he is getting at: ‘every deviation from ordinary usage, as long as it is agreed on for the moment [...] is in the passing theory as a feature of what the words mean on that occasion. Such meanings, transient though they may be, are literal; they are what I have called first meanings’ (1990: 442-3; emphasis added). In other words, at the level of utterer’s occasion meanings or ‘first meanings’, figurative meaning would then become literal by definition. This view of literal meaning is, of course, a far cry from Davidson’s earlier view that literal meaning is precisely what is abstracted from particular speaker’s intentions and contexts of utterance.

There seem to be only two ways in which Davidson can resolve this apparent contradiction between his earlier and his later views; both are equally problematic. First, he can resort to the wildly implausible - claim that metaphor, unlike malapropism, is not a first meaning, in that the
former, but not the latter, presupposes a given system of rules or conventions, or to speak with Davidson himself, first meanings. This claim is wildly implausible because, obviously, malapropisms depend on or exploit the existing language just as much as metaphors do, except that they do not exploit its semantic resources but phonological similarities between given items. It is, however, precisely the claim Davidson subsequently makes: ‘a metaphor is wholly dependent linguistically on the usual meanings of words... a malapropism, on the other hand, is sheer invention’ (1991: 1; cf. Glüer 1995: 82-3).

The other way in which Davidson could try to salvage his original view of ‘metaphor without meaning’ is by denying that metaphor involves speaker’s intentions, and thus by denying that metaphor has anything to do with non-natural meaning at all. Although he nowhere explicitly does so, appeals to speaker’s intentions in order to explain metaphor are conspicuously absent from his 1979 account; this is the more surprising in the light of his earlier claim that metaphor belongs to the (pre-eminently intention-based) domain of language use. It is probably no coincidence that he consistently speaks of the metaphor itself, rather than the speaker uttering a metaphor, as ‘making us attend to’, ‘nudging us into noting’, or ‘making us see’, some likeness. This can hardly be a metonymical shorthand for ‘the speaker, in uttering a metaphor, makes us attend, etc.’; for if a speaker uttered a metaphor with the specific intention of having the hearer notice a likeness, she would of course be communicating a cognitive content or (non-natural) meaning. And communicating (i.e., expressing or implying) meanings is precisely what, for Davidson, metaphorical language use does not do. Moreover, such an analysis in terms of speaker’s intentions would turn metaphor into a specific kind of speech act, a view that has by now largely been discredited.1

**Beyond Davidson: Richard Rorty**

Despite his lack of emphasis on speaker’s intentions, Davidson himself does not explicitly take the step of totally denying that metaphor plays any role in intentional communication at all. This is, however, precisely the step taken by Richard Rorty (1987, 1989), who elaborates on the epistemological background of Davidson’s position, while at the same time further radicalizing it. Rorty explicitly claims that metaphors cause beliefs and insights, rather than expressing or even inviting them (1987: 284). That is, he argues, metaphors should be understood in the same way that we come to understand anomalous natural phenomena, such as newly discovered species of

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1Black (1979b: 188-9) criticizes Davidson’s ideas for potentially having such an outcome, but puts more emphasis on the role of speaker’s intentions than Davidson himself would.
animals or kinds of birdsong never heard before. In Rorty's view, such anomalies cause us to change our theories, but do not themselves belong to any antecedent theory. Davidson's approach to metaphor, he argues, 'takes [metaphor and other flights of genius] out of the sphere of what Grice calls 'non-natural meaning' and reduces them to the level of mere stimuli' (1987: 291). True, in this perspective the break between natural and non-natural meaning is 'pragmatic and temporary' rather than 'metaphysical' or ontologically given, but it is essential nonetheless. The trouble with such a position is, of course, that one can only maintain it by wholly ignoring any kind of communicative intention on the part of the speaker and any kind of meaning words used metaphorically may have in so far as they already belong to a conventional system of signs, but this is precisely what Rorty does. If metaphors are merely anomalous causes rather than carriers of insights, however, it becomes next to impossible to explain why they cause one specific insight rather than another, say, why the utterance of man is a wolf causes the insight that man is cruel rather than that $2 + 2 = 4$, or anything else.

Rorty thus presents even less of an account of how metaphors work than Davidson. But he considers this a virtue rather than a vice: he believes that metaphors are expressions of genius, and as impervious to analysis as genius itself: 'to ask "how metaphors work" is like asking how genius works [...] If we knew how metaphors work they would be like the magician’s illusions: matters of amusement, rather than [...] indispensable instruments of moral and intellectual progress' (1987: 296). Metaphor falls outside the realm of meaning and cognitive content, he thinks, just as 'the genius who transcends the predictable thereby transcends the cognitive and the meaningful' (1987: 292). For Rorty, then, metaphors do not have a place in a language game when alive; but when new they cause a theory to change, they die off into literalness. Consequently, 'it is essential to Davidson’s view that dead metaphors are not metaphors' (1987: 292): in so far as a sentence expresses a cognitive content, it has a role in a language game and cannot be a metaphor.

It will be clear that Rorty’s is an extremely romantic view: he rejects the very possibility of theorizing about how metaphors work. It amounts to a causal variety of what Scheffler (1979: 82-7) calls an intuitionistic approach, according to which the hearer 'grasps' the effect of a metaphor in an act of intuition that allows for no rational reconstruction. He can only do so by adding to Davidson’s rejection of metaphors as expressing a specific content an even more radical rejection of live metaphor as playing any role in intention- or convention-governed communication at all. This implies that all theorizing about metaphor is a priori pointless. Readers who find such claims convincing are well advised to put this book aside without further ado.

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1 I think Rorty’s claim that metaphors, having no fixed place in a language game, are neither true nor false (1989: 18) goes too far even for a Davidsonian approach. Davidson still allows for metaphor to have 'literal' truth conditions.
2.4 Conceptualist Views: Cognitive Semantics

The approaches to metaphor considered thus far, whether semantic or pragmatic, and whether referentialist or descriptivist, all face essentially the same difficulties. They all take falsity or anomaly as a criterion that allows for the recognition of metaphor, and they all think of metaphorical interpretation as secondary, and based on processes that are rather different from those governing the interpretation of literal language. Moreover, all approaches have problems with novel metaphors and the apparent ‘creation of similarity’. In large part, these difficulties stem from the assumptions that literal language has an absolute priority over figurative language and that metaphor is essentially deviant, or at least distinct, from the literal. Perhaps, then, we should look elsewhere for a fully satisfactory account of metaphor. This is indeed what has been claimed by defenders of a conceptualist view, i.e., theorists who hold that metaphor is not so much a matter of language as of thought. Although Aristotle, Jurjáni, and Vico at times seem to come close to such a view, the first modern author to unambiguously argue for it was I.A. Richards. For him, linguistic metaphors are really just reflections of something more basic: ‘thought is metaphoric, and proceeds by comparison, and the metaphors of language derive therefrom’ (Richards 1936: 94). In metaphor, he argues, two thoughts are ‘active together’. Before Black, few authors have taken up Richards’s programmatic and rather impressionistic remarks.¹

A much more detailed version of a conceptualist view was developed in the 1980s, and has become known under the name of ‘cognitive semantics’. The main aspects of this approach were first formulated in Lakoff & Johnson’s Metaphors We Live By (1980), and subsequently elaborated in Johnson (1987) and Lakoff (1987). Lakoff & Johnson’s ideas have become quite influential, and various extensions and elaborations of their framework have appeared since then.² I will focus on the three works mentioned, however, as they express the relatively undisputed ‘theoretical core’ of the cognitive semantics movement.

Lakoff and Johnson mount a full-scale attack against ‘objectivist’ semantics (comprising, roughly, theories that try to capture meaning in terms of such notions as truth conditions and reference), and an ‘objectivist’ view of metaphor, which they believe to be represented by the work of Grice, Searle, and Davidson. Model-theoretic or truth-conditional approaches to semantics, they argue, cannot adequately account for the widespread metaphorical expressions occurring in everyday language, such as I attacked his argument, I’m feeling down, You’re

¹Beardsley (1958: 159) and Black (1962: 47) already noted Richards’s wavering terminology.
wasting my time, etc. These are ‘metaphors we live by’: we do not even perceive them as metaphorical, for they are just reflections of the way we actually conceptualize the world. They are linguistic realizations of ‘metaphorical concepts’ such as ARGUMENT IS WAR; HAPPY IS UP, SAD IS DOWN; TIME IS MONEY, etc. Metaphors, on this view, are not just linguistic expressions of a specific kind, but conceptual structures. Such structures are an irreducible part of the way in which we conceptualize the world; consequently, their linguistic realizations should not be seen as deviant or ungrammatical. ‘Objectivist’ approaches, by contrast, are alleged to define meaning as an unmediated relation between symbols and ‘objective reality’, and to be committed to objectively existing entities and categories or ‘natural kinds’. Thus, Lakoff & Johnson argue, they fail to take the human understanding or conceptualization of the world into account, and cannot properly account for the pervasiveness of such everyday metaphors.

As an alternative to such views, Lakoff & Johnson outline an ‘experientialist’ theory that defines meaning and truth in terms of ‘embodied understanding’. Conceptual structure is ‘embodied’ in so far as it arises from preconceptual experience, which is itself claimed to be ‘directly meaningful’ (Lakoff 1987: 267). Preconceptual experiences are structured in terms of basic-level categories, which are ‘characterized by gestalt perception, mental imagery, and motor movements’ (ibid.), and roughly correspond to what Rosch (1978) calls ‘prototypes’; and of so-called image schemas or metaphorical concepts: ‘relatively simple structures and orientations that constantly recur in our everyday experience’, such as PATHS, FORCES, CONTAINERS, UP-DOWN, PART-WHOLE, etc. (ibid.). Abstract conceptual structure, by contrast, is held to be indirectly meaningful in that it arises from basic-level and image-schema structure by metaphorical projection, or by projection to superordinate or subordinate categories. In metaphorical projections like THEORIES ARE CONTAINERS, the ‘target domain’ (the concept THEORY) is structured in terms of some more familiar and initially more elaborately structured ‘source domain’ (the concept CONTAINER).

Cognitive semantics thus promises to reduce linguistic metaphor to conceptual processes, and to integrate the understanding of metaphor into a general theory of conceptualization. Perhaps, then, this approach can provide solutions to the difficulties that face the theories discussed above. In fact, it amounts to an even bolder challenge to those familiar semantic and pragmatic theories, and indeed to the very framework in which they are formulated, than Davidson’s approach. Much of its argument against ‘objectivist semantics’, however, is phrased in such sweeping terms as to be hardly worth taking seriously. Lakoff and Johnson often resort to straw man argumentation, and rarely explicitly ascribe specific doctrines to
specific authors;¹ worse, where they do, they seriously distort the views they criticize by numerous errors of a rather elementary nature.² The ‘objectivist tradition’ they fulminate against is not ‘fundamentally misguided’ or ‘humanly irrelevant’ but simply nonexistent.

The entire case against ‘objectivist semantics’ boils down to the familiar phenomenological argument that meaning and truth are not just relations between symbol systems and the world, but are mediated by human intentionality or subjectivity, which in cognitive semantics is expressed more specifically as ‘understanding’ or ‘embodied imagination’? There is no reason, pace Lakoff & Johnson’s oft-repeated claim to the contrary, why model-theoretic semantics should be a priori incompatible with such a view. Model-theoretic semantics is not a metaphysical theory of ‘objective reality’ or an epistemological theory of ‘objectively existing categories’ or ‘natural kinds’. It really is just semantics, and is metaphysically and epistemologically neutral, as is its logical ancestor, Tarski’s theory of truth (cf. Blackburn 1983: ch. 8). It makes no substantive claims as to what truth is, or how we can know it. Neither is it committed to any specific doctrine about word meanings or categories; it just aims at describing how words, given the meaning they have, contribute to sentence meanings.

The cognitive semanticists’ attacks against ‘objectivist semantics’ are thus little more than heroic fights against windmills. Nonetheless, their own theory contains many suggestions that at least initially seem interesting and plausible. The importance of their approach lies in their attempt to overcome the limitations of semantic and pragmatic approaches by reducing linguistic metaphor to conceptualizations. They focus on ‘dead’ or conventionalized metaphor, and on the role it plays in our conceptualizations, and consequently argue that much of conventional semantic structure is motivated rather than arbitrary. They thus try to moderate,

¹This strategy is explicitly acknowledged in Lakoff & Turner (1989: 136): ‘we have not tried to say who claims what, to associate particular authors with positions. Our main interest has been in simply stating what the positions are’. Jackendoff & Aaron (1991: 321-2) already criticize this argumentative tactic.

²To mention just a few examples: Lakoff & Johnson (1980: 182; cf. Johnson (1987) and Lakoff (1987), passim) believe that model-theoretic semantics presents a theory of ‘purely objective’ or ‘absolute’ truth (and of ‘objectively existing categories’). Not even Tarski, the precursor of model-theoretic semantics, made such a claim: his truth predicate is relative to a language (and, in later formulations, to a model), and no claims regarding ‘objective truth’ (whatever that may be) are made. Lakoff & Johnson also believe that in Tarski’s biconditional ‘S’ is true iff p, ‘p is a statement in some universally applicable logical language’ (1980: 183), rather than just in the metalanguage in which the truth predicate for the object language is defined. Lakoff (1987: 247-8) mistakenly defines Kaplan’s notion of character as ‘meaning minus truth conditions’ and thinks this notion ‘cannot be model-theoretical’, whereas in fact character is defined model-theoretically as a function from contexts to intensions (see 3.1 below). Johnson (1987: 168) tends to equate Frege’s notion of Vorstellung (‘image’ or ‘representation’) as opposed to ‘rationality’, and believes that Searle’s idea that all meaning is a matter of intentionality is somehow opposed to truth-conditional semantics (1987: 179). In fact, Searle precisely defines intentional contents partly in terms of truth or satisfaction conditions. This inventory of blatant misreadings could easily be expanded.

³The phenomenological heritage of cognitive semantics clearly appears in Johnson’s claim, echoing Heidegger, that ‘our understanding is our mode of “being in the world”’ (1987: 102)
though not to eliminate, the folk theory of literal meaning and the strict distinction between literal and metaphorical language. Their approach has also been applied to diachronic meaning change (Sweetser 1990), and thus suggests an alternative to a strictly synchronic perspective as well. I will therefore try to discuss their approach in its own terms for as far as possible, and examine whether it meets the goals it sets for itself.

On the whole, however, cognitive semantics is hardly satisfactory as a theory. To begin with, central notions like ‘meaning’, ‘culture’, ‘rationality’, and ‘imagination’ are largely left undefined, or are defined rather carelessly. Another surprising, and rather problematic, feature is that Lakoff’s rejection of ‘objectivist’ semantics leads to the evaporation of the distinction between semantics and pragmatics (Lakoff 1987: 171). Objectivists, Lakoff states, see semantics as independent of, and more important than, pragmatics: the former supposedly deals with ‘objective’ word and sentence meanings, abstracted away from contexts and speakers, whereas the latter ‘merely’ involves speaker’s intentions and use. In cognitive semantics, by contrast, the language user’s subjectivity mediates between the linguistic expression and its meaning, and consequently the need to maintain an ‘objectivist’ distinction between semantics and pragmatics is claimed to drop out. As a matter of fact, Lakoff had already argued for giving up the strict distinction between semantic and pragmatic inferences in favor of a generalized notion of ‘contextual entailment’ in earlier writings (see e.g. Lakoff 1975). Such a single monolithic notion of entailment, however, threatens to obliterate the intuitively clear differences in behavior between semantic entailment, presupposition, and implicature that were discussed in 2.2 above. For example, presuppositions are preserved under negation and modals, unlike semantic entailments; implicatures differ from both presupposition and entailment in that they are cancellable and nondetachable. Moreover, these respective inferences involve different kinds of relations: semantic entailments are relations between sentences, or sentences in context (or alternatively between propositions), presuppositions are relations between sentences, contexts, (and perhaps speakers) and propositions, while implicatures are utterance- rather than sentence-bound. It is not at all clear how these distinct characteristics could be adequately accounted for in one generalized notion of contextual entailment.

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1For example, Lakoff & Johnson claim that We need new alternative sources of energy ‘means something very different to the president of Mobil Oil from what it means to the president of Friends of the Earth’ (1980: 12), but they do not specify precisely what is supposed to be different in these meanings for different persons.

2Elsewhere, Lakoff defines pragmatics as the ‘semantics of communication’, and claims that it involves the same conceptual tools as semantics (1987: 583), but does not elaborate on this.

3Objections against Lakoff’s ‘monolithic view of meaning’ also appear in Levinson (2000: 192, 243). See 3.2 below for more extensive discussion of the differences between entailment, presupposition, and implicature.
The existing statements of cognitive semantics are hardly more factual than earlier accounts on the question of when a sentence is interpreted metaphorically rather than literally. For all the importance that Lakoff & Johnson attach to linguistic metaphors as instantiations of conceptual metaphors, they pay surprisingly little attention to the actual process of recognizing and interpreting a sentence as metaphorical. They reject the 'objectivist' accounts that treat metaphor as semantically deviant or arising from a defective 'literal meaning', but offer no clear alternative, even though it is obviously necessary. After all, some sentences can be interpreted either literally or metaphorically, and the same sentence may receive different metaphorical interpretations in different contexts. For example, (36)

(36) She has high standards. (Lakoff & Johnson 1980: 16)

may be interpreted literally as a statement about the standards in which some person stacks her compact discs, or metaphorically as a statement about her moral norms. Although Lakoff and Johnson at times acknowledge contextual influences on interpretation, they do not attempt to systematically incorporate such influences in their account. At times, they even hint at giving up the distinction between literal and metaphorical language altogether, but this hardly seems a realistic option; for obviously, not all acts of interpretation involve the understanding of one thing in terms of another, and thus a mapping between two distinct conceptual domains. Lakoff and Johnson are thus bound to maintain some distinction between literal and metaphorical language (or rather, perhaps, between literal and metaphorical concepts), but nowhere do they describe how this distinction is to be made in practice.

Some brief remarks regarding the recognition of metaphor appear in Johnson (1981); but these remarks, incomplete as they are, constitute an important retreat in comparison with the bold steps taken in Metaphors We Live By. Johnson argues that 'an adequate account of metaphor can be given only at the level of the utterance in its total context' (1981: 22; emphasis in original). He does not argue, however, that metaphorical interpretations are directly determined by contextual factors (as the widespread and nondeviant character of everyday metaphors might suggest), but rather that they arise from the inappropriateness of the literal meaning of the sentence in context. He stresses that metaphorical readings arise not from any semantic deviance of the sentence, but from the 'tension between the literal reading and its context' (1981: 23; emph. added). On this analysis, metaphorical interpretation involves an appeal to a defective 'literal meaning' after all, and is somehow derived from the literal interpretation: it arises out of the pragmatic reinterpretation of a defective meaning of the
sentence in context. But this is of course exactly the kind of ‘objectivist’ view that Lakoff & Johnson reject, together with the idea that there are speaker-independent sentence meanings at all (cf. Lakoff 1987: 171-2). The ‘contextual-inappropriateness view’ is also quite at odds with the earlier idea that metaphor is not in any sense deviant or derived. In other words, in so far as Lakoff & Johnson give any account of the recognition of metaphor at all, they fall back on an ‘objectivist’ position.

In addition to the problem of when interpretation involves an image schema (i.e., when a sentence is recognized as a metaphor), there is the question of precisely which schema applies. Cognitive semanticists make much of the ‘generalizations’ (i.e., the explanation of a wide range of data in terms of a few basic notions) that image schemas allow for; but these underlying metaphorical concepts are often arrived at in a rather arbitrary and ad hoc manner. Thus, the ‘ontological’ and ‘orientational’ metaphors (later generically called ‘image schemas’) that underly many linguistic expressions are sometimes so abstract as to be hardly ‘metaphorical’ in any useful sense of the word. For example, THE MIND IS AN ENTITY (Lakoff & Johnson 1980: 27) seems less an instance of a metaphorical mapping between different domains than just a case of the reification of abstract notions; for how would the conceptual domain or image schema of ENTITY be structured and elaborated in any interesting manner? There is no clear reason why this kind of reification should involve specifically metaphorical transfers. Further, as Jackendoff & Aaron (1991: 324) have noted, the choice of a particular schema is often rather arbitrary: thus, it is not explained why You’re wasting my time involves the metaphorical concept TIME IS MONEY, rather than some more specific or more general schema, like TIME IS A LIMITED RESOURCE, or TIME IS A VALUABLE COMMODITY (cf. 1980: 8).

Descriptively, the metaphorical concepts postulated by Lakoff and Johnson are not always adequate: at times, the schemas invoked hardly square with the linguistic expressions that are supposed to ‘contain’ them. Concepts like THE MIND IS A MACHINE or THE MIND IS A BRITTLE OBJECT are claimed to be contained in sentences like We’re running out of steam, He broke down, or He cracked up, but in these sentences no minds are mentioned or necessarily implied. Likewise, the sentence Tell me the story of your life no more contains the conventional metaphorical concept LIFE IS A STORY than Tell me the story of Don Quixote contains a concept DON QUIXOTE IS A STORY (ad 1980: 172).

Finally, Lakoff and Johnson make a distinction between ‘metaphors we live by’ and ‘merely idiosyncratic’ metaphors that remains insufficiently motivated: they do not explain why conceptual metaphors like A MOUNTAIN IS A PERSON (or perhaps more generally A PHYSICAL OBJECT IS A HUMAN BODY), which may be argued to underly expressions
like *the foot of the mountain*, are ‘marginal’ and unsystematic, and ‘play no interesting role in our conceptual system’ (1980: 55). As seen in the discussion of Vico (1.4 above), such uses are in fact widespread across languages, and may as well be treated as metaphors of personification, which Lakoff & Johnson themselves consider a central kind of ‘ontological metaphor’ (1980: ch. 7). On the whole, many of the particular conceptual metaphors or image schemas that Lakoff and Johnson propose are *ad hoc* generalizations, rather than theoretically motivated, and descriptively and explanatorily adequate structures.

This brings us back to the wider epistemological problems surrounding the relation between metaphorical concepts and their linguistic expressions. It is a central feature of Lakoff and Johnson’s argument that linguistic metaphors are logically posterior to metaphorical concepts: as seen, they take linguistic meaning to arise in virtue of human intentionality or understanding. There are two serious difficulties with such a view: first, how can private concepts or experiences warrant that people have the same public meanings? And second: how can one verify that concepts really are logically prior to their linguistic expression?

The first problem is largely assumed to be solved by the notion of ‘embodied understanding’. This is claimed not to be just a private, internal affair, but to be intersubjectively shared by different people in virtue of the way they function as organisms in their physical and cultural environment. Lakoff & Johnson thus maintain the view that people display the same linguistic behavior because they have the same concepts. This not only begs the question of how they come to have the same concepts in the first place, but also ignores the fundamental difficulty of how the possession of a mental representation can explain linguistic behavior at all (cf. 4.1 below). Linguistic meaning obviously has to be shared in some sense; cognitive semantics accounts for this sharing in terms of concepts or mental representations that are internal to the human body. Now what ensures that different people have the same concepts and the same meanings? Lakoff & Johnson repeatedly claim that preconceptual experiences are shared, not just private, entities, because of the common way that human organisms function in, and interact with, their environment. But merely saying that two people have the same physical experiences is obviously not enough, for the mere fact that two individuals live in the same environment, and behave in the same way, gives no conclusive evidence as to their inner workings yet (cf. Quine 1960). Further, ‘preconceptual’ experiences are obviously influenced by cultural and social factors as much as by physical ones. Lakoff & Johnson themselves note this point (1980: 57), but do not systematically address it.

But even the sharing of *cultural* experiences is not yet enough to warrant the identity of different individuals’ representations. One cannot just say that preconceptual experience may
in part be culturally determined and leave it at that: one has to articulate how such factors influence experiences and the concepts emerging from them. The problem here is that culturally conveyed concepts essentially involve linguistically conveyed information, and this is a central difficulty for theories that try to reduce linguistic meaning to conceptual structure. Even the most ‘basic’ culture-laden concepts cannot be fully articulated without linguistic means.1

This leads us directly to the second difficulty. Lakoff & Johnson take linguistic meaning to be derived from ‘embodied conceptual structure’, which they believe is directly meaningful; basic-level categories and image schemas, they hold, directly emerge from preconceptual experience, and because of this essentially causal relation to experience, they are ‘understood’, i.e., meaningful to us (Lakoff 1987: 266-8). Obviously, the basic-level and image-schema structures emerging from preconceptual experience cannot in their turn be derived from linguistic meaning, as that would render the attempt at reduction circular. However, this is precisely what seems to be the case: preconceptual structure, which Lakoff and Johnson claim to be directly meaningful, is in fact meaningful only given a culturally determined background (cf. Indurkhya 1992: 126). Moreover, this background cannot even be fully articulated and structured without linguistic means (cf. 4.2 below). In other words, conceptual structure is not wholly prior to linguistic expression or linguistically conveyed meaning even at the allegedly basic level.

This problem reflects the general shortcoming that Lakoff & Johnson do not systematically incorporate social and cultural influences in their theory. Although Lakoff at times speaks of embodiment in terms of physical and social experiences (1987: 267), much of his argument suggests that preconceptual experience is purely biologically determined interaction with physical objects in virtue of our human build up and sensorimotor capacities, and thus is common to all human beings. Significantly, he consistently speaks of basic-level gestalt perception in terms of physical experience, and of image schemas as emerging from our ‘constant bodily functioning’ (e.g. 1987: 269, 278). On this view, all humans share a preconceptual structuring of experiences in virtue of their biological constitution. We may perhaps ascribe to Lakoff a moderate cognitive relativism (cf. Lakoff 1987: 334-7): the contents of actual metaphorical mappings between different conceptual domains may vary between (and even within) cultures and languages (thus, love may be conceptualized as a journey, a collective labor, a heavy burden, etc.), but the basic-level domains and the processes of categorizing and mapping would seem to be essentially the same for all human beings, regardless of their cultural environment.

1Thus, Leach (1982: 18) argues that ‘the notion of “wife” is meaningless except in the social context of a community of speaking human beings’. 
Lakoff's view of the relation between conceptualization, experience, and culture faces a number of difficulties. To begin with, the image schemas involved in metaphorical mappings may be 'relatively simple', but they are nonetheless abstract and decontextualized. Schemas like CONTAINER are a kind of abstract conceptual structure, in terms of which 'first-order' categories (whether at the basic level or more abstract) such as cup and theory are structured. Thus, in a theoretical sense, they are even more abstract than the first-order concepts they are supposed to structure. However, it is not clear where such abstract, 'second-order' or superordinate, metaphorical concepts themselves come from, if not through abstraction or some other cognitive operation upon the various first-order concepts involved; but Lakoff claims that they precisely make the classification of 'abstract experiences' possible. He claims that basic-level structure and image-schematic structure are preconceptual (1987: 302). But obviously, specific structures like CONTAINER, MACHINE, etc. can hardly be preconceptual: they cannot even be 'experienced' without a full linguistic elaboration of the structure and purposes of machines and containers. The only road left open would be to postulate that the general structures for specific image schemas are somehow available to the mind before they are filled in with specific slots or items for different concepts, but I find it difficult to make sense of this. In other words, cognitive semantics presupposes these more abstract image structures as logically prior to the understanding of first-order concepts. For a theory that claims to give an account of what actually goes on in people's heads, however, it seems rather counterintuitive to treat the more abstract as making the less abstract possible. In 1.1, it was already argued that abstract, decontextualized concepts only appear at a relatively late stage of concept formation; this point will be elaborated in 4.2 below.

Likewise, the assumption that basic-level categories emerge directly from our preconceptual and physical functioning seems too strong. This assumption is most explicit in Turner (1987), which gives a cognitive-semantics account of kinship metaphors like Death is the mother of beauty in poetic and everyday language. Turner argues that kinship is primarily a biological rather than a socially or culturally determined notion: 'though, plausibly, social relations often hold preeminence in conceptual systems, yet in cases of kinship metaphor, biological and social relations are collapsed, under the assumption that prototypically the social relation follows as a consequence of the biological relation' (Turner 1987: 54). But it is precisely not possible to reduce social and cultural factors to biological ones; otherwise, social anthropology would be just a branch of biology. Kinship terms not only are as 'basic' as any other category from direct experience, as children are usually surrounded by their kin right from the start; they are also among the most widely used bases for metaphorical expression (cf. Leach 1982: 138-9).
Obviously, however, kinship as linguistically expressed is not a biologically determined domain of experience: it allows for wide cross-cultural variations. It is also difficult to see how such ‘basic-level’ categories as *boy*, *mother*, or *table* can be wholly prior to their linguistic expression: these notions do not emerge from mere physical experience, but require an intermediate level of socially organized and therefore linguistically communicated experience. In short, image schemas and basic-level categories are centrally culture- and language-dependent, and therefore cannot be entirely preconceptual or biologically determined.

A final difficulty is that cognitive semantics presupposes that the domains of ‘concrete’ physical experience and ‘abstract’ reasoning and conceptualizing are distinct, even disjunct, classes. This requires the language user to realize that these cognitive domains are distinct from each other before she can even begin to conceptualize abstract domains of experience metaphorically; for if there is no strict distinction between domains to begin with, there will not be in any clear sense a transfer between domains. The interpretation of, for example, *he was red hot with rage* can hardly be said to involve any mapping from one domain to the other if there is no strict and decontextualized categorial boundary between the ‘source’ and ‘target’ domains of physical heat and anger. The language user need perhaps not be aware of different categorial domains being involved, but for the cognitive processes to operate such distinctions have to be present. In other words, cognitive semantics presupposes precisely what it should explain: the emergence of clearly delimited, distinct cognitive domains between which metaphorical transfers are to take place. The assumption of strictly delineated conceptual domains is also at odds with the suggestion, made in 1.1 above, that objects are not rigorously and systematically classified in nonliterate societies, and often not even in literate ones. Cognitive semantics thus shares with its ‘objectivist’ predecessors an emphasis on individual, presumably universal, cognitive operations that are abstracted from particular contexts of use, and a lack of attention to sociocultural variables and their influence on the process of concept formation. In other words, it assumes abstract and decontextualized image schemas to be logically or conceptually prior to the understanding of linguistic metaphors, and thereby falls prey to what Vico has called ‘the conceit of scholars’: it presumes that culturally determined structures are universals of human cognition.\(^1\) Although cognitive semantics marks a radical departure from earlier views, it is in an important sense not radical enough.

In all, then, cognitive semantics comes nowhere near making good its grandiose claims. It fails to constitute an adequately elaborated theory, often resorts to ad hoc generalizations, and

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\(^1\)Along similar lines, Scholnick & Cookson (1994) argue that Lakoff & Johnson take an ‘adult perspective’ of cognitive development, and presuppose as given notions that only gradually emerge.
The Davidsonian Program

presupposes as given what it should set out to explain. For those who prefer to maintain a more ‘objectivist’ view of semantics, however, the challenge raised by cognitive semantics consists in stating more explicitly what the status of models in model-theoretic semantics is, and in elaborating the relation between semantic and conceptual processes. Lakoff and Johnson’s answer to these problems is less than satisfactory, in view of the notions and processes they take to be given or ‘directly meaningful’, and of their downplaying the role of linguistic as opposed to conceptual factors. There is a considerably greater need for a linguistic level, and for social and cultural factors, in explaining the peculiarities of metaphor than Lakoff and Johnson allow for. Perhaps I should emphasize, in conclusion, that the above remarks do not amount to a wholesale rejection of conceptualist views: they only discuss the problems of one specific and highly influential statement of such a view. In arguing against the logical priority of conceptualizations over linguistic expression, I do not wish to argue for the opposite; rather, a conceptualist account should take into consideration the mutual dependence and interplay of linguistic and conceptual factors.

Appendix: Putnam’s Problem

The philosophical neutrality of model-theoretic semantics renders Lakoff’s (1987: ch. 15) attempt at a knock-down argument against model-theoretic semantics as a whole simply misguided. As my own approach, which I will outline in chapter 3, presumes a model-theoretic framework, it may be worthwhile to say why this is so. Lakoff uses Putnam’s well-known argument in ‘A Problem About Reference’ (Putnam 1981: ch. 2) to show that all varieties of model-theoretic semantics, as based on the principle of compositionality of meaning (which Lakoff (1987: 230) formulates as ‘the meaning of the parts cannot be changed without changing the meaning of the whole’), are logically inconsistent. He claims that, using Putnam’s argument, one can change the meaning or intension of singular terms while leaving the meaning of the sentence in which they occur intact, which would be a contradictory result for any theory of meaning. If he is right, this would render the very enterprise of model-theoretical semantics a waste of time.

Putnam’s argument is an application of the Löwenheim-Skolem theorem, according to which a collection of true sentences can have different models, i.e., different sets of objects or different interpretation functions that make the same sets of sentences true. Earlier, Quine (1960) had used this theorem in his familiar argument for the ‘indeterminacy of reference’: knowledge of the truth value of a sentence (or set of sentences) underdetermines knowledge of
the reference of its constituent terms. Putnam basically generalizes Quine's argument to
intensional languages. One may know, he argues, not only the actual truth value of a sentence
(i.e., its extension), but also its truth value in every possible world (i.e., its intension) without
thereby securing the intuitively correct intensions of its constituents. Thus, it is possible to
formulate wildly divergent intensions for expressions like cat and mat, so that in the actual
world they refer to trees and cherries, respectively, without affecting the intension of The cat is
on the mat. For Putnam (1981: 49), this is a reason to reject 'metaphysical realism' (the idea
that the world consists of mind-independent objects, and that there is a unique correct
description of it) for what he calls 'internal realism', the idea that asking what objects the world
consists of only makes sense within a theory. Objects, that is, do not exist independently of
conceptual schemes or theories. Lakoff sees Putnam's argument as a fatal objection to any
semantic theory that tries to define meaning in compositional and model-theoretical terms as
relations between uninterpreted languages and models; instead, he proposes a 'cognitive model
theory', in which the correct reference of singular terms is warranted by human intentionality
or 'embodied understanding'.

It should be clear, however, that Putnam's argument is not directed against model-theoretic
approaches to semantics as such, but rather against a (metaphysically) realistic interpretation
of them: it is an epistemological (and metaphysical) rather than a semantic argument. Even if it
is valid - and there are good reasons to doubt that it is1 - it would at most be an injunction
against taking the model in which a language is interpreted to be the 'objective world', a world,
moreover, that can be uniquely described.

Lakoff is also mistaken in thinking that his 'experientialist' account of meaning is the way
out of Putnam's problem. He argues that his and Johnson's 'experiential realism' is just a
'further development' or 'form of' internal realism, formulated in terms of a theory of
embodied understanding: basic-level categories and image schemas are directly meaningful, he
argues, as they arise from our bodily experience, and thus secure 'correct interpretations'. In
other words, he believes it is human intentionality or understanding that warrants the right
meanings: on this view, the interpretation of linguistic signs is essentially mediated, and
secured, by concepts or mental representations.2 This is actually at odds with Putnam's own
argument, however: whereas he argues that his form of realism is internal to a theory, Lakoff

1Blackburn (1983: 301), for example, has argued that it is rather implausible to postulate that we know the
intension of a sentence prior to knowing the intensions of its constituents, even though this holism is a crucial
premiss in Putnam's argument. Other criticisms abound in the literature.
2Lakoff rejects the notion of 'representation' for suggesting that the mind passively mirrors objective reality
(1987: 165, 200), but no such connotation is implied here: in hallucinating, one may well have representations
that have no counterpart in the outside world.
construes it as being internal to a person or human organism (1987: 268, 303). Ironically, Putnam precisely rejects human intentionality, or the capability to represent, as a warrant for reference (1981: 17-21). Lakoff and Johnson's experientialism, then, threatens to succumb to a formidable epistemological problem of its own: if meaning is secured in virtue of experiences that are internal to the human organism, how can I ever know for sure that my meanings are the same as someone else's? This is just the familiar difficulty for theories that try to account for linguistic meaning in terms of concepts or representations. We will return to this question, which is indeed a serious one for cognitive semantics, in 4.1 below.
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METAPHOR AND CONTEXT

3.1 METAPHOR AND CONTEXT-DEPENDENCE

The upshot of the preceding chapter is that neither semantic nor pragmatic approaches as traditionally conceived account convincingly for what is specific to metaphorical interpretation. Neither do the radical revisions suggested by Davidson and Lakoff appear very promising. The semantic theories discussed mostly founder on the problem of recognizing metaphors as such—a difficulty that in the final analysis arises from the assumption that literal and figurative interpretation are somehow essentially different, which forces us to the position that figurative language should be recognized as such before it can be adequately interpreted. There appeared to be no criterion of linguistic or other incongruity, however, that distinguishes metaphor both from literal language and from other tropes. Further, the creation of ‘new senses’ in novel metaphors also seems difficult to account for in semantic terms. Pragmatic accounts at first sight seem to offer a useful alternative by describing metaphor as a pragmatic reinterpretation of a literally defective sentence, but they likewise fail to give a satisfactory account of the recognition of metaphors; further, they do not sufficiently motivate the need for a pragmatic rather than a semantic analysis. In fact, the strongest argument against a pragmatic approach is the fact that the actual interpretation of metaphors is in no clear sense determined by speaker’s intentions. Davidson’s and Lakoff & Johnson’s proposals create more difficulties than they claim to (dis-)solve, and are still based on the folk-theoretical assumptions of clearly delimited literal meanings, and of stable decontextualized concepts, respectively.

It would seem wise, then, to steer a middle course between semantic and pragmatic extremes. As seen in 2.1 and 2.2 above, it cannot be the sentence type that receives a metaphorical interpretation, as a strictly semantic account assumes: in different contexts, the same sentence type (for example, *this is a donkey*) may express different propositional contents and different literal or metaphorical interpretations. Neither is it full-fledged utterances that carry a metaphorical interpretation, as a pragmatic account requires. A
metaphorical interpretation does not disappear under embedding, indirect quotation, negation, or other operations that affect the assertive power of the utterance; in other words, the speaker’s intentions and the ‘literal’ assertive power appear not to play any decisive role specific to the interpretation of metaphor. The middle road to be taken here will assume the form of a semantic theory which systematically takes contextual factors into account. This will enable us to take the context-dependence of metaphorical (and indeed, of much of literal) interpretation seriously, without at once committing us to a pragmatic account in the sense of 2.2. The approach outlined below takes the locus of metaphor to be the sentence in context, not a sentence simpliciter or an utterance. It presents, in essence, a variety of a descriptivist approach, but enriches it with an account of context-dependence: it takes metaphorical interpretations to arise in virtue of the context and of the descriptive information (rather than the referents or concepts) associated with the metaphorically interpreted expressions.

Contextual influences on metaphorical interpretation have been noted before, but they have rarely received any systematic attention. Various authors acknowledge the role of ‘contextual factors’ in the recognition and interpretation of metaphor; some argue that they constrain the range of possible interpretations (Fogelin 1988: 66; MacCormac 1985: 185 and passim; Goodman 1976: 71ff.); but none of them attempts to explicate this role of the context. In fact, Scheffler (1979: 128) even believes that such contextual factors a priori rule out the possibility of stating any rule or formula for metaphorical interpretation. Kittay (1987: 10ff.) likewise stresses the context-dependence of much literal language, but this does not lead her to a systematically context-sensitive view of metaphor: she still considers the latter a kind of ‘secondary interpretation’, based on the conceptual oddity of the literal interpretation.

Yet the strategy to pursue seems obvious: if metaphorical interpretation systematically depends on the context of utterance, we could try to describe it with the tools of the existing semantic theories of context-dependence or indexicality. The most sophisticated of these is Kaplan’s ‘Logic of Demonstratives’ (Kaplan 1978, 1979, 1989a, b), which has been a starting point for much work on various kinds of context-dependence. Josef Stern (1979, 1985) was the first to develop a theory of metaphor along Kaplanian lines; a similar, but less fully developed approach appears in Bergmann (1979, 1982). Both these authors further hold that metaphors can be used to make assertions that may be true or false in much the same way as literal language, and develop these ideas against the background of Stalnaker’s theory of assertion (1978). Two of the main challenges noted above, the context-dependence of metaphor and the attempt to describe metaphorical interpretation in terms of a more general theory of language meaning and usage, are thus met in a systematic way.
In essence, this is also the strategy I will pursue here. After a general overview of Kaplan's theory, I will first discuss the case for metaphorical interpretation as involving a specific kind of context-dependence, and discuss which contextual parameter is involved. In 3.2, I address the question of whether metaphors can be used to make assertions (i.e., whether metaphors can express propositions, and whether the speaker is 'committed' to such propositions). The familiar problems that arise in accounting for the 'creation' of a 'novel' propositional content are of particular importance here. Metaphorical interpretation will turn out to share some interesting structural parallels with other phenomena that surround the notion of presupposition.

3.1.1. Kaplan's Logic of Demonstratives

In the 1970s, David Kaplan developed an elegant approach to the treatment of context-dependent expressions within the framework of possible worlds semantics.\(^1\) His Logic of Demonstratives basically constitutes a further refinement of the intensional logic familiar from Montague Grammar: Kaplan argues that the distinction between intension and extension cannot adequately capture our intuitions regarding the meaning of context-dependent expressions such as I, here, and now, that man, etc.\(^2\) Obviously, the referent or extension of an indexical-like I or now changes from context to context, so this cannot be its unchanging meaning; but also the propositional content, or intension, expressed by sentences containing indexical expressions varies. For example, if both Sherlock Holmes and Watson say:

(1) I am Sherlock Holmes.

not only do the truth values of what they say differ, they also say something different: (1) uttered by Holmes expresses the proposition that Holmes is Holmes, but uttered by Watson, it

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\(^1\) The most developed statement of Kaplan's views can be found in the 1977 manuscript 'Demonstratives', published in Almog et al., eds. (1989), referred to as Kaplan (1989a); the same volume also contains useful 'Afterthoughts' (Kaplan 1989b). At times I refer to earlier work, in particular the 1970 paper 'Dthat', published as Kaplan (1978). I have profited much from Zimmermann's (1991) extensive discussion of context-dependence; cf. also Salmon (1981), Recanati (1993).

\(^2\) Kaplan notes that pronouns like he may also function as discourse anaphors or bound variables; later authors, like (Kamp (1984) and Heim (1982, 1983), have developed a framework for a unified treatment of these different functions; more on this in 3.2. Kaplan distinguishes between 'demonstratives proper' like this (which are semantically incomplete and require an act of demonstration for a referent to be determined), and 'pure indexicals' like I and now, whose referent is determined by linguistic rules alone. I focus on indexicals here.
expresses the proposition that Watson is Holmes. Thus, not only the extension but also the intension of sentences like (1) appears to vary with the context.

In addition to the extension-intension opposition, Kaplan therefore proposes a distinction between the character and the content of an expression, paired with a distinction between two different kinds of context: the context of utterance and the circumstance of evaluation. Content is a function from circumstances of evaluation to referents (or, more generally, extensions), and thus coincides with Montague’s notion of intension. Character is a function from contexts of use to contents, and constitutes what we would intuitively call the meaning of an indexical. To capture the distinction between different kinds of context-dependence, one may postulate contextual aspects or parameters like speaker, place, and time of the utterance, on which the interpretation of different indexicals like I, here, and now, respectively, depends; and further parameters may be added to such a list.¹ What is central is just the point that, for indexicals, these parameters apply at the level of contexts of utterance rather than circumstances of evaluation (below, I will refer to these as contexts and circumstances, respectively).

The orthodox Montagovian position would be to incorporate such contextual parameters into the circumstance of evaluation, rather than to postulate a distinct level of interpretation. Thus, Montague (1974 [1968]) combines context and circumstance into a single index, or point of reference \(i = < t, p, w>\), with separate parameters for time, place, and possible world. Against such ‘index theory’, Kaplan (1989a: 507) has argued that this reformulation not only blurs the distinct roles of context and circumstance, but also allows intuitively fallacious inferences like that from (2) to (3):

(2) I am here now.
(3) Necessarily I am here now.

As (2) cannot be uttered falsely in any context of utterance, and hence is logically valid. But (2) is obviously not necessarily true: I could easily have been elsewhere now. Thus, the rule of necessitation (the principle that all logically valid sentences are necessarily true), which would yield (3), fails here.² As Bennett (1978: 3) pointed out, however, Montague’s analysis need not

¹Here, I will ignore the question of precisely which parameters are needed. Cresswell (1973: 110ff) argues that such an approach leads to an undesirable proliferation of ad hoc parameters. Instead of providing a fixed list of parameters, he suggests ascribing specific context properties to contexts, which allows for more flexibility.

²Kaplan argues that the Logic of Demonstratives implies an epistemological distinction between logical truth, which applies to character, and necessary truth, which is a matter of content. In a similar manner, Kripke’s ideas about rigid designation led him to distinguish between analytic and necessary truths (Kaplan 1989a: 539; cf. Kripke 1980).
allow the inference from (2) to (3). Montague distinguished the subset of proper indices (where the speaker is at the time and place of speaking) to mark off the possible contexts of utterance, and while he postulated that every context be proper, this condition does not hold for circumstances; consequently, (2) does not entail (3). I will hold on to Kaplan’s terminology here, however, as it makes the distinct conceptual role of contexts and circumstances more explicit: in order to evaluate a sentence containing context-dependent expressions relative to some circumstance, e.g., a possible world \( w_n \), one must first determine what propositional content it expresses, and obviously this can be done only relative to a context of utterance \( c_0 \).

The core of Kaplan’s theory consists of two ‘obvious principles’: first, the referent of an indexical depends on the context; second, all indexicals are directly referential (1989a: 492). That is, not only does the referent of an indexical depend on the context of utterance; the semantic rules associated with it also stipulate that the referent is the same in all circumstances of evaluation. Indexicals thus have what Kaplan calls a stable content: what content they express depends on the context of utterance, but given a context, the content is a constant function, which gives the same extension in all circumstances. Likewise, a character is stable if it yields the same content in all contexts. Indexicals thus differ both from descriptions and from proper names. Descriptions like the fortieth president of the United States have a stable character, but an unstable content: which individual is denoted depends on the circumstances of evaluation, not on the context of use. Proper names have a stable character and a stable content, at least if we take them to be what Kripke (1980) calls rigid designators.1 To summarize:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>stable</th>
<th>unstable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stable</td>
<td>proper names, logical constants</td>
<td>indexicals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unstable</td>
<td>descriptions2</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1There has been some discussion as to whether natural-language names are actually context-dependent or just lexically ambiguous. Bartsch (1987: 7) takes the former position, while Kaplan (1989a: 562) and Bennett (1978: 9) argue for the latter. In any case, proper names do not display the systematic context-dependence that characterizes indexicals: the fact that two different persons may have the same name, say Bobby Brown, is typically an accident rather than an intentional use on the part of the namegivers. An exception is the intentional naming of one individual after another, such as calling one’s cat Plato.

2Excluding descriptions that contain demonstratives or ‘rigidifying operators’ like actual.
I will consider expressions that seem to be unstable both in character and in content below; my hypothesis will be that this class includes metaphorical and metonymical (cf. Sag 1981) transfers of sense and reference. On this account, both proper names and indexicals are rigid designators, as they express constant functions from circumstances to extensions. Treating directly referential terms as merely having a stable content is not exactly what Kaplan wants, however; he means them to be wholly independent of, rather than constant over, circumstances of evaluation. He really wants the semantic rules for directly referential terms to provide us directly with a referent, not with an individual concept to be evaluated at a circumstance. He prefers a metaphysical picture (which he admits is not part of his theory (1989a: 496)), in which the propositional content expressed by a sentence containing a directly referential term involves, or even contains, the referent itself, rather than some intensional entity that functions as a constituent of the proposition and determines the referent: ‘the constituent of the proposition is just the object itself’ (Kaplan 1989a: 494). Sentences containing indexicals could then be said, echoing the early Russell, to express singular propositions. In semantic terms, the referent determines the propositional content, rather than vice versa.

