

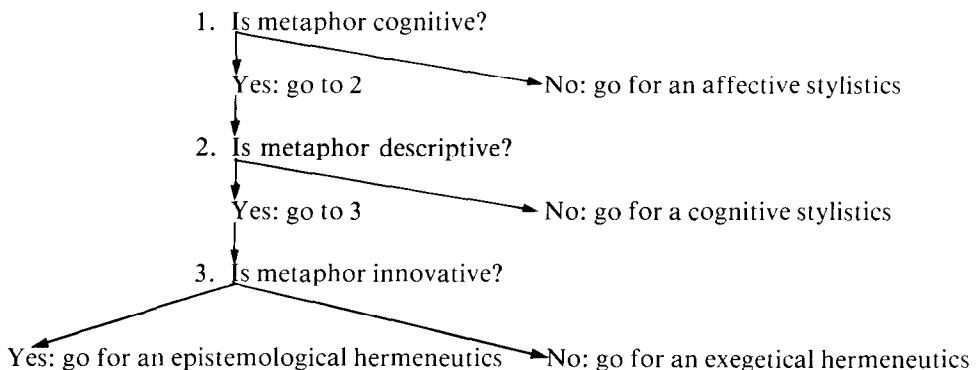
## THE DEMARCATION OF METAPHOR

PHILIP PETTIT

There are three major issues which crop up in the discussion of metaphor among philosophers of language. They are: whether metaphor is cognitive, whether it is descriptive, and whether it is innovative. Those who deny that metaphor is cognitive are a group more often imagined than encountered, but if they existed they would consign the study of metaphor to affective stylistics, stressing the ornamentative and related effects which the phenomenon is likely to have.<sup>1</sup> Those who admit that metaphor is cognitive and go on to reject the idea that it is descriptive also assign the study of metaphor to stylistics, but stylistics with a cognitive emphasis. What is primarily to be studied in their view is not any descriptive content but the effects which metaphor has in drawing certain things to the attention of an audience and in changing thereby the audience's general point of view.<sup>2</sup>

And what of theorists who acknowledge that metaphor is both cognitive and descriptive? These divide over the issue of whether or not it is innovative, whether or not it ever makes possible the expression of something which was inexpressible up to then. In either case they allocate the study of metaphor primarily to hermeneutics, though they may also acknowledge a role for stylistics.<sup>3</sup> If the innovative thesis is denied, the hermeneutics sought will be exegetical, offering something like rules for the interpretation of metaphor; if the thesis is upheld, it will be more in the nature of an epistemological discipline, a discipline whose goal will be to explain the possibility of the sort of interpretation involved.<sup>4</sup>

The structure of the debate around these three issues can be nicely summarised in the following flow-chart. The chart may be of interest to those who wish to find their way through recent philosophical literature on metaphor.



So much by way of summarising the main questions about metaphor which philosophers of language are currently discussing. What I now wish to point out is that presupposed to the discussion of these issues is a question which one rarely finds explicitly debated, even though it is as tricky as any of the more central problems. This is the question of how metaphor is defined or demarcated: how it is marked off from that which is not metaphor. The question must divide philosophers of language, for one finds great differences in what different theorists are prepared to regard as metaphorical.<sup>5</sup> It may even determine the approach which different philosophers take to the central issues catalogued above. Nevertheless it is a question which has escaped sustained discussion. In this paper I would like to begin to put that deficiency right by taking the issue as my explicit topic.

There are two fronts on which metaphor requires demarcation: first, as against literal utterance and second, as against non-literal utterance which is also non-metaphorical. The first two sections of the paper are devoted respectively to these tasks: the first defines the genus of non-literal usage exemplified by metaphor, the second identifies the metaphorical species within that genus. The paper also has a third section. This deals with the specific problem of demarcation associated with dead metaphor: that of marking off metaphor from literal usage which would once have counted as metaphorical. The problem is a particularly tricky one and discussing it will give us the chance to sharpen some of our earlier conclusions.

## I

Literal utterances come in different modes, assertoric, interrogative, imperative or whatever; mode is usually determined by mood but may also be fixed by intonation, punctuation or context. Looking at literal utterances it is theoretically natural and economical to distinguish them into sets the members of which differ only in mode: they are assertions, questions, orders and so on in respect of the same matter or content.<sup>6</sup> An example of such a set might be 'John is angry', 'Is John angry?', 'Let John be angry', or 'You are alert', 'Are you alert?', 'Be alert'. In representing a set of this kind we might take each utterance as the expression of a different attitude *vis-à-vis* the same indicative sentence. The assertion expresses a belief that the sentence is true, the yes-no question a desire to be told by the addressee whether or not it is true, and the command a desire that the relevant agent act so as to make it true.

