



hopefully, my arguments are dancing in the petri dish with a deadly strain of a linguistic virus or, on the very importance of the metaphoric as semantic to communication, understanding, and the philosophy of language: reviving metaphorical meaning through analysis of inadequacies in pragmatic theories and sketching a consequent account of understanding using intentionality and hermeneutics

Mark Andrew Matienzo

Advised by Professor Garrett Thomson

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## Table of Contents

Table of Contents .....	2
Acknowledgments .....	4
Introduction.....	5
Chapter 1: Intention and convention: Grice, Lewis, et al. on meaning .....	8
§1 An introduction to the Gricean program .....	8
§2 Natural versus non-natural: kinds of meaning.....	9
§3 Gricean conditions for meaning and the ‘Gricean mechanism’ .....	10
§4 The Gricean approach as a psychological account of meaning and its sufficiency .	11
§5 ‘Timeless’ meaning and the introduction of convention of sentence meaning.....	12
§6 Blackburn’s treatment of the Gricean mechanism: a brief aside .....	14
§7 The Lewisian definition of convention.....	15
§8 Fitting convention with the Gricean analysis of meaning .....	16
§9 Blackburn’s account of convention and the role of force.....	17
§11 Davidson and the problems of reference and structure.....	21
§12 Concluding remarks and criticisms .....	22
Chapter 2: The inapplicability of Searle’s conception of rules .....	24
§13 An overview of Searle’s view of language .....	24
§14 The distinction between constitutive and regulative rules.....	24
§15 Language and constitutive rules .....	25
§16 Objections regarding the application and nature of rules .....	27
§17 Quine’s distinction between rule-fitting and rule-guided behavior .....	29
§18 Conclusion: a simple criticism based on the dilemma of this thesis.....	30
Chapter 3: The case against metaphorical meaning: Davidson and Searle.....	31
§19 Metaphor is meaningless, but important: an introduction.....	31
§20 Davidson’s rejection of metaphorical meaning .....	32
§21 Positive aspects of Davidson’s theory .....	34
§22 An overview of the deficiencies of Davidson’s analysis.....	36
§23 Against the nonparaphrasability of metaphor.....	37
§24 Against the likeness of metaphor and simile .....	40
§25 Problems with the Davidsonian view of ‘dead metaphor’ .....	41
§26 The context-dependence of metaphorical and literal language .....	42
§27 An overview of the rejection of the positive Davidsonian analysis.....	45

§28 The problem of metaphorical lies .....	47
§29 The independence of intention in metaphorical understanding.....	47
§30 Insufficiencies of Davidson’s analysis .....	49
§31 Searle and metaphor as utterer’s meaning.....	50
§32 Problems with Searle’s approach to metaphor .....	52
§33 Epilogue: reclaiming the concept of metaphorical meaning .....	55
§34 Appendix 1: Searle’s eight principles of metaphorical interpretation.....	55
§35 Appendix 2: Searle on metaphor and irony .....	57
Chapter 4: Towards a positive account of metaphorical meaning .....	58
§36 Why metaphor matters: an introductory perspective .....	58
§37 Metaphor, semantic anomaly, and the Gricean/Lewisian and Searlian theories of meaning: how to reclaim metaphorical meaning.....	59
§38 The ubiquity of metaphor: why we use it .....	62
§39 Exhuming metaphor: metaphorical ‘death’ and conventionalization.....	64
§40 The importance of metaphor: an epilogue .....	67
Chapter 5: Metaphor and the nature of understanding: a conclusion .....	68
§41 Analyzing communication: an introduction.....	68
§42 On metaphorical meaning and convention.....	69
§43 The metaphorical nature of understanding .....	72
§44 Understanding and intentionality: on what we understand .....	74
§45 Epilogue: hermeneutics as an anti-method of understanding .....	76
Works Cited.....	80

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## Introduction

*'This isn't some kind of metaphor. Goddamn, this is real.'*<sup>1</sup>

Metaphor is a highly pervasive aspect of all language. We most often think of it occurring in poetry and other forms of literature, but we use it in our daily speech without realizing it. For example, we often use spatial terms in nonspatial applications, such as when we speak of time: 'The weeks *ahead* of us are *coming closer*,' 'Meet me *at* five o'clock.' Philosophy, especially metaphysics, relies heavily on metaphor as an essential part of its explanations, e.g., Wittgenstein's language games and the treatment of the mind as a container—again, an application of spatial terms in a nonspatial setting. This could be a reason why the Logical Positivists and, in turn, the majority of analytic philosophers, rejected both metaphor and metaphysics as 'unscientific.' In light of contemporary analytic philosophy, metaphor has been relegated to the 'softer' of area of pragmatics in the case of the philosophy of language and, among other disciplines, rhetoric, philology, and other areas of literary criticism. This is because most theories in the philosophy of language assume that literal meaning is fundamental, viewing metaphor as a case of deviant language. Nonetheless, if metaphor is so central to both everyday and philosophical language, it should be accounted for in a serious manner.

In spite of that, I approached this thesis initially as with additional concerns regarding the possibility of communication when we rely on pragmatic theories of language. It seemed to me that, in general, theories of understanding in the philosophy of language were not well developed. I realized that metaphor was fundamentally incompatible with an account of meaning that relied on truth-conditional semantics, such as that of Donald Davidson. Furthermore, I felt truth-conditional semantics did not

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<sup>1</sup> Shellac of North America, 'Squirrel Song.'

satisfactorily account for the aspect of communication involving understanding. Nonetheless, I noticed that pragmatic theories of language tend to rely on some device or set thereof, i.e., conventions and/or rules, to explain how we come to apply meaning and understand utterances. However, the use of metaphor appears to break convention and not to follow rules. Therefore, it is unclear how we can understand metaphor from the point of view of pragmatics. Tempted by a psychological account of meaning such as that given by Grice, I felt that I might be able to salvage a pragmatic account of communication that was compatible with metaphor. In my investigations, I found that even an account of meaning that used speaker's intentions was incompatible with the possibility of metaphorical meaning.

Accordingly, I developed the focus of my thesis as a defense of metaphorical meaning. Since metaphor is such a fundamental aspect of language, I first chose to find error in pragmatic theories of meaning. The first two chapters are where this occurs; in chapter one, we first investigate an account of intention and convention as developed by Grice, Lewis, and others, ultimately leading to our rejection of it. The second chapter is similar in structure, but rather investigates Searle's account of regulative rules. My next issue is to refute those positions that reject the possibility of metaphorical meaning, i.e., that consider it a 'pragmatic' phenomenon (one that is determined by use rather than meaning). This investigation occurs in the third chapter, in which we also will investigate the issue of language as context-independent, the possibility of a metaphor as paraphrasable, and the question of 'dead metaphor.' The fourth chapter, consequently, aims at presenting a positive account of metaphorical meaning. My claim is that not only does metaphor have meaning, but that *all* meaning is to some extent metaphorical. We will also determine why we use metaphor and what, in my view, a dead metaphor really is. The final chapter is designed to give a preliminary account of

what a theory of understanding compatible with metaphor would look like and explores views outside of analytic philosophy.

Before beginning the investigation, we should first determine what counts as metaphor. The most abstract definition I have developed is that it is an utterance or an utterance-part that is *any kind of comparison between two or more entities, implicit or explicit, that relies on antecedent meanings for the comparison to be made*. I will first note that this is not the same as simile, whose comparison is linked by a copula such as 'like' or 'as,' e.g., 'Her smile was like the sound of snow falling.' What we usually think of a metaphor is an explicit comparison, such as 'Philosophers are surgeons,' but less direct metaphors can occur as well, e.g., 'He made an incision into the argument.' The other main instance of what I consider metaphor is known as catachresis, wherein a word is used in a context that differs from its 'proper' application. In catachresis, one adapts the meaning of existing terms to applications where a proper term does not exist, such as 'the leg of the chair,' and 'the neck of the bottle.' While many philosophers of language consider 'dead metaphor' as not metaphorical at all, I argue that much of what we think of as such nonetheless retains some metaphorical character. Now that we have defined what we are studying, we may now begin to investigate the pragmatic theories of meaning that we will ultimately find incompatible with the possibility of metaphorical meaning.

## Chapter 1: Intention and convention: Grice, Lewis, et al. on meaning

### §1 An introduction to the Gricean program

In 1957, *Philosophical Review* published a paper by H. P. Grice, which provided one of the first contemporary attempts to philosophically address the concepts of meaning and communication. Simply titled, 'Meaning' appears to serve its three main purposes well. First, Grice distinguishes between two senses of meaning, that which is applicable to speakers, and that which is applicable to sounds or other signals. Secondly, he proposes a definition for speaker meaning explained solely through psychological terms. Finally, he suggests that utterance meaning can be explained through speaker meaning.<sup>2</sup>

Grice's theory of meaning considers 'utterances' as the main implements of communication. However, his conception of an utterance is slightly broader than one would expect in the philosophy of language. His main concern *is*, not surprisingly, meaning, a phenomenon that can occur both within language and outside of it. Therefore, he states that he uses the term 'utterance' in 'an artificially extended way.'<sup>3</sup> That is, he considers utterances to include non-linguistic signals, including gestures, flag-waving, and so on.<sup>4</sup> Avramides suggests this as a possible reason why Grice is not (initially) concerned with the structure of language, for the structures that formal semantics usually centers itself on do not exist outside of language. Nonetheless, Grice never explicitly rejects the importance of structure and he intends his analysis to clarify the concept of linguistic meaning.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Schiffer 1987, p. xiii.

<sup>3</sup> Grice, p. 92.

<sup>4</sup> Schiffer 1972, p. 8.

<sup>5</sup> Avramides 1989, p. 6.

This chapter serves the purpose of introducing the Gricean view of meaning as a method of explaining semantic concepts in terms of purely psychological ones. In the explication of Grice's position, we will revise the conditions for meaning to fit this program. He aims to define the regular, linguistic meaning of an utterance through these basic terms with no appeal to any other semantic concepts. After we have a clear understanding of a psychological approach to meaning, we will examine and address several criticisms of this approach. I maintain that the Gricean/Lewisian program may be a necessary but not a sufficient set of conditions for communication. Overall, the program may reveal itself as important to our understanding of metaphor, but we will find that, even with revisions, it is not adequate.

## §2 Natural versus non-natural: kinds of meaning

Grice sets himself the task of finding how to distinguish between cases of natural and nonnatural meaning, or, more specifically, what it is for  $x$  to mean<sub>*m*</sub> (i.e., to mean nonnaturally) something. Natural meaning is that which solely applicable to nonhuman signals, e.g., that the existence of clouds in the sky mean that it will rain. Nonnatural meaning, however, is the sense of meaning that applies to speakers, such as what an utterer  $U$  means by an utterance  $x$ . His plan is as follows:

If we can elucidate the meaning of ' $x$  meant<sub>*m*</sub> something (on a particular occasion)' and ' $x$  meant<sub>*m*</sub> that so-and-so (on a particular occasion)' and of ' $U$  meant<sub>*m*</sub> something by  $x$  (on a particular occasion)' and ' $U$  meant<sub>*m*</sub> by  $x$  that so-and-so (on a particular occasion),' this might reasonably be expected to help us with ' $x$  means<sub>*m*</sub> (timeless) something (that so-and-so),' ' $U$  means<sub>*m*</sub> (timeless) by  $x$  something (that so-and-so),' and with the explication of ' $x$  means the same as,' ' $x$  understands,' ' $x$  entails,' and so on.<sup>6</sup>

Grice's first suggestion is that ' $x$  meant<sub>*m*</sub> something' would be true if  $x$  was intended by its utterer,  $U$ , to induce a belief,  $p$ , in an audience,  $A$ . Furthermore, to say what  $p$  was

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<sup>6</sup> Grice, p. 217. In this and further citations, I replace Grice's use of  $A$  in ' $A$   $x$  meant<sub>*m*</sub> something...' with ' $U$ ,' which reflects the terminology I use. I will also do the same for citations from other sources, (cont.) notably Bennett's *Linguistic Behaviour*. The reason for doing so is to have a standard symbolization throughout this chapter.

would be to say what  $x$  meant<sub>*m*</sub>. However, this is not adequate;  $U$  could try to get  $A$  to believe that  $p$  without involve  $U$ 's meaning that  $p$  (e.g., the placement of evidence). Therefore, there need to be conditions that explain how nonnatural meaning brings about belief in a specific manner.

To introduce the distinction between natural and nonnatural meaning, Grice offers a few statements for consideration. Of particular interest are the first two of the two 'specimen sets' he offers: 'Those spots mean (meant) measles' and '[t]hose three rings on the bell (of the bus) mean that the bus is full.'<sup>7</sup> I shall refer to these two statements as  $m_n$  and  $m_m$  respectively. Statements such as these can be said to have the form ' $x$  means/meant that  $p$ '. In the case of  $m_n$ ,  $x$  means/meant that  $p$  must entail  $p$ , for one cannot say something like 'Those spots mean measles, but he isn't sick.' On the other hand, in statements like  $m_m$ ,  $p$  is not entailed by  $x$  means/meant that  $p$ . Furthermore, in statements like  $m_m$  we can argue from such a statement to two conclusions: the first concerning what *someone* meant by those words, and a general conclusion about what was meant by those words. With  $m_n$  however, we cannot argue from such a statement to *any* conclusion about what the utterance or signal meant, generally or otherwise. This set of observations is all that Grice feels we need to distinguish between cases that are similar to  $m_n$  and those similar to  $m_m$ .

### §3 Gricean conditions for meaning and the 'Gricean mechanism'

The Gricean conditions for meaning are straightforward; for  $U$  to mean<sub>*m*</sub> something by  $x$ , which in turn means that  $p$ ,  $U$  does so intending that:

- (1) some audience  $A$  should come to believe that  $p$ ,
- (2)  $A$  should recognize intention (1),
- (3) the recognition in (2) should be part of  $A$ 's reason for believing that  $p$ .

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<sup>7</sup> Grice, p. 213-214.