Direct Reference as a Semantic Notion

Unfortunately, there is a serious friction between this metaphysical picture of direct reference and the ‘semantic picture’ implied by the use of possible worlds semantics. The metaphysical picture faces the familiar objection that Frege (1966 [1918]: 42) raised against the idea of singular propositions: how can an abstract object like the proposition expressed by Aristotle was fond of souvlaki actually contain the individual Aristotle himself? More importantly, however, the metaphysical picture does not tally with Kaplan’s own semantic formulation: in the Logic of Demonstratives, a ‘directly referential’ expression has an instable character which determines a stable content: it thus expresses the same content for all circumstances, instead of completely bypassing circumstances, as Kaplan wants it to. In other words, the linguistic rules associated with / for each context of utterance determine a constant individual concept rather than an individual. Kaplan’s Logic thus fails to distinguish formally between rigid designators and directly referential terms: both have stable contents. The only difference is that directly referential terms are what Kaplan calls obstinately rigid: they denote the same object x in all possible worlds, including those where x does not exist. For example, (4)

1Actually, Frege argued against physical objects being constituents of thoughts, but for him, thoughts play the same role as propositions for Russell as the primary bearers of truth values; cf. Dummett (1973: 153, 1981: 24).
(4) I could have been dead now.

is true in \( c_0 \) iff in some possible world \( w_n \), the individual denoted by \( I \) in \( c_0 \) is dead; but even though the speaker of \( c_0 \) does not exist in \( w_n \), \( I \) still denotes that very same individual there. Rigid designators are not in general committed to this stronger claim: they merely 'designate the same object \( x \) with respect to all worlds where \( x \) exists, and never any object other than \( x \) with respect to any possible world' (Kripke, as quoted in Kaplan 1989b: 569; emphasis in original). In fact, Kaplan himself admits that the possible worlds semantics blurs the picture of direct reference. We should not feel overly worried about this, however: the primary concern here is with the semantics of metaphorical interpretation, not with the metaphysical and epistemological aspects of Kaplan's theory. I will therefore adhere to the possible-worlds formulation in what follows.

To avoid confusion, it should be stressed what the thesis of direct reference, taken as a semantic claim, is not. First, it does not imply that indexicals do not have any linguistic meaning or descriptive information at all, for obviously, the 'meaning' of \( I \) gives us the speaker for each context of utterance. Rather, the descriptive meaning of an indexical functions at the level of contexts rather than of circumstances. Secondly, it should not be confused with the metaphysical claim that the proposition expressed (an abstract entity) actually contains the referent (a concrete, physical individual) as a constituent: it merely claims that, semantically, the referent in a context determines the proposition expressed, rather than the other way around, as an orthodox Fregean account (in which reference is always determined by sense) would hold (Kaplan 1989b: 569).\(^1\) Finally, it is not an epistemological requirement that we actually know its referent in each context: the hearer need not have any direct acquaintance with the referent for the expression to refer directly (Kaplan 1989a: 536). Suppose somebody has been drugged and locked up in the totally dark basement of the Amsterdam Opera building; upon waking up, he may still truthfully say (2)

(2) I am here now.

without knowing the referents of \( here \) and \( now \) in the context of utterance. The thesis of direct reference, then, is a semantic claim about how some expressions refer, not an epistemological claim about how speakers have knowledge of referents.

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\(^1\)Perry (1977) likewise argues that a Fregean account with reference determined by (context-free) sense cannot adequately deal with indexicals. For defences of a Fregean approach, see Evans (1985), Dummett (1981: ch. 6).
Likewise, it would be mistaken to interpret the Logic of Demonstratives as a pragmatic theory in the sense of 2.2 above. One might take character to apply to expression types, and content to tokens (i.e., utterances or occurrences in context) (cf. Stern 1979: 223); but this way of putting it all too easily leads to confusion between the semantic and the pragmatic aspects of indexical language. A token of a sentence is an actual utterance, uniquely located in space and time, and therefore belongs to the theory of speech acts, that is, to pragmatics. Moreover, a speaker can repeatedly utter the same sentence in the same context. The second utterance in (5)

(5) -Wilt thou have this woman to thy wedded wife [... etc.]?
-I will, I will.

contains two tokens of the same sentence I will in what is semantically the same context: none of the relevant contextual parameters changes in such a way that the second token receives another interpretation than the first one. On the other hand, a sentence-in-a-context need not actually be uttered in that context for it to be evaluated. The content it expresses in that context is a strictly semantic entity. It may be true, and arguments in which it occurs may be valid, in or on the basis of a context, without its having to be uttered: the fact that I am here now makes the sentence I am here now true in this context, without my having to utter it, and regardless of the intentions I may have in uttering it (cf. Kaplan 1989: 546; cf. ch. XIII). Thus, neither the distinction between sentence and sentence-in-a-context nor that between character and content parallels the type-token distinction. In other words, the Logic of Demonstratives is a semantic, not a pragmatic, theory of context-dependence: it does not involve actual utterances, nor speakers and their intentions. The importance of this general point for the analysis of metaphor will become clear below.

Contexts and Circumstances

The distinction between context of utterance and circumstance of evaluation, which is crucial to Kaplan's theory, is a distinction not in ontological status as much as in role or function. In terms of possible-worlds semantics, both may be seen as worlds or situations: the set of possible contexts of utterance is then a proper subset of the set of possible circumstances of evaluation, namely those situations where the speaker is at the place and time of utterance (i.e.,

1Some sentences, like Don't shoot now but now, do require that the semantic context of utterance shift during the interpretation of the sentence. For the time being, I ignore such cases.
what Montague would have called ‘proper indices’). Obviously, there are many possible circumstances $w_n$ where the speaker of $c_0$ is not the speaker (for example, a world in which that individual does not exist, as in (4), or where there are no speakers at all).

Contexts are not merely a subset of circumstances, but also play a distinct conceptual role: the situation-as-context determines what is said, i.e., which propositional content is expressed, while the situation-as-circumstance determines the truth value or extension of that proposition.¹ In extensional constructions, context and circumstance coincide: the same situation functions twice in the interpretation, first as a context of utterance, and then as a circumstance of evaluation. Thus,

(6) I am tired.

is true in $c_0$ iff the speaker in $c_0$ (as context) belongs to the set of individuals that are tired in $c_0$ (as circumstance). But in intensional constructions, context and circumstance come apart:

(7) Necessarily I am tired.

is true in $w_0$ (≡ $c_0$) iff the speaker in $c_0$ is tired in all possible circumstances of evaluation $w_n$.² In such a case, the circumstance of evaluation is shifted to other situations in order to determine the extension of the predicate tired there; at the same time, however, the referent determined by $I$ in the context $c_0$ is retained in all these circumstances. In other words, the interpretation of the indexical $I$ is not influenced by the presence of a modal operator; if it were, (7) as uttered by me in $c_0$ would be true if in every circumstance $w_n$ the speaker in $w_n$, rather than in $c_0$ is tired in $w_n$. But then, $I$ as uttered by the speaker in $c_0$ has nothing to do with that speaker, and this does not coincide with what we would intuitively think of as the meaning of (7). One could, more theoretically, say that indexicals always take wide scope over intensional operators: no such operator can shift the referent which is fixed in the context of utterance. Put differently, the direct reference thesis precludes quantification over contexts in the way that modal operators express quantification over circumstances (Zimmermann 1991: 173).³

¹ Following standard intensional semantic practice, I take extensions of sentences to be truth values in a world, and their intensions (propositions) as functions from worlds to truth values.

² To avoid confusion between context and circumstance, I will refer the former by $c$, and the latter by $w$, even though they may in fact indicate the same situation.

³ Kamp (1971), the first to make this point, argues that one needs at least a ‘double indexing’ (for context and circumstance, respectively) to correctly interpret sentences like One day you will be grateful for what I am doing now, in which the tense operator does not affect the referent of now.
Monsters

The apparent impossibility of quantifying over the context of utterance places an important constraint on the possible operators in a natural language like English. The introduction of characters as a kind of higher-level intensions would seem to allow for operators that work on the character of an expression, just as modal and temporal (i.e., intensional) operators operate on contents; but Kaplan argues that such ‘monsters begat by elegance’ do not in fact occur in natural languages like English, and cannot be added to it. Such operators would imply that establishing the content and extension of complex expressions may involve shifting away from the actual context of utterance. Thus, (8)

(8) In some contexts it is true that I am not tired.

would be true in the context \( c_0 \) iff the speaker of some other context \( c_1 \) is not tired at \( c_1 \). But as said, in that case the referent of \( I \) would have nothing to do with the speaker of \( c_0 \).¹ Monsters would violate Kaplan’s second principle, which states that indexicals and demonstratives are directly referential (Kaplan 1989a: 510-2). Note, however, that the monstrous operator in (8) quantifies over the context as a whole. If we take the context as a list of contextual aspects or parameters, one might argue that some of these aspects allow more easily for shifting than others (Zimmermann 1991: 170). Possibly, it is just the more strictly deictic aspects of the context (such as speaker, place, and time of utterance) that resist quantification; it is not to be excluded a priori that other contextual aspects or parameters do allow for constructions that Kaplan outlaws as monsters. In fact, we will encounter several contextual aspects that can more easily be shifted or quantified over in 3.1.2 below.

Kaplan and Zimmermann interpret the stricture against monsters as a reformulation of the Fregean compositionality principle: they argue that constructions are at most intensional, i.e., the extension of a sentence or other complex expression may be a function of the extensions or of the intensions, but never of the characters, of its component parts (Kaplan 1989a: 502n; cf. Zimmermann 1991: 167).² For Kaplan, the only way to operate on the character of an indexical

¹Note how difficult it already intuitively is to take (8) in the desired, ‘monstrous’ reading.
²This is not quite identical to Frege’s principle: in general, Frege’s notion of Sinn (sense) cannot be identified with that of intension. Further, Montague explicitly allows for monsters, as is noted by Zimmermann (1991: 225). He distinguishes meanings (functions of two arguments: a possible world and a context of use) from senses (functions of a possible world only), analogously to Kaplan’s distinction between character and content, and adds: ‘the extension of a compound expression may depend on the full meanings [that is, characters, M.L.] of certain components’ (1974: 231; emph. added).
is to use quotation marks; but in that case, an indexical expression occurring between the quotes is mentioned rather than used:

(9) O'Leary said ‘I am a fool’.
(10) O'Leary said that he was a fool.
(11) O'Leary said that I am a fool.

Obviously, I in (9) refers to O'Leary rather than to the speaker who utters (9) in c0, so that (9) entails (10); in (11), by contrast, the indexical is used, not mentioned, and thus refers to the person speaking about O'Leary.

**Indexicals**

Indexicals are also similar to names in that, although their referent may be fixed by a description, such a description does not provide a synonym, in the sense of an expression with the same character (cf. Kripke 1980: 55ff.). Descriptions like the speaker in the context of utterance may fix the referent of I, but are not themselves directly referential. Kaplan tries to provide genuine synonyms for directly referential terms by introducing an ‘auxiliary demonstrative’ *dthat*, which provides a way of turning an arbitrary term into a directly referential one (Kaplan 1978; 1989a: ch. XII). As *dthat* is a main source of inspiration for Stern’s (1985) treatment of metaphor, it deserves special attention here.

Kaplan originally coined *dthat* to capture what he called the ‘demonstrative use’ of descriptive phrases (1978). In such use, a description functions much like a nonlinguistic demonstration, such as a gesture of pointing: it fixes a referent, and thus a propositional content, but it is not itself part of that content.1 The early *dthat* is a directly referential term: it is syntactically complete, and its associated description functions as its completing demonstration. In the Logic, by contrast, *dthat* is described as an operator that rigidifies an arbitrary singular term. Now, according to Kaplan (1989a: 522), a *dthat*-description like

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1Kaplan’s notion of demonstrative use is analogous to - and inspired by - Donnellan’s (1966) idea of the ‘referential use’ of descriptions, in which the description merely serves as a means to pick out, and rigidly refer to, a specific individual, regardless of whether that individual actually fits the description. Sentences with referentially used descriptions thus express something much like singular propositions. The differences between Kaplan and Donnellan reside primarily in Kaplan’s greater emphasis on contextual factors, and on his belief that it is the actually demonstrated object, rather than the object which the speaker intends to demonstrate, that determines the propositional content (1978: 241-2; but cf. 1989b: 587-8)
(12) dthat [the person who utters this token].

comes ‘much closer to providing a genuine synonym’ for I, as I and the completed dthat-term not only fix the same referent in c0, but are also directly referential. It still does not seem to be a real synonym, however; Stern (1979: 211-4) has argued that the referent of the dthat-description is the object denoted by the description in the actual circumstances, while the referent of I is just fixed by the linguistic rules. On this picture, dthat turns a description into an (obstinately) rigid designator, i.e., a constant function over circumstances, whereas I is, or should be, wholly independent from the circumstances. Stern argues that this amounts to a difference in character, but that Kaplan cannot formally make this distinction in his Logic.

Stern’s remark points to a central difficulty surrounding dthat: just as there is a serious friction between the metaphysical and formal semantic view of direct reference (cf. p. 154 above), so the original status of dthat as a demonstrative fails to match its subsequent formal interpretation as an intensional operator in Kaplan’s Logic. If we take dthat as a special kind of demonstrative, or as a ‘demonstrative surrogate’, it is a syntactically complete and directly referential singular term, and its character is completed by the associated description; the description then makes no contribution to its content. In his Logic, however, Kaplan defines dthat as an intensional operator which anchors the associated description or singular term to the context of utterance (in particular to the world and time of the context), and thus rigidifies it. In this formal perspective, dthat is not a complete expression, and the descriptive information of the term it operates upon does form part of the propositional content expressed; moreover, the complete dthat-description is a complex term that does not refer directly. Even here, however, Kaplan’s use is not entirely consistent: at times, he speaks of dthat as ‘a way of converting an arbitrary singular term into one which is directly referential’ (Kaplan 1989a: 521), but this would make it a monster: it would change the term’s character, i.e., operate on characters rather than on intensions. In other words, the ‘pre-classical’ (1978) dthat is a directly referential expression, but the ‘classical’ (1979, 1989a) dthat is a rigidifying operator, and the complete description dthat [α] is obstinately rigid rather than directly referential (Kaplan 1989b: 580-1; cf 1989a: 502n). This ambiguity in the status of dthat will reappear in the discussion of Stern in 3.1.4 below.

To sum up: the distinction between character and content is crucial to Kaplan’s approach, as it clarifies the distinct conceptual roles played by context and circumstance. It appeared that Kaplan’s preferred metaphysical picture of direct reference cannot be captured in possible world semantics, but we need not overly worry about this here. What matters is the suggestion
that in different contexts, the same sentence can express different propositional contents; so if we can explicate the relevant contextual parameter, it should be possible to treat metaphorical interpretation as involving a specific kind of context-dependence as well. But before we can do this, it is necessary to take one more intermediate step. Kaplan only talks about the context-dependence of singular terms that refer to individuals; but as seen in the introduction, metaphorical interpretation typically involves expressions with descriptive information, like verbs and common nouns. Semantically, such terms have properties (functions from circumstances to sets of objects) as their intension and sets of objects as their extension. The question facing us now is: can we generalize Kaplan’s theory so as to make it applicable to expressions that do not refer to single objects? It will appear that we can, but not without considerable modification of Kaplan’s original views.

3.1.2. Context-Dependence of Property Expressions

Kaplan’s theory suggests an elegant general picture of reference. Zimmermann (1991: 162) proposes a classification based on the distinct ‘character properties’ of different expressions; this leads to a central distinction between directly and absolutely (or denotationally) referring terms. Semantically, we can say that an expression a refers directly if, for all contexts of utterance \(c_0\) and for all circumstances of evaluation \(w_m\) and \(w_n\):

\[
c_a (c_0) (w_m) = c_a (c_0) (w_n) \text{ (i.e., stable content)};
\]

In other words, a directly referring expression is a constant function over circumstances. By contrast, \(a\) refers absolutely (or denotationally) if, for all contexts of utterance \(c_0\) and \(c_1\) and for all circumstances of evaluation \(w\):

\[
c_a (c_0) (w) = c_a (c_1) (w) \text{ (i.e., stable character)}.
\]

An absolutely referring term is thus a constant function over contexts. This distinction between different kinds of reference can be schematically represented as follows (cf. p. 153 above):

\[\]

\[\]

This classification is phrased in entirely semantical terms, so the metaphysical idea of direct reference is lost here.
Some expressions, especially logical constants like and, or, and not, refer both absolutely and directly; proper names also fall into this group, if we treat them as rigid designators and ignore the problem of several individuals having the same name. But there are also many expressions that refer neither directly nor absolutely: the extension of a sentence like (13)

(13) I am the queen of the Netherlands.

dePENDS both on the context and on the circumstance. Next, there are personal pronouns like we and plural you or demonstratives like thus, that shape, this tall, etc. Their content depends on the context, but their extension varies with the circumstances. That shape, for example, may in one context indicate the property of roundness, but the set of round objects may have different members in different circumstances. Likewise, determining the extension of inflected verbs, like Latin ambulo ('I walk'), involves the context to determine the referent of the first-person singular morpheme -o, and the circumstances to determine the extension of the predicate (or predicate stem) ambul-. Zimmermann argues that such cases are actually syntactically or morphologically complex, and can be decomposed into parts that refer either directly or absolutely, but not both. This leads him to the following ‘lexical hypothesis’ (1991: 164):

(L) Lexically basic units are always directly or absolutely referential.

Zimmermann suggests that apparent counterexamples to this hypothesis be decomposed into directly and absolutely referring parts. For indexicals that do not refer directly, like we and my, this yields the following analysis: we could be decomposed into a part that refers directly to the speaker and a part that refers absolutely to the other persons associated with the speaker; the possessive pronoun my could be reanalyzed as the directly referring I plus an absolutely referring possessive 's. But at times, such a reanalysis leads to unconvincing or counterintuitive
results: some kinds of context-dependent expressions turn out to be less easily decomposable than Zimmermann hopes. I will discuss three cases: more complex demonstratives like *thus* and *that shape*, descriptive expressions like *local*, and context-dependent properties like *good*.

First, there are the demonstrative expressions that do not denote individuals but properties, such as *thus* and *that shape*. In fact, *that shape* is not lexically basic, so it is not a real counter-example to (L), but it deserves some attention.\(^1\) Surprisingly, a definition of demonstratives like *this* and *that* (whether as syntactically complete pronouns or as demonstrative determiners that require a completing expression) is entirely absent from Kaplan’s formal system, despite the prominent role they play in his informal, metaphysical argument. Kaplan only gives an explicit definition of his neologism *dihat*, as a one-place operator that turns its completing singular term into an obstinately rigid expression; thus, as said, the complete *dihat*-description is not directly referential. If we take the formal system seriously, the same should hold for regular demonstratives. In other words, only pronominal demonstratives (like *this* accompanied by a gesture) are directly referential, unless we take the completing expressions, like *man* in *that man*, to play a syntactic but no semantic role. But such a move hardly squares with our intuitions or with the compositionality principle. There remains another problem, however: *dihat* is typically completed by a definite description, which has an individual as its extension and an individual concept (a function from circumstances to individuals) as its intension. This intension is rigidified by the operator, so that, e.g., *dihat [the queen of the Netherlands]* denotes a constant individual concept. Regular demonstratives, however, typically have a common noun, or in some cases an adjective (as in *this tall*), as their complement. Now these expressions have *sets* of individuals as their extension, and *properties* (i.e., functions from circumstances to sets of individuals) as their intension. In Montague’s intensional type logic, one can refer to intensions by putting the intensional operator \(^\langle\rangle\) in front of an expression, so demonstrative determiners can refer directly to properties if we take them to express context-dependent intensional operators. However, complete demonstratives like *that shape* are not themselves directly referential: to determine the extension of such expressions, one has to look at both the context and the circumstance. They denote the same *property* in all circumstances, but not the same set of *objects* (viz., the objects that in the context of utterance happen to have the shape demonstrated).

This is related to the point, observed by Stern (1979: 149-51; 1985: 692-3), that *that shape* cannot be reanalyzed as *the shape of that*, where *that* demonstrates the object with the intended

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\(^1\)Below, it will appear that property expressions like *shape* and *high* display a kind of context-dependence even in the absence of demonstrative determiners.
shape.¹ The shape of that is a description (albeit one containing a demonstrative), and may thus denote different shapes in different circumstances, whereas that shape, given a contextually demonstrated shape (e.g., roundness), denotes that same shape in all circumstances. For example, if I point at a round table, I may very well say (14), but (15) makes no sense at all:

(14) The shape of that might have been rectangular.
(15) That shape might have been rectangular.

(14) is true in c₀ if there is some possible circumstance wₙ in which, e.g., the sides of the table have been sawed off (assuming that the same object may change in shape in different circumstances), but the shape demonstrated by (15) in c₀ cannot be changed. Even in counterfactual circumstances where the extension of round does not include the table demonstrated in c₀, that shape still denotes the shape or property of roundness, rather than rectangularity.

Although these cases are no real counterexamples to the direct reference thesis, it seems somewhat odd to say that one can directly refer to something by means of an expression that is also dependent on the circumstances of evaluation.

Second, Partee (1989) argues that many expressions with descriptive information, such as local, foreigner, and enemy, are implicitly context-dependent: what counts as local is obviously relative to the place of utterance or to what is otherwise salient in context; someone is an enemy not absolutely but relative to a contextually given opponent, etc. Further, Partee observes that these expressions, just like pronouns such as he, may function either demonstratively, as discourse anaphors, or as bound variables, as becomes clear from comparing (16a-c) with (17a-c):

(16) a. He is suspect. (Demonstrative)
    b. A man walked. He whistled. (Anaphora)
    c. Every man believes he is right. (Bound variable)

(17) a. The local bar is OK. (Demonstrative)
    b. John lives in London. He attends a local school. (Anaphora)
    c. Every town has its local bar. (Bound variable)

¹Although Stern does not mention it, his objection applies equally well to Bennett's attempt to reanalyze this house as the house here (Bennett 1978: 23). Stern later allows for direct reference to properties (1985: 693).
As seen above, it is not possible to quantify over or to bind *I* or *here*, but pronominal *he* appears to behave differently in this respect. In other words, some kinds of context-dependent expressions do allow for their contextual 'variable' to be quantified over. This is, of course, directly opposed to Kaplan's claim that one can *never* quantify over contexts. What is promising about Partee's approach, however, is that it attempts to give an integrated treatment of deictic, anaphoric, and bound-variable functions of different kinds of qually well to pronouns, tense morphemes and property expressions. This will indeed turn out to be a desirable goal, as metaphorical interpretation may involve linguistic as well as extralinguistic context. I will discuss this in more detail in 3.2.

Interestingly, Partee (tentatively) rejects the idea of treating such terms as containing an implicit variable (i.e., of reanalyzing *enemy* as *enemy of x*), and of decomposing them into a context-independent (i.e., absolutely referring) and a pronoun-like (directly referring) element, which is of course just the solution proposed by Zimmermann. Against such a treatment, she argues that it is not always easy to localize the 'antecedent' and 'dependent' elements in anaphoric and 'bound-variable' constructions, as in (18)

\[
(18) \text{ Citizens of every country tend to find foreigners attractive.}
\]

In this case, it is difficult for *foreigners* to take an overt pronominal argument like *to them* or *to that country*. Moreover, not all such dependent elements admit of a plausible decomposition (1989: 351f). Rather than making a strict distinction between directly and absolutely referring expressions, therefore, Partee argues for a continuum of context-dependent expressions, of which indexicals proper are just an extreme case: some of them, such as *I* and to a lesser extent *here* and *now*, are purely referential and do not allow for quantification over their contexts; others, like *we* and *local*, are much more germane to quantification and binding, in part precisely because of their descriptive information. Partee thus shows the need for further exploration of the different *kinds* of context-dependence that natural-language expressions may display.

*Thematic Dimensions*

Third and finally, Bartsch (1987a) has called attention to a type of context-dependence of contentful expressions that is of particular relevance to a discussion of metaphorical

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1 Such integrated approaches originate, of course, in Kamp's (1984) and Heim's (1982) work on Discourse Representation Theory.
interpretation. She notes that many property expressions, like *good*, *satisfactory*, and *strong*, do not in themselves express any specific property, but require a specification of which respect of qualification they apply in; she calls such expressions ‘dimensionally weakly determined’ (Bartsch 1987a: 1). Next to the ‘deictic’ parameters of the context, such as place, and time, Bartsch therefore introduces the notion of a *thematic dimension*, which specifies the theme of a discourse, or what that discourse is about. The dimension supplies the respect in which adjectives like *good* apply:

(19) *As far as style is concerned*, this book is good.

One may see the thematic dimension as just one contextual parameter $d$ alongside the more familiar ones that make up a context $c$, like speaker $s$, place $p$, and time $t$. A context can then be represented as a list of parameters of the form $c = < s, p, t, d, ... >$. Semantically, one may look at thematic dimensions as sets of properties that apply under one respect; for example, the dimension of color consists of the set of all color properties: {red, blue, yellow, ...}; the dimension of health contains all health properties, etc. Thus, thematic dimensions are similar to what Goodman calls *schemas* (Goodman 1976: 71-4; cf. 2.1.2 above): the implicit sets of alternative labels that determine the range and realm of an individual label. The difference is, of course, that thematic dimensions are sets of properties, not labels.

Thematic indeterminacy is a rarely noticed form of context-dependence, but it is semantically important, as the application of the same expression in different dimensions may yield fallacious arguments. Already Aristotle was aware of this: in Chapter XX of the *Sophistical Refutations* (177b14), he argued that it is possible for a good man to be a bad cobbler, but this does not imply that, as a cobbler, he is both good and bad: being bad as a cobbler, i.e., not being skillful at cobbling, is not the same *kind* of property as being good as a man, which is a moral property.

In isolation from a thematic dimension, dimensionally weakly determined adjectives do not express a property but a *pre-property* (a function from thematic dimensions to properties). Dimensionally strongly determined adjectives, like *brave*, express the same property in all contexts. Bartsch therefore proposes to extend Kaplan’s distinction between character and content to property expressions. Strongly determined adjectives have a stable character, weakly determined ones an instable character. Strongly determined expressions may be said to carry an *internal* thematic dimension; thus, *mauve* has an internal dimension of color. Likewise, some weakly determined adjectives like *good* may have a ‘default’ internal dimension when
predicated of people, e.g., that of moral qualities. Thematic dimensions are not affected by negation, questioning, etc.; they involve presupposed rather than asserted information.¹

Thematic dimensions need not be fully specified, so that sentences like John is doing well in isolation from a contextually supplied, or contextual, dimension, do not attribute any single property to John. Bartsch argues that doing well denotes a default range of properties, namely ‘doing well in all relevant respects’; these are the respects normally presupposed when we inquire how somebody is doing, such as healthwise, in family life, financially, etc. (1987a: 5). Alternatively, one may take one of these dimensions as the default one. Upon further questioning, this dimension may be further specified, and other dimensions may be added. Bartsch further argues that thematic dimensions are intentional dimensions: they define a perspective on the object or person spoken about, and are related to the hearer’s expectations regarding the theme of the discourse (1987b: 296). This need not imply, however, that thematic dimensions are established by the recognition of the speaker’s intentions; typically, they are implicitly present in the situational or conversational background, or explicitly indicated by the speaker.

Clearly, the number of lexically simple adjectives is finite, so they express a limited number of pre-properties. The number of thematic dimensions, which likewise can typically be expressed by basic lexical items (health, shape, color, size,...), seems to be limited as well. Thematic dimensions do allow for indefinite further differentiation, however, by additional perspectives and aspects. Some of these aspects can be supplied as part of the descriptive information of the noun of which the adjective is predicated (e.g., a strong drink does not express the same property of strongness as a strong man), but they may also be supplied in the course of the text. In this way, ever more fine-grained properties may be arrived at.² Thus, on the basis of relatively small sets of pre-properties and thematic dimensions, indefinitely many properties of varying degrees of thematic precision can be expressed. This indeterminacy and openness for further refinement of pre-properties and thematic dimensions is actually of great importance for the economy of linguistic expression: if all property expressions were dimensionally and otherwise fully determinate, we would quickly run out of linguistic resources to express more specific properties (other than by the mere conjunction of adjectives), and to extend property terms to new cases (see also chapter 4 below). In fact, most properties that can be captured in natural language are not named but expressed in discourse;

¹In 3.2 below, I will address this aspect in more detail.
²See Bartsch (1987b) for more details. For an comparable account of how the progressive refinement of indeterminacy takes place, see Pinkal (1985, 1989), who presents a ‘semantics of precisification’ for the familiar vagueness of such predicates as red, bald, etc.
that is, they are not necessarily defined once and for all in the model, but *constructed* by the application of thematic dimensions and further perspectives to pre-properties (Bartsch 1987b: 302; 306). Consequently, thematic dimensions can be more easily quantified over than deictic contextual parameters, witness such phrases as *in all respects*, etc.

*Are Predicate-Limiting Adverbials Monsters?*

The specification of which respect of qualification applies may be supplied by a *predicate-limiting adverbial*, which enables one to indicate with linguistic means exactly which property is expressed by a weakly determined term. Such adverbials thus supply an *external* thematic dimension, as distinct from both internal and contextual dimensions. They also restrict the applicability of the adjective: for example, a book that is beautiful *in style* need not be beautiful *as a physical object*. Predicate-limiting adverbials thus do not display the same patterns of inference as manner adverbials, witness (20) and (21):

(20) John’s paper is stylistically good $\not\rightarrow$ John’s paper is good.
(21) John walks quickly $\rightarrow$ John walks.

Bartsch argues that predicate-limiting adverbials create *thematic intensionality*, in that they suspend whatever other contextual and internal dimensions are present. To capture this formally, she introduces the operator $\ast$, which creates what she calls ‘thematic intensionality’, just as the familiar cap-operator $\wedge$ creates ‘regular’ intensionality: it abstracts from the contextually given and internal thematic dimensions of an expression, just as $\wedge$ abstracts from the actual circumstance of evaluation. But then the question arises: what kind of intensionality is created here? If we take the thematic dimension to be part of a complex index $i = <c,w>$, the operator $\ast$ introduces just an analogue of familiar intensionality; but if we take seriously the idea that thematic dimensions are *contextual* parameters, $\ast$ operates on characters, and hence is what Kaplan would call a monster.

This question is not discussed in Bartsch’s writings. Although she makes an initial distinction between context and character, she later treats context as one parameter of a complex index that also comprises the reference situation; this is, of course, a return to Montagovian index theory (Bartsch 1987a: 13; cf. 1987b: 304). Formally, such a move amounts to just a notational variant, as was noted above, but conceptually, it blurs the distinction between character and content, and consequently between ‘regular’ intensional
operators and monsters. Perhaps it is this conflation of context- and world-parameters that leads Bartsch to define the thematic intensionality operator * in unmistakably monstrous terms.

Zimmermann (1991: 168) has already noted that predicate-limiting adverbials are monsters because they shift (an aspect of) the context of utterance: for example, if we assume a dimension of spatial distance to be contextually given for expressions like shortest in (22), this dimension may be shifted by an adverbial like temporally, as in (23):

(22) the shortest way to Berlin.
(23) the temporally shortest way to Berlin.

It is this shifting of a contextually given dimension that makes predicate-limiting adverbials into monsters. In itself, this is not an argument against them, but merely an indication that we should either modify Kaplan's (intuitively plausible) injunction against monsters, or reanalyze predicate-limiting adverbials as really operating on intensions rather than characters. Zimmermann suggests two strategies for the latter option: first, he suggests that it is not always the context of utterance that supplies the underdetermined dimension, but rather a circumstantial parameter that merely appears to be contextual. Context and circumstance may be in conflict with each other, and thus constitute an improper index, which therefore does not define any specific situation, but rather several situations (Zimmermann 1991: 171). This is hardly convincing: intuitively, not only the extension but also the content of shortest is changed in (23). Second, Zimmermann proposes to reanalyze dimensionally weakly determined adjectives as derived from the comparative form, which, he believes, refers absolutely. On such an analysis, a way is short if it is shorter than some situationally given standard. As this standard is explicitly given in comparative form, the content is thereby fixed, and thus the comparative

(24) The book is harder than the pillow.

would need no contextual specification of standards any longer, and refer absolutely (1991: 165). But this strategy does not fully eliminate dimensional indeterminacy. The comparative form of an adjective may be just as context-dependent as the positive form, and equally well allow for predicate-limiting adverbials:
Regarding swimming skills/painting talent/etc., John is better than Harry.

In short, then, the attempts to reanalyze thematic dimensions as circumstance parameters rather than contextual factors do not appear very successful or promising; after all, a hard book with respect to contents expresses an entirely other property than a hard book with respect to physical solidity. Thematic dimensions, in other words, are contextual aspects in so far as they can determine the content or intension of an expression; but otherwise, they differ from the strictly deictic parameters of the context, such as speaker, place, and time. Like the contextual variables noted by Partee, they allow for shifting and quantification more easily than deictic parameters; it is only the latter that cannot be quantified over. In fact, the context-dependence of expressions like good, local, and enemy seems to be of such a different order from that of I and here that one hesitates to call them 'indexicals' at all.

Bartsch only discusses (the predicative use of) adjectives, but her approach can straightforwardly be extended to other kinds of property expressions, such as common nouns and verbs. All of these allow for predicate-limiting expressions in a manner similar to that of dimensionally indeterminate adjectives:

(26) John's business is booming financially, though not regarding the number of employees.

(27) Life's evening.

(28) Saul Kripke is the Bobby Fischer of philosophy. (Ernest Gellner)\(^1\)

To capture these phenomena in a principled manner, I would suggest as a general strategy to assign a character, rather than just a content or intension, to all property expressions. Many verbs, common nouns and proper names preceded by an article express a specific property only given a specific thematic context. This indeterminacy is largely independent of the fact that the interpretation of many adjectives is affected by the noun to which they are applied. Thus, a big mouse need not entail that the mouse referred to is a big animal; other examples are

(29) A solid drink.

(30) A solid table.

\(^1\)Note that the proper name Bobby Fischer is preceded by the definite article here, and consequently functions as a predicate rather than as a referring expression (cf. p. 6 above).
Clearly, *solid* does not express quite the same property in these cases.\(^1\) Thus, to some extent, the head noun may reduce the thematic indeterminacy of the modifier, but explicit predicate-limiting expressions apply in addition to (and at times possibly even in conflict with) such restrictions.

Different kinds of context-dependence thus yield significant divergences from Kaplan’s original Logic of Demonstratives. In particular, thematic dimensions appear to present genuine problems for a Kaplanian theory of context. They apply to property expressions rather than to referring terms, and are much more easily shifted than deictic contextual parameters. If a Kaplanian approach brandishes constructions in which the dimension is shifted as ‘monsters’, they may take pride in this name: they capture empirical phenomena that are certainly real.

### 3.1.3. Metaphor and the Logic of Demonstratives

With Bartsch’s extension of Kaplan’s ideas, the application of the Logic of Demonstratives to metaphorical interpretation becomes straightforward. In chapter 2 above, it was already noted that metaphorical interpretations are assigned to sentences in context rather than to sentence types. This is in essence just an instance of the general fact that sentences containing context-dependent terms express different propositional contents in different contexts. A sentence like

\[(31) \text{This place is a prison.}\]

can express different propositional contents, depending on the contextually determined extension of *this place*. It now appears that property expressions like *prison* may equally well be context-dependent. Here, I wish to pursue the idea that metaphorical interpretation systematically exploits this (actual or potential) context-dependence of property expressions: the basic idea is simply that a metaphorical interpretation arises from the application of a property expression in a new thematic dimension \(d_n\). In metaphorical interpretation, the internal dimension of an expression is overruled. To take a simple example:

\[(32) \text{This is a swine.}\]

\(^1\)Kamp (1975: 125) calls adjectives whose interpretation is not affected by the nouns with which they are combined *predicative*. Thematically weakly determined adjectives, in particular metaphorically applied terms, are in general not predicative.
In isolation from a context, (32) does not yet express any specific propositional content. The same sentence type may receive different literal and metaphorical interpretations, depending on both the referent of *this* and on the thematic dimension. By the very same (or at least a very similar) mechanism, contextual features determine both that *this* is interpreted as referring to, say, the extremely filthy person at whom the speaker is pointing, and that *swine* is interpreted in a thematic dimension other than a default dimension dᵢ of biological taxa. When interpreted in dᵢ, (32) is just false (indeed, false in all circumstances, given a context in which *this* refers to a human being); in dₑ, however, it denotes the property of being filthy, and there, (32) is true if the person pointed at does in fact have that property. In other words, it is the thematic dimension that is the relevant contextual parameter in metaphorical interpretation: a property expression is interpreted in the contextually given dimension, which may, but need not, be at odds with its internal dimension.

Before filling in this picture in more detail, it may be as well to note that it depends on quite general and independently motivated semantic principles. First, property expressions have characters rather than contents as their meanings: they express functions from thematic dimensions of contexts to properties. As seen, the distinction between character and content has a wide application, and is independently motivated by the existence of such simple indexicals as *I* and *here*. Second, the notions of thematic dimensions and thematic intensionality were introduced independently of questions specific to metaphor. Metaphorical interpretation, in other words, involves general principles of semantic interpretation. What is distinctive, but not exclusive, to it is the kind of context-dependence and the kind of expression it involves. Above, it has been stressed repeatedly that it is typically property expressions (verbs, nouns, and adjectives) that may be interpreted metaphorically. Proper names, when employed metaphorically, are typically preceded by an article, and thus function as descriptions rather than as purely referring expressions. Metaphorical interpretation thus essentially involves the descriptive information of property expressions. Dimensionally weakly determined expressions only denote a specific content given a thematic dimension; but even given a context, they usually do not have a stable content. For this reason, they cannot be called either absolutely or directly referring according to Zimmermann’s definition.

Thematic dimensions, as said, can appear in three ways: as *internal* dimensions that are associated with dimensionally strongly determined expressions by default; as *external* dimensions in the form of predicate-limiting adverbials within sentences; or as *contextual* dimensions, i.e., as information from the extralinguistic context of utterance or from the
preceding discourse. Now in metaphorical interpretation, the internal dimension of the predicate (in so far as it has one) is suspended or neutralized by the external or contextual one. It is the contextual dimension that creates textual coherence, and therefore it takes precedence over whatever internal dimensions are associated with the predicate itself. The external dimension, in its turn, takes precedence over whatever contextual or internal dimensions are available. In a null context (for example, at the start of a discourse), there is obviously no clash between external and contextual dimension, but in contexts where a dimension is available, it is either shifted or further specified by the explicit dimension indicator. Such shifts, as noted above, would be monsters in Kaplan’s sense, but this hardly counts as a decisive argument against them. After all, it is perfectly possible to shift the theme or topic of conversation as discourse unfolds. It should also be kept in mind that predicate-limiting adverbials do not operate on, or quantify over, the context of utterance as a whole, but merely over the thematic aspects of the context. As will be seen in 3.2 below, thematic dimensions behave differently from deictic parameters like place and time in a number of ways.

**Metaphor and Literal Falsity**

A novel metaphorical predication involves applying a predicate not only to a new subject, but also in a new thematic dimension.\(^1\) The mere application of a term to a new subject in itself need not lead to a metaphorical interpretation: the predicate can still be applied in its ‘literal’ dimension \(d_i\), and as such yield literally true or false sentences. But the metaphorical application of an expression does not just determine a new extension; it also involves a new intension or content. In literal and metaphorical interpretations, property expressions express different contents, and these respective contents are determined by the thematic dimension of the context. Because of this systematic context-dependence of metaphorical interpretation, the importance of falsity of the ‘literal interpretation’ (i.e., the interpretation in the default dimension) as a criterion for recognition loses in importance. In fact, precisely because metaphorical interpretation involves the determination of content as well as extension, it is perfectly possible to interpret a literally true sentence metaphorically. Sentences like

\[(33) \quad \text{Anchorage is a cold city.}\]

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\(^1\)As seen in 2.1, Goodman (1976: 72) already noted that ‘metaphor typically involves a change not merely of range but also of realm’.
can be interpreted both literally and metaphorically; but which of these interpretations is selected depends on the context of utterance. As (33) is, or can be, literally true, the metaphorical interpretation is not triggered by the literal falsity of the sentence, but by the thematic dimension $d_n$ of properties of hospitality, which overrules the internal dimension $d_i$ of temperature. Moreover, as the thematic dimension is a contextual parameter, it takes wide scope over extensional and intensional operators like negation and modals, just as parameters like speaker and place of utterance do:

(34) X is geen aasgier. Aasgieren zijn tenslotte hoogvliegers. (W.F. Hermans)
   X is not a vulture: after all, vultures are high-flyers.

(35) Perhaps John is an ostrich.

What (34) denies is not that *aasgier* (‘vulture’) should be metaphorically interpreted, but that $X$ belongs to the extension of its metaphorically established content. It is contingently true when interpreted in a dimension of personality properties; but interpreted in a dimension of biological species, it is trivially true. It thus expresses different propositional contents, and not just different extensions, in different dimensions. Likewise, in (35), the dimension of behavior is not affected the modal operator *perhaps*: the operator shifts the circumstance of evaluation, not the (thematic dimension of) the context of utterance; consequently, it leaves the metaphorical interpretation of (35) intact.

Taking metaphorical interpretation to be determined by a contextual parameter thus removes two difficulties of earlier theories in a single stroke. First, this approach does not require the recognition of a sentence as literally false or otherwise inappropriate as a basis for metaphorical interpretation, a claim which we have seen to face various counterexamples; and secondly, it can handle metaphors that are literally true (true, that is, in a default dimension $d_i$) without any appeal to *ad hoc* notions. The hearer can just bypass the question of whether the sentence is literally true, and determine a metaphorical content directly, on the basis of the contextually available information. This content can then be evaluated with just the same standards as a literally determined content: if there is no circumstance where John has the property of being an ostrich in $d_n$, (35) is just false. A metaphorically interpreted sentence is simply true in case its subject has the contextually determined property. Thus, there is no need for any distinct notion of metaphorical truth or falsity.

In other words, the problem of recognizing a metaphor as such before it can be interpreted disappears on this approach, which may therefore be characterized as one of *direct contextual*
interpretation. The recognition of a metaphor as literally false or odd need not occur at all, and if it occurs, it is logically posterior to its interpretation. Thus, the ‘literal meaning’, i.e., the content established in the default dimension $d_i$, loses much of its traditionally privileged status in the process of interpretation. In general, sentences containing context-dependent expressions cannot even be assigned a ‘literal meaning’ or propositional content in isolation from a context; which propositional content a sentence expresses varies with its context of utterance.¹ There is no need to assume that, given a contextual dimension $d_n$, a content is determined in $d_i$ first.

Earlier semantic accounts were all based on the assumption that some kind of clash or tension is a necessary feature of metaphorical interpretation, and that the literal content is logically prior to the metaphorical interpretation. Descriptivists like Beardsley (1962) assumed that there is a logical opposition between the terms of the sentence itself, but such a view was quickly confronted with counterexamples that are literally quite in order:

(36) Life is not a bed of roses.
(33) Anchorage is a cold city.

More recent statements of ‘tension theories’ (Beardsley 1978, Kittay 1987) therefore postulate that sentences like (36) and (33) must first be recognized as deviant or inappropriate within the larger context or stretch of discourse in which they occur. Interpreted literally, (33) would then be odd because of its triviality or irrelevance; (33) because a remark about the climate or temperature of a city is out of place in a context that concerns, say, the hospitality or attractiveness of different cities. It was noted in chapter 2 above that such attempts face considerable descriptive problems: even if it were possible to formulate a criterion that nontrivially characterizes all metaphors as inappropriate in context, this still would not warrant that such expressions are interpreted metaphorically rather than in some other non-literal way.

But apart from these practical problems, the difficulty of finding a criterion for metaphor should raise more principled doubts as to whether we actually need any criterion at all. Rather than inspiring a search for a ‘contextual’ criterion that may at most give a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for metaphorical interpretation, metaphors that are literally true in some contexts should be taken as reasons to question the very assumption that metaphor involves a

¹What we intuitively consider the ‘meaning’ of property expressions occurs at the level of content, not of character: it is the content of an expression in its default dimension. In this respect, property expressions differ from indexicals: we think of the ‘meaning’ of an indexical like / as a function from contexts to speakers, that is, as its character. Dimensionally weakly determined expressions may be an exception: the meaning of good is not goodness in any one specific sense, but rather goodness in some respect.
‘second-order’ interpretation based on a semantically or contextually anomalous literal meaning. If thematic dimensions are taken as features or parameters of the context of utterance, and therefore as playing a role already at the semantic level of determining content (and above there appeared to be independent reasons for such a view), then all the contextual information necessary for determining a metaphorical interpretation is already available for the direct construction of such an interpretation. In a ‘metaphorical’ thematic dimension of personality properties, (33) does not predicate a temperature property of Anchorage, but the property of lack of hospitality. In that case, however, the appeal to a presumably anomalous ‘literal’ meaning (here, the temperature property expressed by cold) becomes just irrelevant, as does an appeal to pragmatic factors that are to establish a ‘secondary’ interpretation. The propositional content semantically determined in context is the metaphorical interpretation to begin with, so it is simply superfluous to treat it as a pragmatic reinterpretation of a contextually inappropriate literal content. On the contrary, the metaphorical content is precisely the contextually appropriate interpretation.

In fact, it would be rather odd to say that the hearer would first shift the contextually given dimension $d_n$ to some other dimension $d_i$ (the ‘literal’ one) in order to find out that the sentence makes no sense when interpreted in that dimension, and then by a long detour via pragmatic principles of a Gricean or comparable nature select a context $d_n$ that was already there in the first place, just as odd, in fact, as it would be to determine the referent of I in a given context by figuring out what the referent would be in some other context. The relevant information for establishing a metaphorical interpretation is already available, and in fact needed, at the semantic level. It is absolutely essential here to take the context, and more specifically the thematic dimension, into account: without such contextual information, the hearer will not only determine the wrong content, but is often not even able to determine any specific content at all. Outside a context, as Kaplan noted, context-dependent expressions do not express a content, but only a character. And as a character may determine different propositional contents in different contexts, one can hardly say that it is in itself deviant or anomalous.

On a direct contextual interpretation account, the ‘tension’ or ‘logical opposition’ that earlier theories postulated as the criterion of recognition or basis of metaphorical interpretation is just a contingent aspect of some metaphors. If an expression has no internal dimension, that is, if it determines different contents in different contexts, its being applied in a new context will not clash strongly with earlier applications. The metaphorical application of dimensionally strongly determined expressions may involve a clearer sense of clash than that of weakly determined ones; but in any case the recognition of such a ‘clash’ or ‘tension’ has no semantic
relevance for either the recognition or interpretation of a metaphor. The hearer has to interpret and evaluate a sentence before noting its oddity; just as one has to evaluate a literally interpreted sentence as false before realizing how stupid it was to say something so false in the first place.

The idea that metaphorical interpretation involves essentially semantic processes, and has a relatively determinate outcome in context, is equally at odds with the views of various other theorists. Davidson and Blackburn, to mention just a few, argue that metaphors, precisely because of their open-endedness, do not involve anything like a semantic process of interpretation in which a cognitive content or proposition is recovered. Against such views, it may be said that, in isolation from a context, metaphors indeed do not have any determinate interpretation: on their own, they express a character, which yields specific contents only in specific contexts. Metaphorically interpreted sentences also tend to look more ‘anomalous’ or ‘deviant’ in isolation than in a context, because the default dimension \( d_i \) tends to appear if it is not blocked by any contextually given dimension. In this dimension \( d_i \), however, a predicate like wolf in *Man is a wolf* determines a property that either is obviously false of, or just does not attribute anything interesting to, the subject *man*. The sentence type itself gives no clues as to which dimension it should be interpreted in, but may at most suggest that it should not be interpreted in the default dimension. Even given a context, however, some indeterminacy may remain; but this may be reduced by further specification or elaboration in subsequent discourse. The ‘open-endedness’ of metaphor is in essence just the same kind of indeterminacy that characterizes dimensionally weakly determined predicates in general.