Given these comments, we can have a go at defining a literal utterance. To begin with, we can say that the content in respect of which a literal utterance expresses an attitude is an indicative sentence as routinely interpreted. And what then is the routine interpretation of an indicative sentence? Roughly, it is the interpretation yielded just by a consideration of the meanings of the words in the sentence. This consideration will have to take context, linguistic and non-linguistic, into account, since the meanings of many words are fixed by context. In order to determine which of a number of possible word-meanings is in question, it may even involve looking at the overall interpretation given by each of the different meanings and determining the most plausible one. In general, however, the interpretation is governed primarily by the words in question; only in special cases does it turn upon independent evidence as to what the speaker is likely to have asserted, or asked, or ordered.<sup>7</sup>

This rough account of routine interpretation will lend itself to refinement only when we have access to semantic theories for natural languages. Any such theory must be capable

of identifying the meaning of each of the indefinite number of indicative sentences which a natural language generates. It can hope to do this only by recourse to two sorts of items: base axioms which give a semantic value to each of certain elements distinguished in the lexicon of the language, and recursive axioms which say what effects on sentence meaning various sorts of combination of these elements have.<sup>8</sup> Given such a semantic theory, we could characterise the routine interpretation of a sentence as an interpretation which assigns the meaning, or one of the meanings, licensed by the semantic theory: that is, derivable within the theory from the fixed values of the lexical elements in the sentence and from the fixed effects of the ways in which the elements are combined. In the absence of any theory of this kind, we must replace reference to semantic values and effects by loose talk of word meanings and we must identify a routine interpretation as one that is guided by those meanings in a more or less straightforward way.

Metaphorical utterances, like literal ones, come in different modes: we find not just metaphorical assertions, but also metaphorical questions, metaphorical commands, metaphorical wishes and so on. This suggests that their distinctiveness lies in the content in respect of which a related set of utterances will express different attitudes. Where the content of a literal utterance is an indicative sentence as routinely construed, the content of a metaphorical one will be such a sentence as construed non-routinely or imaginatively.<sup>9</sup> And what then is an imaginative interpretation of an indicative sentence? We can say that it is an interpretation fitting at least these three conditions: it takes the place of a routine interpretation which would make the original utterance incongruous in some way; it is sensitive to the meanings of the words in the sentence—if it were not it would be arbitrary—but it is not derived from them in the straightforward manner of the routine reading; and it succeeds in making good sense of the utterance, it enables us to see why the utterance should have been made.

The foregoing remarks about literal and metaphorical utterances are little more than a circumspect statement of commonly accepted platitudes; hence my complacency in asserting them without argument. There is one point however on which our common sense is quite liable to be wrong and I would like to draw attention particularly to this. It has to do with the precise nature of the incongruity which leads us to reject routine interpretation in favour of imaginative construal.

Traditionally, discussions of metaphor have focused on metaphorical assertions and the question here is: in what way does routine interpretation make an assertion so incongruous that we are driven to take it as a metaphor. The common and natural answer is that routine interpretation presents a metaphorical assertion as false in some obvious way: perhaps even as outrageously false in the manner of a statement which offends against linguistically marked categorisations. The answer comes easily because it is borne out by all the standard examples of metaphorical assertion: 'Richard is a lion', 'The world's a stage', 'The flowers are dancing', 'The law is an ass'. And yet the answer is wrong, though the fact has been noticed only recently.<sup>10</sup>

There are lots of traditional metaphorical assertions which are not false, let alone outrageously false, when interpreted routinely: for example, 'No man is an island'. Moreover, such examples are not hard to come by since the negation of any metaphor that is false on routine construal will naturally count as a metaphor itself and will have to be true on routine construal: witness 'Richard is not a lion', 'The world is not a stage', and so on. And if it is suggested that only negative metaphors have the characteristic of

being true on routine interpretation, there are examples to hand which also put paid to that idea: 'The man is an animal', 'That painting is blue' and the like. For such assertions we can easily imagine circumstances under which they are true both when interpreted routinely and non-routinely.

In what, then, do we say that the incongruity of a routinely construed metaphorical assertion consists? All that it appears we can say is that routinely taken the sentence in question is not one which we can seriously imagine the speaker to have asserted: this, because of what we know or think we know about him and about his circumstances. The situation is nicely summed up by Ted Cohen.

