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More about metaphor

by Max BLACK

A metaphor. Things are looking up.
— Harold Pinter, *No Man's Land*

Summary

An elaboration and defense of the " interaction view of metaphor " introduced in the author's earlier study, "Metaphor" (1962). Special attention is paid to the explication of the metaphors used in the earlier account.

The topics discussed include: selection of the "targets" of the theory; classification of metaphors; how metaphorical statements work; relations between metaphors and similes; metaphorical thought; criteria of recognition; the "creative" aspects of metaphors; the ontological status of metaphors.

Metaphors are found to be more closely connected with background *models* than has previously been recognized.

Résumé

Elaboration et défense de la « conception interactive de la métaphore » présentée par l'auteur dans une étude antérieure *Metaphor* (1962). Une attention particulière est vouée à l'explication des exemples de métaphores utilisés dans la précédente étude.

Les sujets discutés comprennent: sélection des buts de la théorie; classification des métaphores; comment fonctionnent les énoncés métaphoriques; relations entre métaphores et termes voisins; pensée métaphorique; critères de reconnaissance; les aspects « créatifs » des métaphores; le statut ontologique des métaphores.

Les métaphores apparaissent comme étant plus étroitement liées à des *modèles* sous-jacents qu'on ne l'avait précédemment soupçonné.

Zusammenfassung

Es handelt sich um eine Ausarbeitung und Verteidigung der «interaction view of metaphor», die der Autor schon in einer früheren Arbeit, *Metaphor* (1962), vertreten hat. Besondere Aufmerksamkeit wird der Erklärung von Metaphern geschenkt, die in der früheren Betrachtung verwendet worden sind.

Unter den diskutierten Fragen finden wir: Auswahl der «Ziele» der Theorie; die Klassifikation der Metaphern; die Art des Funktionierens von metaphorischen Aussagen; die Beziehungen zwischen Metaphern und Vergleichen; das metaphorische Denken; Kriterien für den Entscheid, wann wir es mit einer Metapher zu tun haben; die «schöpferischen» Aspekte von Metaphern; der ontologische Status von Metaphern.

Metaphern werden — mehr als früher — in eine enge Beziehung mit Hintergrund-*modellen* gebracht.

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This paper [1] is intended to supplement the earlier study in which I introduced and defended an "interaction view of metaphor" ("Metaphor," 1962, referred to hereafter as *Metaphor*). A reader unfamiliar with that study will find a summary in section 5 below.

I shall try here to amplify my original formulation by explicating the grounds of the metaphors of "interaction," "filtering" and "screening" that I found illuminating in trying to understand how metaphorical statements work. I shall add some suggestions about the relations of a metaphor to its grounding resemblances and analogies (somewhat scanted in *Metaphor*), with the hope of also shedding some further light on the connections between metaphors and models (for which see my "Models and Archetypes") [2].

This occasion gives me an opportunity to take some notice of the numerous criticisms, mostly friendly, which *Metaphor* has received since its original publication. Pleased though I am at the widespread acceptance of the "interaction view," I agree with Monroe Beardsley, Ted Cohen, Paul Ricoeur and others that more work will be needed before the power and limitations of this approach to the subject can be fully appreciated.

1
Reasons for current interest in metaphor

John Middleton Murry's essay of 1931 opens with the remark that "Discussions of metaphor — there are not many of them — often strike us at first as superficial." Today both comments would be inappropriate. The extraordinary volume of papers and books on the subject produced during the past forty years might suggest that the subject is inexhaustible [3].

Warren Shibles's useful *Bibliography* of 1971 has entries running to nearly 300 pages and contains perhaps as many as four thousand titles. As for these discussions being "superficial," one might rather complain today of ungrounded profundity, since so many writers, agreeing with Murry that "Metaphor is as ultimate as speech itself, and speech as ultimate as thought" (1), rapidly draw ontological morals, while leaving the nature of metaphorical speech and thought tantalisingly obscure.

[1] Based, with numerous revisions and additions, upon a paper, entitled "Metaphor Revisited," prepared for the 2nd International Colloquium in Philosophy, Biel 1976.

[2] See "References" at the end of this paper. Numbers in parentheses refer to pages. Where there is possible ambiguity, a date is added.

[3] This reflection is sometimes attributed to Michel Bréal (see his *Essai,* 115). But the subject he called "infini" was the special one of the influence of metaphors upon the extension and renewal of a standard lexicon, of which he provides numerous illustrations.

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In the inconclusive debate between the Appreciators and Depreciators of metaphor, the former nowadays make most of the running. But they are characteristically prone to inflation. As Winifred Nowottny puts it (89):

> "Current criticism often takes metaphor *au grand sérieux*, as a peep-hole on the nature of transcendental reality, a prime means by which the imagination can see into the life of things."

She adds:

> "[T]his attitude makes it difficult to see the working of those metaphors which deliberately emphasize the frame, offering themselves as deliberate fabrications, as a prime means of seeing into the life not of things but of the creative human consciousness, framer of its own world."

Enthusiastic friends of metaphor are indeed prone to various kinds of inflation, ready to see metaphor everywhere, in the spirit of Carlyle, who said:

> "Examine language; what, if you except some primitive elements of natural sound, what is it all but metaphors, recognized as such or no longer recognized; still fluid and florid or now solid-grown and colourless? If these same primitive garments are the osseous fixtures in the Flesh-Garment Language then are metaphors its muscle and living integuments."
>
> (quoted from Brown, 41)

This quotation illustrates a pervasive tendency for writers, including myself in *Metaphor,* to frame their basic insights in metaphorical terms.

A related inflationary thrust is shown in a persistent tendency, found in Aristotle's still influential treatment, and manifest in as recent a discussion as Nelson Goodman's *The Languages of Art,* to regard all figurative uses of language as metaphorical, and in this way to ignore the important distinctions between metaphor and such other "figures of speech" as simile, metonymy, and synecdoche.

To make a sufficiently intricate topic still harder to handle, the Depreciators tend to focus upon relatively trivial examples ("Man is a wolf") that conform to the traditional "substitution view," and the special form of it that I called the "comparison view" [4], while Appreciators, in their zeal to establish "That metaphor is the omnipresent principle of language" [5], tend to dwell upon excitingly suggestive but obscure examples from Shakespeare, Donne, Hopkins or Dylan Thomas, to the neglect of simpler instances that also require attention in a comprehensive theory.

[4] See *Metaphor,* especially pp. 30-37.
[5] I. A. Richards, 92. He says that this "can be shown by mere observation."

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Although I am on the side of the Appreciators, who dwell upon what Empson and Ricoeur call "vital" metaphors, I think their opponents (typically philosophers, scientists, mathematicians, and logicians) are right in asking for less "vital" metaphors to be considered. It may well be a mistaken strategy to treat profound metaphors as paradigms.

