

SUNY Oneonta ILL



ILLiad TN: 166706

Borrower: YOM

Lending String: YBM,*ZBM,BUF,BNG,YSM,NAM

Patron: DeLancey, Craig, Faculty

Journal Title: Journal of literary semantics.

Volume: 13 **Issue:** 1

Month/Year: January 1984 **Pages:** 35-56

Article Author: Martinich, A. P.

Article Title: A theory for metaphor

Imprint:

ILL Number: 110862339



Call #:

Location:

ODYSSEY ENABLED

Send Via: Odyssey

Charge

Maxcost: 0.01IFM

Shipping Address:

SUNY College at Oswego

LAND Delivery

OSWEGO, NY

Fax: 315-341-3194

Ariel:

Email: ill@oswego.edu

Notice: This Material May Be Protected By Copyright Law (TITLE 17 U.S. CODE)

A THEORY FOR METAPHOR

A.P. Martinich

A lot of interesting work has been done recently on the concept of a metaphor, and any adequate theory of metaphor will have to take account of much of this work, accommodating what is true and explaining where this recent work goes wrong. (Typically, this work errs either by overgeneralizing or by mistaking an essential but subordinate feature of metaphor for the whole or the most central feature.) However, as interesting as much of this work is, it lacks something essential to an adequate theory of metaphor, namely, a place within a more general theory of language or language use. The reason metaphor needs to be placed within a more general theory is that metaphor itself is a logically derivative phenomenon and, derivative, in particular, from some aspect of language use. In this paper, I will place metaphor within such a theory. Specifically, I will explain metaphor in terms of H.P. Grice's theory of conversation. By extending Grice's theory to account for metaphor, I am holding in effect that metaphor is pragmatically and not semantically based. Although there is a sense in which the sentence used metaphorically has a metaphorical meaning, this meaning is itself a consequence of the mechanisms that give rise to the metaphor and are not what makes the metaphor possible. In Grice's terminology, the metaphorical meaning of an utterance is an instance of utterance occasion meaning and not (applied) timeless utterance meaning.

I. Preliminary Theoretical Distinctions

Grice distinguishes a number of different elements within the total content of what a speaker signifies.¹ The first division he makes is into what the speaker says (or makes-as-if-to-say) and what he implies. Both of these elements come into play in the explanation of metaphor. Let's begin with the former notion. There are various senses of the word "say". A parrot can say, "Polly wants a cracker" and yet not mean anything by what he says. We are not interested in this sense of "say". An actor, rehearsing his lines for a play can say, "All the world's a stage", and mean those words to have their normal meaning without meaning that all the world's a stage. We are

not interested in this sense of "say" either. The sense of "say" in which we are interested involves more than simply uttering words and intending them to be perceived as having a meaning. In order to count as an instance of saying something, the words uttered must be used to refer to something or predicate something and have some force, directly or indirectly. A citizen, discussing a proposed governmental budget, might utter the sentence, "There will be a 100 billion dollar deficit this year", and thereby *say that* there will be a 100 billion dollar deficit. We can correctly report the citizen to be *saying that* such and such, while we cannot correctly report the parrot or the actor as saying anything in our sense, because neither the parrot nor the actor uses the utterance to communicate anything. Because of the legitimacy of using the "say that" locution in indirect speech to report what a speaker says, let's use the portmanteau expression "saying-that" to express this sense of "say". This sense of "say" is closely tied to the words actually uttered and their ordinary meanings; but more, it includes all the references and predications that result from that utterance, and whatever force, direct or indirect, it might have.

Connected with saying-that is the notion of making-as-if-to-say. This notion is more difficult to characterize than saying-that. But it is easily illustrated. A disgruntled worker in a financially depressed, politically repressive country utters the sentence, "This is a *fine* country" sarcastically. The worker does *not* say-that his is a fine country. He intends to communicate by implication that his is *not* a fine country by flouting the maxim of quality. What he does is to make-as-if-to-say that his is a fine country.

One of the most difficult and important issues for a theory of metaphor to get right concerns the question of whether a person who utters a sentence metaphorically says-that anything or only makes-as-if to say something. On the one hand, it is correct to hold that a speaker who utters a sentence metaphorically, for example, "My love is a red rose", is not asserting that his love is a red rose. For, if he were, then he would be saying something false, and, surely, a person who utters a metaphor typically is not speaking falsely, *pace* Plato. A person who speaks metaphorically aims at the truth. To hold that a person who speaks metaphorically is speaking

falsely is a kind of philistinism. These considerations incline one to say that a person who speaks metaphorically does not say-that anything but only makes-as-if-to-say something. On the other hand, a metaphor can contain its literal reference or its literal predication (though not both). Suppose the parents of an ebullient young woman are disturbed by her reckless social life. Her Dutch uncle might say to them, "I will clip the wings of the butterfly" and refer to himself while also speaking metaphorically. Or he might say, "That butterfly will be home by 10:00 p. m." and predicate being home by 10:00 p.m. It is also important to recognize that some metaphorical utterances have their literal illocutionary forces. The Dutch uncle might say, "I promise that I will clip that butterfly's wings", and thereby make a promise. Since a metaphorical utterance can have its literal illocutionary force, and its literal reference or predication, one is inclined to think that a person who speaks metaphorically is saying what would normally be said by a sentence. I think the truth lies in between these two extreme positions. A person who speaks metaphorically does succeed in performing some of the subacts that together constitute a complete act of saying-that, namely, reference, predication and illocutionary force. However, a person who speaks metaphorically does not say-that what he would normally be taken to have said-that if he were speaking literally; further, he does not represent himself as saying-that such and such, but only makes-as-if to say it by flouting a maxim of quality.