Bennett names *A*'s recognition of the primary intention the 'Gricean mechanism.' However, he feels that this concept of *U*'s intention *through* such a mechanism is in need of some repair. First, he abstracts a more inclusive conception: intending by an action (*F*) to produce a specific goal (*G*) through a particular mechanism (*M*). Of particular concern is the relation between the following statements: 'He intended by doing *F* to produce *G*, and *intended that M provide the connecting link*' and 'He intended by doing *F* to produce *G*, and *relied upon M to provide the connecting link*.' Bennett notices that that often the former statement is used to mean the latter, especially in the case of a Gricean approach to meaning. Consequently, he accepts the latter as an acceptable substitute: '*U* means that *p*, if *U* intends to get *A* to think that *p* and relies for the achievement of this on the Gricean mechanism.'<sup>8</sup>

#### **§4 The Gricean approach as a psychological account of meaning and its sufficiency**

Essentially, Grice's analysis of meaning explains the nonnatural meaning of an utterance on a particular occasion through *U*'s intention to produce a response (e.g., a belief that) *p* in *A*. However, such a basic analysis has been deemed insufficient by numerous philosophers, including Bennett, Stephen Schiffer, Brian Loar, et al.<sup>9</sup> The problem that arises concerns the lack of analysis of communicative acts between *U* and *A*. While we may begin to refine the analysis by considering *A*'s recognition of *U*'s intention, such a revision is not adequate since *A* can recognize *U*'s intention while not having a response *p* due to this recognition. In addition, *A*'s response, *p*, should be based on *U*'s utterance, *x*, having *f*, a certain feature or a set thereof. To prevent the possibility of deceitful communication, such as those based on the arrangement of

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<sup>8</sup> Bennett, p. 125

<sup>9</sup> See materials by these authors as given in the Works Cited.

evidence<sup>10</sup>, Schiffer adds a condition of ‘mutual knowledge\*’ to the revised Gricean conditions. This condition says that *U* and *A* mutually know\* that *p* iff *U* knows that *p*, and *A* knows that *p*, and *U* knows that *A* knows that *p*, and *A* knows that *U* knows that *p*... Schiffer restates this entire set of revisions as follows:

*U* meant something by uttering *x* iff *U* uttered *x* intending thereby to realize a certain state of affairs *E* which is (intended by *U* to be) such that the obtainment of *E* is sufficient for *U* and a certain audience *A* mutually knowing\* ... that *E* obtains and that *E* is conclusive evidence that *U* uttered *x* intending

- (1) to produce a certain response *p* in *A*;
- (2) *A*'s recognition of *U*'s intention (1) to function as at least part of *A*'s reason for *A*'s response *p*;
- (3) to realize *E*.<sup>11</sup>

These revisions to the Gricean program reveal that speaker meaning (i.e., ‘the semantic’) can be explained through psychological terms. The definition of speaker meaning needs no reference to any semantic concept as its definition consists in terms of action with intention to produce beliefs or effects. Furthermore, all other semantic concepts (sentence meaning, reference, etc.) and linguistic items are to be defined in terms of the reduced concept of speaker meaning.<sup>12</sup> We have thus far seen how the conditions of meaning presuppose neither any semantic concepts nor more complex cases of linguistic meaning. However, we have not yet completely reduced all semantic concepts to a psychological theory. We still need to develop the definition of linguistic meaning (i.e., where *x* can mean the same thing regardless of the occasion of its utterance) through the concept of speaker meaning.

### §5 ‘Timeless’ meaning and the introduction of convention of sentence meaning

Since the modified Gricean conditions of meaning appear to describe speaker meaning adequately, we should therefore concern ourselves with elucidating the concept of timeless meaning of sentences. Timeless meaning is also referred to as

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<sup>10</sup> Strawson 1971.

<sup>11</sup> Schiffer 1972, p. 39.

linguistic meaning since, as opposed to speaker meaning, which is connected to a specific occasion of an utterance, its meaning does not depend on the particular occasion of its use.<sup>13</sup> Grice's initial generalization about timeless meaning, that it could be 'equated with some statement or disjunction of statements about what "people" (vague) intend (with qualifications about "recognition") to effect by  $x$ ,'<sup>14</sup> appears to be very inadequate. In a later essay, he suggests the notion that we analyze  $U$ 's timeless meaning through  $U$ 's 'habit' of certain utterances when  $U$  intends to have  $A$  believe that  $p$ .<sup>15</sup> However,  $U$  may either have other means of getting  $A$  to believe that  $p$  or that  $U$  may use the same utterance when intending  $A$  to believe something different, e.g., to believe that  $q$ .

His third and final suggestion is that of 'having a certain procedure in one's repertoire' to utter certain things when  $U$  intends to have  $A$  believe that  $p$ . His rough definition of  $U$  'having a certain procedure...' consists in 'a standing readiness (willingness, preparedness), in some degree ... to do something being a member of the same family ... as an intention to do that thing.'<sup>16</sup> Nonetheless, Grice himself feels such a definition is inadequate, as there are cases where persons do not exhibit *any* readiness to utter certain expressions in any circumstance. At this point, he ceases his explication of timeless meaning yet briefly notes a number of 'informal' points. The first point, which appears to be important regardless of Grice's feelings, is as follows. In considering utterance  $x$ , which is 'current' for [in use by] a community  $C$ , a  $C$ -member who does not exhibit readiness to utter  $x$  under any circumstance is [can be] aware that the rest of  $C$  has a readiness to utter  $x$  under a set of certain circumstances  $c$ . This point denies the

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<sup>12</sup> Schiffer 1987, p. 11.

<sup>13</sup> Avramides 1997, p. 60

<sup>14</sup> p. 220.

<sup>15</sup> Grice, p. 125.

possibility of such a person being completely ignorant of such a readiness, which, as we will see later, is part of an important condition for a convention to exist.

### §6 Blackburn's treatment of the Gricean mechanism: a brief aside

Blackburn treats the concept of a Gricean mechanism somewhat differently.<sup>17</sup> He initiates his analysis with the consideration of what he refers to as an 'action intended to induce belief' (AIIB), which I have symbolized thus far as  $x$ . Much like others who have written on Grice, he notes that an AIIB can induce a belief without  $U$  aiming to mean that  $p$ . For Blackburn, Bennett's 'Gricean mechanism' is a 'Gricean AIIB that  $p$  (GAIIB $_p$ ).<sup>18</sup> The distinction appears when we try to consider how meaning becomes 'fossilized' or 'regular.' The position that Bennett holds, 'linguistic nominalism,' aims to find a condition for an action to be taken in a specific way in cases where the audience *must* recognize the utterer's intention ('one-off predicaments'). Once this condition is found, linguistic nominalism suggests that we should be able to discover how an utterance can mean that  $p$  in a 'timeless' sense.

Blackburn objects to this position since that recognition of intention does not have to occur 'once we have habits of taking utterances one way or another.'<sup>19</sup> He prefers this claim since we can avoid the introduction of 'one-off' conditions when one considers cases of shared communication. More clearly, conventions do not need to 'fossilize' the Gricean conditions of meaning; instead, they would replace the use of the Gricean mechanism, which is only required when there are no conventions to speak of. The two positions can be represented visually:

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<sup>16</sup> Grice, p. 127

<sup>17</sup> See Blackburn, ch. 4.

<sup>18</sup> p. 112.

<sup>19</sup> p. 113.

Linguistic nominalism:  
 one-off AIIB<sub>p</sub> (x)  $\longrightarrow$  one off GAIIB<sub>p</sub>  $\xrightarrow{\text{fossilized}}$  regular meaning of x that p

Blackburn:  
 one-off AIIB<sub>p</sub> (x)  $\xrightarrow{\text{fossilized}}$  regular meaning of x that p  
 $\hookrightarrow$  one off GAIIB<sub>p</sub><sup>20</sup>

## §7 The Lewisian definition of convention

David Lewis presented the contemporary approach to clarify convention as a method of solving recurrent ‘problems of co-ordination’ between two or more agents.<sup>21</sup> The problem consists in not the fact that their interests conflict, but that what is best for each agent to do relies on what the others do. An occurrence of some sort of regularity solves the problem if following the regularity benefits all members of the group and if each member has an interest to co-ordinate oneself so that one performs this regularity. Once a particular regularity has been selected, it can be considered conventional if there are persons conform to it, if they expect others to do so, and if this mutual expectation acts as part of the reason why they follow the provisional convention. Furthermore, there is at least one alternative regularity such that the belief that others conformed to the alternate would be adequate reason to conform to it. As such, there is no way to conform both the original regularity and the alternate. Finally, this regularity is conventional if these conditions are common knowledge (i.e., they more or less conform to Schiffer’s ‘mutual knowledge\*’ condition) within a community. However, one should note that, while a convention is more than just a simple regularity in a course of action, it requires nothing like a ‘tacit agreement’ between all the members of a community.<sup>22</sup> Such agreement itself relies on a ‘pre-existing or newly formed propensity to conform to *r*,’ based on common knowledge that other members of our community expect us to

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Lewis 1969. All references to Lewis following this point will be to Lewis 1969 unless otherwise noted. See also Lewis 1983, essay 11.

<sup>22</sup> Bennett, p. 177.

conform to  $r$  in appropriate circumstances.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, any agreement that is possibly sufficient to create a convention, as Lewis himself allows, neither needs to be linguistic nor requires ‘face to face’ agreement.<sup>24</sup> While the Lewisian account is an adequate start to understanding convention’s connection to a Gricean account of intention, it seems more suited to conventions of action than those of meaning. Therefore, the definition needs some amendments to make it more applicable to Grice’s theory.

### §8 Fitting convention with the Gricean analysis of meaning

In the fifth chapter of his *Meaning*, Stephen Schiffer provides an attempt to unify the Gricean conditions of meaning with the Lewisian conception of convention. To begin, Schiffer adds another condition to Lewis’ definition of convention. The condition states that the common knowledge that  $C$ -members will perform an action  $F$  when in situation  $c$  is based on their common knowledge that there is a precedent of performing  $F$  in such situations. He also makes an important critical comment that conventions do not necessarily solve co-ordination problems, particularly in the case of conventions of meaning. He considers the following case: if  $C$  has a convention to utter  $x$  only when one means that  $p$ , then members of  $C$  will expect each other to utter  $x$  only when aiming to mean that  $p$ .<sup>25</sup> In such a case, Schiffer notes, a member of  $C$  is trying to make certain that a specific inference is made by others, not that the member is trying to ‘co-ordinate’ any actions with others. Nonetheless, the two types of convention (i.e., those of meaning and those of actions) are related because they both rely on mutual expectation. After introducing these modifications to Lewis’ approach to convention, Schiffer provides his account of convention:

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<sup>23</sup> Lewis, p. 83.

<sup>24</sup> p. 86-88.

There prevails in  $C$  a convention to do an act (or activity) of type  $F$  [when in circumstances  $c$ ] iff it is mutual knowledge\* amongst the members of  $C$  that (1) there is a precedent in  $C$  for doing  $F$ , on an agreement or stipulation that one will do  $F$  when  $c$ ; (2) on the basis (in part) of (1), almost everyone in  $C$  expects [each other] to do  $F$  when  $c$ ; (3) because of (2), almost everyone in  $C$  does  $F$  when  $c$ .<sup>26</sup>

Schiffer's account of convention appears to fit appropriately with the Gricean program since his account, as well as Grice's, is psychological in nature. When  $U$  utters  $x$  in circumstance  $c$  based on a convention  $r$ ,  $U$ 's beliefs must at least be a partial reason for  $U$  to utter  $x$ . This proves that conventions allow speakers some rational control over the utterances they choose to use in communicating their intentions. One can see correspondingly that a speaker's intentions require such rational control. For example, in the (non-conventional) case that I present an empty plate to you as a signal that I am hungry, I have chosen to use a relevant signal in my intention, rather than a irrelevant or unspecific one (i.e., groaning incessantly). Nonetheless, Simon Blackburn provides an important analysis of convention that is less psychological in nature yet is further concerned with pragmatic nature of language than Schiffer's account.

### §9 Blackburn's account of convention and the role of force

Blackburn devises an account of convention slightly differently than Schiffer. He first makes a slight alteration to the Lewisian definition of convention to explain the continuation of a conventional act: Regularity  $r$  is kept as a convention among  $C$  iff most of  $C$  conforms to  $r$  and the reason for their conformity is that each member of  $C$  expects and prefers the others to do so.<sup>27</sup> This new definition allows discoveries to be made and the possibility of being ignorant or mistaken about conventions. Even at a cursory glance, one can determine that the Lewisian definition is suited for the coordination of *actions* between persons. However, in the case of communication, there may not be any

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<sup>25</sup> Schiffer 1972, p. 151.

<sup>26</sup> Schiffer 1972, p. 154.

<sup>27</sup> Blackburn, p. 120

'action' expected of the hearer, excluding injunctions, wherein *U*'s utterance must be coordinated with *A*'s action. The problem lies in what we consider as 'a regularity.' According to Blackburn, speech is too powerful a device for us to take the utterance of a sentence as a conventional means to induce the belief that *p*. There are two reasons for this potency: I can assert that *p* either when the audience already believes that *p* or when I am aware that the audience will never believe that *p*. Furthermore, we run into the difficulty of addressing what a sentence means when we insert a clause about meaning within the description of a linguistic regularity.<sup>28</sup>

For these reasons, Blackburn adds another supplement to the definition of regularity. Rather than being concerned with the beliefs of the utterer, we should rather concern ourselves with what the utterer is displaying. Moreover, how an utterance displays that *p* is governed by its *force*, which is indicated through some related circumstance: either via 'self-contained' aspects, such as a vocal utterance's intonation, the neatness of a written utterance, etc, or through its relation to other utterances or the situation it was uttered in (context). This leads to the final reworking of Blackburn's definition of communicative convention, which is as follows: 'It is a conventional regularity in *C* that someone uttering *x* with an indication of assertive force, may be regarded as having displayed that *p*.'<sup>29</sup> When such a regularity exists in *C*, we can say that *C* therefore conforms to an *x/p* regard-display convention. Assertive force is not a definite indicator of an utterer's intention due to the first aspect of said power, that *U* can, by *x*, display that *p* with no intention of *A* believing it.

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<sup>28</sup> Blackburn, p. 123.

<sup>29</sup> Blackburn, p. 126.

Although convention does not always require the implementation of the Gricean mechanism, we can nonetheless combine the two to create an unusual result as explained by Bennett:

A statement of the form 'In uttering  $x$ ,  $U$  conforms to regularity  $r$  as a convention' may entail that  $U$  has a Gricean intention, even if  $r$  in itself does not involve Gricean intentions.<sup>30</sup>

Bennett then offers a specific regularity, which I will symbolize as  $r_g$ : ' $x$ -utterers always intend to get their hearers to believe  $p$ , and  $x$ -hearers always come to believe  $p$ .'<sup>31</sup> While  $r_g$  itself is not Gricean (since it does not require the use of the Gricean mechanism), all instances of  $r_g$  will be Gricean if it is maintained as a convention for a community to which  $U$  and  $A$  (i.e.,  $x$ -utterers and  $x$ -hearers) belong. This relates to the earlier case of mutual belief given when describing Schiffer's psychological treatment of convention. Lewis himself provides an in depth proof that establishes  $U$ 's intention of uttering  $x$ , but I will not restate it here due to its length.<sup>32</sup> For the rest of the chapter, we will focus on addressing criticisms of the Gricean analysis.

### **§10 Searle's criticism: confusion and ignorance**

In the second chapter of his *Speech Acts*, Searle makes two critical remarks on Grice's analysis of meaning. First, it ignores the role of rules, which Searle views as necessary to explain sentence meaning. Furthermore, Searle views sentence meaning as more fundamental to speaker's meaning. Secondly, Grice defines meaning in terms of  $U$ 's intention to perform a perlocutionary act, regardless of the fact that 'saying something and meaning it is a matter of intending to perform an illocutionary, not necessarily a perlocutionary, act.'<sup>33</sup> We shall start with Searle's second objection regarding how the Gricean account considers that the utterance of  $x$  and meaning that  $p$

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<sup>30</sup> Bennett, p. 179.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Lewis, p 155-156.

rely on the intention to perform a perlocutionary act, or to affect *A* in a specific manner. Searle also suggests that *x*-utterance and meaning that *p* rely on the intention to perform an illocutionary act, or an act of assertion, suggestion, etc. Furthermore, even when there is a correlated perlocutionary effect, *U* may utter *x* and mean that *p* without intending to produce such an effect. Finally, there is the possibility of *U* seeking to inform *A* without having one of *A*'s reasons for believing that *p* be that *U* intended *A* to believe that *p*. I feel as though this criticism has been sufficiently addressed in sections three and four of this chapter, so I will return to Searle's first objection.