In what follows, I shall steer a middle course, taking as points of departure metaphors complex enough to invite analysis, yet sufficiently transparent for such analysis to be reasonably uncontroversial. My interest in this paper is particularly directed toward the "cognitive aspects" of certain metaphors, whether in science, philosophy, theology or ordinary life, and their power to present in a distinctive and irreplaceable way, insight into "how things are" (for which see Section 11 below). I shall leave the "poetic metaphors" invoked by Nowottny for another occasion.

2

What is the "mystery" of metaphor?

One writer, who might be speaking for many, says "Among the mysteries of human speech, metaphor has remained one of the most baffling" (Boyle, 257). But what *is* this supposed mystery? Given the prevalence or, if we are to trust Richards and many other thinkers, the ubiquity of metaphor, metaphorical discourse might well seem no more mysterious than singing or dancing — and, one might add, no more "improper" or "deviant".

In the sentence following the one I have quoted, Father Boyle refers to the "odd predilection for asserting a thing to be what it is not." So perhaps the "mystery" is simply that, *taken as literal*, a metaphorical statement appears to be perversely asserting something to be what it is plainly known not to be. (And that makes the metaphor-user look like a liar or a deceiver.) When Juliet says to Romeo, "the light that shines comes from thine eyes," she surely can't *really mean* that his eyeballs are lighting up the chamber; when Wallace Stevens says "A poem is a pheasant" he can't *really* mean that it flaps its wings and has a long tail — for such things are plainly false and absurd. But such "absurdity" and "falsity" are of the essence: in their absence, we should have no metaphor but merely a literal utterance. So a metaphor-user, unless he is merely babbling, would seem, according to the ancient formula, to "say one thing and mean another." But why?

An intelligent child, hearing his scientist father refer to a "field of force," might ask — but with a twinkle in his eye, one hopes — "And who ploughs it?" In order to feel the supposed "mystery," one needs to recap-

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ture the naïveté of somebody who takes metaphorical utterances to be literal, or the false naïveté of someone who pretends to do so. But to assume that a metaphorical utterance presents something as what it is plainly not, or to assume that its producer really does intend to say one thing while meaning something else, is to beg disastrously a prime question, by accepting the misleading view of a metaphor as some kind of "deviation" or "aberration" from proper usage.

Somebody seriously making a metaphorical statement — say, "The Lord is my Shepherd" — might reasonably claim that he meant just what he said, having chosen the words most apt to express his thoughts, attitudes, and feelings, and was by no means guilty of uttering a crass absurdity. Such a position cannot be rejected out of hand.

The danger of an approach that treats literal utterance as an unproblematic standard, while regarding metaphorical utterance as problematic or "mysterious" by contrast, is that it tends to encourage reductionist theories: as the plain man might say, "If the metaphor-producer didn't mean what he said, why didn't he say something else?" We are headed for the blind alley taken by those innumerable followers of Aristotle who have supposed metaphors to be replaceable by literal translations.

A sympathetic way of following Father Boyle's lead might be to start by asking what distinguishes a metaphorical statement from a literal one. That, of course, assumes that there is at least a *prima facie* and observable difference between metaphorical and literal statements — a *donnée* that seems to me initially less problematic than it does to some theorists. When a writer says "Men are verbs, not nouns," a reader untrammeled by theoretical preconceptions about the ubiquity of metaphor will immediately recognize that 'verbs' and 'nouns' are not being used literally. Dictionaries do not include men as a special case of verbs and a competent speaker will not list them as paradigm cases of the application of that word. And so in general: it would be relatively easy to devise tests, for those who want them, of the literal meaning of the word that is the metaphorical "focus" of a metaphorical utterance. Tacit knowledge of such literal meaning induces the characteristic feeling of dissonance or "tension" between the focus and its literal frame.

Starting so, and acknowledging a clear *prima facie* difference between literal and metaphorical uses of expressions, need not, however, prejudge the validity of some "deeper" insight that might eventually reject the commonsensical distinction between the literal and the metaphorical as superficial and ultimately indefensible. But such a revisionist view needs the support of a thorough exploration of the implicit *rationale* of the common-

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sense distinction. An effort to do so will naturally concern itself with crucial supplementary questions about the point of using metaphors and, more generally, about the distinctive powers of metaphorical discourse.

Some writers, notably Coleridge, but not he alone, have imputed a peculiarly "creative" role to metaphor (for which see Section 10 below). That a puzzle or mystery might be perceived in this connection can be supported by the following train of thought. A successful metaphor is *realized* in discourse, is embodied in the given "text," and need not be treated as a riddle. So the writer or speaker is employing conventional means to produce a non-standard effect, while using only the standard syntactic and semantic resources of his speech community. Yet the meaning of an interesting metaphor is typically new or "creative," not inferrible from the standard lexicon. A major task for theorists of metaphor, then, is to explain how such an outcome — striking for all its familiarity — is brought about.

We may usefully consider, for the sake of contrast, the situation of a participant in a rule-governed practice more tightly constrained than speech — say the game of Chess. There too a "creative aspect" is readily discernible, since even if all the mistakes are waiting to be discovered (as a Master once said) a player must still search for and ultimately *choose* his move: in most chess positions there is no "decision procedure" and no demonstrably "correct" move. Yet the player's scope for "creativity" is sharply limited by the game's inflexible rules that provide him always with a finite and well-defined set of options.

Imagine now a variation, say "Epichess," in which a player would have the right to move any piece as if it were another of equal or inferior value (a bishop moving for once like a knight, say, or a pawn) — *provided the opponent accepted such a move*. There we have a primitive model of conversation and discourse, where almost any "move" is acceptable, if one can "get away with it," i. e., if a competent receiver will accept it. But even here there are *some* constraints upon "creativity": one cannot couple any two nouns at random and be sure to produce an effective metaphor. (If the reader doubts this, let him try to make sense of "A chair is a syllogism." In the absence of some specially constructed context, this must surely count as a *failed* metaphor.)

But what *is* a "creative" rule-violating metaphor-producer really trying to do? And what is a competent hearer expected to do in response to such a move?

In my earlier study, I suggested that such questions, and most of the others posed by theorists of metaphor, might be regarded as concerned with "the 'logical grammar' of 'metaphor' and words having related meaning"

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(25); or has expressing "attempts to become clearer about some use of the word 'metaphor'" *(ib.)*; or as the start of an effort "to analyze the notion of metaphor" (26). Although this semantic emphasis has alienated some of my critics, I see no particular harm in it. There would be no substantial difference in an approach that was conceived, in a more ontological idiom, as an effort to "become clearer about the nature of metaphor" — indeed I would regard the two formulas as equivalent.