'In all cases in which the words are not to be taken literally, there must be something which blocks their being taken literally. They may be senseless if taken literally. But they needn't be. They must be blatantly false if taken literally. But they may be true. What they must be, if taken literally, is something the speaker could not mean in these circumstances. There are things we cannot mean which are not (sententially) meaningless'.<sup>11</sup>

Going back to the main theme of this section, it appears that we can distinguish metaphorical utterance from literal on these grounds: the metaphorical utterance involves as content an indicative sentence which makes the utterance incongruous if interpreted routinely but which makes good sense of it if taken non-routinely or imaginatively. The suggested demarcation leaves a lot of detail to be teased out, but the main point should be intuitively clear. In conclusion, I may just mention that the way in which the literal-metaphorical contrast is drawn allows for the possibility of pedestrian metaphor: metaphor which does nothing of expressive note and can be readily paraphrased in literal terms. This possibility is closed by some theorists, on the grounds that just as a joke is not a joke unless it is funny, so a metaphor is not a metaphor unless it is rich with ramifications and is capable of sustaining endless paraphrase.<sup>12</sup> I am happy that our demarcation puts us in conflict with these theorists, for it seems to me intuitively that what we know as metaphor may be more or less resistant to paraphrase, more or less rich in expressiveness; it would be a mistake to define metaphor in neglect of this intuition. Besides, our line of demarcation would seem to be the more prudent one: defining a wider category in the first place, we are afterwards able to distinguish inexhaustible metaphor within it, whereas our opponents run the risk of overlooking the relations between what we see as two kinds of metaphor in their rush to focus on the richer variety.

## II

Our method of distinguishing metaphor from literal utterance does not draw a line between metaphor and certain forms of non-literal speech which we would naturally describe as non-metaphorical. In particular it leaves metaphor in the company of what I shall call figurative distortion and figurative deviousness. These phenomena I shall consider in turn, with a view to finding a way of marking off metaphor from them.

Figurative distortion is exemplified by well-known figures of speech such as irony, understatement and overstatement, underemphasis and overemphasis. In such utterances the speaker utters, usually with assertoric force, a sentence which on the literal face of it is outlandish: the large is described as small or the small as large; the fair-sized is characterised as small or as large; the large and small are both depicted as fair-sized or the fair-sized is presented either as large or as small. As with metaphor the utterances can be made sense

of by an imaginative rendering of the content sentence, a rendering which postulates the presence of irony or one of the other figures of speech. Are we to say therefore that the sort of figurative distortion involved is an instance of metaphor? It would run against the intuitive grain to do so, and if we can find a natural basis for drawing a distinction, then a distinction we should draw.

The most striking point of contrast between figurative distortion and metaphor is that distortion does not carry concepts from one area of discourse to another, whereas metaphor has been traditionally taken to do so: indeed the assumption is marked by its very etymology. Can we spell out clearly this idea of transference, perhaps freeing it of the rather unsubtle metaphor of transportation? If so, we will be able to draw a satisfactory distinction between the two phenomena.

An obvious and indeed a traditional way in which metaphor might be thought to involve transference is this: that it applies a predicate to something of which the term does not literally hold, to something outside the normal range of application, the normal extension, of the term. The thought leads nowhere, however, for it is bound to the mistaken assumption that every metaphor involves a literally false sentence: 'Richard is a lion' does but 'Richard is not a lion' and 'Richard is an animal' do not. And even if it were true that metaphor always applied a predicate to something of which it did not literally hold, this could also be said of irony and its related figures of speech: unlike metaphor, these always do seem to involve the literal misapplication of terms.

For an understanding of transference which will enable us to make out a satisfactory distinction between metaphor and figurative distortion, I suggest that we turn to the work of Nelson Goodman: this, paradoxically, since Goodman himself does not regard the distinction as significant.<sup>13</sup> In particular I think that we must take over two concepts developed by Goodman: those, as he calls them, of predicate schema and predicate realm.

For every predicate in use we can identify a complementary predicate or set of predicates such that the application of the first is taken to rule out the application of the other or others. Recognising this scarcely contestable fact, Goodman introduces the notion of a predicate schema to describe the set of alternatives at issue in any utterance. Thus the schema for 'is a lady' in 'That is a lady' may be either 'is a lady/is a man' or 'is a lady/is a woman of ill-repute', depending on context. Again the schema for 'is a game' in 'It's a game' may be, depending on context, either 'is a game/is serious business' or 'is a game/is mere play'.