Searle expresses his first concern through the example of an American prisoner of war captured by Italian troops in World War 2. To attempt to convince the Italians that he is a German soldier, the GI utters the only German phrase he knows: a line of a poem. Based on a Gricean approach, the soldier can be considered as intending the belief that he is a German soldier and that he intends to achieve this effect by the Italians' recognition of his intention. However, it does not follow that he *meant* that 'I am a German soldier' since he both knows and remembers what the German phrase means. According to Searle, 'Meaning is more than a matter of intention, it is also at least sometimes a matter of convention.'<sup>34</sup> Also, utterer's meaning presupposes sentence meaning (which, in Searle's view, is explained by rules) and thus cannot be used to analyze the latter. Thus far, we have already introduced a revised Lewisian model of convention, which Searle did not have access to until about the time that *Speech Acts* itself was published.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, we have seen that Schiffer is responsible for uniting the Gricean and Lewisian programs. Nonetheless, Searle makes further remarks

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<sup>33</sup> p. 43-44.

<sup>34</sup> p. 45.

<sup>35</sup> Both Searle's *Speech Acts* and Lewis' *Convention* were first published in 1969.

regarding the role of rules, which he considers antecedent to intention. I will address his program in the following chapter.

### **§11 Davidson and the problems of reference and structure**

At the beginning of his essay 'Reality without Reference,' Donald Davidson considers the necessity of reference to theories of meaning. He claims that knowledge of a truth theory of a language is sufficient for understanding utterances in that language and that the theory can be applied without the use of linguistic concepts that it describes.<sup>36</sup> According to Davidson, the problem consists in that a theory of meaning must be a theory of truth that describes the conditions under which any sentence in a language is true without the use of terms such as 'meaning' within the theory. The theory cannot rely on truth-analysis of a finite set of sentences; therefore, Davidson states that a theory of truth depends on the analysis of semantic features of sentences, broken into their constituent parts. Accordingly, any theory of meaning must explain how individual words contribute to the meaning of sentences so that a speaker can understand a potential infinity of sentences. In other words, a theory of meaning requires a theory of language structure, which Grice does not provide.

At this point, one should see the impact of the Davidsonian position on Gricean theories. From Davidson's point of view, we have started incorrectly if we use intentions as the means to elucidate meaning, for our pragmatic position relies on analysis of sentence meaning to derive the meaning of words (i.e., 'utterance parts'). However, Davidson's criticism suffers from several problems and inconsistencies. First, Griceans agree with Davidson that theories of meaning should be describable in terms that are neither semantic nor linguistic. Davidson nonetheless discards the 'non-linguistic' requirement since the evidence comes from facts about 'when a speaker

holds a sentence to be true.<sup>37</sup> While Davidson may aim describe truth through a non-semantic and non-linguistic feature such as force, this approach relies on the assumption that the utterance is a sentence. As Bennett suggests, we can presume that Davidson does not intend ‘to give a “non-linguistic” account of what a sentence is.’<sup>38</sup>

## §12 Concluding remarks and criticisms

We have discovered that a Gricean analysis of meaning is resilient to its criticisms. Introducing the related concept of convention allows us to expand the reduction of the semantic to the psychological. While this program may be useful to elucidating the meaning of metaphor pragmatically, there nonetheless remains one criticism that I have not yet addressed. I will only mention it here briefly since it involves a criticism of Davidson’s position on metaphorical meaning that we will investigate in the third chapter.<sup>39</sup> The main problem with a theory of meaning that relies on invention and convention for two reasons. In the case of metaphorical utterances, it appears that conventions of meaning are broken. Nonetheless, intention also appears insufficient for an account of metaphorical meaning for a number of reasons. First, an utterance may be misinterpreted as metaphorical. Secondly, an utterance may be successfully communicated as metaphorical, but the utterer may fail in expressing an intended proposition. Finally, a metaphor may be said to be ‘indeterminate,’ or that the utterer desired a number of possible interpretations, leading our search for a specific interpretation to be fruitless. Nonetheless, we will address this problem in the third

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<sup>36</sup> p. 215.

<sup>37</sup> Bennett, p. 270; Davidson, p. 144.

<sup>38</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> See §§28-29.

chapter. Let us now take into account Searle's account of meaning before we continue on to exploring metaphor.

## Chapter 2: The inapplicability of Searle's conception of rules

### §13 An overview of Searle's view of language

John Searle's most well known work, *Speech Acts*, aims to argue that language use consists in following a complex rule-governed form of behavior and that understanding a language relies on mastery of the rules that govern it.<sup>40</sup> Rules exist to systematize and regularize predicate meaning for a community. Searle states that the 'linguistic characterizations' he seeks to give will have a 'general character' since they do not rely on particular sample utterances in specific contexts for their exposition but rather on rules. His justification lies in that, for a speaker who has mastered a certain language, linguistic characterizations of the elements of the language describe this competence.<sup>41</sup> Consequently, that rules have such a major role in allows a language user to make mistakes quite readily. Furthermore, Searle expects language users to have difficulty in formulating and stating their preexistent rules, or conversion of '*knowing how*' into '*knowing that*.'<sup>42</sup> In other words, while rules must explain how predicates are to be applied, language users are not necessarily able to formulate the rules.

### §14 The distinction between constitutive and regulative rules

Searle distinguishes between two types of rules to clarify their involvement in language. The first type, regulative rules, he describes as those which regulate 'antecedently or independently existing forms of behavior.'<sup>43</sup> More specifically, for such rules, the activity governed must be logically independent from the rules. Searle carefully chooses examples of regulative rules that are imperative statements (e.g., statements about etiquette) to stress the differences between them and the other type of

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<sup>40</sup> Searle 1969, p. 12. All references to Searle in this chapter, unless otherwise noted, will be references to *Speech Acts*.

<sup>41</sup> p. 13.

<sup>42</sup> p. 14.

rule, the constitutive rule. Constitutive rules define or create forms of behavior that are logically dependent on the rules that define them. In other words, without the rules, the behavior would not exist. As opposed to regulative rules, constitutive rules appear to have a different form and do not appear as rules at first glance. In addition, Searle suggests that constitutive rules are nearly tautological in their form, for one performs the governed behavior by following a rule as an analytic truth based on the meaning of the rule.<sup>44</sup> Finally, Searle says constitutive rules often but not necessarily have a general form of 'x counts as p in context c.'

### §15 Language and constitutive rules

To specify the application of his hypothesis, Searle states that the semantic structure of language is the conventional realization of a set of constitutive rules. Nonetheless, Searle does not conceive convention in this case in the same manner as Lewis, for the latter's treatise on convention was published the same year as the former's on speech acts. Furthermore, speech acts are those acts performed by an utterance in accordance with this set. He begins his description of the role of constitutive rules in language by noting the difference between language use and other forms of behavior (e.g., fishing). While both forms of behavior are goal-directed human activities that allow for the possibility of mistakes, the relations that make the latter possible are 'matters of natural physical facts.'<sup>45</sup> The conditions under which one catches fish are *not* conventional; instead, they are categorized as strategies or techniques that involve regulative rules. Although Searle makes this fundamental distinction regarding rules, he nonetheless poses three questions to continue the clarification of the role of rules in language. His first question, which asks whether

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<sup>43</sup> p. 33.

<sup>44</sup> p. 34.

(specific) languages are conventional, is answered simply: yes, since (in this thesis) what I have written accords to the conventions of English. However, as was previously noted, Searle did not have a Lewisian account of convention at his disposal while writing *Speech Acts* since both were published in 1969. Therefore, we can safely assume that he is not explicitly arguing for an identical account of convention, particularly since he argues against a Gricean account meaning later in the second chapter of *Speech Acts*.

His second question is somewhat more difficult: are illocutionary acts rule-governed? Searle considers illocutionary acts those which are 'complete' (e.g., assertion and questioning), as opposed to those which are combined to make such illocutionary acts (e.g., reference and predication).<sup>46</sup> Searle notes that there could be some very simple illocutionary acts whose performance would exist apart from any conventional devices. However, Searle states that since 'different human languages ... are inter-translatable, [they] can be regarded as different conventional realizations of the same underlying rules.'<sup>47</sup> This also leads to and answers 'yes' to Searle's third question: is language rule-governed? Returning to the second question, there must be conventions that govern the performance of illocutionary acts, for the act can only be performed only within these rules and, accordingly, there must be a means to invoke these rules. While Searle stresses that language use is a rule-governed form of behavior, he notes that finding specific conventions of predicate meaning is not necessary for a philosophical analysis of the rules of language. As such, this makes his analysis distinct from the aim of linguistics. The last essential point he makes regarding rules is that one can follow them without knowing them. This statement allows that a language user's linguistic behavior can still adhere to rules without the user necessarily being able to state the rules.

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<sup>45</sup> p. 37.

<sup>46</sup> p. 23.

Furthermore, even if we are unable to state rules that we know to exist, we can determine when behavior breaks these rules.

### **§16 Objections regarding the application and nature of rules**

Searle's position on the role of rules in language nonetheless has critical faults. G. P. Baker and P. M. S. Hacker, most notably in their book *Language, Sense, and Nonsense*, establish most of the criticisms. They make five essential points about the role of rules.<sup>48</sup> First, rules usually involve regularities in behavior; however, these regularities need not be normative. Rules need not be enforced or followed to exist, but they may describe such regularities. Secondly, we guide our actions by reference to rules, in one of three ways: mandatorily, permissively, or indirectly. However, we should not consider a rule's normative guidance to be any form of causality, for even mandatory rules do not causally necessitate action. Taking into account how Searle views predicate rules, we see that we our language use is creative, which he apparently does not take into account. For example, we can use a predicate in a number of new ways, particularly in the case of metaphor. Next, rules provide standards of conduct against which behavior is compared for 'correctness.' Fourthly, rules can originate in many different ways: with or without the existence of an authority, through the acceptance within a group, etc. Finally, rules have a 'dual generality': they are general in terms of the diversity of occasions for their application and for their subjects. For Baker and Hacker, these points suggest that there cannot be rules 'that exist *and* guide conduct ... independently of human consciousness or volition.'<sup>49</sup> We may formulate a rule, but neither these (linguistic) formulations nor their meanings can count as the rule.

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<sup>47</sup> p. 39.

<sup>48</sup> p. 251.

<sup>49</sup> p. 252.

While a rule may guide a certain type of behavior, it cannot determine any future action. We often systematize rules in certain ways to give them specific contexts of application. In turn, the application of a rule is significant for us to determine whether the behavior has the appropriate connection to the rule. Since we tend to attribute properties such as complexity and necessity to rules, we think of rules as existing. However, that we speak of a rule as existing when a certain behavioral pattern obtains, as in the case of predicate meaning, we are speaking falsely. It is a mistake to think that rules have an ontological character outside of how we implement them insofar as they have the ability to determine future action. Nonetheless, Searle's account of semantic rules requires such determinate rules to explain 'correct' predicate application. Baker and Hacker note that, while we often say that a certain type of behavior follows from a rule, such a determination is not causal as the wording suggests.<sup>50</sup> Instead, determination is a logical or conceptual relationship that is characterized through the tendency of a rule's linguistic formulation to formulate a corresponding expression that states what behavior counts as complying with the rule.

The application of a rule is significant for us to determine whether the behavior has the appropriate connection to the rule. In the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein names the rule-determining an 'interpretation' of the rule.<sup>51</sup> Since rules do not have an ontological aspect, we cannot posit Platonic 'normative fields of force' that determine our action.<sup>52</sup> On the other hand, an appeal to dispositions or finding a course of action to be natural give us no insight at all, for we can therefore make any behavior conform to a rule by saying that we 'went on in the same way.'<sup>53</sup> To Wittgenstein, 'any

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<sup>50</sup> p. 263

<sup>51</sup> §201.

<sup>52</sup> Baker and Hacker, p. 264.

<sup>53</sup> Wittgenstein, §185.

interpretation still hangs in the air with what it interprets and cannot give it any support. Interpretations by themselves do not determine meaning.<sup>54</sup> In short, there is no way for a rule to determine future applications of itself. There needs to be a corresponding interpretation that is distinct from the rule to which it is applied.

### §17 Quine's distinction between rule-fitting and rule-guided behavior

W. V. Quine makes the following important distinction in the connection between a rule and the behavior associated it:

Behaviour *fits* a rule whenever it conforms to it; whenever the rule truly describes the behaviour. But the behaviour is not *guided* by the rule unless the behavior knows the rule and can thus state it. This behavior observes the rule.<sup>55</sup>

Blackburn makes an analogy to a computer chess program to prove Quine's point.<sup>56</sup> Although the program may make a move similar to that of a human chess champion, the rules may nonetheless be very different. The program may simply use 'brute force' to find all possible moves and their outcomes to select an 'appropriate' move. More clearly, the computer and player may have the same results without following the same set of rules. Accordingly, Quine feels that implicit rules cannot guide us. Even if we had one set of linguistic rules that produce the same results as a language user with a different set, 'Quine would deny that it makes any empirical sense to ask which of them guides us.'<sup>57</sup> If Quine's criticism holds true, we will find it impossible to discover such a set of rules that describe preexistent aspects of semantics and syntax. This is an important problem for Searle's program of semantics, for it assumes that predicate rules are necessary to determine meaning. Nonetheless, when faced with the possibility of creativity in predicate use, we find that such determinate rules are problematic.

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<sup>54</sup> §198.

<sup>55</sup> qtd. in Blackburn, p. 30, emphasis in original.

<sup>56</sup> p. 31.

### §18 Conclusion: a simple criticism based on the dilemma of this thesis

The introduction of this thesis posed the following dilemma:

Pragmatic theories of language tend to rely on some device or set thereof, i.e., conventions and/or rules, to explain how we come to apply meaning and understand utterances. However, the use of metaphor appears to break convention and not to follow rules. Therefore, it is unclear how we can understand metaphor from the point of view of pragmatics.

Quite obviously, Searle's position on rules does not solve any aspect of this dilemma. Furthermore, if the notion of a rule is problematic to begin with, we should be reluctant to implement it in a possible theory of meaning applicable to metaphor. As we have seen in the last chapter, the Gricean program is quite flexible; despite its many varied criticisms, it can be amended to address most of them sufficiently. Perhaps now we have an appropriate starting point to structure our investigation in the meaning of metaphor. The following chapter will begin to analyze the notion of metaphor and theories regarding its meaning. While discovering these new theories, we will most likely see how they involve aspects of the two divergent programs in pragmatics (i.e., intention and Searle's position).

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<sup>57</sup> *ibid.*

## Chapter 3: The case against metaphorical meaning: Davidson and Searle

### §19 Metaphor is meaningless, but important: an introduction

Donald Davidson and John Searle are the two most well known proponents of theories that reject the concept of metaphor having meaning as we think of it. Davidson's position, espoused in his essay, 'What Metaphors Mean,' stems from his program to create a truth-conditional semantic theory claims that all only have literal meaning. Nonetheless, he breaks from the Positivist tradition of *total* rejection of metaphor, as he sees that it plays a vital role not only in literature, 'but in science, philosophy, and the law; it is effective in praise and abuse, prayer and promotion, description and prescription.'<sup>58</sup> While he rejects the notion of metaphorical meaning, and accordingly, that of metaphorical content, he stresses that metaphor assists us in making and contemplating comparisons that we would ordinarily not make. His criticisms of existing theories of metaphor are exhaustive; as such, they include rejection of comparison between metaphors and similes, rejection of Black's interaction theory, and several others.