3
Identifying the targets

The reader will have noticed my references to metaphorical *"statements."* Indeed, my standing concern is with full metaphorical statements and, derivatively, with statement-ingredients (words or phrases used metaphorically) only as they occur in *specific* and relatively complete acts of expression and communication. (Hereafter, "metaphor" is usually short for "metaphorical statement.") A "statement," in my intended sense, will be identified by quoting a whole sentence, or a set of sentences, together with as much of the relevant verbal context or the non-verbal setting as may be needed for an adequate grasp of the actual or imputed speaker's meaning. I use "meaning" here for whatever a competent hearer may be said to have grasped when he succeeds in responding adequately to the actual or hypothetical verbal action consisting in the serious utterance of the sentence(s) in question.

As examples of such identifications of metaphorical statements, I offer:

(1) "L'homme n'est qu'un roseau, le plus foible de la nature, mais c'est un roseau pensant (Pascal in the *Pensées*).
— or, more briefly, "Pascal's metaphor of man as a thinking reed."

(2) "You are a metaphor and they are lies
Or there true least where their knot chance unfurls . . ."
(William Empson, *Letter V*).

(3) Ezra Pound's metaphor of education as sheepherding
(in his *ABC of Reading*, passim).

Of these metaphors, the last is relatively the most independent of its context and might be sufficiently identified, with suppression of Pound's name, as "the metaphor of education as sheepherding." Yet, justice to Pound's view might demand citation of relevant passages in his tract. Textual elaboration is more obviously needed to appreciate Pascal's deceptively simple metaphor, or Empson's characteristically obscure one.

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I propose to distinguish what is identified merely by a formula like "the metaphor of *A* as *B*," without further specification of its contextual use, as a metaphor-*theme*, regarded as an abstraction from the metaphorical statements in which it does or might occur. A metaphor-theme is available for repeated use, adaptation and modification by a variety of speakers or thinkers on any number of specific occasions.[6]

One danger in attending mainly to what I have called "metaphor-themes" is that of postulating a standard response to a given metaphorical statement, a response determined by linguistic, conceptual, cultural, or other conventions. Such a view is untenable because a metaphorical statement involves a rule-*violation*: there can be no rules for "creatively" violating rules.[7] And that is why there can be no *dictionary* (though there might be a thesaurus) of metaphors.

Any attempt to be more precise about the identifying and individuating criteria for metaphorical statements will be embarrassed by the following difficulty. The *very same* metaphorical statement, as I wish to use that expression, may appropriately receive a number of different and even partially conflicting "readings." Thus Empson's metaphor, reproduced above, might be taken by one reader, but not another, as imputing falsity to the person addressed. We might choose to say that both were right about two different metaphors expressed in Empson's words; or, less plausibly, that one reader must have been mistaken. There is an inescapable indeterminacy in the notion of a *given* metaphorical statement, so long as we count its "import" as part of its essence.

I hope these brief terminological remarks will serve for the present occasion. In what follows, I shall not insist pedantically upon using the

[6] It might be held puzzling that while the act of producing a metaphorical-statement is a datable event, its semantic content can be described, referred to and discussed at any time: so what by definition seems to be "subjective," as produced by a particular speaker or thinker, has an *import*, as one might say, that is sufficiently stable or "objective" — in spite of violating the background linguistic conventions — to be available for subsequent analysis, interpretation and criticism. But is this really more puzzling than the fact that what a tennis player did in his last serve can be talked about (more or less) at any subsequent time?

[7] For this reason, my analogy of "Epichess," above, may be somewhat misleading. For in that game, there was a "super-rule" of sorts that determined *how* and *when* the rules of ordinary chess might be violated. In view of what looks like the essential lawlessness of metaphorical transgression, I am less sanguine than other writers about the prospects of treating the production of a metaphorical statement as a speech-*act* in Austin's sense. I, too, wish to attend particularly to what a metaphor-user is doing and what he expects his auditor to do. But I see little profit in modelling this primal situation on that of a promise-giver (Austin's paradigm case), where the consequences of the performative statement are determined by a speech community's *conventions*.

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qualifiers '-statement' or '-theme', usually leaving the context to resolve any possible ambiguity.

4

On classifying metaphors; and the importance of "emphasis" and "resonance"

Given the prevalence of metaphorical statements and their manifest versatility, a student of the subject would find some generally accepted classification helpful in making even the simplest distinctions: but a present he is in even worse case than a biologist before Linnaeus. For the only entrenched classification is grounded in the trite opposition (itself expressed metaphorically) between "dead" and "live" metaphors. This is no more helpful than, say, treating a corpse as a special case of a person: a so-called "dead metaphor" is not a metaphor at all, but merely an expression that no longer has a familiar metaphorical use.

A competent reader is not expected to recognize such a familiar expression as "falling in love" as a metaphor, to be taken *au grand sérieux* — indeed it is doubtful whether that expression was ever more than a case of catachresis (fadging an idiom to fill a gap in the lexicon).

If the "actuality" of a metaphor, its possessing the distinctive characteristics, whatever they may be, of genuine metaphorical efficacy, is important enough to be marked, one might consider replacing the dead and alive contrast by a set of finer discriminations: distinguishing perhaps between expressions whose etymologies, genuine or fancied, suggest a metaphor beyond resuscitation (a muscle as a little mouse, *musculus*); those where the original, now usually unnoticed, metaphor can be usefully restored (obligation as involving some kind of *bondage*); and those, the objects of my present interest, that are and are perceived to be actively metaphoric. Appropriate labels might be: *extinct, dormant,* and *active* metaphors. But not much is to be expected of this schema or any more finely tuned substitute. (I shall be concerned hereafter only with metaphors needing no artificial respiration, recognized by speaker and hearer as authentically "vital" or active.)

Given an active metaphorical statement, it would be useful to discriminate two aspects, which I shall call *emphasis* and *resonance*. A metaphorical utterance is *emphatic*, in my intended sense, to the degree that its producer will allow no variation upon or substitute for the words used — and especially not for what in *Metaphor* I called the *focus*, the salient word or expression, whose occurrence in the literal "frame" invests the utterance

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with metaphorical force. Plausible opposites to "emphatic" might include: expendable, optional, decorative, and ornamental. (Relatively dispensable metaphors are often no more than literary or rhetorical flourishes that deserve no more serious attention than musical grace notes.) Emphatic metaphors are intended to be dwelt upon for the sake of their unstated implications: their producers need the receiver's cooperation in perceiving what lies *behind* the words used.

How far such interpretative response can reach will depend upon the complexity and power of the metaphor-theme in question: some metaphors, even famous ones, barely lend themselves to implicative elaboration, while others, perhaps less interesting, prove relatively rich in background implications. For want of a better label I shall call metaphorical utterances that support a high degree of implicative elaboration "resonant."

Resonance and emphasis are matters of degree. They are not independent: for highly emphatic metaphors tend to be highly resonant (though there are exceptions), while the unemphatic occurrence of a markedly resonant metaphor is apt to produce a dissonance, sustained by irony or some similarly distancing operation.

