

**Richmond K wesi**

**UNDERSTANDING ASSERTION AND TRUTH  
IN RELATION TO METAPHOR**

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**Name: RICHMOND KWESI**

**Student number: KWSRIC001**

  
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## ABSTRACT

The central question I engage with in this dissertation is this: are declarative metaphorical sentences truth-evaluable? I pursue an *affirmative* answer to this question within a pragmatic framework that does not (1) reduce the metaphorical to the literal, (2) appraise the metaphorical in terms of the literal, and (3) provide a *sui generis* kind of ‘metaphorical truth’. In presenting this answer, I show, on the one hand, that other positive responses in terms of speaker meaning (Searle 1993; Moran 1989; Camp 2006a,b) and pragmatic enrichment (Bezuidenhout, 2001; Recanati 2004) are inadequate, and, on the other hand, that the main reasons proffered for the denial of the truth-aptness of metaphorical sentences, in the literature, are unsatisfactory. I do this by arguing, in Chapter I, that characterizing metaphor in *seeing-as* experiential or phenomenological terms is not incompatible with appraising metaphors for truth when the notion of *understanding metaphors* is construed in terms of ability to use them; in Chapter II, that a causal explanation of metaphors (Davidson, 1979; Cooper, 1984; Rorty, 1987; Lepore & Stone, 2010) does not successfully justify denial of the content of metaphors, and that the normative practices involved in the use of metaphors – engaging in genuine disagreements, using metaphors in reasoning, endorsing and retracting metaphors – attest to the fact that associated with metaphors are contents that are propositional in nature. In Chapters III and IV I argue that the pragmatic criterion – inviting others to do something (Lamarque & Olsen, 1994; Blackburn, 1984, 1998), the psychological criterion – non-expression of belief (Blackburn, 1984; Davies 1984), and the semantic criterion – non-assertion of claims (Loewenberg, 1975; Davies 1982), are all not appropriate determinants of the truth-evaluability of metaphors. To evaluate metaphors *qua* metaphors for truth, I draw on Brandom’s (1983, 1994, 2000) inferentialist pragmatics, in Chapter V, in providing an articulation of the use of metaphors in terms of inferring and the undertaking of commitments. The overall thesis for this dissertation is that, an *inferential* articulation of metaphors that approaches the central question from the pragmatics of what we *do* in using metaphors is apt for understanding metaphorical sentences as propositionally contentful and truth-evaluable.

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## INTRODUCTION

In the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, John Locke (1690) cautions that “if we would speak of things as they are, we must allow that all the art of rhetoric, besides order and clearness, all the artificial and figurative application of words ... are certainly, in all discourses that pretend to inform or instruct, wholly to be avoided; and where truth and knowledge are concerned, cannot but be thought a great fault, either of the language or person that makes use of them” (Bk III, Ch. X, § 34). And, according to Max Black (1977), “a witness who swears to “tell the truth and nothing but the truth” is expected to “speak plainly,” i.e., to eschew figurative language” (p. 455). These views raise the question of metaphor, a figure of speech, in relation to truth and the use of metaphors in making truth-claims: Are metaphorical utterances truth-evaluable? Do metaphorical sentences make statements or express propositions that could be appraised for truth? Could one use metaphors to state things as they are? Do metaphors belong to truth-making and truth-telling discourses in spite of their being figures of speech? Does one assert a proposition, or express a belief, in uttering a metaphorical sentence? I engage, primarily, with these questions in this thesis, in a bid to understanding why, and how, metaphors can be evaluated as true or false. Negative or affirmative answers to these questions have consequences for a theory of truth for a language, for articulating the distinction and relationship between the literal and metaphorical, and for thinking about the right place of figures and tropes in our practices of using language.

These questions are significant in determining the propriety of applying the semantic notion of truth to metaphors. On the one hand, the question of the appropriateness or otherwise of evaluating metaphors for truth stems from the nature of metaphors which has been examined from different (and often opposite) perspectives: some theorists have treated metaphor primarily

as a figure of speech (e.g. Blair, 1787; Earle, 1890) while others have seen it as a figure of thought (Kames, 1836; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980); some have regarded it mainly as an ornament of language (Whately, 1861) while others have deemed it an integral part of language use (Black, 1955, 1962; Quine, 1979; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980); some have seen it as an abuse of language (Hobbes, 1991/1651; Locke, 1975/1690) while others think it is a mark of genius in using language (Aristotle, 1984); some have thought of it as a linguistic phenomenon (Bickerton, 1969; Matthews, 1971) and others have regarded it as a cognitive phenomenon (Black, 1955, 1962; Gibbs 1992); some theorists think metaphor belongs exclusively to the domain of pragmatics (Davidson, 1978, 1979; Searle, 1979; Martinich, 1984, 1996) while others treat it in the domain of semantics (Stern, 1985, 2000).<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, the question of the evaluation of metaphors for truth is important because of the ubiquity of metaphors in everyday discourses and in every branch of human understanding: metaphor is useful in learning and education (Green, 1993; Sticht, 1993; Mayer, 1993); it is regarded as the foundation of religion and religious texts (Tracy, 1979; McFague, 1982, 1987; Raposa, 1984; Soskice 1985); it is essential to science and the driving force of scientific discoveries (Rorty, 1987; Hesse 1987; Haack 1988; Boyd, 1993; Kuhn, 1993; Brown 2003); and it is useful in the communication and conveyance of new ideas and scientific theories (MacCormac, 1976; Ziman 2000). The ubiquity and use of metaphors in every branch of human

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<sup>1</sup> The diverse perspectives on metaphor also raise the question of what constitutes a metaphor and how metaphor is to be defined. The literature is replete with many different definitions, accounts, and theories of what constitutes a metaphor, and whether metaphors are true or false, to an extent, depends on how one defines a metaphor. I do not wade into the problem of defining metaphors in the thesis; the various accounts and arguments discussed in the thesis in relation to whether metaphors should be evaluated for truth do not depend on any particular way one defines metaphors. When I use the expression “metaphor” to denote the phenomenon, and “a metaphor” or “metaphors” to refer to particular instances or examples, I have in mind something along these lines: “A metaphor is a statement that characterizes one thing in terms of another thing, juxtaposing concepts from separate domains of experience” (Gentner & Bowdle, 2002, p. 18).

understanding – aesthetics, poetics, politics, education, religion, science – and in everyday conversations, present a problem as to whether metaphorical sentences, like ordinary literal sentences, make cognitive claims about the world, claims that can be evaluated to be meaningful and truth-laden. This problem is compounded by the fact that metaphors are also figures of speech in which words are used without their ordinary literal significations, making most metaphors literally false, semantically anomalous, or pragmatically inappropriate.

I classify as Anti-Truth theories or accounts, theories and accounts that either deny the evaluation of metaphors for truth and thereby eliminating metaphors from truth-talk, or that deem it inappropriate to appraise metaphors on the dimension of truth. Pro-Truth theories and accounts provide affirmative answers to the questions posed above. The arguments of Anti-Truth accounts take many forms; the primary ones can be categorized as *causal*, *phenomenological*, *invitational*, *psychological*, and *expressivist*. The *causal* account holds that metaphorical sentences or utterances do not have propositional contents that can be determined to be true or false; rather, the use of metaphors have non-propositional effects on hearers and causes them to act in certain ways (Davidson, 1978; Cooper 1984, 1986, 1993; Rorty 1987, 1989; Lepore & Stone, 2010, 2015). The *phenomenological* argument is a corollary of the causal argument. It argues that understanding a metaphor is primarily a matter of *seeing* one thing *as* another thing wherein the mind is directed to attend to some likeness and similarities between the two things being compared; however, this perceptual or phenomenological seeing-*as* is not seeing-*that*, that is, it is not propositional in nature (Davidson 1978; Davies, 1984; Blackburn 1984; Danto, 1993; Lamarque & Olsen, 1994). The *invitational* account posits that the *constitutive* aim of metaphors is not to say that something is the case but rather to invite or encourage others to see one thing as another thing, and invitations and encouragements are not the sorts of things evaluated for truth

(Lamarque & Olsen, 1994). A consequence of the invitational account is that a metaphorical utterance is not an expression of belief or an assertion, and the intention of the metaphor-maker is not to express a belief or assert anything (Loewenberg, 1973, 1975; Davies, 1982; Davies, 1984; Blackburn, 1984, 1998) – this is the *psychological* argument. Drawing a distinction between descriptive and non-descriptive uses of language, the *expressivist* argument is that metaphorical sentences are non-descriptive uses of language – metaphors do not state facts or describe any states of affairs in the world and as such the question of truth does not arise in appraising metaphors (Blackburn 1998).

On the side of the Pro-Truth accounts, a metaphorical sentence can reveal how things are in the world (Black, 1993); a metaphorical sentence is either true or false based on the truth or falsity of the resemblances between the two things being compared (Olscamp, 1970); a metaphorical utterance can count as an assertion on the basis of the relevant and salient characteristics associated with the subjects of the metaphor (Bergmann, 1982); an adequate literal paraphrase of a metaphor can be given to capture the content or propositions associated with the metaphor which could be used to determine the truth-value of the metaphor (Martinich, 1996; Hills, 1997; Levinson, 2001; Borg, 2001; Camp, 2006a); the propositional content of metaphors can be given in terms of speaker-meaning (Searle, 1993; Moran, 1989; Camp, 2006b) or by means of the processes of pragmatic enrichment (Bezuidenhout, 2001; Recanati, 2004).

In engaging with the question of the truth-evaluability of metaphors and interrogating the two responses above – Anti- and Pro- Truth accounts – I do two main things in the thesis: one, I argue, on the one hand, against Anti-Truth accounts that their arguments are unsatisfactory in that they do not support their thesis that metaphors are not truth-evaluable, and on the other hand, against Pro-Truth accounts that their arguments are wrong-headed and inadequate in establishing

the propositional contentfulness of metaphors; and two, I offer an affirmative answer to the question of the truth-evaluability of metaphors by showing an *inferential* articulation of metaphors that approaches the question from the pragmatics of what we *do* in using metaphors so that the notions of propositional content, truth, and assertion, in relation to metaphor, are properly understood within this inferential articulation of the use of metaphors.

In completing the first task, that is, in assessing the Anti- and Pro- Truth accounts discussed above, I show that, in general, the Anti-Truth theorist, in particular, is motivated in her arguments by commitments to two unfounded principles: literalism – that metaphors only have literal meaning and literal truth-conditions – and representationalism – that metaphors do not convey facts or represent things as they are in the world and hence are without meaning. These two principles together, the Anti-Truth theorist argues, demonstrate that metaphors are not truth-evaluable. But, the first principle is specious, for it does not evaluate metaphors *qua* metaphors, and it is unable to provide a satisfactory explanation of the use of metaphors in such practices as disagreements and argumentation. The second principle is unwarranted, for propositional contentfulness and truth-aptitude is not determined by the capacity to portray facts, and indeed, one can pursue an explanatory strategy (other than representationalism) that concedes propositional content to metaphors.

The pursuit of such an explanatory strategy in understanding metaphors in connection with truth and assertion is the basis for the affirmative answer to the question of the truth-evaluability of metaphors. Rather than taking the notions of representation and reference as fundamental, this strategy – inferentialism – takes *inferring* and asserting as basic in our practices of using language. The crucial argument I advance is that metaphorical sentences are propositionally contentful and truth-evaluable because they are used in reasoning – they can be

premises and conclusions of arguments – and in the making of claims and the drawing of consequences from those claims – they are caught up in the practices of asserting and inferring. These practices confer propositional contentfulness on metaphor and they explain why metaphors are involved in genuine disagreements and in argumentation. This view is an inferential articulation of metaphors that takes its cue from Robert Brandom's (1994, 2000) inferentialist semantics for our discursive practices. For Brandom, our discursive practices are both social and linguistic : the sociality of the discursive practice lies in the normative statuses – the undertaking and attributing of commitments and their attendant undertaking of responsibility for those commitments – and normative attitudes – acknowledging the propriety or impropriety of performances – while the linguistic nature of the practice lies in the institution of the speech act of assertion – the making of claims that can stand as, and be in need of, reasons. The making of claims or assertions is connected to the inferential consequences that follow from such claims. The inferential involvements of a claim or the network of inferential connections that a claim has to other claims, the propriety of the speaker's commitment to the claim and the appropriateness of the inferences one can make from that claim to other claims, suffice to determine the semantic content of that claim. This is the kind of inferential articulation that I posit obtains in our practices of using metaphors.

To make Brandom's view work for metaphors, to show that metaphors too are caught up in this practice of asserting and inferring which comes with the undertaking and attribution of normative commitments, I modify and complement Brandom's account with insights from *presupposition accommodation*. I argue that the making of metaphors comes with the presupposition of *speaking metaphorically* which is to be accommodated in order to treat the metaphorical sentence as an acceptable move a language player can make in the asserting-

inferring game. Accommodation then sets the kind of inferential involvements of the metaphorical claim and the propriety of those inferential involvements. The result of providing an inferential articulation of metaphors within the ambit of presuppositional accommodation is that both literal and metaphorical sentences are indistinguishable in terms of the basic kinds of things we do in using them – asserting and inferring – but differ only in the ways in which their inferential involvements and the propriety of such involvements are determined. This result implies that in terms of the determination of the content of literal and metaphorical sentences, and in terms of evaluating literal and metaphorical sentences for truth, the one – metaphorical – need not be reduced to, or be determined by, or be expressed in terms of the other – the literal.

The merit of this approach to the question of the truth-evaluability of metaphors is not only to show that the metaphorical should not be cast in literal terms and literal truth-conditions, but also that it provides an explanation for the positive insights of both the Anti- and Pro- Truth responses to the question. This approach is able, for instance, to explain the role of the phenomenological dimension to metaphors and the role of the intentions of speakers and the issuing of invitations in the making of metaphors. The phenomenological aspect of metaphors does not preclude treating metaphors as claims that can be true or false, but that when this dimension is properly accommodated, it influences the kind of, and propriety of the inferential involvements of metaphors. The issuing of invitations for one to explore comparisons, from the point of view of an inferential articulation of metaphors, is neither constitutive of, nor fundamental to, the making of metaphors; rather, in asserting metaphorical claims, one thereby invites others, or proposes to them to see one thing in terms of another thing.

The outline of the thesis is as follows:

In Chapter I, I discuss the Anti-Truth phenomenological argument that says that seeing one thing as another thing constitutes understanding metaphors and since this seeing-*as* experience is non-propositional, metaphors are not in the business of making *that*-claims that can be appraised for truth. I agree with the Anti-Truth theorist that seeing-*as* is not seeing-*that* but I argue that seeing-*as* does not entail not-seeing-*that*; that is, that the phenomenological aspect of a metaphor does not entail that there is no propositional dimension to metaphors. The way I argue for this is by taking up the question of what constitutes understanding metaphors. I argue there that, *understanding*, pragmatically construed involves the ability to do things with what one understands, that is, the capacity to reason with, and the ability to use, what one understands in multiple contexts. The ability to do these things is not inherent in seeing one thing as another thing, and hence, seeing-*as* does not constitute understanding metaphors.

I discuss the nature of the content of metaphors in Chapter II. From a causal explanation of metaphors, Donald Davidson and Richard Rorty especially have argued that metaphors do not have any meaning and content other than their literal meanings and the literal contents they express. This suggests both that metaphors cannot be meaningfully subsumed under a general theory of cognition and the conveyance of information, and that metaphors can only be appraised in terms of literal truth-conditions. I challenge the supposition that metaphors only possess literal contents by showing that this supposition cannot make sense of the use of metaphors in genuine disagreements. I argue for a non-compositional analysis of metaphors where, although the words in a metaphor do not acquire additional ‘mysterious’ meanings other than what they mean literally, their composition yield sentences with metaphorical meaning. I also show that the Pro-Truth theorist’s account of the content of metaphors in terms of salient characteristics, literal paraphrasing, speaker meaning, or pragmatic enrichment, does not fare any better. These

accounts, variably, tend to ignore the figurative dimension to the making of metaphors. The criticisms of the Anti-Truth's no-content view are motivated in part by showing that such practices as disagreements, the use of metaphors in arguments, the drawing of inferences from metaphors, all point to metaphors having contents that are propositional in nature. And hence, a Pro-Truth account of the content of metaphors should reflect the ways in which metaphors are caught up in these practices.