Searle, on the other hand, takes a less dramatic position, wherein he relegates the possibility of metaphorical meaning to only that which the speaker means (rather than what the utterance means on its own). His program also differs from Davidson's in that he seeks to set out a number of principles for metaphorical interpretation. While the set Searle provides may be somewhat short, he nonetheless proposes them as a starting point for developing a theory of metaphor. He also briefly compares metaphorical utterances to instances of irony and other indirect speech acts. This chapter aims to delineate these two major positions that view metaphor solely as a pragmatic phenomenon. Furthermore, we will explore their inconsistencies and weaknesses,

ultimately to determine whether or not there is potential for creating a positive theory of metaphorical meaning.

### **§20 Davidson's rejection of metaphorical meaning**

Donald Davidson's essay, 'What Metaphors Mean,' stated the first radical position against metaphor as having a 'special' meaning or any cognitive content. In his words, 'metaphors mean what the words, in their most literal interpretation, mean, and nothing more.'<sup>59</sup> This leads Davidson, relying heavily on the distinction between meaning and use, to claim that metaphor can only be explained in terms of use. His account of metaphor, while confusing on its own, is even more so without familiarity with his other views on language. Most notably, Davidson claims that a theory of meaning for any natural language requires the statement of truth conditions for sentences in that language.<sup>60</sup> As Davidson writes, 'Literal meaning and literal truth conditions can be assigned to words and sentences apart from particular contexts of use. This is why adverting to them has genuine explanatory power.'<sup>61</sup>

To develop his own views, Davidson rejects several other views of metaphor. The first position he discusses is that metaphor makes a similarity between two or more things aware to us. According to his interpretation, this is done by examining the class of objects that to which we are comparing the individual[s] to determine the properties that the objects and the individuals have in common. If we could find the words that meant what the metaphorical terms mean, we could therefore determine what the 'metaphorical meaning' was. This leads to the idea of metaphor producing 'extended' meanings for words and expressions; when a metaphor is used, the metaphorical

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<sup>58</sup> p. 246.

<sup>59</sup> p. 245.

<sup>60</sup> See Davidson 1984, essays 1-5.

<sup>61</sup> p. 247.

extension of the word becomes part of the [philosophical] extension of the word.<sup>62</sup> However, if this is so, the concept of metaphor is faulty since metaphorical usage would be the same as the introduction of a new term into our vocabulary. Davidson further disagrees with this position since it disregards the original meaning of the words, for original or primary meanings somehow play a role in metaphor.

Davidson then addresses the treatment of metaphor as ambiguity; in cases of metaphor, expressions have new meanings as well as their original ones, and 'the force of the metaphor depends on our uncertainty as we waver between the two meanings.'<sup>63</sup> He feels that this position is wrong from the beginning. Our uncertainty lies not in the determination of an expression as metaphorical but in the determination of the specific interpretation we should choose when we think of several possible interpretations. He then thinks of a different kind of ambiguity, wherein a word can have two meanings within a single context and we must accordingly remember both meanings. He views this considers this as a pun rather than a metaphor, but nonetheless uses it as a basis for another view.

This new position states that an expression can have both literal and figurative meanings. We understand the literal meaning regardless of context, while in cases of metaphor, the figurative meaning is recognized and understood first. In other words, 'the rule, at least in many typical cases of metaphor, says that in its metaphorical role the word applies to everything that it applies to in its literal role, and then some.'<sup>64</sup> To refute this position, Davidson provides a lengthy example. However, I will only state the point of his example. If this theory were correct, then when a person is taught how to use and understand an expression only literally it would not matter how the person

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<sup>62</sup> Davidson, p. 248.

<sup>63</sup> p. 249.

interpreted the expression, i.e., literally or metaphorically. This is so since this theory would provide the use of the metaphor to be the same as the opportunity to learn its new usage. Furthermore, Davidson suggests that we could identify the metaphorical meaning in cases of 'dead metaphor' since it should therefore become part of the dead metaphor's literal meaning. However, this is not the case. If we examine cases such as 'His eyes flamed,' we only think of the subject in question as being angry and not having eyes on fire.

The final position of metaphorical meaning that Davidson rejects is the likeness between metaphor and simile. A simile clearly states something that a metaphor merely suggests, so accordingly we can assume that the figurative meaning of a metaphor is the same as the literal meaning of a corresponding simile. A related but simpler theory is the theory that metaphor is an elliptical simile, which excludes the possibility of metaphorical meaning and makes no distinction between the meaning of a metaphor and a related simile. For Davidson, the fault of these theories is that 'they make the hidden meaning of the metaphor all too obvious and accessible ... by looking to the literal meaning of what is usually a painfully trivial simile.'<sup>65</sup>

### **§21 Positive aspects of Davidson's theory**

These failed theories suggest to Davidson that only literal meaning can explain what metaphors mean. However, as he notes, an important consequence is that metaphorical sentences are only true or false in a literal way. In terms of the sentences themselves, we can easily recognize that most metaphors are false and that most similes are true. Furthermore, he feels that we use similes most often when we know that the corresponding metaphor is false. For example, consider 'A philosopher is like a

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<sup>64</sup> p. 250.

<sup>65</sup> p. 254.

butcher.’ Nonetheless, we use the fact that most metaphors are false in the determination of a sentence as metaphorical or not. On the other hand, in cases of metaphor where the literal sentence is true, the use is often awkward enough to merit close attention. Therefore, Davidson feels that ‘absurdity or contradiction in a metaphorical sentence guarantees we won’t believe it and invites us, under proper circumstances, to take [interpret] the sentence metaphorically.’<sup>66</sup>

Davidson attempts to show further that metaphor falls under the scope of language use (i.e., pragmatics as opposed to his semantics) by comparing it to lying. In the act of telling a lie, one needs not to utter a false sentence but rather to believe that it is false. In both cases, how a hearer interprets sentence relies on the hearer’s recognition the speaker’s intentions. Accordingly, he considers that one can utter the same sentence either metaphorically or to lie, depending on the intentions that the utterer has. For example, someone can say ‘She’s a witch’ in reference to a neighbor, meaning metaphorically that she is malevolent, etc., or to deceive another person. The difference between a metaphor and a lie is obvious: the use of the words in each case is unlike the other based on their use. Furthermore, one cannot use metaphor to “say something” special ... for a metaphor *says* only what shows on its face ... [what] is given in the literal meaning of the words.’<sup>67</sup>

While we have clearly seen Davidson’s arguments against metaphor having a special meaning or cognitive content, he has not yet explained what he thinks the purpose and nature of metaphor is. To explain his position, Davidson first rejects Black’s interaction theory regarding the possibility of paraphrasing a metaphor. For Black, a paraphrase fails not due to the lack of a special metaphorical content but that

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<sup>66</sup> p. 258.

<sup>67</sup> p. 259, emphasis in original.

the paraphrase will not provide the proper cognitive content. In response, Davidson asks why we should posit the concept of metaphorical content if its determination is so difficult. Accordingly, he inquires why we cannot derive the previously metaphorical content from a dead metaphor as per his previous investigation.

Rather than continuing to rely on the possible existence of metaphorical content, he suggests that the (literal) cognitive content of a metaphor causes us to notice things we had not noticed before. Therefore, metaphors make aware to us certain analogies or similarities. To Davidson, 'metaphor can, like a picture or a bump on the head, make us appreciate some fact—but not by standing for, or expressing the fact.'<sup>68</sup> Davidson's theory therefore is a causal account, for metaphor causes us to ascertain something we had not previously noticed. Nonetheless, this insight can only be expressed through sentences that only have literal meaning. A further problem with positing any cognitive content is that one can easily assume that such content is finite and propositional; however, there is often no limit to what a metaphor allows us to discover. More simply, 'seeing as is not seeing that,' for 'what the metaphor prompts or inspires is not entirely, or even at all, recognition of some truth or fact.'<sup>69</sup>

## §22 An overview of the deficiencies of Davidson's analysis

Davidson's position suffers from a number of problems, not all of which rely on his aim to construct a truth-conditional semantic theory. Some of the criticisms at hand focus on discrediting his criticism of metaphorical meaning, while the rest seek to bring out problems with the positive aspects of his analysis. In delineating these obstacles to Davidson's theory, we will first take issue with his criticisms of metaphorical meaning. The first criticism of this group originates in his negative position that metaphor is not

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<sup>68</sup> p. 262.

<sup>69</sup> p. 263.

paraphrasable. For Davidson, the paraphrasability of an utterance is the primary proof of the existence of the utterance's cognitive content. Since, in his view, metaphor cannot be paraphrased accurately, metaphor must therefore have no cognitive content. The second criticism relies on Davidson's claim that simile and metaphor are alike because they bring two objects or situations in comparison with each other, causing us to contemplate this comparison. The third takes issue on his position regarding 'dead metaphor' as a potential vehicle for the metaphorical meaning that the expression had while it was still 'alive.' The final criticism concerns Davidson viewing metaphor as context-dependent as opposed to cases of literal meaning that he considers context-independent. The arguments against his positive theory arise from his treatment of metaphor as lies and as metaphor as a causal device for instigating comparison and contemplation. We will now begin to explore the errors and inconsistencies in Davidson's analysis.

### **§23 Against the nonparaphrasability of metaphor**

Davidson asks the following of his readers in 'What Metaphors Mean': 'If a metaphor has a special cognitive content, why should it be so difficult or impossible to set it out?'<sup>70</sup> As Nogales has noted, Davidson's view of paraphrasability relies on not only the expression of an utterance's cognitive content, but its cognitive effect as well.<sup>71</sup> For Davidson, cognitive effect includes that which we contemplate or feel outside of the cognitive content of an utterance. With that in mind, Nogales devises the following structured argument to explain Davidson's position:

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<sup>70</sup> p. 260.

<sup>71</sup> p. 75.

- (1) Metaphorical utterances typically do not admit of paraphrasing.
- (2) Any given cognitive content can be expressed in at least two different ways (i.e. it can be paraphrased).
- (3) Being (easily) paraphrasable is a test of whether the cognitive content of a sentence captures its cognitive effect.
- (4) Therefore, the cognitive effect of a metaphorical utterance does not lie in the cognitive content of its terms.
- (5) Metaphorical meaning is defined so as to capture the cognitive effect of the utterance through cognitive content.
- (6) Therefore, there is no such thing as metaphorical meaning as defined.<sup>72</sup>

In response to this position, Nelson Goodman offers a relatively straightforward criticism to this line of argumentation in his essay 'Metaphor as Moonlighting.' Goodman makes the important observation that 'paraphrase of many literal sentences is also exceedingly difficult.' As such, we have every right to question any translation of a sentence, either into words in the same language or into another, distinct language.<sup>73</sup> Nonetheless, Goodman asks us to think of metaphor as particularly difficult to paraphrase as metaphors often elicit 'relevant kinds' that for which there are no established literal descriptions. For example, 'whether a man is metaphorically a Don Quixote or a Don Juan is perhaps even easier to decide than whether he is literally a schizoid or a paranoiac.'<sup>74</sup>

A secondary critique of this argument depends on how we interpret 'the nonparaphrasability of a metaphor.' A possible interpretation suggests that metaphors have an effect (e.g., a cognitive effect) that an analogous literal utterance cannot duplicate. Even if the literal utterance expresses the same proposition (i.e., it has the same cognitive content) that the metaphorical utterance does, it is not a paraphrase unless it produces the same effect in the hearer. However, this interpretation is questionable depending on how ubiquitously one interprets what an 'effect' is. If we were to accept a very broad definition of 'effect,' we could easily claim that no utterance

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<sup>72</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> p. 176.

<sup>74</sup> p. 177.

classifies as paraphrasable.<sup>75</sup> Conversely, we could implement a rudimentary interpretation of paraphrasability, wherein a paraphrase would only need to express the truth conditions of the corresponding utterance. While deceptively simple, this claim requires that metaphors be paraphrasable if and only if they can be expressed in some other way. While established metaphors, by either definition, may be easily paraphrasable, nonstandard metaphors may not translate accurately or adequately. For example, such literary metaphors as ‘love’s the i guess most only verb that lives/(her tense beginning,and her mood unend)’ do not have a straightforward meaning.<sup>76</sup> This in turn often leads to perpetual analysis and suggests that metaphors are terribly difficult to paraphrase. Nonetheless, this is not to say that metaphors are *completely* impossible to paraphrase.

Paraphrase of metaphor is also problematic because of reasons related to the lack of specificity in a metaphorical utterance. One instance of this originates in that the full expression of a metaphorical utterance’s meaning may not be grasped at first exposure. For example, metaphors often express an indefinite number of propositions and, as such, a metaphorical expression may literally be ‘more economical in the use of words.’<sup>77</sup> Another instance of this exists in that metaphorical utterances do not explicitly specify which propositions they entail. Contextual information may be sufficient in some instances of interpreting metaphor, but in many cases it is not and leaves the utterance vague. Finally, in Davidson’s view that metaphor serves as a device for ‘seeing as,’ a metaphorical utterance expresses more than the information it conveys. Metaphor, in addition, may express the perspective that is necessary for its interpretation. It is uncertain that this perspective occurs in the paraphrase of a

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<sup>75</sup> Nogaes, p. 76.

<sup>76</sup> Cummings, p. 134.

metaphorical utterance. Without it, part of its potential interpretation would be lost. In summation, Davidson's position on nonparaphrasability is problematic since does not clearly define the notion of successful paraphrase adequately.

#### **§24 Against the likeness of metaphor and simile**

The second argument that Davidson makes against metaphorical meaning relies on the likeness that he ascribes to both simile and metaphor. The two are alike by virtue of their ability to conjoin two entities for the purpose of comparison and contemplation. However, we need not posit any sort of special meaning for similes to understand what they mean. Accordingly, we do not need any recourse to the concept of metaphorical meaning to explain metaphor.<sup>78</sup> At first glance, his position is nonetheless seemingly misled. We could say that the literal meaning of a simile is identical to the metaphorical meaning that Davidson rejects.<sup>79</sup> This theory arises when we distinguish between literal comparison statements and figurative similes. By investigating the Davidsonian converse, that similes function as literal comparisons, we find that any simile must, in theory, have the same truth value regardless of how it is understood (i.e., literally or figuratively). The only view of similarity to which this seemingly adheres is Davidson's rather simplistic view that 'everything is like everything,' or that two entities always share one common feature.<sup>80</sup> This view of similarity in turn leads to the problem of all comparison statements as trivially true and therefore unrevealing. Since this is clearly not the case, we find that another of Davidson's negative arguments fails.

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<sup>77</sup> Nogales, p. 78.

<sup>78</sup> Davidson, pp. 255, 261.

<sup>79</sup> Nogales, p. 85.

<sup>80</sup> pp. 254, 257.

## §25 Problems with the Davidsonian view of 'dead metaphor'

Davidson's last major argument against metaphorical meaning comes from his view of 'dead metaphor,' wherein a previously figurative utterance loses its figurative character. He believes that if there is any kind of metaphorical meaning, we could do the following in the case of a dead metaphor. When we derive the literal meaning of a dead metaphor, we would discover what the metaphorical meaning was when the utterance was still a 'live metaphor.'<sup>81</sup> However, dead metaphors only call to mind what they mean now. Therefore, there can be no such thing as metaphorical meaning. This argument appears to be the weakest that he makes for his rejection and as such, we can refute it easily. The most basic observation that one can make concerns Davidson's presumption that, if there were metaphorical meaning, it would be incorporated in the literal meaning of a dead metaphor. Rather bluntly, Davidson does not give any evidence to prove this point.