Finally, I propose to call a metaphor that is both markedly emphatic and resonant a *strong metaphor*. My purpose in the remainder of this paper is to analyze the *raison d'être* and the mode of operation of *strong* metaphors, treating those that are relatively "weak" on account of relatively low emphasis or resonance as etiolated specimens.

A weak metaphor might be compared to an unfunny joke, or an unilluminating philosophical epigram: one understands the unsuccessful or failed verbal actions in the light of what *would be* funny, illuminating, etc. Yet if all "jokes" are intended to be funny, and fail to the degree that they are not, not all good metaphors aim at "strength" and may be none the worse for that.

Consider the following example from a letter of Virginia Woolf to Lytton Strachey:

> "How you weave in every scrap — my god what scraps! — of interest to be had, like (you must pardon the metaphor) a snake insinuating himself through innumerably golden rings — (Do snakes? — I hope so)."
>
> (Nigel Nicholson, *The Letters of Virginia Woolf*, vol. ii: 1912-1922 [New York, Harcourt, 1976])

The snake metaphor used here should certainly count as "weak" in my terminology, since Strachey was intended to take the rich implicative background lightly.

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5

The interaction view revisited

The "interaction view" which I presented in *Metaphor* was there characterised as an attempt "to become clearer about some uses of the word 'metaphor' — or, if one prefers the material mode, to analyze the notion of metaphor" (25-26). In retrospect, I would prefer to think of my position as a help to understanding how strong metaphorical statements *work*. But this shift of formulation from conceptual analysis to a functional analysis, though potentially important, need not detain us.

The merits of the interaction view, a development and modification of I. A. Richards's valuable insights, should be weighed against those of its only available alternatives — the traditional "substitution view" and "comparison view" (a special case of the former). Briefly stated, the substitution view regards "the entire sentence that is the locus of the metaphor as replacing some set of literal sentences" (31); while the comparison view takes the imputed literal paraphrase to be a statement of some similarity or analogy, and so takes every metaphor to be a condensed or elliptic *simile* (35-36).

The reader will notice that both of these views treat metaphors as *unemphatic*, in my terminology — in principle expendable, if one disregards the incidental pleasures of stating figuratively what might just as well have been said literally.

A brief summary of the preferred interaction view might consist of the following claims, based upon the concluding summary of *Metaphor* (44-45). I reproduce the original formulations, with minor improvements, appending afterthoughts in each case.

(1) A metaphorical statement has two distinct subjects, to be identified as the "primary" subject and the "secondary" one.

> In *Metaphor*, I spoke instead of the "principal" and "subsidiary" subjects. The duality of reference is marked by the contrast between the metaphorical statement's *focus* (the word or words used non-literally) and the surrounding literal *frame*.

(2) The secondary subject is to be regarded as a system rather than an individual thing.

> Thus, I think of Wallace Stevens's remark that "Society is a sea" as being not so much about the sea (considered as a "thing") as about a system of relationships (the "implicative complex" discussed below) signalled by the presence of the word "sea" in the sentence in question. (In *Metaphor*, I proposed that the primary subject, also, be taken as a "system." But it seems in retrospect

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needlessly paradoxical, though not plainly mistaken, to say that Stevens was viewing Society, too, as a system of social relationships.)

In retrospect, the intended emphasis upon *systems*, rather than upon "things" or "ideas," (as in Richards) looks like one of the chief novelties in the earlier study.

(3) The metaphorical utterance works by "projecting upon" the primary subject a set of "associated implications," comprised in the *implicative complex*, that are predicable of the secondary subject.

The label, *implicative complex*, is new. "Projection" is, of course, a metaphor, that will need further discussion. In the earlier study, I spoke of a "system of associated commonplaces" (which later provoked some pointed criticisms by Paul Ricoeur). My notion was that the secondary subject, in a way partly depending upon the context of metaphorical use, determines a set of what Aristotle called *endoxa*, current opinions shared by members of a certain speech-community. But I also emphasised, as I should certainly wish to do now, that a metaphor-producer may introduce a novel and non-platitudinous "implicative-complex."

(4) The maker of a metaphorical statement selects, emphasises, suppresses and organises features of the primary subject by applying to it statements isomorphic with the members of the secondary subject's implicative complex.

The mechanisms of such "projection" (a still serviceable metaphor) are discussed and illustrated in the next section.

(5) In the context of a particular metaphorical statement, the two subjects "interact" in the following ways: (i) the presence of the primary subject incites the hearer to select some of the secondary subject's properties; and (ii) invites him to construct a parallel "implicative complex" that can fit the primary subject; and (iii) reciprocally induces parallel changes in the secondary subject.

This may be considered a crux for the "interaction view" (an attempted explication of Richards's striking image of the "interanimation of words "). Although I speak figuratively here of the *subjects* interacting, such an outcome is of course produced in the minds of the speaker and hearer: it is they who are led to engage in selecting, organising and "projecting." I think of a metaphorical statement (even a weak one) as a verbal action essentially demanding "uptake," a creative response from a competent reader.

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In *Metaphor*, I said — to the scandal of some of my subsequent critics — that the imputed interaction involves "shifts in meaning of words belonging to the same family or system as the metaphorical expression" (45). I meant, of course, a shift in the *speaker's* meaning — and the corresponding *hearer's* meaning — what both of them understand by the words, as used on the particular occasion.

6

How metaphorical statements work

Consider "Marriage is a zero-sum game." In this relatively "active" metaphor the implication-complex might be spelled out somewhat as follows:

(*G*1) A "game" is a *contest*;

(*G*2) between two opponents;

(*G*3) in which on player can win only at the expense of the other [8].

The corresponding system of imputed claims about marriage depends crucially upon the interpretations given to "contest," "opponents," and especially to "winning." One might try:

(*M*1) A marriage is a sustained struggle;

(*M*2) between two contestants;

(*M*3) in which the rewards (power? money? satisfaction?) of one contestant are gained only at the other's expense.

Here, the "projected" propositions can be taken literally — or almost so, no matter what one thinks of their plausibility (the metaphor's aptness not being here in question).

Such a heavy-handed analysis of course neglects the ambience of the secondary subject, the suggestions and valuations that necessarily attach themselves to a game-theory view of marriage, and thereby the receiver's perception of it: a marriage that can be seen as a competitive "game" of skill and calculation is not the kind made in heaven.

[8] To these might be added the following optional implications, that would readily occur to somebody familiar with game-theory, though not to a layman:

(*G*4) There is no rational procedure for winning in a single play.

(*G*5) A "maximin" strategy (playing to minimise possible losses) may, though controversially, be considered rational.

(*G*6) Playing a long-run "mixed strategy" (alternating available moves randomly but in a predetermined frequency) is (again, controversially) a "solution."