In Chapter III, I take up the view that the issue of the truth-evaluability of metaphors resides in the aims and purposes involved in the making of metaphors. Some Anti-Truth theorists have argued that the constitutive aim of using metaphors is to invite or encourage others to do certain things. And that, invitations, suggestions, and proposals are not the sort of things appraised for truth, hence, metaphors in being invitations are not truth-evaluable. I challenge this view by first arguing that there are no aims constitutive of the making of metaphors, and that the invitational aim is not essential to the making of metaphors.

A consequence of the invitational account is that metaphors do not count as assertions or the expression of beliefs. The Anti-Truth theorist utilizes the connections between the notions of assertion, belief, and truth to argue that metaphors are not truth-evaluable because speakers do not assert anything or express their beliefs by their use of metaphors. The theorist also trades on the bifurcation between descriptive (or fact-stating) and non-descriptive (non-fact-stating) uses of language in the vocabulary of expressivists and argues that metaphors are non-descriptive uses of language. And so in Chapter IV, I examine these views by showing that they are premised on two implausible principles – literalism and representationalism. I argue that assertion is not literal and that there are good reasons to treat metaphors as assertions and expressions of beliefs.

In the final Chapter V, I offer a theoretical framework or account within which the question of the truth-evaluability can be affirmatively answered. This framework grounds the positive claims I advanced in the previous chapters. This account is the inferential articulation of metaphors that combines Robert Brandom's inferentialism with presuppositional accommodation. It explains why metaphors are propositionally contentful: in virtue of the fact that they are caught up in inferential practices where metaphors can be regarded as claims that are fit to serve as premises and conclusions of arguments; it explains why on the issue of the truth-evaluability of metaphors, the issue should not be based on, or be couched in literal terms, for both literal and metaphorical sentences are involved in the same fundamental kind of doing – asserting and inferring. This inferential articulation of metaphors also accommodates some of the positive insights of the Anti- and Pro- Truth accounts and shows how one can make sense of these insights.

## CHAPTER I

### ANTI-TRUTH: THE ARGUMENT FROM PHENOMENOLOGY

#### 1.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I take a critical look at the argument that metaphorical sentences are not truth-evaluable<sup>2</sup> because of, or by virtue of, the phenomenological experience – *seeing* one thing *as* another thing – involved in understanding them as metaphors. I argue that the phenomenological or perceptual experience associated with metaphors does not determine the truth-evaluability of metaphors: whether or not metaphorical sentences are truth-evaluable is not a consequence of the phenomenological experience associated with metaphors. I argue for this partly by showing that *seeing-as* does not constitute *understanding* of metaphors when understanding is appropriately construed in terms of *being able to use* an expression. A necessary requirement for linguistic understanding – grasping of meaning – shows that metaphors, contra Davidson (1979), do have meanings other than, and in addition to, their literal meanings. It also shows that metaphors can be understood independently of the phenomenological experience associated with them. But this grasping of meaning requirement should be linked with the ability to use both what one has grasped and the sentence in reasoning to suffice for an appropriate and comprehensive account of understanding. The practice of using a metaphorical sentence in reasoning and the making of inferences which reflects an understanding of the metaphorical sentence, I argue, confers propositional contentfulness on metaphorical sentences. My argument that a perceptual or phenomenological experience associated with metaphors cannot be used as a basis or criterion for denying the appraisal of

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<sup>2</sup> As I will point out below, the issue is not about whether metaphors can be evaluated as being literally true or false. Rather, it is to do with whether metaphors *qua* metaphors are truth-evaluable.

metaphors for truth aims to show that truth-evaluability is not inconsistent but compatible with a perceptual model for metaphors.

Do metaphorical sentences make statements or express propositions that could be appraised for truth? Davidson (1979), Rorty (1979, 1987, 1989), Reimer (2001), and Lepore & Stone (2010, 2015) are among theorists who are referred to as ‘non-cognitivists’ by their denial that metaphorical sentences have cognitive contents, while writers like Black (1955, 1962, 1979, 1993), Hesse (1966, 1987, 1988, 1993) and Searle (1993) imbue metaphors with cognitive contents.<sup>3</sup> But the label ‘non-cognitivism’ is too vague and the distinction between cognitivism and non-cognitivism is not extensionally broad enough in accounting for the ‘deniers’ and ‘professors’ of the truth-aptness of metaphors. It is possible for someone to argue that metaphors can make cognitive claims and be sceptical about whether the metaphorical claims should be evaluated for truth.<sup>4</sup> Also, one need not be a literalist like Davidson to argue that metaphorical sentences are not to be evaluated for truth. I will use the general label ‘Anti-Truth’ to designate the position of the deniers of the truth-evaluability of metaphor. The particular Anti-Truth arguments to be discussed in this dissertation will indicate the various theorists who subscribe to such arguments.

In the next section of this chapter, §1.2, I will state and clarify the general Anti-Truth position. This will be followed in §1.3, by a presentation of the ‘Argument from Phenomenology’ which reasons from the kind of perceptual experience associated with metaphors to the conclusion that metaphors are not truth-evaluable. In §1.4, I will look at some

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<sup>3</sup> Haack (1988), Gal (1995), and Hymers (1998) are among those who take a middle position, arguing either that metaphorical sentences are cognitive *to some degree* or that there is no genuine controversy between the two extreme positions on the cognitive status of metaphors.

<sup>4</sup> This is Black’s (1993) position. Although he thinks that some metaphors have representational aspects by revealing or “*showing* how things are” (1993, p. 39) he is skeptical about assigning ‘true’ and ‘false’ to metaphors, suggesting that “it is a violation of philosophical grammar to assign either truth or falsity to strong metaphors” (1993, p. 39).

responses to, and issues that arise from, the argument from phenomenology. I will then argue in §1.5 that an appropriate response to the argument from phenomenology is by showing that the seeing-*as* phenomenological experience does not constitute an understanding of metaphors. In §1.6, I consider possible objections to the account presented in §1.5.

## 1.2. The Anti-Truth position

The central position of the Anti-Truth theorist is that metaphorical sentences are not truth-evaluable.

**Anti-Truth:** *Metaphorical sentences<sup>5</sup> are not truth-apt; they are not, and do not make, claims that can be appraised or evaluated for truth.*

Proponents of the Anti-Truth position often offer different but related claims in support of this central position. Some of these claims are: metaphorical sentences do not have non-literal propositional contents (Davidson 1979; Rorty, 1979, 1987, 1989; Cooper, 1984, 1986; Reimer, 2001; Lepore & Stone, 2010, 2015); truth is not the constitutive aim of metaphors (Lamarque & Olsen, 1994); metaphorical sentences are not expressions of beliefs (Blackburn, 1984, 1998; Davies, 1982; Davies, 1984); metaphorical utterances are not assertions (Loewenberg, 1973, 1975; Cooper, 1984; Blackburn 1984; Davies, 1984). The Anti-Truth theorist need not deny some of the cognitive aspects of metaphor. In fact, the Anti-Truth theorist endorses the claim that metaphors can be insightful, edifying, stimulating, thought-provoking, etc. She agrees that metaphors can be apt or inapt, vivid or pale, successful or unsuccessful; but she disagrees that among the terms we possess for evaluating metaphors on ‘cognitive lines’, truth should be one of them.

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<sup>5</sup> We can replace ‘sentences’ with ‘utterances’ or ‘statements’ depending on what one takes to be the bearers of truth. The Anti-Truth position we are here investigating maintains that linguistic expressions that have been identified as metaphors are not evaluated as true or false.

The terms 'true' and 'false' are often applied to metaphors where the intent of the application is to give a heuristic for the identification or recognition of a sentence as metaphorical. For instance, Beardsley (1976) thought that recognizing a metaphor involves discerning between two senses of the predicate term of the metaphorical sentence "in one of which the sentence is false" (p. 219); Davidson (1979) thought that most metaphorical sentences are "patently false" (p. 42); and Martinich (1996) claims that "every metaphorical proposition is false" (p. 430). What these authors are pointing out is that metaphorical sentences are *literally false*, that is, when the metaphorical sentences are interpreted literally, they are false.

Reacting to the claim of the literal falsity of metaphors, Binkley (1974), Cohen (1975, 1976) and others have given examples of metaphors like 'no man is an island', 'Moscow is a cold city', 'Jesus is a carpenter' where the metaphors are true when they are interpreted literally. Unfortunately, Cohen (1975, 1976) has dubbed these cases 'twice-true' metaphors suggesting that they are true on both their literal and metaphorical interpretations. I say unfortunately because the label 'twice-true' does not explain or give an account of the 'second' sense in which the metaphor is true. It merely assumes that if the utterance is literally true – the 'first' truth – then it is twice-true. The term 'twice-true' mischaracterizes or misrepresents the metaphor – all it shows is that the metaphorical utterance is true if interpreted literally. It does not follow from that that the utterance itself has another truth or is true in another sense. One has to give an account of why the metaphor itself is true non-literally. Saying that the sentence 'x is F' is twice-true implies that there are two propositions involved – a literal and a metaphorical one – and the sentence is true on both interpretations. But whereas we understand the sense in which 'x is F' is true on a literal interpretation we need an account of why it is true on a metaphorical interpretation. We can entertain the possibility of 'x is F' being literally true but metaphorically

false, or literally false but metaphorically true (once-true?), or literally false and metaphorically false (twice-false?).

The view that some metaphors are twice-true should not be understood as an endorsement of the view that metaphorical utterances are truth-apt or truth-evaluable *per se*. We must distinguish the use of ‘true’ and ‘false’ as *identificational* terms from their use as *evaluative* predicates. In the identificational sense, metaphors are mostly literally false. That is, a way of identifying certain sentences as metaphors is to see that when they are interpreted literally they are obviously false or absurd. The case of ‘twice-true’ metaphors is to show that when interpreted literally, these sentences are true. So, the point of twice-true is to show that literal falsity or absurdity is not a universal heuristic for identifying metaphors.<sup>6</sup> But the evaluative sense of true is about whether sentences identified as metaphors are truth-evaluable. And here, the heuristic identificational sense of twice-true is not an argument for, or in favour of, the fact that metaphors are truth-evaluable

The fact that metaphors can be said to be true or false on their literal interpretation does not entail that metaphors, *qua* metaphors, are truth-evaluable. The act of qualifying metaphorical utterances as *literally* true or false is different from the act of appraising the metaphorical utterances as either true or false. The Anti-Truth theorist will have no qualms with the view that some metaphors are literally true or false; what she contests is that the semantic notion of truth should be applicable in evaluating metaphors *as* metaphors. This means that we move beyond the recognitional or identificational status to the appraisal or evaluative status of our treatment of metaphors. Once we have identified a sentence *as* a metaphor, the Anti-Truth position is that that metaphorical sentence cannot be truth-apt either because it has no meaning and content, or it does not express any proposition, or it is a non-descriptive use of language, or it is not an

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<sup>6</sup> Literal falsity is neither necessary nor sufficient for identifying linguistic expressions as metaphors

expression of the belief of the speaker, or it cannot count as an assertion, or the point of using it is not to say something that is truth-evaluable, or a combination of any of these and other reasons.

### **1.3. The argument from the phenomenological experience with metaphors**

A central argument in support of the Anti-Truth position rests on the connection between the phenomenological experience associated with metaphors and the truth-evaluability of metaphors: metaphorical sentences are not truth-evaluable *because of*, or *by virtue of*, the phenomenological or perceptual experience involved in understanding them *as* metaphors. On this view, the phenomenology involved in the understanding of metaphors serves as the basis for denying truth to metaphors. The phenomenological or perceptual experience often alluded to in characterizing metaphors is *seeing-as*, that is, ‘seeing one thing *as* another thing’, but other cognate locutions like ‘understanding...as...’, ‘framing...as...’ and ‘experiencing...as...’ will amount to the same phenomenological experience.

Wittgenstein’s discussion of the duck/rabbit figure is mainly regarded as one of the grounds for the seeing-as experience involved in the perception of pictures and figures of speech (metaphor in particular). Depending on one’s direction of attention, one sees the figure either as a duck or as a rabbit, but never both at the same time. One sees an ‘aspect’ of the figure. This ‘aspectual seeing-as’ has been employed as the experience involved in the recognition and understanding of metaphor. Thinking of metaphor as involving a ‘seeing-as’ experience entails a visual or perceptual understanding of metaphor: it is at least a matter of ‘seeing’ something, albeit, in this case, seeing something as something else.

One difference between the ‘seeing-as’ of metaphor and that of the pictorial arts is that whereas the seeing of pictorial arts literally involves a visual perception – with the eyes – of the

painting and the object painted, the seeing involved in metaphor is a ‘cognitive’ perception – with the ‘mind’s eye – of the ‘images’ or entities involved in the metaphor. Metaphorical seeing is a kind of skill both on the part of the maker and hearer – the maker, in associating two things usually from different modes of discourse, and the hearer, in deciphering the point of the association or imagery involved in the metaphor. It is not surprising then that Aristotle in the Poetics wrote that the making of metaphor is a “sign of genius, since a good metaphor implies an intuitive perception of the similarity in dissimilars” (1459, 5-8).

That metaphor involves seeing one thing as another thing is not the crucial element of the position under consideration: the crux of the view is that taking metaphors to involve seeing one thing *as* another thing is sufficient grounds to deny the truth aptness of metaphors. The claim of this ‘Argument from Phenomenology’ (AP) then is this:

**AP:** *Understanding metaphors as seeing one thing as another thing implies that metaphors are non-truth-evaluable.*

Davidson’s (1978, 1979, 1984) view on metaphor is a paradigmatic account that adduces the seeing-*as* experience involved in comprehending metaphors as grounds for the denial of the truth-aptness of metaphors. Other authors like Davies (1984), Rorty (1987, 1989), Taylor (1989), Lepore & Stone (2010) who defend Davidson’s account subscribe to some form of the claim in **AP**. Davidson’s central thesis (CT) in his account on metaphor is that:

**CT:** *A metaphor has no content other than its literal content, and it expresses no proposition other than the proposition it literally expresses.*

Understanding a declarative sentence usually amounts to grasping the content or the proposition expressed by the sentence. The plain truth about metaphors is that every metaphorical sentence has a literal content or proposition associated with it. Davidson’s claim is that metaphors have no

contents and they do not express propositions *other than*, or *in addition to*, their literal contents and propositions. However, when a particular declarative sentence – *x is y* – is identified as a metaphor, as for instance, ‘Juliet is the sun’, grasping the literal content or proposition does not amount to understanding the sentence *as* a metaphor. Davidson recognizes that propositional understanding does not illuminate the point or import of a metaphor; one does not achieve cognitive success in grasping the literal content of a metaphorical sentence. Indeed, this failure of understanding the metaphor as a result of grasping the literal content or proposition is a sign that leads to the recognition of the sentence as a metaphor. This is a sense in which, when a sentence is regarded as a metaphor, it is usually because it is literally false or absurd. Understanding a sentence as a metaphor, then, has to be something other than grasp of the literal content of propositions. Understanding a metaphor, Davidson postulates, involves a phenomenological experience, and an appropriate phenomenology for metaphor is *seeing-as*; in other words, understanding a metaphor involves seeing one thing *as* another thing. Davidson reasons from this experiential understanding of metaphors to the conclusion that metaphors are not truth evaluable.

#### **The Seeing-*as* Argument<sup>7</sup>:**

- P1. A sentence is truth evaluable only if what one grasps in understanding it is truth evaluable.
- P2. What one grasps in understanding a metaphorical sentence is encapsulated in a *seeing-as* experience.
- P3. *Seeing-as* is not *seeing-that*; *seeing-as* has no propositional content.
- C1: So, what one grasps in understanding a metaphorical sentence has no propositional content [From P2 and P3]

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<sup>7</sup> Davidson did not give an explicit argument like this, so this construction of what I am calling the *seeing-as* argument can be regarded as an Anti-Truth theorist’s argument against metaphorical truth evaluability or as I sometimes will call it, a Davidsonian argument.

P4. To have propositional content just is to be truth evaluable.

C2: So, what one grasps in understanding a metaphorical sentence is not truth evaluable

[From C1 and P4]

C.∴ So, metaphorical sentences are not truth evaluable [From P1 and C2].