It is very important to distinguish what a speaker says (or makes-as-if-to-say) from what he communicates in some other way. Merrie Bergmann has conflated these elements and has consequently come up with a defective theory of metaphor. She holds that metaphors are typically used successfully to make true assertions.² The falsity of her view is evidenced by typical metaphors: Mary is a butterfly; The Middle East is a time bomb. If someone were actually asserting these sentences, he would be asserting respectively that Mary is a butterfly and that the Middle East is a time bomb. Both assertions are patently false. What is not false is what a speaker might be implying by uttering the sentences in question metaphorically. Bergmann holds that what the speaker communicates

by such utterances are assertions; but she is mistaken. For what a person asserts must be explicit and determined by the rules governing the use of the words uttered; but what a person, speaking metaphorically, means by the sentence in question is not explicit in the utterance, but implicit, and is not governed by the rules for the use of those words. What the speaker communicates, he communicates by some kind of implication. This notion of implication returns us to Grice's second main element of what a speaker signifies.

Grice distinguishes two different kinds of implication: conventional and nonconventional. These terms are a bit misleading and I prefer to call them "linguistic" and "nonlinguistic" implication, respectively. What a speaker says linguistically implies what it does in virtue of the meanings of the words used. Thus, saying that *even Bill likes Mary* linguistically implies *people other than Bill like Mary* in virtue of the meaning of the word "even", just as "John loves Mary and Mary is happy" entails "John loves Mary" in virtue of the meaning of "and". Linguistic implication is not crucial to the understanding of metaphor, and is mentioned only to distinguish it from nonlinguistic implication. There are several types of nonlinguistic implication, of which the most important is conversational implication, and it is this type that is crucial to the understanding of metaphor.

Saying-that p conversationally implies that q just in case (a), a speaker has said (or made-as-if-to-say) that p ; (b), the speaker is observing the conversational maxims or, at least, the cooperative principle; and (c), the satisfaction of conditions (a) and (b) jointly make it highly plausible that the speaker means that q . The crucial element in this notion of conversational implication is that of a conversational maxim. Grice has pointed out that conversation is regulated by certain global conventions, which he calls conversational maxims and which he divides into four categories: quantity, quality, relation and manner. The maxims of quantity are "Make your contribution as informative as is necessary", and "Do not make your contribution more informative than is necessary". The maxims of quality are, "Do not say what is false" and "Do not say that for which you lack sufficient evidence". The maxim of relation is, "Be

relevant". The maxims of manner are "Be clear", "Avoid ambiguity", "Be brief", and "Be orderly". I should also mention that an important feature of a conversational implicature is that in order to understand what has been implicated the audience must draw an inference, and the audience must go through a characteristic and more or less complex pattern of reasoning in order to calculate what implicature has been made. For example, suppose Professor Wisdom is supposed to write a letter of recommendation for his student Nullset. Wisdom writes "Nullset is a very well-groomed young man, who has beautiful handwriting". If Wisdom says nothing more than this, then he does not say, but conversationally implies that Nullset is not a very good candidate. For the addressee reasons: Wisdom has said that Nullset is well-groomed, etc.; he is observing the cooperative principle; and, by the maxim of quantity, he would be making a stronger claim about Nullset's philosophical ability if he were able to. Since he has not made a stronger claim, he must be unable to, and that implies that he thinks that Nullset is not a very good philosopher.

II. Flouting the Maxim of Quality

Conversational maxims regulate our discourse and usually are observed by interlocutors; usually, not always. Grice distinguishes four different ways in which a maxim might be contravened and thereby go unfulfilled. First, a speaker might violate a maxim; that is, he might quietly and unostentatiously contravene a maxim. Liars contravene a maxim of quality of course; but it is important to recognize that not all violations are sinister. Any honest mistake violates a maxim of quality. Moreover, a good teacher often says what is false in order to help his students learn more easily, because the literal and unadulterated truth about something is often too difficult or even impossible for them to understand. Second, a speaker might opt out of a maxim. A person who is asked for the details of a private meeting might say, "I'm sorry; I cannot say. That information is privileged", thereby opting out of a maxim of quantity. A person who is asked to explain Einstein's theory of relativity briefly might reply, "There is no brief explanation", thereby opting out of a maxim of manner. Third, a speaker might flout a maxim. Our disgruntled laborer who said, "This is a fine country", provided an

example of flouting a maxim of quality. Grice claims there is also a fourth way of not fulfilling a maxim: by being faced with a clash of maxims. However, a moment's reflection should reveal that this alleged fourth way is not a genuine way of not fulfilling a maxim but a reason for not doing so. A person might violate or opt out of or flout a maxim if he is faced with a clash of maxims; but the clash itself is not a way of contravening them. A person who is required to speak both truly and briefly about a complicated subject may be faced with a clash and may either violate one of the maxims, opt out of one or, what is least likely in this case, flout one. Of the three remaining ways of contravening a maxim, flouting is the one most relevant to the analysis of metaphor.