*Metaphor and Other Figures*

The choice between literal and metaphorical interpretation, then, depends less on the conscious recognition of a sentence as metaphorical than on the identification of the thematic dimension within which it is to be interpreted. But how do we distinguish metaphorical interpretations from other figures? It is obviously necessary to have some kind of criterion, for a sentence that determines a false or otherwise inappropriate content in the ‘literal’ or default dimension may lead to various (re)interpretations. It may be taken as just literally false, as metonymical rather than metaphorical; or the utterance of such a literally false sentence may be taken to convey a particularized conversational implicature (such as irony or sarcasm). It should be kept in mind, however, that these different construals have a rather different status in the interpretation process: on the account given here, both literal and metaphorical interpretation involve the
determination of a semantic content, whereas implicatures arise from the *utterance* of a sentence in context that has already been evaluated as false or otherwise defective. The former *precede* the evaluation of a propositional content, but the latter *follow* upon it.

Distinguishing metaphors from 'literally' false sentences is in essence the same problem as distinguishing metaphors from 'literally' true sentences: both involve the identification of the right thematic dimension. As seen above, given a ‘metaphorical’ dimension, both an assertion and its denial predicate something of the subject within that dimension. Accordingly, the literal as well as the metaphorical content of sentences like (33a) may be taken as either true or false, and accordingly corrected by responses like (33b) and (33c), respectively. These answers still presume, or rather presuppose, the respective thematic dimensions \( d_i \) and \( d_n \) as given.

(33)  
(a) Anchorage is a cold city.
(b) No, last summer, people were fainting because of the heat.
(c) No, last summer I went there and met friendly people everywhere.

Likewise, distinguishing metaphorical interpretation from conversational implicature seems more problematic than it is. If the above ideas are correct, the thematic dimension goes into the determination of the propositional content (what Grice would call ‘what is said’). Implicatures, by contrast, are carried not by sentence types or sentences in context, but by *utterances* of sentences in context. On the standard account, implicatures arise only *after* a content has been established and evaluated as false or otherwise inappropriate (e.g., redundant or irrelevant). As noted in 2.2, metaphorical interpretation differs from implicature with respect to cancellability, behavior under negation and modal operators, etc.\(^1\) In general, metaphorical interpretation as a semantic notion and implicature as a pragmatic, utterance-based phenomenon differ so strongly in inferential behavior that it is difficult if not impossible to conflate or identify the two.

Obviously, however, metaphorically interpreted sentences can be *used* to yield a conversational implicature in addition to their (semantic) interpretation.\(^2\) Metaphors may very well be used to communicate irony, sarcasm, or some other implied content:

\(^1\)Bartsch (1987a: 3) argues that in case of dimension clash, the internal dimension may overrule the contextual one; a ‘literal’ interpretation then arises as an implicature. I will address this question in 3.2.

\(^2\)Grice himself notes the possibility of ‘stacking’ metaphor and irony; he suggests that the hearer has to calculate the metaphorical reading first, and then calculate an ironic interpretation on the basis of it (1989: 34). But if a metaphorical interpretation already is an implicatum, the utterance of a literally false sentence would then lead to an equally false implicature, which in its turn yields a ‘true’, ironic implicatum. As seen in the discussion of Martinich, the notion of an implicatum that is itself false or uncooperative makes little sense.
Metaphor and Context-Dependence

(37)  [Speaking of a dull mathematics student] He is a real Gödel.
(38)  - Shall I invite Gustave to our formal dinner this Friday?
     - Gustave is a swine. [implicature: don’t invite him]

The implicatures arising from (37) and (38) can be cancelled without any sense of contradiction, but the metaphorical interpretations are left untouched. The speaker who utters (37) may deny that she is suggesting that the student in question is no good at mathematics; the second speaker in (38) may deny that she does not want Gustave to be invited. Both are committed, however, to the ‘metaphorical content’ that is determined in context. The fact that metaphors can be used to convey various kinds of pragmatic information may be another reason to keep their semantic interpretation and pragmatic effects apart.

In other words, figures such as irony or sarcasm, unlike metaphorical interpretation, do appear to depend on a previously established content.¹ Metonymy stands apart from these figures, however, in that it seems to involve, like metaphor, the contextual establishing of a propositional content rather than the reinterpretation of an already determined and evaluated one (Nunberg 1978, Sag 1981). Now how do we distinguish between these two? The standard response is that metonymy involves contiguity or a part-whole relation, and metaphor a relation of similarity, between objects; but in 2.2 so many difficulties have been noted for referentialist theories of metaphor as based on similarity between objects that this answer is hardly a way out. One global difference is that metonymic interpretations, unlike metaphorical ones, often determine information that is presupposed rather than asserted. Thus, (33)

(33)  Anchorage is a cold city.

can be interpreted metaphorically regarding the property attributed to, or asserted of, the subject (cold may be interpreted as a temperature property or as a hospitality property), or metonymically with respect to the subject about which an assertion is made (Anchorage can be interpreted as denoting either the city itself or its inhabitants). It would be more difficult to think of examples where a property is metonymically rather than metaphorically attributed to a subject. But this will not do to distinguish metonymical from metaphorical interpretations in general, as the latter can on occasion express presupposed information as well. Imagine a sandwich bar where a tyrannical customer has just ordered a ham sandwich. Noting his impatience, the waiter may metonymically say (39), and metaphorically say (40), to the cashier:

¹Gibbs (1993, 1994) has even argued against a Gricean analysis of irony as an implicature.
(39) The ham sandwich is getting impatient
(40) Napoleon is getting impatient.

This makes clear that in both metonymical and metaphorical interpretation, contextual factors play a central role in determining propositional content; the main difference seems to be that metonymic interpretation does not depend on which properties are at stake (i.e., on the thematic dimension), but rather on what (kind of) objects are being talked about. In the context for (39) and (40), the same individual is contextually associated with a ham sandwich and with tyrannical behavior, and it is his behavior about which an assertion is made here. Now descriptions like the/a ham sandwich may well receive a metaphorical interpretation in some contexts, but there are no obvious candidates for such an interpretation in a dimension d of behavior; at least I cannot think of any interesting behavioral properties of ham sandwiches. In fact, in a rather different context, (39) might have been interpreted metaphorically, as expressing that an individual resembling a ham sandwich in some way is losing his patience; alternatively, getting impatient might be taken as metaphorically expressing that an actual ham sandwich is on the verge of burning in the toaster. These considerations may not add up to a full-fledged criterion for distinguishing between metaphor and metonymy, but at least they suggest where it could be found. They also show the need for a rich representation of contextual parameters, which includes thematic dimensions, discourse referents, etc. I will return to this in 3.2.4.

In fact, some authors have argued that at times it is difficult to say whether a sentence is interpreted metaphorically or metonymically (Levinson 1983: 148), or even that metaphorical interpretations themselves depend on metonymic chains of factual associations (Eco 1979). Perhaps the word kiwi is an example of an expression where it is difficult to tell metaphorical and metonymical transfers from one another. At first, the word denoted a particular species of bird with fur-like brown feathers living in New Zealand; later, it came to denote inhabitants of New Zealand in general, and also a new type of fruit with a furry brown skin. While the former of these extensions is clearly metonymic in kind, the latter may be construed as either involving metonymical or metaphorical processes: the fruit is metonymically related to the bird because of its provenance, and metaphorically because of its appearance. This need not be a very serious problem, however: as said, connotations may be associated with expressions in different ways, but both metonymical and metaphorical transfer may on occasion result in the same propositional content.

Both metaphorical and metonymic interpretation thus involve the contextual determination of propositional content. For that reason, they should be seen as instances of semantic
interpretation rather than pragmatic reinterpretation. In this, they differ from the figures of speech that do involve the reinterpretation of a propositional content. Recognition thus drops out as a necessary first step in metaphorical and metonymical interpretation. It might be argued that the hearer must consciously recognize or identify the thematic dimension before he can correctly interpret a sentence, but such a claim applies to dimensionally weakly determined expressions in general, and is a far cry from arguing that the hearer must recognize a sentence as metaphorical. On the present account, the ‘literal meaning’ (i.e., the content in the default dimension $d_j$) plays no privileged role in the recognition or interpretation of metaphor.

**Direct Contextual Interpretation as a Descriptivist View**

How does this direct contextual interpretation approach compare with the semantic and pragmatic approaches discussed above? It should be obvious that it is, in essence, a semantic rather than a pragmatic account, in that it does not centrally involve speaker’s intentions. The interpretation of metaphor involves a context-dependence that is similar in kind to, although different in detail from, the more familiar - and essentially semantic - context-dependence of indexicals that Kaplan has tried to account for. Among semantic approaches, it is closer to descriptivist than to referentialist views. It crucially involves meanings or contents, and changes in meaning in virtue of the descriptive information associated with expressions, and thus falls squarely within the domain of descriptivist theories. At first sight, it may appear to be a referentialist view, however, in that it involves the properties that objects have as the basis of a metaphorical interpretation. But there are two points to be brought in against such a simplistic referentialist view: first, the property involved need not actually apply to its ‘original’ object: it may be associated with it in various ways (for example, the property of being brutish and violent is stereotypically associated with gorilla, even if gorillas are in fact not brutish and violent at all, but shy and sensitive). Second, a property that is metaphorically attributed to a human being like Juliet need not be quite the same property that is literally attributed to, e.g., the sun. Thus, if the assertion of (41)

(41) Juliet is the sun (Shakespeare, *Romeo & Juliet* II.2:3)

ascribes warmth or radiance to Juliet, this is a different kind of warmth or radiance than that of the sun. This is, of course, just the problem of tamthil-based metaphors that Jurjānī already

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1As seen in 2.2.2, both of these points were already noted by Searle (1979).
discussed. The earlier formulations of descriptivist views (Black, Beardsley) saw a ‘tension’ or ‘clash’ at the level of ‘literal meanings’ as an essential first step in reaching a metaphorical interpretation, but such a first step drops out here. On this account, the metaphorical interpretation is determined directly, or semantically, as a propositional content on the basis of the thematic dimension of the context, and ‘literal meaning’ (that is, the content in the default dimension) is simply bypassed.

Metaphor and Paraphrase

There are three kinds of question facing semantic, and especially descriptivist, accounts: the question of how metaphors are recognized, the question of whether metaphor can be paraphrased into literal language, and the question of how the metaphorical content arises: is it ‘selected’ or ‘created’? The first of these has already been addressed in detail: on the present account, the problem of recognizing a metaphor essentially dissolves. I will now address the second, and return to the third in section 3.2.5.

The question of whether metaphors can be paraphrased in ‘literal’ language has vexed many authors: Black, for example, has argued that no literal paraphrase can give us precisely the insight that an ‘interactional’ metaphor gives us, as a purported paraphrase explicates the associations left implicit by the metaphor itself, and does not demand any simultaneous awareness of both the ‘principal’ and the ‘subsidiary’ subject; accordingly, he believes that what is lost in paraphrase is indeed a ‘loss in cognitive content’ (1962: 46). Davidson, by contrast, argues that ‘we can come as close as we like’ in paraphrasing the cognitive content of metaphors, and that the non-paraphrasable effect of a metaphor is not a cognitive content at all (1979: 44-5). The problem is that many of these discussions of the ‘cognitive autonomy’ of metaphor suffer from a lack of terminological clarity, as Stern (1979) has rightly argued. At what level of interpretation are metaphors supposed to be unparaphrasable: that of character, of content, of extension, or at some altogether different level? Moreover, the semantic claim that metaphors cannot be paraphrased should not be confused with the epistemological claim that our understanding or apprehension of metaphor differs qualitatively from our knowledge of literal language, or with the metaphysical claim that metaphors express some distinct kind of ‘metaphorical facts’ that cannot be expressed in literal language (cf. Stern 1979: 294-312).

It should be clear that the semantic claim does not entail the epistemological or metaphysical one. But even semantically, the unparaphrasability thesis is limited in scope. As said, in a metaphorical interpretation an expression $P$ semantically just comes to denote a property in a
new dimension $d_n$. The property thus identified is just there, in the model, and not created by the metaphorical application: objects just have properties, but some of these may be nameless. Naming such properties is precisely what happens in metaphorical application. This account does not absolutely require, however, that the property in question is not yet named, or cannot be identified by other means. It certainly seems possible in principle, though it may be difficult or cumbersome in practice, to identify the same property with the aid of 'literal' property expressions (or Boolean operations on them), or with descriptions. Put differently, the content determined in a metaphorical interpretation can in principle also be expressed by 'literal' means. The specific character of a metaphorically interpreted expression, however, cannot in general be captured by other means: there is no other, literal expression that determines the same content as cold in all dimensions. In a dimension $d_n$ of hospitality properties, predicates like unfriendly can determine (approximately) the same property, but in other dimensions $d_m$, they denote another property than cold as interpreted in $d_m$, or no property at all. The same goes for expressions with the same content in the default dimension $d$ of cold; expressions like having a low temperature may express the same property there, but they do not typically do so in all dimensions. In other words, a literal paraphrase may express the same content in some context $d_n$, but it will not have the same character as the metaphorically interpreted expression, so it is at the level of character that the 'unique' and unparaphrasable effect of metaphor lies.\footnote{Stern (1979: 297) draws in essence the same conclusion, except that he has fewer reservations about the possibility of expressing the same content by other expressions.}

One may question, however, to what extent this 'uniqueness' of metaphor is a semantic matter at all, rather than an epistemological one. In fact, Kaplan himself (1989a: ch. XVII) already argued that epistemologically, character can be seen as a context-dependent manner of presenting a content. For context-dependent expressions, the same character will typically determine different contents to different persons, so that the character of e.g. (42)

\begin{equation}
(42) \quad \text{I am hungry.}
\end{equation}

determines for each speaker the content that she is hungry. Conversely, when both you and I entertain the same content (or thought) that I am hungry, we will do so under different characters, and consequently, behave in a different manner (I will go and get something to eat for myself, while you may go and get me something to eat). This leads Kaplan to distinguish between the cognitive significance of a thought, which he identifies with character, and the
object of thought, which he identifies with content (1989a: 530; cf. Perry 1977, 1979). If this identification is correct, metaphor can likewise be said to involve the (context-dependent) presentation of a content under a specific character. If one tries to paraphrase this content, the specific manner of presentation will in general be lost; and conversely, the same manner of presentation will determine different contents in different contexts. This would make it difficult, if not impossible, to find any paraphrase that presents the same content under the same character.¹

We can then see the character of cold as presenting the hospitality of Anchorage in a manner different from unfriendly or unwelcoming. Put this way, part of the effect of a metaphor is closely similar to what earlier authors claimed about it. Black, for example, argues that the metaphor man is a wolf ‘organizes our view of man’ (1962: 41); Goodman (1976: 73) claims that metaphor involves a ‘transfer of a schema, a migration of concepts, an alienation of categories’; Davidson (1979: 45) and Blackburn (1983: 175-6) suggest that metaphors lead us to seeing one thing as another, and Lakoff & Johnson (1980) hold that linguistic metaphors reflect our conceptualizing of one thing in terms of another, and can thus help to organize entire conceptual domains. The fact that property expressions often function within thematic dimensions, and that these dimensions often have internal structure of their own, goes some way in accounting for these ‘holistic effects’. Once an expression P has been applied in a novel dimension d_n, other predicates contained in its default dimension d_i may systematically be assigned a place in d_n as well, or as Goodman (1976: 72) put it, ‘a label along with others constituting a schema is detached from the home realm of that schema and applied for the sorting and organizing of an alien realm’. For example, if the term red in a dimension of politics expresses the property of being leftist, and blue that of being liberal, then it becomes straightforward to apply the term purple, which denotes a combination of red and blue colors, to a left-liberal coalition government, as happened after the 1993 parliamentary elections in the Netherlands.² Another effect of a fruitful metaphor is that the novel application of a predicate P in dimension d_n may also suggest applications of P in other dimensions. For example, once I have called John a wolf because of his cruelty, the hearer may also start to attribute other wolf-like features to John, such as his yellowish eyes, pointed teeth, and other visual or behavioral

¹One notices, however, a certain friction between the epistemological view of character as a manner of presenting a content and the semantic view of character as a function from contexts to contents. This recalls the familiar point that the formal semantic notion of intension does not quite match Frege’s notion of Sinn. Doubts have already been raised regarding Kaplan’s identification of semantic and epistemological notions (cf. Zimmermann 1991: 178-86), but I will not go into these matters here.

²In fact, the color red is metonymically rather than metaphorically associated with leftist politics, but the effect of ‘reorganizing’ the novel dimension or realm is similar to the effect that metaphorical applications may have.
aspects. In these ways, the ‘literal’ meaning’ or ‘past history’ guides both the metaphorical application of a predicate and the further effects it may have. To some extent, this explains the resistance of ‘rich’ metaphors to literal paraphrase. More can be said about this, and I will return to this question when discussing the assertive power of metaphor in 3.2. Here, it should be noted, however, that these wider effects do not automatically or necessarily accompany every single metaphorical application of the predicate red or wolf: they are not matters of semantic interpretation as much as of subsequent elaboration.

On this view, then, the semantic claim that metaphors cannot be paraphrased amounts to no more than saying that a ‘literal’ expression will not in general have the same character as a ‘metaphorical’ one, although in some contexts it may determine the same content. But this impossibility of finding a literal synonym is nothing mysterious or unique for metaphor: it is just a consequence of the general distinction between character and content, and of the context-dependence of property expressions: two property expressions may be synonymous in one context, but they are rarely synonymous in all contexts, just as I and the speaker cannot be considered synonyms. One may thus defend the cognitive (or rather, semantic) autonomy of metaphor without having to appeal to unexplained notions like ‘metaphorical meaning’, ‘metaphorical insights’, or ‘metaphorical facts’.

Indeed, the present approach involves a ‘metaphorical meaning’ only in so far as a contextually determined content, distinct from the ‘literal’ or default content, is determined; but this cannot be called a wholly distinct kind of meaning. Given the contextual parameters involved, the interpretation process is relatively straightforward and in accordance with the compositionality principle. In fact, there is nothing ‘metaphorical’ about the content itself: it is just the propositional content determined by the metaphorical application of an expression in a novel or unusual thematic dimension. Propositional contents and other semantic objects, of course, cannot themselves be called either ‘literal’ or ‘metaphorical’; so strictly speaking, any talk of ‘metaphorical senses’ or ‘metaphorical contents’ would be misleading here. These notions should be seen as no more than metonymical shorthands for ‘the contents (or senses or intensions) contextually determined in metaphorical interpretation (or: by the metaphorical application of an expression)’.

Likewise, the notion of ‘metaphor’ itself is, in a sense, misleading. It suggests a reification of something that is actually a process of interpretation rather than a syntactic or semantic object. This ambiguity in the term ‘metaphor’ appeared already in Aristotle’s discussion (see 1.2 above): Aristotle speaks of metaphor as ‘the transfer of a word from elsewhere’, and this may mean both the process and the result of such transfer. Unfortunately, most subsequent authors
tend towards the latter view, and I think it is this reification of the process of metaphorical interpretation that has led to a long and fruitless search for specific syntactic or semantic properties that metaphors as word or sentence types were presumed to have. The search is fruitless because ultimately, there simply are no properties or criteria that strictly distinguish metaphorical and literal language. *Metaphor is not a syntactic construction or a semantic object of a specific nature; it is a mode of interpretation.*

3.1.4. A Comparison: Stern’s ‘Metaphor as Demonstrative’

After this outline of a direct contextual interpretation approach to metaphor, I would like to discuss the work of Josef Stern, which embodies an closely similar approach.¹ In his dissertation, *Metaphor as Demonstrative* (1979), and in a 1985 article of the same name (which summarizes the earlier work, and introduces a few small but significant changes), Stern has likewise argued for an account of metaphor based on Kaplan’s theory of context-dependence. I will briefly summarize his argument, discuss a few problematic aspects, and then discuss some of the similarities and differences between the view outlined above and Stern’s. Stern’s approach also involves an account of how metaphors may express assertions, but I will postpone discussion of this aspect to the next section. Here, I focus on how metaphorically interpreted sentences may depend on the context; in 3.2, I will look at how metaphorically interpreted sentences may change the context.

Stern argues that a significant component of a language user’s ability to interpret metaphors forms part of semantic competence as traditionally conceived (i.e., the domain of purely linguistic knowledge), although the content of metaphors, just like the interpretation of demonstratives, also depends on extralinguistic factors. At first sight, metaphors seem to defy an analysis in compositional semantic terms. Consider again (41)

(41) Juliet is the sun.

taken to express that Juliet is unequalled among women. This interpretation is hardly a function of the (literal) interpretations of its component parts, even though in some sense it

¹This is the place for a general acknowledgement of my indebtedness to Stern’s writings. Although I originally developed the approach presented here in my Master’s thesis (Leezenberg 1989), before I became acquainted with Stern’s work, my subsequent thinking has been heavily influenced by his ideas. Ideas bearing some resemblance to Stern’s and my own are presented in rudimentary form in Bergmann (1979) and (1982); cf. also Bosch (1985).
depends on those literal meanings: ‘[the] literal meaning is necessary for the metaphorical interpretation but is not itself always part of it’ (1985: 681). Moreover, the same expression may receive different metaphorical interpretations in different linguistic surroundings, and this does not seem to tally with the compositionality principle either. For example, the sun in

(43) Achilles is the sun.

‘might express Achilles’ devastating anger and brute force’ (1985: 682) rather than being unequalled among men (or women) as it does in (41).

Metaphorical interpretations, thus, cannot be seen as functions of the literal extensions of their parts. But neither, Stern argues, can they be captured in other relatively familiar semantic terms, such as intensionality or ambiguity. If we assume some underlying intensional operator, such as expressed by metaphorically in (44),

(44) Juliet metaphorically is the sun.

to be at work in metaphorical interpretation, we have of course only baptized the problem as long as the syntax and semantics of this operator have not been described in detail. Moreover, it is not at all clear that such an operator is just intensional; for if it is, we still cannot account for the difference between (43) and (46). In both cases, the sun has the same intension, but the respective interpretations turn out to be different. In general, Stern argues, metaphorical interpretations vary more with their linguistic and nonlinguistic context than the positing of some (context-independent) intensional operator allows for. In fact, one and the same sentence may even express different metaphorical contents in different contexts, as already seen in 2.1 and 2.2 above: in a context where Juliet has just quarrelled with Romeo and smashed all the household china, (41) might just as well express her devastating anger, rather than her being unequalled.

Likewise, Stern argues against taking the sun to be merely ambiguous as to its different literal and metaphorical senses. Merely postulating that the sun in (41) has or acquires a distinct ‘metaphorical sense’ that blocks the inference to sentences with the same extension, such as (45)

(45) Juliet is the center of the solar system.
is not enough. Examples (41) and (45) indeed seem to involve different senses, but these can hardly be described in terms of the more familiar kinds of lexical ambiguity: the different literal and figurative senses of the sun are systematically related, unlike the distinct senses of lexically ambiguous expressions like bank or table (1985: 686-7). By merely postulating an ambiguity, we would be forced to accept a widespread ambiguity in much of natural language, which would lead to a rather counterintuitive picture of interpretation. As many expressions may receive an indefinite number of metaphorical interpretations in different contexts, a wide array of irrelevant senses has to be ruled out before the ‘literal meaning’ can be determined. This would lead to a combinatorial explosion of possible senses in sentences containing several such ambiguous expressions.

Stern thus claims that a semantic account of metaphor cannot take recourse to either intensional constructions or ambiguity. He does allow, however, for senses or contents to play a role in metaphorical interpretation, and this makes him a descriptivist of sorts. He goes beyond earlier descriptivists, however, with his doubt that metaphor involves just an intensional construction: he does not believe that the interpretation of a metaphor can be described as a function of the intensions and extensions of its parts. Earlier semantic accounts of metaphor, he argues, fail because they do not identify all the parameters relevant to the compositional process of interpretation. As an alternative, he proposes to systematically take the context-dependence of metaphor into account, with the aid of Kaplan’s terminological apparatus introduced above. Because the number of contexts in which (41) can occur has no bound, there is no fixed bound either on the contents it may express. It is this systematic context-dependence, he argues, that allows for the capturing of an important part of metaphorical interpretation in compositional semantic terms.

Because metaphors may express different contents in different (linguistic and nonlinguistic) contexts, as examples (41) and (43) show, Stern suggests that their interpretation involves a kind of context-dependence similar to that of demonstratives and indexicals: the hearer has to recover the ‘metaphorical character’, i.e., the covert context-dependence of sentences like (41). This metaphorical character is induced by a hidden ‘metaphorical operator’ Mihat, which ‘converts any (literal) expression φ into (to coin a term of art) the “metaphorical expression” Mihat [φ] of nonstable character, which is sensitive to a “metaphorically relevant” feature of its context’ (1985: 695). Mihat is, of course, analogous to Kaplan’s dthat, which expresses the demonstrative interpretation of arbitrary singular terms: in Stern’s view, metaphors form just one specific subgroup of the class of demonstratively interpreted expressions. Thus, underlying each metaphorically interpreted expression φ there is a metaphorical expression
Metaphor and Context-Dependence

The determination of a specific content, by contrast, involves contextual information that may be extralinguistic; consequently, Stern believes that the ability to determine a metaphorical content is not part of purely semantic knowledge, but also involves pragmatic factors (1985: 698). The 'metaphorically relevant' contextual feature is comparable to what Black calls the 'associated commonplaces' (see 2.1 above). To interpret sentences like (46)

(46) Man is a wolf.

we appeal to the system of commonplaces associated with wolf (or with wolves,- Black appeared to waver on this point), such as cruelty, loyalty to the other members of the in-group, etc. Black himself fails to indicate whether these commonplaces are stereotypes, propositions, or statements, but Stern simply takes them to be (sets of) properties. Such properties may come to be associated with an expression like wolf in various different ways: as connotational features, because of similarity, because of dissimilarity, etc. (1985: 696). There is thus no single 'ground', Stern argues, on which all metaphorical interpretations of expressions are based; semantically, however, metaphor is a unitary phenomenon in that there is one formal relation, viz., the context-dependent interpretation of a Mhat-expression on the basis of contextually given presuppositions, that governs the dependence of metaphorical content on its contextual parameter. Stern treats the relevant associated properties that may appear as the value of this parameter as contextual speaker's presuppositions in Stalnaker's (1978) sense, i.e., as 'presuppositions held in the context of utterance by the speaker and his audience' (1985: 697; emphasis added). Knowledge of these presuppositions, in contrast to the knowledge of metaphorical character, does not belong to semantic competence, but is of a 'general symbolic nature', and not even necessarily language-specific (ibid.). One might also say that it essentially belongs to pragmatics because it involves speakers and their intentions. On this point, Stern's views differ from a direct contextual interpretation approach: he takes presupposed commonplaces, rather than thematic dimensions, to determine metaphorical interpretation.

1Stern himself equates pragmatics with 'the application of character in actual performance' (1985: 698), but I prefer the characterization of 2.2 above. In itself, the mere fact that the relevant properties are extralinguistic beliefs no more makes the contextual determination of metaphorical content a pragmatic matter than the fact that the referent of I is typically an extralinguistic entity. One can only call such determination of content pragmatic if it essentially involves speaker's intentions; see 3.2.1 below for more discussion.
The contextually given presuppositions determine the metaphorical content of metaphorical expressions like $Mthat$ ["a wolf"] or $Mthat$ ["the sun"] in two ways. The set of presuppositions associated with the metaphorical expression first generates the properties that go into the determination of its metaphorical content; the presuppositions associated with its literal environment subsequently filter out those generated (sets of) properties that are inconsistent or redundant in the context. Stern calls the former the set of productive or $p$-presuppositions, and the latter the filter or $f$-presuppositions.

An example may clarify the interpretation process according to Stern. He sees the context of utterance as playing a central role at several distinct stages. For the interpretation of *Juliet is the sun*, the hearer first has to select the right logical form for the sentence, i.e., assign it the right ‘metaphorical’ character; in other words, one of the logical forms (41b-e.) has to be recovered:

(41)  
\begin{itemize}
\setlength\itemindent{-1.5em}
\item a. Juliet is the sun
\item b. Juliet $Mthat$ ["is the sun"]
\item c. $Mthat$ ["Juliet"] is the sun
\item d. $Mthat$["Juliet"] $Mthat$ ["is the sun"]
\item e. $Mthat$ ["Juliet is the sun"]
\end{itemize}

At this ‘pre-semantic’ stage, the context helps the hearer to select, e.g., (41b.) as the right Logical Form. Secondly, the $p$- and $f$-presuppositions that make up the context set determine the content; for example, the presuppositions associated with *the sun* generate as possible interpretations that Juliet is the center of the solar system, a source of light and warmth, a large gaseous blob, a round object, etc. The presuppositions associated with *Juliet* filter out the last two of these, and other unsuitable properties. Third, the context serves as the circumstance of evaluation, in which the content established at the second stage is evaluated as true or false; in case the sentence contains intensional operators like *perhaps*, it will be evaluated in some other circumstance. Finally, the $f$-presuppositions determine which properties are appropriate; at this stage, the actually intended content is established by essentially Gricean mechanisms (Stern 1985: 706-8).

This account carries the promise of treating metaphors as fully grammatical, and of describing their interpretation along the same lines as that of indexicals or demonstratively interpreted descriptions. It avoids the view of metaphor as a reinterpretation of a literal content

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1Stern (1979: 265ff) only gives $f$-presuppositions a role in establishing a content, i.e., prior to evaluation; he acknowledges that $p$-presuppositions widely overgenerate the possible interpretations. More on this in 3.2.1.
that is itself ungrammatical or deviant, and suggests a principled account of its context-
dependence, with the aid of a terminology that is independently motivated by the presence of 
other context-dependent expressions in natural language. It also suggests a clear division of 
labor between the semantic and pragmatic aspects of metaphorical interpretation. In Stern’s 
view, a semantic theory of metaphor should merely represent the knowledge that forms part of 
semantic competence, in other words, knowledge of metaphorical character; it thus gives the 
common semantic structure of different metaphorical interpretations (1985: 689; cf. 1979: 
225). Establishing a specific content, by contrast, involves extralinguistic beliefs and general 
symbolic skills in addition to purely linguistic knowledge, and is for that reason taken to be 
essentially pragmatic rather than semantic.¹

Problems of Stern’s Account

There is much in this analysis that I substantially agree with. Stern’s principled attention to the 
context-dependence of metaphorical interpretation and his employment of Kaplan’s technical 
apparatus go a long way in meeting the familiar objections to the traditional semantic accounts 
discussed in 2.1. On his analysis, metaphors are fully grammatical, and need not be taken as 
reinterpretations of grammatically or otherwise deviant strings. Of particular importance is his 
attention to the distinct roles that the context plays in different stages of the interpretation 
process. Nevertheless, his account is not without its problems, especially regarding the status 
of the operator $Mthat$ and the question of precisely when a sentence is interpreted 
metaphorically.

To begin with, Stern’s account is unambiguously monstrous: it takes both $dthat$ and $Mthat$ 
as operating on character rather than content. Stern explicitly argues that $dthat$ destabilizes the 
character of its completing singular term (1985: 694); likewise, the ‘metaphorical operator’ 
$Mthat$ is said to ‘convert any (literal) expression $ø$ into the “metaphorical expression” $Mthat \ [ø]$ 
of nonstable character’ (1985: 695). Both $dthat$ and $Mthat$, on this interpretation, operate on 
the character of their ‘completing terms’, and consequently are monsters.² In 2.1, it appeared

¹For an approach to metaphor in the philosophy of art that is germane to, and in part inspired by, Stern’s 
account, see Danto (1981: ch. 7, esp. pp. 176-89). Like Stern, Danto rejects the idea that metaphor involves 
deviance, and describes it as creating an intensional context of sorts; but he rejects the possible worlds semantics 
Stern advocates, in favor of a more strictly Fregean style. For him, a metaphor not only presents its subject, but 
also the subject’s mode of presentation.

²Stern (p.c.) argues that these operators work on descriptions rather than directly referential terms, and do not 
shift the context, and thus are not monsters as they do not violate Kaplan’s second principle (cf. p. 153 above); but I 
maintain the more general definition of a monster as a construction that is more than intensional, and involves 
characters (p. 158).
that in itself, this is not an objection against such an analysis: as seen, there are other constructions in natural language that Kaplan’s theory would rule out as ‘monstrous’, and metaphorical interpretation may very well turn out to involve a change of character (intuitively, one would certainly think that repeated metaphorical application may diachronically lead to the destabilization of character). It appears, however, that monstrosity is introduced here for the wrong reasons: after all, Kaplan himself argues that *dhat* and *now* are intensional operators rather than monstrous ones (see 3.1.1 above). But the problem with Stern’s *Mhat* is not so much its monstrosity as its precise status: it inherits this ambivalence from Kaplan’s *dhat*. Stern wavers on the questions of whether we should take *Mhat* as an operator or as a ‘demonstrative surrogate’, and whether the meaning of the associated expression itself forms part of the propositional content of the complete ‘*Mhat*-description’.

To be sure, Kaplan himself may be held partly responsible for this confusion. As seen above, he formally defines *dhat* as an intensional operator which turns an expression into an (obstinately) rigid designator rather than into a directly referential term, but this does not fit his metaphysical picture or his informal talk of *dhat* as a ‘demonstrative surrogate’, which is introduced as ‘a way of converting an arbitrary singular term into one which is *directly referential*’, and claimed to be ‘simply the *demonstrative* “that” with the following singular term functioning as its demonstration’ (1989: 521; emphases added). It is probably the ambivalence between *dhat* as an operator and as a demonstrative, and between *dhat* as an intensional operator and as a monster, that leads Stern to present his own ‘metaphorical operator’ *Mhat* as a functor operating on the character rather than on the intension of the expression to be interpreted metaphorically (his argument against intensionality undoubtedly also plays a role, cf. p. 156-7 above). Consequently, Stern introduces a ‘monstrous’ analysis of the interpretation of metaphor where it is not really needed.

Because of *Mhat*’s ambivalent status, the status of the metaphorically interpreted expression itself remains equally unclear: does the descriptive meaning of *the sun* in (43) itself form part of the propositional content expressed by *Juliet is the sun*, or does it merely help in determining a content in the way a demonstration would? In his dissertation, Stern appears to tilt over to the latter view. There, the metaphorically interpreted expression itself makes no contribution to the metaphorical content: ‘just as the descriptive meaning or character of *a* in *dhat* [a] fixes its content (or direct referent) in a context without being part of the content, so the descriptive meaning of *φ* contributes to fixing the content of *Mhat* [φ] though it is not part of it’ (1979: 286-7). On such a view, a metaphorically interpreted expression is mentioned or quoted rather than used, and Stern explicitly acknowledges as much. This is, of course, a
‘demonstrative interpretation’ of \( M\text{that} \). Scarcely two pages later, however, Stern switches to the ‘operator interpretation’: ‘formally, the operator \( M\text{that} \) denotes a function from characters to characters, from the (stable) character of \( \phi \) to the (non-stable) character of \( M\text{that} \[\phi] \) (1979: 289-90). In his 1985 article, Stern does not explicitly address these matters, and so the ambiguity remains. His remark that metaphors are a subclass of demonstratively interpreted expressions suggests a demonstrative interpretation, and this is probably why he consistently places the metaphorically interpreted terms between quotation marks, writing e.g., \( M\text{that} \['the sun'\] \) rather than \( M\text{that} \[the sun\] \). On the other hand, he equally consistently talks of \( M\text{that} \) itself as an operator rather than a demonstrative. In fact, an ‘operator interpretation’ of \( M\text{that} \) (and consequently of \( M\text{that} \) and the thematic intensionality operator \( \ast \) ) fits in more naturally with a compositional view of semantics: it seems rather counterintuitive to argue that an expression like \( \text{the sun} \) makes a syntactic but no semantic contribution to \( \text{Juliet is the sun} \), while all the semantically relevant work is done by an underlying element \( M\text{that} \) that is not syntactically realized.\(^1\)

Even in its formal definition as an operator, \( M\text{that} \) is not really worked out in detail: it is broadly characterized as turning the character of any expression \( \phi \) into a ‘metaphorical expression \( M\text{that} \[\phi] \) of the same semantic type but of an unstable character, which is sensitive to the set of properties presupposed in the context’ (1985: 695). Few specific claims are made, however, about its syntactic or semantic behavior regarding scope, the way it interacts with quantifiers or modal operators, etc.\(^2\) Moreover, as \( M\text{that} \), being a theoretical auxiliary, obviously does not occur explicitly in any sentence interpreted metaphorically, we are still left with the question of how to account for its appearing in the semantic representation. Sometimes, of course, the speaker explicitly indicates that her words should be interpreted figuratively rather than literally:

\[(47) \quad \text{In a sense/Figuratively (or: Metaphorically) speaking, my hands are tied}\]

But unlike such expressions, \( M\text{that} \) is not realized in any overt sentence \( S \), but rather in an underlying sentence \( S' \), which must be recovered with the aid of contextual cues.\(^3\) In other

\(^1\)Stern (p.c.) argues that the completing terms play a role only at the level of character, not content, and that the quotation marks indicate this; but from a compositional semantic point of view, this is not satisfactory either.

\(^2\)There are other minor technical difficulties. For example, \( M\text{that} \) is defined as not changing the semantic type of the expression it operates on (1979: 442), but elsewhere, Stern says that ‘the character of \( M\text{that} \[\phi] \) [with \( \phi \) of arbitrary type a, M.L.] is a function from the set of sets of contextually presupposed p- and f-propositions to a [...] set of properties that is the metaphorical content of \( \phi \) in that context’ (1985: 705; emph. added).

\(^3\)One might take expressions like metaphorically speaking as linguistic realizations of \( M\text{that} \), but this still leaves
words, *Mihat* is alleged to be represented in the Logical Form\(^1\) of the sentence that is to be interpreted metaphorically. This underlying representation is ‘generated by the grammar’ (1985: 706), but Stern surprisingly gives no criteria at all for why the ‘metaphorical’ Logical Form rather than the ‘literal’ one is recovered to begin with. He merely argues against taking grammatical deviance or any related notion as a criterion (a move with which I would agree, as seen above), but provides no other criteria. He only states that ‘contextual cues undoubtedly play a big part in solving this problem’ (1985: 707; cf. Stern 1983), and that the ‘pragmatic criteria typically employed in fixing a particular interpretation do not fit the traditional mold of necessary and sufficient conditions’ (1979: 57). Although metaphors on his account are fully grammatical expressions, and thus cannot be distinguished from literal expressions on the basis of grammaticality or anomaly, he still has to make some distinction: ‘metaphorical’ characters, unlike ‘literal’ ones, contain at least one occurrence of *Mihat*. Like his predecessors, Stern thus maintains some fundamental cleavage between literal and metaphorical interpretation, and - apart from a few general and programmatic remarks - comes no nearer to an adequate account of how the two should actually be distinguished. In essence, Stern delegates the problem of recognizing a metaphor to pragmatics, and thus leaves it unaccounted for; much of his criticism of the ‘Grammatical Deviance paradigm’ is valid, but his own alternative is less than satisfactory.

On a direct contextual interpretation account, by contrast, thematic intensionality, which closely parallels the workings of Stern’s *Mihat*, is just a characteristic of specific syntactic constructions, viz., those containing predicate-limiting adverbials. Moreover, it is not a necessary feature of metaphorical interpretation: in some cases, the extralinguistic context itself determines the metaphorical interpretation, and suspends the internal dimension of expressions like *the sun*. Metaphorical interpretation is determined by contextual parameters that are either implicitly present in the context of utterance, constructed in the preceding discourse, or explicitly indicated by a predicate-limiting adverbial. As there is no longer any semantic criterion or characteristic that distinguishes metaphorical and literal interpretation, the problem of recognition evaporates as a semantic question: unlike Stern’s *Mihat*-expressions, metaphorically interpreted sentences on a direct contextual interpretation account do not contain any specific operators.

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\(^1\)By this, Stern means the Logical Form notion of Generative Grammar, which he tentatively identifies with the model-theoretic notion of character. I have my doubts about such identifications of concepts from Generative Grammar with formal semantic ones (cf. also his claim that pragmatics is the application of character in actual *performance*), but they are for the most part not essential to his argument.
Finally, Stern's account makes the determination of the semantic content of metaphors dependent on pragmatic factors, not just in the sense that extra-linguistic factors of the context determine what is said (for this much we already knew from Kaplan), but also, as will become clear in the next section, because he relies on a Stalnakerian notion of presupposition as a relation between a sentence, a speaker and a proposition. As this relation contains the speaker (or perhaps the speaker's intentions) as a variable, it is indeed a pragmatic notion in the restricted sense of 2.2 above. This intrusion of pragmatic factors in the determination of semantic content seems at odds with the methodologically appealing and intuitively plausible view that compositional semantic interpretation is logically prior to pragmatics. Of course, this does not necessarily mean that it is wrong; rather, it calls for further attention to the semantics-pragmatics interface in metaphorical interpretation. It seems uncontroversial that presupposed information plays a central role in this process: thematic dimensions are presuppositionally associated with expressions. In metaphorical interpretation, whatever internal dimension is thus associated with the expression is cancelled or neutralized. But this picture conjures up a host of questions concerning the nature of presupposition, assertion, and implicature, and with the relation between semantic and pragmatic aspects of interpretation. To these questions I will now turn.

3.2 METAPHORICAL ASSERTION

The preceding section discussed the way in which metaphorical interpretations depend on the context in which they occur; now it is time to look at how metaphorically interpreted sentences may change the context. In other words, I will look at the question of what effects metaphors may have, and specifically at the question of whether metaphors can express assertions, that is, claims that may be true or false.

The idea that metaphors can express truthful claims about the world has not been popular among recent theorists. Black (1979a: 41) argues that metaphors do not represent 'how things are' in the same way as statements of fact, so that truth and falsity cannot be their standards of correctness: he believes that, much like maps, photographs, or models, they show rather than say how things are. On essentially pragmatic accounts, such as Grice's and Davidson's, the speaker in uttering a metaphor does not make any assertion at all, i.e., she does not commit herself to any propositional content. Blackburn (1983: 176) argues that metaphors may lead
the hearer to see one thing as another, but claims that such insights are not knowledge of a fact that something is the case; consequently, he likewise denies metaphors the status of truth value bearers. Lakoff and Johnson (1980), by contrast, do believe that metaphors can be true, but reject truth-conditional semantics as a whole, and do not work out any coherent alternative notion of truth.

The account outlined in 3.1 above suggests a picture diametrically opposed to all these views: in metaphorical interpretation, a propositional content is established in a context, and this content can be evaluated at a circumstance, and thus assigned a truth value, just as a content determined by literal interpretation. If this is right, the need for a distinct notion of 'metaphorical truth' drops out, and metaphor can be treated as capable of expressing assertions, or statements of fact, just as well as literal language. Of course, this does not imply that metaphors may not have other effects, or are always used to make assertions. Here, the question is just whether, and how, metaphors can express assertions at all.1

Assertion should be strictly distinguished from presupposition and implicature, as appeared from the discussion in 2.2. Asserted information is the propositional content expressed by a sentence in context in virtue of semantic rules. Speakers are committed to this content: they cannot withdraw asserted information, except by explicit denial or correction. Speakers and hearers are ready to assume presupposed content, but they are not committed to it as they are to asserted content: after all, one can hardly be committed to content that may be implicit. Further, they are not necessarily bound to a belief in what they assert and presuppose, as it is very well possible to make successful assertions about nonexistent persons like Santa Claus (Van der Sandt 1988: 165-7; cf. Stalnaker 1978).2 Presupposed content is preserved under negation and modals, unlike assertion and implicature, and has a distinct nonmonotonic projection behavior: the presuppositions of simple sentences may disappear in complex sentences like conjunctions:

(48)  a. The king of France is old.
     b. There is a king of France.
     c. There is a king of France, and the king of France is old.

1For reasons of exposition, I will at first focus on simple subject-predicate sentences that do not involve quantifiers, logical operators like $\rightarrow$, $\neg$, $\lor$, and $\land$, or modals like necessarily.

2Incidentally, this suggests that pragmatic definitions of metaphors, or metaphorical utterances, as arising when the speaker or hearer does not believe the content literally expressed (Cooper 1986: 112; cf. Davidson 1979: 40), may be too strong.
(48a) presupposes (48b), but this presupposition is not preserved in (48c), where the content of the presupposition is asserted in the left conjunct. Implicature differs from both assertion and presupposition in that it is utterance-, not sentence-bound, and can be cancelled without contradiction. In other words, a speaker is not committed to implied propositional content as strongly as to presupposed or asserted content. In 2.2, the criteria for distinguishing these notions appeared not to be watertight, but the general differences between them are clear enough. In other words, assertion, presupposition, and implicature are disjunct classes, and we should keep the distinction between them in mind when trying to account for specifically 'metaphorical effects'.

The question to be addressed here is what, if any, assertion is expressed by the occurrence of a metaphorically interpreted sentence $S$ in context $c$, or perhaps by the utterance of $S$ in $c$, and what the sentence, or utterance, may presuppose and imply. Before discussing how these notions fare in an account of direct contextual interpretation, I will discuss two earlier attempts at describing what metaphorical assertions amount to (Bergmann 1982 and Stern 1979: ch. VI; 1985: 697-704). Both of these authors take Stalnaker's work on assertion (1978) as their starting point, so I briefly discuss that theory first.

3.2.1. Stalnakerian Views of Assertion: Bergmann and Stern

Stalnaker (1978) was the first to outline a general picture of how assertions and their effects can be characterized in terms of possible worlds semantics. He broadly characterizes assertion and presupposition as follows. Acts of assertion, he holds, express propositions, which represent a state of affairs. Propositions may be described as functions from possible worlds to truth values, or alternatively as sets of possible worlds (viz., those worlds in which the proposition is true). The proposition expressed in an assertion both depends on and changes the context: it may depend on contextual parameters like speaker or time, and it may change the presuppositions of the participants in a conversation. Presuppositions are the propositions that are taken for granted by the speaker and hearer as part of the conversational background. The set of presuppositions held in such a background or context (or alternatively, the set of worlds compatible with these presupposed propositions) may be called the context set. The making of a felicitous assertion reduces the context set: it gives the hearer new information, and

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1I speak of contents as asserted and presupposed by sentences; but several authors have argued that it is speakers, rather than sentences, that presuppose or assert. I will not address this debate here.
thus eliminates possible worlds that were still in the context set before the assertion was made. For example, by making the assertion that it is raining, the speaker eliminates from the context set all possible worlds where it is not raining.

Stalnaker formulates three principles that govern assertions (1978: 325):

1. An asserted proposition $p$ is always true in some but not all of the possible worlds in the context set; that is, it should be both informative and consistent with what has been asserted earlier (formally: the context set $C$ does not entail $p$, and the intersection of $C$ and $p$ is not empty);

2. Any assertion should express a definite proposition, and have a definite truth value in each possible world (assertions without a definite truth value do not reduce the context set, and are thus infelicitous);

3. An assertion should express the same proposition with respect to every possible world as fixed by the context set (if it did not, the speaker’s intentions would be ambiguous).

If an assertion is not in line with these principles, it may be interpreted or reinterpreted in such a way that the resulting proposition does conform to them. Although Stalnaker himself describes these principles as ‘pragmatic principles to which any rational agent would conform’ (1978: 325), and stresses their similarity with Grice’s conversational Maxims, he defines them in exclusively semantic terms as properties (or desiderata) of propositions, without an appeal to speakers or their intentions. This leaves room for a more strictly semantic reinterpretation; and indeed later authors like Heim (1983) and Van der Sandt (1988, 1992) tend to describe presupposition in more strictly semantic terms. There may be terminological discussion as to whether such notions as consistency and informativeness are really semantic or pragmatic notions, but they are not pragmatic in the sense of 2.2 above: they are not characterized in terms of speaker’s intentions.