#### 1.4. Issues and responses to the argument from seeing-*as*

Davidson's central claim (CT) and the seeing-*as* argument are independent but related to each other. In one sense, the seeing-*as* argument can be regarded as playing an explanatory role of how metaphors work and what understanding of metaphors involves other than grasp of propositional content. It is possible to accept Davidson's claim that metaphors have no additional non-literal contents without positing further that metaphors should be modeled along perceptual experiences. For instance, Cooper (1984), an avid defender of Davidson's general account of metaphor does not think that a seeing-*as* perceptual experience is appropriate for modeling metaphors; he thinks that there are difficulties with construing metaphors in terms of seeing one thing as another. This explanatory reading of the seeing-*as* argument in relation to Davidson's central claim, however, does not take away Davidson's position that metaphors *qua* metaphors are not truth-evaluable. The stronger sense or reading of the seeing-*as* argument, even when it is taken to be independent of Davidson's central claim, is a justificatory one: if to understand a metaphor is to see one thing as another thing then it follows reasonably that metaphors are not truth-evaluable.<sup>8</sup> This stronger reading is the Anti-Truth theorist's contention that metaphorical

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<sup>8</sup> Davidson has other explicit arguments against the truth-evaluability of metaphors which I discuss in Chapter II. In this chapter, I am only interested in one unique strand of argument against the truth-evaluability of metaphors, the seeing-*as* argument, which Davidson's view encapsulates. And although Davidson discusses seeing-*as* at the end of his paper this does not suggest that he does not use seeing-*as* as a reason for the non-truth evaluability of metaphors. The *seeing-as* argument is that seeing-*as* is not seeing-*that*; that is, seeing-*as* is not propositional; and since in an important sense the proposition is that which is evaluated for truth, understanding metaphor as seeing-*as* implies that

sentences are not truth-apt in view of the fact that understanding metaphors does not involve grasp of propositions.

The main premises of the *Seeing-as* Argument which lead to the conclusion that metaphorical sentences do not have propositional contents, and thus, not truth-evaluable, are P2 and P3:

- P2.** What one grasps in understanding a metaphorical sentence is encapsulated in a *seeing-as* experience.
- P3.** *Seeing-as* is not *seeing-that*; *seeing-as* has no propositional content.

And responses to the argument have primarily focused on these two premises and their relation to the main conclusion. These responses to the *Seeing-as* Argument have come in three forms:

- R1.** Reject P2 by arguing that the perceptual experience associated with metaphors is either vague or difficult to comprehend or that it is not applicable to all cases of metaphors.
- R2.** Accept P2, the perceptual experience, but reject P3 by showing that the distinction between *seeing-as* and *seeing-that* is not plausible.
- R3.** Accept P2 and P3 but reject the sub-conclusion C1 by arguing that there is a propositional dimension to metaphors which is not given by *seeing-as*.

The responses to the Davidsonian *seeing-as* argument have primarily focused on the *seeing-as* phenomenon associated with metaphors and there have been pertinent questions about the nature and role of *seeing-as* in a theory of metaphor. The first response, **R1**, originates from the observation that there are difficulties involved with appropriating the *seeing-as* phenomenon to metaphor, and these observations have been made even by those who are not directly

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metaphors are non-truth-evaluable. Bearing in mind that Davidson's account is a paradigm case, the responses to, defense of, and the criticisms of the *seeing-as* argument are not limited to that of Davidson's.

commenting on Davidson's account of metaphor. It has been pointed out that not all metaphors take the 'x is y' structure to warrant using a seeing-*as* perceptual experience for understanding metaphors (Cooper, 1984; Tirrell, 1991); there are not many similarities between the Wittgensteinian duck-rabbit aspectual seeing and metaphor to warrant extending the use of seeing-*as* to metaphors (Stock, 2013); seeing one thing as another thing doesn't seem to be applicable to metaphors whose subjects are taken from incommensurable realms (Cooper, 1984); it is neither definitional (Moran, 1989) nor necessary (Kemp, 1991; Tirrell, 1991) for an utterance to be a metaphor that someone sees one thing as another thing.

Davidson has not been the only one to think of metaphors in terms of seeing-*as*. Hester (1966) and Aldrich (1968) viewed metaphor as involving having images through a seeing-*as* experience; Yoos (1971) talked of 'conceiving' or 'imagining' one thing as, or "under the aspect" (p. 85) of, another thing; Moran (1989), Gaut (1997), and Camp (2006a,c, 2008) prefer to think of seeing-*as* as a 'framing effect' or a perspective for structuring or framing one thing as another thing; for Semino (2008), metaphor is "the phenomenon whereby we talk and potentially think about something in terms of something else" (p. 1); and Ritchie (2013) views metaphor as "seeing, experiencing, or talking about something in terms of something else" (p. 8). Davidson's own characterization of metaphor in terms of seeing-*as*, like many others before and after him, does not offer an account of what it is to see one thing as another thing; in fact, Davidson's use of seeing-*as* is not without problematic issues. According to Davidson (1979), "metaphor makes us see one thing as another thing by making some literal statement that inspires or prompts the insight" (p. 45). His use of 'makes' here has led Blackburn (1984) to wonder whether metaphor

is a *stimulus* to the insight or the metaphor itself *expresses* the insight.<sup>9</sup> For in comparing metaphors to similes, Davidson also says things like “a metaphor makes us attend to some likeness” (p. 31), “metaphor merely nudges us into noting” [what similes tell us] (p. 36), “the metaphor does not explicitly assert a likeness, but if we accept it as a metaphor, we are again led to seek common features” (p. 38); “a metaphor directs attention to the same sorts of similarity, if not the same similarities, as the corresponding simile” (p. 38), and also that “metaphor does lead us to notice what might not otherwise be noticed” (p. 39).

Tirrell (1991) has faulted Davidson for interchanging ‘seeing’ with ‘noticing’ and ‘attending to’ as evidenced in the things Davidson says above. She notes correctly that “we may see x as y, or we may see that x is y; we may notice that x is y but we cannot notice x as y” (p. 144). Also, “we attend to x, or we attend to the y-ness of x, or we attend to the fact that x is y, but we do not attend to x as y” (p. 144). But Davidson is not equating seeing-as or seeing to noticing or attending to something; he is also not explaining or reducing seeing or seeing-as to noticing and attending to. What Davidson is pointing out here is the use and function of metaphor; and the work of metaphor here is to direct our attention to see something or attend to something or notice something. This is supported by his comparison of metaphor with simile where he notes that while the simile explicitly asserts a likeness between two things the metaphor directs our attention to, rather than assert, likenesses. In this sense, Blackburn (1984) is right in construing metaphor as a stimulus to seeing aspects of things we have not noticed before.

The role or function of metaphor is one thing but understanding a metaphor is another thing. The Davidsonian argument does not rest on metaphor’s role in directing our attention to seeing things hitherto unseen; the argument is not premised on what metaphor does. It is

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<sup>9</sup> While Blackburn considers metaphor as a stimulus to an insight, Taylor (1989) defends Davidson against Blackburn that a metaphor expresses an insight and that a grasp of a metaphor amounts to a grasp of the insight expressed by the metaphor.

premised on the view that seeing one thing as another thing is constitutive of grasping or understanding a metaphor. Hence, even if metaphor does not stimulate, nudge, or direct us to see one thing as another thing, that is beside the point of the argument. To grasp a metaphor, that is to appreciate the point<sup>10</sup> of the metaphor, for Davidson, is to see one thing as another thing. Similarly, the difficulties and complexities observed with seeing-*as* do not offer a challenge to the Davidsonian argument. Davidson is not making seeing-*as* a necessary condition for *being* a metaphor or as definitional of what it is for a sentence to be taken as a metaphor, as Moran (1989) and Tirrell (1991) tend to suppose. If the response to **P2** is that the seeing-*as* phenomenon is imprecise or inapplicable to certain metaphors, as **R1** says, that will not amount to a total rejection of **P2**, although it would be a rejection of this particular perceptual experience – seeing-*as* – itself. **R1** would not have rejected **P2** if the perceptual experience is, say, seeing-*in* or a more refined experiential way of construing metaphors.

This is so because there are two ways of understanding **P2**. One is to take seeing-*as* as definitional or constitutive of *what it is to be a metaphor*. Understood this way, the charge that seeing-*as* is ill-defined, that seeing-*as* is not applicable to understanding many metaphors, or that seeing-*as* is definitionally inadequate of metaphors, all seem justified. And these seem to be the objections raised by Cooper, Tirrell and Moran. But Davidson is not making seeing-*as* definitional or constitutive of what it is to be a metaphor.<sup>11</sup> The other way of understanding it, the appreciative sense of it, is to make the grasping of insights constitutive of understanding

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<sup>10</sup> There might be a difference between the *point* and the *insight* that one grasps in understanding a metaphor, but like Davidson, I use the two terms interchangeably to characterize the non-propositional content one grasps in understanding metaphors.

<sup>11</sup> This passage from Davidson shows his dislike for definitions and rules for making metaphors: “The interpretation of dreams requires collaboration between a dreamer and a waker, even if they be the same person; and the act of interpretation is itself a work of the imagination. So too understanding a metaphor is as much a creative endeavor as making a metaphor, and as little guided by rules...

A metaphor implies a kind and degree of artistic success; there are no unsuccessful metaphors, just as there are no unfunny jokes. There are tasteless metaphors, but these are turns that nevertheless have brought something off, even if it were not worth bringing off or could have been brought off better.” (1979, p. 29)

metaphors. In this sense, understanding a metaphor requires that one sees the insights of the metaphor. The point is not that by definition a metaphor is seeing one thing as another thing; rather when one says that he understands a metaphor it means that he appreciates the insight of the metaphor and the insight arises out of seeing one thing as another thing. Even if one does not employ a seeing-*as* mechanism, understanding a metaphor will mean that one has appreciated the insight of the metaphor.<sup>12</sup> The appropriate response to **P2**, I will argue below, is to show that *understanding* – and in this case understanding a metaphor not an exception – pragmatically construed, does not entail seeing-*as*, and seeing-*as*, phenomenologically construed, does not constitute understanding a metaphor.

The response I will offer is appropriate in the sense that the correct reading of Davidson as captured in **P2** makes the seeing of one thing as another, the grasp of the insight or point of the metaphor, as constituting understanding of the metaphor. What Davidson is after, is what Moran (1989) captures as the “successful achievement of the effects of framing<sup>13</sup>” (p. 97) one thing as another thing. That is, while the metaphor leads one to see one thing as another thing, the hearer understands the metaphor when she successfully comes to appreciate the insight or the effect of the metaphor. Taylor (1989) captures it more explicitly for Davidson when he says that “the *appreciation* of a metaphor requires seeing one thing as another” (p. 71, emphasis mine), and that “in a more general - i.e. not necessarily visual - sense, a metaphor can capture an aspect

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<sup>12</sup> The distinction drawn above between what it is to be a metaphor and what constitutes understanding of metaphors does not imply that the one – what it is to be a metaphor – cannot be derived from the other – what constitutes understanding of metaphors. The distinction is apt in bringing out a difference between thinking of seeing-*as* as what defines or constitutes a metaphor and thinking of seeing-*as* as what constitutes understanding the metaphor. The challenge to the first is that not all metaphors can be defined in terms of seeing-*as*; the making of metaphors does not always involve seeing-*as*. But the second is that understanding a metaphor involves seeing-*as* whether or not metaphors are made by, or defined in terms of, seeing-*as*. The challenge to the second is whether grasping or understanding of metaphors can appropriately be cast in terms of seeing-*as*. It is the second that raises the issue of whether we grasp only non-propositional contents in understanding metaphors and it is that I will be challenging below.

<sup>13</sup> Moran uses seeing-*as* and framing interchangeably

of something, where *understanding* the metaphor requires seeing the aspect” (p. 75, emphasis mine). If this reading is the persuasive intent behind the second premise, then the first response, **R1** does not offer a strong challenge to the premise. **R1** correctly challenges ‘seeing-*as*’ itself but as pointed out above, one could adopt another phenomenological experience in characterizing metaphors. The virtue of my response is that an experiential or phenomenological experience that is precise and accurate enough to characterize metaphors will still be wanting if it uses that experience in rejecting the truth-evaluability of metaphors.

Can one accept the second premise, that to understand a metaphor is to see one thing as another thing in the appreciative sense explained above, *and* reject the third premise that seeing-*as* is not seeing-that? In other words, can one accept the premise that when one understands a metaphor then she has come to appreciate the point of the metaphor by virtue of seeing one thing as another thing but reject the premise which articulates the view that what seeing-*as* enables one to grasp is not propositional? The second response, **R2**, permits the acceptance of the second premise in conjunction with a rejection of the epistemic criterion in the third premise. But **R2** is not a favourable response: one cannot accept the second premise – that to understand a metaphor is to appreciate its insight through a seeing-*as* experience – and reject the third premise – that seeing-*as* does not amount to seeing-that, for the effects, points, or insights – what a metaphor may lead one to see – are not propositional; they are not expressible in propositional form; they are not propositionally contentful. Davidson explains the locution ‘seeing-*as* is not seeing-that’ with respect to visual perceptions that involve switch of aspects:

But if I show you Wittgenstein's duck-rabbit, and I say, “It's a duck,” then with luck you see it as a duck; if I say, “It's a rabbit,” you see it as a rabbit. But no proposition expresses what I have led you to see. Perhaps you have come to realize that the drawing can be seen as a duck or as a rabbit. But one could come to know this without ever seeing the drawing as a duck or as a rabbit. (1979, p. 45)

The same principle is what pertains in metaphor, according to Davidson. A metaphor is a literal statement that prompts a hearer to see one thing as another thing but there is no proposition that expresses the insight that the hearer has been led to see. And what the metaphor prompts one to see, Davidson says, is not “recognition of some truth or fact” (p. 45).

Tirrell (1991) has attempted to show on one hand that what a metaphor prompts could be propositional, and on another hand, that seeing-*as* is ‘associated’ with propositional content. In other words, seeing-*as* could prompt both propositional and non-propositional contents of metaphor. According to her,

A metaphor, according to Davidson, prompts the audience to see one thing, X, as another, Y. X is what is seen, and X is usually not propositional. In Pynchon’s ‘Jessica was the breaking of the wave’, ‘Jessica’ is the X-term and Jessica herself is not a proposition. Davidson mistakenly conflates what is seen with what the metaphor prompts. The metaphor prompts a *seeing*, in particular a seeing of X as Y. What is seen is Jessica; what is prompted is a seeing of Jessica as a breaking of the wave. It is obvious that in most cases what is seen is non-propositional; it is less than obvious that in most cases what is prompted is non-propositional (p. 145, emphasis in original).

However, Tirrell’s reading of Davidson mischaracterizes the point Davidson is making in an obvious way. The application of the seeing-*as* perceptual experience to metaphor does not work on the basis of one literally seeing the subject as in the duck-rabbit case. Davidson is not saying that the subject of the metaphor is non-propositional; what he is saying is that what is seen, what is achieved by a successful application of the seeing-*as* experience, is non-propositional. Tirrell fails to make a distinction between the function or role of metaphor as a linguistic device, and the successful grasping or understanding of a metaphor. The prompting to see one thing as another thing, is a function of metaphor, but the result of the seeing of one thing as another thing, that which is seen (the insight), for Davidson is not propositional in character. Understood in this way, what is prompted to be seen cannot be propositional in nature.