So much for the notion of schema. For Goodman the realm of a predicate in use is defined with the help of this notion. It is said to be the range of things to which the predicate or the alternatives in the predicate's schema apply: the sum or aggregate of the extensions of the predicates in the schema. Thus the realm of 'is a lady' may be, depending on the schema in question, all human beings, male and female, or merely the female members of the species. Again the realm of 'is a game' may be either human enterprises in general or just recreational activities.<sup>14</sup>

Within the concepts of schema and realm to hand, we can make sense of the idea that metaphor distinctively involves transference. In metaphor, and this is what marks it off from figurative distortion, a predicate schema is applied, not to its normal realm, but to a novel one. A schema like 'is a lion/is some other jungle animal' is exported beyond its native frontiers to a new area and is made to do categorising work there parallel to that which it had done at home. The contrast with irony and the like is that in those figures of

speech we remain focused on the same realm; it is just that the schema is applied to the realm in an unusual way. Thus in irony the schema is inverted so that within a realm sorted by a schema ' $P/Q$ ', what is literally  $Q$  gets described as  $P$  and what is literally  $P$  described as  $Q$ .<sup>15</sup>

Does our new idea of metaphorical transference enable us to handle the sorts of example which forced us to give up the old one? Can we say that there is transference even in metaphors which involve literally true sentences? I think we can. The negative metaphor 'Richard is not a lion' presents no more problems than its positive counterpart, for though it is literally true and the counterpart literally false, they both involve a transference of a predicate schema from the realm of jungle animals to the realm of man.

And what of the positive metaphor which is literally true: a metaphor like 'Richard is an animal'. This also involves transference as we can see when we ask what the schema in question is. The answer must be 'is an animal/is a human being', a schema for which the normal realm is the wide one which includes all animals, human and non-human. This schema is transferred by the metaphor to the narrower realm of human beings and there it is made to effect a new sorting parallel to the old. Notice that on this interpretation 'Richard is an animal' comes out as literally true only because it is taken to involve a different schema from that which operates in the metaphor: it is true with reference to the schema 'is the animal/is not an animal of any kind, human or otherwise'.

Do we find positive metaphor which is literally true and which is literally true with reference to the same schema as that involved in the metaphor? We do, since 'That painting is blue' may be true both literally and metaphorically with reference to the schema 'is blue/is of some other colour'. In what way can such metaphor be said to involve transference? Goodman supplies the answer, with reference to the very example in question. He points out that when the sentence is understood metaphorically, it is understood through a transference of the schema from the realm of the emotions, a realm to which is applied in an established variety of metaphor, to the realm of paintings.<sup>16</sup> Thus we see that metaphorical transference may be the transference, not of a schema as it is literally used, but of a schema already understood metaphorically.

These comments on transference should be sufficient to bring out the contrast between metaphor and figurative distortion. What now of figurative deviousness, the second sort of non-literal utterance from which I suggested that metaphor should be distinguished? The category in question is not often given explicit notice, but it includes familiar figures of speech such as the following: the well-worn proverb introduced to make a discussion point indirectly—'Business is business', 'The early bird gets the worm', 'There are lots of good fish in the sea'; the enigmatic remark designed to convey some idea thought too deep or devious for literal expression—'The battle will be won', 'He who claps with one hand makes no noise'; and the allegory or parable recounted for didactic effect. Indeed, it will also be thought to include simile, if a simile is held to communicate something more specific and interesting than the bland statement of similarity, a statement which can scarcely fail to be true, in which it superficially consists.

Figures of deviousness, like figures of distortion, share the metaphorical characteristic of yielding incongruous utterances if the sentences they involve are taken routinely. The utterances make sense, their point becomes manifest, only when the sentences are construed in an imaginative manner. Despite all of this we would hardly want to say that such utterances were metaphorical. Figurative or symbolic they certainly are, but it would not

be true to our linguistic intuitions to describe them as metaphorical. The question then is whether we can find a satisfactory base for drawing a distinction between such utterances and true metaphors.