If we accept Grice's formulation of the maxims of quality, then a central thesis about metaphors can be stated simply and in non-technical language:³ Every metaphor either is (or is thought to be) literally false or is supposed to be false. This disjunction reflects a genuine division of two types of metaphor. I shall call metaphors that are literally false *standard* metaphors; and those that are supposed to be false *nonstandard* metaphors. By "supposed", I do not mean that the metaphor is intended to be false but that the metaphor is *treated as if* or *entertained as if* it were false in order to consider the consequences, as when, in a *reductio ad absurdum* argument, the proposition to be proved is *supposed* to be false in order to show that the consequences of such a supposition are absurd. Most of this article will be devoted to standard cases of metaphor because the nonstandard cases are derivative, rare and merely an unavoidable complication to the theory. Until further notice, then, by "metaphor" I will mean "standard metaphor".

Every metaphorical proposition is false. Every metaphor flouts the *first* maxim of quality. This is not to say or imply that the point of a metaphor (what the speaker intends to communicate) is false. On the contrary, the point of a metaphor is typically true. Further, the point of a metaphor is conversationally implied in virtue of the fact that the speaker *flouts* the first maxim of quality. This is not to say or imply that any metaphorical proposition is a lie. Indeed, no metaphor *can* be a lie. It can be inapt or inept, imaginative or dull, cheery or morbid or any number of other things.

But no metaphor is a lie. The reason is that every lie, by definition, must be unostentatious; it violates the first maxim of quality. A metaphor, in contrast, flouts the maxim. A hearer relies upon the open and ostentatious falsity of the utterance as one important clue that the speaker is speaking metaphorically.

III. Analysis of a Metaphor

Let's now see how the foregoing applies to the analysis of a particular metaphor. Suppose someone writes the sentence, "My love is a red rose", in the context of a poem, singing the praises of his lover. The audience reads the sentence and tries to interpret it. If the audience takes the poet to be saying-that his love is a red rose, then the audience must take the poet to be uttering a patent falsehood, and not fulfilling the maxim of quality, "Do not say that which is false". But the audience knows that the poet cannot be intending to utter a patent falsehood, because a falsehood would make sense in the context only if it were disguised and the audience is justified in believing that the poet is observing the conversational maxims. Consequently, the audience infers that the poet is not saying-that his love is a red rose, but only making-as-if-to-say that she is. Once the audience has determined that the speaker is only making-as-if-to-say something, it is then able to begin calculating the actual content of what the speaker has signified. Since the poet is signifying by implication, he must believe that the audience is able to work out the implication. For this reason, the features of the rose that are exploited will be those that the audience is as likely to know as the poet. They will be held mutually, or, as we might say, commonly. Max Black saw this point, more or less clearly, and made it part of his theory of metaphor. He calls such features "related commonplaces".⁴ Typically, metaphors do exploit "related commonplaces". (Jones is a dog (gorilla); my love is a red rose (a doll)). Yet, it is also true that some metaphors do not trade on commonplaces, such as "The fog came in on tiny cat's feet". Such metaphors are, however, exceptional, the work of poets or poetic spirits. Such metaphors force the audience to explore the concepts introduced by the metaphor in order to come up with terms that, working in conjunction with the metaphor, will yield the meaning the poet intends, the metaphorical truth. Nonethe-

less, even in such "creative" metaphors it must be possible for the audience to determine which properties of the metaphorical term the speaker is thinking of and which the speaker thinks that the audience will think that the speaker thinks the audience will think of. And these features we call salient.⁵ What features these will be cannot be specified in advance of extensive knowledge of the context: who the speakers are, what their mutual beliefs are; what has been said earlier in the conversation, etc.

Not all salient properties are meant by the speaker; there are too many of them. Thus the set of salient properties must be further reduced. There are two further principles that limit the properties the speaker intends to be operative in the metaphor. One concerns a conversational requirement. Since the speaker has flouted a maxim of quality, he is exploiting that maxim and thereby conversationally implying something. The pattern of inference involved in calculating what the speaker conversationally implies typically involves the maxim of relation: Be relevant. In order to interpret what the poet means, it is necessary to understand his utterance as relevant to the context. The poet is comparing his lover to a rose and hence, given that his comparison is apt, only those salient properties will be considered that are relevant to the poet's attitude towards his love.

The other principle that limits the salient properties is this: the properties intended are only those that contribute to a true conclusion. One plausible statement of the salient features of a rose, relevant to the context of utterance and leading to a true conclusion, is that a red rose is beautiful, or sweet-smelling, or highly-valued . . . Putting the poet's sentence and the statement of salience together and drawing an obvious inference, we construct the following argument:

My love is a red rose.