Tirrell agrees with Davidson that when Romeo says 'Juliet is the sun' Romeo does not see *that* Juliet is the sun. But she retorts that "we cannot agree that *no* propositional content is associated with seeing Juliet as the sun" (p. 146). Why? Because, "in seeing Juliet *as* the sun" she explains, "Romeo may, for example, see *that* she brings warmth to his life" (p. 146). Davidson's response will be this: "metaphor can, like a picture or a bump on the head, make us appreciate some fact – but not by standing for, or expressing, the fact" (1979, p. 44). The thought that Juliet brings warmth to Romeo may be what Davidson calls "the point" of the metaphor and the appreciation of this point through seeing Juliet as the sun is not a recognition of a truth or a claim that is propositional. Davidson's response here ties in with his central thesis that metaphors only have literal meanings and literal contents. Tirrell's point is that in seeing-*as* one *thereby* sees-*that*. Davidson's point is that the only proposition associated with the metaphor is the literal one and that is the one which the metaphorical sentence directly expresses. All other things that one could come to entertain are non-propositional since the metaphor itself doesn't directly express them. Of course, when the point entertained in light of the metaphor is put forth as a claim then it is propositional. But the metaphor itself does not issue that claim. And Davidson will also say that there are many such claims the metaphor may be supposed to issue which becomes difficult to say which one is *the* claim. If to understand a metaphor is to successfully grasp the point of the metaphor by means of seeing one thing as another thing, then the point grasped is not propositional in nature and therefore cannot be appreciated for truth. One cannot accept premise two (P2) and deny premise three (P3) by showing that seeing-*as* produces propositional understanding.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> There have been reductive analyses of seeing *x as f* in terms of seeing *that* *x* is *y* via an analysis of what it is to see *x*. Kvat (1993) is an example. But while these analyses may be plausible for ordinary perceptual seeing it is not pertinent to the seeing-*as* involved in the case of metaphors.

The third response, **R3**, is the position of especially, Moran (1989), Gaut (1997), Camp (2006a,c, 2008, 2009). For them, Davidson is right that metaphor involves seeing one thing as another thing, and Davidson is also right that seeing-*as* is not seeing-that for the effects and insights of the metaphor are non-propositional. But they reject the conclusions (**C1** & **C2**) that metaphors do not have propositional contents and that they are not truth-evaluable. For Camp (2008), seeing-*as* is just a matter of “using one thing as a perspective for thinking about something else” (p. 1) and that the perspective serves as a ‘tool’ for ‘framing’, ‘structuring’ or ‘characterizing’ the one thing in terms of the other. Since seeing-*as* is merely a tool for thinking metaphorically, it is not the product or ‘the thought’ entertained by the metaphor. Camp and Moran both agree with Davidson that the thoughts or the aspectual effects produced by seeing-*as* are non-propositional. But while they accept that aspectual seeing-*as* does not translate into seeing-that they argue that there is a *propositional dimension* to metaphor. That is, metaphors have propositional contents but their propositional contents are not contingent on, or produced by, aspectual seeing-*as*. Whereas Davidson’s account of metaphor focuses primarily on the audience and how metaphor enables them to see one thing as another thing, Moran and Camp place emphasis on the speaker’s intention in using metaphors. Camp reverts to Gricean (Grice, 1989) implicatures in terms of what one *speaker-means* in using metaphor. What the speaker means in using a metaphor can be captured by a paraphrase into a propositionally assessable content (Camp 2006a, 2008). Moran’s (1989) account of metaphor also grants that metaphors have two dimensions: “the dimension of effects... in terms of framing or the adoption of a perspective, and the dimension of the beliefs that prompt the comparison in the first place, and which are necessary for the framing-effect to be something other than mere juxtaposition” (p.108). Gaut (1997) expands the distinction between the two dimensions this way:

The theory holds that there are two dimensions to metaphor: the dimension of cognitive content (a propositional content that the metaphor communicates), constituted by our beliefs about what properties the objects compared literally possess, beliefs which may be ineffable; and the dimension of the framing-effect, by which we see one object in terms of the other (p. 233).

The positing of two dimensions to metaphor implies that there is an alternative route to imbuing metaphors with propositional contents which could be evaluated for truth. And, so, the Davidsonian premises, **P2** and **P3** do not lead to the conclusion that metaphorical sentences are not truth-evaluable. Is this a satisfactory response to the Davidsonian argument? Notice that this **R3** response characterizes seeing-*as* differently from Davidson for it seems that it does not wholly accept **P2**. It sees seeing-*as* as a tool or a perspective for thinking of one thing in terms of another thing. However, if Moran's belief-dimension is to the speaker and the framing-effect dimension is to the hearer, then it seems to suggest that the hearer's understanding of a metaphor comes about by virtue of the framing-effect dimension even if the beliefs of the speaker play a part in the comprehension of the metaphor. This suggests also that the proponent of the two-dimensional approach implicitly endorses **P2** that the hearer's understanding of a metaphor involves successfully grasping the point or insight of the metaphor which is given by the framing effect. What the approach adds here is that there is another avenue for thinking about metaphorical sentences associated with propositional contents. But what is the theoretical value of couching metaphor as seeing-*as* and claiming that speaker-intentionality is another dimension to the metaphor?

Purely pragmatic accounts of metaphor in terms of the intentions of the speaker like that of Searle (1993) and Martinich (1984, 1996) do without thinking of metaphors as a matter of seeing one thing as another thing. For them, the content of a metaphor does not belong to 'what is said' but rather to 'what is communicated' or meant. Reckoning that what is said – 'S is P' –

is literally false or absurd, the hearer adopts certain strategies in working out the speaker's intended meaning of the metaphor – 'S is R' – by computing the relevant values of R from the salient characteristics associated with P. Now, suppose that the hearer is to construe what is said 'S is P' in terms of seeing S *as* P, what will be the role or point of the seeing-*as* when the hearer can work out the content of the metaphor from the intentions of the speaker? Gricean implicatures occur without construing the original sentence in terms of seeing-*as*. A more parsimonious account for the one who accords propositional contents to metaphors through some mechanism of Gricean intentions will be to do away with talk of seeing-*as* altogether since the seeing-*as* theoretical level does no work in capturing the beliefs and intentions of the speaker. It is also not too clear on both Camp and Moran's account what the relationship between the two dimensions is supposed to be. If the one dimension – the framing-effect – is to offer a perspective for deciphering the content of the metaphor then this dimension is not necessary since the content of the metaphor could be had anyway without the framing effect. Perhaps, there are propositional and non-propositional aspects of metaphors, and nothing I have said so far regarding the two dimensional approach refutes that. But if the Davidsonian claim is that understanding a metaphor, for the hearer, amounts to successfully grasping the point or insight of the metaphor, by seeing one thing as another thing – whether or not the seeing-*as* is merely a tool or the end product – then the response that another dimension to the metaphor makes it truth-apt, while it may be true, does not offer a satisfactory response to the claim. As I mentioned earlier, my response to the argument is built on arguing that seeing-*as*, whether it is construed as the successful appreciation of the insight of the metaphor or as merely a tool for thinking, does not constitute understanding metaphors.

In summary, the three main responses, **R1-R3**, to the Seeing-*as* or Phenomenological Argument do not provide substantial and adequate challenges to the force of the Davidsonian contention that metaphorical sentences do not express (non-literal) propositional contents that can be evaluated for truth. R1 challenges the Davidsonian contention by showing that ‘seeing-*as*’ is a nebulous notion for characterizing metaphors. While this observation seems plausible, it does not suffice to deny that understanding a metaphor amounts to appreciating its non-propositional insights. R2 is also unsatisfactory because while it acknowledges that understanding metaphors amount to seeing one thing in terms of another thing – what R1 rejects – it posits further that perceptual experience can yield propositional content. R3, unlike R2 admits that the perceptual experience involved in understanding metaphors yield non-propositional content, but that by some pragmatic mechanism of speaker meaning metaphor has a propositional dimension to it. This response merely evades the phenomenological argument.

### **1.5. What is it to understand a metaphor?**

The plausibility of the argument from phenomenology (AP) depends on the plausibility of the implication that is held between the phenomenological experience (seeing-*as*) and the evaluation of metaphors for truth. What Davidson has correctly established is that seeing-*as* is not equal to seeing-*that*. But this result does not reveal that understanding a metaphor centrally involves seeing one thing as another thing, and the result also does not show that thinking of metaphors in terms of seeing-*as* implies that metaphors are not truth-evaluable. I shall argue for these three related claims:

- (A) What constitutes understanding, and what one grasps in understanding a metaphor is not encapsulated in a seeing-*as* experience [Challenge to P2]

- (B) Seeing-*as* does not entail not-seeing-*that*; that is, seeing-*as* does not preclude seeing-*that*. Rather, seeing-*as* plays a functional role of suggesting or intimating what one sees-*that*.<sup>15</sup>
- (C) A perceptual experience, such as seeing-*as* does not determine the truth-evaluability of metaphorical sentences.

The implication of the conjunction of these three claims is that metaphorical sentences *can* be truth evaluable

The essential question that needs addressing here is this: what constitutes understanding a metaphor? And more generally, what constitutes understanding a linguistic expression (or an utterance) or anything for that matter? The specific, as well as the general, question is essential primarily because the Seeing-*as* argument rests on the view that what one grasps in understanding metaphors determines whether metaphors are truth-evaluable and since the argument attributes a non-propositional content to the grasping of metaphors, it concludes that metaphors are non-truth-evaluable. The nature of understanding, however, offers a two-pronged attack on both the Seeing-*as* Argument and the Argument from Phenomenology: on the one hand, a *necessary* but not sufficient condition for understanding a sentence or utterance – *grasping of meaning* – implies that metaphorical sentences or utterances can have propositional contents; and on the other hand, the condition that *suffices* for understanding a sentence – *the ability to use the sentence* – implies that metaphorical sentences are propositionally contentful and that the Seeing-*as* argument does not succeed in precluding metaphors from being appraised for truth.

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<sup>15</sup> Although Tirrell and others affirm the fact that there are propositional contents associated with metaphors, it is crucial to distinguish this claim (B) from their related views. Tirrell says that “in seeing Juliet as the sun, Romeo may, for example, see that she brings warmth to his life”. This is the view that derives seeing-*that* from seeing-*as*, or the view that in seeing-*as* one may thereby see-*that*. Claim (B) is not derivative in this sense; according to claim (B), seeing-*that* is primary and independent of seeing-*as*.

The nature of understanding has been examined from different philosophical disciplines: from epistemology, especially by Zagzebski (2001), Kvanvig (2003, 2009b), Riggs (2003, 2009), Pritchard (2008, 2009, 2010), Elgin (2006, 2007, 2009a), Grimm (2006), Khalifa (2013a,b), Kelp (2015), Dellsen (2016); from philosophy of science, by de Regt (2004, 2009), de Regt and Dieks (2005), Grimm (2008, 2010), Lacey (1999); and from the philosophy of language, writers including Hunter (1998), Gross (2005), Longworth (2008), Wang (2009), Pettit (2002), Bourget (2015) who have engaged with the issue of linguistic understanding.<sup>16</sup> Within these disciplines of philosophy, ‘understanding’ or ‘to understand’ is primarily conceived in terms of a state of achievement: “all understanding involves cognitive achievement” (Pritchard, 2010, p. 82); it is a mental state where one achieves a “cognitive success” (Elgin, 2007, p. 33), or which is an “epistemic accomplishment” (Kosso, 2007, p. 180).<sup>17</sup> The cognitive success one achieves in understanding something amounts to, or is synonymous with, *grasping* that thing, and hence, when one understands something, one thereby grasps it.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, ‘understanding’ is something abstract or cognitive but grasping – taking a hold or a grip of something – has both a material (literal) and an abstract (figurative) sense, and the abstract sense which is linked with understanding, unless explicated, remains a metaphor or a synonym for understanding. As a cognitive achievement, ‘understanding’ then is a cognitive grasp of something or the having of a cognitive grip on something. The notion of grasping is fundamental to understanding, and rather than merely a synonym, many writers understand ‘grasping’ to be necessary to understanding

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<sup>16</sup> The issues these authors deal with often intertwine and their discussions are not limited to the philosophical disciplines I have categorized them here. From epistemology, these philosophers are concerned with the relation between knowledge and understanding, whether understanding is a species of knowledge, whether understanding has epistemic value, whether understanding is factive, etc. Philosophers of science are concerned with understanding-why or explanatory understanding. And from philosophy of language, knowledge of meaning and propositional content tends to be primary in the discussions of understanding linguistic utterances.

<sup>17</sup> We can bracket the sense of understanding as a process or event when one ‘comes to understand’ something.

<sup>18</sup> In the case of sentences, one understands a sentence by grasping its meaning. In addition to *grasping*, Franklin (1983), Grimm (2012, 2006) and Riaz (2015) suggest that *seeing* is sometimes used in talk of understanding.

(Cooper, 1994; Strevens, 2013; Khalifa, 2013a; Bourget, 2015).<sup>19</sup> Although, it is difficult to explain what ‘grasping’ is, Grimm (2006) notes that “when trying to offer an account of understanding the notion of *grasping* arises almost irresistibly” (p. 532).

What is it to *grasp* something? This question is related to, but distinct from, the question of what it is – the *thing* – that one grasps. An answer to the question about the thing that one grasps in understanding can shed light on what constitutes grasping that thing. There are a variety of things one can grasp, such as propositions (Kvanvig 2003; Elgin, 2007; Pritchard, 2009; Bourget 2015), structures, patterns, systems (Moravcsik 1979; Zagzebski 2001; Riggs 2003), information chunks (Kvanvig 2003, 2009b; Elgin, 2007), ‘dependency relations’ (Grimm 2006, 2012), phenomena, subject matter (Zagzebski, 2001; Kvanvig, 2003, 2009b; Elgin 2007). Following Kvanvig (2003), the objects of understanding can be categorized into two, propositional and objectual understanding, which reflects two primary uses of understanding. As he explains, “the propositional sort occurs when we attribute understanding in the form of a propositional operator, as in understanding that something is the case, and the objectual sort occurs when understanding grammatically is followed by an object, as in understanding the presidency, or the president, or politics, or the English language” (Kvanvig, 2003, p. 191). For Kvanvig, the different kinds of understanding, such as understanding *why*, *what*, *when* can be explicated in terms of propositional understanding, understanding *that* (2003, p. 189).

Grasping of a subject matter or objectual understanding is considered different from grasping a proposition or propositional understanding and the difference is significant for accounting for what constitutes ‘grasping’.<sup>20</sup> Since a subject matter or a body of information

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<sup>19</sup> The centrality of *grasping* to understanding is often cited as what distinguishes understanding from knowledge as for instance in Khalifa (2013a)

<sup>20</sup> The difference between grasping a phenomenon or subject matter and grasping a proposition is also significant for the way in which understanding is related to other notions like knowledge. For instance, some epistemologists think

involves more than one proposition, grasping a subject matter or a body of information involves grasping not just a set of propositions but the various relations and interconnections among the propositions that make up the subject matter. Objectual understanding for Kvanvig requires “an internal grasping or appreciation of how the various elements in a body of information are related to each other in terms of explanatory, logical, probabilistic, and other kinds of relations that coherentists have thought constitutive of justification” (2003, p. 191-192). Elgin (2007) concurs with Kvanvig on this. She outlines certain features that indicate the presence of an understanding of a subject matter like the Athenian victory over Persia in the battle of Marathon:

To understand the Athenian victory involves more than knowing the various truths that belong to a suitably tethered comprehensive, coherent account of the matter. The understander must also grasp how the various truths relate to each other and to other elements of the account. She should also be able (and perhaps be aware that she is able) to use that information – to reason with it, to apply it, perhaps to use it as a source of working hypotheses about related matters (p. 35).

The key elements of objectual understanding for Kvanvig and Elgin from their assertions above is the grasping of the connections among different propositions relating to the subject matter and the fitting together of the propositions into a coherent whole. This means that grasping a proposition within a body of information should involve how the individual proposition fits into the larger whole which in turn should capture the consistency of the proposition with other propositions. Kvanvig (2009b), Schurz & Lambert (1994), Elgin (2009a) and others hold that understanding is *primarily* holistic in the sense that it involves apprehension of the connections between propositions and pieces of information despite the distinction between propositional and objectual understanding. It is however, possible to understand a proposition without recourse to

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that both understanding and knowledge are factive (Kvanvig 2003) and others think that while knowledge is factive, understanding is not (Elgin, 2007; Khalifa, 2013). The issue of the factivity of understanding arises because of the apparent ways in which understanding is said to be like and unlike knowledge since both understanding and knowledge are terms of cognitive success. But the issue of the factivity of understanding, to a large extent, depends on the use of ‘understanding’ at play; that is, since epistemologists are concerned with knowledge *that p*, the issue of the factivity of understanding is couched in terms of understanding *that p*, for grasping a subject matter can involve false beliefs and propositions.

the larger subject matter of which the proposition is a part; and it is equally possible to understand a proposition which is not intended to fit into any complete whole. The demand for coherence within a larger theme and the logical connections it shares with other propositions, are relaxed in the case of grasping individual propositions.<sup>21</sup>

Understanding a proposition is often thought to be somehow linked to knowledge that the proposition obtains.<sup>22</sup> But it is crucial to distinguish the constitutive question of understanding from the epistemological question of when one knows that the proposition one understands obtains. If grasping of propositions is constitutive of propositional understanding that makes the proposition the *object* of understanding. The obtaining of the proposition – that is, its being true – does not affect the grasping of the proposition. This is why it is possible for one to understand a proposition that is actually false (Riggs, 2009; Gardiner, 2012).