The answer is not far to seek, for we can help ourselves once again to the notion of transference. Metaphors take a predicate schema from one realm and apply it to another, the effect of the exercise being to polarise the new area into kinds that correspond with the kinds into which the schema divides the old. Figures like those we are discussing now do not attempt any such transfer and do not seek any such effect. In common with all figurative or symbolic styles of utterance, in common in particular with metaphor, they give us utterances which mean something other than what they literally say. What they do not give us however may be accorded greater importance in the devising of our taxonomy. Granted that they do not involve the transfer which metaphor elsewhere displays, and granted that our linguistic intuition is to describe them in any case as non-metaphorical, we have every reason to draw the line demarcating metaphor somewhat short of the territory that they comprise.<sup>17</sup>

In this section we have drawn on the notion of metaphorical transference in order to bear out our intuition that figurative distortion and figurative deviousness, non-literal uses of language though they are, are not properly metaphorical. What must now be noted is that by making transference into such a distinctive feature of metaphor, we put ourselves in a position where it is difficult to deny the title of 'metaphor' to metonymy, synecdoche and the like, even though these figures are often contrasted with metaphor. In both figures we find the transference of a predicate schema from one realm to another. What distinguishes metonymy is that the schema is transferred to a realm of objects associated in some way with those in the original; what distinguishes synecdoche is that it is transferred to a realm of objects which relate to those in the original as parts to whole or vice versa. Thus we get: 'The first reporter is the *Times*', 'The next customer is a ham sandwich', 'He is a fine brain', 'The winning team was Brazil'.

In concluding this section a note of caution must be sounded. Our use of the notion of transference may seem to suggest that there is a natural division of things into realms and that metaphor is deeply deviant in failing to respect this. That suggestion is not supported by what we have written. The deviance by which metaphor is distinguished is of a shallow variety, for the realm boundaries which it trespasses may reflect nothing more than current, changeable usage. That this is sometimes all that they reflect is shown by the fact that when a metaphor dies, the metaphorical application is as often taken to expand the original extension of the predicate as it is to establish a new one. But here we are venturing into the area set aside for our last section.

### III

Our final topic is the demarcation of metaphor from that sort of literal utterance that would once have been metaphorical. The question before us is, when is it that a metaphor can be said to die: and die in a definitive sense, so that dead metaphor is no more an instance of the phenomenon than fake? What we have to find is a criterion for determining whether there is any metaphorical life left in an utterance which came into existence as a metaphor or which uses an expression that was originally coined metaphorically.

Our first two sections give us something that may serve as such a criterion. We can say that an utterance is metaphorical if and only if: (a) it is incongruous if the content sentence

is interpreted routinely but makes sense if the sentence is construed imaginatively; and (b) it involves the transference lacking in such non-metaphorical but symbolic utterances as we find in figurative distortion and figurative deviousness. A dead metaphor, then, is an utterance which would once have satisfied these conditions but which now fails to do so: in particular, since this is where the passage of time will have had the relevant effect, it fails to satisfy clause (a).

These remarks do give us a criterion for determining whether a metaphor is dead although, as we shall see, it is not always clear how the criterion should be applied. In what follows I propose to consider three sorts of putatively dead metaphor and to use the criterion to determine which, if any, really does exemplify such usage. My three divisions are: familiar metaphors, forgotten metaphors and forfeited metaphors; all contrast with metaphors newly minted, metaphors just put into circulation. I shall deal first with divisions one and three and then with the problematic division two.

Familiar metaphors are utterances which would certainly have once counted as metaphors, which are still recognised as such but which have become rather hackneyed and stale. They are illustrated by the examples usually quoted in theoretical treatises, the present paper not excluded: examples like 'The man is a lion', 'The world's a stage', 'The flowers are dancing', 'The law is an ass'. Someone who thought that only the pristine phrases of poets were metaphors might wish to say that such remarks were metaphorically dead. In support of his position he might argue that the utterances no longer fit the first condition which we have said that metaphor must satisfy: he might urge that the construal on which they make sense is not imaginative and non-routine but a construal which most of us would find psychologically natural. Presented with one of the utterances, one does not have to go through a procedure of reckoning imaginatively what it is used to mean; one sees immediately what the speaker intends to convey.

There are two reasons why we should not be moved by the theorist who claims that familiar metaphors are dead. The first is that the claim is quite outlandish, in view of the fact that familiar metaphors are always quoted as the very paradigms of the species. The second is that the argument imputed to the theorist in question can hardly be sound, since it would force us to say that once a poem becomes well known something in it which was originally a metaphor ceases any longer to be such. The metaphor dies as soon as it stops jolting readers, forcing them to go through a procedure of imaginative interpretation. Or so the argument would suggest.

If we are to maintain that familiar metaphors are truly metaphorical, then we must find something wrong with the argument in question. The fault is not far to seek. The argument is built on the assumption that an interpretation of an utterance is imaginative only if it is not psychologically natural, only if it involves an explicit procedure of interpreting the remark routinely, rejecting the routine construal and looking for a non-routine replacement. This assumption is not implicated in our criterion and it seems downright false. What makes an interpretation imaginative is that it is not governed by the meanings of the words in the utterance in the same, straightforward manner as routine interpretation. An interpretation may be imaginative and yet be entirely spontaneous, even psychologically natural. Granted this, there is every reason to regard familiar metaphors as properly metaphorical. In construing the examples mentioned we do not take our cue straightforwardly from the meanings of the terms, for on any intuitive reckoning of meaning,



lions and asses are animals, a stage is a theatrical platform and only people, or at least animals, literally dance.