These further implications would, of course, strengthen the metaphor and heighten its interest.

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The relations between the three members of the implication-complex ($G1$-3) in this relatively simple example and their correlated statements about marriage ($M1$-3) are a mixed lot. $M2$ might be said to predicate of marriage precisely what $G2$ does of a twohanded game (with some hesitation about the matching of "opponents" and "contestants"); but in the shift from $G1$ to $M1$ it seems more plausible to discern some similarity rather than strict identity; and in $M3$, finally, "gain" must surely have an extended sense, by contrast with its sense in $G3$, since marital struggles usually do not end in clear-cut conventional victories. The difficulty in making firm and decisive judgments on such points is, I think, present in *all* cases of metaphorical statement. Since we must necessarily read "behind the words," we cannot set firm bounds to the admissible interpretations: ambiguity is a necessary by-product of the metaphor's suggestiveness.

So far as I can see, after scrutinising many examples, the relations between the meanings of the corresponding key words of the two implication-complexes can be classified as (i) identity, (ii) extension, typically *ad hoc*, (iii) similarity, (iv) analogy, or (v) what might be called "metaphorical coupling" (where, as often happens, the original metaphor implicates subordinate metaphors).

Let us now idealise the connection between the two implication-complexes (G and M) in the following way: G consists of certain statements, say Pa, Qb, ... and aRb, cSd ..., while M comprises corresponding statements $P'a'$, $Q'b'$, ... and $a'R'b'$, $c'S'd'$ ... (where P is uniquely correlated with P', a with a', R with R', and so on). Then the two systems have, as mathematicians say, the same "structure," are isomorphic (see Eberle for a lucid exposition of this notion). One important deviation from the mathematical conception is that G is linked with M by a "mixed lot" of projective relations, as we saw in the game-marriage example, and not (as typically in mathematical contexts) by a single "projective relation."

With such conceptions to hand, we need not speak metaphorically about "projecting" the secondary system. Viewed in this way (and neglecting the important suggestions and connotations, the "ambience," tone and attitudes that are also projected upon M) G is precisely what I have called in the past an "analogue-model" (cf. "Models and Archetypes").[9] I am now impressed, as I was insufficiently so when composing *Metaphor*, by the tight

[9] This conception might, accordingly, be regarded as a generalisation of Brown's view of metaphor as an "analogy between ... two relations" (71). I differ from him in admitting any number of predicates and relations in isomorphic correlation — and in laying less stress than he does upon "analogy," that tantalisingly suggestive but obscure notion.

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connections between the notions of models and metaphors. Every "implication complex" supported by a metaphor's secondary subject, I now think, is a *model* of the ascriptions imputed to the primary subject: every metaphor is the tip of a submerged model.

7
Metaphors and similes

I have said that there is a similarity, analogy or, more generally, an identity of structure between the secondary implication-complex of a metaphor and the set of assertions — the primary implication-complex — that it "maps." In "Poverty is a crime," 'crime' and 'poverty' are nodes of isomorphic networks, in which assertions about crime are correlated one-to-one with corresponding statements about poverty.

Hence, every metaphor may be said to mediate an analogy or structural correspondence. (That is the correct insight behind the classical "comparison view" of metaphor as elliptical or truncated simile.) Hence, also, every metaphorical statement may be said to implicate a likeness-statement and a comparison-statement, each weaker than the original metaphorical statement. ("I didn't say that he is *like* an echo; I said and meant that he *is* an echo!") But to perceive that a metaphor is grounded in similarity and analogy is not to agree with Whately that "the Simile or Comparison may be considered as differring *in form only* from a metaphor" or with Bain that "the metaphor *is* a comparison implied in the use of a term" (cf. *Metaphor,* 36). Implication is not the same as covert identity: looking at a scene through blue spectacles is different from *comparing* that scene with something else.

To call "Poverty is a crime" a simile or comparison is either to say too little or too much. In a given context of utterance, "Poverty is like a crime" may still be figurative, and hardly more than a stylistic variant upon the original statement. Burns might have said "My Love is a red, red rose" instead of "My Love is like a red, red rose," if the metre had permitted, with little semantic difference, if any. But to suppose that the metaphorical statement is an abstract or *précis* of a literal point-by-point comparison, in which the primary and secondary subjects are juxtaposed for the sake of noting dissimilarities as well as similarities, is to misconstrue the function of a metaphor. In discursively comparing one subject *with* another, we sacrifice the distinctive power and effectiveness of a good metaphor. The literal comparison lacks the ambience and suggestiveness, and the imposed "view" of the primary subject, upon which a metaphor's power to illuminate depends. In a metaphor as powerful as Pascal's, of man as a "thinking reed"

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(un roseau pensant), the supporting ground is disconcertingly simple, being intended chiefly to highlight human frailty and weakness *(faiblesse)*. The figure's effect depends, in this instance, very much on the "ambience."

It is helpful to remind oneself that 'is like' has many uses, among them: to point to some obvious, striking, or salient resemblance as in "Doesn't he look like Mussolini?" (where some such qualification as "*looks* like" or "*sounds* like" is needed); in an "open comparison," to mark the start of a detailed, literal point-by-point comparison; or as a mere stylistic variation upon the metaphorical form (which raises nearly all the questions I am here trying to answer).

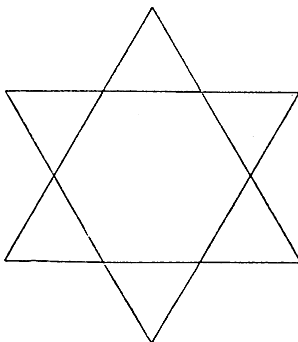
8

Thinking in metaphors

The foregoing account, which treats a metaphor, roughly speaking, as an instrument for drawing implications grounded in perceived analogies of structure between two subjects belonging to different domains, has paid no attention to the state of mind of somebody who *affirms* a metaphorical statement. A good metaphor sometimes *impresses*, strikes, or seizes its producer: we want to say we had a "flash of insight," not merely that we were comparing A with B, or even that we were thinking of A as if it were B. But to say seriously, emphatically, that "Life *is* the receipt and transmission of information" is at least to be thinking of life *as* the passage of information (but not that, merely). Similarly for all metaphorical utterances that are asserted and not merely entertained.

It might therefore be a large step forward in becoming clearer about what might be called *metaphorical thought* (a neglected topic of major importance) if we had a better grasp on what it is to think of something (A) as something else (B). What, then, is it to think of A as B?