Without losing sight of our main question – what is it to understand a metaphor? – it was important to try to give a broader characterization of what it is to understand anything. We have seen that understanding necessarily involves grasping of something, and the things grasped can broadly be subsumed under two categories: a phenomenon (subject matter) or a proposition. A metaphorical utterance or sentence is neither a subject matter nor a proposition. The issue of what it is to understand a metaphorical utterance should be approached from what it is to understand a linguistic utterance. But this in turn becomes an issue of propositional understanding, for propositions are considered to be the *contents* of sentences.<sup>23</sup> An important

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<sup>21</sup> The distinction at play here is between grasping individual propositions and grasping a whole theme or system which is composed of these individual propositions. The possibility of grasping individual propositions is not intended to imply an atomist (as against holist) conception that we grasp propositions individually, but that one can understand an individual proposition even where she does not understand how or why or whether that proposition fits into a system.

<sup>22</sup> Sliwa (2015) argues that knowing is both necessary and sufficient for understanding, for it is infelicitous to say things like ‘I understand that p, but I don’t know that p’.

<sup>23</sup> One could propose that understanding metaphors is much more like understanding words which do not involve propositions. However, since metaphors are not words it is very unclear how this proposal can be developed. As I

distinction here is apt: when propositional understanding is used in the literature in epistemology and philosophy of science as I tried to present above, the proposition is the *object* of understanding, as for instance, I understand that  $p$  where  $p$  is the proposition that Juliet is sitting on the chair; but when the interest lies in understanding an utterance, the object of the understanding is the utterance, while the proposition is the *content* of the utterance.<sup>24</sup> Since *grasping* is still relevant here, to understand an utterance is to grasp<sup>25</sup> its *meaning* or *content*.<sup>26</sup> To say that to understand an utterance or sentence is to grasp *its meaning* seems to suggest a sense of uniqueness with respect to meaning but this suggestion of uniqueness is mistaken. An utterance can have more than one meaning or content; a proposition itself is a *possible* meaning of a sentence or utterance.<sup>27</sup> I agree with Hunter (1998) when he says that “to understand a thing is to understand it as meaning one thing or another, as having some meaning or other. The objects of understanding are thus things that are meaningful or that have or express meaning, such things as tokens of sentences and words, as well as speech acts” (p. 562).

One reason for taking the sentence as having ‘one meaning or another’ is the phenomenon of *misunderstanding*. To misunderstand a sentence or an utterance is not to fail to understand it but to understand it to mean something else. In misunderstanding, one grasps

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point out below, understanding metaphors involves grasp of meaning or meaning, and as such, whether understanding a metaphor is like understanding a word, and unlike understanding a sentence, meaning or content is involved in that understanding.

<sup>24</sup> The view developed here is not committed to any controversial view about propositions; The argument in this chapter is not necessarily that the content of sentences are propositions. The argument rather is that what is involved in understanding metaphors is grasp of content or grasp of meaning – a content or meaning other than the literal meaning or content of the metaphor. So, it cannot be right on a Davidsonian account that metaphors have no non-literal content. The arguments in Chapter II show why the content of metaphors *can* be construed to be propositional in nature.

<sup>25</sup> For reasons such as that linguistic understanding, unlike knowledge, does not fail in Gettier cases (Pettit, 2002; Longworth 2008) it is apt to use ‘grasp’ instead of the more common way of saying that to understand a sentence is to *know* its meaning.

<sup>26</sup> For our purposes here, let us grant that the meaning of an utterance is the same as the content of the utterance.

<sup>27</sup> The distinction is often made between *sentence meaning* and *speaker’s meaning* (Searle, 1979) but the critique of uniqueness of meaning is applicable to both kinds of meanings. That is, a sentence could have more than one sentence meaning. For example, the sentence ‘visiting relatives can be annoying’ could mean either *that it can be annoying to visit relatives* or *that relatives who are visiting can be annoying*.

something, a meaning, in the case of linguistic understanding. If the meaning grasped is not a *possible* meaning of the sentence, then one has not misunderstood but failed to understand the sentence, and in other words, lacked understanding of the sentence. Failure to understand a sentence implies that one is not able to associate the sentence to any of its possible meanings while misunderstanding implies that one mismatches the sentence to a meaning that is infelicitous to the context in which the sentence is used. For instance, take an ambiguous sentence with two meanings – M1 & M2. In a context where M1 is intended, grasping M2 will amount to misunderstanding it within that context but failure to grasp either M1 or M2 implies that one does not understand the sentence

From the above remarks on linguistic understanding, we can give a necessary condition for a subject's (S) understanding of an utterance (u) as follows:

S understands *u* at *t* only if S grasps some *p* at *t*, where *p* is a possible meaning of *u*

What are these possible meanings of an utterance? Popularized by Austin, Searle, and other speech act theorists, it is generally accepted that there are three types or aspects of the meaning or content of an utterance. As explained by Wang (2009), “one is its propositional content, namely, what is said literally and explicitly with a linguistic expression, which is supposed to represent states of affairs; second is its expressive content, i.e., what is *intended* with a linguistic expression by the speaker; and third, is its illocutionary content, namely, what is *used* in a speech act to enter into a relationship with the hearer” (p. 72, italics in original). Does one grasp all these three contents in understanding an utterance? According to Wang (2009) “since the propositional content of a sentence is the semantic foundation upon which the other dimensions of its meaning depends, to understand a sentence could mean to comprehend its propositional content or the thought expressed” (p. 72). And that, comprehension of the propositional content,

which he calls “propositional understanding” is the “essential dimension of linguistic understanding ...which constitutes the central core of any notion of understanding” (2009, p. 72). Wang’s assertions here bring to the fore the issue of understanding metaphorical sentences. For he captures the intuition behind the Anti-Truth theorist’s assumption that genuine understanding of an utterance involves grasping the content ‘literally and explicitly’ expressed by an utterance.

Indeed, a complete understanding of an utterance might involve comprehension of all the three components of meaning spelled out by Wang, but it is doubtful that the comprehension of the meaning “literally and explicitly” (p. 72) expressed by an utterance constitutes the core or essence of understanding. This is because, in the case of figurative expressions like metaphors, comprehension of only their literal and explicit meanings often constitutes a *misunderstanding* of such expressions as metaphors.<sup>28</sup> For instance, does one understand Romeo’s utterance ‘Juliet is the sun’ spoken in Capulet’s garden by comprehending the literal and explicit content of the utterance? The answer is no. But we do understand Romeo’s utterance, and indeed, we do understand many metaphorical and other figurative utterances. So, either comprehension of the propositional content (in cases where the utterance is supposed to represent states of affairs) as Wang construes it, is not essential to linguistic understanding or that the propositional content of an utterance is not only the literal and explicit meaning of an utterance.

If we construe linguistic understanding in terms of grasp of the meaning or content a sentence explicitly or literally expresses, the case of figurative expressions goes contrary to such

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<sup>28</sup> Since the meaning of a metaphor is often parasitic on the literal meaning of the metaphorical sentence, Wang could say that understanding literal meaning is fundamental to, or is at the core of, understanding the metaphorical meaning. But is it possible to understand the literal content of a metaphorical expression without understanding it as a metaphor or without understanding its metaphorical content? Yes. Is it possible to understand a sentence as a metaphor or understand its metaphorical content without understanding its literal meaning? Yes. This occurs in cases where the literal meaning is very abstruse or even nonsensical. An example is Searle’s “Quadrilaterality drinks procrastination”. So, while grasping the metaphorical meaning of a sentence often depends on grasping its literal meaning, grasp of literal meaning may come first in the comprehension of the sentence but it is not at the core or foundation of comprehension of the figurative meaning of many sentences.

a construal; if understanding the utterance as expressing its literal content is a misunderstanding, then grasp of the semantic content is fundamental to linguistic understanding. Since understanding is grasp of a possible meaning of an utterance, and we do understand metaphorical utterances, this suggests that a possible meaning, other than the literal meaning, is grasped in understanding metaphorical utterances. Is there reason to suppose that the possible meaning grasped in understanding metaphorical utterances is not propositional? The propositional content cannot be equated with the literal and explicit meaning of an utterance. An utterance of ‘he kicked the bucket’ can have two possible meanings: one, *that he kicked the bucket*, and two, *that he is dead*. *That he is dead* is a possible meaning and propositional in nature although it is not the literal and explicit meaning of the utterance. It has been argued by Searle (1979, 1993), Moran (1989), (Camp, 2006) that the speaker’s meaning associated with a metaphor is propositional in nature. If they are right, that will suggest that if understanding a metaphor involves grasp of meaning – grasp of speaker’s meaning – then metaphorical utterances or sentences can have propositional contents which can be evaluated for truth.

But the issue should not be cast in terms of which type or component of meaning one grasps in understanding metaphors; rather, the nature of grasping or understanding implies that grasping of one of the components amounts to *incomplete* understanding. A central feature of understanding or grasping is that it comes in, or admits of degrees<sup>29</sup> (Franklin, 1983; Cooper, 1994; Kvanvig 2003, 2009b; Elgin 2007, 2009a; Riggs, 2009; Sliwa, 2014; Bourget, 2015; Kelp, 2015; Riaz, 2015). Elgin (2007) identifies three dimensions in which understanding can vary: “breadth, depth, and significance” (p. 36). A professor’s understanding of a proposition or a subject matter can be greater, broader, and more sophisticated than that of a graduate student,

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<sup>29</sup> This feature of understanding is often cited as one of the reasons why understanding is not a species of knowledge (Kvanvig 2003; Elgin 2007) for knowledge is an all-or-nothing cognitive achievement.

and graduate student's understanding of the same proposition or subject matter can be greater, broader, and more sophisticated than that of an undergraduate student. We can talk of someone displaying a "measure of understanding" (Elgin 2007, p. 37); we can contrast easy versus hard understanding, shallow versus rich understanding (Carter & Gordon, 2014). Understanding is not something outright or an all-or-nothing achievement; it is something fluid, hierarchical, and gradable.

What is the importance of this central feature of understanding to the grasping of meaning? I suggest that grasping of but one component of the meaning of an utterance is a mark of *incomplete* understanding. The one who grasps the literal and explicit meaning of an utterance but fails to appreciate or grasp the speaker's intended meaning in addition to the illocutionary and perlocutionary effects of the utterance can be said to have not *fully* understood the utterance, or fully understood the utterance but not fully understood its point or not fully understood the speaker. The speaker's meaning and the effects of an utterance are not peculiar to only metaphorical utterances; utterances which do not have a figurative dimension can also have speaker's meaning in addition to their sentence meaning and in most cases, grasping of only one of the meanings may result in an incomplete understanding of the utterance. If I say to you: 'Is that your coat lying on the floor?' You may fully understand my utterance, and so answer 'yes' without understanding that I intend to get you to remove it. You understand the utterance without understanding me.

This is not to suggest that in all cases the sentence-meaning is distinct from the speaker-meaning. In many cases, the sentence-meaning and the speaker-meaning can coincide. But when it comes to understanding the utterance, and not merely knowing what it means or which meaning is at stake, grasp of meaning comes in degrees, and the one who grasps one of the

components of the meaning of the utterance understands the utterance *to an extent*. A full and complete understanding in the case of linguistic understanding which involves grasping of meaning could then be the grasping of all of the possible meanings or components of the meaning of an utterance. A complete understanding of an utterance in this sense might be unattainable as there could be an unlimited number of possible meanings of an utterance. A complete understanding, then, could be considered as an ideal that lesser degrees of understanding can approximate.<sup>30</sup>

We have observed the following:

- a. Linguistic understanding requires grasping of a possible meaning of an utterance
- b. The possible meaning of an utterance could be the meaning the utterance literally and explicitly expresses, or the intended meaning of the speaker, or some other meaning.<sup>31</sup>
- c. Understanding admits of degrees, and hence grasping of meaning may be incomplete, insufficient, inadequate, due to either the grasping of only a component of the meaning of an utterance, or the grasping of particular type of the meaning of an utterance.

What are the implications of these observations on understanding metaphorical utterances?

The first implication is this: contrary to Davidson's (1979) thesis that a metaphor has no meaning other than its literal meaning, a metaphor does have a meaning other than its literal meaning. For we do understand metaphorical sentences, and understanding requires grasp of meaning – a meaning other than the literal meaning since grasping of the literal meaning alone amounts to a misunderstanding or an incomplete understanding of the metaphorical sentence.

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<sup>30</sup> This is the line of reasoning that Khalifa (2013a) takes with respect to explanatory understanding (understanding-why) in science which for him involves the ability to reliably evaluate explanations.

<sup>31</sup> We can talk of such things as the symbolic meaning, religious meaning, cultural meaning etc.

Davidson can give three responses to the claim that because understanding requires grasp of meaning, the fact that we do understand metaphorical sentences implies that we do grasp meanings or contents other than what they literally express.

One, Davidson might simply say that we don't understand metaphorical utterances (other than literally) but that, given that understanding, we might work out the point of the utterance. My reply to this response is that it defeats the whole point of the *seeing-as* argument which postulates that we understand metaphorical utterances when we appreciate their insights by seeing one thing as another thing. It sounds specious to posit that we could appreciate the insights or work out the point of something that we do not understand. If we do not understand a foreign text or a syntactically or semantically anomalous sentence, we cannot possibly appreciate the insight of the foreign text or the anomalous sentence, and it will be very unclear what method we could use to determine the insight of a text or sentence we do not understand.

Two, Davidson could say, alternatively, that we have only literal understanding of metaphorical utterances but we manage to gain metaphorical 'understanding' (grasping of the insight of metaphors) through a *seeing-as* perceptual mechanism or process. But this response is also not satisfactory. The point of seeking or 'hunting out' (Davidson, 1978, p. 42) a metaphorical interpretation of a sentence, for Davidson, is because the sentence is patently false or absurd (semantically or pragmatically) when it is construed literally. But if grasping the literal meaning or interpretation constitutes understanding the sentence, what more need will there be to hunt for or seek another or an additional understanding? A hunt for another understanding presupposes either that the initial understanding is inchoate or that it did not constitute understanding in the first place, or that one is not content with the initial understanding. In all these scenarios, if understanding is grasping of meaning then where the initial understanding is

incomplete or that understanding did not occur, equally the secondary, additional understanding could also be grasp of meaning or content.

Three, Davidson is more likely to say that it is because there is only grasp of literal meaning that is why the metaphorical ‘understanding’ does not constitute a grasp of an *additional meaning* but merely the effect, point or insight of the metaphor. Fair enough. But what about a metaphorical construal of Chomsky’s (1957) famous ‘semantically anomalous’ sentence “colourless green ideas sleep furiously”?<sup>32</sup> By being semantically anomalous, it means that it has no (literal) meaning or content, and thereby we do not understand it. But if we can give it a figurative or metaphorical interpretation, and thereby, understand it, then it means that the sentence can have a meaning – a meaning without a literal meaning – and this meaning can differ from the insight of the sentence. The point is that we can understand literally meaningless sentences, and this makes the position that understanding captures only literal meaning an implausible one.

It is not just that we are simply calling the non-literal meaning that one grasps in understanding metaphors a ‘meaning’; it surely stems from the fact that we have construed linguistic understanding in terms of grasping of meaning, and the case of metaphorical utterances in being meaningful linguistic items, suggests that understanding of metaphorical utterances requires grasp of meaning. The explicit meaning of an utterance is primarily considered as the proposition *expressed* by the utterance. This, however, does not imply that the implicit meaning of an utterance is nothing propositional. The implicit meaning of an utterance can be propositional in nature, only that it is not the proposition overtly expressed by the utterance. This is key to understanding metaphors. For although the explicitly expressed literal meaning is

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<sup>32</sup> A metaphorical interpretation of it could be something like: newly-formed [green] ideas that lack variety or are not interesting [colourless] are in an intense [furiously] a dormant state [sleep]. This is probably not too informative but it is not meaningless.

propositional, it does not entail that the other meaning grasped in understanding metaphor is non-propositional. The entailment is that the propositional status of the meaning grasped in understanding metaphors is not directly expressed by the metaphorical sentence.