A red rose is beautiful, or sweet-smelling, or highly-valued

Therefore, my love is beautiful, or sweet-smelling or highly-valued,

There are at least four things to notice about this argument as it relates generally to the analysis of metaphors. First, the conclusion is presumably true. People who use metaphors aim at the truth,

even in those cases in which they fall wide or short of the mark. The premise expressing the salient features of the rose, the major premise, is also true and typically such premises will be true, though not always. Some metaphors can trade on false but commonly held beliefs or false beliefs mutually held by speaker and audience, even when they alone hold the false beliefs; other metaphors can trade on myths or folklore that the community knows to be false. Take for example the folklore that elephants have infallible memories. Someone might exploit this folkloric belief and say, "Jones has the memory of an elephant" without believing that elephants have prodigious memories.⁶ Also notice that the argument about the rose is valid, and typically such arguments will be valid although again they may not, and need not always be. There is no reason why a good metaphor cannot trade on some subtle or not so subtle fallacious pattern of reasoning. Consider the metaphor, "Mary is a block of ice". As John Searle has argued, there is no similarity between Mary, in the sense in which she is cold, and a block of ice, in the sense in which it is cold. Thus, the comparison theory of metaphor is false because it holds that all metaphors trade on similarity and not just most of them. Nonetheless, the sentence "Mary is a block of ice" can be used successfully as a metaphor. The explanation, I think, is that the metaphor trades on an equivocation on "cold":

Mary is a block of ice.
Blocks of ice are cold.
Therefore, Mary is cold.

"Cold" is equivocal; it means "low in temperature" in the major premise and "unresponsive" in the conclusion.

The second thing to notice about the argument we are considering is that the first premise has its literal meaning. If "My love is a red rose" did not have its literal meaning, then it would not play its proper role in the argument. If, in the first premise, "red rose" did not mean what it normally does, then the first premise jointly with the second premise would not entail the conclusion and the point of the metaphor would not be conveyed. Moreover, if "red rose" did not have its normal meaning, then there would be no way

for the audience to determine what form the second premise of the argument should take. Donald Davidson has argued at length that sentences used metaphorically retain their literal meaning.⁷ Davidson also holds that sentences used metaphorically say what they literally mean. He does not, however, commit himself on the more difficult issue of whether a speaker who utters a metaphor says anything. I have argued that such a speaker does not say-that *s* completely, but does perform some acts that count as parts of saying-that.

Third, notice that the second or major premise expressing the salient features of the rose ends with an ellipsis. Peter Geach distinguishes between two kinds of pronouns: pronouns of laziness and others. We can make an analogous distinction for types of ellipsis: dots of laziness and others. Dots of laziness are a kind of abbreviation. They mark a context that could be filled out if it were desired or necessary, as in the sentence, "The fifty states of the USA are Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, ...". The other kind of dots indicate a context that cannot be completed, as in "The natural numbers are 1, 2, 3, ...". All sentences of natural languages are finite in length and there are an infinite number of natural numbers, so no sentence can specify them all. The dots at the end of the major premise are not dots of laziness. There is no way to fill out the sentence completely and determinately. What a person means by an utterance is not always, if ever, wholly determinate. Usually, the border of what a speaker means is penumbral. Also, since a speaker and his audience are likely to differ about how many features of a rose should be included in the major premise and people will differ about which proposed features are actual features of roses, it is to the communicative advantage of both speaker and audience to leave the major premise disjunctively indeterminate. This kind of indeterminacy does not constitute a defect in our analysis of metaphor. Just the opposite. Most metaphors, and, more generally, most cases of conversational implication, exhibit just this kind of indeterminateness and for the reasons given above. Grice thinks that conversational implications generally should be formulated as open disjunctions of propositions and this seems to me to be largely correct. The disjunctive sentences are clearly

inclusive disjunctions; so it is possible, indeed, it is intended, that more than one of the disjuncts are true; yet, should one turn out to be false or should the audience either dispute the truth of one of the disjuncts or not take one as partially constituting the premise, the truth of the premise is still safeguarded by the other disjuncts. The view that the supplied premise (or premises) is an open disjunction also helps us pinpoint one objectionable feature of the comparison view of metaphor. According to the comparison view, the meaning of every metaphor can be rendered by some literal paraphrase. Further, it implies, if it does not say, that the literal paraphrase is a determinate and precise sentence. It is this part of the theory that is objectionable. Metaphors are typically vague and indeterminate. This is not a defect. This indeterminateness is one of the more intriguing features of metaphors; it is what encourages the audience to play with and explore the concepts involved; to look for relationships between things not previously countenanced.⁸

Fourth, the argument about the metaphor involving the red rose can be used to answer a criticism against the interaction view of metaphor. That criticism briefly is that the key term employed in that view is metaphorical, and hence defective as an analysis. What literal sense, to put the objection interrogatively, can be given to the notion that the terms of a metaphor interact?⁹ Our theory supplies an answer: Notice first that understanding a metaphor requires that the audience must supply one or more premises that will work in conjunction with the metaphor that will (seem to) entail the conclusion, that is, the proposition that expresses the point of the metaphor. Further, and more importantly, such an argument will often be a syllogism, and what will allow the two premises to work jointly is the metaphor term, which occurs as the middle term of the syllogism. Middle terms are those that mediate the two other terms of the syllogism or, we might say, interact with both premises. There is, perhaps, a stronger sense of interaction to be noted; it concerns the principle of selecting the missing premise. In formulating the missing premise, the audience must take into account the following constraints: whatever term is selected, it must be relevant to the topic, salient and contribute to yielding a true conclusion.