We come next to our third class: that of forfeited metaphors. These are utterances of which we assume that they would once have been metaphorical or, at least, if this is thought to be distinct, that they use linguistically imported expressions which were and remain suitable imports because of their metaphorical utility in the exporting language. What puts them in contrast with familiar metaphors is that they are not generally recognised as metaphorical; only the scholar is in a position to see whatever metaphorical claims they have. Native competence in the language, even when backed by educated common sense, is no guarantee that those claims will be detected.

The issue of forfeited metaphors is the clearest of all. Here there is no question of our interpretation being imaginative, even in the purely linguistic sense which we have distinguished. The appropriate construal of the utterances takes its cue from the only relevant meanings that the words are known by all natives to have. That the utterances have metaphorical origins is not liable to be of any importance outside of restricted philological circles; for all that competent speakers and hearers need care, they could as well have sprung from neological constructions. Without fear of controversy we may describe such metaphors as dead.

We come finally to the problematic second division: that of what I have called forgotten metaphors. Unlike their familiar counterparts, forgotten metaphors are not generally recognised as metaphorical by native speakers. Unlike forfeited metaphors however, they are of such a kind that native speakers are in a position to realise that they would once have counted as metaphorical. Forgotten metaphors constitute a division intermediate between the other two.

The best examples of the division are utterances which it is hard to imagine being able to replace with definitively literal remarks. 'Our eyes *met*', 'Your theory is ill *constructed*', 'Do not always *attack* what your parents believe', 'I have come to *see* what he meant', 'Time *flies*': these are all examples, as the italics emphasise, of forgotten metaphors. Most of the examples, and it may be a general truth about such metaphors, belong to systems of related expressions. Thus 'Your theory is ill constructed' is part of a system of forgotten metaphors to which the following also belong: 'Is that the *foundation* of your theory?', 'The theory needs more *support*', 'Here are some more facts to *shore up* the theory', 'We need to *buttress* the theory with *solid* arguments'.<sup>18</sup>

Given these examples we can see that forgotten metaphors are not always recognised as metaphorical by native speakers: that is what makes the italics necessary. On the other hand we can also see that native competence is all that is required for the realisation of their metaphorical origins: that is what makes the italics sufficient. Are we to regard such utterances as *bona fide* instances of metaphor? The question turns on whether the appropriate interpretation of the utterances, however psychologically natural, is a case of imaginative rather than routine construal.

The reason why forgotten metaphors raise a problem is that looking at them in one way we must say that their interpretation is routine, looking at them in another that it is imaginative. More specifically, if we view them as using their relevant words in an extended sense we have to conclude that the interpretation is routine, if we use them as using the words in some relatively more original sense that it is imaginative. 'Met' in 'Our eyes

met' has an extended sense, in which it applies as a matter of course to eyes. Its more original sense, so at least it appears, restricts it to people, but the utterance need not be construed with that meaning in view. Read the remark with the focus on the extended sense and the metaphor is dead; read it with the focus on the original and it quickly lives again.

The difficulty raised by forgotten metaphors would seem to be capable of easy resolution. It appears that all we have to decide is how they are generally seen, whether with the extended or original senses of their terms in view: if with their extended, forgotten metaphors are as dead as forfeited; if with their original, they are as alive as familiar. And how then are forgotten metaphors generally seen? The answer must be, with the extended senses of the relevant terms in view. That is why the metaphors are said to be forgotten and it seems to give equal reason for saying that they are fully dead.<sup>19</sup>

And yet there is reason to pause. There are a number of considerations which suggest that as native speakers we dare not blind ourselves to the original aspect of forgotten metaphors, even if we generally lose sight of it. The idea is that native competence in the language requires an awareness, if only infrequently activated, of the metaphorical nature of forgotten metaphors. I shall bring forward three considerations in support of this claim and then return to the question of whether forgotten metaphors should be regarded as dead or alive.

The first consideration is that a native speaker who happened never to have come across a particular forgotten metaphor, and who happened not to know the relevant extended word meanings, might yet be expected to understand it on his first hearing or reading: and to understand it in a manner that did not significantly differ from the established mode of understanding.<sup>20</sup> This shows that seeing forgotten metaphors with the focus on the original sense of the relevant terms is a potential way of understanding them and a way which, for all we know, may be regularly utilised.