A problem of Stalnaker’s proposal is that it does not distinguish between asserted and implied information. It takes both as just involving the addition of information to the context set, without accounting for how they differ with regard to cancellability and the like. It is not even clear how these differences could be incorporated into this picture.¹ A second noteworthy

¹This problem comes to the fore in van der Sandt’s (1992: 336) representation of Stalnaker’s view: he takes both assertion and implicature as sets of possible worlds, and context change as incrementation with their intersection.
aspect is the relation between pragmatic and linguistic presupposition. At first, Stalnaker (1974) characterizes speaker’s presupposition in wholly extralinguistic terms, without reference to sentences or utterances, and defines semantic presupposition in terms of this pragmatic notion. In ‘Assertion’, however, he does just the opposite: there, he derives speaker’s presupposition from semantic presupposition on the basis of his second principle, the postulate that a sentence should have a definite truth value in every world in the context set (1978: 325-6). If a sentence does not have a definite truth value, the hearer cannot attribute any definite intention to the speaker, and no felicitous assertion is made. As a third point, Stalnaker defines presuppositions and context sets exclusively in terms of propositions. Heim (1983) has noted, however, that not all presuppositions seem to have the form of propositions. This becomes especially clear in quantified sentences:

(49) a. Every nation cherishes its king.
    b. every $x_i$, $x_i$ (is a) nation, $x_i$ cherishes $x_i$’s king.

(49a), which can be represented as (49b), seems not to presuppose a proposition like every nation has a king, but rather an incomplete expression with a free variable like $x_i$ has a king. It is not immediately clear how a theory that takes presuppositions to be propositions, and associates them with whole sentences, can handle such apparently subsentential presuppositions. As a solution for this problem, Heim suggests abandoning the identification of contexts with (sets of) propositions. Instead, she treats the information accumulated in a context as something like a card file containing descriptions. The context for (49) can then be seen as a file for $x_i$, containing an entry like $x_i$ has a king. The context change that results from utterances would then involve various updating operations, such as the addition of further entries on existing cards, or the establishing of new cards containing new variables. Stalnaker’s suggestions may thus be modified and improved upon on various points, but nevertheless his ideas have proved fruitful for theories of presupposition, especially because of their systematic attention to the context-dependence of what is asserted and presupposed: what is asserted at one stage of the conversation may be presupposed at the following stages.

But this cannot be correct: if a speaker utters an ironic utterance conveying the opposite of what her words literally express, the intersection is of course empty, and no information would be added to the context set at all.

1 Van der Sandt (1988: 30-4) argues that Stalnaker’s notion of speaker’s presupposition is too vague to capture linguistic presupposition, and that defining presupposition in terms of appropriateness conditions does not yield sufficient conditions for linguistic presupposition.
Bergmann

It is tempting to link these ideas to the insight that metaphorical interpretation is systematically context-dependent. It may then become possible to specify how metaphorical interpretation both depends on and affects the context. Thus, Bergmann (1982) argues that the oft-noted 'richness', indeterminacy, or suggestiveness of metaphors need not clash with their use in making assertions; in fact, she argues, the assessment of this richness is 'based on the workings of the same linguistic mechanism which enables us to make [...] assertions with metaphors' (1982: 229). She calls this mechanism the 'salience relation' between the expression used and the content of what is communicated: for example, she argues that the metaphorical content of (50)

(50) John is an Einstein

is a 'direct function' of the literal meaning of John and of 'salient characteristics' associated with Einstein (1982: 235), such as the property of brilliance. Bergmann claims that salient characteristics may involve relatively context-free culturally shared beliefs, as in stereotypes, but they may also be created on the spot, as 'ephemerally salient' properties. Thus, the utterance of (50) may be preceded by the telling of anecdotes about Einstein's eccentricity. Eccentricity then becomes an ephemerally salient characteristic relevant to the interpretation of (50) in that specific context. Otherwise, Bergmann leaves salient characteristics undefined.¹

The idea that propositional content is a direct function of contextually determined properties is, of course, rather similar to the direct contextual interpretation account outlined in 3.1 above. It suggests that contextual factors determine the propositional content itself, rather than a reinterpretation of such a content, and that this content can be asserted just as easily as one that is determined by literal means. Unlike the direct contextual interpretation account, however, Bergmann's approach does not systematically relate salient characteristics to the context: she defines them as two-place relations between expressions and properties rather than as three-place relations between expressions, contexts, and properties.

Somewhat surprisingly, Bergmann does not work out the intuitively plausible idea that salient characteristics are determined by the context set, despite her appeal to Stalnaker. In fact, the only essential use she makes of Stalnaker's ideas is taking over his definition of assertion;

¹Bergmann promises to develop the notion of 'salient characteristic' in another article, 'The Formal Semantics of Metaphorical Assertions', but I have not been able to trace this paper.
she does not explain in detail, for example, how the indeterminacy of metaphors could be captured in terms of Stalnaker’s theory of context change. The interpretation of a metaphor, she holds, must take place with respect to a context, but she defines contexts primarily in terms of speaker’s intentions (cf. Bergmann 1979). The hearer must recognize these intentions in order to determine the communicated content; therefore, it is assertions, not propositions, that can be true or false (1982: 238).

Moreover, in the course of her paper, Bergmann turns out to fall back on a pragmatic account that treats metaphorical interpretation as a reinterpretation of a literally defective propositional content: ‘a person who uses a sentence metaphorically does not use it to assert the proposition that is literally expressed. In the case of assertive metaphor, we must distinguish between sentence meaning and speaker’s meaning’ (1982: 234). For most of her paper, she maintains this ‘pragmatic reinterpretation’ perspective that is hardly consistent with the idea of metaphorical content as a direct function of salient characteristics. In the end, Bergmann thus presents a roundly pragmatic account, which faces all of the problems regarding recognition and interpretation that were raised against such theories in 2.2 above. First, she invokes Gricean principles of inference to account for both the recognition and interpretation of metaphorical assertions. Secondly, she argues that Gricean mechanisms also serve to ‘identify the proposition the author intended to assert’: the hearer first recognizes the expression as ‘semantically or contextually anomalous’ on its literal interpretation, and thus as violating one of Grice’s maxims, next recognizes the utterance as an assertion, i.e., a true or false claim that the world is a certain way (she does not spell out how this is done), and finally selects the most plausible salient characteristics, again on the basis of Grice’s maxims (Bergmann 1982: 239). Finally, she takes recognizing a metaphor as a question of manner or style, witness her claim that a sentence may be used metaphorically, hyperbolically, etc. (1982: 233).

That the first of these claims is wrong was already clear from the discussion of Grice himself in 2.2 above: no maxim or set of maxims is necessary or sufficient for the recognition and interpretation of all and only metaphors. Moreover, as noted, the view of metaphorical assertions as being indirectly conveyed implicatures does not tally well with her claim that metaphorically communicated content is a direct function of salient characteristics (1982: 234). The second claim, that Gricean principles determine the communicated content, is even more problematic. It suggests that metaphorical interpretations are never actually asserted but always implied; thus, the speaker is not committed to the communicated propositional content.

1In fact, because of this, Bergmann’s (1982) approach might as well have been discussed with the more familiar pragmatic theories there, except that it introduces the novel notion of assertion that is also of semantic relevance.
Obviously, this would flatly contradict Bergmann’s own claim that metaphors can be used to make assertions: assertions and implicatures are disjunct classes, so it is by definition impossible to assert an implicature.

The main problem with Bergmann’s account, then, is that she does not differentiate clearly between what is asserted and what is implied by a speaker; but, as noted above, neither does Stalnaker. Bergmann also appears to waver regarding the question of whether the communicated content is a direct function of the salient characteristics associated with an expression (which would be in line with Stalnaker’s view that what propositional content is expressed or asserted depends on the context set), or rather the result of an indirect process of applying pragmatic principles to a literally defective semantic content. She seems to tend towards the latter view. Finally, Bergmann does not take up Stalnaker’s suggestion that the proposition expressed by a sentence already depends on the context of utterance itself. Consequently, she falls back on a ‘pre-Stalnakerian’ view of literal meanings as more or less context-free.

Stern

Stern’s (1979, 1985) views on metaphorical assertion are comparable to Bergmann’s, but worked out in much more detail. He likewise relies crucially on Stalnaker’s ideas: for him, it is speaker’s presuppositions (as contained in the context set in which an assertion occurs) that constitute the relevant contextual parameter for metaphorical interpretation. As said, he considers these presuppositions to be similar to Black’s ‘associated commonplaces’, but he characterizes them in more explicitly semantic terms as sets of properties. Thus, the term *wolf* is associated with various properties, e.g., being carnivorous, being cruel, living in strongly coherent groups, being lonely in old age, etc. These properties may, but need not, be part of the meaning of *wolf*; they need not even be linguistically expressed. As speakers may come to associate such properties with the expression in a variety of ways, Stern holds that knowledge of them ‘falls under pragmatics, the application of character in actual performance’, rather than under semantics, and that it involves extralinguistic beliefs and abilities of a ‘general symbolic nature’ rather than language-specific semantic rules (1985: 697-8). It is these associated properties, he argues, that generate the possible metaphorical interpretations of an expression; that is, they function as productive or p-presuppositions (see 3.1.4 above) in metaphors like (46)

(46) Man is a wolf
The range of the possible interpretations of wolf is subsequently restricted by the filter or f-presuppositions that are generated by the (literal) environment of wolf (i.e., Man). In this way, properties that are inconsistent or redundant in the context set are filtered out, and a ‘metaphorical content’ is determined by the p- and f-presuppositions together. After the evaluation of this content as true or false, the f-presuppositions function as Gricean principles of conversation, and further restrict the possible metaphorical interpretations to just the appropriate or intended one (Stern 1985: 695-700; 706-8).

This formulation looks like a promising attempt to explicate ideas that are already implicitly present in Black’s, Beardsley’s, and Searle’s writings, and at integrating them into a general theory of language use. On a number of points, however, I think it does not go far enough in what I think is the right direction, and on other points it runs into trouble. First of all, there is some friction between Stern’s claim that metaphorical interpretation involves presupposed properties and Stalnaker’s original idea that it is propositions that are presupposed. This point may seem of minor technical importance, but in fact it has rather serious consequences, especially for the treatment of novel metaphor. For example, if we assume a property like cruelty to be presupposed by wolf, this property does not in itself determine a unique proposition yet, and thus no unique set of possible worlds, as Stalnakerian presuppositions do. Stern attempts to solve this problem by defining ‘property-presupposition’ in terms of ‘proposition-presupposition’ as follows:

(i) If \( P \) is a property and \( Q \) a proposition, then for any \( P \), any speaker \( S \), and any individual \( x \), \( P \) is presupposed by \( S \) of \( x \) iff there is some \( Q \) identical with \( \ldots P x \ldots \) such that \( Q \) is presupposed by \( S \) (1985: 696n)

Obviously, this will not do: if a property is to serve as a Stalnakerian presupposition, it has to determine a single proposition; but Stern’s definition does not rule out that a single property \( P \) determines many different propositions \( Q \), like \( \text{There is an } x \text{ such that } P x; \text{ For all } x, P x; \text{ There is an } x \text{ such that } \neg P x; \text{ For all } x, \text{ if } P x, \text{ then } S x, \text{ etc.} \), etc. One may try to tighten up definition (i) by capturing the relation between expressions like wolf and their associated properties in universally quantified sentences, a bit like meaning postulates:

(51)  \( \forall x \ (\text{WOLF}(x) \rightarrow \text{CRUEL}(x)) \)

This is, of course, just a restatement of Stalnaker’s principle regarding the informativeness and consistency of assertions, and of Beardsley’s principles of congruence and plenitude.
b. \( \forall x ( \text{WOLF}(x) \rightarrow \text{QUADRUPED}(x)) \), etc.

This is certainly stronger than what Stern himself intends: first, he holds that the relation between \text{wolf} and its associated properties may be weaker than that of semantic entailment, and typically is not a semantic relation at all, but rather a pragmatic relation between a person and a proposition (1985: 700); secondly, he argues that the associated property need not be \textit{linguistically} expressed or expressible, and the ability to grasp it may be of a ‘general symbolic’ rather than a linguistic kind. But also for other reasons, the reformulation of (51) may not be correct: as seen above, quantified sentences like \textit{Every nation cherishes its king} do not obviously presuppose any proposition at all, but more likely an open formula. In short, it is not quite clear whether and how Stern’s account of the relation between presupposed properties, propositions, and the metaphorically interpreted expression itself, can be made more precise and explicit.

Second, Stern does not specify or define how presuppositions may ‘generate’ or ‘filter’ properties. True enough, he argues that especially p-presuppositions are associated with expressions on such a variety of grounds that no one general principle or mechanism can account for all of them (1985: 696). But one would like to have some constraints, as speakers and hearers cannot associate just any property with any predicate. Stern does not specify either how p- and f- presuppositions ‘interact’ (1985: 699) in determining a specific metaphorical content. At the risk of distorting his views beyond recognition, I would reformulate his broad (indeed metaphorical) characterizations as follows:

1. An expression \( P \) \textit{generates} a (p-)presupposition \( q \) iff some atomic sentence in which \( P \) occurs entails \( q \);

2. A context set of (f-)presuppositions \( C \) \textit{filters out} a presupposition \( r \) iff \( r \) is already an element of \( C \), or inconsistent with \( C \).

For a sentence like \textit{Man is a wolf}, this would yield something like the following: assume that \textit{wolf} generates the p-presuppositions of being cruel, being a quadruped, etc., along the lines of (51). Next, the f-presuppositions associated with \textit{man}, the ‘literal context’ of \textit{wolf}, include those of being cruel, being a biped, etc. This set filters out the property of being a quadruped,

\footnote{These definitions are not yet sufficiently restrictive, of course, as they do not explicate the relation between property and proposition presuppositions either.}
which is not consistent with the f-presupposition of being a biped; the property of being cruel will pass. The f-presuppositions thus eliminate the p-presuppositions that do not apply to the subject, man.

This leads us to a third problem: Stern's constraints on possible metaphorical interpretations seem far too weak. The p-presuppositions strongly overgenerate the possible interpretations, but they are subsequently constrained by the f-presuppositions on the basis of consistency and informativeness. Neither Stern's own characterization nor the above reformulation, however, adequately filters out the intuitively redundant or irrelevant properties at the level of content. Indeed, on Stern's view, the most appropriate, or intended, interpretation is determined only after the content has been evaluated. But this leaves us with an extremely indeterminate content: if f-presuppositions do not constrain the range of possible interpretations beyond the two principles as defined above, the hearer is typically still left with a large number of intuitively irrelevant properties, and all these properties are part of the content in C.

An example may make this point clearer. The p-presuppositions of wolf include many properties besides being cruel, such as being an animate object, needing sleep once in a while, being bigger than a cat, not living on the moon, etc. Intuitively, many such properties are unininformative or just irrelevant; but they will yield assertions that are informative in the technical sense if they exclude some but not all of the possible worlds in the context set. But even if somehow we can limit ourselves to the intuitively relevant properties, we will be left with too many of them: ideally, one would want the content given a context to consist of just a single property. In the terminology of 3.1, various properties may be associated with the predicate wolf in different thematic dimensions, such as having sharp teeth, behaving ferociously towards other species, being lonely in old age, etc. In the above account, any one of these properties may serve as a possible metaphorical interpretation of wolf as predicated of man in a specific dimension. Stern's setup, however, makes no choice between these properties in different dimensions at the level of content; the 'relevant' or 'intended' property is determined only after the content has been evaluated. In other words, unless we introduce a thematic dimension or similar contextual constraints, the p- and f-presuppositions determine no one property but merely a set of properties or, in the terminology introduced above, a pre-property. ¹ Put this way, what Stern describes as the metaphorical content would not really be a content at all, but merely a character.

¹Significantly, Stern (1985: 699) takes the literal 'environment' that yields f-presuppositions to consist just of the literal part of the sentence (in this case, Man), ignoring the wider context.
A fourth difficulty arises from Stern’s definition of presupposition as a pragmatic relation between individuals and propositions (1985: 700), rather than as a semantic relation between sentences, contexts and propositions. More specifically, he sees the role of the f-presuppositions as comparable to that of Gricean conversational principles (1985: 700n, 708). Quite apart from the already noted problems of a Gricean treatment, and the difficulty of linking a pragmatic concept of presupposition to linguistic presupposition (cf. Van der Sandt 1988: 31), this leaves open how such presumably pragmatic principles as f-presuppositions, which after all require a semantic base on which to operate, can apply at all before a semantic content has even been established. Further, it goes unexplained why the f-presuppositions serve essentially the same purpose, that of restricting the range of possible interpretations, at two rather distinct stages of interpretation. It would be more economical to argue that f-presuppositions play their role entirely at the second level of interpretation, that is, in the determination of ‘metaphorical content’; but then it becomes even more difficult to see how they can function like Gricean principles, which on the standard picture apply to an already established and evaluated content.1

The most serious problem for Stern, however, is that the properties which he believes to be presupposed in metaphorical interpretation are in fact not really presupposed at all. It is rather easy to see why: as already seen in 2.2 above, presuppositions are typically preserved under negation, modals, and questioning. Thus, both (52a) and its negation (52b)

(52)   a. The king of Siam is bald.
       b. The king of Siam is not bald.

presuppose that Siam has a king. This also holds on Stalnaker’s account: the context set for a successful assertion of the propositions expressed by both (6a.) and (6b.) contains the proposition that Siam has a king.2 But now compare the properties that, on Stern’s account, are presupposed for a metaphor like X is a Kennedy; presumably, these include properties like being intelligent, goodlooking, charismatic, etc. In a famous TV debate in 1988, the Republican candidate for the U.S. vice-presidency, Dan Quayle, boasted of being a Kennedy, and thus of possessing just such properties. But when his opponent Bentsen replied

1In fact, f-presuppositions function at the level of determining content in Stern (1979: 271); there too, they function as essentially Gricean principles of communication rather than as semantic rules. In 3.2.2, I will discuss recent approaches that do allow for Gricean principles of inference to play a role prior to semantic interpretation.

2An exception is explicit denial of the presupposition, as in The king of Siam is not bald, for Siam has no king.
(53) Senator, you are not a Jack Kennedy.

he surely did not assert, or even presume, that Quayle was intelligent, goodlooking, charismatic, etc. Still, Stern would be bound to say that these properties are presupposed rather than asserted in a metaphorical interpretation, and consequently are not denied by a negation of You are a Kennedy, whatever else such a negation might deny of Quayle. But the properties presupposed in metaphor, just as Stalnakerian presuppositions in general, presumably survive negation.1 Obviously, this is an undesirable result.

I think that Stern’s quandary originates from the fact that he does not distinguish precisely what a metaphor (or a speaker uttering a metaphor) asserts and what it (or she) presupposes. He might argue that (54a) presupposes a proposition like All wolves are cruel, but this will still yield the wrong results with negation (54b)

(54) a. John is a wolf
    b. John is not a wolf

One cannot infer from both (54a) and (54b) that all wolves are cruel in the same way as one can infer the presupposition that there is a king of Siam from both The king of Siam is bald and its negation (6a, b.). It cannot be a proposition like John is cruel that is presupposed either: if the metaphorical interpretation of (8a.) presupposes the proposition that John is cruel, this proposition should be part of the context set C in which it is uttered, but then the asserted content of (8a.), which is just the very proposition that John is cruel, does not add any new information, and should be ruled out as not in accordance with Stalnaker’s first principle that assertions should be informative. Likewise, the assertion of (54b) would yield a contradiction with the presupposition that John is cruel, and would therefore be filtered out.

To this, Stern would probably reply that it is not the proposition that man (or wolf) is cruel, but merely the property of cruelty, that is presupposed in C. But here the first difficulty mentioned above reappears: if it is the property of cruelty that is presupposed, then what is the precise relation between this property and the asserted proposition that man is cruel? Stern’s own writings do not contain any specific suggestions regarding this relation. In fact, however, the very undertaking of finding the right entity that is presupposed by metaphors like (54a-b) is misguided: the relation between the relevant property and the asserted content cannot possibly be one of presupposition in anything like the standard technical sense of the

1 An account of negated metaphors like (53) and (36) is conspicuously lacking in Stern’s account.
word. In a sense, of course, the properties required for metaphorical interpretation are 'presupposed', as both (54a) and (54b) require that cruelty is somehow associated with wolf. But in so far as the claim that the property of cruelty is presupposed by John is a wolf can be tested, it fails all the familiar tests for presupposition. The reason is obvious: the relevant property of cruelty is part of the asserted content, not of the presupposed content, of John is a wolf. And what is asserted can, by definition, not be presupposed.

 Novel Metaphor and Accommodation

These problems become especially serious in Stern's account of novel or 'creative' metaphor. For Stern, the question of novel metaphor is how a metaphor can express novel information if its content is determined by presuppositions that are already in the context set, and are thus already known. His answer is that in such cases, the relevant presuppositions are logically, but not temporally prior to the utterance of the metaphor. The context set, he argues, may contain properties or propositions that not even the speaker knows or 'sees' until after she has made the utterance; but such presuppositions are logically prior to the interpretation of the utterance in that they have to be added to the context set for the sentence as a whole to be interpreted (Stern 1985: 704). He thus explains the creativity of some metaphors as the creation or discovery of new properties in the context set. This still leaves unanswered the question of how, and in which sense, these 'novel properties' are 'created' in the context set at all. We will return to this question below; for the moment, let us focus on the status of these properties as presuppositions.

Stern's solution suggests a general strategy of accounting for informative or 'novel' presuppositions. In fact, it foreshadows an important insight that since the 1980s has played a prominent role in the literature on presupposition. It was realized that presuppositions are not always present before the utterance of a presupposition-carrying sentence: sentences, or utterances, can actually communicate their presuppositions as novel information. For example, it is very well possible for a policeman to start a conversation with someone who is walking his dog on the front lawn of the White House as follows:

(55) We regret that dogs are not allowed on the lawn.

1This does indeed seem the sense of presupposition that Stern is getting at: 'what is presupposed to make the metaphorical interpretation of is a wolf possible is that the predicate is a wolf is associated with being cruel' (p.c.).
Obviously, (55) presupposes the information that dogs are not allowed on the lawn, but nonetheless, its being uttered in a context that does not contain or entail this presupposition does not lead to an infelicitous utterance. Apparently, under the right circumstances, a presupposition can come into existence, just by being needed at that moment. This phenomenon has become known as accommodation. Karttunen (1974) was the first to note such cases, but considered them exceptional. Later authors, however, have argued that accommodation is in fact a widespread and natural phenomenon (just think of stories that open with a definite description which presupposes the existence of its referent), and must therefore be systematically accounted for in any theory of presupposition. The first to discuss the concept of accommodation in detail was Lewis (1979); it was more fully worked out by, among others, Heim (1983) and Van der Sandt (1988).\footnote{The notion of accommodation obviously needs constraints if it is not to be vacuous. Heim (1983) merely proposes consistency with the context set. Van der Sandt (1988, 1992) adds informativeness and contextual acceptability, which allows for complex sentences to be ambiguous between a presuppositional and a non-presuppositional reading; thus, If John has sons, his children will be happy may or may not carry the presupposition that John has children.}

It would be a natural extension of Stern's account to treat novel metaphors as involving the accommodation of a presupposed property: assume that (56)

\begin{equation}
(56) \quad \text{The telephone is my umbilical cord to the world. (MacCormac 1985: 30)}
\end{equation}

is asserted metaphorically for the first time: the context set for (56) does not yet contain the presupposed property, say, that of being a lifeline, but as this property is needed for the right interpretation of (56), it will come into existence just by being needed in that context. But on this picture, once again, presupposed and asserted content are conflated. In a novel metaphor, the novel property is part of what is asserted rather than presupposed, so we should not think of it as an element of the context set at all. Taking the asserted propositional content as containing presupposed information leaves us with the paradoxical notion of a presupposition that is asserted.\footnote{Cf. Stern (1979: 371-2): 'the content of the metaphorical expression $M(f)$ in a context $c$ is some property $P$ presupposed by the speaker to be appropriately related to $f$ and to the other expressions in its linguistic environment' (emph. added).} Moreover, if the propositional content expressed by a metaphor is already part of the context set preceding the utterance of the metaphor, what is the use of adding that property to the context set? On a Stalnakerian account, as seen above, asserting something that is entailed by the context set is not even felicitous.
This case reflects the more general point that one should sharply distinguish the effect of a novel or informative presupposition from that of a novel assertion. An accommodated presupposition \( p \) of a sentence \( S \) is added to the context \( C \) before the asserted content of \( S \) is added to the ‘local context’ \( C + p \). Accommodation can account for novelty of presuppositions, but hardly for the novelty of assertions. Van der Sandt has argued that a Stalnakerian approach tends to obscure the distinction between the accommodation of presuppositions and contextual updating with assertions. Accommodation, he notes, is not the addition of new information to a context set, but a strategy for repairing the context set before it is updated with the information expressed by a sentence \( S \) (1992: 340-1). Novel metaphor would seem to involve new asserted information rather than the accommodation of presupposed information, and this casts doubt on the relevance of Stern’s considerations. This does not exclude the possibility that the interpretation of novel metaphors at times involves accommodation of some sort, but it forms a strong argument against taking the effect of a novel metaphorical assertion as involving the accommodation of the asserted property: if the relevant property is accommodated, and thus presupposed, there is nothing interesting left to be asserted.

In short, neither Bergmann nor Stern gives an entirely satisfactory account of precisely what a metaphorically interpreted sentence asserts, what it presupposes, and what it implies. They take a step in the right direction with the insight that metaphorical assertion involves contextual factors, but they fail to work out this insight into a precise and coherent account. Moreover, in spite of their avowed aims of presenting a semantic theory, both state their views in essentially pragmatic terms such as speaker’s presuppositions and implicature. Thus, their accounts not only involve contextual factors, but also crucially rely on speaker’s intentions. In the end, therefore, their accounts boil down to something very close to the Gricean approach that was rejected in 2.2 above. There is a new aspect to their treatments, however: both argue that the semantic content (i.e., the proposition expressed, or assertion made) of a metaphorically interpreted sentence is itself determined by pragmatic principles. In other words, the allegedly Gricean processes play their role before, rather than after, the determination of semantic content. This point deserves closer attention.

### 3.2.2. Pragmatic Intrusion: The Neo-Gricean Program

Stern’s and Bergmann’s accounts of pragmatic influences on the establishment of metaphorical content involve something like what has been called ‘pragmatic intrusion’ in the literature, i.e.,
the functioning of Gricean processes of inference prior to the establishment of a semantic representation with definite truth conditions. Arguments for pragmatic intrusion have been developed since the 1980s by various ‘neo-Gricean’ authors (e.g. Atlas 1989, Levinson 2000). The existence of indexicals already shows that extralinguistic and contextual information plays an essential role in determining semantic content; but these authors also argue that pragmatic factors in the stricter sense of intention-governed, and especially Gricean, processes of inference, contribute to the determination of semantic content. If their arguments are correct, the traditional picture of an autonomous semantics that serves as the basis for a ‘post-semantic’ pragmatics, is in for serious reconsideration.

The case for pragmatic intrusion rests on the fact that often, truth conditions seriously underdetermine interpretation. Often, it is argued, the hearer has to infer much more than just the truth-conditional meaning or meaning contribution of the expressions he hears. One might maintain that many expressions are just ambiguous between the different interpretations they may receive in different contexts, but this will lead to a proliferation of possible senses for many expressions that intuitively have only one lexical meaning. Instead, it is suggested that much of the interpretive work be delegated to pragmatic processes of inference, which will keep the semantics simple, and explain the ‘additional information’ conveyed by most messages as arising from a small number of general principles of rational communication. Before these principles have applied, sentences do not have any precise semantic representation at all; they are what Atlas (1989) calls ‘semantically general’; they express specific truth-conditions only after pragmatic inferencing has taken place. Pragmatic factors, on this view, essentially contribute to the establishment of semantic meaning.

Let us look at a simple example. In truth-conditional semantics, it is claimed, conjunction is commutative: the conjunction $A \& B$ has the same truth conditions as $B \& A$. It is well known that such truth conditions cannot account for the suggestion of temporal consecution that $and$ carries in e.g. (57):

(57) He took off his glasses and rubbed his eyes.

One could then argue that $and$ is ambiguous between a commutative and an asymmetrical ‘temporal-order’ sense as in (57), but this would force one to postulate similar ambiguities in many other expressions. Instead, the ‘temporal’ sense is often explained as an implicature arising from the ‘literal meaning’ of (57) on the basis of the Gricean Maxim of Manner (‘Be orderly’), which expresses the injunction to describe events in the order in which they occur.
Sometimes, however, such implicatures apparently have to be calculated before the correct semantic representation is arrived at, and are thus logically prior to the semantic interpretation, rather than posterior as they would be in the classical Gricean scheme. A famous example is (58a-b):

(58)  a. Getting married and having a child is better than having a child and getting married
          b. Having a child and getting married is better than getting married and having a child.

Defenders of such a ‘pragmatic intrusion’ view argue that the correct semantic interpretation of (58a) is not of the self-contradictory form \((A&B)\) is better than \((B&A)\), nor has (58a) the same meaning as (58b); it clearly involves the temporal sense of the conjunction. But in that case, pragmatic inferencing must occur prior to the establishing of the correct semantic truth conditions (cf. Levinson 1983: 35).

Various other examples have been adduced as evidence for such pragmatic intrusion, but for as far as I know, these ideas have not yet been seriously applied to the problem of metaphorical interpretation. One exception is an early paper by Atlas (1977), which argues against ‘two dogmas of literary modernism’: the belief, first, that there is some fundamental cleavage between figurative (or more generally, literary) and literal (ordinary) language, and second, that all metaphors are literally anomalous category mistakes. Atlas rejects the distinction between literal and figurative as a matter of principle, not just because it is difficult to make in practice. Metaphor, he argues, has the same semantics as literal language: its interpretation essentially involves abduction (the Peircean strategy of inferring the premiss from the consequent, which Atlas identifies with the Gricean notion of inferencing). He claims that a metaphorical sentence is semantically univocal (what he later calls ‘semantically general’): its sense, or connotation, does not determine its reference, or denotation. Literal sentences, too, are semantically general; they are not assigned determinate truth conditions by their sense alone, but only following a Gricean process of inference. Atlas does not proceed to describe how the actual (semantic) content of specific metaphors is determined, or motivate why the relevant ‘inferencing principles’ are of a pragmatic rather than a semantic nature. Moreover, his total rejection of the distinction between literal and figurative may seem too radical. On several points, however, I am rather sympathetic to such a view; the reasons for this will become clearer in chapter 4.

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1 Atlas considers his views on metaphor comparable to Davidson’s, but there are actually rather important differences between them: thus, unlike Atlas, Davidson still maintains a strict notion of (context-free) literal meaning.
The neo-Gricean picture and Atlas's view of metaphor to some extent resemble the view outlined in 3.1.3 above. There, it was argued that metaphorical interpretation is not essentially different from literal interpretation, as both may involve the same kind of context-dependence. On a direct contextual interpretation approach, however, these contextual mechanisms are semantic rather than pragmatic in nature. As no full-fledged pragmatic-intrusion analysis of metaphor is available, I will limit myself to some (admittedly programmatic) remarks about the general difficulties that such an approach encounters.

To begin with, apparent counterexamples to truth-conditional theories of meaning, such as (58a), by no means force us to a pragmatic analysis; they may equally well motivate an enrichment of the semantics. Arguments for pragmatic intrusion typically presume a relatively 'poor semantics': a static, extensional truth-conditional semantic language with a weak expressive power. In recent years, however, various new developments have considerably enriched the expressive power and potential descriptive range of semantics, and it is not clear how pragmatics would react to such innovations. For example, in semantic theories that define the meanings of expressions in terms of their 'Context Change Potential' rather than in terms of truth conditions (Heim 1982, 1983), and in the dynamic semantics developed by Groenendijk & Stokhof (1990, 1991), the conjunction *and* is no longer automatically commutative; that is, it is only in specific conditions that *A and B* can be said to be synonymous with *B and A*. Similar results appear from the work on the semantics of temporal anaphora that has been carried out in the framework of Discourse Representation Theory (cf. Kamp 1984). On Heim's approach, conjunctions *A and B* are added to the context c in two steps: first, the context is updated with *A* and whatever presuppositions it may carry; subsequently, *B* is added to this 'local' or 'provisory' context c \([ [ A ] ]\). The felicity of each conjunct is thus successively assessed, and this accounts for the difference between (59a) and (59b)

\[(59)\]

- **a.** John has children and John's children are bright
- **b.** ?John's children are bright and John has children

The right conjunct of (59b) asserts the presupposition of the left one, which had already been added to the local context, and is therefore uninformative, which accounts for the unacceptability of the conjunction as a whole. Such theoretical innovations suggest that there may also be a way of capturing the intuitively correct interpretation of cases like (58a) in semantic rather than pragmatic terms.
What an argument for pragmatic intrusion needs in the face of such broadening of semantic theory, then, is a principled argumentation that the inferences involved are of a pragmatic rather than of a semantic nature. If one wants to adhere to a definition of pragmatics as essentially involving speaker's intentions, one should show that the noncommutativity of and in (58a) and (58b) is essentially determined by speaker's intentions rather than by the context and by conventional rules of language! As argued in 2.2 above, merely relying on one or more of the familiar diagnostics for conversational implicature, such as defeasibility, does not yield a decisive outcome. If an inference is defeasible in specific contexts, this may equally well be due to its being presuppositional or context-dependent as to its being pragmatically implied. Moreover, once an adequate semantic analysis has been given, there remains little reason to look for a pragmatic explanation.

Another question facing defenders of pragmatic intrusion is the question what such presemantic Gricean inferencing takes as its basis. Regarding metaphorical and other kinds of context-dependent interpretation, this amounts to the question of whether the inferencing takes place at the level of character or that of content. If the argument that thematic dimensions are contextual parameters is correct, a thematically indeterminate sentence only expresses a character, not a content that can be assigned a definite truth value. The sentence's character can hardly serve as a basis for Gricean inferencing; at the level of content, however, the specifically metaphorical interpretation has already been established. Atlas (p.c.) has argued that a sentence need not be deviant or defective for the inference process to start applying; rather, the hearer starts working out an inference on the basis of his recognizing the speaker's intentions. Such an argument, however, assumes that the hearer has access to the speaker's specific intentions prior to, and independently of, the process of semantically interpreting her utterances, and this view faces the difficulties already noted in 2.2. For example, in written communication, the hearer often has the evolving discourse as his only cue regarding the speaker's intentions.

To return to metaphorical interpretation: a 'pragmatic intrusion' account implies a specific answer to the question of whether it is semantic or pragmatic information that determines the

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1 Actually, a dynamic semantic analysis of comparatives like (58a) and (58b) has not yet been given; but they actually hinge on the (non-)commutativity of the conjunction rather than on the comparative construction itself.

2 Conversely, attempts to incorporate implicature in an enriched semantic theory will have to account for its specific characteristics. As noted, implicature, presupposition, and assertion differ on several central points, so one cannot treat them as involving just the addition of different kinds of information to the context set.

3 Sag (1981: 276, 290) likewise argues that metonymical sense and referencetransfers as in The ham sandwich wants to pay discussed above, cannot be Gricean implicatures, as there is no input for a Gricean machinery. Such transfers, he claims, should be accounted for in a semantic theory, although they are constrained by pragmatic factors.
propositional content of a metaphor. But it already appeared from the discussion of Searle in 2.2 and from 3.1 that there is no easy answer to this question: metaphorical interpretation may involve world knowledge, culturally based stereotypes, or contextually established 'connotations', i.e., information that can hardly be considered purely linguistic. I am hesitant, however, to conclude that, for this reason alone, the determination of metaphorical content is pragmatic rather than semantic in kind. It rather suggests that it is difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish linguistic knowledge from world knowledge in lexical semantics.

Neo-Gricean analyses, however, do not make the largely uncontroversial claim that broadly pragmatic factors like context-dependence enter into semantic interpretation; they argue that a more specifically Gricean process of inferencing precedes the semantics. That is, 'pragmatic intrusion' in the sense of the intrusion of general background or world knowledge, as opposed to purely semantic or linguistic knowledge, should clearly be distinguished from the pre-semantic intrusion of Gricean inferences. The latter, being implicatures of a kind, are - among others - defeasible;¹ there is no good reason to believe that intruding world knowledge in general has the same characteristics. Levinson argues that accommodation, as discussed above, is a case of pragmatic intrusion in the more restricted sense (2000: 233, 249; cf. 399n17).

The question then becomes whether accommodation (especially in so far as it may be involved in metaphorical interpretation) is essentially Gricean in nature. Levinson gives no arguments for his repeated claim that it is; and, in the case of metaphor, there is some persuasive evidence against it. It may be that accommodation is involved in sentences containing metaphorically interpreted terms as part of their presupposed information, like Pass the vintage vinegar said of a bad wine, or God has arrived said of Wittgenstein; but our intuitions are not clear in these cases (cf. 3.2.4 below). Levinson himself notes that indexicals, unlike implicatures, are not affected by negation or modal operators (2000: 353n52); but we saw that the same holds for metaphorical interpretations (2.2.1 above). Further, Levinson (2000: 246) concedes that a Kaplan-style indexical analysis rather than a pragmatic intrusion account may be fine for metonymical transfers like The ham sandwich wants to pay. In 3.1.3. above, however, it has been argued that metaphorical interpretation is in this respect of exactly the same indexical nature as metonymy. There are good reasons, then, against treating metaphorical interpretation as a kind of Gricean inferencing, whether of a pre- or a post-semantic nature.

¹ On Levinson’s view, generalized conversational implicatures do not arise from assumptions about the speaker’s intentions in specific circumstances only, as much as from general features of the utterance; but otherwise they share attributes like cancellability and universality that mark off particularized conversational implicatures from presupposition and semantic entailment.
More generally, whatever the nature of the information involved in the determination of the semantic content of a metaphor, it seems to be of a much more conventionalized kind than an account in terms of speaker’s intentions would allow for. Much attention has been paid to the ‘novel’ aspects of metaphor, but this has tended to downplay the fact that even the interpretation of novel metaphors often relies on conventional associations. Literally equivalent sentences may receive different metaphorical interpretations in different languages, simply because different properties may be associated with expressions that have the same ‘literal meaning’, as has already been noted in 2.2.2. The metaphorical interpretations of (60), (61), and (62):

(60) John Searle is the ayatollah of pragmatics.
(61) John is a fox.
(62) Sweet words.

centrally involve culture-specific, that is, conventionally determined information. To a European, (60) will probably convey something more negative than to, say, a Shi’ite Muslim. To a speaker of English, (61) communicates just that John is sly or clever, whereas to a Japanese native speaker, it (or its Japanese equivalent, John-wa kitsune desu) would convey something much more malicious, given the role of foxes as prototypically evil spirits in Japanese folk beliefs. Likewise, the word sweet in English and Chinese receives different figurative interpretations when applied to words: in English, sweet words are pleasant words, but in Chinese, sweet words are specious words (cf. Stern 1985: 685). Previously established conventions play at least as important a role in metaphorical interpretation as speaker’s intentions.

A pragmaticist might counter this claim by arguing that implicatures are not universal in content as much as in structure. Specifically, he might argue that metaphors are particularized conversational implicatures, and may involve contextual information that cannot readily be translated. However, even regular particularized implicatures appear to vary less with culturally shared information than with what counts as rational behavior on the part of the speaker. They carry over across languages more easily; thus, the answer in (62)

1But cf. Levinson (1983: 127), who argues that metaphors like England is a sinking ship ‘convey what they convey in a relatively context-independent way’, which would seem to make them candidates for being generalized rather than particularized implicatures. This suggestion is not taken up, however, in Levinson’s (2000) discussion of generalized conversational implicature.
Metaphorical Assertion

(62)  - Does John have a girlfriend?
    - He has been paying a lot of visits to New York lately

will carry the conversational implicature that John has a girlfriend in New York, regardless of
the language in which this exchange occurs. Metaphorical interpretations are much more a
matter of conventionally associated and language-dependent information, and much less of
speaker’s intentions, than such implicatures. Perhaps this argument is not conclusive by itself,
but it gains in strength in conjunction with the other objections against treating metaphorical
interpretations as implicatures raised in 2.2 above: they do not clearly display any of the
characteristics of conversational implicature. In short, the case for pragmatic intrusion and its
relation to semantics is very much an open one. Progress on this question is somewhat
hampered by a lack of principled argumentation, based on a clear (though necessarily theory-
internal) distinction between semantic and pragmatic information. For metaphorical inter-
pretation, at least, the arguments for specifically pragmatic principles involving speaker’s
intentions as prior to semantics remain at best inconclusive, and at worst implausible.

3.2.3. Thematic Dimensions, Presupposition, and Assertion

After these considerations, let us return to the notion of thematic dimensions and the role they
play in metaphorical interpretation. It appeared that both Bergmann and Stern fail to state
precisely what a metaphor asserts, presupposes, and implies. The task is now to describe how
a direct contextual interpretation account articulates these notions.

It was already suggested in 3.1 that thematic dimensions involve presupposed rather than
asserted information (cf. Bartsch 1987a: 5). This becomes clear if we look at their behavior
under operations like negation, modals, or questioning that serve as tests for presupposition:

(63)  a. The car is red. (internal dimension: w.r.t. color)
    b. The car is not red.
    c. Perhaps the car is red.
    d. Is the car red?

1In 2.1, it was noted that Goodman’s comparable notion of a schema likewise functions much like a presupposed
set of alternative labels; but this point remains rather implicit in Goodman’s own writings.
The negation of (63a) and (64a) does not affect the thematic dimension in any way: (63b) merely states that the car does not have the specific color property of redness; likewise, (64b) denies that John does well with respect to his finances, not that he does well in any other respect. The modal sentences (63c) and (64c) do not preserve the assertion made by their nonmodal counterparts (63a) and (64a), but the thematic dimension with respect to which the weaker assertion is made remains. Likewise, questions (63d) and (64d) alter the illocutionary force, but not the thematic dimension. This is strikingly similar to the behavior of metaphorical interpretation under such embeddings (cf. 2.2.1 above):

Here, too, such operations as negation, questioning, modals, etc., obviously affect the asserted content, but not the sentence’s being interpreted figuratively rather than literally. The central question regarding the interpretation of such embedded metaphors as (54f) is whether the thematic dimension, being a contextual parameter, is preserved in propositional attitude contexts. One might argue that (54f) is not necessarily metaphorical, but just ascribes a belief in a false literal statement to Peter. This does not seem likely, however, given a contextually established dimension of behavior properties, the that-clause of (54f) will be interpreted metaphorically if the sentence as a whole is to express an assertion that is coherent in this context. Indeed, one would expect this interpretation, given Kaplan’s idea that context-dependent expressions take wide scope over extensional and intensional operators. In 3.1, it appeared that this thesis cannot be maintained without qualification, but for cases like (54f), it seems intuitively plausible. But one’s intuitions in these cases may not be clear to begin with.

Stern (1979: 413-39) argues that metaphor cannot be eliminated from belief-contexts without loss of information.
The semantics of metaphorical interpretation in attitude contexts is a complex matter, which I will not further discuss here.

In 2.2, it was concluded from examples such as (54a-f) that metaphorical interpretation does not bear any clear relation to illocutionary force; here, the point of these examples may be formulated more precisely: **metaphorical interpretation involves a change in what is presupposed, not in what is asserted.** This is just a corollary of the general point that thematic dimensions, and dimension-indicating expressions, involve presupposed rather than asserted information. Literal interpretation, then, presupposes the default dimension $d_i$, and metaphorical interpretation presupposes a novel dimension $d_n$. Bartsch (1987a: 5) has already noted that predicate-limiting adverbials, which linguistically express dimensions, differ from manner adverbials in several respects. First, unlike manner adverbials, they are not affected by negation (64-65):

(64)  
\begin{align*}
\text{a. John does well financially.} \\
\text{b. John does not do well } & \text{financially.}
\end{align*}

(65)  
\begin{align*}
\text{a. John walks quickly.} \\
\text{b. John does not walk } & \text{quickly.}
\end{align*}

This is, as said, a feature of presupposed information in general. Second, predicate-limiting adverbials cannot be paraphrased as predications; that is, they cannot be rephrased as expressing asserted content, like in (66), but manner adverbials can, as (67) shows:

(66)  
\begin{align*}
\text{John’s paper is } & \text{stylistically good } \neq \text{The goodness of John’s paper is stylistic}
\end{align*}

(67)  
\begin{align*}
\text{John’s paper is } & \text{well written } = \text{The writing of John’s paper is good}
\end{align*}

Third, predicate-limiting adverbials and manner adverbials do not display the same inferential behavior:

(66)  
\begin{align*}
\text{a. John’s paper is } & \text{stylistically good } \# \text{John’s paper is good.}
\end{align*}

(65)  
\begin{align*}
\text{a. John walks } & \text{quickly } \rightarrow \text{John walks.}
\end{align*}

In a null context, or at least in a context that does not include a dimension of stylistic qualities, (66a) is not valid, unlike the parallel entailment involving a manner adverbial. These differences
show that, in general, manner adverbials express part of the asserted content, but predicate-limiting adverbials express presupposed content.

An interesting further distinctive trait of predicate-limiting adverbials, and other adverbials that express presupposed rather than asserted information, is that they cannot themselves be interpreted metaphorically. In this respect, too, they differ from manner adverbials. It is not possible to interpret the phial of Ares in such a way that of Ares rather than the phial receives a metaphorical interpretation. Brooke-Rose (1958: 249-53) discusses how adverbs of manner may be used metaphorically; they may, for example, qualify an action of an inanimate object such as a drum in the manner of an animate entity, as in (68)

(68) The drums demurely wake the sleepers. (Shakespeare)

Adverbials and comparable adnominal or adsentential modifiers that express presupposed information, by contrast, may force a metaphorical interpretation of the term they modify, but precisely for that reason, they cannot themselves be interpreted metaphorically. Thus, in (69)

(69) Cambodia has become Vietnam's Vietnam. (cf. Boas & Keysar 1993)

the restricting phrase Vietnam's cannot be interpreted metaphorically, but it serves in turning Vietnam from a name into a predicate or property expression, which denotes, say, disastrous military adventures.

This would lead us to the hypothesis that if a predicate modifier is interpreted metaphorically, it cannot be a predicate-limiting term. As such terms precisely determine a (metaphorical) content, it would be odd indeed if they could be part of that content. Put differently, presupposed information determines asserted content without itself being part of what is asserted. This is not to say, of course, that metaphorically expressed contents can never be presupposed. Below, we will discuss some cases of 'presupposed metaphors', but these involve the content of noun phrases and predicates, not the content of adverbials.

In other words, metaphorical interpretations arise from a change of presuppositions (more specifically, a change in thematic dimension) rather than from an oddity in what is asserted. The hearer, basing himself on contextual information, interprets the sentence metaphorically as part of finding out exactly which assertion is made, rather than trying to bring an apparently asserted propositional content that has already been determined and evaluated in line with the linguistic and nonlinguistic context. What is asserted, then, is the content of the sentence as
interpreted metaphorically; what is presupposed is the thematic dimension that is implicitly
given or linguistically expressed. This is, of course, just another way of saying that a
metaphorical interpretation is a semantic or propositional content arising in a specific context
of utterance, rather than a pragmatic reinterpretation of a ‘defective’ literal content.

The failure to distinguish between presupposed and asserted information is precisely the
point where pragmatic theorists like Grice and Searle, and would-be pragmaticists like Fogelin,
run into trouble. All of these authors, and many others with them, assume that the hearer starts
with the ‘literal content’ as the apparent assertion that the speaker makes (or, as Grice puts it,
‘makes as if to say’). Various objections have already been raised against such views in 2.2; but
if the argument presented here is correct, such pragmatic approaches are simply misguided in
searching for a ‘clash’ in asserted rather than in presupposed contents. The lack of a clear
distinction between presupposition and assertion in metaphor is also a stumbling block for
Stern: if we assume the ‘metaphorically relevant property’ itself, rather than a thematic
dimension, to be presupposed, we cannot adequately account for the behavior of sentences like
(22a-f). On a direct contextual interpretation approach, then, as opposed to Stern’s account, it
is not the relevant property itself that is presupposed, but rather the thematic dimension
determining that property.