The second implication is this: if understanding requires a comprehensive grasp of the various aspects of the meaning of an utterance, then understanding a metaphor requires that one not only comprehend its literal meaning but also its implicit meaning and its speaker's meaning. The difference between understanding a literal utterance and understanding a metaphorical utterance is not that in the former one grasps only the explicit meaning while one grasps only the non-literal content in the latter. In both cases, a comprehensive understanding requires grasping of the various components of the meanings of utterances. This is, perhaps, the common factor between objectual understanding of a subject matter and linguistic understanding of an utterance: both involve a holistic sense of grasping. In objectual understanding, one grasps the various propositions, the connections among the propositions, and the ways in which the various propositions fit into a consistent and coherent whole; in linguistic understanding, one grasps the various meanings, the connections among the meanings, and the ways in which the different meanings fit into a coherent understanding of the utterance. Understood in this way, understanding a metaphorical utterance does not need a mediating phenomenological experience like *seeing-as*; that is, the job of grasping of meaning cannot be undertaken via an experiential *seeing-as*.<sup>33</sup> This explains why one can understand a metaphor with or without seeing the one thing in terms of another thing. And it also explains why one can understand a metaphor in cases where it does not make sense to see the one thing in terms of the other thing.

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<sup>33</sup> The claim here is that seeing one thing as another thing is, in general, not necessary for understanding metaphors. However, as I will explain below, this claim does not dispense with *seeing-as* altogether. *Seeing-as* may be useful in appreciating metaphors and it may aid in understanding particular metaphors too.

When grasping is understood in this holistic sense, it neutralizes the impact of the view that what one understands determines whether it is truth-evaluable, as the Seeing-*as* argument suggests. Indeed, ‘what one understands’ or ‘what one grasps in understanding’ here is ambiguous in relation to truth-evaluation. In the one sense, it refers to the *object* of understanding. Since the proposition is what can be determined to be true or false, the proposition *that p* can be the object of understanding, the thing that one understands. This is what Kvanvig (2003) describes as propositional understanding. In the other sense, the sense that interests us here, the proposition is a *content* or *meaning* of that which one understands – an utterance or a sentence. As we have seen, to understand an utterance is to grasp the various meanings of the utterance, but the various meanings could be propositional or non-propositional in nature. A holistic sense of grasping implies that in understanding any meaningful utterance, one comprehends both the propositional and non-propositional contents it could be associated with. If the truth-evaluability of an utterance is determined by what one grasps in understanding the utterance, then by virtue of the holistic nature of grasping, every meaningful utterance expressed in the indicative form can be truth-evaluable.

To conclude, the necessary requirement for linguistic understanding – grasping of possible meaning – presupposes that metaphorical sentences, contra Davidson, have meanings other than, and in addition to, their literal meanings, which makes it possible to understand metaphorical sentences. Grasp of meaning occurs independently of perceptual and phenomenological experiences associated with linguistic expressions. So, the perceptual and phenomenological experiences cannot be coterminous with, or be substituted in place of understanding. Grasping is both holistic and gradable: in terms of holism, grasping involves the comprehension of the various meanings and contents associated with an utterance that are

relevant to resulting in a complete and coherent understanding of the utterance; and this feature of holism is related to the other central feature of grasping admitting of degrees, in that, one who grasps only a component or type of the meaning of an utterance could either misunderstand the utterance, or understand it to some extent, or possess an incomplete understanding of the utterance. The holistic picture also shows that if the content of what one understands determines whether the object of the understanding is truth-evaluable then metaphorical sentences, just like other ordinary sentences, are truth-evaluable.

The features of holism and gradation associated with understanding leads to another condition that suffices for understanding. Construing understanding as a cognitive condition or state is the sense in which to understand something is to ‘grasp’ its meaning or content. From this idea of cognitively grasping something we often distinguish between what is grasped as propositional or non-propositional. However, grasping something is not a *sufficient condition* for understanding that thing.<sup>34</sup> Understanding a sentence or a proposition is marked by the *ability to use* that sentence or proposition. Ability admits of degrees. In discussing understanding associated with the scientific explanation of why planes fly, Trout (2002) distinguishes two senses of understanding: an objective sense of understanding which is associated with knowledge of the relevant principles of why planes fly, and a subjective sense of understanding which is marked by a cognitive state or feeling:

According to one sense of understanding, I understand why planes fly if I know Bernoulli’s principle. In such a case, I must have some knowledge of relevant background conditions, of course—how much the plane weighs, the area of the wings, etc. But in a stronger sense of understanding, I can know Bernoulli’s principle and still not understand why planes fly, because my knowledge that Bernoulli’s principle applies in this case is not associated with a specific kind

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<sup>34</sup> In terms of linguistic understanding one could point out that *grasp of meaning* often involves *ability to use*. While I concede that grasp of meaning is not to be contrasted with ability to use, the argument here is that grasp of meaning alone does not suffice to a comprehensive understanding of a sentence. Indeed, the ability to use the sentence appropriately in multiple contexts is evidence for the fact that one has grasped the meaning of the sentence.

of subjective state or feeling; it does not have the phenomenology of understanding. (p. 222).

But as De Regt (2004) correctly points out, although the objective and subjective senses of understanding may be necessary, they are not sufficient for properly understanding why planes fly. “In addition,” says De Regt, “one should at least be able to use this knowledge to deduce a prediction (explanation) of the occurrence of the phenomenon” (p. 100). What is needed to supplement Trout’s characterization of understanding, De Regt points out, is the ability to use the available objective knowledge in explaining that planes can fly. Knowledge of principles, memorization of laws, and awareness of causal conditions, do not constitute understanding of a proposition or a phenomenon; *being able to use* a proposition is the evidence for, and the proper constitution of understanding.

What does this pragmatic conception of understanding mean? Firstly, being able to use a sentence (or a phenomenon) – the mark of understanding – is to be able to *reason with*, and apply the sentence in different circumstances and to different cases. On this, Elgin (2007) is right when she says that “someone who understands geometry can reason geometrically about new problems, apply geometrical insights in different areas, assess the limits of geometrical reasoning for the task at hand, and so forth” (p. 35). Secondly, being able to use a sentence or a proposition involves the ability to draw logical and non-logical connections between the proposition and other propositions, and the ability to see the consequences and significance of the proposition. Understanding a phenomenon involves the ability to see how the various pieces of information and truths about the phenomenon relate to one another and compose of a complete whole. Because understanding a proposition involves being able to reason with and see the inferential connections it has to other propositions, one cannot understand a proposition in isolation. Being able to use a proposition implies understanding other propositions that are related to the

particular proposition in use. This is a presentation of the holistic aspect of understanding. A pragmatic conception of understanding makes it possible to ascribe or attribute understanding to others: by one's ability to use a sentence we can say whether she understands the sentence or not. By this pragmatic conception too, we can make sense of saying that someone lacks understanding, or fails to understand, or understands something to a degree.

Given this comprehensive conception of understanding, the question now is this: is seeing one thing as another thing to understand a metaphor? Seeing one thing *as* another thing is not *doing something*. What a metaphor does in directing our attention to see things is obviously not something that the hearer brings about. But the hearer's coming to see the point or insight of the metaphor does not involve the capacity to do something. Appreciating the insight of the metaphor does not amount to the capacity to reason with and draw inferences from the metaphor. When one sees one thing as another thing or comes to see the point of the metaphor, she has not *thereby* understood the metaphor; but when one understands a metaphor, the understanding may or may not consist of seeing one thing as another thing. To explain, the result of a seeing-*as* experience is not that which accounts for one's ability to reason with the metaphor, use the metaphor in different contexts, and apply the metaphor in concert with other metaphors. 'I understand, but I don't see the point' is a legitimate response to someone's use of an expression or explanation of something. The responder is simply saying something like 'I know how to use that expression, I know what the metaphor means, I grasp the content of the metaphor, but I fail to see the point you are trying to put across by your use of the metaphor'. Seeing the point of a metaphor is contextual, understanding it is not. Failure to see the point or insight of a metaphor does not show that one does not or did not understand the metaphor. Seeing-*as* and understanding can come apart: I can understand the metaphor 'Hannah is the sun' but fail to see

the point; I can successfully see Hannah *as* the sun but be unable to reason with the metaphor. The point of all these is that understanding a metaphor is not a matter of seeing one thing as another thing: seeing-*as* is not equal to understanding.

Rather than beginning with a distinction between seeing-*as* and seeing-*that* and using that distinction to distinguish grasp of non-propositional effects which is constitutive of understanding metaphors from grasp of propositional contents which is constitutive of understanding literal sentences, the analysis should begin with a pragmatic conception of understanding in terms of *use* and then explain both the experiential and propositional ‘seeing’ in terms of use. If to understand an expression is to be able to use that expression in reasoning where the expression can serve as a premise or a conclusion of an argument, and if to understand an expression involves being able to draw deductive and inductive inferences from it, then it is the *use* of the expression that makes it propositionally contentful. A metaphor has a propositional content by virtue of its use and not because of the intentions of the speaker. Like Camp (2006, 2008, 2009), we can think of seeing-*as* as a matter of *using* one thing as a perspective to thinking about another thing. And while the insight achieved in doing so cannot be expressed propositionally, the practice of using the metaphor in arguments and drawing inferences from the metaphor, is evidence that the metaphor has a content that is propositional. In this way, although seeing-*as* is not equal to seeing-*that*, seeing-*as* does not preclude seeing-*that*. And this result is not based on positing two dimensions – propositional and non-propositional dimensions – to the metaphor.

Corresponding to the two dimensional approach to metaphor, Gaut (1997) proposes that there are two ways of understanding a metaphor like ‘war is hell’: understanding by explication and understanding by elaboration. He explains the distinction in this way:

In 'war is hell', the critic may show the metaphor to be appropriate by listing the literal features shared by war and hell: they are noisy, hot, dangerous, involve torture, and so forth. This dimension of understanding is an explication of the metaphor, a statement of what features are literally possessed by the objects metaphorically compared. But the task of understanding a metaphor can proceed in a different manner, not stating literal likenesses, but creating a new set of metaphors which develop the original metaphor further. So the critic may respond to the metaphor by noting that if war is hell, generals are demons, guns are pitchforks, the poor bloody infantry are suffering sinners, bomb explosions are infernal fires, and marching towards the battlefield is a journey to the inner circles of hell. In this kind of understanding the critic does not explicate the metaphor, for her remarks are themselves new metaphors: rather, she elaborates the metaphor, works it outwards, extends its field of application by inventing new and related metaphors (p. 239-240)

But his two ways of understanding a metaphor are an offshoot of an underlying pragmatic conception of understanding. The ability to explicate or elaborate a metaphor stems from an ability to use the metaphor, to reason with it, and to see connections it has with other expressions. Understanding in terms of *being able to use* an expression is what explains the ability to develop and extend a metaphor. The common denominator of the various kinds of understandings such as practical understanding (understanding-*how*), explanatory understanding (understanding-*why*), experiential or phenomenological understanding (understanding-*as* or understanding-*what*) and propositional understanding (understanding-*that*) is the ability to use the unit or the object of that which is being understood. It is from this central conception of understanding in terms of ability to use that the various kinds of understandings gain their meaning. This means that propositional contentfulness should be established within our practices of using language. It also means that the significance and truth-value of a linguistic expression should be determined within this central pragmatics of using the linguistic expression.

To sum up: because seeing-*as* is not equivalent with understanding and because seeing-*as* does not imply the absence of seeing-*that*, seeing-*as* is not a criterion or a basis for determining

whether metaphorical sentences are truth-evaluable or not . Indeed, we do appraise metaphorical sentences for their *aptness*, vividness, and propriety, without alluding to the experiential or phenomenological aspects in which metaphorical sentences are conceptualized. A phenomenological look at metaphors is not a measure for the appraisal or evaluation of metaphors – the evaluation on the dimension of truth is no exception. The argument from phenomenology is not satisfactory.

### **1.6. Possible objections to the pragmatic account of understanding above**

The account presented in the preceding section rejects **P2** by pointing out that understanding metaphor is not equivalent to seeing one thing as another thing, and that seeing one thing as another thing does not constitute understanding metaphor in the sense of understanding proposed. The account accepts **P3** which states that seeing-*as* is not seeing-that, but it argues that seeing-*as* does not rule out seeing-that. Seeing-that is not a result of seeing-*as*; seeing-that resides in, and originates from, the pragmatics of using metaphors in reasoning, in the making of inferences, and in social practices like disagreements. These practices confer propositional contentfulness on metaphors.

Is the account a plausible response to the Davidsonian Seeing-*as* Argument? Does the account provide a satisfactory critique of the Anti-Truth position that a phenomenological understanding of metaphors implies that metaphors are non-truth-evaluable? I shall look at specific objections and queries one could raise against the plausibility of the account presented in the preceding section in responding to the Seeing-*as* Argument in particular, and the Anti-Truth theorist's Argument from Phenomenology in general.

### **Objection 1**

*There are two levels or layers of understanding: understanding a phenomenon or subject matter and understanding a sentence or proposition. Indeed, when one understands a subject matter like geometry, it is supposed that she can reason with geometrical propositions and apply geometrical insights to solving problems. However, when she is said to understand a sentence, it means that she grasps the meaning or proposition expressed by the sentence. The pragmatic conception of understanding applies to understanding metaphor as a phenomenon; it does not extend to the understanding of individual metaphorical sentences. Since the Davidsonian account of metaphor denies any meaning or propositional content to metaphorical sentences (other than their literal meanings or propositions), it means that there cannot be any genuine understanding of metaphorical sentences other than grasp of their literal meanings. And this is why talk of understanding a metaphorical sentence just amounts to a seeing-as experience whereby what is 'grasped' is just the point or insight of the metaphor. Someone who gets the 'point' of a metaphor understands the metaphor.*

Surely, we can draw distinctions among the objects of understanding – a sentence, a paragraph, a chapter, a text, a thing, a phenomenon, etc. – and these different objects of understanding can be grouped into two: linguistic and non-linguistic items. The felt difference between understanding a linguistic item (such as a sentence) and a non-linguistic item (such as geometry or a person) is that linguistic items in particular are associated with notions like meaning, reference, proposition, and truth. It seems intuitive, then, to suggest that when one understands a sentence, one apprehends what the sentence means or the proposition expressed by the sentence. A 'minimalist' about understanding a linguistic item underscores only this intuitive suggestion of construing understanding in terms of grasp of meaning or content. The 'pragmatic'

construal of understanding, I have suggested, goes beyond the minimalist approach, in showing that grasp of meaning is not sufficient for understanding. What is required for understanding, other than, and in addition to, apprehension of meaning, is the capacity to use the particular sentence in multiple contexts where this capacity includes reasoning deductively and inductively with the sentence and making inferences from the sentence. Indeed, we can say that grasping of meaning enables or is constituted by one's ability to reason with the sentence. This pragmatic conception of understanding is not an extension from understanding non-linguistic items to the understanding of linguistic items; rather, it is central to both the understanding of linguistic and non-linguistic items. The semantic understanding in terms of grasp of meaning and the pragmatic understanding in terms of use go hand in hand.

Should the minimalist conception of understanding be limited to grasp of *literal* meaning? One can be a literalist about meaning but one cannot be a literalist about understanding. That is, one can argue that linguistic expressions have only literal meanings but it would be implausible to argue also that understanding linguistic expressions involves grasping of only literal meanings. The cases of figurative expressions like idioms, ironies and metaphors, present counter examples to the view that understanding is grasping of literal meaning. In fact, grasp of only the literal meaning of an idiomatic or ironic expression constitutes a lack of understanding of the expression as idiomatic or as ironical. The same result pertains in metaphor: one does not understand a metaphorical sentence if one grasps only the literal meaning of the metaphorical sentence. This does not show that grasping literal meaning is a 'genuine' understanding of such a sentence; it shows rather that understanding is not limited to grasp of literal meaning.