Nonetheless, there are also more comprehensive criticisms that can be made to dispute Davidson's argument. In Goodman's refutation of this argument, he does not refer to 'dead metaphor' as such; instead, he considers it as an utterance, 'that after being used metaphorically later loses its metaphorical force through overuse.'<sup>82</sup> He agrees with Davidson in that, upon the loss of metaphorical force, a metaphor no longer causes us to make comparisons. However, Goodman considers Davidson's position contradictory with the earlier claim that metaphorical and literal applications of an utterance must be the same. To use Davidson's example, if 'burned up' becomes a literal expression to describe someone who is angry, it now has the same application as it does (did) when metaphorical. Consequently, its metaphorical application must have been

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<sup>81</sup> p. 253.

different from the original literal application. Therefore, when it ‘retires as metaphor,’ it becomes an ambiguous term whose literal applications no longer influence each other. Goodman asks his readers to consider the possibility of ‘burned up’ retaining its metaphorical application despite the evaporation of its metaphorical force. If, as Davidson claims, that application is coextensive with ‘angry,’ then the reason for the difficulty in paraphrasing an utterance is more than he considers it to be. Even if the metaphor fades from the expression ‘burned up,’ its second literal application is not exactly the same as the application of ‘angry.’ Finally, I find Davidson’s treatment of ‘dead metaphor’ to be problematic in that views established metaphors as static and to which everyone has access. I agree with Davidson and Goodman in that metaphor loses its ‘force’ over time, but instead of it ‘dying’ in the Davidsonian sense, I view metaphor as becoming conventionalized. Metaphor can eventually ‘die,’ but most ‘dead metaphors’ are merely conventionalized and nonetheless still have some metaphorical force. We will not investigate this in detail in this chapter; rather, this is part of my positive theory of metaphor stated in section 39 of the following chapter.

### **§26 The context-dependence of metaphorical and literal language**

The position on metaphor that Davidson and his colleagues espouse relies heavily on their larger program of truth-conditional semantics.<sup>83</sup> A tenet of such a theory is that meaning in language is necessarily context-free. However, if an aspect of language is *not* context-free, it is thus a matter of use rather than meaning. Since, in the Davidsonian view, the interpretation of metaphor is inevitably bound to its context, metaphor is not an issue of meaning. Before we attempt to address this, we will take a brief look at the structure of the general Davidsonian theory. In his view, a semantic

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<sup>82</sup> p. 177. I assume that Goodman is not considering ‘metaphorical force’ to be the same as the usage of ‘force’ in speech act theory.

theory must give an account of the truth conditions of all sentences. Applying Tarski's semantic theory of truth, Davidson derives a general form that he names a 'T-sentence.' Such T-sentences have the form 'x is true if and only if p,' demonstrated by the familiar example of "'Snow is white' if and only if snow is white." For each sentence, we must accordingly relativize it to a particular occasion and speaker, for an identical sentence may be true for one speaker and occasion but false for another. Nonetheless, this theory only holds when relativized sentences do not vary in meaning between contexts. Based on the Davidson's picture of semantics and metaphor, metaphorical utterances are problematic since their lack of metaphorical meaning prevents them from having truth-values that differ between metaphorical and literal occasions. Metaphorical utterances hence appear as either trivially true or patently false.

The easiest way to challenge this theory is to contest the necessity of context-independence for semantic theories. Nonetheless, we need a clearer explanation of context-independence. Eva Feder Kittay lists three possibilities for what we mean when we consider meaning as context-free:

- that the meaning of a word is independent of its context; or
- that the meaning of a sentence is independent of its context; or
- that features of the context figure in the meaning of a sentence in a rule-governed way, such that we may bracket these contextual features in order to consider the meaning of a sentence to be context-free.<sup>84</sup>

While considering the third possibility to be the closest to the view that she to which subscribes, Kittay notes that we cannot continually bracket aspects of content to make the meaning completely context-independent. Her argument for the context-dependence of literal language accordingly challenges her first two definitions of context-independence, those of sentence and word meaning. Her critique of context-free sentence meaning consists of two parts, but I view the first as more essential and more

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<sup>83</sup> See Davidson, essays 1-5, particularly essay 4.

correct. It originates from how she views our understanding of an utterance as metaphorical to develop. While Davidson admits that context often determines the metaphorical nature of an utterance, he ignores the possibility of context playing the same determining factor in the case of literal utterances. For Davidson, recognition of an utterance as metaphorical affects its truth conditions, as expressed through his example of the headline reading 'Hemingway Lost in Africa.'<sup>85</sup> The claim of irrelevance regarding specific truth or falsity of the statement is wrong, for that, if Hemingway were indeed lost before his death, we can say that he was lost 'in both senses.' In other words, each reading of the word 'lost' has its own set of truth conditions. Therefore, Davidson's truth-conditional semantics is incompatible with his claim that a metaphorical sentence only has a literal meaning. Furthermore, the reply that we are always inclined to seek a literal meaning first and that context only serves to elucidate metaphor is erroneous, as Kittay demonstrates by the phrase 'Nixon's plumbers' uttered around the time of the Watergate scandal.<sup>86</sup> As a result, two major theses originate against Davidson's view: that how we interpret a sentence (i.e., literally or metaphorically) alters its truth value, and that context can determine the meaning and truth conditions of a literal sentence.

Kittay's argument against the context-independence of literal word meaning relies on words being polysemous, or that a single word may have an indefinitely large number of meanings. The contextual environment in a word occurs therefore serves to affect the meaning of the word that one should interpret. For example, Kittay cites the following series of sentences to prove the polysemy of the word 'dropped': 'She *dropped* a stitch. She *dropped* her hem-line. She *dropped* her book. She *dropped* a

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<sup>84</sup> p. 96.

<sup>85</sup> Davidson, p. 257.

friend. She *dropped* her courses.<sup>87</sup> By substituting the antonym ‘picked up’ for ‘dropped,’ the first two examples neither are ‘acceptable sentences’ nor are they the contraries of the originals.<sup>88</sup> The polysemy has its roots in analogy, as the instance of ‘dropped’ in each of the example sentences is analogous with the others. Nonetheless, that they are polysemous in different sentences suggests that is the combination with other words that leads to indefinite possibilities of meaning. As such, context is an essential part of both developing new meanings and of interpreting established ones.

### §27 An overview of the rejection of the positive Davidsonian analysis

After rejecting a number of various semantic theories of metaphor, Davidson attempts to develop his own nonsemantic theory. As such, the theory he develops appeals to so-called pragmatics in that it considers metaphor within the domain of language use. Since he writes that ‘metaphor can, like a picture or a bump on the head, make us appreciate some fact’ in a nonlinguistic manner, we may assume that Davidson’s account has a causal character.<sup>89</sup> That is, our understanding of a metaphorical utterance causes us to bring certain comparisons to mind and to contemplate them in an indefinite number of ways. Furthermore, Davidson continually describes the metaphorical in terms of its effect.<sup>90</sup> His main presentation of his theory consists in his treatment of metaphor as something similar to lying. The semblance between the two consists in that we can use a particular utterance either to lie or not to lie, and that we can do the same with metaphor, using it figuratively or not. For Davidson, this simple likeness is sufficient to demonstrate that both metaphors and lies are matters of use and as thus nonsemantic.

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<sup>86</sup> p. 103.

<sup>87</sup> p. 110, emphasis in original.

<sup>88</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> p. 263.

<sup>90</sup> pp. 261, 262, 263.

To analyze the Davidsonian treatment of metaphors as comparable to lies, Nogales provides the following example:

Chris and Pat are discussing the sale of leaf blowers at a local store. In scenario 1, Chris, who is looking at tomorrow's date on the calendar, takes tomorrow's date for today's, deduces the sale is over, and tells Pat 'The sale is over.' In scenario 2, Chris, who knows the correct date but wants Pat to pay a higher price for the leaf blower, utters the same statement.<sup>91</sup>

The semantic theory that Davidson both presupposes (for 'What Metaphors Mean') and espouses would claim that both utterances express the same proposition based on their identical truth conditions. Moreover, the theory would consider both utterances to have the same truth-value. That this theory views these two utterances as identical leads a Davidsonian analysis of metaphor to search outside of semantics for what makes them distinct as cases of telling the truth and lying. Based on the established framework within the philosophy of language, we should accordingly investigate these cases in pragmatic terms. In both cases, the utterances are declarative ones whose utterer uses to induce a certain belief in its hearer. Where the two utterances differ is in that the second scenario the utterer does not hold the belief. In general, we can appeal to the utterer's intentions to make the distinction between the cases of truth telling and lying. On an utterance of a lie, the utterer aims to deceive the hearer, while in the case of Nogales's first scenario, the utterer is merely conveying mistaken information. We now may be able to see a possible reason for Davidson's comparison of metaphors and lies: that both phenomena are defined in terms of the utterer's purpose in their utterance. While one utters a lie to deceive another person, we may consider a metaphorical utterance as that which is used to make someone treat two entities as the subject of comparison and contemplation. If this is the case, then metaphor is outside the domain of semantics and as such is a matter of use or pragmatics.

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<sup>91</sup> p. 106.

### **§28 The problem of metaphorical lies**

There are two significant criticisms that refute Davidson's treatment of metaphors as phenomena similar to lying. One involves rejecting the role of intention in metaphorical interpretation, but first we will examine a relatively simple, straightforward criticism based on the possibility of metaphorical lies. According to the definition of a lie proposed, the utterer must not believe the proposition expressed by a lie while nonetheless portraying the attitude of belief.<sup>92</sup> Furthermore, the utterer must intend to deceive the hearer of the lying utterance. The hearer must accordingly rely on interpreting the utterer's intentions and beliefs. If we had the set of the utterer's beliefs and recognized he utter as not displaying disbelief, sarcasm, etc., we should therefore be able to interpret the utterance of a lie as such. If the hearer interpreted a metaphorical lie as a purely literal utterance, the utterance would remain a lie. This suggests that our criteria for interpreting an utterance as a lie is inadequate, for in order to interpret a metaphorical lie, we must first interpret it as a metaphor. The conditions for an utterance to be a metaphor are hence considerably different from those that make an utterance a lie. Furthermore, Nogales states that this proves the existence of metaphorical content for we determine the truth or falsity of a metaphorical utterance after we realize that it is a metaphor.<sup>93</sup>

### **§29 The independence of intention in metaphorical understanding**

Although the preceding criticism does not completely reject the possibility of metaphor as a pragmatic phenomenon, it does prove that what makes a metaphor is not defined by intention in the same manner that lies are. We can accordingly prove that metaphor is further independent of an utterer's intention by noting its independence

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<sup>92</sup> Nogales, p. 109.

<sup>93</sup> p. 110.

from the intention to speak metaphorically and by the proposition the utterer intends to express. In the case of the former, we may interpret certain utterances as metaphorical although the utterer did not intend them as such. For example, the utterance 'He lives without a doorbell or any windows' is easily taken as metaphorical utterance, but would not be meant as such if we considered the case of a person who lived in a tenement-like basement apartment.<sup>94</sup> If the hearer interprets this utterance as metaphorical when its utterer did not intend it to be, the utterer has both failed to make a literal utterance and to express an intended proposition. This also can happen in certain degrees, as shown by reference to denoting certain metaphorical utterances as 'good' or 'weak' metaphors.

Metaphor also cannot rely on intention for its understanding for an utterer may fail in expressing an intended proposition even when there is successful metaphorical communication. Nogales claims this occurs when a hearer correctly identifies a metaphorical utterance as such but nonetheless does not interpret it properly.<sup>95</sup> However, Cooper argues for a broader conception of how intention and metaphor do not work together properly in terms of metaphorical indeterminacy. A certain metaphorical utterance is said to be indeterminate when it has more than one possible interpretation but none of which can be adequately said to be the 'proper' interpretation. While it may be tempting to relegate this simply as a problem stemming from metaphorical nonparaphrasability, but this is not the case for the indeterminacy may arise within the various instances of paraphrase. Nonetheless, there are numerous kinds of metaphorical utterances where recourse to the utterer's intentions would be utterly fruitless if we sought one particular interpretation. Most obvious are cases of

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<sup>94</sup> Nogales, p. 110.

<sup>95</sup> p. 112.

literary metaphors, wherein ‘speculation as to what [authors] intended to communicate by individual metaphors is pointless – in the dual sense of being a waste of time and beside the point.’<sup>96</sup> Attempting to identify the intentions behind the comparisons that Marinetti, an Italian Futurist, makes when he refers to bayonets in a trench as an ‘orchestra’ appears futile.<sup>97</sup> Another case in which interpretation by reference to utterer’s intention is irrelevant is that of Zen koans, which are meant to inspire thoughts beyond those of the master who utters them. Suggesting the existence of ‘indefinite intentions’ appears to be a weak manner of addressing the possibility of intentions as independent from metaphorical understanding. As such, it is easier to establish that intentions are clearly not involved to the extent to which we have thought them to be.

### **§30 Insufficiencies of Davidson’s analysis**

The clearest problem with Davidson’s account arises from his claim that a metaphorical utterance’s truth conditions and truth-value are only that of what the utterance, when taken literally, expresses. Since literal interpretations of metaphors are often false (‘He is a wolf,’ etc.), the metaphorical utterance must be therefore false as well. This is accordingly incompatible with our intuitions in that we view truth-values of metaphorical utterances to be distinct from those of literal utterances. Nonetheless, this is one of the areas in which his analysis is sorely lacking. On the other hand, when we consider ‘trivially true’ metaphorical utterances, we can see in terms of responses to them that we cannot use the response for a metaphorical interpretation as one for a literal interpretation. If we did, the responses would be applied inappropriately. This suggests that literal and metaphorical interpretations of otherwise identical utterances have distinct propositional contents. Another insufficiency in Davidson’s account

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<sup>96</sup> Cooper, p. 72.

<sup>97</sup> qtd. in Cooper, p. 72.

occurs in regards to the importance he places on the dependence of the metaphorical on the literal. In 'What Metaphors Mean,' he does not appear to explain adequately how metaphor relies on literal meaning. Stern notes that, while Davidson insists on this dependence, 'much of what is usually included in our notion of the literal meaning of a sentence does no work in and is even excluded from, Davidson's account of this dependence relation.'<sup>98</sup> In due course, we must therefore limit the extent to which we use a metaphor's literal meaning to explain its effects. A final area in which Davidson's account lacks is an explanation for why we use metaphor. In other words, he does not spell out its purpose or function despite how prevalent it occurs in communication. In the following chapter, I will seek to explain metaphor's role in communication, which in turn I feel may explain how metaphor works. However, we will first explore Searle's position on metaphor and investigate how, like Davidson's, it does not sufficiently explain what metaphor is and how it works.

### **§31 Searle and metaphor as utterer's meaning**

'Metaphor,' Searle's paper on the matter at hand, adopts a less radical position in contrast to Davidson's outright rejection of metaphorical meaning. While Searle does nonetheless relies on the term 'speaker meaning,' his position nonetheless rejects metaphorical meaning. Searle views metaphor as a 'special case' wherein 'speaker and sentence meaning come apart.'<sup>99</sup> In other words, communication is successful although the words uttered do not mean what the utterer meant. He therefore compares metaphorical utterances to irony and other forms indirect speech acts. Taking into account his view of the necessity of linguistic rules, Searle feels that a set of principles that we must follow when we speak metaphorically. These principles also distinguish

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<sup>98</sup> qtd. in Nogales, p. 118.