Dimension Clash in Metaphor

In so far as metaphorical interpretation involves any clash at all, it is a clash between different
thematic dimensions. The relation between internal, external, and contextual dimensions has
already been addressed in 3.1; the main point to note here is that they all function as
presuppositions or as contextual features, rather than as aspects of word meaning or semantic
content in the strict sense. In metaphorical interpretation, the contextually determined thematic
dimension takes precedence over whatever internal dimension may be presuppositionally
associated with the metaphorically interpreted term. If a sentence contains an explicit
predicate-limiting adverbial that indicates an external dimension, this dimension takes precede-
ence over both the internal and the contextual dimension. As we already saw, many expressions
simply do not have any single internal thematic dimension associated with them, so there can
hardly be any conflict with the external or contextual one; but now it remains to be seen exactly
what happens if there is a ‘clash’ between the internal and the external or contextual dimension.

Bartsch (1987a: 3) gives an example of such a dimension clash. She notes that Dutch flink is

a dimensionally weakly determined adjective, which has as its meaning or character something
like 'strong under aspect X'. In dimension $d_1$ of behavior, *flink* is synonymous with *dapper* (brave), and in $d_3$ of volume or size, *flink* is synonymous with *fors* (sturdy); but what is the interpretation of *dapper*, which has an internal dimension $d_1$, in $d_3$ of size? It could be interpreted as expressing sturdiness, but there are already other words (viz., *flink* as a weakly, and *fors* as a strongly determined expression) that are synonymous in that dimension. In such cases, Bartsch suggests, the internal thematic dimension generally takes precedence over the external one. But this would make the discourse incoherent, as in the following conversation:

(70)  - Hoe groot is Jan? (What is John's size like?) [thematic question, $d_3$]
     - Hij is dapper. (He is brave) [interpreted in $d_1$, behavior]

This hardly counts as an answer to the question posed, but the hearer may try to reestablish coherence by inferring a conversational implicature (like *John is not tall*), or he might take the external dimension as superseding the internal one after all, in which case a metaphorical interpretation arises (ibid.)

In metaphorical interpretation, however, the opposite seems to take place: the contextually given or established thematic dimension takes precedence over the internal one. There are several reasons for this: first, taking the internal thematic dimension as the dominant one leads to an incoherent discourse (as Bartsch herself already notes), and therefore requires a special 'repair strategy' of reestablishing coherence after the semantic content has been determined, evaluated, and found wanting in some way. As a general strategy, the hearer will select an interpretation that makes sense and is coherent given the context, unless other factors rule out this option. Secondly, there are a good many expressions that are thematically weakly, or at least not fully, determined; they obviously have no internal dimension, so of necessity it is the contextual or the external dimension that determines their content. To maintain the uniformity of the process of interpretation, we may then take the same mechanism to be at work for all property expressions, regardless of how strongly dimensionally determined they are.

This leaves us with the question of precisely what is implied by such cases as *brave* in (70), interpreted in $d_3$. If the hearer decides to interpret *brave* in the internal dimension of behavior rather than in the contextual one of size, the content of braveness itself is semantically determined. Its 'oddity' then consists primarily in its not being coherent, given the contextual dimension of size. Of course, (70) may also turn out to be false, and might then yield a Quality implicature; but if it is evaluated as true, it involves a violation of the Maxim of Relation, and the hearer may infer the conversational implicature that the speaker wants to change the theme
of the conversation (for example, because she considers Jan’s size an irrelevant or embarrassing subject), or that she does not think that Jan has any interesting size properties. It should be noted that a similar effect can arise from the use of an explicit dimension indicator. The speaker may change the contextual dimension of (70), by starting her answer with an expression like ‘Regarding behavior,...’. We will return to this below.

The reader may be surprised that in this account even internal dimensions are not treated as aspects of word meaning, but as contextual features. It would seem that internal dimensions are presuppositionally associated with specific lexical items, and thus are in a way part of lexical meaning. Using the terminology introduced above, one might say that they are accommodated if no external or contextual dimension is available; but typically, the internal dimension $d_i$ is so strongly associated with an expression $P$ that $P$ is normally interpreted in $d_i$. In the jargon of presupposition theory, dimensionally strongly determined expressions are presupposition triggers: in a null context, or at least in the absence of contextual information to the contrary, the internal dimension appears as an ‘elementary presupposition’. It is tempting to see elementary presuppositions as parts of lexical meaning, but there are reasons for resisting this temptation. Van der Sandt (1988: 194-5) has noted that elementary presuppositions can disappear even in simple sentences like (71)

(71) The king of Siam exists.

Obviously, (71) asserts rather than presupposes that there is a king of Siam. Thus, Van der Sandt argues, elementary presuppositions cannot just be entailed by, or read off from, the occurrence of presupposition triggers such as definite descriptions and proper names, but depend on the derivation of the sentence as a whole. He suggests an alternative picture, which is based on two intuitively plausible assumptions: first, the interpretation of sentences often requires the selection or construction of a context in which they can be interpreted; second, presuppositions are normally supposed to be part of these contexts. On this picture, elementary presuppositions are syntactic or lexical indicators of context selection, and are thus part of the context, rather than of semantic content (1988: 194). Obviously, Van der Sandt’s proposal squares well with the argument of 3.1 above that thematic dimensions in general are contextual features.

1These two assumptions are similar in spirit to Kaplan’s and Stalnaker’s ideas about context-dependence and presupposition.
An internal dimension, then, is not part of the content expressed by a property expression, but rather a contextual feature that determines a content. On this view, metaphorical interpretation does not involve a clash of dimensions as much as a selection from among the available dimensions. Dimensionally weakly determined expressions, such as good or Dutch flink, do not carry a dimensional presupposition, and outside a specific context will not get any determinate interpretation at all. If the property expression is weakly determined, the hearer can only take the external or contextual dimension; but even if there is an internal dimension, the hearer will usually select the contextual or external one in order to preserve discourse coherence. In other words, general considerations of discourse coherence explain the order of priority of external, contextual, and internal dimensions.

**Thematic Dimensions and Predicate Restriction**

Dimension-indicating expressions are closely similar to, but distinct from, other ways of restricting the interpretation of predicates. For example, thematic dimensions are comparable in function to f-presuppositions in Stern’s account. As said, Stern holds that f-presuppositions associated with man, such as being a biped, filter out some of the presuppositions generated by wolf in Man is a wolf, such as that of being a quadruped. In other words, the presuppositions associated with the ‘literal surroundings’ restrict the properties generated by the metaphorically interpreted predicate. Thematic dimensions impose much stronger constraints on interpretation than Stern’s f-presuppositions, however; the latter amount in essence to a domain restriction for the predicate interpretation, while the former impose a further restriction within that domain.

Thematic dimensions also restrict the interpretation of a predicate in a similar way as the head noun restricts the interpretation of non-predicative adjectives like big, and thus block the inference from a big mouse to a big animal (Kamp 1975: 125; cf. 3.1.2 above). Although head nouns do not function in quite the same way as thematic dimensions (after all, an animal that is a big mouse is still a mouse, but an animal that is big for a mouse need not be a mouse), the restrictions they impose closely resemble those imposed by explicit dimension indicators. In some metaphors, the relevant property is indeed restricted by a modifier that functions in much the same way as a predicate-limiting adverbial:

(72) Halfway down the path of life. (Dante)
(60) John Searle is the ayatollah of pragmatics.
As with a predicate-limiting adverbial, (72) expresses not just another extension, but also another content than the ‘literal’ interpretation, i.e., the interpretation in $d_1$ of spatial distance, without the adverbial of life. But such qualifying phrases should not be conflated with dimension indicators.\footnote{Bartsch (1987a: 18) also notes the option of taking the discourse domain as a separate aspect of the context. The interaction between head noun and thematic dimension constitutes an interesting topic for further research.} In general, the noun imposes a domain restriction, that is, a restriction of the objects to which a predicate may apply; thematic dimensions, by contrast, restrict the properties that may be the content of the predicate itself. Often, the restriction introduced by the thematic dimension is additional to that introduced by the head noun. For example, the coldness of cities expressed in (33)

(33) Anchorage is a cold city.

is not quite the same property as the possible coldness of ovens or heavenly bodies (cf. also expressions like cold nuclear fusion), as they involve different intervals on the scale of temperature properties. Even within the domain of cities, there may be different subsets that have different standards of comparison. Thus, (73)

(73) Milan is a cold city.

may be true within the domain of Italian cities, but false when Milan is compared with Anchorage. There is no contradiction either in sentences like (74)

(74) For Italian cities, Milan is cold, but compared to German cities, it is mild.

But even given this domain restriction, sentences like (33), (73), and (74) may still be interpreted either ‘literally’ (i.e., in the dimension $d_1$ of temperature) or ‘metaphorically’ (in dimension $d_n$ of hospitality). Outside a thematic context, metaphors typically do not yet express any specific content. Thus, (72) merely indicates that the path cannot be interpreted in its default dimension; this dimension is blocked if it is incompatible with features of the reference situation, specifically those introduced by the modifier of life. This blocking of default dimensions accounts for the sense of anomaly that metaphors, especially those involving dimensionally strongly determined expressions, tend to display when taken out of context. In
isolation, such sentences only express a character, unless the modifying expression itself has a stable content. In that case, the internal dimension of the modifier will function as the default dimension for the sentence as a whole. If we take *brave* to have an internal dimension of behavior, this dimension will be triggered by the occurrence of (75) in a null context:

(75) John is a textbook example of *braveness*.

This implies that it is not just the head noun (or, to speak with Black, the literal ‘frame’) that determines or constrains the possible metaphorical interpretations of the predicate, but also the context. Thematic dimensions thus impose an important constraint over and above that imposed by the subject about which something is predicated.

*Paraphrasing Metaphorical Assertion*

The question of whether metaphors can be paraphrased has already been discussed in 3.1; it was concluded that even if a literal paraphrase succeeds in expressing the same content, it is unlikely that it does so under the same character: metaphorically interpreted sentences and their literal paraphrases are different manners of presenting the same content. Here, the question remains whether some of the suggested ways of paraphrasing a metaphorically expressed content actually retains its assertive power.

The two main ways of paraphrasing metaphors like *John is a wolf* are, of course, comparisons of the type *John is like a wolf*, and ‘literal’ property attributions like *John is cruel*. Let us look at these in turn. It should be obvious that comparison statements do not really paraphrase the asserted content: a comparison has an essentially weaker assertive power than a metaphor. Whereas a sentence of the form *A is (a) B* expresses a class-inclusion assertion, a corresponding comparison *A is like (a) B* merely asserts that A and B have some property in common, without any commitment of class inclusion. In essence, the element of comparison *like* functions as a hedge that weakens the assertive power of the sentence, rather than as an element that leads to some radical difference in interpretation between metaphors and comparisons. But even aside from the difference in assertive power, comparison can in no sense *explain* metaphorical interpretation. Obviously, both may involve the same kind of contextual information and interpretative processes: both may require a thematic dimension in

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1Tirrell (1991) makes essentially the same point: similes, she holds, may help in * explicating*, but not in *explaining*, metaphor (1991: 358).
order to determine a specific property, and both may involve the construction of a contextually relevant property. Moreover, similarity statements are much more restricted to a small number of specific syntactic constructions: as seen, there are no comparisons that may usefully serve as paraphrases of metaphorically interpreted verbs and adjectives like *The chairman ploughed through the discussion* or *Sally is cold*. The present account does not require similarity as an explanatory concept for metaphorical interpretation: both notions can be elucidated in the same terms of a context-sensitive semantic theory. In a way, then, Aristotle, Jurjânî, and Goodman were right in claiming that comparisons are a special kind of metaphor, rather than the other way round.

One can also try to paraphrase a metaphor by literally predicating a property of the subject, as in *John is cruel*. It has already been noted by Black (1962: 46) that such a paraphrase explicitly presents the implications that in the metaphor were left for the hearer to discover, but this need not be an overriding objection: assume, for the sake of argument, that *cruel* indeed expresses the same property as *wolf* in $d_n$.¹ Still, there is a difference, in that *John is a wolf* expresses another category inclusion statement in $d_n$ than *John is cruel*, even if *wolf* has the same extension in $d_n$ as *cruel*. Once again, the difference lies not in the extension or the expressed content as much as in the character under which the content is presented. On a direct contextual interpretation account, then, the apparent and the actual assertive power of a metaphor are equal. Predicative metaphors typically express class inclusion statements, and the speaker is committed to the content they express. Thus, the 'metaphorical content' is not a fundamentally weaker assertion (such as a comparison statement, or even an implicature) than the syntactic form of the sentence suggests.

*Thematic Dimensions and Semantic Features*

It may be objected that the account outlined here is just a notational variant of approaches in terms of semantic features, which were popular in the 1960s but have largely been abandoned since (though cf. Lappin 1981). A thematic dimension like color, it might be argued, is just another way of describing the semantic feature [COLOR] that is associated with predicates like *red*. So why talk of a clash between thematic dimensions if the interpretation just involves sortal incorrectness, or a clash of semantic features?

¹Note that the 'implications' that Black speaks about should not be seen as implicatures in Grice's sense: in uttering a sentence like *John is a wolf*, the speaker is committed to the content it expresses in $d_n$, but not to the implicatures that may arise from her utterance.
For a number of reasons, however, such objections do not hold. The advantage of treating thematic dimensions as presuppositionally associated with expressions rather than as semantic ‘features’ or ‘markers’ is that it becomes easier to account for how they can be contextually defeated, without at once being lost as associated with lexical meaning, as an account in terms of features would seem to imply. It can also deal with dimensionally weakly determined expressions, where no internal dimension or semantic feature is even available for cancellation. Semantic features are held to be fixed and context-free elements of word meaning; they are aspects of word types, rather than of tokens or occurrences. Semantically, the cancelling or deleting of such information makes little sense, and in any case it cannot be the whole story: cancelling a feature like [+ LIVING ] in the predicate thirsty would merely yield a less determinate property than the ‘literally’ expressed one; we would still need further contextual constraints to determine the exact property expressed in sentences like the earth is thirsty: in one context, this can be taken to mean that the earth is arid and lacking water, but in others that it has been drained of minerals by excessive monoculture, that it absorbs water quickly, and so on. Treating metaphorical interpretation as merely involving the cancellation of a semantic feature leaves the resulting content too indeterminate.

The account described here, by contrast, treats thematic dimensions as playing a role, not only in suspending the internal dimension di, but also in the determination of a new content in dn: it takes the dimension to impose strong constraints on the possible interpretations. It also differs from feature-based approaches in that neither (internal) thematic dimensions nor contextually associated properties are necessarily part of word meaning in the strict sense. A dimension is a contextual feature rather than a part of lexical meaning; likewise, associated properties may belong to the word’s stereotypical connotations, or they may have been introduced or created in the preceding linguistic or situational context. Such a perspective can account in purely semantic terms for the ‘nonmonotonic’ behavior of metaphorical interpretation, i.e., the fact that some aspect of the literal word meaning appears to be contextually ‘cancelled’. It also relieves us from the necessity of arguing that all possible metaphorical interpretations are already somehow included in the semantic word meaning, as has in the past been argued by Cohen & Margalit (1972) and Levin (1977) (cf. Stern 1979: 233ff.). The relevant property may be a feature of word meaning in so far as it is determined by an internal dimension, but it may also be ‘imported’ from the context into the resulting content, in much the same way as the content of an indexical is determined by its extralinguistic referent.
Moreover, on a direct contextual interpretation account, sortal incorrectness, which can be represented as a clash of features or presuppositions, is no longer essential to metaphorical interpretation: the external thematic dimension may, but need not, clash with the internal dimension associated with the metaphorically interpreted expression. As seen, sentences like

(33) Anchorage is a cold city.

do not involve any sortal incorrectness at the level of the sentence type. Only if a dimensionally strongly determined expression is interpreted metaphorically in a specific context can we say that there is anything like a ‘clash’ between the internal and the external or contextual dimensions; but even here, ‘clash’ is hardly the appropriate terminology. It would be more appropriate to speak of context selection than of context clash. Dimensionally weakly determined expressions lack an internal dimension, and their metaphorical interpretation just involves the application in dimensions to which they had not yet been applied. In general, then, the ‘novel’ or ‘metaphorical’ sense does not arise from a clash between the meanings of the sentence constituents (i.e., the defectiveness of the sentence as interpreted ‘literally’) or from an inappropriateness of the sentence in its (linguistic) context. Rather, the new content is a function of the dimension in which the sentence occurs. As argued in 3.1, the ‘sense of clash’ that a hearer may perceive is subsequent to the actual interpretation process, and has no semantic function. It arises when the hearer remains aware of the default dimension of the metaphorically interpreted expression.

In other words, no clash or ‘tension’ is essentially involved in metaphorical interpretation. The hearer does not first have to establish a ‘literal’ content, perceive it as semantically anomalous or evaluate it as false, and subsequently figure out a pragmatically conveyed ‘intended metaphorical sense’. The metaphorical interpretation of an expression $P$ arises directly from the contextually given thematic dimension $d_n$ and the information that is associated with $P$, regardless of whether this information is part of the word meaning proper, part of the stereotype, or contextually introduced in the preceding discourse or the situation in which the metaphor occurs. This information need not even be linguistically expressed; but that does not defeat the essentially semantic character of metaphorical interpretation. After all, the potential referents of indexicals like $I$ or now need not be taken as part of their ‘meaning’ either, nor need they be linguistically introduced in a context.

But if ‘tension’ or ‘anomaly’ is not essential to metaphor, is there any specific characteristic of metaphor left at all? The one feature that seemed to characterize metaphor, its sense of
oddity or anomaly, threatens to disappear. Many authors hold that tension or anomaly of some kind is essential to metaphor; if metaphorically interpreted predicates can apply correctly to their subject, they argue, ‘all sense of metaphor evaporates’ (Davidson 1979: 32). Such an argument is actually based on the assumption that anomaly or falsity is a necessary criterion for recognizing a metaphor as such, and thus warrants a metaphorical rather than a literal or another figurative interpretation. On the account given here, however, the problem of recognition simply drops out, so there is no longer any need to postulate any anomalous literal meaning; indeed, the very logical priority of ‘literal meaning’ disappears. It was noted above that a strict distinction between literal and metaphorical language often cannot be made; but on the present account, it need not be made either. If there is no essential distinction between literal and metaphorical interpretation, however, the notion of ‘literal meaning’ itself may well become superfluous. Unsettling as it might seem, this is indeed what I would want to argue; I will have more to say about it in chapter 4.3.

3.2.4. Extensions: Scope and Shift of Dimensions

Thus far, the discussion has been limited to the metaphorical interpretation of simple subject-predicate sentences. More complex constructions introduce complications of various kinds. I will look at a few of such constructions here, without pretending to give more than a preliminary outline of how they could be accounted for in the present framework. The question of scope has already been briefly discussed in 3.1. Authors defining metaphorical interpretation with the aid of an operator, such as Stern (cf. also Sag’s (1981) discussion of a ‘sense transfer operator’), should spell out what scope relations such an operator may enter into with other operators, and with quantifiers. On the present account, this problem does not arise: metaphorical interpretation does not involve any ‘metaphorical operator’ but depends on the (thematic) context, so there are no questions of scope that are specific to metaphorical interpretation. In general, thematic dimensions, being contextual features along Kaplanian lines, are not affected by extensional and intensional operators: they survive negation, modals, etc. Questions of scope do arise, however, for predicate-limiting adverbials, which introduce thematic intensionality (marked by the thematic intensionality operator * in the semantic representation language). Although these questions are not specific to metaphorical interpretation, they deserve some attention.
Bartsch (1987a, b) has described in detail how predicate-limiting expressions can be used adnominally, adverbially, or adsententially:

(76) a. John’s health is fine/ John, with respect to health, is fine.
    b. John is fine healthwise.
    c. With respect to health, John is fine.

Semantically, these different sentences are equivalent, as they describe the same state of affairs; this becomes clearer if we think of the thematic dimension as the set of all properties included in that dimension, the character of a name like *John* as the set of all John’s properties in different dimensions, and the character of the predicate as a pre-property or set of properties. In the adnominal construction (76a), John’s properties are first restricted to his health-properties, and then intersected with the character of *fine*. Essentially the same process occurs with the adverbial and adsentential construction, but only in a different order. (76a-c) only differ in ‘intentional structure’, i.e., in the way of getting at this state of affairs (cf. Bartsch 1987b: 296). In Fregean terms: they present the same content in slightly different manners. In principle, a thematic dimension applies to an entire predication, and consequently it has wide scope over negation and modal operators, as appeared from examples (54a-f). It also has wide scope over disjunction and conjunction, unless a subsequent predication introduces a new dimension by a predicate-limiting adverbial:

(77) Healthwise, John is doing well, but financially, he is in trouble.

In this projection behavior, thematic dimensions behave much like other kinds of presupposed information, except that they are typically ‘cancelled’ by other dimensions rather than by the assertion of the presupposed information, as in *The king of Siam exists* (71). The order of priority of dimensions arises from considerations of discourse coherence. As already indicated in 3.1, the external dimension (i.e., an explicit indication of the dimension, within the sentence, by a predicate-limiting adverbial) takes precedence both over the contextual and the internal dimension. In the absence of an external dimension, the contextual dimension (situationally given or linguistically introduced in the preceding discourse) overrules the internal one. If there is no contextual dimension either, the internal dimension is triggered or perhaps accommodated. An interesting complication is introduced by metaphorically interpreted quantified sentences, like (78) and (79):
(78) Everybody has his Minotaur. (after Marguerite Yourcenar)

(79) Brulé de plus de feux que je n’en allumai. (Racine, *Andromaque*)

‘Burned by more fires than I lighted’.

One can read (78) either ‘collectively’, with one dimension $d_n$ having wide scope over the quantifier, or ‘distributively’, with the quantifier taking primary scope. On the former reading, there is one respect, say, that of personality, in which each person has his Minotaur, yielding as a content that each person has some private, destructive obsession; on the latter, each person has a minotaur in some respect, and these respects may differ for different persons. It may be $d_n$ for Phaedra, who developed a destructive love for her stepson Hippolytus, but it is $d_1$ for Theseus, who was confronted with the ‘literal’ (albeit fictive) Minotaur. On the distributive reading, the quantifier would have wide scope over the thematic dimension; in such an interpretation, (78) might be said to express a disjunction of different contents in different dimensions. It thus seems to be a real counterexample to the claim that thematic dimensions always have wide scope; in fact, it is comparable to Partee’s ‘bound-variable’ reading of foreigners in *Citizens of every country tend to find foreigners attractive* (cf. p. 165 above).

Racine’s famous line (79), spoken by Achilles’s son Pyrrhus, who has just taken an active part in burning down Troy, and now is consumed by a burning passion for Hector’s widow Andromache, is even more complex than (78). This complexity arises not only from the fact that the thematic dimension shifts within the sentence (thus causing a slightly zeugmatic result), but also because the second occurrence of *feux* is implicit in the anaphoric *en* in the subordinate clause, and semantically related to *feux* in the main clause by a comparative construction. It is difficult to account for the intuitively correct interpretation of (79) within its context, where the main clause is interpreted metaphorically, and the subordinate clause literally. In fact, the opposite distribution is possible if (79) is uttered by Don Giovanni, who is cast into the fires of hell after having seduced countless numbers of women. Yet other contexts might determine an exclusively literal or metaphorical interpretation of both occurrences of *feux*.

A discourse-oriented semantic theory could in principle account for such cases if it keeps track of the relevant background information (specifically, Pyrrhus’s having burned down Troy and having fallen in love with Andromache), but it needs special engineering to account for an anaphoric expression and its antecedent occurring in the same sentence receiving different
interpretations. The general position would be to hold on to the principle that a thematic dimension in principle applies to a single predication, and that the main clause and subordinate clause in the example are different predications expressing different contents; and, of course, part of the suggestiveness of Racine's line lies precisely in its zeugmatic character. If this solution does not sound altogether convincing, I can only say in defence that the behavior of metaphorical interpretations in quantified contexts is almost wholly virgin territory, and that examples like (79) present serious problems for all current theories of metaphor. I leave these examples of metaphor in quantified contexts for future investigation.

Metaphor in Discourse

The last few examples, problematic as they are, indicate that thematic dimensions may evolve in discourse, and at times even within a single sentence. Within discourse, they can be changed or further specified much more easily than parameters for place and time of utterance. The reason for this is that they are discourse parameters rather than deictic ones: they are created, and developed, in the ongoing discourse, rather than fixed in the extralinguistic reference situation. Unlike the time of utterance, that is, they can be shifted by the speaker herself. Deictic dimensions (speaker, place, time) are situational parameters that are determined in a context but are not fixed by the model, but they may not really be said to be created by the speaker (cf. Bartsch 1987b: 306). At most, they can be shifted within strict limits, but as said, in this respect they are just one extreme case among the different contextual parameters.

Another aspect of metaphorical interpretation in discourse is the fact that metaphorically interpreted expressions may maintain 'anaphoric' relations with earlier or subsequent expressions. The most interesting case was already referred to in 3.1.3 above: that of 'presupposed', or nonasserted, metaphorical interpretations appearing in subject position:

(80) Napoleon wants ice cream.
(81) God has arrived. I met him on the 5.00 PM train.
(82) The locomotive is in bed. (cf. MacCormac 1985)

The content metaphorically expressed by Napoleon, God, and the locomotive is not asserted, but it can (and should) still be determined on the basis of information from the linguistic and

1Note that the problem arises for any semantic or pragmatic account, and regardless of whether one takes the metaphorical interpretation of brulé to be conventionalized.
nonlinguistic context. Such cases may depend on earlier identifying assertions, like *Jaap and Rietta’s son is a real Napoleon*, or *Wittgenstein is God*. In the absence of such an assertion, however, the above sentences express a specific metaphorical content only if the reference situation contains enough information to determine which individual is metaphorically spoken about. The relevant identifications are then accommodated as presupposed information. Thus, (80) requires a context in which there is one specific individual with Napoleon-properties in a dimension $d_n$. The occurrence of *him* in (81) can be interpreted as anaphorically referring to the person described as God, without the hearer’s having to know that the speaker, Keynes, was referring to Wittgenstein; for the determination of the actual content of (81), however, this knowledge is obviously necessary. In isolation, (82) may be interpreted either as a description of an energetic person who has at long last gone to sleep, or as about an actual locomotive that has been placed in its depot overnight, or even as a fully literal statement about a toddler’s toy locomotive. The correct interpretation of such sentences, then, equally depends on the discourse referents and thematic dimensions established by the preceding discourse. Here, it has not been my intention to describe in detail how these examples can be captured in a direct contextual interpretation approach, but merely to state the lines along which this could be done.

In one important respect, however, these cases are distinct from asserted metaphors like (33) or (79): they do not serve to ascribe a property to a specific individual, but rather to identify or refer to that individual. Such cases are comparable to the referential or demonstrative use of descriptions (cf. 3.1.1 above). According to Levinson (2000: 233), they involve an intention-guided accommodation, but on the present account, they refer to a specific individual in virtue of the content they metaphorically express, rather than of the speaker’s intentions.1

Metaphorically interpreted antecedents of conditionals, as in (83), form another example of nonasserted metaphor. Here, too, the content of the antecedent is not asserted, but it still requires a presupposed dimension.

(83) If art is the tip of the iceberg, I’m the part sinking below. (Lou Reed)

1 Kittay (1987: 307-8) tries to assimilate metaphor to referential use in general: she suggests that, just as with a referentially used description, the reference of a metaphorical expression may differ from its literal denotation. Taking referential use as a matter of speaker’s rather than semantic reference, she concludes that some metaphorical expressions refer in virtue of the speaker’s intentions, and that ‘some metaphorical reference is a matter of pragmatics rather than semantics’. Apart from the general problems facing such pragmatic accounts, this cannot explain our intuition that the metaphorical expression’s descriptive content in some way does apply to the ‘metaphorically described’ object, and to the sentence’s truth value.
In this case, the thematic dimension of the antecedent is passed on to the local context for the interpretation of the consequent, and might thus be said to be ‘accommodated’; but one could also imagine examples where this does not happen.

Despite such complexities, the idea that metaphors express a definite semantic content leads to a relatively straightforward account of their effects across sentence borders. It is in virtue of their content that metaphorically interpreted expressions like God in (81) can denote specific persons, and thus determine antecedents for subsequent anaphors. As noted in 2.3 above, such phenomena are much more difficult to account for on Davidson’s view, according to which metaphors do not express or suggest any definite content at all. Examples like (82) or (83) might still be accounted for in pragmatic theories that take metaphors to express a specific content at the level of speaker’s meaning or implicature, but this becomes much more difficult in ‘mixed’ cases like (79). All such cases of metaphorical interpretations in quantified and other complex contexts, then, mount an interesting challenge for any future research.

The possibility of metaphorically interpreting such different constructions recalls Partee’s suggestion for an integrated treatment of the demonstrative, discourse anaphora and variable binding interpretations of context-dependent lexical items (3.1.2 above). In fact, such an integrated approach seems to be equally promising for a comprehensive treatment of metaphor:

(80) Napoleon wants ice cream. (‘demonstrative’)
(84) Regarding behavior towards superiors, John is a donkey. (sentence-internally established dimension)
(78) Everybody has his minotaur. (‘bound variable’)

A semantic account of all these cases, along with asserted metaphors, should keep track not only of deictic and thematic parameters of the context, but also of ‘discourse referents’ (i.e., the objects and situations spoken about), and other kinds of contextual and presupposed information. It would thus seem a fruitful option to account for such cases in terms of the more discourse-oriented semantic theories now available. Familiar earlier efforts in this direction are Kamp’s Discourse Representation Theory (1984), applied to presupposition in Van der Sandt (1992), Heim’s File Change Semantics (1982, 1983), and Groenendijk & Stokhof’s Dynamic Montague Grammar (1990). Such a rich discourse-oriented semantic approach would avoid the main pitfalls of Stalnaker’s theory of assertion, and Stern’s application of it, in that it is not committed to restricting presuppositions to propositions. It defines a context not as a set of possible worlds, but as a ‘conversational scoreboard’ (Lewis 1979) or ‘card file’ (Heim 1982)
that contains various kinds of information. In this perspective, information states are not just sets of worlds or propositions, but also contain information about assignments, values for contextual parameters, etc.

But such an account of metaphor in a more discourse-oriented theory remains a task for the future. Thus far, there have been few earlier discussions of the anaphoric or discourse effects of metaphorical interpretation, and these have remained rather inconclusive. Thus, Kittay (1987: 302-11) tries to account for what she calls ‘metaphorical reference’ (which she defines as ‘the reference of expressions [that are] understood metaphorically’) in terms of anaphoric reference. Following Chastain (1975), she argues that referring expressions can establish an anaphoric chain, by which different expressions corefer to the same antecedent. Metaphorical reference can then be explained away ‘as anaphoric reference, in which some member of an antecedent chain refers literally’ (1987: 303). In other words, Kittay reduces metaphorical reference to a literal reference to the same object by some antecedent expression. She tries to counter the obvious objection that metaphorical interpretation involves denoting rather than referring expressions by invoking Donnellan’s distinction between referential and attributive use. In metaphorical reference, she holds, the reference and denotation of a denoting expression come apart, just as in referential use; the actual referent is determined by the speaker’s intentions rather than by the expression’s descriptive information (1987: 306-11).

Kittay’s account is quite at odds with the theory outlined here, in which (metaphorical) senses or contents, rather than speaker’s intentions, determine the ‘metaphorical reference’ or extension, and no expressions literally referring to, or denoting, the same property are required. Moreover, Kittay’s ideas face serious difficulties of their own. To begin with, they would account for ‘presupposed metaphors’ only. The metaphorically interpreted denoting expressions in asserted metaphors do not refer in Kittay’s sense, but predicate a property of the sentence’s subject, and it is hard to see how such predication could be reduced to anaphoric reference. Second, her account would make metaphorical reference dependent on speaker’s intentions, a view which has already been criticized above. Third, she assumes that the ‘literal denotation’ is preserved in metaphorical interpretation, but such an assumption is unwarranted, and at odds with the account of ‘metaphorical meaning’ she gives elsewhere. There is no reason to deny a ‘metaphorical sense’ the capacity of determining a ‘metaphorical reference’ or extension, otherwise, what use would they have? In short, Kittay is insufficiently alive to the fact that metaphorically interpreted terms typically function as predicating rather than referring expressions.¹

¹On several points, Kittay’s theory is similar to a direct contextual interpretation account; especially her emphasis
A more promising analysis is given by Tirrell (1989), who likewise pays specific attention to the role that metaphors may play in subsequent discourse. She argues that metaphors can be extended: they create antecedents of sorts for subsequent expressions, as in (85)

(85) Read o'er the volume of Young Paris' face,

And find delight writ there with beauty's pen... (Shakespeare)

She correctly attributes the lack of attention for such extensions to the overemphasis paid in studies of metaphor to single predications, divorced from their linguistic context. She goes on to argue that extended metaphors can establish a dependence relation with subsequent expressions that is analogous to Chastain's anaphoric chains, with the one difference that extended metaphors do not involve 'coreferential commitments' like anaphoric chains, but 'shared expressive commitments'. Such commitments, she claims, are distinct from 'identificatory commitments' that fix the reference of expressions like Romeo, it, etc., and from 'assertional commitments' regarding the 'inferential consequences' of the asserted claim. Expressive commitments are 'commitments to the viability and value of a particular way of talking' (1989: 22).

At first sight, the notion of an expressive commitment might seem similar to that of a thematic dimension, which also creates a discourse coherence of sorts; but it actually has a rather different function. The distinction between identificatory, assertional, and expressive commitments makes it immediately clear that Tirrell's notion of 'metaphorical extension' is a stylistic rather than a semantic one. It accounts for how a metaphor can be further elaborated by other metaphors, rather than for how it is interpreted in context, despite her own claim that 'the analogy between extended metaphors and anaphora provides a basic structure for describing just what it is to interpret and understand expressions metaphorically' (1989: 27; emph. added). This stylistic focus also appears in her characterization of metaphorical chains: 'there will be one or more expressions so related to the context that if any one is interpreted metaphorically then all the others must also be interpreted metaphorically' (1989: 18). But it is not necessary that all subsequent expressions are interpreted metaphorically: this characterization does not yet account for how metaphorically interpreted expressions can establish 'identificatory commitments', or anaphoric links, with subsequent items that refer literally, witness there in (85) or him in (81). Tirrell's account of metaphorical extensions, then, does not really account for the interpretation of metaphor in context; at most, it might be on the role of contextual factors and background assumptions has a familiar ring. As already noted above, however, her account essentially differs from the one outlined here, in that she treats metaphor as 'second-order meaning', that is, as a reinterpretation of a sentence or utterance that is linguistically or contextually incongruous.
developed into an account of coherent *use* of metaphor in discourse. Such coherence could then be defined in terms of maintaining a constant expressive commitment. This might account for the ‘expressive coherence’ of sequences like (85), as opposed to the stylistic incoherence of mixed metaphors like *flogging a straw herring in midstream* (an example due to Glucksberg), or of text sequences like (86) about the Dutch national soccer team:

(86) Tegen Griekenland en Malta werd eindelijk met volle overtuiging voor de aanval gekozen. Het *zinkende schip* kreeg plotseling *vleugels* en bleek *niet meer te stoppen*. Kapitein Michels sputterde aanvankelijk nog wat tegen, probeerde het elan nog wat *in te dammen*, maar boog tenslotte het grijze hoofd voor Van Basten, de nieuwe Leider. Op het *goede paard* wedden is een kunst die Michels nog steeds verstaat. Door Van Basten met *waterdragers* te [ondersteunen]... etc.

Against Greece and Malta at last the choice for attacking was made with full conviction. The *sinking ship* suddenly *became winged* and appeared *impossible to stop*. At first, captain Michels demurred somewhat, and tried to *dam in* the elan, but at long last bowed his grey head for Van Basten, the new Leader. Gambling on the right *horse* is an art with which Michels is well acquainted. By supporting Van Basten with *water bearers*... etc. (*De Volkskrant* daily, December 20, 1990; emph. added)

Such examples are not ungrammatical or semantically deviant, but merely stylistically odd (or worse): they jump from one expressive commitment to another. They are, however, no more difficult to interpret than coherent sequences, *pace* Tirrell’s claim to the contrary (1989: 30). Tirrell’s main problem, then, is that ‘expressive commitments’ are stylistic rather than semantic in character, and are based on the - unwarranted - assumption that metaphorical language is fundamentally distinct in ‘expressive commitments’ from literal language (and also, for that matter, from other kinds of figurative interpretation). I do not deny that stylistic considerations may play an important role in the use of metaphorical language, but they are neither a necessary nor an exclusive aspect of it. In any case, a notion of expressive commitment is hardly relevant to a *semantic* account of metaphor, despite the inherent interest of Tirrell’s examples.

To conclude: the discourse aspects of metaphor remain a wide and largely unexplored territory. The change of thematic dimension within and across sentences, the interaction of thematic dimensions with quantified sentences, and the possibility of anaphoric reference to metaphorically interpreted sentences form particularly interesting areas for further investigation. I hope that a direct contextual interpretation account at least provides a perspective from which these questions can be tackled.
3.2.5. Novel Metaphor

One problem that has not yet been addressed in detail is the question of novel metaphor. It has often been argued that truly creative metaphors introduce something essentially new, as they express or convey information that is not just a function of the conventional semantic meaning of the metaphorically interpreted expression; Cooper (1986) sees this phenomenon as a decisive argument against any attempt to deal with metaphorical interpretation in semantic terms. Now, the present account is of an avowedly semantic character, but thus far, the question of novelty has not really come up in the discussion. For simplicity’s sake, the examples have been limited to rather inexpressive metaphors of the kind *John is a wolf*. But perhaps, it might be argued, the more complex or creative metaphors do not allow for such an analysis in purely semantic terms. Many of the examples used thus far might even plausibly be argued to be so conventionalized that they are just dead metaphors, and thus, in a sense, no longer really metaphorical at all.

The reply to such objections is, first, that on a direct contextual interpretation account, there are no essential semantic differences between everyday and poetic metaphors, or between novel and dead metaphors, to begin with. The claim that live metaphors are not interpreted in the same way as conventionalized expressions is based on the assumption that metaphorical interpretation involves principles essentially different from those governing literal interpretation, and this assumption turned out to have no clear motivation. The difference between live and dead, and between everyday and poetic metaphors, is a matter of degree rather than of principle. Secondly, one might reply that metaphors now dead were once alive,¹ so even if the above account merely describes dead and conventionalized metaphors, it also accounts for how they were interpreted when they first occurred (Stern 1983: 588). Still, these answers may not sound quite convincing. They seem more like the stipulative explaining away of a genuine problem: the theory outlined above does not yet clearly account for the more creative or complex metaphors in which a new content arises, or in which the properties attributed in the literal and metaphorical application of expressions like *sun* and *cold* are not quite the same (the kind that Jurjānī called *tamthil*-based metaphors).

Let us look at the question of ‘novel metaphorical content’ first: is this content selected or created? Intuitively, the latter option seems the more plausible one, but the idea that the meaning of an expression is created in a particular context seems a clear violation of the

¹Actually, this picture is rather misleading: it assumes that words originally have one strictly delimited meaning, and are subsequently extended by metaphorical application. We will discuss this assumption in chapter 4 below.
compositionality principle. Words are presumed not to change their meanings in different linguistic surroundings, but this is precisely what seems to happen if we look at the different interpretations of *cold* in *Anchorage is cold* and *Sally is cold*, respectively. In order to give a semantic account that remains compositional, Cohen and Margalit (1972) therefore take the other option, and argue that a metaphorical interpretation is selected from the available range of word meanings rather than created in context, and that all potential metaphorical interpretations are already present as nonactualized aspects of word meaning. Several authors have rightly objected against this way of putting things, as it seems to preclude the very possibility of developing any essentially new meaning (Cooper 1986: 61-5; cf. Stern 1985: 681). A specifically semantic problem is that this proposal involves the `cancellation of features', that is, a deletion of semantic information that, as said, is difficult to account for in compositional semantic terms. A more general objection is that it suggests that every possible application of an expression is already contained in its meaning; at its strongest, such a claim would rule out any coherent talk of semantic innovation or change.

For a direct contextual interpretation account, however, compositionality is not so much the problem: if we take the context as a factor that determines the content of the expressions in metaphorical interpretation, such apparent contextual variation in the meaning of lexically basic items can be accounted for in terms of a compositional, but context-sensitive semantic theory, as Stern (1985: 689) has already noted. The problem lies rather in the question where the properties expressed by novel metaphors come from. Thus far, I have assumed that the relevant property in the `metaphorical dimension' $d_n$ is already there, either as part of the lexical meaning of a predicate $P$, or as part of the descriptive information associated with it in $d_n$; it is this information that becomes the propositional content expressed in context. Beardsley (1962) had essentially the same thing in mind when he argued that in metaphorical interpretation, a connotation associated with an expression becomes the denotation. But can this account for the presumed creation of `new senses' in the more creative metaphors? The question can be reformulated as: exactly what happens if $P$ is not yet defined in $d_n$ at all? In this case, the intersection of the pre-property expressed by $P$ and the thematic dimension is empty ($P \cap d_n = \emptyset$), and the hearer must `construct' the interpretation in that dimension.

*Limits of a Semantic Approach*

But how can the `construction' of such a property be captured in the vocabulary of model-theoretic semantics? We must beware of confusing semantic and epistemological questions
here. Semantically speaking, the subject spoken about just does or does not have the property that is attributed to it. The properties of objects are realized in the model, even if they are not yet named or otherwise expressed by linguistic means.\(^1\) Semantically, the object's having a specific property is precisely what makes a metaphorical assertion true, so that assertion itself can hardly create that property. In metaphorical application, a predicate \(P\) then comes to denote a specific, and possibly 'nameless' property in a specific context. The difference between novel and more conventionalized metaphors then lies in their being interpreted on the basis of a contextually selected property, and of the interpretation function \(I\), respectively; but both receive their interpretation in virtue of the same contextual constraints and the same property. Epistemologically speaking, however, in a novel metaphor the speaker has to construct a concept that corresponds to the attributed property. Although the semantic and epistemological aspects of metaphorical interpretation are closely interrelated, there is no reason to assume that either of them reduces to the other.

Incidentally, this distinction between semantic and epistemological aspects of metaphorical interpretation also suggests that Reinhart's distinction between focus interpretation and vehicle interpretation (1976; cf. 2.1.3 above) can be seen in a different light. What she calls focus and vehicle interpretation (respectively the attribution of a contextually relevant property, and the construction of a special concept involving a 'double perception') may be said to correspond to two distinct aspects, rather than to two distinct kinds, of metaphorical interpretation. Part of Reinhart's strict distinction between the two stems from her assumption that focus interpretation is the attribution of some linguistically expressed property to the subject, and thus that the focus interpretation can also be expressed by a literal paraphrase.\(^2\) But this assumption rests on a conflation of properties with their linguistic expressions. On the present account, a property need not be named before coming to be denoted by a metaphorically applied predicate, and such an application may indeed involve the 'construction of a property' at the epistemological level.

Semantically, the question of how to account for the creation of novel sense or content boils down to the question of how word meanings are to be represented. We can define the meaning of a dimensionally strongly determined expression as a total function, expressing for each dimension the property determined in the default dimension \(d_j\). But then it would become

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\(^1\)The claim that a property just is in the model should be seen as a semantic claim only, and as such it does not carry any epistemological or ontological commitment; specifically, models are neither claimed to be (part of) 'objective reality', nor to consist of private representations.

\(^2\)If [focus interpretation] were to exhaust the full meaning of the metaphor, there wouldn't be much reason to use metaphor in the first place, since this part of the content can be expressed literally' (Reinhart 1976: 389).
difficult indeed to account for metaphorical interpretation in semantic terms: it would then involve nonmonotonically deleting the ‘default property’ as the denotation of a predicate \( P \) in the ‘metaphorical dimension’ \( d_n \), and replacing it with another property. It is theoretically more elegant, and descriptively more adequate, to represent word meanings of property expressions as partial functions from thematic dimensions of the context to properties. As argued above, the default dimension \( d_i \) of a dimensionally strongly determined expression is an elementary presupposition which jumps up in the absence of conflicting contextual information; novel metaphorical application then involves the determination of a content in a new dimension, for which the predicate had not yet been defined. In other words, this is in essence a monotonic process of \textit{adding} information, not one of ‘erasing’ or ‘canceling’ information. In metaphorical interpretation, the contextual dimension, rather than the internal one, is taken to determine the content; but a single metaphorical application does not automatically lead to a change in the lexical meaning of the expression. Repeated application may lead to a ‘destabilization of character’, so that the default dimension no longer determines the content in all dimensions. But even in expressions of unstable character, one dimension may remain more accessible than others, and this may explain why we can sometimes still perceive the ‘metaphoricity’ of dead metaphors like \textit{time flies}. Especially in isolation from a context, we will tend to think of flying as a property of physical objects.

This would suggest that the creation of novel content that occurs in some metaphors can be accounted for in terms of a dynamic semantic theory. The metaphorical application of a predicate would then involve an extension of the interpretation function \( I \): in a context set or information state \( C_n \), the denotation of predicate \( P \) in dimension \( d_n \) is either undefined or the empty set; the metaphorical application of \( P \) in \( d_n \) would update the hearer’s information to a state \( C_{n+1} \), in which the denotation of \( P \) in \( d_n \) is the ‘metaphorically denoted’ property. Which property is thus denoted depends on the subject of the application, on the ‘past history’ of the predicate (that is, its earlier applications as well as its conventional or contextual associations), and on the thematic dimension. In this perspective, metaphorical interpretation involves not an interpretation function \( I \), as in a ‘static’ metalanguage, but rather an ordered pair \( < I, I' > \) of such functions, indicating the state preceding, and the state resulting from, the metaphorical application, respectively. This would call for a significant extension of the dynamic approaches to semantics that have been developed thus far; in the present formulations (e.g., Groenendijk & Stokhof 1990, 1991), it is typically the assignment function that is rendered dynamic in this way. There are no reasons, however, why the interpretation function could not be redefined along parallel lines, and in fact it may already be useful or necessary to do so in order to
capture phenomena like questions or ambiguity (cf. Van Benthem 1991: 173; Van Deemter 1991: 78-81). But even if this task would be accomplished, the result would still be descriptive rather than explanatory. A purely semantic account would stipulate, rather than explain, that for a metaphorically applied predicate like cold, the interpretation function \( I \) comes to define a property of being unemotional, rather than one of low temperature, in a dimension \( d_n \) of personality properties. It hardly explains the basis, or motivation, for such an interpretation, i.e., the fact that a predicate like cold metaphorically denotes a property of unemotionality in virtue of its ‘literal’ meaning’, or of its associations.

It seems that we reach a real limit to the explanatory power of model-theoretic semantics here. The question of how a metaphorical interpretation is related to literal meaning or established usage, involves the lexical meaning and internal structure of \( P \), and model-theoretic semantics (which deals with sentence meanings rather than word meanings) has few interesting answers to such questions; but in their dependence on literal meaning and earlier associations, metaphorical interpretations are motivated, not arbitrary. Perhaps, then, one should not really account for the basis of metaphorical interpretation in model-theoretic semantics at all, but rather see it as a kind of dubbing or naming, the principles of which lie outside semantics.