IV. Metaphor and other Figures of Speech

Metaphor is a figure of speech, and it may be instructive to compare it to three other figures of speech. One crucial mark of a metaphor, I have claimed, is that would be false, if it were asserted. However, a speaker who uses a metaphor does not assert it, but, by flouting the second maxim of quality, only makes-as-if-to-say what the metaphor expresses. The correct treatment of hyperbole is strictly analogous to metaphor. Hyperboles, like metaphors, are cases of flouting the second maxim of quality. A person who speaks hyperbolically, that is, who consciously and intentionally exaggerates what he knows to be the truth and intends his audience to recognize this, does not say-that but only makes-as-if-to-say.

Hyperbole should be contrasted with simple overstatement, by which a person who unconsciously or unintentionally expresses a proposition that is stronger than the evidence warrants. The same proposition can be overstatement in one person's mouth and hyperbole in another's. A person who states "Every American who wants to be successful can be" without realizing that circumstances of nature and society prevent some people from achieving their full potential has simply overstated the truth. However, a person who both realizes the truth and intends his audience will understand it may express the same proposition and thereby speak hyperbolically for effect. Hyperbole is a rhetorical device; overstatement is a mistake. Hyperbole differs from metaphor in that the expressed hyperbolic proposition always entails the proposition that should have been expressed and does not require any additional premises as metaphors do. If someone says, "Jones has never been late to anything in his life", he probably means, "Jones is almost never late for anything" and the former entails the latter.

There is a curious asymmetry between metaphor and hyperbole on the one hand, and meiosis on the other, in two ways. First, meiosis unlike hyperbole and metaphor, does not contravene a maxim of quality but a maxim of quantity: Contribute as much to the conversation as is required. Meiosis contributes too little. While an hyperbolic proposition entails what ought to be said, meiosis is entailed by what ought to be said. Second, because the proposition the speaker expresses is not false, there is no need to interpret it as not being said-that.

Finally, consider irony. Ironical utterances, like metaphors and hyperboles, appear to contravene a maxim of quality. The contravention is, however, only apparent and not genuine. A person who speaks ironically is not saying what is obviously false; for if he were, he would be conveying something that is explicitly contradictory. For example, if the disgruntled worker who uttered the sentence, "This is a *fine* country", and meant that his country is not a fine country, were saying that his is a fine country, then he would be contradicting himself. Ironical utterances, like metaphors and hyperboles, constitute cases of making-as-if-to-say; the speaker means just the opposite of what he makes-as-if-to-say.

V. *Nonstandard Metaphors*

I have now concluded my treatment of standard metaphors, that is, those metaphorical propositions which would be false if asserted and which, by flouting the second maxim of quality, are cases of making-as-if-to-say. (Thus, "metaphor" no longer means "standard metaphor".) I need now to discuss the nature of nonstandard metaphors, that is, metaphorical propositions, which, if asserted, would be literally true. The first thing to say about such metaphors is that they are rare. The second thing is that they must be treated, because they are genuine cases of metaphor. The third thing is that treatment is more complicated than that of standard metaphors. It is difficult to think of good examples of nonstandard metaphors. Here is the best that I have been able to come up with. Suppose Princess Grace of Monaco is speaking with an American friend about her daughter Caroline. She might say, "Caroline is our princess". Here we have a case of a nonstandard metaphor. Since Caroline is a princess by virtue of her birth to a princely family, Grace's utterance, if asserted, would be literally true. Grace means it, however, metaphorically. The metaphor operates in the following way. When Grace utters "Caroline is our princess", the American must interpret what Grace means. The American reasons that, if Grace means (or means only) that Caroline is the daughter of a prince, then her utterance is defective because it flouts the first maxim of quantity since it is mutually obvious to Grace and the American that Caroline is the daughter of a prince. Consequently, the American reasons that, since Grace is not (simply) stating the obvious, she must be implying some-

thing. Since the assumption that the proposition expressed is (simply) true would make it defective, the audience supposes that the proposition is false in order to test the consequences. If Grace intends the American to suppose the proposition is false, then the second maxim of quality is being flouted in that way. Hence, Grace must mean her utterance to be construed metaphorically. Using a folkloric belief as the major premise, the American constructs the following syllogism:

Caroline is a princess.

Princesses are beautiful or admired or well-loved or slightly spoiled or ...

Therefore, Caroline is beautiful or admired or well-loved or slightly spoiled or ...

What unites the standard and nonstandard cases of metaphor are the role that falsity plays in generating the metaphor and the characteristic form of conversational implicature, leaning on either true or folkloric or mythic or communal beliefs.

A less clearcut case of a nonstandard metaphor is provided by Julia Driver's poem, "The Prostitute", which begins

I am stripped,
an old screw.

Taking "stripped" literally to mean "deprived of clothes" and "screw" as "woman who engages in sexual intercourse", we can suppose the sentence is literally true but in this sense plays little or no part in its metaphorical interpretation. The metaphorical interpretation depends upon another interpretation of the meaning of the sentence. In addition to the meaning already cited, the sentence can mean, "I am an old metal fastener with a defective spiral ridge running around it". In this latter sense, it is patently false of the speaker, flouts the first maxim of quality and invites a standard metaphorical interpretation. This example is interesting, however, because the first and second sense of the sentence are not independent. The two senses of "screw" in the poem are etymologically related. The reading of the sentence, "I am stripped, an old screw", that is literally true invites, at least by association, the reading of the sentence that is patently false and metaphorical. (Much more could be said about the metaphor; for

example, a stripped metal fastener is virtually useless as is an old prostitute.)