<sup>99</sup> p. 84. All references to Searle in this chapter will be to Searle 1993 unless otherwise noted.

metaphorical utterances from other utterances where utterer's meaning and sentence meaning separate. As I feel Davidson's arguments against other theories on metaphor are the most decisive, I will not take issue with Searle's criticisms. Instead, we will begin to investigate the principles of metaphorical interpretation that he delineates at the end of his essay.

At the beginning of the section regarding the principles, Searle restates the problem as follows:

How is it possible for the speaker to say metaphorically "*S is P*" and mean "*S is R*," when *P* does not plainly mean *R*; furthermore, How is it possible for the hearer who hears the utterance "*S is P*" to know the speaker means "*S is R*"?<sup>100</sup>

The most simple answer he gives is that *P* is used to make the hearer think of the meaning and truth conditions associated with *R*. This must be done accordingly in a systematic manner as guided by the principles he seeks to set out. Nonetheless, before a hearer interprets a metaphorical utterance, the utterance must be identified as a metaphor. Searle provides three steps that allow a hearer to identify a metaphorical utterance as such, the first of which being: *'Where the utterance is defective if taken literally, look for an utterance meaning that differs from sentence meaning.'*<sup>101</sup> The easiest means of doing so are to recognize a sentence such as 'Sam is a pig' as false when taken literally or as otherwise nonsensical. The next step is *to find possible values for R by looking for ways in which S might be like P through P's salient features*. Concerning the sample utterance, we may think of pigs as dirty, gluttonous, fat, etc. That this set of features is indefinite requires another step where the number of possible *R*'s is limited: *'Go back to the S term and see which of the many candidates for the values of R are likely or even possible properties of S.'*<sup>102</sup> For example, this step allows us to interpret 'Sam's car is a pig' differently from

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<sup>100</sup> p. 102, emphasis in original.

<sup>101</sup> p. 103.

<sup>102</sup> p. 104.

'Sam is a pig' even though they contain a similar metaphor. While Searle's account of metaphor has other notable details, we will now begin to dismantle what we have of his position. For more insight into Searle's theory of metaphor, consult the final two sections of this chapter (§§34 and 35).

### §32 Problems with Searle's approach to metaphor

Searle intends to distinguish between what a speaker means making an utterance and by what the utterance means by itself. According to him, 'metaphorical meaning is always speaker's utterance meaning.'<sup>103</sup> In making this distinction, Searle cleverly can use 'speaker's meaning' to refer to either '*speaker's meaning*' or '*speaker's meaning*'.<sup>104</sup> Using the former, he can avoid rigid semantic criteria such as context-independence while incorporating propositions associated with the utterance that are nonetheless not contained in sentence meaning. Implementing the other classification, 'he implies that the regularity of semantics applies to the determination of [metaphorical] content, thus rescuing it from Davidson's "jungle of use."<sup>105</sup> That Searle can use the expression 'speaker meaning' so freely should suggest that his position is questionable if we consider meaning as constant between contexts. Even if we were to consider 'speaker meaning' only in terms of its communicative role, there are a number of possible interpretations that could be used. If we interpret speaker meaning to be that which reflects a speaker's beliefs, a problem would arise immediately if we examine the case of lies. For a lie to be successful under this definition, the hearer must not grasp the speaker meaning. However, this contradicts Searle's major assertion that communication is only successful if and only if the hearer understands the speaker meaning. Another possible interpretation is 'that speaker meaning is intended to

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<sup>103</sup> p. 84.

<sup>104</sup> Nogales, p. 140 n. 35.

capture the main point of the utterance.<sup>106</sup> This reduces speaker's meaning to utterance meaning and accordingly suggests that all utterances have a proposition that captures such a 'main point.' Nonetheless, this is obviously not the case that all utterances have a 'main point.' As such, it appears that this explanation of speaker meaning is too much like the problematic conception of paraphrase.

Searle's position of metaphor is also faulty since he appears to conflate the distinction between the literal and metaphorical with that between the direct and indirect speech acts. He tends to treat the literal/non-literal distinction as something that occurs at a semantic level as it arises from the connection between an utterance and the proposition it expresses. According to Searle, in cases of metaphor 'the meanings of the words uttered by the speaker do not exactly and literally express what the speaker meant.'<sup>107</sup> Such a statement implies that the literal/non-literal distinction involves the connection between sentence meaning and its expressed proposition. Nonetheless, in the figure at the end of 'Metaphor,' Searle says the following: '*Literal Utterance.* A speaker says *S is P* and he means *S is P*. Thus the speaker places object *S* under the concept *P*, where  $P=R$ . Sentence meaning and utterance meaning coincide.'<sup>108</sup> Nogales notes that using this definition to explain literal utterances implies that the distinction occurs at the level of speech acts, that literal utterances are the same as direct speech acts, and that non-literal utterances are those wherein speaker and sentence meaning separate.<sup>109</sup> In the same figure in Searle's essay, he also contrasts this definition with those speech acts whose sentence meaning and speaker meaning do not coincide. Accordingly, he treats non-literal speech acts as indirect speech acts. If Searle is

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<sup>105</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> Nogales, p. 144.

<sup>107</sup> p. 84.

<sup>108</sup> p. 110.

intentionally doing this, he is therefore equating the literal/non-literal distinction with the direct/indirect distinction. He may therefore intend to reject the former, suggesting that it be therefore expressed completely in the latter.

Nonetheless, his identification of metaphor as an indirect speech act is also problematic. In 'Indirect Speech Acts,' he defines such acts as 'cases in which one illocutionary act is performed indirectly by way of performing another.'<sup>110</sup> In every instance of an indirect speech act, two acts are always performed, wherein a speaker communicates the intention to commit a non-literal act using non-literal means. Each act must also be a distinct act identified by a distinct illocutionary force. Likewise, for an illocutionary act to be indirect, the primary illocutionary act must be non-literal. However, metaphor apparently does not meet the necessary criteria of indirect speech acts, primarily since what makes a metaphorical utterance such is independent of illocutionary force. If, on occasion of a metaphorical utterance, we are not aware of the speaker's intentions or that if the speaker communicates them to the hearer, we are unable to determine whether the utterance is direct. We *can* still determine whether the utterance is metaphorical regardless of our knowledge of the speaker's intentions.<sup>111</sup> Metaphorical utterances consequently do not meet Searle's criteria of indirect speech acts other than those that occur within as an indirect speech act. Even if we were to claim that there is little difference between metaphor and indirect speech acts because in both we 'need more information,' the type of knowledge required to derive the metaphorical content is significantly different from that which determines [in]directness.

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<sup>109</sup> p. 145.

<sup>110</sup> Searle 1996, p. 168.

<sup>111</sup> Nogales, p. 146.

### §33 Epilogue: reclaiming the concept of metaphorical meaning

In this chapter, we have seen how the rejection of metaphorical meaning fails both in terms of the positions of Davidson and Searle. We now should concern ourselves with reestablishing the possibility of metaphorical meaning. Nonetheless, the theories of meaning that have been outlined in the first two chapters appear to be fundamentally incompatible with an account of meaning that includes the possibility of metaphor as a valid part of language. Accordingly, we will have to reconsider the extent to which these theories are involved in a philosophy of language that deems metaphor to be a central aspect. Since (dead) metaphors seem to be deeply ingrained in language, we should attempt to determine the extent that meaning is primarily metaphorical. In the following chapter, we will investigate metaphor and attempt to determine whether it has meaning, why it is used, and how it relates to the theories that we investigated earlier.

### §34 Appendix 1: Searle's eight principles of metaphorical interpretation

After Searle's discussion of the steps used by a hearer to determine the metaphorical nature of an utterance, he provides his set of principles to determine the meaning of *R*. Nonetheless, Searle himself notes that he has most likely not given the complete set of principles yet offers them as a starting point. The first principle, that *things that are P are by definition R*, is exemplified by the metaphorical utterance 'Sam is a giant.' When taken metaphorically, this utterance should mean that Sam is big since a salient feature of being a giant is size. The second principle, that *that which is P is contingently R*, correlates a metaphorical utterance to a literal simile. The utterance 'Sam is a pig' may conjure images of Sam's sloppiness and gluttony. In addition, small changes in the *P* term (cf. 'Sam is a pig' and 'Sam is a hog') can cause substantial changes in the *R* term. Principle three states that *things that are P are often said or believed*

to be R, even though both utterer and hearer may know that R is false of P. While we may know that 'gorillas are shy, timid, and sensitive creatures ... generations of gorilla mythology have set up associations' that allow 'Richard is a gorilla' to mean 'Richard has a short temper, etc.'<sup>112</sup> The fourth principle asserts that *although things that are P are not R we may perceive a connection between the two so that we associate the utterance of P with R properties*. Therefore, although there are no literal similarities between 'Sally is a block of ice' and 'Sally is unemotional,' we nonetheless perceive a connection that allows us to interpret the utterance. Principle five says that *while P things are not like R things nor are believed to be as such, the condition of being P is like the condition of being R*. For example, if I say 'You have become an aristocrat,' I do not mean that you have become *like* an aristocrat, but that your status is similar to that of an aristocrat.<sup>113</sup> The sixth principle, that *there are cases where P and R have similar meanings but one term has a restricted application that does not literally apply to S*. Principle seven is somewhat different in that is a method of application for the first six principles to those outside of the form 'S is P.' Searle asks us to consider such relational metaphors as 'The ship plows the sea' and 'ton was the father of his country':

In each case, we have a literal utterance of two noun phrases surrounding a metaphorical utterance of a relational term ... The hearer's task is not to go from "S is P" to "S is R" but to go from "S P-relation S'" to "S R-relation S'" ... [one] has to find a relation R which is different from relation P but is similar to it in some respect.<sup>114</sup>

The final principle that Searle cites considers metonymy and synecdoche as forms of metaphor. For example, we can speak of the government of the United States as 'the White House' or 'the Capitol' by implementing his systematic principles. Nonetheless, the last principle is not nearly as important in the general scope of an analysis of metaphor.

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<sup>112</sup> p. 105.

<sup>113</sup> Searle, p. 106.

### §35 Appendix 2: Searle on metaphor and irony

Searle's article concludes by comparing his principles for metaphor to those on which irony and other indirect speech acts rely. In his example, Searle imagines a person accidentally breaking an antique vase and an onlooker who responds by uttering 'That was a brilliant thing to do.' The mechanism by which we can recognize the ironical content of this utterance is relatively straightforward: 'the utterance, if taken literally, is obviously inappropriate to the situation.'<sup>115</sup> The occurrence of such an 'anomalous' utterance should cause us to interpret it with a meaning the opposite of which it has literally. Similarly, in the case of indirect speech acts such as 'Can you pass the salt?' (as opposed to 'Please pass the salt'), Searle provides some simple principles to explain the hearer's recognition of the utterer's intended meaning. The first principle is similar to that of irony in that we recognize an utterance as anomalous. Secondly, since the hearer is aware of the rules of speech acts, he knows that the ability to pass the salt is a necessity on the act of a request for him to do so. Therefore, the hearer should therefore be able to infer that the question is a polite way of requesting that he pass the salt.

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<sup>114</sup> p. 106.

<sup>115</sup> pp. 108-109.

## Chapter 4: Towards a positive account of metaphorical meaning

### §36 Why metaphor matters: an introductory perspective

As we have seen in the preceding chapter, Davidson and Searle's accounts of metaphor, which reject the existence of metaphorical meaning, suffer from serious weaknesses and inconsistencies. Such comprehensive flaws suggest that many prominent philosophers of language have overlooked metaphor's necessity in the development of theories of meaning and understanding. Furthermore, the tendency within analytic philosophy to ignore that which is not, in a very ecumenical sense, 'scientific' left metaphor as the subject of 'softer' disciplines such as rhetoric, philology, pragmatics, and various strains of literary criticism. However, none other than W. V. Quine noted that:

It is a mistake, then, to think of linguistic usage as literalistic in its main body and metaphorical in its trimming. Metaphor, or something like it, governs both the growth of language and our acquisition of it.<sup>116</sup>

Quine's statement is nonetheless weak, particularly in light of Davidson's claim that metaphor is important but only has a literal meaning.<sup>117</sup> However, it suggests that metaphor does play more of a role than we, as philosophers of language, would have expected.

This chapter aims to reestablish metaphor as a vital and primary element in the philosophy of language, particularly in terms of constructing theories of meaning and understanding. We will begin by investigating metaphor and its compatibility with the two theories of meaning delineated in the first two chapters: the Gricean and Lewisian approach (intention and convention) and Searle's regarding constitutive semantic rules. By establishing their significant incompatibilities with metaphor, I intend to establish

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<sup>116</sup> Quine, p. 160.

<sup>117</sup> Davidson, p. 246.

that all meaning is, to some extent, metaphorical. Metaphor is, therefore, a necessary dimension in any theory of understanding. This further suggests that any descriptive account of the world is therefore metaphorical for we must rely on a metaphor to unify our claims about the world. Furthermore, we will attempt to find a clear reason for why we use metaphor and why metaphor is essential to the phenomena of language. Also using our newly developed position, we will take another look at the problem of ‘dead metaphors,’ the possibility of paraphrasability, and Quine’s remark cited above.

### **§37 Metaphor, semantic anomaly, and the Gricean/Lewisian and Searlian theories of meaning: how to reclaim metaphorical meaning**

Most theories of metaphor treat metaphorical utterances as semantically anomalous or deviant.<sup>118</sup> Some claim such utterances involve intentional misapplications of ‘categories,’ e.g., animate versus inanimate (‘Margaret Thatcher is a bulldozer,’ ‘The stone died’).<sup>119</sup> These category mistakes in part are what cause us to perceive metaphors as either ‘trivially true or patently false.’<sup>120</sup> In the first two chapters of this thesis, we examined two major theories of meaning: a Gricean analysis of intention supplemented by Lewis’ account of convention, and a theory reliant on constitutive rules as provided by Searle. While in the preceding chapter we addressed issues that will ultimately lead us to reject these theories of meaning, I will now redirect the problem of metaphor so that it faces both theories equally. If we rely on theories such as those which Grice, Lewis, and Searle advocate, we find that metaphorical utterances appear to break conventions and/or semantic rules. For example, Rumelhart describes a metaphorical conversation between his wife and one of his sons: ‘[He] remarked: “Hey, Mom, my sock has a hangnail.” My wife, quietly, and without special

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<sup>118</sup> This, however, is not the same as the so-called ‘deviance theory’ that accounts for the distinction between metaphor and analogy (cf. Mac Cormac, pp. 24, 26, and 31-33). See Levin, chapters 1-3, for his attempt to fit metaphor (as semantically deviant) within the frame of traditional semantics.

note, responded: “Don’t worry about it, I’ll fix it when we get home,” and the topic was dropped.’<sup>121</sup>

Assuming that, in most cases, the ‘traditional program of semantic analysis ... can provide a reasonable account of the *conveyed meanings* ... of many sentences in English,’ Rumelhart states that cases like his son’s utterance such an analysis is inappropriate:

We cannot suppose that there was an *actual* hangnail on my son’s sock ... unless we assume that the lexical entry for “hangnail” includes provision for a thread hanging from something (an after-the-fact interview ... indicated that my son knew that ... [it] was not a *real* hangnail), we are forced to the conclusion that the literal meaning of such an utterance offers no account of its conveyed meaning.<sup>122</sup>

This leads us to the same problem regarding rules that arose when we investigated Searle’s theory of meaning. Again, his theory consists in the claim that semantic rules, which govern what characteristics a predicate expresses, determine the meaning of a predicate term. However, Searle’s assumption restricts the possibility of creativity within predicate use and seems to misunderstand the nature of rules in the sense that they cannot determine their own application. We can, for example, use the phrase ‘set ablaze’ in a number of various manners: ‘He set the house ablaze,’ ‘The sky was set ablaze,’ ‘She set my heart ablaze,’ etc. The problem arises when we attempt to express the set of semantic rules that govern the use of a predicate. If we can be creative in our language use, then rules must not determine future use; instead, they only act as guides expressing past use. Furthermore, we cannot distinguish between literal and metaphorical use by whether or not we are ‘carrying on in the same way’ since we cannot specify what can be considered as such only using rules.<sup>123</sup> Instead, semantic

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<sup>119</sup> Nogales, p. 9; Levin, pp. 33-34.