Consider the relatively simple case of thinking of the geometrical figure sometimes called the "Star of David"



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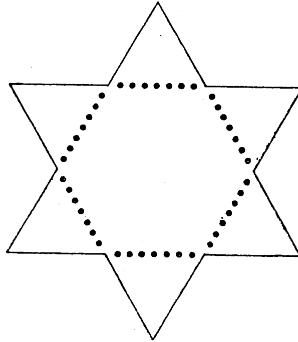
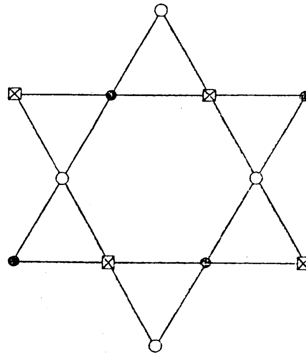
in the following different ways: —

(i) as an equilateral triangle set upon another of the same size;

(ii) as a regular hexagon, bearing an equilateral triangle upon each of its edges;



(iii) as three superimposed congruent parallelograms;



(iv) as the trace left by a point moving continuously around the perimeter of the "Star" and then around the interior hexagon;

(v) as in (iv), but with the point tracing out the hexagon before moving to the outside.

One might ask a child to think of the figure in each of these ways in turn. In the difficult third case of the three parallelograms, he would probably need some help, so there is something that he can be taught to do. But what?

The images one forms in trying to obey instructions corresponding to these five aspects of the Star are heuristically essential. A slow learner might be helped by having the different geometrical forms outlined in contrasting colors or, in cases (iv) and (v), by watching a moving pencil point

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actually produce the figure. But the comprehension could not consist merely in possessing such images, important as they may be: any competent teacher would ask the learner such questions as whether the moving point could trace the whole figure continuously—or, in the simpler cases, whether the triangles in question had the same size and shape. A test of mastery is ability to tease out the implications of the intended perceptual analysis.

So far, the case somewhat resembles what happens when we see some A as metaphorically B: the child sees the Star *as* superimposed parallelograms; a metaphor-thinker sees life *as* a wedding; both apply concepts that yield discovery; both manifest skills shown in ability to tease out suitable implications of their respective insights. But this comparison is lame, because the child-learner, unlike the metaphor-thinker, has not yet been required to make *conceptual innovations,* the parallelograms he perceives being just those he had antecedently learned to draw and recognise.

So let us vary the illustration. One might ask a child to think of each of the following figures as a triangle: one composed of three *curved* segments; a straight line segment (viewed as a collapsed triangle, with its vertex on the base); two parallel lines issuing from a base segment (with the vertex "gone to infinity"); and so on. The imaginative efforts demanded in such exercises (familiar to any student of mathematics) is not a bad model for what is needed in producing, handling and understanding all but the most trivial of metaphors. That the use of the relevant concepts employed should *change* (so that 'game' is *made* to apply to marriage; 'information' to life; 'reed' to man; and so on) seems essential to the operation.

Why stretch, twist, press and expand, concepts in this way — why try to see A as metaphorically B, when it literally is not B? Well, because we *can* do so, conceptual boundaries not being rigid, but elastic and permeable; and because we often need to do so, the available literal resources of the language being insufficient to express our sense of the rich correspondences, interrelations, and analogies of domains conventionally separated; and because metaphorical thought and utterance sometimes embody insight expressible in no other fashion.

9

How do we recognise metaphors?

While praising the interaction theory Professor Monroe C. Beardsley has urged that it is:

> "incomplete in not explaining what it is about the metaphorical attribution that *informs* us that the modifier is metaphorical rather than literal" (1958, 161, emphasis added).

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Elsewhere, Beardsley states the tasks of a theory of metaphor as follows:

> "The problem is to understand how that radical shift of intension [how "the metaphorical modifier acquires a special sense in its particular context"] comes about; *how we know that the modifier is to be taken metaphorically*; and how we construe or explicate its meaning correctly" (1967, 285, emphasis added).

The supplement that Beardsley desires, therefore, seems to be some *diagnostic criterion*, as it might be called, for the occurrence of a metaphorical statement, some mark or indication that will allow its presence and metaphorical character to be detected. I use "diagnostic criterion" here to suggest a bodily symptom, such as a rash, that serves as a reliable sign of some abnormal state though not necessarily qualifying as a defining condition. But Beardsley may, after all, be seeking more ambitiously an observable and *necessary condition* for a statement to be metaphorical.

The need for some such identification criterion, essential or merely diagnostic, has been forcibly urged by other writers. Ina Loewenberg says:

> "Any satisfactory formulation of the principle of metaphor requires the identifiability of metaphors since they cannot be understood or produced unless recognised as such" (1975, 316).

Here "*the* principle of a metaphor" alludes to her contention that metaphors "exemplify a single principle of semantic change" (*ib.*) If "identifiability" is taken in a broad sense, I could agree with Loewenberg's requirement, with a possible reservation about a "producer" being necessarily aware of using a metaphor. But the rest of her valuable essay shows that she, like Beardsley at least part of the time, is demanding what I have called a "diagnostic criterion" for a statement to be metaphorical.

Beardsley proceeds to offer such a diagnostic criterion as the cornerstones of his "controversion theory." [10] According to him, the recognisable mark of a metaphorical statement is that *taken literally* it would have to count as a logical contradiction or an absurdity, in either case something patently *false*.

An obvious objection is that this test, so far as it fits, will apply equally to such other tropes as oxymoron or hyperbole, so that it would at best

[10] See (1958, 138-144). In later writing, he called his view the "Revised Verbal Opposition Theory" (1962, passim). The preferred later title indicates his interest in explaining the supposed "tension between the subject and the modifier by which we are alerted to something special, odd and startling in the combination" (285). Here, he has in mind what would be an essential and not merely a diagnostic feature of metaphor.

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certify the presence of some figurative statement, but not necessarily a metaphor. A more serious objection is that authentic metaphors need not manifest the invoked "controversion," though many of them do. Suppose I counter the conversational remark, "As we know, man is a wolf — *homo homini lupus* " — by saying "Oh no, man is not a wolf but an ostrich." [11] In context, "Man is not a wolf" is as metaphorical as its opposite, yet it clearly fails the controversion test. The point is easy to generalise: the negation of any metaphorical statement can itself be a metaphorical statement and hence possibly true if taken literally. Nor need the examples be confined to such negatives. When we say "He does indeed live in a glass house," of a man who actually lives in a house made of glass, nothing prevents us from using the sentence to make a metaphorical statement.

Our recognition of a metaphorical statement depends essentially upon two things: knowledge of what it is *to be* a metaphorical statement, and our judgment that a metaphorical reading of a given statement is here preferable to a literal one. The decisive reason for the choice of interpretation may be, as it often is, the patent falsity or incoherence of the literal reading — but it might equally be the banality of that reading's truth, its pointlessness, or its lack of congruence with the surrounding text and non-verbal setting. The situation in cases of doubt as to how a statement is best taken is basically the same as that in other cases of ambiguity. And just as there is no infallible test for resolving ambiguity, so there is none to be expected in discriminating the metaphorical from the literal.