I have claimed that nonstandard metaphors are genuine metaphors but rare and derivative upon standard ones. My view is importantly different from the view that the comparatively rare metaphors that are or would be literally true if asserted are not importantly different from the statistically more numerous cases of metaphors that are or would be literally false if asserted. This latter view is defective for two reasons, one positive and one negative. Positively, this view cannot adequately explain how speakers can expect their audience to understand that a metaphor is being broached. On my view, an audience knows that a standard metaphor is being broached largely by the patent falsity of the metaphorical proposition. And if a metaphorical proposition does not appear to be patently false, then there must be some other mechanism that eventually leads the audience to suppose that the literally true proposition must be supposed to be false in order to understand what the speaker means. On my view this other mechanism is the flouting of some conversational maxim --it might be any of the maxims other than the first maxim of quality-- that forces the audience to suppose that the utterance is patently false and hence to be interpreted as a standard metaphor would be.

Negatively, the view that some literally true metaphors are merely statistically rare and not conceptually derivative has led some theorists mistakenly to classify as metaphors utterances that are not metaphors. I shall use some of Ted Cohen's work as an example. Cohen gives three examples of allegedly true metaphors: "No man is an island"; "Jesus was a carpenter"; and "Moscow is a cold city".¹⁰ Each of these sentences must be given a different treatment.

As for "No man is an island", my view is that it is not a metaphor at all. It is true and not false that no man is an island. This is not to imply that Donne's line is not a figure of speech. It is. "No man is an island" is trivially true, and for that reason it is a case of meiosis. One might wonder how such a trivial truth could be so poetically powerful? The answer is that it is powerful in the richness of its associations, conveyed by conversational implication. In saying, "No man is an island", Donne is saying something trivial.

The reader must, consequently, muse about the relevance of a triviality; he reasons, presumably, in a way analogous to a case of metaphor:

No man is an island.

Every island is separated from every other thing of its own kind, does not depend upon any other thing of its own kind for its existence or well-being, and is not diminished by the destruction of any other of its own kind;...

Therefore, no man is separated from every other thing of its own kind, does not depend upon any other thing of its own kind for its existence or well-being, and is not diminished by the destruction of any other of its own kind,
....

This argument is invalid; yet not the less effective as poetry for all that. In short, while what Donne has said is trivial, what he has linguistically communicated *via* conversational implication is not at all trivial; but, on the contrary, profound.

Concerning "Jesus was a carpenter", a speaker who says this speaks truly. Perhaps, however--and this seems to be Cohen's point-- the speaker might well mean more than he says. He might mean that Jesus fashions valuable things out of unfashioned worthless things. If this statement of what the speaker additionally means seems itself metaphorical, it can be paraphrased in ways to eliminate those elements: Jesus causes things that have no value in themselves to become things that do have value in themselves. What is important to notice is that we have specified what the speaker means by specifying that the speaker *means what he says* and *means more than what he says*. And this specification does not commit us to holding that "Jesus is a carpenter" is a metaphor. For, to appeal to the classic formula, "to utter a metaphor is to say one thing and to mean something else" (i.e., something inconsistent with what you say.) In the case under consideration, the speaker does not mean something inconsistent with what he said, merely something additional, just as anyone conversationally implying something means something additional to what he says.

Finally, "Moscow is a cold city" is not a metaphor; it is ambiguous, perhaps, a pun. It has two literal readings: "Moscow is a city that often has low temperatures" and "Moscow is not a cordial city". "Cold", in the latter sentence is a dead metaphor; but dead metaphors are not metaphors.

VI. *Generalizing the Theory*

In section II, I said that *if* we accept Grice's formulation of the maxim of quality, then every metaphor is (or is thought to be) literally false or is supposed to be false. However, Grice's formulation of the maxim of quality is not correct. The principal problem with it is that it is too narrow. As Grice formulates them, "Do not say that which is false", and "Do not say that for which you lack evidence", the maxims apply only to speech acts that have truth values, for example, statements and assertions. Many speech acts do not have a truth value, for example, questions, promises and requests. All of this is important for our theory because many metaphors are embedded in utterances that would not have a truth value if uttered literally, e.g., the Dutch uncle's utterance, "I promise I will clip that butterfly's wings". So, such simple cases cannot be explained in our original formulation about standard and non-standard metaphors. However, the problem is easily corrected by replacing Grice's too narrow maxims of quality with a sufficiently broad one and generalizing our initial formulation to accord with the broader maxim of quality.

In another article, I have argued that Grice's maxims of quality should be replaced by this one: Do not participate in a speech act unless you satisfy all the conditions required for its successful and nondefective performance.¹¹ This maxim is obviously broad enough to cover the entire spectrum of speech acts. The question now is, what was the intuition behind the distinction between standard and nonstandard metaphors? We can get at it if we consider the following sentences that might be uttered in the Dutch uncle situation.