<sup>120</sup> See §§24, 26, and 30 of this thesis and Cooper, pp. 30-31.

<sup>121</sup> p. 72.

<sup>122</sup> p. 74, emphasis in original.

<sup>123</sup> Wittgenstein, §185.

rules guide rather than decide the application of predicates. Since ‘metaphor involves applying old predicates to new things, ... the use of any predicate in a new situation is a little metaphorical.’<sup>124</sup>

Davidson makes an important critical claim against such a position, that ‘there is no difference between metaphor and the introduction of a new term into our vocabulary: to make a metaphor is to murder it.’<sup>125</sup> While I consider metaphorical use similar to the introduction of a new lexical item, this theory is wrong in that metaphors do not die instantly upon their usage. Furthermore, Davidson’s position on dead metaphors is completely off the mark, and as such, we will investigate the process by which a metaphor ‘dies’ later in this chapter. I nevertheless choose to make a stronger claim regarding metaphor: that *all* meaning is to some extent metaphorical, and as such, metaphor is necessary for a theory of understanding. Metaphor is pervasive in all language that we use, and even if an utterance appears to be only literal, it most likely originated as being metaphorical. In Lakoff and Johnson’s groundbreaking book, *Metaphors We Live By*, ‘dead metaphors’ are viewed as still metaphorical and as an essential part of our thought processes. We use deeply rooted basic metaphors such as ‘ideas are objects’ and ‘time is a resource’ in our everyday uses of language; to avoid their use appears remarkably difficult. A similar claim regarding metaphor is given by Colin Murray Turbayne in his *The Myth of Metaphor*. Using the work of Newton, Descartes, and Plato to support his claims, he aims to prove that any descriptive or theoretical account of the world is metaphorical in that they require a basic metaphor to organize the multifarious aspects of the account. In Newtonian and Cartesian theories, the unifying metaphor is that of the world as a machine. Turbayne replaces Newton’s

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<sup>124</sup> Thomson, p. 14.

<sup>125</sup> p. 249.

mechanistic metaphor with a metaphor of the world as language, 'by using the metalanguage of ordinary language consisting of "signs," "things signified," "rules of grammar," and so on.'<sup>126</sup>

Language, metaphor, and the world are tightly interconnected, but we often overlook the metaphorical core since it is so deeply rooted in our descriptions of the 'literal world.' Nonetheless, we must remember that the theories of meaning investigated in the first two chapters rely on an assumption that *literal* meaning is more rudimentary than metaphorical meaning. If my claim holds true, we will then accordingly have to develop a new theory of understanding to correspond with my position. Furthermore, the distinction between metaphorical meaning and literal meaning is therefore mistaken as is normally understood, and accordingly the question of paraphrasability is mistaken as well. As such, it relies on such a strong distinction between the literal and the metaphorical, for the paraphrase itself, according to the theory, is a literal account of a metaphorical utterance.

### **§38 The ubiquity of metaphor: why we use it**

The major role that metaphor plays is that it serves to fill 'semantic gaps,' or the discontinuities that exist in the body of our lexical and semantic knowledge. In other words, we tend to use metaphor when we cannot find a suitable expression to describe something about either the world or ourselves; metaphor, then, is a manner of pushing the meaning of existing words to new frontiers. In Nogales' terms, '[metaphor] allows us to describe entities for which we have no name in away that ... fits the entity into an existing framework.'<sup>127</sup> The most obvious example is that of children such as Rumelhart's son in the example cited above. Rumelhart asserts that such nonliteral

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<sup>126</sup> pp. 69-70.

<sup>127</sup> p. 216.

word use is neither unusual nor special, and it should be viewed accordingly as an active part of language acquisition in children. In his view, children learn words in terms of a specific domain of reference that does not limit their application; as such, 'some features of the use situation presumably are relevant, and others presumably are not.'<sup>128</sup>

Accordingly, a child learns 'proper,' (i.e., 'conventional' from the view that holds literal meaning as primary) usage of a word through the experience of using the word in a variety of situations. When a child happens to use a word in the conventional manner, we view the child as making a literal utterance. On the other hand, when a child breaks convention and applies the word in a nonstandard way, we tend to claim that the child is making a metaphorical utterance. After a child learns the meaning of the word 'open' through a context of a person's open mouth, Rumelhart imagines the following as a possibility for the child's future application of the word:

If the child uses the term "open" to mean "turn on" (as with a television set or a light) the child will be perceived as having produced a metaphor. Yet the process of applying words to situations is much the same in the two cases – namely that of *finding the best word or concept to communicate the idea in mind*. For the child the production of literal and nonliteral speech may involve *exactly* the same processes.<sup>129</sup>

Again, the difficulty with the notion of rule-determined semantics arises, for the child may have thought that she was 'carrying on in the same way' when she expressed the desire to 'open a lamp.' The child could have further chosen the word 'open' to express her proposition since she could not find another word to fit her intended proposition adequately.

We also use metaphorical statements in education and the creation of theories (in particular, scientific and metaphysical theories).<sup>130</sup> Similarly to the case of children

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<sup>128</sup> p. 73.

<sup>129</sup> *ibid.*, emphasis added.

<sup>130</sup> See Scheffler, essay 4, and Ortony, essays 9, 13, and 20-27.

metaphorical descriptions of the world assist us in understanding abstract concepts, e.g., causation, through concrete concepts (in this case, a machine). Furthermore, as Wheelwright notes, the word ‘metaphor’ itself was once figurative, since ‘by its etymology ... the word implies motion (*phora*) that is also change (*meta*)—the reference being to *semantic motion*, not physical.’<sup>131</sup> Nogales suggests that in such cases metaphor acts similarly to a diagram used to solve a mathematical equation. While properties like the color and spatial location of the diagram are considered irrelevant, other properties allow us to ‘manipulate the model and use it either as a basis for speculation ... or even as a means of deriving conclusions.’<sup>132</sup> While Quine claims that ‘the neatly worked inner stretches of science are an open space in the jungle, created by clearing tropes away,’ we find that doing so prevents us from saying anything about the world.<sup>133</sup> Metaphysical concepts like time, causation, and the mind are dependent on the metaphorical explanations that philosophers use to describe them, although metaphysics is ‘supposed to characterize what is real—literally real.’<sup>134</sup> Metaphor inevitably plays some role in every utterance we make, no matter how literal we think it is.

### §39 Exhuming metaphor: metaphorical ‘death’ and conventionalization

In section 25, I began to address problems with the notion of ‘dead metaphor’ regarding the Davidsonian rejection of metaphorical meaning. In review, Davidson claimed that ‘dead metaphors,’ those that no longer inspire metaphorical interpretation, can be used to prove that metaphorical utterances only have literal meaning. This is because Davidson suggests that the literal meaning of a dead metaphor would be the same as the metaphorical meaning when an utterance was still ‘alive.’ While many have

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<sup>131</sup> p. 69, emphasis added.

<sup>132</sup> Nogales, p. 217.

<sup>133</sup> p. 160.

<sup>134</sup> Lakoff and Johnson 1999, p. 14.

argued against the simplistic notion that dead metaphors are not metaphorical or the concept of 'dead metaphor' is fundamentally misleading, there is considerable difficulty in finding an analysis of how a metaphor 'dies.'<sup>135</sup> I agree with those who argue against Davidson in that the so-called 'death' of a metaphor is not a black and white, polar issue. However, metaphor appears to go through a very clear and unique process wherein a metaphorical utterance's meaning becomes increasingly conventionalized. I consider the account of Lakoff and Johnson (1980) that most 'dead metaphors' are conventionalized, systematic, and still metaphorical to be mostly correct. Nonetheless, they do not delineate the process by which this occurs, which I view as a central tenet of explaining the development of our 'literal' lexicon.

To begin my account of metaphorical 'death,' let us first note the distinction between two types of metaphor noted by Wheelwright in *Metaphor and Reality*. The first, 'epiphor,' originates in Aristotle's *Poetics* as his description of metaphor as the 'transference' of a name to something else. Epiphor relies on the assumption of a common, concrete usage of a word to explain a more abstract or vague application, such as 'the milk of human kindness.'<sup>136</sup> The other type of metaphor is diaphor, wherein the 'semantic motion' occurs 'through' the juxtaposition of meaning between two words or phrases. Most instances of diaphor are occasions of novel metaphorical usage, most notably in the case of abstruse literary metaphors. I am inclined to say that many metaphors start as diaphors and become epiphors, but it is clear to me that this is not necessarily so. Therefore, I suggest that metaphors originate as novel diaphors or epiphors, and if they are the former, they become the latter.

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<sup>135</sup> See Lakoff and Johnson 1980, Goodman, and Cooper, ch. 3.

<sup>136</sup> Wheelwright, p. 73.

The next step that occurs is the conventionalization of a metaphor's meaning. Many of the examples that Lakoff and Johnson provide in *Metaphors We Live By* fall into this category, such as 'argument is war,' 'ideas are people,' and 'life is a container.' This conventionalization occurs because of the repeated use of a metaphor, as in the case of anger as fire that Davidson cites throughout 'What Metaphors Mean.' Lakoff and Johnson claim that such metaphors remain metaphorical despite their conventionalization since they are involved in highly systematic conceptual schemata that are hierarchical to unite subclasses of metaphors under larger 'headings.' For example, consider the conventional metaphor of time as a resource. Under such a category, we find other metaphors, such as 'time is money,' wherein we spend it, are told not to waste it, etc. In addition to Lakoff and Johnson's position, I claim that such conventional metaphors remain metaphorical since they are a convention of a specific group, e.g., speakers of a language  $L$  in a particular region  $j$ . While speakers of  $L$  in region  $k$  may have nearly the same set of conventions of those in  $j$ , it is nonetheless possible that dialectical differences may play enough of a difference to lead to different interpretations of the same metaphorical utterance. The final stage in the death of a metaphor is when all traces of metaphorical use disappear and the previously metaphorical use becomes part of the lexical definition or extension of the term. This is exemplified by words such as 'hood' (when used to describe part of a car) and 'pedigree' (from the Old French 'pie de grue' ['crane's foot'], used to describe the appearance of genealogical trees). When this occurs, there is presumably no way to restore the metaphorical aspect as we think of it. Thus we are no longer invited to posit our own interpretations on it unless the term is used in a distinctly metaphorical manner that either relies on an ordinary meaning either applied or opposed to that of another term.

#### §40 The importance of metaphor: an epilogue

While many traditional theories in the philosophy of language view metaphor as problematic, we have seen its necessity to theories of how we understand language since all meaning is, to some extent, metaphorical. Furthermore, metaphor is also essential since it assists in bringing together parts of our semantic knowledge. As such, we can consider metaphor as playing a major role in several distinct conceptions of language development. In the case of metaphor serving to fill semantic gaps for children, metaphor is quintessential to a child's language development. More specifically, metaphor plays a primary role in the development of a child's lexical knowledge.<sup>137</sup> In light of the conventionalization of metaphors, this process also serves to expand our vocabulary. Although all meaning may be metaphorical, it is hard to deny that some expressions like those mentioned at the end of the last section have lost their metaphorical character. We have so far established the importance of metaphor and rethought its place in the philosophy of language. Therefore, we shall continue in our investigation of communication and begin exploring the part other than meaning: understanding. Understanding itself must be metaphorical, and we must investigate what this means and the implications it has on our inquiry regarding communication. Nonetheless, since the focus of this thesis has been metaphorical meaning, I will only provide a preliminary investigation.

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<sup>137</sup> Menyuk, pp. 155-156.

## Chapter 5: Metaphor and the nature of understanding: a conclusion

### §41 Analyzing communication: an introduction

This thesis regards two main topics—communication and metaphor—and their interaction. Thus far, we have only investigated these two topics in part, focusing on meaning in terms of theories thereof and the possibility of metaphorical meaning. Nonetheless, communication is not only concerned with the meaning of utterances. It appears as though theories of communication involve two complementary parts, since such theories must accommodate and coordinate both speakers and hearers of a language. Meaning is the part of communication that regards the ability of speakers being able to use a language. Accordingly, we need to discover the part of communication that accounts for the ability of hearers to interpret (the meaning of) a speaker's utterance. Another corresponding part is an account of communication that explains successful instances of communication in regards to a speaker and successful understanding in terms of a hearer. Nonetheless, this is *not* the same as the distinction between semantics and pragmatics made by many philosophers of language.

However, the philosophy of language assumes that literal language and meaning is fundamental and therefore has proceeded to construct theories based on this dogma. This causes not only metaphor, but other facets of language such as irony and ambiguity to be viewed as 'deviant' as well. In turn, this has led to the view that such 'deviant' aspects of language should be disregarded until a satisfactory account of literal communication (and meaning) has been given. In opposition to this, we have discovered that all meaning is to some extent metaphorical. We must therefore discover a suitable understanding of understanding that accepts all meaning as metaphorical. Obviously, since this thesis is primarily concerned with meaning, I cannot provide an

extremely detailed account of understanding. Instead, I offer a preliminary investigation into a process of understanding that allows the possibility of metaphor.

#### **§42 On metaphorical meaning and convention**

As we have seen, metaphor is an essential part of language in that all meaning is to some extent metaphorical. Accordingly, an account of metaphor is essential to theories of understanding and meaning. As such, any account of the world that we can give is metaphorical, since we cannot present a literal account of the world. This is because any account of the world assumes a basic metaphor to organize our statements about it. For example, consider spatial metaphors and nonspatial applications, such as 'having something in mind.' Under this model, metaphor plays an essential part in expanding our literal lexicon. Philosophers who reject the possibility of metaphorical meaning, such as Davidson, often consider dead metaphor as nothing special. Nonetheless, most of that which he and others consider as 'dead metaphors' are actually being 'conventionalized.' The steps in this process differ significantly from the simple distinction between an active and inactive metaphorical utterance suggested by Davidson. Metaphorical utterances first originate as novel metaphors. Through repeated use, they begin to lose their novelty and become conventionalized. Most Davidsonian dead metaphors fall into this category, such as that of understanding as grasping. Finally, the metaphor becomes truly dead, wherein the metaphorical meaning no longer calls to mind the same content it did when it was novel. For example, consider the following dead metaphors: 'hood' (as a part of a car), 'pedigree' (from the Old French 'pie de grue,' 'crane's foot')<sup>138</sup>, and 'daisy' (a contraction of 'day's eye').