There is an important mistake of method in seeking an infallible mark of the presence of metaphors. The problem seems to me analogous to that of distinguishing a joke from a non-joke. If a philosopher, whose children have trouble in deciding when he is joking, introduces the convention that a raised thumb indicates seriousness, he might sometimes be joking in raising his thumb! An explicit assertion that a remark is being made metaphorically (perhaps the best candidate for a reliable diagnostic sign) cannot guarantee that a metaphor is in question, for that does not depend simply upon its producer's intentions, and the sign might itself be used metaphorically. Every criterion for a metaphor's presence, however plausible, is defeasible in special circumstances.

If Beardsley and other critics of the interaction view are, after all, not looking for a "diagnostic criterion" but rather something essential to a metaphor's *being* a metaphor, my above rebuttals will miss their mark. But

[11] An adaptation of an example used by Binkley. See also Ted Cohen's paper which, like Binkley's, contains many counter-examples to Beardsley's thesis.

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then the "tension" of which Beardsley and others speak seems to be only one feature of that peculiar mode of language use in which a metaphor's focus induces a "projection" of a "secondary system," as already explained earlier in this paper. "Tension" seems to me somewhat less suggestive than "interaction," but there is no point in quarrelling over labels.

10
Are metaphors ever "creative"?

The production of a new metaphorical statement obviously introduces some small change into a "world" that includes statements and the thoughts they express, as well as clouds and rocks. Even the reaffirmation of an old metaphor can be viewed as a trivial insertion into the world of a new token of a known statement-type. That metaphors should be "creative" in this boring way is hardly worth mentioning except for the sake of contrast.

Emphasis upon the alleged "creativity" of metaphors becomes more interesting when they are viewed as miniature poems or poem-fragments. But the production of a work of art would interest me here, given the general thrust of this essay, only if such a work "tells us something about the world." Indeed, I intend to defend the implausible contention that a metaphorical statement can sometimes generate new knowledge and insight, by *changing* relationships between the things designated (the principal and subsidiary subjects). To agree would be to assign a strong cognitive function to certain metaphors; but to disagree is not necessarily to relegate them entirely to some realm of "fiction." [12] For it may be held that such metaphors reveal connections without *making* them. (Would it not be unsettling to suppose that a metaphor might be self-certifying, by generating the very reality to which it seems to draw attention?)

In my earlier essay, I stated one form of what might be called the "strong creativity thesis" in this way:

> "It would be more illuminating in some of these cases [i. e., of metaphors imputing similarities, difficult to discern otherwise] to say that the metaphor creates the similarity than to say that it formulates some similarity antecedently existing." (*Metaphor*, 37)

[12] According to Oakeshott, all "poetic imagining" (as in the use of indispensable metaphors) is concerned with "fictions" which would be radically misconstrued as "contributions to an enquiry into the nature of the real world." He adds: "When it is said that poetic imagining is 'seeing things as they really are' . . . we seem to have been inveigled back into a world composed, not of images but of cows and corn-fields . . ." (45-46). Contrast with this Wallace Stevens's dictum: "Metaphor creates a new reality from which the original appears to be unreal" (169).

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It will be noticed that the claim was explicitly hedged: to say "it would be more illuminating" to view some metaphors as ontologically creative falls short of claiming that they *are* creative. Yet no remark in *Metaphor* has provoked stronger dissent.

Khatchadourian, in the course of a generally approving account of the interaction view, thinks the thesis cannot be right. He asks rhetorically, "How can one, anyway, literally create a feature or a similarity by means of a metaphor?" (235). Granting that a metaphor-user "can bring into prominence *known* features ... which he thinks deserve special attention" (*ib.*, my italics) and thereby "give us a new vision or a new insight," Khatchadourian concludes that "the creation of some effect in the hearer or reader [does not involve] *the creation of a similarity* between the principal and the subsidiary subject" (236).

Long ago, S. J. Brown summarily dismissed a related contention (on the part of Gustave Lanson) that by means of metaphor "our mind, perceiving a common quality in two different objects, or *creating between them a relation which assimilates them to one another*, names one of them by a term which suits, or belongs to, the other" (Brown, 47; emphasis added). Brown says: "How the mind can create a relation which does not previously exist, M. Lanson does not explain, nor ought such explanation be expected of a writer on literary theory" (*ib.*). Such offhand rejection is clearly motivated by a picture of the "relation" in question as being "objective" or "out there" — existing quite as independently as the relation of *having-the-same-height-as*: one rightly wants to deny that cubits can be added to stature by saying or thinking so. But this conception of some "objective" relation as antecedently existing is question-begging when applied to that variegated set of "relations" that we bundle together as "similarity." [13] When applied to the explication of metaphors, 'is like' is not as sharply contrasted with '*looks* like' as 'is taller than' is with '*looks* taller than'. The imputed "relations" in a generative metaphor, one might say, must have a "subjective" as well as an "objective" aspect, but each may contribute to the other, as I shall hope to show. I shall try to make the "strong creativity thesis" at least plausible by considering a series of five answers to questions having the form, "Did *X* exist before it was perceived?"

[13] For which see Jon Wheatley's illuminating essay. I agree with him that "to say, as philosophers sometimes at least imply, that 'A is like B' designates a 'similarity relation' tends to group like-statements to statements of physical, temporal and other purely objective relationships" (112). On the whole, Wheatley tends to stress non-objective uses of "like"; but he also says of some uses that "there is, in all but peculiar circumstances, some very definite sense in which these resemblances must correspond to fact" (113).

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1. *"Did the other side of the moon exist before it was seen?"* It would take a fanatical idealist to say No. We think, of course, of the rocks, plains and mountains as having "been there all the time," prior to observation. It is crucial to this conception — as contrasted with some of the following examples — that the existence of the physical objects and configurations in question is held to depend in no way upon the existence of human or other sentient beings, or upon their contingent possession and use of thought and language.

2. *"Did genes exist before their existence was recognised by biologists?"* The question might be rephrased as "Did things properly *called* 'genes' exist before they were admitted into accepted biological theory?" An affirmative answer is no doubt used to contrast this case with those in which the "objects" in question were *synthesised* by human agency. *Qua* things found but not made, "natural" and not "artificial" genes, it must be agreed, were "there all the time," even before their existence was discovered. But it is less obvious that *genes* "were there all the time, waiting to be discovered." The term 'gene' has its place within a man-made theory, in whose absence it would have no intelligible use: the relation between 'gene' and what that term designates is more like that of a dot on a map and the city it represents than like that of a personal name and the person it designates. So the proper answer to this second question should be "Yes and No."