There is no obvious way of incorporating the grounds for metaphorical interpretation in a semantic theory, and for that reason, several defenders of a semantic view have indeed suggested giving up any attempt to do so. Thus, Stern has argued that, because there are so many different ‘grounds’ for metaphorical interpretation, the question of how the actual content is determined belongs to pragmatics rather than semantics (1985: 696-7). Goodman has gone even further, and claimed that there is in general no basis to explain why an expression, whether metaphorical or literal, means what it means: ‘the question why predicates apply as they do metaphorically is much the same as the question why they apply as they do literally. And if we have no good answer in either case, perhaps that is because there is no real question’ (1976: 78). But such answers may seem unsatisfactory, as they clash with the intuition that metaphorical interpretations are motivated rather than arbitrary, and with the fact that different language users tend to interpret the same metaphors in the same way.

**Metaphor as Dubbing?**

The only recent author to work out an argument that metaphorical interpretation involves a kind of naming or dubbing is, for as far as I am aware, Hausman (1989), who sees creative metaphors as ‘naming or reference-fixingexpressions that give birth to the referents they fix’
He claims that metaphors 'create a unique, extralinguistic referent' (1989: 93), which must be an 'individual' (1989: 109); moreover, he claims, metaphors assert identities, regardless of their grammatical form (1989: 72). On his view, metaphors are truth-value free, and constitute a special class of speech act. This approach falls back onto a number of views that have largely been discredited by now. The idea that metaphors involve a specific kind of speech act has already been considered, and rejected (cf. p. 117 above). Moreover, Hausman is too exclusively preoccupied with reference, at the cost of description. It is also difficult to see how his claim that metaphors assert identities can work for metaphorically applied verbs or adjectives, as in *the chairman ploughed through the discussion* or *the painting is blue*. Hausman also assumes that all metaphors involve a clash or tension, either in their sentence-internal structure or in their larger discourse context, a view that has likewise been rejected. He thus presents few really new aspects for the present discussion.

There are more principled reasons to resist treating the metaphorical application of an expression as a kind of naming or dubbing, however. Kaplan, for example, defines dubbing as the 'use of a proper name with the intention to originate a word rather than conform to prior usage', and adds that 'the speaker does not intend to give the expression its conventional meaning, although he may intend to make use of the conventional meaning in conveying who it is that is being referred to' (1989a: 560; emph. added). Dubbings essentially enrich the expressive power of the language, Kaplan argues, and therefore an account of them belong outside semantics, in what he calls 'metasemantics' (1989b: 573-8). Now metaphorical applications may very well lead to an enrichment of a language's expressive power, but unlike 'real' dubbings, they do not just involve an arbitrary stipulation of a new meaning, based merely on the speaker's intentions. The crucial difference with the stipulative introduction of proper names is that metaphorically applied predicates have descriptive information. It is this content that in large part determines, and constrains, the possible interpretations of the expression. In metaphorical meaning change, it is descriptive information rather than speaker's intentions that plays the determining role (cf. Stern 1979: 395n.); and it is the intersubjective status of this information that allows for the uniformity of metaphorical interpretations among different language users.

The role of descriptive information was already noted by authors like Black and Beardsley, who spoke of the crucial function of connotations, associations, or commonplaces in metaphorical interpretation. Such associations need not be part of word meaning in the strict sense of the word, that is, they need not play part in determining the literal extension; rather, they form part of what Putnam (1975) has called the *stereotype* associated with an expression.
The descriptive information included in a stereotype need not be purely linguistic, but may also comprise ‘world knowledge’. Some of the information, such as the belief that all tigers are striped, or that all gorillas are brute and fierce, may not even be true of the objects referred to (cf. Searle 1979). The demarcation line between purely linguistic and encyclopaedic knowledge is hard to draw in any case; but even if the determination of metaphorical content involves extralinguistic information, this no more defeats the semantic character of metaphorical interpretation than the extralinguistic character of speaker, time, and place of an utterance defeats the semantic character of interpreting a sentence containing indexicals like I, now, or here. It already appeared from the discussion of indexicals that not all aspects of content are determined by ‘word meaning’ in the strict sense: the determination of content may also involve extralinguistic contextual information, such as provided by demonstrations. But extralinguistic information does not defeat the essentially semantic character of the interpretation of context-dependent items: speaker’s intentions do not play any essential role in it.

Because metaphorical application necessarily involves descriptive information that has already been established, metaphorical interpretation is likewise not totally novel or unpredictable. If it were, it would constitute no more than the arbitrary naming of new objects or properties. In general, even novel metaphors have to be supported by descriptive information that is conventionally or contextually associated with the predicate, and by a situational or linguistic context. Further, a metaphorical interpretation largely depends on public information such as culturally determined stereotypes or contextually introduced associations; in a sense, then, it is guided by ‘conventions’, rather than by individual speaker’s intentions. A speaker cannot just intend an expression to mean anything she likes; or rather, even if she does, the hearer is not likely to recognize these intentions in the absence of explicit earlier cues or conventions.

Still, this is just a first step in accounting for the creation of ‘novel senses’. On a direct contextual interpretation account, the ‘creation of novel sense’ is heavily constrained by the subject, by the past history of an expression and by the thematic dimension in which it is applied; but these do not yet seem to motivate the application of a particular word to a particular property. Especially the question of how word meanings are structured in such a way as to allow for metaphorical (and other) extensions remains to be answered. A conceptual counterpart to this question is how concepts can be applied to new cases; we will look at both problems in chapter 4.
Cross-Categorial Metaphor

The second major challenge for a semantic theory, and a particularly difficult case of such ‘novel’ metaphor, is the cross-categorial application of predicates, as in the aforementioned

(87) Dictionaries are (like) goldmines.
(88) His words are (like) honey. (Jurjani)
(62) Sweet words.

These examples were brought up in 1.3 and 2.1 against the idea that similarity can explain metaphor: they are equally problematic as metaphors and as comparison statements. We can take (87) to mean that dictionaries are sources of hidden riches or something of the kind; but the richness of dictionaries and the richness of goldmines are of a different order; goldmines and dictionaries may be similar in containing riches, but they do not contain the same kind of riches. Obviously, it can hardly be the property of richness that is transferred in the metaphorical use: properties are semantic entities that either do or do not apply to objects. In metaphorical language use, it is a term or label, not a property, that is transferred. The question is, then: in cross-category metaphors like (47), a property is ascribed to dictionaries that is not of the same order as the one ‘literally’ expressed by goldmine. But how can terms like goldmine and sweet come to denote properties in entirely different domains of objects? The semantic terminology employed thus far cannot capture the fact that such properties are distinct but related. The problem is a serious one, as there are countless examples of metaphors describing inanimate objects as animate, and vice versa. One such cross-category metaphor which, I trust, will be novel for most readers, is (89), originating in a somewhat disparaging article on the moralism of a well-known Dutch comedian:

(89) Youp van ‘t Hek is de Buckler van de Nederlandse cabaretiers.
    ‘Youp van ‘t Hek is the Buckler of Dutch comedians.’¹

Here, the question rises how a human being can have a property that applies to a beer brand. Obviously, it is not a physical beer property like color, fluidity, or alcohol content that is attributed to, and may apply literally to, the hapless comedian, but rather a property like being

¹I do not recall where I encountered this phrase. Buckler is the name of a brand of alcohol-free beer, which Van ‘t Hek ridiculed in one of his shows because of its presumed whimpiness.
whimpy, overly moralistic, or complying with norms that are considered whimpy. As noted above, Stern attempts to solve the problem of novel metaphor by claiming that the determination of content is a pragmatic rather than a semantic matter; but this is less than satisfactory, if only because it fails to establish a semantic relation between the different senses of a metaphorically interpreted expression. This becomes clear in his extensive discussion of whether the presuppositions involved in the metaphorical interpretation of sentences like Juliet is the sun are those literally applying to the sun, or instead metaphorical ones, applying to Juliet (1979: 397-439). The former alternative is nonexplanatory, as it does not get us to the actually predicated property; but the latter option is circular, as it involves explaining metaphor in terms of metaphor.¹

Stern thus gives no clear answer to the question of how ‘cross-categorial metaphor’ works. He merely notes that it is a serious problem for referentialist attempts to reduce metaphor to literal similarity (i.e., the sharing of one and the same property) or to a shared equivocal meaning (i.e., a more abstract and thus less informative property), but this much we already knew. His own reply is threefold. He argues, first, that his own account does not require that the metaphorical should be reduced to the literal, but merely that the general form of metaphorical interpretation be elucidated: as metaphors need not be any more vague or imprecise than literal language, there is no need to eliminate them. But even if taken as an elucidation rather than an elimination of metaphor, his suggestion that metaphorical content is based on metaphorical presuppositions looks circular. Stern’s second answer, that presuppositions are properties (or propositions), that is, semantic rather than linguistic objects, and are therefore, by definition neither literal nor metaphorical themselves, sounds like a definitionally brushing away of the question. While it is correct as far as it goes, it does not address the problem at issue, namely, the problem of a metaphorical interpretation involving a different property than the literal one. Stern’s third reply is less an answer than a research proposal focusing on the question of whether (pragmatic) presupposition should be seen as an attitude towards a proposition or towards a sentence. None of these clearly addresses the objection that the property ascribed to Juliet in Juliet is the sun is not, or at least need not, be a property of the sun.

One might reply that Juliet and the sun do have a property of a different kind in common, if both have the same place in Romeo’s attitudes, affections, or responses, e.g., if both make him feel happy, both make him sweat when he remains too long in their presence, etc. Regarding (89), one might argue that such properties as whimppiness or being too moralistic already apply

¹This resembles Black’s (1962: 43) argument that a metaphor may involve ‘subordinate metaphors among its implications’, but these are taken ‘less emphatically’.
to Buckler on a metonymic basis: apparently, the speaker considers both the beer (or the drinking of it, or people who drink it) and the comedian whimpy. It is thus her general attitudes towards specific persons and specific objects that explains this ‘classification’. But such a grounding of classifications in terms of attitudes and affections can no longer be motivated in strictly semantic terms: it becomes a broader epistemological rather than a semantic question.

Here, a more general question arises: is there really any strict difference between intra- and cross-categorial applications of the same expression at all? Traditionally, this question has been answered in the affirmative, often on the basis of the tacit assumption that metaphor should be defined as a crossing of categorial boundaries. But clearly, not all metaphors involve such a cross-categorial transfer. For example, shortly after the British Barings Bank lost an enormous amount of money because of speculations by its employee Nick Leeson, a Dutch newspaper headed an article on a similar scandal in a Dutch bank with (90)

(90) ‘Elvis’ N. is ABN Bank’s Nick Leeson.

There is no categorial boundary involved in this metaphor, only one between different individuals, different banks, and different countries. The similarity involved is clearly ‘literal’, as both individuals share the property of squandering tremendous amounts of money belonging to their respective banks. But how similar is similar? Expressions like (a) Nick Leeson can also be metaphorically applied to other situations that are progressively less similar to the literal one, that of squandering a large amount of Barings money. If one compares (90) with (91a-e),

(91)  a. The Dean is the university’s Nick Leeson. (in wasting university money)
       b. The Minister of Trade is Holland’s Nick Leeson. (in wasting state money)
       c. The Prime Minister is Holland’s Nick Leeson. (in wasting others’ time)
       d. Student X. is the Nick Leeson of this course. (in wasting others’ time)
       e. Juliet is Romeo’s Nick Leeson. (in stealing Romeo’s heart)

it is not clear when we actually start attributing properties to different categories of things, that is, attributing ‘really’ different properties. In other words, the very boundary between metaphors that cross categorial boundaries and those that do not is indeterminate. It would be rather odd to assume that the hearer interprets all these cases as metaphorical on the basis of some categorial distinction that is not even clearly determined itself. In fact, the property or set of properties expressed by Buckler or sun is itself a polysemic complex: property expressions
may apply not only to different objects, but also in different dimensions; between these
different possible applications, there may exist at most a ‘family resemblance’, that is, a partial
overlap, with no single element necessarily being common to all the different applications of
the word. In other words, we may be looking at things from precisely the wrong end if we start
with a ‘literal meaning’ that strictly applies to one class or category of objects only. Perhaps
one should not assume the categorial distinctions to be logically or conceptually prior, or more
important, than the contextually established ‘similarity’. In the semantic approach presented
thus far, we have more or less assumed that the different meanings of expressions are neatly
partitioned on the basis of precise, categorial divisions. In the next chapter, I will try to cast
some doubts on the seeming self-evidence of such notions, but this will likewise lead us from
strictly semantic questions to wider problems of epistemology.

It may be useful to review the main findings of this chapter. The metaphorical interpretation of
a sentence depends on the thematic dimension of the context; this dimension is given by the
linguistic or nonlinguistic context, or explicitly indicated by a predicate-limiting adverbial in the
sentence. If a metaphorically interpreted expression has an internal dimension associated with
it, this dimension is overruled by the contextual or external dimension. The presence of internal
dimensions also accounts for the sense of clash or tension that the hearer may perceive after
interpreting the sentence; it plays no role, however, in the interpretation process itself.

Further, metaphors may be used to make assertions. They typically have precisely the
assertive power that is suggested by their syntactic structure. Thus, a metaphor of the form \(A\)
is \((a)\) \(B\) expresses the categorial assertion that \(A\) belongs to the class expressed by \(B\). In such an
assertion, the thematic dimension is presupposed, and some property within that dimension is
asserted of the ‘literal subject’. Depending on the speaker’s intentions in actually uttering the
sentence in a particular context, an additional (or alternative) content may be conversationally
implied. Metaphors may be used hyperbolically, ironically, and so on; but the metaphorical
interpretation itself, i.e., the content expressed, is logically prior to such usages.

Finally, the above analysis does not lead to any distinct notion of ‘metaphorical truth’ or
‘metaphorical meaning’: metaphors can be used to make assertions just as much as literal
language. The impossibility of paraphrasing metaphors is nothing very mysterious either: the
difference between a metaphor and its paraphrase lies in its distinct character-content articula-
tion, and in their distinct balance between asserted, presupposed, and implied information.

In a sense, however, the problem of metaphorical interpretation has been relocated rather
than solved. Instead of focusing on the features that a sentence must have in order to be
interpreted metaphorically, the theory of direct contextual interpretation focuses on the features that the context must have. The problem of metaphorical interpretation, on this account, is twofold: first, identifying (that is, selecting or constructing) the thematic dimension in which a sentence is to be interpreted; and second, identifying the property that is expressed in that dimension. Here, few specific claims have been made regarding these two questions, although we will return to the second one in chapter 4. Perhaps it will turn out that, in the final analysis, thematic dimensions cannot wholly be captured in semantic terms, but are rather to be seen as involving general norms of correctness, such as rational linguistic behavior and hearer’s expectations (cf. Bartsch 1987a: 24). They would then constitute part of a general theory of action, rather than of a semantic theory. But this is a much more general question: in the account given above, no notions specific to metaphorical interpretation have been introduced. Moreover, the question of the division of labor between semantics and pragmatics can only be posed against the background of specific semantic and pragmatic theories: it appeared in 3.2.2 above that phenomena which seem to call for a pragmatic analysis may allow for a semantic treatment after all. To the extent that we can account for the context-dependence and contextual effects of literal language in purely semantic terms, we can also do so for metaphorical language.

In other words, despite such remaining open questions, some real progress has been made: the notions of ‘metaphor’ and ‘metaphorical interpretation’ have actually been reduced to other, more general concepts. Specifically, they have been treated in terms of context-dependence and context change that are independently motivated. The processes involved do not appeal to any notions specific to metaphor, but only to familiar semantic concepts like those of assertion, proposition, and property. Further, properties and propositions are semantic rather than linguistic entities, and therefore cannot be called either literal or metaphorical. In this sense, what is specifically metaphorical in metaphor has been analysed into more general notions.

Finally, it is not at all certain that the semantic operations outlined above are anything like the cognitive operations that the individual actually performs in the interpretation of a metaphor. What has been outlined is, in essence, a ‘rational reconstruction’ of this process in semantic terms. Perhaps some of the difficulties noted above can be resolved by looking at this process from a cognitive or conceptual perspective, and by further explicating the relation between these semantic and conceptual aspects. This question will be addressed in chapter 4.
4.1 CONCEPTUALIST VIEWS OF METAPHOR: A RADICAL CRITIQUE

The preceding chapter argued that the semantic interpretation process of metaphor is crucially and systematically context-dependent. It also argued that (predicative) metaphors express class assertions, and do not indirectly convey a metaphorical content or insight. Thus, a metaphor like *John is a wolf* expresses the assertion that John belongs to the extension of the predicate *wolf* within a specific thematic dimension of the context; in other words, it ascribes a contextually determined property to John. A semantic account cannot explain, however, why a specific metaphorically applied expression determines a specific property; this holds in particular for novel and cross-categorial metaphors. In other words, an important aspect of metaphorical interpretation, the motivation of the metaphorical application of a particular predicate, seems to fall outside the reach of semantics. As neither the referent of a word nor the descriptive information associated with it can quite account for the metaphorical interpretation, we have to look whether a solution should be sought at the level of concepts. But this makes the perspective of the present chapter epistemological rather than semantic; in fact, I will return to some of the epistemological questions regarding classification and categorization that have been raised in section 1.1 above. In this chapter, much of which is of necessity somewhat programmatic in nature, I will discuss how a theory at the conceptual level can match, and supplement, the semantic account of chapter 3. First, I will discuss two recent conceptualist approaches, those of Gibbs (1994) and Indurkhya (1992); it turns out that neither pays sufficient attention to contextual and sociocultural factors. Moreover, conceptualist views face the more general problem, first discussed by Wittgenstein, that mental representations cannot explain language usage. In 4.2, I suggest an alternative, more practice-oriented view of concepts and categorization, and discuss the relative weight of similarity and theories as a basis of categorization on such a view. I then outline how a practice-oriented account can incorporate metaphorical interpretation and the kinds of concepts it involves. In 4.3, I take a look at its
sociological aspects and implications and conclude with a discussion of the consequences of the present account for the notion of literal meaning.

First a note on terminology. In much of the psychological literature, the notions of ‘category’ and ‘concept’ (Lakoff (1987: passim), Gibbs (1994: 52)), and at times even those of ‘concept’ and ‘referent’ (Barsalou 1983), are used as practically interchangeable terms, but these notions should really be kept apart if we want to distinguish the semantic and epistemological aspects of metaphor (and of language use in general). Moreover, concepts are often seen as ‘mental symbols’ (e.g., Indurkhya 1992: 132), but this formulation is somewhat misleading: a concept is not itself a symbol, but rather what is expressed by a symbol; epistemologically, a concept is, rather than has, a meaning. I also prefer not to call concepts ‘representations’; the reasons for this will become clear shortly. For the present discussion, I will take concepts as epistemological reconstructions of properties, which are semantic entities. One may look at concepts as mental entities in so far as individual speakers are concerned, and as social entities with respect to the intersubjective coordination of such individual reconstructions. Because of this coordination problem, which is essential to linguistic communication, one might take the social aspect as primary: concepts capture public correctness criteria and the social pressures to conform to accepted usages of expressions (cf. Bartsch 1990: 1). For the sake of clarity, I will use the following terminology: a concept is that in virtue of which a word is applied to an object or category. A category is a set of objects at the level of extensions. A word (or other kind of expression) has a character, content (intension), and extension (‘reference’); it expresses a concept, and it denotes a category. A concept applies, rather than refers, to an object or a set of objects; in the following, however, I will also speak of both a word and a concept as applying to an object, or set of objects.

4.1.1. Extending Cognitive Semantics: Gibbs and Indurkhya

At first sight, a conceptualist approach to metaphor would seem the most plausible candidate for a satisfactory treatment of novel and cross-categorial metaphor. On a referentialist account, a novel metaphor can merely involve the highlighting of already given similarities; as it explains metaphorical interpretation in terms of the (literal) referents, it can hardly claim that a metaphorical predication creates properties in the referents. It also appeared above that the notion of similarity is both too broad and too weak: too broad in that any two objects have indefinitely many properties in common, and too weak in that it cannot account for the ‘figurative’ similarity between different kinds of objects. On a descriptivist perspective, it is the descriptive content associated with the metaphorically interpreted expression that warrants the interpretation; but such a purely semantic account can hardly account for why one and the
same term comes to denote two distinct, but intuitively related, properties in distinct realms. It would seem plausible, then, that novel metaphors are understood primarily in virtue of some aspect of human conceptualization, such as an ability to ‘see’, or conceptualize, one thing as another. For the earlier statements of cognitive semantics, however, discussed in 2.4 above, novel metaphor is a matter of derivative interest, although Turner (1987) and Lakoff & Turner (1989) do pay some attention to ‘creative’ poetic metaphors. More recent studies, like Gibbs (1994) and Indurkhya (1992), try to get beyond these limitations: they specifically discuss novel metaphors from a conceptualist perspective closely similar Lakoff & Johnson’s. Some of the general difficulties for the cognitive semantics program have already been discussed above, but it may be worthwhile to see if these more recent works contain any useful new insights.

Gibbs

Gibbs remains within the framework outlined by Lakoff and Johnson, but introduces a number of valuable innovations and elaborations. For example, he pays systematic attention to empirical data from research in psycholinguistics and cognitive psychology, which seem to undermine the idea of the logical priority of literal meanings in interpretation. He is not as strict a conceptualist as Lakoff & Johnson, and allows more room for semantic and pragmatic notions as usually conceived. Thus, he argues that the understanding of metaphorical (and literal) language requires not only conceptual knowledge, but also a common ground of information shared between speaker and hearer. He also holds that metaphors can be understood directly, without first being recognized as deviant, especially when they are presented in a suitable context. Many of these claims are not incompatible with the semantic approach outlined in chapter 3; perhaps the gap between ‘objectivist’ and cognitive semantics, then, is not quite as wide as Lakoff & Johnson think. Despite these advantages, however, Gibbs hardly comes nearer to solving the main problems of cognitive semantics discussed in 2.4 above. Moreover, I will argue that at least part of the empirical data that Gibbs refers to, notably Barsalou’s findings, may also allow for other interpretations. I will focus on three aspects where Gibbs elaborates on Lakoff & Johnson’s framework: his emphasis on the context-dependence of concepts, his discussion of the role of metaphor in myth, and his treatment of novel metaphor. I presuppose the discussion of 2.4 as a background.

One of the main tenets of Gibb’s study is his downplaying of the role of literal meaning. Literal meanings, Gibbs argues, have no privileged position in the interpretation of everyday language. In general, interpretation depends on contextual factors such as the common ground

1Or rather, he tries to incorporate ideas from Relevance Theory (cf. 2.2.1 above).
established by the preceding discourse (roughly equal to what has been described above in terms of presuppositions). Metaphorical interpretation equally depends on such factors, so it does not require any special interpretative processes (1994: ch. 2, 3). One would like to see how this context-dependence of language interpretation is reflected at the conceptual level. In this connection, Gibbs makes the interesting claim that concepts and categories are dynamic and context-dependent, rather than decontextualized and fixed entities (1994: 52). Prototype views of categories, he argues, assume that concepts are context-independent; yet it often depends on the context and on the particular goals of a categorization whether a given object is accepted as a member of some category: ‘tea is judged a more typical beverage than milk in the context of secretaries taking a break, but the opposite is true in the context of truck drivers taking a break’ (1994: 51).

On this view, categorization does not depend on decontextualized similarity, but on similarity to some contextually determined ideal, and always involves specific goals; sometimes, an entire ‘ad hoc category’ may be constructed for such a goal. At first sight, these ideas would seem a close parallel to the ideas of semantic context-dependence of chapter 3 above. Gibbs adds, however, that the different conceptualizations of a category in different contexts should be seen as differences in the retrieval, rather than in the representation, of information. In other words, he still seems to assume that long-term knowledge contains stable and decontextualized information, and that concepts are just short-term ‘working models’ that involve the retrieval of various aspects of such information (1994: 53, based on Barsalou 1991). The implications of this view are not quite clear: why, for example, should long-term category knowledge be more stable and decontextualized than short-term representations? In chapter 2, it was argued that the meanings of property expressions, and word meanings in general, are systematically context-dependent, and one would like to see this context-dependence reflected at the conceptual level. For example, it is difficult to see how the meaning of expressions like good or tall, which are semantically context-dependent, could be stored as decontextualized information in long-term memory. In the following, I will therefore take the more radical position that the context-dependence of language and concepts cannot be reduced to decontextualized knowledge at any level of representation. This position is motivated by semantic and epistemological considerations rather than by empirical psychological data, but at least it seems compatible with such data, notably the findings of Vygotsky (1986 [1934]) and Barsalou (1983, 1987). Gibbs’s remarks, then, seem to be on the right track, but do not quite go far enough.

1This notion, introduced by Barsalou (1983), will be discussed in more detail in 4.2 below.
2He also assumes that this knowledge includes the metaphorical mappings or conceptual metaphors that Lakoff & Johnson see as underlying linguistic metaphors (1994: 248ff.; cf. 2.4).
Gibbs's discussion of the role of metaphor in myth (1994: 187-92) illustrates his assumption of the decontextualized nature of the categories underlying thought processes. Echoing Lakoff & Johnson, he argues that 'myths are not falsehoods but reflect patterns of imaginative thinking rooted in metaphor' (1994: 192). He seems to agree with Joseph Campbell, who holds that myths are not reports of historical fact, but figures of the mythical imagination that represent facts of the human mind (ibid.). All myths, he argues, express abstractions with the aid of image schemas; thus, the heroic myths describing journeys that can be found in various cultures all involve the image schema LIFE IS A JOURNEY. In other words, Gibbs assumes metaphorical transfers as cross-culturally constant processes: he takes the abstract concept JOURNEY, and to a lesser extent LIFE, presumed to underly heroic myths, to be given and invariant. The discussions of literacy in 1.1 and of Vico in 1.4, however, give reason to doubt this assumption. Myths are primarily oral, and the empirical material discussed in 1.1 suggests that nonliterate individuals categorize objects in rather distinct ways. Nonliterates think in relatively situation-bound, context-dependent ways, to which abstract, decontextualized notions and categories are largely irrelevant. In this perspective, the understanding of 'metaphorical language' involves the recognition of contextual appropriateness rather than the application of decontextualized concepts and image schemas. Such findings do not just undermine the priority of literal meaning in language understanding (a conclusion with which Gibbs would agree), but lead to a more radical revision of the relation between the literal and the metaphorical: in the absence of a strict distinction between the two, it does not make much sense to speak of specifically metaphorical processes to begin with. An analysis in terms of abstract conceptual domains and transfers between them precisely presumes the decontextualized 'scientific concepts' that only start playing a central role in formal education and after the acquisition of literacy. Cognitive semanticists describe the creation of myths and abstractions from a literacy-based, 'scholarly' perspective; the resulting model is not necessarily a realistic description of the actual thought processes of 'primitive' or illiterate individuals. I will return to this question in 4.2 below.

For the present discussion, the central interest lies in the attention that Gibbs pays to novel metaphor (1994: 7, 247-64). Novel and poetic metaphors, he argues, do not involve new conceptualizations, but only new entailments of existing image schemas. According to him, the lines of Catullus, Suns can set and return again/ but when our brief light goes out/ there's one perpetual night to be slept through, reflect the image schema A LIFETIME IS A DAY (1994:

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1In essence, this view echoes Cassirer's idea that the mythical imagination reflects the free symbol-creating play of the human mind, rather than Vico's idea that myths involve a specific way of describing the world (cf. 1.4 above).
2Although Gibbs (1994: 71) notes the role of literacy in the development of the concept of a decontextualized literal meaning, he does not draw any further conclusions from this.
This reflects the plausible assumption that even novel metaphors are not wholly new, but have to depend on some kind of information that is already given. Gibbs claims that linguistic metaphors, whether 'novel' or not, involve image schemas that are already present in long-term memory, and this accounts for their being readily understandable. On his view, the surprise effect of a novel metaphor consists in the new and unexpected entailments that it teases out of an image schema that the hearer already possesses. This picture, however, assumes that the hearer already has a full-fledged stock of stable image schemas, and thus shifts the problem to the question of how those schemas come about in the first place. It will also have difficulties in accounting for the development of new schemas that cannot be reduced to familiar ones. Presumably, new image schemas are acquired on the basis of linguistically communicated metaphors; but if the interpretation of linguistic metaphor presupposes image schemas, it becomes difficult to explain how new image schemas can develop at all.

Moreover, Gibbs still does not explain what is figurative in figurative transfer: he seems to assume that material from one conceptual domain can equally well apply to another domain; but then, it does not account for what changes in the mapping of one structure onto another. The target domain has to have some structure of its own, for otherwise, there would be no metaphorical transfer, but just a 'literal' extension of a concept to some new object. A cognitive semantics account requires that the source and target domains be kept distinct in some way, for otherwise a linguistic expression describing a theory as a building, like her theory has solid foundations, could not coherently be said to involve any mapping between domains. This would lead to viewing the concept BUILDING as one polysemic whole that also applies to theories, and thus imply that the conceptualization of theories is just one subclass of buildings. And this is certainly not what cognitive semanticists would want to argue: it would imply that there is no conceptual mapping involved at all. Neither the original statements nor Gibbs's elaborations are very explicit, however, about how metaphorical mappings should be distinguished from the ordinary, 'literal' expansion of a concept. Gibbs, then, is hardly more factual than Lakoff & Johnson about the process that is postulated to be central to metaphorical understanding. In other words, the question of exactly what happens in novel and cross-categorial metaphors is not yet answered.

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1Gibbs adds that 'image metaphors', such as Breton's [my wife's] waist is an hourglass, are an exception, as they do not map structured concepts but mental images. Consequently, they do not reflect everyday conceptualizations (1994: 258; cf. Lakoff & Turner 1989: 93).

2Indurkhya (1992: 82) argues that the cognitive semantics approach has to postulate some structure in the target domain in order to avoid the admission of arbitrary transfers and collapse into a comparison view that only captures already existing similarities.
Indurkhya

A promising attempt to account for novel metaphor is made in Indurkhya (1992), who specifically addresses the question of the ‘creation of similarity’ between two apparently dissimilar things. Indurkhya, explaining metaphorical interpretation as a mapping between conceptual domains, stands in the same conceptualist tradition as Lakoff & Johnson and Gibbs. One major advantage of his work over earlier conceptualist approaches, though, is that it introduces a much more precise terminology. Indurkhya focuses on novel metaphor, as is already suggested by his definition of metaphor as ‘an unconventional way of describing (or representing) [one] object, event or situation (real or imagined) as another’ (1992: 36). He focuses his attention on what he calls the ‘paradox of the creation of similarity’: some metaphors, he argues, may create a similarity between the source and target that was not there before, but this creation is not unconstrained or arbitrary. In order to resolve this paradox, Indurkhya distinguishes between objects and their representations, between levels of representation with different degrees of abstraction (such as the extremes of sense data and pure, abstract conceptualizations), and between the different structural elements of concept networks.

Indurkhya is clearly inspired by the work of Kant, Cassirer, Goodman, and Piaget. He presents an ‘interactionist’ view of cognition, according to which the human mind actively creates its own world: in a Kantian vein, he argues that external reality to some extent constrains our conceptual organizations, although it does not have a mind-independent, pre-conceptual ontology (roughly, a stock of basic entities) or structure (the properties of, and relations between, entities) of its own: it only has a specific structure given an ontology that is imposed on it by the agent. The cognitive agent cannot know external reality, the level or realm of ‘things in themselves’, but it can acquire evidence of it by interacting with it (moving about, seeing, touching, etc.). Out of this interaction, a second ‘level of reality’ arises, which Indurkhya calls the sensorimotor data set. This level consists of raw, not yet conceptualized or sense impressions; it can only be experienced by the cognitive agent by having a conceptualization imposed on it. Indurkhya calls this third, conceptualized level of reality the environment, and sees it as corresponding to what Kant calls the phenomenal world (1992: 160). The environment’s ontology is not mind-independent, but determined by the cognitive agent’s conceptualizations. Its structure, given such an ontology, however, is determined by external reality. For example, an agent may impose an ontology of lines of latitude and longitude on geographical reality, but given this, the world of things in themselves determines whether or not two places are on the same latitude (1992: 158-61). The human mind, in other words, can conceptualize reality in different ways, but it cannot do so wholly arbitrarily.
Next, Indurkhya introduces his basic notions at the level of conceptualization. A concept network is a structured set of concepts, or symbols; both its structure and ontology are determined by the agent. In itself, a concept network is only a potential representation, as it need not represent anything external. Only when a cognitive relation, i.e., a correspondence between a concept network and reality, is established, does the concept network become meaningful, i.e., an actual representation. A cognitive relation arises from the instantiation of a concept network in a sensorimotor data set, and by this instantiation, the environment acquires an ontology. Is a cognitive relation, then, a relation between a concept network and an environment, or rather between a concept network and a sensorimotor data set, the environment being the result of this relation? Indurkhya is not quite consistent on this point. At times, he argues for the former (e.g., 1992: 161, 188), but elsewhere, he takes the latter option (1992: 132). This wavering terminology leads to difficulties in his account of metaphor, as we shall see.

The environment’s ontology is determined by the concept network, but its structure is determined by the reality external to the agent. The agent, that is, can conceptualize reality in different ways by instantiating different concept networks in the sensorimotor data set, but given the ontology determined by a specific concept network, external reality determines the environmental structure. Ideally, of course, conceptualizations should match reality. Indurkhya describes this ideal as a coherence condition on cognitive relations: the structure of the concept network should ‘reflect’ the autonomous structure of the environment. But what if the two do not match? In a novel situation, reality may no longer match the agent’s conceptualizations. In those cases, Indurkhya argues, coherence may be maintained in two ways, given that a cognitive relation is a relation of ‘mutual respect’ between the structure of the environment and the structure of the concept network. The structure of the environment is determined by reality, so the agent cannot change it; but the agent determines both the concept network structure and the cognitive relation, so it can vary either of these. The agent may leave the cognitive relation stable and change the structure of the concept network in order to cope with new features of the environment, so that the environment affects the concept network structure. Indurkhya calls this ‘environment-driven’ mechanism accommodation. Alternatively, the agent may keep the concept network structure fixed and vary the cognitive relation by reinstANTIating the concept network, and thus create a new ontology for the environment; given this new ontology, the environment acquires a new structure from external reality. Indurkhya calls this ‘concept-driven’ mechanism projection.1

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1Accommodation and projection are inspired by Piaget’s notions of accommodation and assimilation, which play a central role in his theory of learning. Accommodation in Indurkhya’s sense should, of course, be kept strictly distinct from the accommodation of presuppositions.
Indurkhya on Similarity-Creating Metaphor

Now metaphor, according to Indurkhya, is just such a projective cognitive relation. As said, he defines metaphor as an unconventional description or representation of one object as another; it arises when (part of) a concept network cannot be connected to the parts of an environment in a conventional way. Metaphor thus involves establishing a new cognitive relation between a concept network (the source domain) and an environment. A crucial aspect of this account is that the source and target domains are located at different levels of conceptualization. For Indurkhya, the source is a richly structured, abstract network, while the target is an environment, which has an autonomous structure, but is less ‘abstract’ or conceptualized than a concept network: it lies at the level of the sensorimotor data set of concrete experiences rather than abstract concepts (1992: 253, 280). As an example, Indurkhya discusses Stephen Spender’s poem *Seascape*, which describes the ocean as a harp (1992: 246-8, 251-2).\(^1\) The target domain, in which the poem is interpreted, is a (possibly imagined) perceptual experience of the ocean, including vivid details like the waves, the wind making patterns in the waves, the sunlight reflecting on the water, etc. Metaphorical expressions in the poem, like *A sigh, like a woman’s from inland/ brushes the instrument with shadowy hand/ drawing across those wires some gull’s sharp cry...*, express ‘harp-related concepts’ that are reinterpreted in the target domain: ‘some of the concepts in the text [are interpreted] in a non-conventional way in the imagined domain of ocean’ (1992:251).\(^2\)

In a similarity-creating metaphor, the cognitive agent disregards the existing structure of the target realm as it is conceptualized under the target concept network, and projects the ontology of the source domain onto it, treating it as an object that is encountered for the first time and thus not yet conceptualized. The target domain acquires a new ontology, and consequently a new structure in virtue of this ontology. The source and target domains have now become isomorphic in structure, and the description of the target realm has become similar to the source network in a way it was not before the projection. In other words, a projective metaphor creates a new perspective on the target: it disregards the ‘conventional’ ontology of the target environment, and reinstatiates the source concept network in it (1992: ch. 7).

Such is, in brief, Indurkhya’s account of similarity-creating metaphor. With its sophisticated distinctions, it promises to solve some of the difficulties of earlier conceptualist approaches. Indurkhya argues that earlier approaches treat the projection from source to target as a relation

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\(^1\)Strictly speaking, though, Spender’s poem (which opens with the lines ‘There are some days the happy ocean lies/like an unfingered harp...’) is an extended simile rather than a metaphor.

\(^2\)Incidentally, this passage once more shows Indurkhya’s assimilation of concepts to (linguistic) symbols already alluded to above; cf. his remark ‘words are essentially concepts that are structurally interrelated in a certain way in the poem’ (1992: 249; emph. added).
between two fully conceptualized domains, and therefore fail to solve the paradox of the creation of similarity: if the target domain is already a conceptualized concept network, the projection has to pass through a conventionalized description of the target. In this case, the target concept network's structure is preserved, and no similarity is created: at most, existing similarities are highlighted. If the target realm is a fully conceptual level, however, one can account for similarity-based metaphors only, not for similarity-creating ones.\(^1\)

**Problems with Indurkhya's Account**

Indurkhya's analysis is of a great sophistication: its central notions are given a neat algebraic formulation that allows it to proceed with an even greater precision. But does it work? Its very virtue may in fact be something of a shortcoming: the discussion proceeds at such an abstract and general level that it is difficult to say how it applies to concrete cases. Most of Indurkhya's examples are graphic, and few suggestions are made about the interpretation of linguistic metaphors, which are the main focus of the present work. But even in the linguistic examples that Indurkhya adduces, like Spender's poem, it does not become clear precisely what are the ontologies and structures of the respective domains of oceans and harp: should we see the waves, the wind, and the patterns of light on the water as belonging to the target domain's structure or ontology? Indurkhya's definitions give no clear answer.

To be fair to Indurkhya, the main focus of attention of his work is not the question of how linguistic metaphors are actually interpreted, but rather the problem of how to account for the creation of similarity in conceptual terms: the main thrust of his argument is cognitive, not linguistic. In fact, nonlinguistic metaphors, especially visual ones, play a more important role in his discussions that metaphorical language. Still, one would like to see a more detailed account of how his approach handles concrete cases, and how his theoretical distinctions can be made in practice.

But even as it stands, Indurkhya's account faces a number of difficulties. First, even if we grant that his approach could in principle be supplemented by a linguistic account of when a given sentence is interpreted metaphorically rather than literally, his theory still seems insufficiently constrained: as it stands, it does not warrant that only the relevant information is mapped onto the target domain. In chapter 3 above, it was argued that the context, in particular the thematic dimension of the context, guides and constrains the possible interpretations of a

\(^1\)In 'suggestive' metaphors, a subclass of similarity-based metaphors, the source concept adds structure to an otherwise poorly structured target concept network, but does not wholly replace or reinstantiate it, so no essentially new structure is created (Indurkhya 1992: 266-71).
sentence. Indurkhya’s account contains no comparable constraints. Consequently, his model risks seriously overgenerating possible but irrelevant mappings.

A second difficulty is that some of Indurkhya’s theoretical distinctions may be difficult to tell apart in the actual interpretation process. He discusses three possible strategies if a conventional cognitive relation is insufficiently coherent, for example, when part of the concept network associated with *the sun* cannot be connected to parts of the environment, i.e., (the sense experience of) Juliet. The cognitive agent may then reject the description as anomalous, change the description, or reinstantiate the concept of *the sun* in an unconventional way. The second of these options is, of course, accommodation; the third is projection. Accommodation, Indurkhya argues, may consist in changing the words, so that we end up with a conventional description of Juliet after all (e.g., *is shiny*), if we assume that this is a conventional description), or it may involve redefining the metaphorically interpreted words, ‘so that their dictionary meanings are changed in a way that makes them correspond to parts of the stimuli in a conventional way (1992: 248). In theory, these distinctions are clear enough; indeed, they are essential to Indurkhya’s account, though he adds that most cognitive relations are formed by the two mechanisms of accommodation and projection acting together (1992: 169). But how can we tell the difference between accommodating Juliet and projecting the sun in practice?

The question is indeed an important one. In the semantic account outlined in chapter 3 above, metaphorical interpretation does involve a ‘change in the dictionary meaning’ of the word (albeit perhaps a temporary one only), and would thus be an instance of accommodation rather than projection; but then, in Indurkhya’s terminology, it would not be an instance of metaphor at all. It is crucial to Indurkhya’s account that in a projective relation, the source concept network remains unaffected: its ‘conventional interpretation’, so to speak, remains what it is. At the same time, an entirely new concept is constructed in the target realm, but this is to be kept strictly distinct from the source concept network. Indurkhya gives no procedure, however, for testing whether a specific conceptual change involves accommodation or projection; and it seems that no such procedure could be formulated in his terminology. For he argues that in similarity-creating metaphors, the ontology of the target concept network is completely disregarded, and thus it cannot guide or constrain the transfer. But then what guarantees that the new object is treated as belonging to an essentially distinct target realm, rather than as merely an extension of the source realm? The target realm can hardly contain such abstract categorial information at the level of the sensorimotor data set (or perhaps the

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1Indurkhya (1992: 251, p.c.) suggests that the autonomous structure of the target network to some extent constrains the interpretation; but this can hardly be the case in creative metaphors, where the target network is precisely disregarded; it is treated as an environment or sensorimotor data set, which is not yet conceptualized. In any case, even the target network structure does not in itself seem to provide sufficient constraints on the possible interpretations.
environment), which is held to be involved in metaphorical transfer. Thus, Indurkhya’s claims that the source concept network remains totally unaffected by a metaphorical transfer and that the target realm is totally disregarded seem too strong; and his difficulties seem to arise primarily from his assumption that concept networks are stable and decontextualized. On the account given above, it is precisely contextual factors that make the source domain less stable and more context-dependent than Indurkhya allows for, and restrict the transfer to one specific thematic dimension of the context. But if one takes this context-dependence seriously, it seems that the mechanisms of accommodation and projection collapse in the novel application of a word or concept: it is concept-driven in so far as the earlier applications determine the application to a new object, and it is environment-driven in that the new application leads to a change in the concept itself. In short, the context-dependence of both literal and metaphorical language undermines the strict distinctions between ‘conventional’ and metaphorical cognitive relations, and between accommodation and projection.\(^1\)

Finally, Indurkhya assumes, much like Lakoff & Johnson and Gibbs, that the processes involved in metaphorical transfer are cross-culturally stable. He takes the mental structures and processes involved to be universal, although they may result in different conceptualizations in different cultures. As said, such a perspective ignores (or abstracts away from) possible socio-cultural influences on concepts and the way they are structured. As it stands, Indurkhya’s model is a sophisticated rational reconstruction, but not necessarily a description of the actual mental processes of the cognitive agent. In all, Indurkhya does seem to get closer to an adequate account of the specifically figurative aspect of metaphorical transfers, in distinguishing between ontology and structure; in a metaphorical transfer, the ontology of a concept network is changed, but its structure remains essentially determined by external factors. But his account is rather remote from concrete examples, so it is difficult to say whether it yields the desired results in practice. The lack of contextual and other constraints seems a serious shortcoming, however, and it is difficult to see how they could be added. Moreover, Indurkhya’s claim that the structure of the target domain is totally disregarded in similarity-creating metaphors seems too strong, as it blurs the distinction between metaphorical transfer and ‘literal’ concept broadening. The central question for conceptualist accounts thus remains unanswered: what do concepts have to look like, so that they can systematically reflect the context-dependence of both literal and metaphorical language, and the contextual restrictions on metaphorical interpretation?

\(^1\)Indurkhya (p.c.) agrees that many metaphors involve both accommodation and projection.
4.1.2. A Wittgensteinian Critique of Concepts

All the conceptualist approaches discussed thus far have a distinctively Kantian flavor: they all assume that the ability to understand metaphors depends on more or less universal structures and capacities of the human mind (e.g., Indurkhya (1992: 111-3, p.c.); Johnson (1987: ch. 6)). But the discussion of 1.1 suggested that not only the content, but also the structure of concepts may vary across cultures, especially with degree of literacy and formal education. Neither is the context-dependence of metaphorical interpretation sufficiently taken into account. A more general feature is that all conceptualists seem to treat concepts as representations, i.e., as mental entities that are internal to the individual: they assume that the interpretation of novel metaphors, and of sentences in general, occurs on the basis, or in virtue, of mental representations. In other words, they take mental representations as explaining metaphorical (and other) applications. This idea, however, has come under fierce attack by the later Wittgenstein, who argues that having a mental picture, or more in general being in a mental state, does not logically force any particular use of a word (Philosophische Untersuchungen, §139ff). For example, if we entertain an image of a man climbing up a mountain, it is not the image itself that secures this interpretation, as it might just as well be interpreted as a picture of a man sliding down a mountain. But if a mental image has to be interpreted in its turn, it can hardly serve as an interpretation.

Wittgenstein makes this point with regard to images, but it applies with like force to any theory that tries to explain meaning in terms of concepts as mental representations (cf. Blackburn 1983: ch. 2). In essence, the objection against mental entities as determining interpretations is an objection against the view, explicit in various authors, e.g., Lakoff (1987: 281) and Sperber & Wilson (1986: 231), that (basic-level) concepts or representations constitute a ‘self-interpreting’ medium. Wittgenstein claims that the possession of a concept does not just consist in having a representation, but shows itself in the ability to employ the concept. This is no denial of the existence of mental images, but merely an argument that such entities do not in themselves constitute understanding. In a similar vein, Putnam (1981: 17-21) argues against identifying concepts with mental objects: ‘possessing a concept is not a matter of possessing images [...] since one could possess any system of images you please and not possess the ability to use the sentence in situationally appropriate ways’ (1981: 19). Having a mental image of, say, a tree is thus not the same as having a concept of a tree: the latter requires the ability to employ the image. Consequently, it is not the occurrence of having a private mental representation that constitutes understanding, but rather an ability that manifests itself in public usage. Mental events, Putnam argues, are neither necessary nor sufficient for understanding, and ‘concepts cannot be identical with mental objects of any kind’ (1981: 20-
21). A more radical argument along similar lines is formulated in Saul Kripke’s influential but controversial *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language* (1982), which interprets Wittgenstein as presenting a ‘skeptical paradox’: there is no fact about the speaker or the mental state she is in that justifies the application of a word in a certain way; having a concept does not justify the ‘correct’ use of a word. Kripke then develops a ‘skeptical solution’ to this paradox, in which the language community and its expectations play an essential role in ascribing a concept to an individual.

Surprisingly, such fundamental criticisms as these have never been addressed by conceptualists. Most surprisingly perhaps, Lakoff (1987), who makes so much of Putnam’s (1981: ch. 2) ‘model-theoretic argument’, wholly ignores the latter’s strictures against mental representations. All conceptualist treatments of metaphor appear to view the entertaining of a concept as a state of mind rather than as an ability or practice, and (implicitly or explicitly) take the presence of such mental states as in itself explaining linguistic behavior and interpretation. This is not to say, of course, that all such talk of mental representations is meaningless or that mental representations do not exist, but rather that they cannot explain actual linguistic behavior. It is not a behaviorist rejection of mental representations: Wittgenstein explicitly disclaims denying the existence of mental states or entities (*P. U.* §305-8). His remarks do not constitute an *epistemological* argument against mental entities, but rather a *semantic* objection against the ‘grammatical fiction’ that arises from the picture of a mental representation determining linguistic behavior: it is this picture that leads to philosophical confusions, he holds, and precludes us from seeing the employment of the word as it is (ibid.). The positive view arising from his writings is a treatment of word meanings and concepts in terms of the function, or functions, that words have in a language game or practice.