- I state that Mary will have her wings clipped.
- I promise that Mary will have her wings clipped.
- I ask whether Mary will have her wings clipped.
- I insist that Mary will have her wings clipped.

In each case, the same proposition is involved: that Mary will have her wings clipped. Yet, in each case the force of the utterance would be different if the sentence were uttered literally. Searle would say that each utterance involves the same propositional content and each attempted speech act would be defective for the same

reason if the relevant sentence were uttered literally. In each case, what Searle calls "the propositional content condition" would be flouted. These are cases of standard metaphors. That is, a standard metaphor is one in which the propositional content condition is flouted. Nonstandard metaphors are those in which the propositional content is supposed to be flouted. This formulation of the distinction between standard and nonstandard metaphors is unavoidably stated in technical terms in order to describe the phenomenon of metaphor correctly and with the required generality.

VII. A Comparison with Searle's Theory of Metaphor

There are some important similarities between my theory of metaphor and that of John Searle. The spirit is the same. Both are pragmatic theories that exploit features of Grice's theory of linguistic communication. We also differ in several significant respects. My theory is logically stronger than Searle's in three important ways. First, Searle claims that the stimulus to treat a sentence as being uttered metaphorically is the result of "falsehood, semantic nonsense, violations of the rules of speech acts, or violations of conversational principles of communication".¹² My view is stronger in that I claim that all standard metaphors flout one maxim, the maxim of quality and all nonstandard metaphors must be supposed to contravene it. Second, Searle does not make clear whether, when a speaker utters a sentence *s* metaphorically, he is saying-that *s* or only making-as-if-to-say it. I have argued for the latter view, while also explaining how a speaker communicates some parts of what he says. Third, I have specified that the premises that are added to the metaphor, in order to infer what the point of the metaphor is, are constrained by three principles: they must involve features or properties that are salient to the metaphorical term; they must fulfill the maxim of relation by being relevant to the topic of the conversation; and they must help form a premise that ends to yield a true conclusion.

There is one respect in which Searle's theory has a superficial appearance of being stronger than mine. In contrast with my principles of salience and relevance and truth-producing premises, Searle specifies nine supposed principles for computing the features relevant to the metaphor. Yet, upon reflection, these nine principles

turn out to be vacuous. Searle intends his nine principles to constitute at least a partial answer to the question. How is it possible for the hearer who hears the utterance "S is P" to know that the speaker means "S is R".¹³ I want to show that Searle's nine principles fail to answer this question in any part, because the principles are so weak as to permit any possible feature or property of a thing to be a value of R.

Any feature or property will either be true of an object or false of it; and Searle allows any feature or property whether true or false of an object to play a role in the interpretation of a metaphor. This is objectionable because it fails to limit the possible features or properties of an object to those that are relevant to a metaphorical interpretation of a sentence. A theory of metaphor must provide principles that specify which features or properties might be relevant to a metaphor in order to allow the audience to know which features or properties the speaker means to imply by the metaphor. We can see this argument against Searle's principles more clearly by considering what he says about the metaphorical applicability of all those features or properties that are true of an object and then all those features or properties that are false of an object. According to Principle 1, a feature or property could be true of the object by definition; according to Principle 2, a feature or property could be contingently true of an object. Since every feature that is true of an object is either necessarily true, that is, true by definition, or contingently true, Searle has in no way restricted the actual features of an object to those that might play a role in a metaphor.

What about features that are not true of an object? Again, Searle allows such a latitude that no feature is excluded from possibly playing a role in a metaphor. Citing Principles 3 and 4 is sufficient to show this. Principle 3 allows features that are often said of or believed to be true of an object; Principle 4 allows features that a thing does not have as well as those that are not even like any feature it has. In short, Searle's theory suffers from being too weak for failing to explain when a feature or property might play a role in a metaphor and when it would not.

VIII. Reply to Objections to a Pragmatic Theory of Metaphor

The theory of metaphor I have been advancing is blatantly pragmatic. Since some distinguished theorists have claimed that metaphor is a semantic phenomenon, their claims should be discussed, if only briefly. Max Black is perhaps the most distinguished philosophical proponent of this view. He says that in a metaphor, the focal or metaphorical term "obtains a new meaning, which is not quite its meaning in literal uses, not quite the meaning which any literal substitute would have".¹⁴ This is in line with his general view that metaphor is a semantic phenomenon: "'metaphor' must be classified as a term belonging to 'semantics' and not to 'syntax'...".¹⁵ When Black expressed this view, there was no well-developed pragmatic theory such as Searle's revision of Austin's theory of speech acts and Grice's theory of linguistic communication; so it is not surprising that Black opts for a semantic theory against a syntactic theory and does not consider the possibility of a pragmatic theory. And it is not surprising that his arguments in behalf of a semantic treatment are not very telling against a pragmatic theory. He holds that "The chairman plowed through the discussion" and "The poor are the negroes of Europe" (attributed to Chamfort) are "unmistakeably *instances* of metaphor."¹⁶ They are such only in context. We can imagine a crazed chairman driving a plow through a meeting of his committee; in which case the first sentence, if asserted, would be literally true. And we can imagine a slightly different history of Europe, in which the statement made by "The poor are the negroes of Europe" would be literally true and not a metaphor. The upshot is that whether a sentence is used literally or metaphorically depends upon the context of its use; and is, I maintain, a fit subject for a pragmatic theory.