3. *"Were there bankrupts before the financial institutions of the Western world were developed?"* If the question is taken in a literal sense, the only acceptable answer must be No. For here the allusion to man-made constructions (institutions rather than developed theory) is uncontroversial: 'bankrupt' (applied to someone judged insolvent on petition to a court of law) had no application before the requisite legal procedures had come into existence. A positive answer to the question would need to take the tortuously counterfactual form of: "*If* there had been the corresponding legal institutions (say in 1066), such-and-such a person would have been judged a bankrupt *if* the requisite petitions had been lodged."

4. *"Did the view of Mt. Everest from a point 100 feet above its summit exist before anybody had seen that view?"* An affirmative answer can be accepted only in the counter-factual sense proposed in the last paragraph: "If anybody had been in a position to view the mountain from the point specified, it *would* have looked as it does now from a plane flying overhead (i. e., the view has not changed)." But if we agree, we should reject the reifying mythology of the *unseen* view, "there all the time" and available for inspection like some ethereal emanation. The notion of a "view"

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implicates human beings as possible perceivers (though not as the creators and subjects of legal institutions, as in the last case): it is logically necessary that a view can be *seen* (view*ed*). Now when a certain view is actually seen, that is a fact about the mountain as well as about the viewer — about a world that includes both. It is objectively true, not a matter of mere convention or whim, that the view of Everest from such-and-such a point has such-and-such features.

5. *"Did the slow motion appearance of a galloping horse exist before the invention of cinematography?"* Here the "view" is necessarily mediated by a man-made instrument (though this might cease to be true if some mutant children were born with the power to see "slow motion" with the left eye). And yet what is seen in a slow motion film becomes a part of the world once it is seen.

The last example comes the closest to what I originally had in mind by the "strong creativity thesis." If some metaphors are what might be called "cognitive instruments," indispensable for perceiving connections that, once perceived, are *then* truly present, the case for the thesis would be made out. Do metaphors ever function as such "cognitive instruments?" I believe so. When I first thought of Nixon as "an image surrounding a vacuum," the verbal formulation was necessary to my seeing him in this way. Subsequently, certain kinetic and visual images have come to serve as surrogates for the original verbal formulation, which still controls the sensory imagery and remains available for ready reaffirmation.

For such reasons as this I still wish to contend that some metaphors enable us to see aspects of reality that the metaphor's production helps to constitute. But that is no longer surprising if one believes that the "world" is necessarily a world *under a certain description* — or a world seen from a certain perspective. Some metaphors can create such a perspective.

11

Can a metaphorical statement ever reveal "how things are"?

In the last section my attention was fixed upon the creative or productive aspects of generative metaphors, in virtue of which they can sometimes function as cognitive instruments through which their users can achieve novel views of a domain of reference. But a view, however mediated, must be a view of *something*: my task here is to make some suggestions about what that "something" is and how far its possession can yield insight about "how things are."

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I have chosen the unpretentious formula, "how things are," in order to avoid the fixation of a number of writers who discuss the same topic under the rubric, "Can metaphorical statements be *true*?" [14] Their strategy seems to me misguided and liable to induce distortion, by focussing exclusively upon that special connection between statement and reality that we signalise by the attribution of truth-value. In ordinary language, the epithet 'true' has more restricted uses than philosophers usually recognise: [15] it is most uncontroversially appropriate in situations where the prime purpose is to state a "fact," i. e., where the "fact-stating" statement in question is associated with some accepted procedure for verification or confirmation: A witness who swears to "tell the truth and nothing but the truth" is expected to "speak plainly," i. e., to eschew figurative language, and commits himself not only to refrain from lying, but also to abstain from producing probability statements, generalisations, explanations and interpretations of actions (though some of these excluded types of statements may in other contexts, e. g., those of scientific inquiry, be properly judged true or false). In such "fact-stating" uses, the concepts of truth and falsity are closely associated with such semantic paronyms as 'lying', 'believing', 'knowing', 'evidence', 'contradiction', and others. The relevant linguistic sub-practice (or *Sprachspiel*, as Wittgenstein would call it) characteristically assumes agreement about ways of checking upon what is being said, and on ways of contesting or qualifying such sayings.

Hence one way of recognising that we are in *this* domain of language-use is to consider whether supplementary questions such as "Are you perhaps lying?", "What's the evidence?", "How do you know?", "Aren't you contradicting what you said a moment ago?" and the like are in order. With such considerations in mind, we can readily dismiss the question about whether metaphorical statements have truth-values. If somebody urges that "Nixon is an image surrounding a vacuum," it would be inept to ask soberly whether he *knew* that to be so, or how he came to know it, or how we could check on the allegation, or whether he was saying something consistent with his previous assertion that Nixon was a whore. Such supplementary moves are never appropriate to any metaphorical statements except those

[14] See, for instance, Binkley, Cohen, Loewenberg, McCloskey, and Mew.

[15] Unsurprisingly, a notable exception is Austin, who says: "We become obsessed with 'truth' when discussing statements, just as we become obsessed with 'freedom' when discussing conduct ... Not merely is it jejune to suppose that all a statement aims to be is 'true', but it may further be questioned whether every 'statement' does aim to be true at all. The principle of Logic, that 'Every proposition must be true or false', has too long operated as the simplest, most persuasive and most pervasive form of the descriptive fallacy" (98-99).

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degenerately "decorative" or expendable ones in which the metaphorical focus can be replaced by some literal equivalent. It is a violation of philosophical grammar to assign either truth or falsity to "strong" metaphors.

What lies behind the desire to stretch 'true' to fit some such cases (as when somebody might quite intelligibly respond to the Nixon-metaphor by saying "How true!") is a recognition that an indispensable metaphor does not belong to the realm of fiction, and is not merely being used, as some writers allege, for some mysterious "aesthetic effect," but really does "say something" (Nixon, if we are not mistaken, *is* indeed what he is metaphorically said to be).

Such recognition of what might be called the representational aspect of a strong metaphor can be accommodated by recalling other familiar devices for representing "how things are" that cannot be assimilated to "statements of fact." Charts and maps, graphs and pictorial diagrams, photographs and "realistic" paintings, and above all models, are familiar cognitive devices for *showing* "how things are," devices that need not be perceived as mere substitutes for bundles of statement of fact. In such cases we speak of correctness and incorrectness, without needing to rely upon those overworked epithets, 'true' and 'false'.

This is the clue we need in order to do justice to the cognitive, informative, and ontologically illuminating aspects of strong metaphors. I have been presenting in this essay a conception of metaphors which postulates interactions between two "systems," grounded in analogies of structure (partly created, partly discovered). The imputed isomorphisms can, as we have seen, be rendered explicit and are then proper subjects for the determination of appropriateness, faithfulness, partiality, superficiality, and the like. Metaphors that survive such critical examination can properly be held to convey, in indispensable fashion, insight into the systems to which they refer. In this way, they can, and sometimes do, generate insight about "how things are" in reality.

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