But can such a practice-oriented picture of concepts yield a convincing account of metaphorical interpretation at the conceptual level? Wittgenstein himself has paid little attention to metaphor. He mentions the phenomenon just a few times in passing, and then mostly negatively, as something that may lead to a wrong picture of things (cf. *P. U.* §356, 439). But metaphorical interpretation, and change of meaning in general, do pose genuine problems for a Wittgensteinian account of meaning in terms of use or practice. If the meaning of an expression is determined by its role in a language game, how can it ever receive a novel interpretation unless the game also changes? Does such a new interpretation of an expression *lead to* a change of a language game, or does it *presuppose* such a change? These questions are particularly pressing for Kripke’s (1982) ‘community view’ of concepts: if we can ascribe a concept to a speaker only on the basis of her conforming to the accepted norms that hold in the language community, how could anyone ever deviate from those norms and still display meaningful linguistic behavior, i.e., manifest the possession of *some* concept? After all, the metaphorical
application of a word, as when Romeo suddenly starts applying the word *sun* to Juliet, instead of to a particular celestial body, clearly seems to involve a break in the continuity of the application of an existing rule. If such a 'deviant' application is interpretable (as it surely seems to be), in virtue of what is the utterance interpreted? Which criteria, if any, are involved? What kind of concept does the hearer attribute to Romeo in the face of such an apparent deviation from expected behavior?

These problems are far from trivial, but have never received any detailed attention from Wittgenstein or his followers: a practice-oriented account of metaphor largely remains to be developed. Some authors (e.g., Hester 1966, Cooper 1986: 216-38, Kemp 1991) have discussed whether, and how, metaphor can be treated in terms of Wittgenstein’s notion of 'seeing-as' (*P.U. II.xi*) (cf. 2.3 above); but here, we face the more basic question of how metaphorical interpretation can fit in with a Wittgensteinian view of rule-following and meaning as practice at all. It is not a priori impossible that an answer to these questions can be given, but it would require several steps: first, giving account of how the rules of a language leave sufficient room for individual variation; second, explicating the relation between games and the sentences or utterances belonging to them, and showing how they interact in change; and finally, finding a ‘criterion’ or ‘ground’ of some sort for a novel application and its being interpretable.

The problem with a Wittgensteinian analysis of metaphor, then, is merely that it has not been given, not that it cannot be given. In fact, some aspects of the semantic theory outlined in chapter 3 seem compatible with such a practice-oriented analysis. First, both perspectives share a focus on extralinguistic circumstances or *Umstände*, i.e., on public (and possibly shared) information, rather than on intentions or mental representations. More generally, just as the semantic account of chapter 3 requires an agreement on presupposed and largely culturally determined information, so Wittgenstein locates agreement in shared forms of life rather than in shared statements (*P.U. §241*). Second, both look at the variable, context-dependent functions or roles that words may play in actual usage; the legitimation for a particular use is to be found within a language-game or practice rather than in private entities like intentions or representations. In other respects, however, the above account is rather un-Wittgensteinian: it tries to pin down a single contextual variable that is a common feature of all instances of metaphorical interpretation. Wittgenstein himself largely rejects the search for single criteria that cover all possible roles of notions like ‘sentence’ and ‘game’; presumably, he would do the same for the notion of ‘metaphor’.

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1 It seems that one can capture such aspect-perception effects in terms of thematic dimensions as presenting an object under a certain (contextual) perspective, but this possibility would require more detailed scrutiny.

2 As already noted in 2.4, Rorty (1989) believes that metaphor by definition falls outside any language game. But this is not very plausible, if only because it turns a language-game into something much more rigidly defined and delimited than Wittgenstein himself intended.
Practice-Oriented Views of Concepts and Social Reductionism

The main problem with Wittgenstein’s view is that it seems to take existing language games as the basis of linguistic meaning; it will then have difficulties in accounting for how, and why, word meanings and language games or linguistic practices can change. He does acknowledge that language games can change, and that new games can come into being (P.U. §23, cf. Über Gewißheit §65, 256) but gives no hint at how he could systematically account for change. For the most part, he seems to take existing games as more or less stable. Individual variation and change, as noted, are especially problematic for Kripke’s (1982) interpretation, which defines meaning in terms of community-wide norms. In fact, this problem is rather similar to that facing Durkheim & Mauss’s theory of primitive classification, discussed in 1.1 above. There, it was already noted that the view of categories as wholly derived from social factors leaves insufficient room for individual variation in thinking. Wittgenstein’s repeated emphasis on language games as the one thing that cannot be further explained or justified seems to bring him close to a Durkheimian view. Several authors, notably David Bloor (1983) and Ernest Gellner (1973, 1985), have indeed ascribed a Durkheimian social determinism to the later Wittgenstein. It may be useful to review these interpretations, in order to show that this is not the main problem for a Wittgensteinian account of linguistic and conceptual change.

According to Bloor, Wittgenstein espouses a more radical view than Durkheim: Durkheim holds that only systems of primitive categorization allow for a social explanation, and that beliefs in more complex societies are increasingly constrained by ‘objective’ standards like truth rather than by social compulsion; but for Wittgenstein even the most ‘objective’ kinds of knowledge, such as expressed in logic and mathematics, are essentially determined by social constraints (1983: 3). Likewise, Gellner (1973: 77n.) believes that the Philosophische Untersuchungen just restate Durkheim’s idea that concepts are essentially socially determined, and that Wittgenstein goes beyond Durkheim by generalizing this claim to all concepts, including scientific ones. Bloor bases his claim on Wittgenstein’s doctrine of meaning as use and its presumed rejection of the notion of reference, and on a view of categorization as a matter of social convention rather than of more ‘objective’ criteria. Neither of these two points, however, withstands closer scrutiny. First, Bloor believes that Wittgenstein, in stressing the vagueness and imprecision of natural language, wanted to do away with the notion of reference or extension altogether: ‘Wittgenstein was not simply modifying the concept of extension; he

1The same holds for his follower Michael Dummett, who repeatedly stresses the social character of meaning, and the importance of linguistic change for a meaning theory (1978: 410-6; 430; 1986: 473). At one point, he even seems to suggest that an adequate, ‘dynamic’ theory of meaning should start from the primacy of change rather than from a static system: ‘a static account, to some small degree, is untrue to the linguistic facts’ (1978: 410). Nowhere does he spell out, however, what such a ‘dynamic’ account should look like.
was destroying it' (1983: 29). As evidence for this claim, he quotes a passage where
Wittgenstein seems to say that an sentence with no determinate sense or meaning cannot really
be said to have a sense at all, just as ‘an enclosure with a hole in it is as good as none’ (P.U.
§99). The thrust of Wittgenstein’s argument, however, is the very opposite of what Bloor
thinks. Significantly, Wittgenstein adds to his remark the rhetorical question ‘aber ist das denn
wahr?’, suggesting that he himself does not accept the suggestion; and the whole context of his
discussion makes clear that he thinks of fully determinate senses as an ideal for logic rather
than an aspect of natural feature sentence languages. Wittgenstein precisely rejects the Fregean idea
that a sentence with an indeterminate sense has no sense at all. Secondly, Bloor argues that
Wittgenstein’s rejection of a common criterion for all different applications of words like game,
sentence, and language brings out the social and conventional aspects of concept application:
‘their common property is the result of their being assigned to the same class, not the cause’
(1983: 31; emph. in original). On this interpretation, categorization is indeed based on social
consensus rather than on similarity. In fact, however, Wittgenstein merely argues that there is
no single feature underlying all applications of such words, not that there is nothing underlying
them (P.U. §65-7). Bloor’s argument, then, rests largely on these two premisses; for if words
indeed have no extension but only a role in a languagegame, and if it is only social convention
that assigns different objects to the same class, then the way is open to a social determinism of
a rather strong sort. These claims have no basis in Wittgenstein’s own writings, however.
Similar objections can be raised against Gellner (1993, 1985), who sees Wittgenstein’s
presumed social determinism as leading to an untenable cultural relativism, since, he believes, it
cannot account for conceptual changes, in particular those resulting from scientific progress.
This total rejection is based on the assumption that Wittgenstein’s notion of a languagegame
can be identified with that of a culture, and as such both grounds and legitimizes existing
concepts. But this assumption is unfounded: language games play various different roles in
Wittgenstein’s arguments, but in none of these can they unambiguously be identified with
cultures. Wittgenstein is no social determinist.

Social and Linguistic Change: Consensus Views and Conflict Views

The main problem with a practice-based account of language and concepts, then, is not that it
leads to an unacceptable social determinism or cultural relativism, but rather that it seems to be
based on the dubious assumption that language games or linguistic practices are largely stable.
Wittgenstein’s appeal to language games and forms of life, Dummett’s (1978, 1986) appeal to

1Bloor also mistakes Wittgenstein’s discussion about the sense of sentences for one about the extension of words.
social practice, and Kripke's (1982) appeal to the role of the language community all seem to share the assumption that there are such things as more or less well-established and coherent games, or practices, or communities. At any one stage, a language game or social practice is assumed to be given and uncontested, and the actions of individuals in the language community to be in essence homogeneous, and expected to be so. It is here, rather than in a presumed social determinism, that a practice-oriented view of concepts shares a basic problem with Durkheim's view of classification: both display what has been called a 'consensus view' of practices and societies, i.e., the view that societies are integrated wholes in which everything has a function that contributes to the coherence and persistence of the larger whole. Durkheim’s theory starts from the idea that a society cannot create or recreate itself without creating some kind of ideal (1960 [1912]: 603)-that is, a religious ideal. He briefly alludes to the possibility of social conflict and social change as arising from the conflict between different ideals (1960: 604), or between different (sub-) groups within a society (1960: 213), but mostly assumes an overall consensus between the groups and ideals living in a given society.

Consensus views do not deny the obvious fact of change, but see it as derivative and inessential at a synchronic level. The problem is, however, that change, once abstracted away from, becomes rather difficult to reincorporate theoretically: in semantics, change of meaning tends to become seen as something anomalous, that has to be accounted for in terms of distinct principles. In the introduction, it was already suggested that it is precisely such a narrow synchronic perspective in linguistic theory that has led to much confusion over what kind of processes and principles are involved in metaphorical interpretation. An assumption of overall consensus is a useful theoretical guideline in that it abstracts away from a number of complicating factors, and some assumption of mutual agreement is obviously necessary in order to account for how people can communicate in a common medium at all. Still, an exclusive attention to such factors that contribute to overall coherence and integration runs the risk of overly neglecting possible sources of variation and change. Indeed, consensus theories are well known to have considerable difficulties in accounting for social change: if everything is assumed to work towards the integration and stability of a social system, how is it possible for such a system to change at all?

Change can more easily be handled by ‘conflict’ theories, which emphasize that social coherence is only an apparent stability, and merely the result of a temporary balance between the opposing forces that are at work in a society. The most familiar examples of such conflict theories are, of course, models with a Marxist inspiration, in which a society is held to consist of classes with conflicting interests. Now, just as consensus models of society have difficulty in dealing with social change, so ‘consensus’-based views of linguistic practice and language communities will have difficulty in accounting for linguistic, and in particular semantic, change,
Conceptualist Approaches: A Radical Critique

precisely because they start from the assumption that at any one stage a language consists of a set of more or less fixed and stable rules, and that there is such a thing as a more or less homogeneous language community. Individual variations within the community and changes of rules will come to be seen as something more anomalous than they really are. Strictly speaking, the concept of a language community is an idealization, as it assumes social coherence, legitimate authority, and a generally accepted codification of rules.

It should be noted that a consensus view of linguistic practice need not imply that a language community is fully homogeneous, i.e., that all language users have exactly the same knowledge of their language. For example, Dummett takes Putnam’s well-known ‘division of linguistic labor’ as the most obvious example of the essentially social character of meaning: the average speaker may not know the precise extension of natural-kind terms like gold, but still employ the word correctly, in the knowledge that she may always appeal to experts who do know the defining properties.\(^1\) These differences in individual knowledge do not undermine the picture that the language community as a whole is stable and coherent, however: the division of linguistic labor is consistent with a consensus view in so far as it appeals to legitimate authority in linguistic matters.

In other words, a practice-oriented view of concepts may provide an alternative for a representationalist view, but it should still be elaborated to deal with the problems specific to metaphor. It is not \(a\ priori\) incompatible with an account of (metaphorical) language change, but it does require a more principled account of such change. Given the argument of chapter 3 above, that metaphors are not semantically deviant and do not involve any specific rules, there is clearly a need for an approach to concepts that is likewise sensitive to contextual factors and that systematically incorporates the possibility of linguistic and conceptual change. But what would a ‘conflict view’ of language and concepts look like? Do we have to incorporate an account of class struggle into a theory of concept formation and linguistic meaning? This might be overdoing it. As said, there clearly has to be \(some\) kind of mutual agreement about the conventional meanings of the expressions in a language for there to be a language at all: mutual understanding seems to \(presuppose\) that there is an overall agreement on linguistic conventions. But this agreement need not be as pervasive as consensus theorists would have it: it may well be a temporary and precarious balance or coordination of actions rather than a matter of course, and reflect tensions both in the language system and its users. After all, already at the synchronic level there obviously \(is\) variation within a language community, and even in the

\(^1\)This division may apply to a limited number of expressions, in particular scientific ones; but for many others, the sense given by a group of specialists is in fact a \(different\) one from the sense given by a larger segment or other subgroup of the ‘language community’. Meillet (1982[1906]) precisely sees in such variation one of the major mechanisms of diachronic meaning change. Dummett seems to allow for different kinds of division of linguistic labor (1978: 426).
linguistic behavior of individual speakers. This variation may appear in differences of register, in the language use of specific subgroups, in dialects etc.; but there may also be tensions or conflicts already within the linguistic system itself, and not merely between the language users: simplicity of the rules at one level (say, the phonological), may lead to complication in the rules at other levels, such as morphology and syntax (cf. Bartsch 1987c: 207ff.). It is precisely the fact that neither the ‘language community’ nor the languagesystem is a harmonious, self-sustaining whole that allows for variation and change. Synchronic variation is the basis for diachronic change; this holds for phonological as much as semantic developments. A ‘conflict model’, then, requires at least a systematic incorporation of the open-endedness and variability of the rules of a language.

To recapitulate the main findings of this section: Gibbs’s and Indurkhya’s restatements of a conceptualist view fail to account convincingly for the remaining problems of metaphorical interpretation, notably those of novel and cross-categorial metaphor. They do not convincingly address the influence of contextual and sociocultural factors on metaphorical interpretation. These difficulties arise primarily from their assumption that metaphor involves a transfer between two decontextualized and stable conceptual domains, and from their more general assumption that concepts, as mental representations, in themselves explain linguistic behavior. As an alternative, I have proposed a more practice-oriented, ‘Wittgensteinian’, view of concepts. Such a view seems more in line with the semantic account of chapter 3 above, which treats metaphor as essentially context-dependent and non-deviant. It may also account better for the influence of sociocultural factors like literacy and formal education on conceptual practices. A practice-oriented view of concepts need not imply a strict social determinism, but it will have to develop an explicit and principled account of variation and change in meaning, in particular the metaphorical application of words. In the next section, I will make a proposal in this direction.

4.2 CONCEPT FORMATION AND METAPHOR: A VYGOTSKYAN APPROACH

The objections raised in the preceding section focus on the universalist assumptions and the lack of attention to contextual factors of existing conceptualist approaches to metaphor. Conceptualists take metaphorical mappings between decontextualized conceptual domains as resulting from universal and cross-culturally constant cognitive processes. But such seemingly universal and a priori properties and operations of the human mind may well result at least in
part from specific social and cultural factors. The discussion of section 1.1 already suggested that abstract and decontextualized conceptual domains may not be readily available to language users, but have to be acquired with the aid of writing and formal education. It is also difficult to ground conceptualization and linguistic structure in the universal neurophysiological buildup of the human organism, as some universalists have tried to do. Indurkhya (1992: 100-111) is aware of this difficulty: he argues that Berlin & Kay’s (1969) well-known findings about the universal patterning of basic color terms across languages do not show that such patterns are actually determined by neurophysiological factors. Individuals possessing a relatively small number of basic color terms can easily perceive differences between various hues, but they have difficulties in grouping those hues together (Luria 1976: 24-7; cf. 1.1 above). Even Gestalts, which are often taken as psychologically basic experiences (among others by Lakoff 1987: 269-70), appear to some extent determined by social and cultural factors. Experimental evidence gathered by Luria (1976: 43-5) and others suggests that presumably universal optical illusions, like apparent motion and the apparent size of figures in different surroundings, in fact vary with factors like literacy and degree of formal education.\footnote{Indurkhya (1992: 102-4) concludes from these findings that ‘concepts can go beyond what is given to the senses in organizing the world, [but] they do so in different ways, so that different people can see the world in different ways’. Luria’s work, however, suggests that not only the contents but also the very principles of conceptualization are influenced by social and cultural factors.}

Now these cross-cultural findings are not at all uncontroversial: different authors interpret them in different ways, and they do not all attach the same importance to them. Here, however, I would like to focus attention on them, because they seem germane to the semantic findings of chapter 3, such as the role of the context and of intersubjective and essentially social factors in linguistic behavior. In the following, I will therefore outline a theory of concept formation that tries to incorporate such variables. As such, it may seem an exercise in armchair anthropology and psychology, but I beg the reader’s indulgence: the central points to be raised are epistemological rather than empirical in nature. I first discuss Vygotsky’s approach to concept formation and Bartsch’s extension of it. Next, I consider the relative weight of similarities and ‘theories’ (i.e., mental explanations that systematically relate concepts to each other) in accounting for concepts and categorization. Finally, I will apply these ideas to metaphorical interpretation; ‘theories’ turn out to play an important role, especially in novel and cross-categorial metaphor. The resulting conceptual account parallels the semantic approach of chapter 3, but attempts to overcome its remaining obstacles.

The Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1986 [1934]) develops a theory of concept formation that takes sociocultural factors into account. He outlines a ‘cultural-historical’ theory of concept formation which is in part inspired by Durkheim’s work on ‘primitive classification’, but departs from it on several central points. In 1.1, it already appeared that Durkheim’s views on categorization are too strictly social in kind: they do not sufficiently allow for individual variation and change. Vygotsky, by contrast, tries to strike a balance between individual and society. A central aspect of his approach is the idea that concept formation is essentially mediated by signs. Against Piaget, he argues that concepts develop out of social interaction rather than out of egocentric speech: he sees concept formation as the internalization of public norms rather than as the independent growth and maturation of the individual mind. Speech and thinking, he argues, have different roots, but from roughly the age of two, they merge and develop in mutual interaction. From this stage onwards, words function as mediating tools in conceptual development.1 Vygotsky thus assigns a crucial role to language and other social factors in the process of concept formation, but he does not take either thought or speech as logically or developmentally prior to the other. During development, he argues, both the kinds of concepts and the word meanings employed by the growing child undergo radical changes (Vygotsky 1986: ch. 7; cf. Luria 1976: 91-2). The central claim of his theory is that word meaning is the union of word and thought, and results from the interaction between developing conceptual and linguistic processes. For this reason, word meanings themselves undergo a qualitative change during conceptual development: ‘the relation of thought to word is not a thing but a process, a continual movement back and forth’ (1986: 212, 218). This sets Vygotsky’s view apart from the conceptualist theories discussed above, which assume that all word meanings have essentially the same structure, although their contents may be influenced by sociocultural factors, metaphorical transfers, etc. It may also be construed as avoiding the need to take word meanings as static representations, or as essentially image-like, self-interpreting structures.2

On the basis of experimental studies, Vygotsky found several basic stages in concept formation. First, children group objects together without any stable basis: the bonds linking the different objects are still subjective and highly unstable. Vygotsky calls such unstable and syncretic groupings ‘heaps’. In the second stage, ‘complexes’ are formed: objects are grouped

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1 The same metaphor of words as tools also appears in Wittgenstein’s later writings (P.U. §11-17, 23). Vygotsky’s work may in part be seen as an attempt to explicate this metaphor.

2 This point is not explicit in Vygotsky’s own work, but he does tend to describe meaning in terms of criteria for correct application, with concrete bonds and abstracted features as the bases for application at different developmental stages.
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The well-known overgeneralizations that children display in the early phases of language acquisition suggest that they group objects according to the principles of ‘chain complexes’, with each new application being based on a different concrete bond or perceptual similarity. Thus, the word *dog* may be applied to cows and other four-legged animals, to brushes and other furry objects, and even to beads or cufflinks that blink like dog’s eyes on the basis of various perceptual bonds. Vygotsky gives the example of the word *quah* being used, first for a duck swimming in a pond, then for any liquid, next for an eagle depicted on a coin, and later for any round object (1986: 127). At this stage, objects are still grouped together on the basis of concrete, factual bonds rather than abstract, logical ones; these bonds are context-dependent in so far as each of them depends on a concrete link in a specific context. Gradually, the child is then socialized into using words to apply to the same things as the words of adults. This leads to the final substage of this stage, that of thinking in ‘pseudo-concepts’, which are phenotypically like adult concepts (i.e., both yield the same observable linguistic behavior), but differ from them operationally: they are based on a (single) perceptual bond. A child may correctly apply the word *dog* to all and only dogs, without, however, doing so on the basis of general, ‘theoretical’ reasons.

In the third stage, ‘potential concepts’ are formed. Much like adult concepts, they function on the basis of single attributes, but more as a matter of habit and socialization than of conscious reflection. As soon as a child learns to operate consciously on potential concepts, however, mature scientific concepts start to take shape: ‘a [scientific] concept emerges only when the abstracted traits are synthesized anew and the resulting abstract synthesis becomes the main instrument of thought’ (1986: 139). Scientific concepts thus involve the explicit or conscious recognition and employment of abstract features in the grouping of objects. Their criteria of application are much more decontextualized than those of complex concepts. Scientific concepts are only developed during adolescence, and typically involve formal schooling.

Vygotsky stresses that the mere observation of linguistic behavior does not suffice to distinguish these phases in conceptual development: in the various stages, the extensions of concepts expressed by words with a conventional meaning may be the same, but the different grounds on which they are formed become clear only in experimental settings. In tests where children can group objects with the aid of ‘nonsense words’ that do not have any conventional meaning, the particular grounds for complex thinking become clearly visible (1986: 103-5). The

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1The notion of complex involves something like what Wittgenstein (P.U. §67) calls ‘family resemblances’: any two objects headed under the concept may share some attributes, but the group as a whole does not have any single attribute that is common to all its members.

2Vygotsky made further subdistinctions within these respective stages, but these are not essential to the present argument.
extensions of adult and children's expressions may already coincide at a relatively early stage: complex concepts are 'functionally equivalent' with real concepts when children apply their expressions to the same objects as adults do. The *reasons* for these coinciding categorizations are quite distinct, however: they are based on concrete and factual bonds, and on consciously employed abstract features, respectively. Children have to be taught to categorize objects in a rigorous, abstract manner in a prolonged process of schooling during adolescence. Thus, full-blown, 'scientific' concepts, based on abstract and context-invariant features, must be learned with the aid of literacy and formal education (1986: 120ff).

The formation of scientific concepts does not lead to a total abandonment of earlier stages of thinking, however: developmentally earlier forms, such as complex concepts, may for a long time continue to coexist alongside the more developed forms. In solving everyday problems, even educated adults will often employ complex concepts and pseudoconcepts rather than scientific concepts (1986: 140). At one point, Vygotsky even seems to suggest that the difference between complex and concept thinking is less a developmental than a *functional* difference, and that both occur in adult thinking. In that case, it depends on the specific task or context in which a word is employed: 'the very difference between the complex and the concept lies in the different functional uses of the word. The word is a sign, and as such it may be used in different ways depending on what kind of intellectual operation it is involved in' (1986: 139-40). In other words, although scientific concepts may constitute an ideal or norm of 'proper' conceptual thinking, most people will employ the less organized forms if they can get along with it. Scientific concepts, in fact, may well be in the minority, or be restricted to specific registers of speaking (such as scholarly or academic discourse, or academic writing) or to specific fields of knowledge. There is thus no need to assume that all concepts function in the same way, or even that a single concept functions in the same way in each task context.

Complex concepts may be seen as 'informal' everyday concepts; they are determined by earlier applications rather than explicit definitions, and can easily be modified by new applications. Moreover, unlike 'mature', scientific concepts, they are learned in informal settings with no strict standards of rigor and consistency. Hence, calling them 'pseudoconcepts', as Vygotsky does, downgrades to some extent a major and pervasive way of conceptualizing. Complex thinking is just as real and valid a way of thought as abstract, scientific categorization.

Vygotsky's approach to concept formation seems a promising way of capturing in conceptual terms the semantic context-dependence of everyday language and the role of social factors like schooling in linguistic behavior. Before turning to the question of how Vygotsky's ideas

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1 The context-dependence of complex concepts can to some extent be expressed in the character-content distinction in the above semantic account. Such formal notions seem to have more affinity with scientific concepts, however, and cannot capture the structural change in word meaning that Vygotsky postulates; I return to this in 4.3 below.
can be applied to metaphor, however, I will briefly discuss some possible criticisms. First, Fodor (1972) attacks Vygotsky's central claim that word meanings undergo a qualitative change during development: this claim, he argues, entails that children and adults necessarily misunderstand each other, as the words they employ have the same extension but a different sense or meaning (1972: 87-8). But such a 'Fregean' objection is not as serious as it might seem. Quine (1960) has already argued that the overt linguistic behavior of other individuals can yield at most a knowledge of the extension, not of the meaning, of the expressions they use. Frege himself allows for individual variations in sense, as long as the language users succeed in speaking about the same objects; for him, sense may be seen as subservient to reference in so far as it merely provides a way of getting at a referent (1962 [1892]: 42n.2; cf. Dummett 1973, 1986: 462).

Another critic, MacNamara (1982: 98), takes Vygotsky to task for his allegedly associationist assumptions; but ironically, Vygotsky himself precisely rejects associationist views of word meaning as merely arising from the repeated simultaneous perception of a specific sound and a specific object, because they cannot account for the fact that word meanings undergo qualitative changes during development (1986: 212-6; cf. 102, 106). For the same reason, Vygotsky criticizes Gestalt psychology: although it liberates the relation between thought and speech from crude associationism, it still assumes that all connections between them are essentially the same in kind, and that the structures of word meanings do not change (1986: 215-6).

A final criticism might be that Vygotsky defines concepts proper, viz., the scientific ones, in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions. Subsequent research, especially Rosch's (1978) famous inquiries into prototype concepts, has shown rather persuasively that most adult concepts do not function in this strict, 'scientific' way. Adult concepts, she argues, often do not involve necessary and sufficient conditions, but rather prototypes or exemplars; they are organized around a single, highly representative member of a category. Because of this, they typically have 'graded structure': penguins or ostriches are less prototypical examples of the concept bird than gulls or sparrows, and consequently, a cognitive agent will less easily categorize them as birds. The earliest defenders of prototype theory assumed that a single item functions as the prototype of a category in all circumstances. Recent investigations have pointed out, however, that prototypicality often depends on specific, contextually determined

1The main problem that Fodor notes for Vygotsky, the question of different people using essentially the same linguistic expressions while associating qualitatively different meanings or concepts with them, would also apply to Vico's ideas; as noted, complex concepts have some traits in common with imaginative universals.
2Fodor's and MacNamara's own approach places a heavy explanatory burden on innate conceptual abilities involving a 'Language of Thought' (a self-interpreting internal representation medium). In 4.1 above, it has already been argued that such representationalist views face formidable difficulties of their own.
goals: in a context of office workers taking a break, coffee will be a more prototypical beverage than milk, but the reverse holds for school children. Graded structure, in other words, is unstable and context-dependent (Gibbs 1994: 51f., cf. Barsalou 1987).

From a wholly different angle, comparable objections have been brought up against the notion of scientific concepts as being wholly theoretically based and explicitly defined. Thomas Kuhn (1970: ch. V) has rather persuasively argued that not even scientific concepts need not be acquired on the basis of explicit rules and definitions yielding necessary and sufficient criteria. Instead, he claims, they may be, and often are, learned in practice: the student primarily has to learn how to apply a concept to new situations rather than how to define it; she typically does so on the basis of loose similarities or family resemblances with a paradigm case or exemplar? This claim implies that even scientific concepts are in fact rather less explicitly defined and clearly delineated than is often thought.

The idea of concepts as context-dependent, acquired in practice, and depending on concrete exemplars suggests a reconvergence with Vygotsky’s original notion of a complex concept. In a sense, then, recent empirical investigations start out as a criticism, and end up as a corroboration, of some of Vygotsky’s main ideas: they suggest that in fact, most everyday concepts of adults function as complex concepts rather than as scientific ones. If this is correct, the scientific concepts that result from a lengthy process of literacy acquisition and formal education may not play the central role that research in cognitive science often tacitly assigns them: they are ideals rather than realities.

**Bartsch: Quasi-Concepts and Formal Concepts**

Despite such possible criticisms, then, a Vygotskyan approach to concept formation remains relevant for contemporary research. It serves as a major source of inspiration for Bartsch’s (1990) formal account of concept formation. Bartsch’s approach takes concepts as epistemological reconstructions of properties. As such, it closely parallels her semantic account of the context-dependence of property expressions (cf. 3.1 above), and is of particular relevance for an account of metaphor at the conceptual level.

Vygotsky’s influence is already apparent from Bartsch’s distinction between quasi- and formal or theoretical concepts, which rephrases Vygotsky’s distinction between complex and
Scientific concepts (1990: 1, 14). Quasi-concepts, Bartsch argues, are formed on the basis of regularities between sequences of utterances and the corresponding sequences of satisfaction situations. If the word *dog* is repeatedly used in situations where a dog occurs, a quasi-concept of dogs may be formed. As such data are necessarily finite in nature, quasi-concepts are never quite fixed or stable: the established sequence can always be continued in new ways on the basis of new data. Moreover, as words can be applied in different perspectives (the conceptual counterparts of thematic dimensions at the semantic level), different continuations of data are possible, and sequences can diverge by being restricted to different perspectives. In this way, quasi-concepts can develop into polysemic complexes. For each perspective, a ‘similarity set’ is formed: a set of objects or situations of which all members are more similar to each other than to other items. If the addition of new data under a perspective does not lead to a break in the continuity of the established sequence, a quasi-concept becomes stabilized.

In the metaphorical transfer of an expression, a sequence is continued under a new perspective, on the basis of a transfer by similarity. Likewise, metonymy involves a transfer by contiguity. A new similarity set may be formed by the repeated occurrence of the ‘new’ utterance-satisfaction situation pair. Thus, when a child first forms a concept for the word *dog*, its word uses are not yet restricted or ordered by any perspective. Consequently, it may apply the word to cows, to brushes, and even to buttons, each on the basis of a different link; it thus forms a chain complex for *dog* (1990: 13). From the adult point of view, a metaphorical transfer seems to occur with each new application of the word, on the basis of a similarity in some new perspective. Needless to say, the child itself does not experience such new applications as metaphorical transfers, as it has not yet formed any stabilized concepts at all. A quasi-concept becomes a formal or theoretical concept when it is linguistically explicated and integrated in a semantic field or theory (1990: 14f). Such theories consist of universal sentences (e.g., ‘if x is a bird, then x has feathers’), and thus no longer depend on specific satisfaction situations, as do sentences and concepts on the first level. The explicated general sentences at the second level are, of course, the counterpart to Vygotsky’s abstracted and consciously employed features that determine scientific concepts. The theoretical nature of concepts at the second level leads to a decrease in importance of similarity as a basic notion, especially in metaphorical transfers. On the second level, items are not categorized as falling under a concept because of similarities under some perspective, but because they satisfy the sentences of the relevant theory. Metaphorical interpretations arise on this level when a sentence like *Peter is a wolf* is interpreted not against the background of a biological or

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1. The influence of Carnap’s ‘theory of constitutions’, elaborated in *Der logische Aufbau der Welt* (1928), should also be obvious.

2. They may, however, be refuted by specific situations, e.g., a situation with a featherless bird.
taxonomical theory $T_0$, but rather of an ‘ethological’ theory $T_1$ of behavior, or even on the basis of prototypical stories such as fairy tales, and stereotypes about wolves. Thus, neither at the first nor at the second level does metaphorical transfer involve a clash of features or a noncompositional cancelling of information; rather, the interpretation is determined by a new perspective or the selection of a new theory, respectively (1990: 23). Both quasi-concepts and formal concepts, then, are essentially flexible: ‘complex concepts can change with changing common background experiences, [formal] concepts can change with changing common background theories’ (1990: 19). On the first level, the application of wolf to a human being involves a perceived similarity, say, of cruelty, in a perspective of behavior; on the second, the word is transferred on the basis of theoretical, or possibly stereotypical, knowledge about the behavior of wolves (like ‘if x is a wolf, then x is cruel’).

It is an open question whether a strict distinction between similarity- and theory-based metaphors can really be made, but Bartsch needs this distinction for her account of novel metaphor. On her account, the second, theoretical level of concepts can hardly account for novel metaphor, as all knowledge on this level is already fully explicated and integrated in theories. Indeed, Bartsch argues that semantic accounts like the one outlined in chapter 3 above are theory-based, as they ‘presuppose the results of metaphorical transfers as part of an existing polysemic complex of properties’ (1990: 22). In other words, a semantic account presupposes that the relevant property has already been identified, but cannot account for how it is identified. Truly creative, or ‘similarity-creating’ metaphors, by contrast, may appeal to the first level of concept formation, that of experiences that are not yet explicated, and may lead to the formation of new concepts. Like Indurkhya, Bartsch sees creative metaphors as involving a target domain of not yet fully conceptualized and explicated sense experience (1990: 24). Unlike Indurkhya, however, she sees creative metaphors, even at the first level, as occurring on the basis of a similarity under some perspective $P$ (ibid.). This suggests that even creative metaphors are similarity-based rather than similarity-creating. In other words, Bartsch’s account of novel metaphor falls back onto a referentialist position, and thus fails to resolve the problem of the apparent creation of similarity: it implies that a metaphorical application succeeds, and a ‘metaphorical concept’ may be formed, in virtue of a given similarity between the referents (or more correctly, the satisfaction situations) under some perspective.

Bartsch takes similarity, restricted to perspectives, as a more or less basic or primitive notion for concept formation, and by extension for metaphorical transfers (1990: 8ff.). Now it already appeared in the preceding chapters that similarity is a rather problematic notion: on the

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1 A specific theory thus corresponds roughly to a thematic dimension at the semantic level, and its elements to the descriptive information in that dimension. More on this below.

2 Cf. Carnap’s (1928) use of a primitive relation of similarity remembrance (‘Ähnlichkeitsinnerung’).
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one hand, similarity by itself is too unconstrained to rule out irrelevant properties, and on the other hand, it does not explain what is shared by dissimilar things of distinct ontological status (cf. the similarity between goldmines and dictionaries and the sun-properties of Juliet discussed above). The first of these difficulties, the lack of constraints, is met by Bartsch's restriction of similarity to perspectives (which mirror thematic dimensions at the semantic level); but it is not immediately clear how the second, that of figurative or cross-categorial similarity, can be resolved. One may attempt to meet it by distinguishing between internal and external (or relational) properties. Similarity need not involve the sharing of internal properties, that is, of properties that the referents have in and of themselves. The properties of an object may also be external, and involve a relation with other objects: wolves are not just cruel in and of themselves, but cruel towards other creatures. A specific variety of external properties consists of the properties that are related to the interests and attitudes of categorizing agents. One could then argue that cross-categorial similarity involves identity of relational properties, especially those of the latter, 'attitudinal' kind. Thus comparisons such as Dictionaries are like gold mines may express that goldmines and dictionaries are both valuable to their users; likewise, Romeo's utterance of Juliet is the sun may express the central place that Juliet and the sun have in Romeo's attitudes.

But this solution cannot account for cases where no relevant property is shared at all. As said, metaphors like Sam is a gorilla ascribe a property of bruteness and violence to Sam, even though this is not an actual property of gorillas: gorillas are considered stereotypically brute and violent animals, but in fact they are shy and sensitive. Bartsch's account can only handle such cases at the second level. Stereotypical information, however, hardly counts as 'theoretical' knowledge in the strict sense of the word: although it is often linguistically expressed, it need not be wholly explicit and systematic. One might argue that stereotypical information is based on a specific kind of external property; but it seems rather odd to say that gorillas have the property of being brutish and violent with respect to, or in the beliefs of, a language community. What is central to such stereotypes is the beliefs, or 'theories', of the language users, rather than the actual or presumed properties of gorillas. A theory indeed seems to be involved here; it is not a theory in the restricted sense of Vygotsky and Bartsch, however, but rather a folk theory. Perhaps, then, we will have to look again at the relative weight and status of similarity-based and theory-based applications of concepts, and perhaps we will have to reassess the distinction that Bartsch and Vygotsky make between quasi- or complex concepts and theoretical or scientific concepts.

1This still leaves us with the problem of how to recover the implicit elements of the relation (cf. p. 35 above).
4.2.2. Similarity and the Role of Theories

In 2.1, it has been argued that similarity plays no semantic role in metaphorical interpretation: metaphors do not assert similarities, and cannot be analyzed as abbreviated comparisons. Bartsch’s account, however, suggests that similarity does play a central role at the conceptual level, and that metaphorical transfers are based on shared (internal or external) properties. Do we, then, have to postulate the perception of similarity as a ‘brute fact’, or as a logically primitive notion that cannot be explained or elucidated? Some philosophers have indeed taken that option: thus, Searle (1979: 114) claims that it is just ‘a fact about our sensibility, whether culturally or naturally determined, that we just do perceive a connection’ between cold objects and unemotional persons (cf. p. 122 above); and even so strict an empiricist as Quine (1969: 123f.) ascribes to humans an innate standard of similarity, i.e., the ability to perceive similarities between two stimuli in the same ‘quality space’ of stimuli of the same kind, such as color or sound. In doing so, he departs from Carnap (1928), who still takes such quality spaces to be later constructions out of a primitive, non-qualified relation of similarity. Now part of our ability to perceive similarities between different sounds, colors, or objects may well be determined by our biological makeup. But even if ‘quality spacings’ are innate or biologically determined, they fall far short of forming a sufficient warrant for the actual linguistic categorizations of adults, and for the perception of similarities across quality spaces, which is, of course, a central aspect of cross-categorial metaphor. As noted, children tend to overgenerate the application of linguistic tokens in the first stages of language acquisition, and thus form what Vygotsky calls ‘chain complexes’. Such complex concepts are not random associations, but they develop on the basis of different perceptual similarities in different quality spaces for each new application. Consequently, children have to be trained to consistently categorize objects on the basis of a single similarity space; they do not do so on the basis of any innate disposition. In other words, the perception, and creation, of specific similarities can hardly be taken as a brute fact, so Searle’s and Quine’s suggestions cannot be maintained.

Other authors have rejected the notion of similarity altogether. Goodman even went so far as to deny it all explanatory validity, when he called it ‘a pretender, an impostor, a quack [...] It is [mostly] found where it does not belong, proferring powers it does not possess’ (1972: 437). Perhaps, though, this position is too radical: similarity calls for elucidation, not for excommunication. The idea that similarity, though not an illegitimate notion, is nevertheless not sufficient as a basis for a theory of concepts is forcefully stated by Murphy & Medin (1985), who argue that ‘similarity-based’ theories of categorization, such as exemplar and prototype theories, are insufficiently constrained to account for the coherence of concepts (the fact that some, but not all, groupings of objects ‘make sense’ to cognitive agents, and can be learned with relative ease),
and for the richness of conceptual structure (the fact that concepts often impose more structure on categorized objects than they 'objectively' possess). Instead, they propose a 'theory-based' approach meant to supply the missing constraints.

On similarity-based approaches, objects belong to a given category in so far as they are sufficiently similar to its exemplars or prototypical members, or because they share the relevant (collections of) features with the other category members. But this hardly explains why cognitive agents perceive different objects as similar. On its own, the notion of similarity cannot explain why one category is formed rather than another; after all, all things are alike in some respect. Perhaps, then, Murphy & Medin argue, estimates of similarity are already influenced by the agent's knowledge that the objects belong to the same category: 'similarity may be a by-product of conceptual coherence rather than its determinant - having a theory that relates objects may make them seem similar' (1985: 291). By a 'theory', Murphy & Medin mean a collection of 'mental explanations' rather than a fully coherent and systematic body of knowledge: it is a 'complex set of relations between concepts, usually with a causal basis' (1985: 290). Theories not only offer 'explanations', they also have external and internal structure; that is, they are systematically related to other aspects of knowledge, and they relate the different features of a given object to each other (1985: 298). For example, one might be tempted to categorize whales as fish on the basis of perceptual similarities (both have fins and a certain shape, live in water, etc.), but on the basis of causal, theoretical knowledge (mammals do not lay eggs, do not have gills, etc.), one classifies them as mammals. It is theories, then, that determine to a large extent which features count as criterial for category membership.

Murphy & Medin's formulation gives the impression that the theories they have in mind are, if not scientific, at least scientific in spirit. Systems of general and causal scientific knowledge indeed seem their 'prototype' of a theory, as appears from claims like 'concept use involves the use of causal knowledge, rules, theoretical consistency, and other theory-like knowledge' (1985: 301). But on the whole, their notion of theory is much broader than those of Vygotsky and Bartsch. They allow for theories that are not as fully explicated and general as (quasi-) scientific ones: theories may be 'naive' and consist of commonsense beliefs and stereotypes; they may remain implicit and may consist of tacit background assumptions, or they may take the shape of what Fillmore (and Lakoff 1987 in his wake) has called 'idealized cognitive models', that is, mental structures of (often simplifying) expectations about the world. Theories are also 'flexible' (1985: 298), which means, I take it, that they may apply differently in different circumstances. Most importantly, theories are always formed for specific goals, and thus may explain and justify specific categorizations. For example, barber poles and zebras both have the feature 'striped', but people will categorize zebras together with (non-striped) horses rather than with barber poles, and motivate this categorization by an
appeal to a theory with a more general goal (e.g., picking out things that are edible, or may be of use in agricultural work). In most circumstances, agents will have no reason for grouping barber poles and zebras together. In general, then, categorization does not consist of attribute matching alone; rather, it is determined by people’s specific goals and interests, ‘which are linked to their theories about the objects’ (1985: 296). Theories and their goals, in other words, determine which features count as important in categorization. Scientific theories reflect one such goal: the attempt to find a general, decontextualized description of the world in causal and taxonomic terms. Scientific theories also aim at describing ‘natural concepts’ that reflect the ‘objective’ ontological categories in the world. But not all theories have this general goal, and consequently, not all coherent concepts are ‘natural’.

Theories and Conceptual Development

A theory-based view of categorization leads to a reinterpretation of Vygotsky’s claim that word meanings undergo qualitative changes during development. It implies that theories in the broader sense play a more important role in the cognitive development of children than either Vygotsky or Bartsch allows for. According to Vygotsky, theories (in the narrow sense) start playing a role at a relatively late developmental stage; he argues that the basis of children’s concepts gradually changes from ‘characteristic’ (i.e., accidental and ‘concrete’) to ‘defining’ (necessary and abstract) features. On the basis of experimental evidence, the developmental psychologist Frank Keil (1987, 1989) argues that such a characteristic-to-defining shift indeed actually occurs rather earlier in development than Vygotsky thinks: for example, he argues, four-year old children already seem to employ a kind of rudimentary biological knowledge when they rate worms as being more similar to people than toy monkeys, despite the stronger perceptual similarity between the latter and humans. He sees this change not as a global shift, however, but rather as a shift that occurs on a domain-by-domain basis. Such changes occur at different periods during development, and depend on the particular domain of knowledge involved. Thus, the categorization of specific people as uncles, or specific animals as lions, proceeds from characteristic to defining features as the child’s theories of kinship and biology, respectively, develop: in the earliest stages, non-kin members who behave like ‘typical uncles’ will be classified as uncles, but not atypical members, such as a very young father’s brother. As the concept of uncle becomes progressively more integrated in a ‘kinship theory’, the ‘correct’ categorization, which is based on the defining feature of being a father’s or mother’s brother, comes to be made.1 Keil’s findings lend plausibility to Murphy & Medin’s claim that

1Actually, Keil’s picture is difficult to square with the fact that in most if not all cultures, kinship terms are
conceptual development should be interpreted in terms other than Vygotsky’s: ‘rather than a shift from similarity-based concepts to more theoretically-based concepts, perhaps all concepts are integrated with theories, but children’s theories change radically’ (1985: 311). In other words, they suggest that cognitive development involves less a change in the concepts or representations themselves than a change in the theories on which those concepts depend. The challenge then becomes to find out what such qualitative theory change in concept formation amounts to, and how it is triggered.

One aspect of theories in the broad sense that receives little attention in Murphy & Medin’s and Keil’s work is their social and normative character. Murphy & Medin briefly discuss cross-cultural differences in concepts, but assume that these are quantitative rather than qualitative in nature, and merely affect the richness and elaboration of the domains that are considered important in a particular culture (1985: 305). They also refer to Luria’s investigations (ibid.), but do not take up its suggestion that cross-culturally, theories may differ much more radically than merely with respect to salient features or basic levels. As seen in 1.1, illiterate agents actually tend to reject general explanatory categorizations of objects, and fail at categorization tasks that depend on theories in the narrow sense. Likewise, Keil only briefly notes, and summarily dismisses, the possibility of such cross-cultural differences.

Ad Hoc Concepts and Theories

A kind of theory-based and goal-determined concept that is of particular relevance to the theory of metaphor is what Barsalou (1983) has called ‘ad hoc categories’. Barsalou experimentally demonstrated that people may form groupings of objects that are usually not thought of as belonging together, and that may clash with existing categorizations, or as he calls it, ‘violate correlational structure’. As the need arises, however, such a concept may be formed in specific circumstances; the contextual goal may then overrule, or clash with, existing concepts. For example, children, dogs, stereo sets, and blankets do not form a natural concept, nor do they seem to hang together, but if one takes them as instances of the ad hoc concept

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1 The normative aspect of theories becomes unintentionally clear from Keil’s (1986) study on conceptual domains and the acquisition of metaphor. Keil argues that children’s ability to ‘correctly’ understand metaphors increases with age and degree of schooling, but, like the characteristic-to-definingshift, proceeds on a domain-by-domain basis, and depends on the richness of the child’s knowledge of the ‘juxtaposed’ domains. The setup of his tests clearly shows that what counts as ‘correct’ metaphor understanding is dictated by adult consensus. His experiment thus tests for children’s degree of socialization (their degree of internalizing existing ‘theories’ and norms) as much as for their individual cognitive capacities.

2 In the following, I will use the term ‘ad hoc concept’ rather than ‘ad hoc category’, to emphasize the fact that we are dealing with temporary constructs at the conceptual level, rather than at the level of objects or extensions.
things to take out of one's home in case of fire, this grouping makes sense, and the ad hoc concept becomes coherent (Barsalou 1983, cf. Murphy & Medin 1985: 291, 303). In other words, the coherence of a concept may be determined as much by the goal and the theory behind it as by 'objective' similarities or ontological or taxonomic distinctions. One might also argue that ad hoc concepts, and coherent concepts in general, typically involve external rather than internal properties: the particular goal makes the categorized items important to the agent.

Ad hoc concepts may clash with existing concepts, and they are obviously not as well-established in memory, but apart from that, they appear to function much like ordinary concepts: they display graded structure, with some category members being more typical than others, and they make sense to the agents who employ them. One conspicuous difference with well-established categories is that ad hoc concepts depend on a context for their identification. In the absence of a context, objects like chairs and sofas are much more likely to be recognized as members of the category furniture than children and stereo sets are as examples of things to take out of one's house in case of fire (Barsalou 1983: 223). For Murphy & Medin, the existence of ad hoc concepts, which are essentially goal-directed, shows the central role of theories in forming conceptual structure: it is the goal that enables agents to find out what the items listed have in common, and it is the measure of satisfying this goal, rather than a family resemblance between its members, that creates the category's graded structure (1985: 303). Thus, the coherence of well-established and ad hoc concepts alike primarily depends on goals and theories rather than on any similarity between their members.