Recently, L. Jonathan Cohen has also urged that metaphor be given a semantic treatment.¹⁷ Since Peter Lamarque has acutely criticized Cohen's views in this journal, it is not necessary for me to provide an extended response.¹⁸ Lamarque correctly notes several respects in which metaphors do not parallel genuine illocutionary acts, and this is sufficient to undermine Cohen's case. There is just one issue about which I disagree with Lamarque. He holds that Tom's ironical utterance of

(5) That was a brilliant thing to do.

can be correctly reported by

(7) Tom said that that was a brilliant thing to do.

And he holds that Tom's metaphorical utterance of

(9) The rats have driven me out of the house.

can be correctly reported as

(10) Tom said that the rats have driven him out of his house.

I have already explained why I think sentences (7) and (10) do not correctly report Tom's actions. Ironic and metaphorical utterances are not cases of *saying-that* something, but of *making-as-if-to-say* something. This objection to Lamarque does not diminish the force of his criticisms of Cohen's views. So, the objections of Black and Cohen do not seem to stand in the way of the kind of pragmatic theory I have presented.

Department of Philosophy
University of Texas at Austin

Notes

1. H.P. Grice, "Logic and Conversation", in *Syntax and Semantics*, vol. 3 ed. Peter Cole and Jerry L. Morgan, (New York: Academic Press, 1975) pp. 44-45.
2. Cf. Merrie Bergmann, "Metaphorical Assertions", *The Philosophical Review* 91 (1982), 225-245.
3. Bergmann in "Metaphorical Assertions", 234, confuses what is conversationally implied by a metaphor, the point of the metaphor, with what a speaker asserts by a metaphor. What a speaker asserts must be closely tied to the conventional meaning of the words he utters, but what Bergmann calls the metaphorical assertion is either loosely tied or not tied at all to the conventional meaning.
4. Max Black, "Metaphor", in *Models and Metaphors* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1954), p. 41; see also Max Black, "More on Metaphor", in *Metaphor and Thought*, ed. Andrew Ortony (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 28-29.
5. For more about salience, see Andrew Ortony, "Beyond Literal Similarity", *Psychological Review* 86 (1976), 161-180, and "The Role of Similarity in Similes and Metaphors", in *Metaphor and Thought*, ed. Andrew Ortony (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 186-201; and Merrie Bergmann, "Metaphorical Assertions", 234-239.
6. See also John Searle, "Metaphor", in his *Expression and Metaphor*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 88-90.
7. See his "What Metaphors Mean", *Critical Inquiry* 5 (1978), 31-47; John Searle in "Metaphor", p. 77, and Ted Cohen in "Figurative Speech and Figurative Acts", *The Journal of Philosophy*, 72 (1975), 670, hold the same view.
8. I think that my treatment of the role played by open disjunctive propositions is the theoretical counterpart of Black's "implicative complex"; see "More About Metaphor", p. 28.

9. Searle hints at this criticism; see his "Metaphor", p. 92.
10. "Figurative Speech and Figurative Acts", 671.
11. A.P. Martinich, "Conversational Maxims and Some Philosophical Problems", *Philosophical Quarterly*, 30 (1980), 215-228.
12. "Metaphor", p. 105.
13. *Ibid*, p. 134.
14. Black, "Metaphor", p. 39.
15. *Ibid*.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
17. "The Semantics of Metaphor", in *Metaphor and Thought*, p. 65.
18. Peter Lamarque, "Metaphor and Reported Speech: In Defence of a Pragmatic Theory", *Journal of Literary Semantics* 11 (1982), 14-18.

Bibliography

- Bergmann, Merrie (1982) "Metaphorical Assertions", *The Philosophical Review* 91, 225-245.
- Black, Max (1954) "Metaphor", in *Models and Metaphors* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1954), pp. 41-60.
- Black, Max (1979) "More on Metaphor", in *Metaphor and Thought*, ed. Andrew Ortony (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 1-30.
- Cohen, L. Johnathan "The Semantics of Metaphor", in *Metaphor and Thought*, pp. 64-77.
- Cohen, Ted. (1975) "Figurative Speech and Figurative Acts", *The Journal of Philosophy* 72.
- Davidson, Donald (1978) "What Metaphors Mean", *Critical Inquiry* 5, 31-47.
- Grice, H.P. (1978) "Logic and conversation", in *Syntax and Semantics*, vol. 3, ed. Peter Cole and Jerry L. Morgan, (New York: Academic Press, 1975), pp. 44-45.
- Lamarque, Peter (1982) "Metaphor and Reported Speech: In Defence of a Pragmatic Theory", *Journal of Literary Semantics* 11, 14-18.
- Martinich, A.P. (1980) "Conversational Maxims and Some Philosophical Problems", *The Philosophical Quarterly* 30, 215-228.
- Ortony, Andrew "The Role of Similarity in Simile and Metaphor", in *Metaphor and Thought*, pp. 186-201.
- Ortony, Andrew (1976) "Beyond Literal Similarity", *Psychological Review* 86, 161-180.
- Searle, John, "Metaphor", in *Expression and Meaning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 76-116.