The second consideration I wish to mention bears on the common distinction, introduced above, between a more or less original and an extended meaning of a term. I assume that the distinction is one which native speakers are generally able to draw. In that case, despite appearances, it is not primarily a diachronic distinction: it is not primarily drawn on the basis of which meaning came first. Otherwise native speakers would have to be cast as competent etymologists. But on what basis then is the distinction drawn? A plausible answer would seem to be: on the ground that the original sense gives speakers access, in an appropriate metaphorical context, to the extended, whereas the reverse is not so obviously true. Thus, if native competence allows speakers to distinguish original from extended senses, it must give them an awareness of the metaphorical aspect of forgotten metaphors: taken metaphorically, such metaphors provide the contexts wherein the original senses of the relevant terms give speakers access to the extended.<sup>21</sup>

My third and last consideration in support of the view that native competence involves an awareness of the metaphorical nature of forgotten metaphors may be the most important. It consists in the fact that a given forgotten metaphor may often be harnessed to a fresh one in such a way that our understanding of the fresh metaphor depends on our seeing the metaphorical aspect of the forgotten one. Thus we get: 'Our eyes met but they did not embrace' or 'Your theory is ill constructed but a little buttressing may keep it in one piece'. Such harnessing shows that awareness of forgotten metaphors with the focus on the original senses of the relevant terms is sometimes an indispensable source of linguistic

understanding. The sort of understanding for which the awareness is required may be particularly significant. The harnessing of fresh to forgotten metaphors is a means of systematically elaborating a metaphorical theme and it is now a commonplace that our scientific and other theories often develop only through such systematic metaphorical elaboration.<sup>22</sup>

What view is to be taken then of forgotten metaphors? Are they dead or are they alive? If no third alternative is allowed, I think that we must conclude that they are alive. Generally they are treated in a manner which would not lead us to classify them as metaphors. On the other hand it is a fact tied up with the requirements of linguistic competence that they always remain candidates for such treatment. We might have said that they are dead metaphors which are occasionally raised to life. Out of respect for the facts of mundane mortality we would better say that they are live metaphors which are frequently left for dead.

*Acknowledgement*—I am much in debt to the editor, Professor Harris, for his comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> For a recent discussion of such a view see Israel Scheffler, 1979, *Beyond the Letter*, pp. 87–92, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London.

<sup>2</sup> This view is particularly associated with Donald Davidson, 'What Metaphors Mean', *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 5, Autumn 1978, reprinted in Mark Platts (Ed.) 1980, *Reference, Truth and Reality*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London.

<sup>3</sup> Why not semantics rather than hermeneutics? The reason is that semantics seeks to give the meaning of each sentence in a language as this is determined by the literal meanings of the words and the context of use; such a meaning will always be the literal meaning of the sentence. Hermeneutics seeks to give the meaning or message which a sentence is used by a speaker to communicate, and this need not be the literal meaning of the sentence; witness irony, under and over statement, polite indirection and, arguably, metaphor.

<sup>4</sup> The exegetical approach is assumed to be a reasonable one, even if it is ultimately regarded with scepticism, in Scheffler *op. cit.* A good illustration of such an approach is J. R. Searle, 'Metaphor', in A. Ortony (Ed.) 1979 *Metaphor and Thought*, Cambridge University Press. Two philosophers whose sympathy seems to be with the other approach are Max Black 1962 *Models and Metaphors*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca N.Y., and Nelson Goodman 1969 *Languages of Art*, Oxford University Press.

<sup>5</sup> Thus Goodman writes *op. cit.* p. 80: 'Metaphor permeates all discourse, ordinary and special, and we should have a hard time finding a purely literal paragraph anywhere. In that last prosaic enough sentence I count five sure or possible—even if tired—metaphors'. The liberal view he expresses would conflict sharply, one suspects, with that for example of Davidson, *op. cit.* On this conflict see further note 19 below.

<sup>6</sup> See for example J. R. Searle, 1969, *Speech Acts*, Chapter 2, Cambridge University Press. There are difficulties with how to construe certain utterances, such as what-, why-, and how- questions, but these we may ignore here.

<sup>7</sup> I am assuming that the situation is not one of radical interpretation such as that discussed in chapter 2 of W. V. O. Quine, 1960, *Word and Object*, M.I.T. Press. In the radical situation word-meanings themselves have not been established and there is no sense to the notion of routine interpretation.