Why is understanding a sentence more than grasp of meaning or propositional content? We can distinguish between knowing the meaning of a word or sentence and using that word or sentence once the meaning is known. One can know the meaning of a word and correctly or incorrectly use the word in a sentence. This is what happens in many cases of catachresis like using ‘militate’ instead of ‘mitigate’ in a sentence. Similarly, one can know what a sentence means and correctly (or incorrectly) apply (or misapply) the sentence in a discourse. A lexical definition of a word, for instance, offers a dictionary meaning of the word in presenting the generally accepted connotations associated with the word. Knowing the dictionary meaning of the word does not constitute understanding of the word unless one is also able to use the word correctly in a meaningful sentence. Correct or incorrect use of a word or sentence marks the presence of understanding or the lack of it. Interjections (e.g. oops!, yuck!) and emotive expressions (e.g. hallelujah! what a day!) are linguistic items that do not properly have ‘meanings’ or express propositions but understanding them goes beyond trying to know or grasp what they ‘mean’ or which propositions they express, if indeed they can be said to express any propositions at all. Understanding non-declarative sentences like interjections and exclamations involves more than knowledge or grasp of their meanings – it involves the ability to correctly use such expressions in suitable contexts.

Metaphorical utterances are surrounded by all the trappings of understanding: we require hearers to understand these kinds of utterances and we test their understanding in various ways – simply avowing one’s understanding is insufficient. But understanding a metaphorical utterance as literally interpreted is misunderstanding it. So there is another variety of understanding of the utterance which doesn’t accrue merely from its literal interpretation. If we accept the conjunction of these two claims – that understanding a sentence is something more than grasping its meaning,

and also that understanding a sentence is not confined to apprehending its *literal* meaning – then the objection above loses its sway.

### **Objection 2**

*What the pragmatic conception of understanding metaphors shows is that understanding a metaphor is something more than getting the point of the metaphor; it does not show that the seeing-as experience does not amount to understanding a metaphor. Is the seeing-as experience not something more than merely getting the point of a metaphor? Could the 'something more' not include the capacity to use metaphors as explained by the pragmatic account of understanding?*

One could have the abilities involved in using metaphors without the seeing-*as* experience, and one could have the seeing-*as* experience without the abilities, so the two are distinct. Seeing-*as* is associated with a certain sense of 'use' which conforms with Davidson's conception of it but this sense of 'use' is different from the pragmatic sense outlined above. Davidson, who characterizes metaphors as seeing one thing as another thing also thinks that "metaphor belongs exclusively to the domain of use" (1979, p. 31). He considers a metaphor as a linguistic device that a speaker uses to bring about certain effects on his audience by causing them to attend to the likenesses between the two things being compared in the metaphor. In terms of use, metaphor is like a joke – both metaphors and jokes are used to bring about effects on hearers. It is worth noting that Davidson's assignment of metaphor exclusively to the domain of use is in accordance with his rejection of the applicability of semantic notions like meaning and truth to metaphors. The distinction here, for Davidson, is between what words or sentences mean and what they are used to do, and metaphor belongs to the latter domain. Now, *what words are used to do*, is also distinct from *doing something with words*. The effects of metaphors on

hearers belong to the former – what words are used to do – but the capacity to reason with metaphors and draw inferences from them, belong to the latter – doing something with words. If the seeing-*as* experience correlates with the use of metaphors, then the sense of use it correlates with is *what words are used to do*. This is why by seeing one thing as another thing, the audience is led to appreciate the effect or the insight of the metaphor. In a nutshell, for Davidson, a speaker employs a metaphor aimed at bringing certain effects on his hearers by making a statement that prompts those effects, and the hearer, recognizing that a metaphor has been employed, is led to appreciate the effects of the metaphor by seeing the one thing, the principal subject of the metaphor, in terms of the other thing, the subsidiary subject of the metaphor.

Seeing-*as* is not *doing something with words or sentences*, where *doing something* here means reasoning inductively or deductively with a sentence, putting the sentence in a form of a premise or conclusion of an argument, drawing inferences and implications from the sentence, using the sentence as, or to affirm or retract, an assertion, among other things. The capacity to do these things, we have seen, reflects an understanding of a sentence. Seeing-*as*, then, cannot appropriately amount to understanding a sentence. Seeing-*as*, construed as a phenomenological experience, does not amount to understanding where understanding is construed in pragmatic terms.

### **Objection 3**

*Seeing-as is not constitutive of understanding metaphors; it is rather a feature of understanding metaphors. Understanding a metaphor is a complex thing and seeing-as is a component of understanding metaphors. Now if this complex thing of understanding is reduced to a pragmatic conception in terms of use, what then becomes the role of the seeing-as experiential component*

*of understanding? If seeing-as does not amount to understanding a metaphor, what does it amount to?*

A pragmatic conception of understanding does not dispense with a seeing-*as* experience for characterizing metaphors, for seeing-*as* neither produces, nor stands in the way of, the capacity to use a metaphorical sentence in reasoning and inferring. What one does with a metaphorical sentence is something orthogonal to whether she construes the metaphor in terms of seeing-*as* or not. That is, the ability to reason with, and infer from, a metaphorical sentence, is immaterial to the seeing of one thing as another thing in appreciating the metaphor. Seeing one thing as another thing can amount to appreciating the point of a metaphor. This is because seeing-*as* is both comparative and contrastive: seeing one thing as another thing is always seeing something in certain respects and that seeing-*as* leads one to attend to the likenesses between the two things and the ways in which the two things are dissimilar. In this way, seeing one thing as another thing enables one to attend to the salient characteristics associated with the terms of the metaphor. And this, in turn, aids in the paraphrasing of the metaphor. So, characterizing metaphor in terms of seeing one thing as another thing has a value of enabling one to compare the two things of the metaphor, to bring out the respects in which the two things are similar, to appreciate the insight of the metaphor, and to be able to provide a paraphrase for the metaphor based on the salient characteristics that it enables one to observe. What the seeing-*as* experience cannot do is to invest one with the ability to reason with, and make inferences from, the metaphor. And what the seeing-*as* experience does not imply is that characterizing metaphors in a seeing-*as* fashion makes metaphors non-truth-evaluable, for the appraisal of metaphors for truth is a function of the use of metaphors. Seeing-*as* can lead to an ability to use a metaphor for

some speakers on certain occasions, but the relation between seeing-*as* and use is a causal, rather than, a logical one.

#### **Objection 4**

*Construing the debate in terms of 'understanding' misses the point of the Argument from Phenomenology. The Argument from Phenomenology postulates that characterizing metaphors in experiential terms like seeing-*as* makes metaphorical sentences non-truth-evaluable; and this is so whether or not seeing-*as* amounts to understanding metaphors.*

The premise that metaphors should be characterized in terms of seeing-*as per se* does not yield the conclusion that metaphorical sentences are not truth-evaluable. The conclusion follows only if the premise is supported by two other premises: (1) that characterizing metaphors in terms of seeing-*as* means that metaphors are non-propositional uses of language, and (2) that seeing-*as* is the only framework by which metaphors can be so characterized. In other words, the argument will have to posit that metaphors cannot be evaluated for truth *because* they can only be construed in experiential terms where truth is not applicable. But if it is the case that metaphors can only be characterized or construed in terms of seeing one thing as another thing then this amounts to the same thing as saying that metaphors can be understood in terms of seeing one thing as another thing. Without equating seeing-*as* to understanding metaphors, and without construing the Anti-Truth theorist's argument in terms of understanding, it is not conceivable how the seeing-*as* experience warrants the non-truth-evaluability of metaphors. For a seeing-*as* experience as an account of metaphor, in and by itself, is compatible with an appraisal of metaphors for truth. Hence, it is apt to construe the debate in terms of understanding. And what the account of understanding proposed above has shown is that (i) seeing-*as* is not incompatible with imbuing metaphors with propositional contents, (ii) the

appraisal of metaphors for truth is not determined by the experiential framework used in characterizing metaphors, and (iii) seeing-*as* has its own value within a pragmatic account of understanding metaphors.

### **1.7. Conclusion**

The Anti-Truth theorist argues that metaphorical sentences are not truth-apt because metaphors are understood in experiential terms like seeing-*as*. And a seeing-*as* experience is not associated with any propositional content to warrant appraising metaphors for truth. I have responded to the Anti-Truth theorist by showing that seeing one thing as another thing does not amount to understanding metaphors. Construing understanding a metaphor in terms of the ability to use the metaphor, I have shown that the seeing-*as* model for metaphor is compatible with according the metaphor with propositional content. In construing understanding to require grasp of meaning, understanding metaphorical sentences involves grasp of meaning which could be propositional in nature. By the practices of using metaphorical sentences in reasoning, and the practice of using metaphors in multiple contexts, the meaning and content of metaphors should be investigated within these practices.

## CHAPTER II

### THE NATURE OF METAPHORICAL CONTENTS

#### 2.1. Introduction

Do metaphorical sentences have contents other than, or in addition to, the literal contents they express? If metaphorical sentences have any such non-literal contents, are these contents propositional in nature? How do metaphorical sentences come to have such additional (propositional) contents? And, how do users of metaphors – speakers and hearers – associate, derive, or capture, these additional contents? If metaphorical sentences have, or express, propositional contents (other than their literal contents), then a number of things may follow from that: metaphorical sentences have meaning and may convey information; metaphorical sentences can be evaluated to be either true or false; metaphorical sentences can be asserted and be regarded as assertions.

The Anti-Truth theorist maintains that metaphorical sentences express no propositional contents other than the explicit literal contents they express. He offers a causal account, on the one hand, as an explanation of the supposed additional content of a metaphor in terms of the effects metaphors have on hearers, and on the other hand, as a reason for the non-propositional nature of the ‘something more’ that a metaphor is alleged to mean. The proponents for the additional propositional content of a metaphor, the Pro-Truth theorists, trade on the distinction between ‘what is said’ (or ‘sentence meaning’) and ‘what is communicated’ (or ‘speaker meaning’) and while some argue that the propositional contents of metaphors belong directly to ‘what is said’, others argue that the contents of metaphors are derived indirectly from ‘what is speaker-meant’. They propose further, that a paraphrase could be given to capture, in literal

terms, the propositional content – usually, that which the speaker means – associated with a metaphor.

I argue, in this chapter, contra the Anti-Truth theorist, that metaphorical sentences have propositional contents (other than their literal contents). This is evidenced in both the phenomenological experience involved in the making of metaphor, and the pragmatics of, and social practices involved in using metaphors in arguments and disagreements. In the analysis of the Anti-Truth position, I will argue that what metaphors cause us to do, and the effects they have on us, does not preclude their having contents that can be propositional in nature. I will point out two defects of the causal account proposed by the Anti-Truth theorist: one, it combines the theses of literalism and compositionality to the analysis of metaphor and in so doing mischaracterizes metaphors as having *only* literal meanings; and two, it presents a one-sided perspective on the use of metaphors in terms of the effects they have on hearers, and thereby, fails to appreciate the value in the making of metaphors when hearers become speakers. I will make a case for the propositional contentfulness of metaphors by taking a critical look at the instances of, and our capacity to engage in disagreements involving metaphors: if two parties can engage in genuine disagreements using metaphors then it implies that there is a propositional content asserted in the one utterance which one party accepts and the other party rejects. The use of metaphors in disagreements, deductive and inductive arguments, and the possibility of retracting metaphorical utterances, making of inferences from metaphors – all these practices establish one crucial thing: contra the Pro-Truth theorist, the propositional content of a metaphor cannot reside indirectly in what is speaker-meant.

## 2.2. Anti-Truth: Against propositional contents of metaphors

The Anti-Truth theorist (Davidson 1979; Rorty 1979, 1987, 1989; Reimer 2001; Lepore & Stone 2010) is motivated to restrict the semantic notions of meaning and truth to the more familiar literal uses of language. She is averse to both revising her ontological commitments, and broadening the use of truth and meaning, to include, or apply to, metaphorical and other figurative uses of language. Literal uses of language can be evaluated for truth partly because there are generally accepted ways for fixing the contents and propositions expressed by literal sentences (or utterances), and partly because, unlike in the case of metaphorical sentences, literal truth conditions, usually, can be assigned to sentences irrespective of the particular contexts in which they are used. Every metaphorical claim or sentence, when construed literally, has a literal content or expresses a literal proposition. The Anti-Truth theorist is of the view that the literal content or the proposition the metaphor literally expresses is the *only* content possessed or proposition expressed by a metaphor; the non-literal aspect of a metaphor is nothing propositional. This view implies that metaphors do not have propositional contents in addition to their literal contents, and hence, metaphorical sentences *qua* metaphors cannot be truth-evaluable. This presents a bit of a puzzle: on the one hand, in virtue of being a metaphor, a metaphorical sentence is meaningful and has a non-literal content, and yet the metaphor itself is non-truth-evaluable; and on the other hand, a metaphor has or expresses only a literal proposition which makes the metaphor either *literally* true or false, and thereby, making the metaphor truth-evaluable. The Anti-Truth theorist argues for the second part of the puzzle by showing that

- i. the words of a metaphor have only literal meanings, and, therefore, the metaphorical sentences they compose only have literal meanings; and

- ii. in light of (a), metaphorical sentences have literal truth conditions which makes most, if not all, metaphors patently or literally false.

For the first part of the puzzle, she supports her position by arguing that

- iii. the supposed additional non-literal meaning or content of a metaphor is not propositional in nature;
- iv. this non-propositional meaning of the metaphor is merely the effects metaphors have on its recipients; and
- v. a metaphorical sentence does not have a single definite content or meaning; rather, it has many, and perhaps, an infinite number of contents.

Davidson's Anti-Truth account of metaphor gives expression to the tenets (i) – (v) above. Davidson's main claim (as he himself calls the 'thesis' of his paper) is that "metaphor means what the words, in their most literal interpretation mean, and nothing more" (p. 30). This thesis is borne out of a commitment to two views about language: literalism and compositionality. Davidson's literalism acknowledges a distinction between the literal and metaphorical uses of language but claims that sentences can only have ordinary literal meaning and truth and that a distinction between the literal and the metaphorical does not entail that metaphorical sentences have 'special' meaning and truth *in addition* to their literal senses and truth. What metaphors mean, and what their truth values are, are no different from their assessment from a literal point of view. In his commitment to compositionality, Davidson is of the view that the meaning of a sentence is determined from the meanings of the individual words that compose it. If a metaphor can only be explained by appealing to the literal meanings of the words that compose it then for Davidson "sentences in which metaphors occur are true or false in a normal, literal way, for if the words in them don't have special meanings, sentences don't have special truth" (p. 39).

Combining his literalist and compositionalist views, Davidson's claim is that the words of a metaphorical sentence have no special meanings other than their ordinary literal meanings and hence the sentences they compose only have literal meanings.

In view of the fact that metaphorical sentences only have literal meanings and literal truth conditions, metaphorical sentences have no contents except the contents that they literally express. This is why most metaphors are literally false, if not absurd. That metaphors have no contents (except what they literally express) implies that there is 'nothing' else that is communicated or conveyed by the use of metaphor, 'nothing' else propositional that can be grasped and evaluated as true or false. Davidson entreats us to give up "the idea that a metaphor carries a message, that it has a content or meaning (except, of course, its literal meaning)" and see the supposed 'content' of metaphor as "something about the *effects* metaphors have on us" (p. 43). A metaphor can provoke thoughts and ideas in us, it can make us attend to some likeness and similarities between two things, it can cause us to notice something in a different way, but all these are *effects* metaphors have on us: metaphors "make us appreciate some fact – but not by standing for, or expressing, the fact" (p. 44). Davidson's denial of the cognitive claims of metaphor presents us with an account of metaphor that is causal in nature: it is a causal account in the sense that it explains metaphor both in terms of what it *causes* us to do and the *effects* it has on us. In this cause-effect view, metaphor has no content other than what it literally means and expresses, which is usually false or absurd; if we mistakenly think that there is an additional 'figurative' or 'metaphorical' content to a metaphor, it is merely because we are confusing effect with content. What metaphor directs our attention to, what it makes us see, cannot be propositional in character; for as Davidson exclaims: "seeing as is not seeing that" (p. 45). In this regard, Davidson likens metaphor to a joke or a dream or "a bump on the head" – these acts have

effects on us by making us come to notice or observe some fact without their *expressing* those facts. Metaphors can lead one to *see* something *as*, but not *that*; they can *intimate*, nudge, or poke one to view something in a different way, but *intimation* is not the same as *meaning*; they can *cause* one to have certain beliefs, but they do not *express* those beliefs;<sup>35</sup> like jokes and bumps on the head, they can have *effects* on others, but such effects are not propositional elements that can be evaluated on the basis of semantical notions like meaning, truth and reference.