In short, theories appear to be an important addition to a Vygotskyan approach to concept formation. They carry a greater promise of accounting for the coherence of concepts than a basic notion of similarity, even when constrained by perspectives. Much work needs to be done, however, to delineate a more elaborate and precise notion of 'theory': as it stands, it seems rather too broad, and perhaps is even circular, as theories themselves obviously seem to employ concepts. Murphy & Medin note the possible circularity of concepts as depending on theories (1985: 313). Against this objection, they argue that they do not attempt to reduce conceptual representations to theoretical ones, but merely want to call attention to the mutual interaction between the two. But this still does not explain how, on their approach, theories are in an important sense logically prior to concepts, by making coherent concepts possible in the first place. Further, they appear to assume that the notion of similarity they criticize involves internal, or 'objective' properties of the referents only. If similarity may also involve shared

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1Note that Murphy & Medin conflate the notions of theory and goal here: analytically, it seems better to distinguish the theory that motivates a concept from the goal that 'selects' the theory, and determines the typicality of the members. Incidentally, Barsalou does not explicitly introduce the notion of a concept-motivating theory himself, and sees graded structure as largely imposed by 'similarity comparison' of the category members (1983: 225).
external properties (say, Juliet and the sun sharing the property of being valuable to Romeo), however, the very distinction between similarity-based and theory-based views of categorization becomes blurred. Likewise, the question of qualitative developmental and cross-cultural differences between theories has hardly been addressed, and the social and normative aspects of theories have not been adequately accounted for. But the shift of emphasis from similarity to the goals, needs, and beliefs underlying categorization certainly seems worth pursuing.

4.2.3. Concepts and Metaphor

The task facing us now is, of course, to outline how these insights into concept formation and conceptual structure can yield an account of metaphor, and in particular how such a conceptual approach can match, and supplement, the semantic claims concerning the interpretation of novel and cross-categorial metaphor made in chapter 3 above. By now, we have all the essential ingredients for such an account at our disposal: Vygotsky and Bartsch emphasize the context-dependence of everyday concepts, and the findings of Murphy & Medin, Keil, and Barsalou stress the importance of theories (in the broad sense) in concept formation: theories not only seem more important for conceptual coherence than ‘objective’ similarities based on internal properties, but they also highlight the goal-directed character of categorizations, and allow for such goal-directed categories to ignore ontological differences among its members.

The basic idea of the approach I would like to propose is rather simple: the metaphorical application of a word leads the cognitive agent to construct an ad hoc concept, which applies to both its ‘literal’ and its ‘metaphorical’ referents in virtue of some contextually determined feature. The main characteristics of this account to some extent distinguish it from earlier conceptualist views. First, it involves ad hoc concepts rather than ‘regular’ concepts. Second, the contextually given perspective plays an essential role. Third, the concepts involved function as complexes rather than as scientific or theoretical concepts. Fourth, metaphorical transfers need not depend on similarities that are already present at the conceptual level, but may involve the attribution of a feature that is determined, or in a sense ‘created’, by a theory (in the broad sense). Finally, this account does not require that the agent perceives the source concept and the ad hoc concept as distinct: the perspective determines an ad hoc concept which applies equally well to the referents of both the source and the target concept. Let us see how these ideas fit together.

In comparison with existing conceptualist approaches, the present account is closest to Glucksberg & Keysar’s (1993) view of metaphor as a class-inclusion assertion, to which I will refer repeatedly. There are also some important differences with their approach, however, and I will discuss these in the course of the argument.
First, why should the metaphorical application of a term involve the formation of an ad hoc concept rather than a regular one? The reason should be obvious: a single metaphorical application of a word need not lead to the formation of a concept that is ‘well-established’, let alone to a reorganization of one’s entire conceptual system, as Goodman (1976: 73) and perhaps Indurkhya (1992: 281) suggest. For a metaphorically interpreted expression to become established as a concept in long-term memory, typically more is required than just a single metaphorical application in a particular context. Only a repeated metaphorical application will establish a new context type (cf. Bartsch 1990: 2). But the mere repetition of an application is not yet sufficient either: as said, ad hoc concepts violate correlational structure, and metaphorical applications likewise tend not to square well with earlier applications. In order to be integrated in, or at least reconciled with, existing theories, both the internal and the external structure of the ad hoc concept first have to be elaborated. Thus, in

(1) My job is a jail.

the source or vehicle concept jail applies to ‘a category of things that does not have a name of its own’, viz., the category of unpleasant or confining things or situations (Glucksberg & Keysar 1993: 409). Glucksberg & Keysar claim that the word jail usually denotes regular prisons, but in the context of (1) it serves as a ‘superordinate concept’ that includes unpleasant jobs. On their account, metaphors like (1) involve a ‘dual reference’: they refer simultaneously to the literal object and to the superordinate category (a set of objects). The notion of dual reference introduces unnecessary complications, however. Semantically, jail functions as a property expression, rather than a referring term, already in its ‘literal’ applications: it does not denote individual objects, but sets of objects. Conceptually, jail establishes different ‘similarity sets’ under different perspectives. Under one perspective, it may apply to all and only actual jails, but under another (say, that of atmosphere, or living conditions), it applies to all unpleasant and confining situations. This ad hoc concept may become established in memory when it is reconciled or integrated with what is already known about jobs and jails in other perspectives, and when the different aspects of jobs and jails as unpleasant situations are systematically connected with each other (cf. Murphy & Medin 1985: 299). There is thus no reason to assign metaphors a dual reference: in different perspectives, the concepts expressed apply to different ‘superordinate categories’ or properties.

Not all ad hoc concepts are the result of metaphorical application, of course. What distinguishes ‘metaphorical’ ad hoc concepts is that they are not labelled by a name or description like furniture or things to sell at a garage sale, but by the word that also indicates the source concept (jail in the example given). But even if the ad hoc concept is, or can, be
expressed by other linguistic means, these ‘literally’ and ‘metaphorically’ expressed concepts are not quite identical; I will return to this point below. Otherwise, a ‘metaphorical’ concept has the same structure as a ‘regular’ ad hoc concept: for example, it displays graded structure and prototype effects (cf. Glucksberg & Keysar 1993: 419).

Second, the perspective under which the ad hoc concept is formed is crucial in this account: it serves as a goal for, and a constraint on, the interpretation. As already noted, many authors, whether referentialists, descriptivists, or conceptualists, pay lip service to the ‘role of the context’ in the metaphorical application and interpretation of words, but they rarely attempt to incorporate this role in their accounts in a systematic way. Thus, Glucksberg & Keysar acknowledge that the properties selected in a metaphor depend on the topic of conversation (1993: 411-2), but this point hardly returns in their analysis. Obviously, however, even so simple a metaphor as (2)

(2) Some lawyers are sharks.

can lead to the formation of different ad hoc concepts in different contexts, for example, depending on whether it is preceded by (3) or by (4):

(3) I wonder why Joan took that impossible case to defend.
(4) J.’s defenders have helped him win his lawsuit, but they left him bankrupt.

The ad hoc concept expressed by shark in the context of (3) is something like individuals that grab hold of anything they can, but in the context of (4) it will rather be individuals that ravage their victims. In the present approach, the context plays a central role, both at the semantic level (as a thematic dimension) and at the conceptual level (as a goal or perspective). This role really is central: as Barsalou (1983: 223) has noted, in the absence of a contextually specified goal, cognitive agents will typically not be able to form any specific ad hoc concept, just as semantically, a metaphor often seems false or anomalous when taken out of its context. The perspective serves as a goal for the categorization, and as such, it strongly constrains the features that may be involved in the metaphorical application. Needless to say, the ad hoc categorization may very well clash with existing correlative structure determined by other theories. Thus, the ad hoc categorization of a lawyer as a member of the concept shark under the perspective of behavior towards victims clashes with the ‘scientific’, causal and taxonomic theory of the world, according to which lawyers and sharks belong to wholly different biological categories. But the perspective involved already indicates that this biological theory is not the one employed in the categorization. In other words, perspectives both trigger and
constrain the metaphorical interpretation of a term, and allow for an analysis of metaphor that appeals to ‘context selection’ rather than ‘feature cancellation’: contextual factors weigh more heavily than ‘default theories’ or decontextualized categorizations.

The third point emphasizes that metaphorical application involves complex concepts rather than scientific concepts. Complex concepts are crucially context-dependent in that they require a perspective, and are not typically explicated and integrated in a general, systematic theory in the narrow sense. The correct application of a complex concept depends more on the contextually determined perspective or goal than on abstract and decontextualized categorial boundaries. Consequently, the present account requires no ‘clash’ or ‘anomaly’ at either the semantic or the conceptual level as a warrant for metaphorical interpretation. If the speaker’s job possesses the feature(s) ascribed to it by the application of jail in the given perspective, this application is correct regardless of ‘categorial’ distinctions between jobs and jails. As noted, ad hoc concepts, and coherent concepts in general, ignore such ‘ontological’ distinctions among their members. In metaphorical application, the correctness in the contextually given perspective takes precedence over the possible incorrectness with respect to a ‘default theory’. Strict and decontextualized categorial boundaries only arise from scientific concepts and theories in the narrow sense, and these are typically employed in specific, ‘formal’ situations, such as schools, only. Complex concepts, which are backed by implicit and unsystematic theories in the broad sense, are attentive to contextual realities rather than to decontextualized ideals. In everyday situations, words can be applied to various different objects under various different perspectives, and this flexibility in the use of words has to be reflected systematically in the flexibility of concepts. The dependence on contextual factors also plays down the importance of abstract and decontextualized ‘conceptual domains’, which play a central role in earlier conceptualist approaches, such as Lakoff & Johnson and Indurkhya. Complex concepts are better equipped to capture the context-dependence that appeared to be a crucial feature of metaphorical interpretation at the semantic level. Nonetheless, this conceptual account does not quite match the semantic account, which involves theoretical or ‘scientific’ notions at least in the semantic metalanguage. I will return to this point in 4.3.

*Theories, Categorization, and Cross-Categorial Metaphor*

The fourth point stresses the role of theories in the perception, and possibly creation, of similarity. The features attributed to the (concept of) Achilles in *Achilles is a lion*, say, those

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1 An adequate analysis may not strictly require complex concepts, provided we have an account of the role of contexts and theories in scientific concepts. But even if such an account, which is lacking at present, can be given, it will probably overemphasize the importance of abstract categorizations and theories in the narrow sense.
of force and ferociousness, and a majestic or royal character, may be determined not so much by the actual, or internal, properties of lions as by the features they are endowed with in theories of various kinds. In themselves, lions are not necessarily stronger, more ferocious, or more violent than panthers, cheetahs, bears, or hippopotami; but they are often presented as such in folklore, fairy tales, and the like. This holds even more clearly for the attributes of royalty and majesty, which involve the specifically human institutions of kingship or nobility. Thus, the features associated with the source concept often need not be actual properties of its referent; rather, they are associated with it on the basis of various folk theories surrounding the concept.

The fact that folk theories, as expressed in stories and stereotypes, may attribute diverging or even contradictory features to lions suggests even more strongly that everyday concepts are not based on scientific theories in the narrow sense, which aim at coherence, consistency, and factual truth. Folk theories are not wholly systematic and coherent, for the simple reason that they were not created for theoretical but for practical purposes. Different theories may originate with different individuals or social groups, or even with the same individual or group in different situations, in order to satisfy different concrete social needs and goals. There may thus be a considerable tension between different theories, and it is this tension that accounts for the instability of complex concepts across perspectives, and for their flexibility in novel situations and applications. This is where something like a 'conflict theory' of language and concepts comes in.

The epistemological notion of a theory in the broad sense parallels the semantic notion of descriptive information, as both involve public and socially instilled information. As such, they have an intersubjective and even normative character: they express expectations about events in the world, and about conformity in speakers' behavior. The metaphorical attribution of features, then, relies less on individual cognitive conceptualizations than on socially constituted and reproduced (in short: institutionalized) theories. Once again, such theories need not be systematic or consistent; they merely have to be socially accepted or legitimized (or, in the case of ad hoc theories, acceptable). Often, they are tacitly taken for granted, although they may be contested or challenged at any time. Strictly speaking, the term 'theory' may even be a misnemer for such social knowledge, as it suggests intellectual reflection rather than everyday habit. A 'theory' in the broad sense may be instilled by social action as much as by linguistic communication; consequently, it need not even be linguistically expressed. Thus, the Bororo ritual forms the background 'theory' on the basis of which Bororo males can say with

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1Bourdieu (1990) in fact coined the term 'practical logic' for the mechanisms governing such concrete and unsystematic everyday intellectual activities; see 4.3. There are also parallels to Wittgenstein's notions of 'language game', 'form of life', and, in fact, 'practice', but I will refrain from exploring these.
justification that they are parrots; similarly, one's neighbour can actually 'be' Santa Claus in some Western European December rituals. It is such ritual and other practices that primarily determine the features associated with the source concept. In other words, theories in the broad sense are really practices.

Theories in the broad sense play an even more important role in 'similarity-creating' metaphors, which attribute essentially new features to the target concept, or establish 'cross-categorial' similarities. As ad hoc concepts in general, a metaphorically expressed concept may attribute new features to its members as much as it explicates already present ones: prior to the metaphor, and thus prior to the establishment of the ad hoc concept, the concepts of lawyer and job need not have the features attributed to them by the metaphorical application of shark and jail, respectively. Metaphors can thus add essentially new information to their target concepts. Moreover, the utterance of the novel metaphor may be preceded by an 'ad hoc theory': in the preceding discourse, specific features may have been introduced; a poem, for example, may establish a specific theory that differs significantly from current theories.

It should be clear that this is an epistemological rather than an ontological version of the similarity creation thesis: the concept of a lawyer may not yet contain the feature(s) expressed by shark under the new perspective of behavior towards victims. Semantically, however, the referents spoken about in a sense should already possess the property expressed in this way. Metaphors may add new information, but there should be something in virtue of which they are true. Now, if Some lawyers are sharks is true, it is true in virtue of the fact, as 'objective' as any, that some lawyers indeed have the property of ravaging their victims. Metaphorical transfers cannot on their own create such facts,- except in so far as social facts and institutions may be brought about by (performative) linguistic behavior. But even in these cases, it seems to be the underlying practice, rather than the metaphor itself, that creates the 'similarity' that makes the metaphor true.

Now many of the 'facts' of our world, especially those related to external properties, are indeed socially created: thus, an individual can have the (external) property of being a king only in virtue of a complex of social structures and institutions. Likewise, the external properties of objects like tools and crowns are not merely determined by their physical features, but also by their functions or roles in human and social behavior and practices.¹ In other words, much of our 'objective' world is socially constructed as much as physically or biologically given, and for this reason, the properties that objects have are imposed by our goals and theories (or practices) as much as by 'objective reality' (cf. Searle 1995: ch. 1). This point is of prime

¹Black (1979a: 36-40) likewise argues that the 'similarity-creation' thesis need not imply the creation of 'objective', or internal, properties, and that some properties may be created by man-made theories and institutions.
importance for the problem of ‘cross-categorial’ metaphors. As said, Barsalou argues that ad hoc concepts may serve some urgent need or goal that overrules ‘correlational structure’ and abstract ontological boundaries. But these needs and goals are not always quite as urgent as when one’s house is on fire, and one has to think of what to save. Often, goals and needs are social as much as biological: they may be directed not towards survival, but towards more restricted social purposes. Thus, the need to emphasize particular aspects of lawyers or jobs may lead to the formation of ad hoc concepts in which they are attributed specific features of the concepts expressed by shark and jail, respectively. Because of such social needs, which are established by a perspective, and because of the theories which are grounded in social practices, entirely new features may be attributed to the target concept. Lawyers and sharks, or Juliet and the sun, may have distinct internal properties, but they have the same external properties in relation to the speaker’s social attitudes and goals.

The reason why the semantic account of chapter 3 could not account for novel and cross-categorial metaphors, then, lies in the fact that it does not appeal explicitly to such general, and extrasemantic, goals and needs; it can only describe, or stipulate, the results of their workings. The grounding of goals and theories in social practice also explains why objects of distinct ontological status can be ascribed the same features by human conceptualization. In the same way, the ‘metaphorical’ use of kinship terms like uncle or brother is guided by the speaker’s affections and attitudes at least as much as by the ‘actual’ properties of the individuals thus described. It is this grounding of theories in social and biological needs, attitudes and affections that may lead agents to group ontologically different objects under the same concepts. The ‘scientific’ theory, which emphasizes that these objects belong to different categories, may not be relevant to such specific needs, and accordingly be ignored by the agent.

Consequently, on the epistemological level, the problem of cross-categorial similarity simply evaporates: one’s social goals and socially reproduced folk theories may impose a similarity on the objects thus grouped together. An exclusive attention to the fact that lawyers and sharks, or Juliet and the sun, belong to different ontological categories, and thus cannot have quite the same (internal) properties, betrays an overemphasis of one particular social goal, viz., that of a decontextualized causal and taxonomic description of the world, and one kind of theory, viz., a ‘scientific’ one, at the expense of others that may be more important in everyday situations. Objects can be classified, and cross-classified, in various different ways; but all such categorizations depend on some specific goal. To take the ‘scientific’ goal as overriding all others in importance is to overintellectualize everyday linguistic and conceptual behavior, and thus an instance of what Vico calls ‘the conceit of scholars’.

This is not to say, however, that all categorizations are merely determined by social needs and socially established theories. As Indurkhya (1992: 104-5) notes, the “world in itself” is not...
determined by social practices alone, and has traits that cannot arbitrarily be ascribed or denied by our theories and goals. One cannot arbitrarily change, for example, the facts of gravity merely by changing one’s theories and practices. But given the constraints imposed by the ‘world an sich’, human beings can, and in fact must, select the properties that are important to them from among the countless properties that things have. It may be objected, as has been done by Bartsch (1990: 22), that such an approach accounts only for metaphorical applications at the second level of concept formation; but here, I have been using the term ‘theory’ in the broader, informal sense. Theories in this sense play a role from early on in conceptual development, and need not be explicated in the form of general and systematically interrelated sentences. They may be introduced by ritual, or by the text of a poem preceding a specific novel metaphor; in short, they may consist of any system of knowledge or experience relative to some human or social goal.

Finally, we have to address the question of to what extent the agent perceives the different concepts involved in metaphorical interpretation as distinct from each other. On existing conceptualist approaches, metaphorical transfer requires that the source and target domains be kept distinct practically by definition: if, for example, the domain of lawyer is not seen as a distinct domain to be ‘reorganized in terms of the source domain’ of shark, but merely as a subclass of shark under some perspective P, no transfer across domains takes place, and one cannot really speak of a metaphor at all. But it already appeared above that the notion of ‘conceptual domain’ presupposes a view of concepts as abstract, well-delineated and discrete, in short, as ‘scientific’.1 But the emphasis on contextual factors and on the role of complex concepts undermines this picture of concepts as neatly discrete entities: if concepts are context-dependent and instable to begin with, then the importance of categorial boundaries and conceptual domains diminishes. Let us see what happens on the present account.

As said, metaphors like Juliet is the sun involve three kinds of concepts: the source concept expressed by the ‘literal’ applications of the sun, the target concept expressed by Juliet, and the ad hoc concept of the sun under perspective P, which is determined by a contextual goal. All of these concepts are backed by theories; because they function as complex concepts, however, the source and target domains need hardly be seen as two strictly disjunct domains. The source and target concepts also have a different status in the metaphorical application: that is, the concepts of Juliet and the sun are not simply compared. Rather, Juliet is categorized as a member of the ad hoc concept the sun under perspective P.2 In this sense, one must distinguish

1In this respect, the status of concepts as scientific is independent from the question of whether they are defined by necessary and sufficient conditions, a view which in fact is attacked by many conceptualists.
2As Glucksberg & Keysar (1993: 415-6) and others before them have noted, this categorial attribution view accounts for the asymmetry of metaphor.
the ad hoc concept from the target concept or ‘metaphor topic’ expressed by Juliet. But the sun under perspective $P$ is not simply an entirely new concept; rather, it is a novel application of the complex concept sun under some new perspective $P$. Likewise, the application of sun to Juliet under perspective $P$ need not lead to an entire reorganization of the concept expressed by Juliet, but rather involves the attribution of a (possibly new) feature in a new perspective. In other words, even in ‘similarity-creating’ metaphors, the target concept is not necessarily treated as if encountered for the first time and not yet conceptualized; rather, a new feature in a new perspective is added to it.\(^1\) This addition may, but need not, affect the features of Juliet in other perspectives. In other words, the target concept is typically enriched rather than destroyed by metaphor. It is ‘subordinate’ to the source concept (and the ad hoc concept made out of it) in being taken as a member of a superordinate category, rather than as an equal; but it need not be subordinate in the sense of being (treated as if) less conceptualized.

Because the ad hoc concept of the sun under perspective $P$ functions not as a wholly distinct concept, but merely as a new application of the complex concept expressed by the sun, one cannot say that the source domain remains unaffected even by a single metaphorical application, as, e.g., Indurkhya’s account requires. Consequently, his strict distinction between accommodation and projection disappears: both the source and the target concept undergo a (possibly temporary) change under metaphorical application. The metaphorical application of the sun involves applying the complex concept to a new object and under a new perspective. If this use is repeated, and if the ad hoc concept is integrated in existing theories, the new application becomes established as a ‘subconcept’ of sun, which is thus turned into a polysemic complex (if it did not already function as one). The repeated use and theoretical integration of an ad hoc concept may thus change the meaning of, and the concept expressed by, the word sun. In this sense, the ‘interaction’ in metaphor may affect the source concept.\(^2\)

In short, in the ad hoc concept the sun under perspective $P$, both Juliet and the sun are taken as equally legitimate category members, though not necessarily as equally prototypical ones. In this sense, they are not assumed or perceived as belonging to wholly different conceptual domains. Likewise, the ad hoc concept is not perceived as wholly distinct from the concept ‘literally’ expressed by the sun, but rather as a new continuation of a complex that can already be applied in various different perspectives. Finally, the source and target concepts are perceived as distinct in so far as the target is taken as an element, rather than an equal, of the

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\(^1\)In novel metaphor, information is thus added in a new dimension, in which no ‘conventional description’, as Indurkhya (1992: 279) calls it, exists yet.

\(^2\)Cf. Glucksberg & Keysar, who argue that not only the category’s extension but also its intension changes by the addition of a new member (Juliet) to the category sun (1993: 414). On the present account, the concept sun need not undergo a change on the basis of a single metaphorical application. Also, it is not the category or concept, but rather the word, that may change in intension and extension.
source. In other words, the present account does not require a strict distinction between conceptual domains as essential to ‘metaphorical transfer’, but merely a distinction between a concept (or category) and its elements. What *seems* to distinguish metaphorical application from the ‘literal’ expansion of a concept to new objects is merely the presence of one among many theories, which suggests that Juliet and the sun, or sharks and lawyers, ‘really’ belong to different ontological categories; but in the actual interpretation of metaphor, and in many other cases of everyday communication, this theory plays little or no role. In other words, despite the folk-theoretic belief in a clear difference between the literal and the metaphorical, in the practice of everyday communication, there is a continuum rather than a cleavage between them.

Such is, in brief, what a Vygotskyan account of metaphor at the conceptual level could look like. It may be useful to conclude with a few disclaimers. First, the present, practice-based account does not fall back onto a referentialist view of the kind that has been criticized in 2.1 above. It is not committed to the assumption that the referents of the terms involved actually exist, nor to the assumption that the referent of the source concept actually has the properties that are ascribed to the referent of the target concept; rather, the relevant features are determined by the theories (in the broad sense) that underlie our categorizations. Further, similarity, in particular of the ‘cross-category’ kind, has been reduced to the goals and needs (as captured in perspectives) of the social agents who do the categorizing. This reduction to the agent’s goals and needs might suggest that the present account is ultimately a pragmatic one; but I am not sure about this. The question whether *social* action, which is what I have been talking about here, can be wholly reduced to *individual* intentions is very much an open one, and in any case of a much more general nature. Finally, the conceptualist account just outlined and the semantic account of chapter 3 above do not mutually exclude each other. Rather, the two are complementary: they describe the same interpretative process in epistemological and semantic terms, respectively. The conceptual account goes beyond the semantic treatment, however, in that it actually sets out to *explain* the basis of metaphorical categorizations.

No doubt, many of the details of the present account have to be further elaborated. In particular, the status and role of theories in the broad sense, the role of specific sociocultural factors, and the theory-based creation of similarity, have been outlined rather than described in detail. Further examination of a broader range of concrete cases could supply more detail to the picture just sketched. But I hope that it suggests a treatment of metaphor that is less dependent on idealized and decontextualized abstractions, and more faithful to the vagary, context-dependence, and lack of systematicity of everyday linguistic and social practices.
4.3 Beyond Literal Meaning

The conceptual account outlined in the preceding section and the semantic account outlined in Chapter 3 have drastic consequences both for the status of concepts in general and for the notion of 'literal meaning' in semantic, and pragmatic, theory. On the present view, everyday concepts are not fixed representations that stop undergoing changes once the process of concept formation has been completed (presumably, during late adolescence or early adulthood). Rather, they are evolving structures which are always indeterminate, instable, and context-dependent to some extent, and which can always be expanded or modified on the basis of new data. The successful application of a concept to new objects or in new perspectives will also affect the concept itself.

Such a view of concept formation may seem overly radical in comparison with the ideas of Indurkhya and Gibbs, but in fact it tallies rather well with recent empirical studies that treat concepts as dynamic, context-dependent structures (Barsalou & Medin 1986, Barsalou 1987), or as 'emergent products of multiple knowledge sources in specific task contexts' (Jones & Smith 1993: 136), rather than as fixed representations. Two differences of emphasis between the above account and such empirical studies should be noted, however. First, the present argument is epistemological rather than psychological in nature: it is based on general considerations regarding semantics and conceptual development as much as on empirical findings. As such, it may gain in plausibility in the light of empirical psychological research, but it primarily concerns the question of how such empirical findings should be interpreted. Second, the present account sees concepts and categorization primarily in terms of practices, and consequently stresses the social and normative dimensions of concept formation (and indeed of semantics), i.e., the processes of socialization that play an essential role in concept formation, and the social pressures towards conformity in linguistic behavior. As seen, empirical studies in psychology and cognitive science largely focus on individual representations, and tend to downplay or ignore the role of sociocultural factors and the possibility of qualitative cross-cultural or developmental differences in conceptualization.1 The argument presented above suggests that such factors may indeed lead to qualitative differences, and thus have to be accounted for in cognitive-psychological research. This is not to say, of

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1 Fodor (1972) explicitly rejects this possibility. Lakoff (1987: ch. 17) is more ambivalent: he emphasizes cultural variability, but this emphasis disappears in his actual account of concept formation. Likewise, Indurkhya (1992, p.c.) sees the structure of the concept networks and mappings involved in metaphorical interpretation as 'universal of a sort', though these mappings may generate different concepts in different languages or cultures. Keil (1986, 1989) rejects the idea of variability on the basis of a single field study, wholly ignoring the findings of Luria (1976) and Scribner & Cole (1981).
course, that research which abstracts away from them is useless, but merely that it may fruitfully be elaborated in a new light.

The precise relation between the conceptual and semantic accounts given above leaves room for discussion. In itself, a semantic theory is, or should be, neutral with respect to ontological and epistemological questions. If we want to reconcile it with an epistemological theory of concept formation and language understanding, however, we have to interpret its basic theoretical notions as being of a specific kind, and thus to give up its neutrality. Given the above discussion, the most natural interpretation of model-theoretic semantics is to treat the semantic objects that serve as meanings (and which can be formally represented as functions from contexts to possible worlds to extensions) as the contents of linguistic norms. Semantics, while itself descriptive in character, would then describe the contents of a system of essentially normative rules and principles (cf. Bartsch 1984, 1987c). It should be noted, however, that the semantic account given above is not strictly dependent on this interpretation. Still, some friction between the above semantic and conceptual accounts remains. Specifically, the semantic treatment of metaphor in terms of abstract properties and context-dependence cannot distinguish between complex and scientific concepts. If anything, it has more affinities with the latter, in view of its pursuit of formal rigor and overall consistency; it does not explicitly incorporate the normative aspect of semantic objects either. It thus abstracts away from a number of notions that are epistemologically central. The semantic account of chapter 3 should therefore be seen as a model or rational reconstruction rather than as a psychologically realistic description.

A Parallel? Bourdieu's Logic of Practice

The present account implies an entire 'sociology of metaphor', and indeed of literal language, which largely remains to be written. Much of the preceding discussion appealed to essentially social factors, and although these factors have not been addressed as fully as I would have liked, a view of concepts in terms of practices might fruitfully be developed in a direction that is more explicitly informed by the social sciences. Such an analysis of metaphor could focus on various aspects of the 'social organization of meaning', notably the role of stereotypical information in the process of interpretation, and the social pressures towards both conformity and divergence in linguistic behavior. In fact, the approach outlined above seems germane to a number of recent ideas in the social sciences, in particular those of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. An account of metaphor in terms of context-dependent interpretation at the semantic level, paired with an account of ad hoc concepts and complex thinking at the conceptual level, shows a number of interesting parallels with what Bourdieu (1990: 1.3, 1.5)
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has called the ‘logic of practice’, and in particular with his notion of *habitus*. Some of these parallels originate in Wittgenstein’s work on language as a form of social practice, and in the anthropological studies of literacy discussed in 1.1 above. Moreover, both Bourdieu’s work and the above analysis point in the direction of a conflict view of language and concepts.¹

Bourdieu holds that many of the everyday interactions observed by sociologists and anthropologists are guided by a ‘practical logic’, which is characterized by the absence of theoretical reflection, a concrete and situational focus of attention, and little preoccupation with logical coherence. The social scientist who tries to systematize into a coherent whole this concrete situation-bound behavior, which is often directed towards unconscious goals, may think she gives the ‘real meaning’ of such social and, as such, symbolic actions. In fact, however, these systematizations transform the practical reasoning involved in everyday behavior into a decontextualized theoretical knowledge of a radically different character: ‘the logic of practice can only be grasped through constructs which destroy it as such’ (1990: 11). Bourdieu here extends Goody’s point concerning theorizing about ‘primitive classification’ (p. 19 above) to theorizing about social action in general.

For example, the categorizations expressed by kinship terms are nowhere near as systematic and orderly as some social-science researchers would have us believe. Kinship categorizations may be described as cognitive operations, but their functions and goals are not just cognitive: kinship relations are also relations of interest, and as such they may be presented as if they are based on genealogy, and serve to mask and justify other, e.g., economic, relations and interests (1990: 16). For various reasons, kinship terms may be applied to people who are not really (dare I say ‘literally’?) kin members, and denied to those who are. The outside observer who focuses on the cognitive uses of kinship vocabulary will represent it as a closed, coherent system that is defined once and for all, and picture it in a spatial, literacy-based diagram, such as a family tree. In doing so, however, she will ignore the different uses that may be made of kinship in different situations: ‘the logical relations of kinship [...] exist in practice only through and for the official and unofficial uses made of them by agents [to the extent that] they actually and potentially fulfill useful functions, satisfying vital material and symbolic interests’ (1990: 34-5). In other words, writing down, systematizing, and analyzing a practice with its own concrete goals turns it into a neutral, abstract *theory*, and thus loses sight of its essential practical functions.

Bourdieu’s argument goes beyond romantic claims to the extent that ‘to analyze a poem is to destroy it’, or that one cannot analyze ‘live’, ‘changing’ language with fixed and precise technical means. Rather, he aims at problematizing or, as he calls it, ‘objectifying’ the relation

¹ Cf. also Bourdieu (1991), which does not, however, specifically address the question of metaphor.
between observer and object. This relation is itself a social institution as much as the institutions that the social scientist is studying, and for that reason, it cannot be assumed to be neutral or objective, nor simply to yield the ‘real’ meaning of social behavior such as myths or rituals, which at first sight may seem incoherent or meaningless. In the social sciences, he argues, knowledge cannot progress without progress in the (social) conditions of knowledge.

A central concept in the logic of practice is what Bourdieu calls habitus, defined as a collection of ‘principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcome without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them’ (1990: 53). The habitus, in other words, is what generates concrete social practices. It is claimed to be a dispositional concept, as it consists of ‘systems of durable, transposable dispositions’ (ibid.; cf. 290 n.1). It acts as an intermediary between objective structure and individual subject, as it is located between individual agency and social coercion. It is derived from objective conditions, but does not coincide with them; it is embodied, internalized history which is forgotten as history. It shows the autonomy of practice with respect to objective structures, as it is neither wholly free nor wholly determined, and related towards immediate, context-bound aims, rather than towards abstract, decontextualized intellectual goals such as logical consistency. Finally, the individual’s early experiences have a disproportionate weight in establishing a habitus, which explains its tendency to resist change.¹

Bourdieu on Metaphor

Of particular interest in this context are Bourdieu’s brief, and somewhat cryptic, remarks on metaphor. He characterizes metaphor as a transfer of schemes or areas of practice, such as food, labor, and the effects of seasonal changes (1990: 250ff.). Consequently, he sees metaphor as involving practical rather than strictly cognitive operations: ‘one has to move from ergon to energeia, [...] from objects or actions to the principles of their production, or more precisely, from the fait accompli and dead letter of already effected analogy and metaphor [...] to a practice understood as a transfer of schemes that the habitus performs on the basis of acquired equivalences [...] enabling the agent to master all problems of a similar form that may arise in new situations, by a kind of practical generalization’ (1990: 94). Thus, even though metaphor here involves a scheme transfer much like conceptualists would argue, it is less driven by

¹ Levinson (2000: xiii, 386) has suggested that the concept of the habitus may converge with his own notion of a ‘preferred interpretation’ as elaborated in his theory of generalized conversational implicature, but Bourdieu’s work seems to call for a rather more radical rethinking of traditional semantic notions like ‘rule’ or ‘convention’, and of pragmatic concepts, like implicature, that are usually cast in terms of individual intentions.
intellectual operations than by everyday practices. For Bourdieu, if I understand him correctly, metaphor (as well as myth) is grounded less in a ‘mythic logos’ than in a ‘ritual praxis’.

It should be clear that Bourdieu’s work displays some interesting convergences with the account outlined above: first, it emphasizes social factors over presumably biologically based and universal cognitive capacities. It carries no commitment to ‘universal mental structures’ as explanatory notions, such as pursued by Lévi-Strauss in anthropology, and by Chomsky and Lakoff & Johnson in linguistics. Rather, it focuses on the ‘socially constituted system of inseparably cognitive and evaluative structures that organizes perception of the world and action in accordance with the objective structures of a given state of the social world’ (1990: 94). Practical logic shows some resemblances to the notion of ‘embodied imagination’ in cognitive semantics, which derives our understanding of abstract conceptual domains from our concrete bodily experiences (cf. 2.4 above). Bourdieu, however, places much more emphasis on the symbolic social manipulation of bodily experience than on presumably universal cognitive operations: if there are any ‘universals’ of practical logic, these would be social rather than biological in kind (cf. 1990: 77). Second, Bourdieu does not give any logical priority to decontextualized abstract categories and consistence; practical logic is primarily concerned with situational appropriateness, and essentially linked to orality (1990: 11). This likewise seems in line with many of the remarks made in sections 1.1 and 4.2 above. Third, his notion of habitus might yield an interesting way of further developing what I have been calling ‘theories in the broad sense’: it involves sets of principles which aim at fulfilling concrete social needs, but are not necessarily consciously or explicitly represented. The habitus generates routine practice rather than theoretical reflection. As such, it is not wholly determined by ‘objective’ abstract rules or structures, nor by individual intentions. The workings of the habitus may also go part of the way in explaining the pervasiveness of complex concepts and the role of contextually determined perspectives in everyday communicative practice.1

With respect to metaphorical interpretation, however, Bourdieu’s picture looks rather like those of the conceptualists criticized above, as it pictures metaphor as involving a transfer between schemes.2 Moreover, adherents of Bourdieu’s views would probably argue that the semantic approach outlined above essentially remains within an ‘objectivist’ framework: it states the semantic processes involved in terms of systematic context-dependence, and aims at a logically consistent and fully systematized description of properties ordered by thematic

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1Cf. Bourdieu’s remark that ‘ritual practice performs an uncertain abstraction which brings the same symbol into different relationships by apprehending it through different aspects, or brings different aspects of the same referent into the same relationship of opposition’ (1990: 87).

2 Actually, Bourdieu’s notion of a scheme is already an objectifying construction itself: it models in theoretical, literacy-based terms a domain of actions that need not involve conscious mental operations, let alone linguistically expressed notions.
dimensions, abstracting from their concrete social goals. In essence, the semantic account thus seems to remain within what Bourdieu calls a framework of ‘rules and exceptions’. Such an approach seems comparable to the method of ‘situational analysis’ in anthropology, as found in the work of Leach (1962) and Van Velsen (1964), which takes structural systems such as those of kinship not as fully determining social behavior, but as leaving room for individual variation and manipulation of the rules. Bourdieu criticizes such approaches for merely absorbing variations within the structures, and thus avoiding a radical questioning of the objectivist mode of thought (1990: 53). The conceptual approach outlined in 4.2 above, which tries to take factors like literacy and social practices into account, might be better able to meet such criticisms than the semantic approach of the preceding chapter.

Most important of all, then, Bourdieu’s notion of habitus involves a more radical reorientation towards the notion of language as a system of rules than has been taken here. I have largely left unanswered the question of whether a direct contextual interpretation account of metaphor is more than a model, or just a rational reconstruction; it merely aspires to give an adequate description of linguistic facts as far as it goes. But if one takes Bourdieu’s arguments seriously, it may well become necessary to question the very assumptions of explicitness, systematicity, and logical consistence in the object language that underlie formal linguistic theory. Nevertheless, Bourdieu himself remarks that objectification is a necessary first stage of analysis, and it is presupposed by a more radical criticism: ‘if it is to be more than the projection of personal feelings, social science necessarily presupposes the stage of objectification’ (1990: 11). If this is so, and if Bourdieu’s suggestions are at all tenable, our efforts towards modeling the semantic and conceptual structure of metaphorical interpretation in abstract theoretical terms will not have been in vain.

The Folk Theory of Literal Meaning Revisited

Despite their possible differences regarding social practices, the semantic and conceptual accounts presented above agree on a central, and perhaps rather counterintuitive point. Both the semantic analysis of metaphorical interpretation as involving a specific kind of context-dependence and the conceptual analysis of complex concepts of 4.2 (backed by the discussion of metaphor and literacy of 1.1) reduce the importance of ‘literal meaning’ in metaphorical interpretation. On the epistemological level, a strict distinction between metaphorical and literal language can only be made on the basis of decontextualized category distinctions that are taken to overrule all other considerations, such as contextual factors or the goals of different categorizations. If such abstract categorizations are perceived as irrelevant, as seemed to be the case with the illiterate Uzbek peasants who refused to categorize hammers, hatchets, and saws
as 'tools', it makes little sense to rate their linguistic behavior as either literal or metaphorical on the basis of such theoretical notions as categorial mistakes or transgressions. For literates, the picture is essentially the same: metaphorical interpretation involves complex concepts rather than scientific ones, and contextual appropriateness rather than decontextualized anomaly. Talk of cross-categorial mappings or transfers may serve as a model of metaphorical interpretation, but it does not necessarily capture the actual cognitive processes involved.

Likewise, on the conceptual level, there is nothing that strictly separates the formation of 'metaphorical' ad hoc concepts from 'regular' or 'literal' ones, like things to sell at a garage sale. Both kinds may clash with existing theories and categorizations, and both may gradually become theoretically integrated and established in memory. The only difference is that metaphorical ad hoc concepts may not have a 'literal' name or description of their own, but are expressed by the word indicating the source concept; but this also happens when a complex is applied 'literally' to a new object or under a new perspective. But even at a semantic level, it appeared difficult if not impossible to make a strict distinction between literal and metaphorical language: one of the main findings of chapters 2 and 3 above was that there are no criteria or processes that are specific to either the recognition or the interpretation of metaphor. In short, no strict distinction between literal and metaphorical language can be made at either the empirical level of linguistic behavior, or at the theoretical level of semantics or concepts.

These claims, of course, are totally at odds, not only with much linguistic and other theorizing on the subject, but also with our intuition that metaphors somehow are essentially distinct from literal language. But these theories, and these intuitions, proceed from the mistaken assumption that there is such a thing as 'literal meaning' that can be clearly delineated and does fruitful theoretical and practical service to begin with. People do seem to have the folk belief that all words have a 'literal' or 'proper' meaning, which is typically seen as a unique and stable meaning that is fixed once and for all in something like an original naming ceremony. The archetypal expression of this belief is perhaps the biblical story of Genesis 2: 19-20, where Adam gives all animals their names when he first encounters them. Such folk beliefs may serve as useful guiding assumptions, and thus help language users in dealing with the world around them, but they are, in fact, false. If one looks at actual linguistic behavior instead of folk beliefs, it appears that practically all everyday words are used in various different shades of meaning; they may be applied to different (categories of) objects and under different perspectives. There is no serious reason to take this flexibility of language as a shortcoming; on the contrary, the looseness, context-dependence and polysemy of everyday language precisely allows us to describe countless new situations and objects with the aid of a limited vocabulary. If our linguistic apparatus did not leave us this leeway, it would be difficult to deal with new
objects or situations without the frequent introduction of new names or cumbersome
descriptions. Everyday language has the virtue of flexibility rather than the vice of imprecision.

Consequently, even if the biblical myth would correctly describe the actual historical origins
of language (which may be doubted), this Edenic state cannot have lasted for a long time. Even
if words are initially endowed with well-defined literal meanings (which, in any case, would re-
quire the possession of literacy, scientific concepts and theories in the narrow sense), the abun-
dance of new situations and perspectives will quickly put an end to this neat and tidy state of
affairs. If the arguments of 1.1, 3.1, and 4.2 above hold, context-dependent variability of lan-
guage is the rule rather than the exception. At the conceptual level, this variability is reflected
by the precedence of complexes over scientific concepts. The discussion of 1.1 suggested that
the rise of literacy and formal education are crucial prerequisites for the development of decon-
textualized, stable meanings and decontextualized concepts. ‘Literal meanings’ depend on the
stabilization and codification of linguistic norms; these are achieved with the aid of literacy,
education, standardization of language and lexicography. Literal meanings, then, are not the
start of the life of a language, but rather the end product of a long social and historical process.

Even after codification and stabilization, however, languages remain inherently instable, not
only because of the leeway in application that most words leave open, and because of the
variations in social use (such as style, register, and sociolect) of linguistic items, but also
because even codified and stabilized norms of communication are never wholly consistent
among themselves. Stabilized and unified rules are idealized norms for linguistic behavior, but
they never fully determine it. As any lexicographer knows, it is impossible to fix the
meaning(s) of a word once and for all. But the methodological emphasis on the synchronic
analysis of a language system as given delegates such obvious phenomena to secondary status.

Although the folk theory of literal meaning may go as far back as Plato’s *Cratylus*, it has
been turned into a methodological assumption in twentieth-century linguistics. Its origins as a
guideline in theoretical research seem twofold. First, with the shift in attention from diachronic
to synchronic linguistics, and the concomitant abstracting away from social and dialectal
variations, languages came to be modelled as essentially homogeneous and stable structures.
Saussure was the first to make this abstraction, witness his notion of *langue*; moreover, his
characterization of *langue* as a ‘social fact’ (1916: 25-33) unmistakably echoes Durkheim’s
consensus theory of society. Chomsky (1965) took it one step further, by treating the
individual speaker’s competence (i.e., knowledge of the rules of a particular language) as just
one realization of a set of universal and innate mental structures. Both these notions appear to
take the codified, systematized, and literate varieties of national languages as their objects of
inquiry. Second, the assumption of literal meaning in linguistic theorizing may be traced to the
historical roots of formal semantics in logic and mathematics, where expressions are simply
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Postulated to have one single, clear-cut meaning. Consequently, work in formal semantics has largely ignored phenomena like polysemy and metaphor. The assumption of literal meanings, then, seems to be an integral part of a consensus view of language.

What is Literal Meaning?

Whatever its origins, the notion of literal meaning is often taken for granted rather than explicitly argued for. It is assumed rather than shown to be clear and unproblematic. Few authors will explicitly commit themselves to the oversimplified view of Davidson that ‘literal meanings 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’ (1979: 31). Even Searle, however, who is one of the few authors to actually discuss the notion of literal meaning, and who is aware of its context-dependence, runs into serious problems when he tries to define it. As seen in 2.2 above, Searle argues that the literal meaning or intentional content of words like cut and open determines a set of truth or satisfaction conditions only given a specific background, which is itself nonrepresentational and nonintentional (1992: 178-9). This distinction between intentional content and satisfaction conditions leads him to distinguish between literal and ‘genuinely metaphorical’, though conventionalized, occurrences of a word (such as cut the grass or cut the cake, and cut budgets or cut classes, respectively), a rather counterintuitive move that does not even fit his own definition of metaphor as part of speaker’s meaning, which is never conventional.

But Searle’s very quest for a common aspect in the different applications of words like cut seems misguided. The various occurrences of cut need not have any one literal meaning or intentional content in common: cut is a polysemic complex, with at most a family resemblance between its different applications. Even if all these occurrences would have a common element, this would be too general and unspecified to function as the literal meaning. In fact, Searle’s account leaves room for interpreting cut the grass against a background of cake-cutting situations, i.e., as involving cake cutting rather than grass cutting. If one takes the context-dependence of word meanings seriously, however, it becomes superfluous to delegate such aspects of the satisfaction situation to the background: the satisfaction situation itself already requires that the cutting involved in cut the grass is grass-cutting rather than cake-cutting (cf. Bartsch 1996). In other words, an account of interpretation as outlined in chapter 3 above dispenses with the need for a single ‘literal meaning’ as shared by all occurrences of expressions like cut.

This account not only incorporates Searle’s background aspects into the satisfaction situations, but also dispenses with the need to view meanings as representations, a view that appeared subject to Wittgenstein’s criticism of representations as self-interpreting images
(4.1). A representation or mental symbol cannot itself be a meaning, but has to have a meaning through a causal association with elements of the background, which in turn are causally related to satisfaction situations. But then, intentional content as representation becomes superfluous as capturing the meaning of a word: the satisfaction conditions directly determine the different contextual meanings of the word, without requiring any one meaning or intentional content common to all these occurrences. They also warrant that cut in cut the grass is not taken as the cutting of cake: there simply is no satisfaction situation for such a kind of cutting. Finally, as satisfaction situations are primarily public criteria for the correct application of linguistic expressions, they need not be represented explicitly in individual minds (Bartsch 1996: 5-7).

The emphasis on satisfaction situations as public criteria, and on the social factors determining concept formation and language acquisition, also downplays the idea that individual mental representations are the ultimate explanation of language use. This need not imply a wholesale rejection of the concepts-as-representations view, but rather a shift of emphasis in favor of the social aspects and practical abilities involved in concepts and categorization. Possessing a concept consists in being able to apply it rather than in having a mental representation; knowing the meaning of a word is a knowing-how rather than a knowing-that.

The notion of literal meaning, then, expresses an ideal of academic discourse rather than the reality of everyday communication. Word meanings may be relatively stabilized by oft-repeated usages, but this semblance of a literal meaning should not be confused with literal meaning as a precise and decontextualized notion. Word meanings are context-dependent, imprecise, and variable; there is no theoretical notion that can usefully serve as a counterpart to our folk concept of literal meaning. Not even the formal notion of character, which does aim at relating the different senses of expressions to different contexts, captures it: for literal meaning is assumed to occur at the level of content, whereas character precisely abstracts away from specific contents. As said, the different applications of a word in different contexts need not have any one aspect of meaning in common, nor does any one application in a specific dimension have to be logically prior to, or more important than, others. The concept of literal meaning may serve as a regulatory ideal for education and lexicography, but it has no use in either everyday linguistic behavior or in semantic or conceptual theorizing. Literal meaning, in other words, is a myth: as convenient as it may be, it is, in the final analysis, a fiction.
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