<sup>8</sup> For the elaboration of such a conception of semantic theory, a conception due primarily to Donald Davidson, see Mark Platts, 1979, *Ways of Meaning*, Routledge and Kegan Paul.

<sup>9</sup> This line fits most naturally with a view of metaphor as cognitive and descriptive: I discuss the matter in an unpublished manuscript 'Against Davidson About Metaphor'. I do take such a view, but I have tried to make my approach to the definition of metaphor as independent of it as possible. Only in Section 2 do I explicitly presuppose it: see note 13 below.

<sup>10</sup> See Ted Cohen, 1976, 'Notes on Metaphor', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 34. Note that in rejecting the answer, we rule out, among other approaches, any attempt to identify metaphor as involving a certain sort of syntactic incongruence. Elsewhere I have noted how often metaphors break 'sub-categorial' rules of grammar: See *The Concept of Structuralism*, University of California Press, 1975. What now appears is that many metaphors do not offend against any such rules.

<sup>11</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 256.

<sup>12</sup> See for example Cohen *op. cit.* pp. 250–51 and Davidson *op. cit.* page 31.

<sup>13</sup> The relevant discussion is in *Languages of Art*, pp. 71–85. In analysing metaphor as involving transference, I assume that it ought to be analysed as cognitive and as descriptive. Someone who took a non-cognitive or non-descriptive view might have to deny the significance of the distinctions drawn in this section.

<sup>14</sup> As the examples chosen indicate, what schema and what realm is in question in the use of a given predicate may vary from context to context. The examples are of two-membered schemas—binary options—but there is no reason to think all schemas are like this. Thus ‘is transparent’ may be used as part of the three-membered schema ‘is transparent/is translucent/is opaque’. Again examples are of one-place predicates, predicates which are not relational, but there is no reason to think that two-place and more complicated predicates are not subject to the same organisation. Thus ‘is the brother of’ may be used in the schema ‘is the brother of/has some relation to’ or ‘is the brother of/is the sister of’.

<sup>15</sup> In the other figures the schema is displaced in relation to the realm. This displacement would mean a change of realm were some items left undescribed by the terms of the schema. What happens, however, is that those items come to be described by terms constructible by the use of a word like ‘very’ from the original members of the schema. Thus there is a natural sense in which the figures in question do not make for a shift of realm, although Goodman sometimes speaks as if they do.

Notice that nothing is said in our account about what makes transference work, yielding an imaginatively interpretable thought. Nevertheless, it is assumed that the transference does work: by the demarcation between the literal and the metaphorical, an utterance can be metaphorical only if the content sentence lends itself to imaginative construal.

<sup>16</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 83.

<sup>17</sup> This is not to say that an expression which occurs in such a figure may not sometimes be used metaphorically. Thus ‘early bird’ is often given a metaphorical application, even though it does not bear such an interpretation in ‘The early bird gets the worm’.

<sup>18</sup> The examples are taken from a book which illustrates beautifully the systematic nature of such forgotten metaphor: George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, 1980, *Metaphors We Live By*, University of Chicago Press.

<sup>19</sup> The conclusion is explicitly drawn in William Charlton, ‘Living and Dead Metaphors’, *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 1975. Even Lakoff and Johnson are wary: ‘If you say “The odds are against us” or “We’ll have to take our chances”, you would not be viewed as speaking metaphorically but as using the normal everyday language appropriate to the situation. Nevertheless, your way of talking about, conceiving, and even experiencing your situation would be metaphorically structured’. (*Op. cit.* p. 51). Charlton accuses Black of oversight on the question; he might also have accused Goodman, granted the quotation in note 5 above.

<sup>20</sup> The established mode of understanding may of course be quite incomplete: it may fall well short of the understanding available to the expert. Thus we might understand what it was for prices to be inflated, either through knowing the jargon in a non-expert way or through grasping the metaphor in question, but such understanding would leave a lot to be desired in a professional economist. On the tricky issues involved here see Tyler Burge 1979, ‘individualism and the Mental’, *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, Vol. 4.

<sup>21</sup> For related points see Lakoff and Johnson, *op. cit.* pp. 106–114. What must be conceded to the diachronic point of view is that if two word meanings are thought to be related as original and extended but it transpires that historically they were not appropriately related, then the thought will be put down as mistaken. Even if the original–extended distinction can be otherwise drawn, the diachronic facts remain normative.

<sup>22</sup> See for example Donald A. Schon, 1969, *Invention and the Evolution of Ideas*, Tavistock, London.