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<sup>138</sup> 'Pedigree' was used to describe the appearance of family lineage charts, which understandably look like the foot of a bird.

As we have seen in the second and fourth chapters, Searle's theory of meaning requires closed semantic rules to fix the application of a predicate. Such an account is fundamentally incompatible with metaphor since it is irreconcilable with the manner in which we choose to apply predicates in novel ways. Nonetheless, to justify metaphor within the philosophy of language, we must discover an account of meaning that permits of metaphorical utterances. We must therefore find an account of meaning compatible with this explanation of metaphorical meaning before we investigate the nature of understanding. Since we rejected Searle's account, we may want to investigate using a theory of meaning based on convention as the most viable alternative to a rule-based model. At first glance, such theory however appears to be incompatible with metaphor, for metaphor appears to break convention. Furthermore, the use of a speaker's intentions to interpret a metaphorical utterance appears to be secondary if not irrelevant.<sup>139</sup> Nonetheless, we may be able to adapt this theory so it is suitable to account for metaphorical meaning.

Let us first consider convention as part of an account of meaning that includes metaphor. Conventions, unlike Searlian semantic rules, do not determine future use, allowing the possibility of metaphor. In other words, metaphor is possible since predicates are based on open-textured conventions that allow creativity in predicate application. The process of a metaphor's 'death' involves conventionalization wherein the utterance loses its novelty and its cognitive content changes. Nonetheless, such conventionalized metaphors seem to have some of the same metaphorical cognitive content, for they may not exist outside of a community of users of a particular language or dialect. For example, consider the interpretation of the utterance 'He kicked the bucket' by a nonnative speaker of English. Although Davidson and Nogales regard

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<sup>139</sup> See §§27-29.

such an utterance as a prime example of a dead metaphor, one easily recognizes that such an utterance may not be easily understood if one cannot use the semantic conventions of a given community. Despite appearances, convention may also play a significant role in our understanding of metaphors that are not yet conventionalized. Since, as discussed in the second and fourth chapters, rules cannot determine future action, they can only serve as guides expressing past use. This view of semantic rules makes them somewhat similar in character to conventions, since semantic conventions co-ordinate speakers and hearers by reference to past action. Furthermore, Davidson appears to be partially correct in his view that metaphors rely on literal language.<sup>140</sup> We have nonetheless changed our view of meaning to be primarily metaphorical in nature. Accordingly, Davidson's claim is not directly compatible with the account we are trying to construct. Unlike a claim made Davidson, I feel that metaphor is not *exactly* the same of the introduction of a new term into a language.<sup>141</sup> Metaphor relies on the use of words that already exist and have meanings rather than the construction of neologisms whose meanings are determined by the lexemes used in their composition. Furthermore, the most basic aspect of successful interpretation of a metaphorical utterance relies on knowledge of the meanings of the words used in the utterance. While distinct from Davidson's claim that metaphors rely in the *literal* meanings of words, we can see that metaphor necessarily relies on antecedent meanings. Moreover, semantic convention is a suitable method to account for this reliance considering our new analysis of it in regards to metaphor.

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<sup>140</sup> p. 249.

<sup>141</sup> pp. 248-249.

### §43 The metaphorical nature of understanding

Now that we have deliberated at length regarding meaning and metaphor, we shall now discuss the other part of our reconstructed philosophy of language—understanding. We have seen that a theory of meaning necessarily includes metaphor, and, consequently, understanding itself is in part metaphorical. This is because understanding necessarily involves the implementation of knowledge regarding meaning when a hearer interprets a speaker's utterance. Nonetheless, on what does this understanding rest? Relying on a Wittgensteinian view, Stanley Cavell makes the following remark:

We learn and teach words in certain context, and then we are expected, and expect others, to be able to project them into further contexts. Nothing insures that this projection will take place ... just as nothing insures that we will make, and understand, the same projections. That on the hole we do is a matter of our sharing routes of interest and feeling, modes of response, senses of humor and of significance and of fulfillment...—all the whirl of organism Wittgenstein calls 'forms of life.' Human speech and activity, sanity and community, rest upon nothing more, but nothing less, than this. It is a vision a vision as simple as it is difficult, and as difficult as it is terrifying.<sup>142</sup>

This accords with our rejection of the possibility of semantic rules determining future use of words and predicates as well as our affirmation of the possibility of semantic conventions. Nonetheless, we are likely to experience the terror he describes at the end of the passage when we realize that 'there is nothing that keeps our practices in line except the reactions and responses we learn in learning them.'<sup>143</sup> This terror, or 'vertigo' as McDowell calls it, may tempt us to return to a view that treats rules as rails that determine our course of action. We notice here that understanding is metaphorical in another way; it appears that accounts of understanding themselves rely on (usually conventionalized) metaphorical language. In this case, we rely on a conventionalized metaphor of ideas (in this case, rules) as objects (rails).

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<sup>142</sup> p. 52.

<sup>143</sup> McDowell, p. 149.

The metaphorical aspect of understanding is highly pervasive and primarily relies on the conventionalized metaphors of ‘ideas are objects’ and ‘understanding is seeing’ identified by Lakoff and Johnson.<sup>144</sup> The ‘understanding is seeing’ metaphor seems more basic than that of ‘ideas are objects,’ and as such, it should be easier to discover the metaphorical nature of understanding. For example, McDowell asks why we should be concerned with finding an external *perspective* from which we can view the rules of language if the notion of a rule is fundamentally problematic. In cases where there are disagreements regarding concept applications that are not resolved, we often make statements such as ‘You simply aren’t seeing it’ or ‘But don’t you see?’<sup>145</sup> Nonetheless, our understanding does not rely on an external vantagepoint for rules, and as such, ‘we should accept that sometimes there may be nothing better to do than explicitly to appeal to a hoped-for community of human response.’<sup>146</sup> Understanding is also metaphorical in light of the ‘understanding as grasping’ metaphor. Lakoff and Johnson ask us to consider the two following statements: ‘If an object has gone over one’s head, then one hasn’t grasped it,’ and ‘If an idea has “gone over one’s head,” then one hasn’t understood it.’<sup>147</sup> The roots of this metaphor originate in the word ‘comprehend,’ which in Latin both meant ‘hold tightly’ and ‘understand.’ The use of ‘comprehend’ in English to mean ‘hold tightly’ is viewed as archaic, and only the ‘semantic mapping’ of comprehension to understanding remains. Nonetheless, this is an instance of conventionalized metaphor rather than dead metaphor since the metaphorical aspect of ‘understanding as grasping’ retains an explicitly metaphorical cognitive content.

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<sup>144</sup> Lakoff and Johnson 1999, pp. 124-125, 541, and 545.

<sup>145</sup> McDowell, p. 151.

<sup>146</sup> McDowell, p. 153.

<sup>147</sup> p. 125.

#### §44 Understanding and intentionality: on what we understand

To determine the nature of understanding, we must accordingly determine what it is we understand and the process involved in such an understanding. While it may be tempting to say that we understand the meaning of an utterance, it does not appear to say anything beyond our ordinary intuitions about understanding. No matter what we try understanding, we always try to understand *something*—not an ontological ‘thing’ or object, but a particular cognitive content that arises from our interaction with the world and our consciousness. Our understanding is *about, of, or directed at* something, either sensory or nonsensory; for example, both ‘a color that one is aware of *as* a color ... and that  $2 + 2 = 4$  are contents.’<sup>148</sup> If our understanding indeed concerns itself with various cognitive contents, then we can say it is intentional or consists in intentional states; the intentionality of our understanding is that it *is* about or of something. It is important to note, however, the claim that understanding is intentional does not require a theory of meaning based on utterer’s intentions.

In first describing intentionality, we said our understanding could be directed at something. Jaakko Hintikka has chosen to refute this traditional view since it considers an act as intentional ‘if it has an object to which it is directed ... and if this object is somehow present in the act itself.’<sup>149</sup> In other words, all intentional acts seem to be directed at specific goals, which is clearly not so. A case in point is perception: we cannot choose what we perceive, nor is perception a process that has a specific aim. Nonetheless, perception is intentional, by virtue of it having a content about something. In other words, his view states perception is intentional because it is informational, and all informational activity requires ‘a distinction between states of affairs compatible

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<sup>148</sup> Zemach, p. 113.

<sup>149</sup> p. 81.

with this information and those incompatible with it.<sup>150</sup> Similarly, we appear to do the same when we understand something, for we need to choose (momentarily) a specific interpretation among a number of other possible, and possibly appropriate, interpretations. While we may *see as* in a potential infinity of ways, we cannot consider all candidates at once. In due course, it appears that understanding is a matter of degree. We may need to deliberate for an extended length of time in order to gain a better understanding of a given utterance. Zemach consequently tries to define the concept of '*better* understanding' rather than the concept of understanding:

Let us say that S understands the sentence 'p' better than S\* understands it iff, had S and S\* represented all possible situations, S would have scored higher than S\* in a contest of dividing them into p-situations and non-p-situations. Let us say that S understands the term 'F' better than S\* iff, had S and S\* represented all possible situations, S would have scored higher than S\* in dividing them into Fs and non-Fs. That defines a *degree* of understanding. What degree of understanding is deemed sufficient depends on circumstances and the needs for which understanding is required.<sup>151</sup>

Since we have defined a degree of understanding, we can now begin to examine in what the process of understanding consists. According to Wittgenstein, our experience of meaning is comparable to our visual experience of *seeing as*.<sup>152</sup> Although Davidson rejects metaphorical meaning, he nevertheless also links metaphor and *seeing as*.<sup>153</sup> This link shows us that there *is* something that we understand (i.e., an intentional content) when we interpret a metaphor. Consequently, since there is metaphorical meaning (regardless of the extent to which *all* meaning is metaphorical) it thus has a content that one can understand. We need a way to investigate the cognitive contents we arrive at when considering anything that needs interpretation. The following section will step outside of analytic field and graze in the possibly much greener pastures of the Continent and the area of hermeneutics.

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<sup>150</sup> p. 89. See also Hintikka, 'Information, Causality, and the Logic of Perception,' *Ajtus* 36 (1974).

<sup>151</sup> p. 117, emphasis in original.

<sup>152</sup> pp. 193-208.

<sup>153</sup> p. 263.

#### §45 Epilogue: hermeneutics as an anti-method of understanding

Throughout this thesis, we have seen how the assumption of necessity of closed semantic rules is fundamentally incompatible with an account of meaning as metaphorical. Such assumptions state that a traditional analytic exposition of meaning ‘must give an explicit account, not only of what anyone must know in order to know the meaning of any given expression, but of what constitutes having such knowledge.’<sup>154</sup> The distinction between ‘metaphorical’ and ‘literal’ language itself is problematic, for it is unclear whether or not the language with which we make this distinction itself is metaphorical or not. Hermeneutics, the branch of Continental philosophy concerned with understanding and interpretation, considers the task of rule-based semantics, as well as the sharp distinction between metaphorical and literal language, as misled. In essence, understanding cannot be reduced to any explanation reliant solely on rules. Hermeneutics claims that understanding must be an essential part of communication and our interaction with the world; otherwise, ‘there would be as little *meaning* to explain as there is when two computers are made to trade sentences with each other.’<sup>155</sup> Our involvement in the world determines the kind of relationship we have to those instances of intentionality. For example, reconsider that children make seemingly ‘false’ utterances that one can nonetheless interpret as metaphorical. Not only can we say that a child is using metaphor because of a ‘semantic gap,’<sup>156</sup> but that the child is doing so since she may find it easier to express the relationship between certain intentional contents as such. If language acquisition relies on a non-rule-based account of understanding, ‘there are no grounds for asserting that the conditions of meaning lie solely in rules or publicly communicable knowledge.’ The oft-confused

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<sup>154</sup> Michael Dummett, qtd. in Bowie, p. 121.

<sup>155</sup> Bowie, p. 136.

matter is that creativity in producing a potential infinity of sentences using a finite number of words and syntactic rules is not the same as creativity in predicate application.

The hermeneutic process relies on an essential type of circularity, named 'virtuous' (*contra* 'vicious') circularity by Heidegger. Within virtuous circularity, the 'preliminary look' that concerns and makes possible the inquiry is not explicitly assumed but rather reflected upon within the inquiry. We can see this most clearly in the so-called hermeneutic circle, wherein 'we can decipher the parts of the text only if we anticipate an understanding ... of the whole; and conversely, we can correct this anticipation ... only to the extent to which we explicate individual parts.'<sup>157</sup> Our various interpretations must also admit of criticism and reinterpretations themselves if we are to avoid relativism. Accordingly, the hermeneutic circle is not only concerned with the object or content that one tries to understand. It is equally concerned with self-understanding, for our interactions with the world as well as ourselves are what lead us to interpret in different ways. No one can completely objectify nor exclude oneself from the manner in which one understands; consequently, self-criticism is equally in order. Novel interpretations are appropriate as long as they 'continue a dialogue with the text and demonstrate the limitations of previous explorations of the text.'<sup>158</sup> Hoy makes a corresponding claim that 'a poem continues to have an effect as long as the dialogue leads to greater self-awareness of current questions and methodologies.'<sup>159</sup> Considering metaphor, we may see the beginnings of a new account of what is considered a 'dead metaphor.' Metaphorical utterances that do not prompt further dialogue leading to new

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<sup>156</sup> See §38.

<sup>157</sup> Jürgen Habermas, qtd. in D'Amico, p. 182.

<sup>158</sup> Hoy, p. 167.

<sup>159</sup> *ibid.*

insights are therefore dead. Also, we can determine a novel metaphor's success by the ability it has to prompt this process of interpretation. Hermeneutics appears to be an appropriate starting point for us to understand understanding in a way compatible with metaphor. By continuing the hermeneutic process, we can interpret metaphors in new ways. This is especially important when we consider the use of metaphorical utterances to invite interpretation.<sup>160</sup> This also leads us to think of metaphor and thus meaning as context-dependent in a different manner than explored earlier, for individuals as well as 'linguistic context' contribute to the interpretation of a given utterance.

What I have attempted to give in this final section is a sketch of a suitable account for exploration of understanding, specifically in terms of the metaphorical nature of language and communication. In this sketch, we have seen that understanding of metaphorical utterances must account for metaphoric intentionality. In addition, understanding should be a process like the hermeneutic circle that also involves the interpreters as well as the content they interpret. Obviously, we have not investigated hermeneutics in enough detail to determine whether it will be successful. Furthermore, what I have aimed to do is to show that (human) language is above all a tool for communication, an activity that requires two kinds of participants, a speaker and an audience. There can be meaning without language; in fact, Grice readily admitted this in his 'Meaning.'<sup>161</sup> We can communicate using gestures, music, dance, and through any other conceivable medium that involves someone who makes an 'utterance' and someone to interpret what the 'speaker' is trying to communicate. Rules cannot strictly govern communication concerning either part (i.e., meaning and understanding). An

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<sup>160</sup> See §§23 and 29.

<sup>161</sup> p. 92.

appropriate determination of meaning relies on a continuing cycle of interpretation that necessarily involves us and our interactions with the world. With this in mind, we must accordingly revolutionize the philosophy of language to be process-oriented rather than end-oriented.

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