Davidson argues also that our inability to paraphrase or decide exactly what the content of a metaphor is, is not primarily because metaphors are non-paraphraseable but because there is no content to be paraphrased or expressed. He thinks that we imagine there is a content to be captured when all the while we are in fact focusing on what the metaphor makes us notice; we are merely focusing on the effects metaphor has on us. He writes: “If what the metaphor makes us notice were finite in scope and propositional in nature, this would not in itself make trouble; we would simply project the content the metaphor brought to mind onto the metaphor. But in fact, there is no limit to what a metaphor calls to our attention, and much of what we are caused to notice is not propositional in character. When we try to say what a metaphor ‘means’, we soon realize there is no end to what we want to mention” (p. 44).

Davidson’s line of thought has been expanded by Lepore & Stone (2010) in their thesis statement that “though metaphors can issue in distinctive cognitive and discourse effects, they do so *without* issuing in metaphorical meaning and truth, and so, *without* metaphorical communication” (p.166). Like Davidson, they take a pragmatic view of metaphor as involving

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<sup>35</sup>By causing us to form certain beliefs that such-and-such is the case, there is something ‘propositional’ about metaphor, that is the acquisition of propositional attitudes. But the Davidsonian contention is that the metaphorical sentence *itself* does not express the proposition that such-and-such is the case; the metaphor itself does not make a statement or communicate something that is propositional.

some sort of speaker intentions and not “communicated meaning”. They argue that metaphor should be catalogued among practices such as “hinting, joking, trash-talking, flirting, and flattering” (p. 166). By joking, one aims to cause certain effects in her audience rather than to assert something that can be appraised for truth. And metaphor is no different from jokes. An interlocutor may use a metaphor with the intention that his hearers see a particular point but this point “is not a property of the metaphor itself” (p. 173). Lepore and Stone contend that “interlocutors use their metaphorical discourse not to assert and deny propositions but to develop imagery and to pursue a shared understanding” and that “such practices can account for our interactions in using metaphor, without appealing to metaphorical meaning or metaphorical truth” (p. 177). In effect, they argue for a distinction between “metaphorical thinking – developing imagery, seeing one thing as another, noticing similarities – from merely grasping a proposition, namely the one that is speaker meant, brought about through an intention to present information through coordination or intention recognition” (p.178).

For Richard Rorty, Davidson’s causal account enables us to see the distinction between the literal and the metaphorical not as two sorts of meaning or truth but a distinction between “familiar and unfamiliar uses of noises and marks” (1989, p. 17). The literal is the regular and familiar uses of language that is marked by predictability and a generally accepted procedure for determining meaning and truth. The metaphorical, Rorty thinks, is an unfamiliar noise – a use of familiar words in unfamiliar ways. As an unfamiliar noise, metaphor has no fixed place in the language game. Uttering a metaphorical sentence is not to say something true or false; it is not to say something that has a ‘meaning’. Rather, uttering a metaphor only produces an effect in one’s audience and causes them to have certain beliefs or act in certain ways. In one characterization of metaphor, Rorty has this to say:

Tossing a metaphor into a conversation is like suddenly breaking off the conversation long enough to make a face, or pulling a photograph out of your pocket and displaying it, or pointing at a feature of the surroundings, or slapping your interlocutor's face, or kissing him. Tossing a metaphor into a text is like using italics, or illustrations, or odd punctuation or formats. All these are ways of *producing effects* on your interlocutor or your reader, but not ways of conveying a message. To none of these is it appropriate to respond with "What exactly are you trying to say?" If one had wanted to say something - if one had wanted to utter a sentence with a meaning - one would presumably have done so. (1989, p. 18, italics mine)

In another characterization, Rorty likens metaphor to thunderclaps and birdsongs to make the same point. A novel metaphor is like the noises of a bird we are not acquainted with. The noise *causes* us to believe that there is, for instance, a quetzal in the forest. But the noise itself does not convey the information nor express the fact that there is a quetzal in the forest. In the same way, a metaphor causes us to change our beliefs and desires without representing or expressing any facts of the world. According to Rorty, we should see metaphor in its functions as "causes of our ability to do lots of other things – e.g., be more sophisticated and interesting people, emancipate ourselves from tradition, transvaluate our values, gain or lose religious faith – without having to interpret these latter abilities as functions of increased cognitive ability" (1987, p. 284-285). Rorty, therefore, allows metaphor to have functions, that is, to be causes of beliefs, just as Davidson endows metaphor with the ability to direct our attention to notice similarities between things. Yet, these functions of metaphor are not to be interpreted as conveying any message that will add to our knowledge.

Both Rorty and Davidson rely on a distinction between "cause of belief" and "justification of belief" (or reason for belief) and argue that it is a conflation of this distinction that seems to give some credence to the cognitive claims of metaphor. As it pertains in sensory observations of birdsongs and other unfamiliar noises, we can draw a distinction between the

unfamiliar noise as a stimulus to knowledge and the claim that it conveyed that knowledge. The noise is merely a stimulus to knowledge or a cause of the belief that there is a bird in the forest, but it is not a reason for, nor a justification of, the belief and information that there is a bird in the forest. In the same vein, there is an ambiguity in the claim that, for instance, metaphor is essential to science or that metaphor is a source of scientific knowledge (Hesse, 1987). Metaphor is the ‘source’ of knowledge only in the sense that it is a stimulus to knowledge, that is, it functions as causes of changing beliefs and desires. But metaphor does not feature as a justification of belief or the conveying of information, and hence it has no cognitive content. Metaphors are useful (or perhaps necessary) for gaining knowledge but they do not express knowledge. What causes belief and knowledge is not necessarily that which expresses or conveys belief and knowledge. Metaphor as an unfamiliar noise belongs not to cognition but to stimulus. It has a place in a causal scheme of things, but it does not have *in addition* a place in a pattern of justification of beliefs.

Nonetheless, metaphor can assume a place in the justification of beliefs – it can become a truth-value candidate, and it can *begin* to convey information – but at a cost. According to Rorty, a metaphor attains cognitive status only when it ‘crosses the line’ from unfamiliar noises into the more familiar, predictable uses of language. That is, a metaphor begins to convey information only when it is dead. When a sentence is a metaphor it has no truth value – we cannot confirm or disconfirm it, nor can we argue for or against it. “But”, Rorty writes, “this is not to say that it may not, in time, *become* a truth-value candidate.... It will thereby have ceased to be a metaphor – or, if you like, it will have become what most sentences of our language are, a dead metaphor. It will be just one more, literally true or literally false, sentence of the language” (1989, p. 18).

Metaphor then gains significance and relevance only after its death, only when it loses its ‘metaphoricity’. A metaphorical utterance is merely an unfamiliar noise when it is alive and active but once it gains a place in the more familiar and regular uses of language upon its death, it acquires the same status as every other ordinary use of language. This is consistent with Davidson’s view that only literal sentences which have a fixed place in the language game can be true or false and be cognitively significant. And since for him “metaphors mean what the words, in their most literal interpretation mean, and nothing more” (1979, p. 30), metaphors are significant only when literalized, that is, only when they are reduced to the literal.

By confining the interpretation and meaning of metaphor to the literal and explaining away the supposed additional content of a metaphor in terms of the effects metaphors have on us, Davidson, Rorty, Lepore & Stone, and others, limit the semantic notions of truth, meaning and cognition to regular and literal uses of language.

### **2.3. Critique of the Anti-Truth position**

Davidson’s account of metaphor has been discussed extensively in the literature, mostly in two main directions: there are those who criticize his literalist account and argue for the cognitive claims of metaphor, especially Black (1979), Goodman (1979), Leddy (1983), Hesse (1987), Farrell (1987), Moran (1989), Camp (2006a,c, 2008), Johnson (2008), and most works in cognitive linguistics; and there are others who have defended his account, particularly, Davies (1982),<sup>36</sup> Davies (1984),<sup>37</sup> Rorty (1987, 1989), Cooper (1986), Reimer (2001), Lepore & Stone (2010, 2015). The critique of the Davidsonian account in the literature has primarily focused on showing that there is a cognitive dimension (Black, 1979) or a propositional dimension (Moran

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<sup>36</sup> Martin Davies

<sup>37</sup> Stephen Davies

1989; Camp 2006a,b, 2008) to metaphor. This propositional aspect of a metaphor is usually derived from, or associated with, the intentions of the speaker – what the speaker means by uttering a metaphor (Searle, 1979).

The critique of the account I offer here is partly diagnostic, intended to reveal the ways in which the Davidsonian Anti-Truth tenets (a) – (e) are flawed and untenable; and it is partly prescriptive, meant to provide evidence that metaphorical sentences have propositional contents. It is often regarded as *implied* by Davidson's account that once one accepts his central thesis that a metaphor has no additional meaning and truth-value other than its literal meaning and truth-value then one is committed to seeing metaphor only in terms of its functions – in terms of its causes and effects. However, the inference from literalism – 'only literal meaning' – to a causal explanation – 'only causal role' – is not a logically necessary one. It is possible to accept Davidson's central thesis without adducing a causal explanation for how metaphor works, and more importantly, without singling out a causal explanation as the only explanation one could give to metaphor. Similarly, the conclusion that metaphors have no propositional contents cannot be premised on the fact that metaphors have causes and effects on their users. It is possible to accept a causal explanation of how metaphors work – that is, that they cause us to acquire certain beliefs, that they direct our attention to see similarities between two things, etc – *and* posit that they have propositional contents *in addition* to their causal role. In other words, that metaphors have causes and effects does not preclude their having propositional contents. Metaphors do have functions, they do cause us to do certain things, they have effects on us; but their having functions and effects is not a reason for, nor a limitation of, their capacity to be something else, or have something more – something propositional.

### 2.3.1. Metaphor and Compositionality

Davidson's ultimate position on metaphor is that metaphorical sentences have only literal meanings and hence only literal truth conditions. This position is as a result of combining his thesis of literalism – that *the words* of a metaphor have only literal meanings – with compositionality – that the meaning of a sentence is derived from the meanings of the individual words that compose it. That is, if the words of a metaphor have only literal meanings then metaphorical sentences have only literal meanings. However, this analysis is flawed: the mistake lies in the conjunction of the two theses – literalism plus compositionality – to generate the solution that metaphorical sentences have only literal meanings.

(p) Literalism (L) + Compositionality (C) = Literal Meaning (LM)

To see the flaw, we have to take a critical look at the two principles of literalism and compositionality. Compositionality is regarded as one of the essential properties of language which is used to explain, among other things, our linguistic and cognitive abilities to learn a language by learning the meaning of a finite number of expressions and yet be able to produce and understand an infinite number of meaningful sentences (Davidson 1967, 1984; Fodor & Lepore, 2002; Pagin & Westerstahl, 2010a,b). On one definition, the principle of compositionality is the claim that “the meaning of a complex expression is determined by its structure and the meanings of its constituents” (Szabo 2010, p. 255). This determination of the meaning of the complex expression is usually construed in functional terms; that is, “the meaning of the complex expression is a function of the meanings of its parts and the mode of composition by which it has been obtained from these parts” (Kracht 2011, p. 57). Compositionality is a semantic phenomenon, for it determines the semantic value of a complex from the values of its constituents, thereby constraining the relevant factors involved in the

determination of meaning. In a strict sense of compositionality, what is necessary and sufficient for determining the semantic value (meaning, content, denotation) of a complex expression is the semantic information and contribution derived from the parts of the complex expression and its mode of composition. This is akin to what Dever (2008) has called the ‘semantic closure’ constraint of the principle of compositionality.

However, it has been questioned in various ways in the literature as to whether the meaning or content of a complex expression is determined purely from the semantic values of, or the semantic information provided by, its constituents and their mode of composition. This questioning arises out of the observation that the meaning or content of an expression is underdetermined by the semantic information provided by the parts of the expression, and that, there are certain constituents of the meaning of an expression that are provided purely on pragmatic grounds, usually by a process of ‘free pragmatic enrichment’ (Carston 1988, 2002; Recanati 2004; Sperber & Wilson 1986, 1995; Hall 2009). The utterances of ‘I have had breakfast’ and ‘It is raining’ have their truth-evaluable contents <I have had breakfast *this morning*> and <It is raining *in Cape Town*> respectively, where the time (of breakfast) and the location (of rain) are freely pragmatically supplied by the context of the utterance. These additional constituents of the meaning or content of an expression are not traceable overtly or covertly to the encoded meanings of the parts of the expression; they are provided and constrained by purely pragmatic factors.<sup>38</sup> Generalization from this observation, contextualists and pragmatists argue that the intuitive meaning and content of an expression cannot be given solely by a compositional semantics.

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<sup>38</sup> Some semanticists like Stanley (2000, 2002), King & Stanley (2005) have argued that indexicality and other contextual factors can be traced to the logical form of the expressions which suggests that the so-called free pragmatic enrichments are constrained semantically. Lasersohn (2012) has argued that the context-sensitivity nature of most expressions and the fact that speakers rely on pragmatics to arrive at the contents of certain expressions do not undermine, but are compatible with, the principle of compositionality.

Compositionality itself as a principle for the determination of the semantic value of a complex expression does not discriminate between literal and non-literal meaning even though it seems to presuppose literal meaning. All that is required for compositionality is that the meaning of the complex be a function of the meanings of its parts and their mode of composition. This does not imply that the *kind* of meaning<sup>39</sup> of the complex be determined from a function of its parts and the ways in which they are composed. That is, compositionality does not specify or stipulate that the meaning-type of the complex be derived from those of its units. The requirement that the meanings of complex expressions be literal because their units are literal is an additional constraint on the meaning of complex expressions. Up to this point we had noted that compositionality requires that the meaning of the complex expression is a function of both

- (a) the meanings of its constituents, and
- (b) their mode of composition.

Now there is a further constraint on the meaning of complex expressions or sentences in general in relation to the parts that compose it:

- (c) the kind of meaning (or the meaning-type) of the complex expression is a function of the meaning-types of its constituents.

This additional constraint (c) is what informs the literalism of Davidson's account of metaphor.

We should distinguish between two strands of literalism: word-literalism ( $L_w$ ) and sentence-literalism ( $L_s$ ). Davidson actually argued for word-literalism, indicating that words themselves do not have 'extra' or non-literal meanings, and by extension, he argued for sentence-literalism through a compositional analysis. That fact that Davidson argued for word-literalism

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<sup>39</sup> By '*kinds* of meaning' I mean meaning-types such as literal meaning, metaphorical meaning, symbolic meaning, etc,

has been observed also by Farrell (1987) who shows that in his essay on metaphor, Davidson hardly treats metaphor at the sentential level; rather, he treats it at the level of word meaning. At the beginning of his paper where he states his main thesis, Davidson writes: “This paper is concerned with what metaphors mean, and its thesis is that metaphors mean what the *words*, in their most literal interpretation, mean, and nothing more” (p. 29-30, emphasis mine). He again writes that “my disagreement is with the explanation of how metaphor works its wonders. To anticipate: I depend on the distinction between what words mean and what they are used to do” (p. 31). And when he discusses and rejects other views on metaphor, Davidson has these things to say: “The idea, then, is that in metaphor certain words take on new, or what are often called ‘extended’ meanings” (p. 32); “Perhaps, then, we can explain metaphor as a kind of ambiguity: in the context of a metaphor, certain words have either a new or an original meaning” (p. 32); “I have been making the point by contrasting learning a new use for an old word with using a word already understood” (p.37). And after discussing a number of views, Davidson concludes: “The argument so far has led to the conclusion that as much of metaphor as can be explained in terms of meaning may, and indeed must, be explained by appeal to the literal meanings of words. A consequence is that the sentences in which metaphors occur are true or false in a normal, literal way, for if the words in them don’t have special meanings, sentences don’t have special truth” (p. 39).

As Farrell points out, Davidson’s focus on the word instead of the sentence “serves his strategy in the article” for “he interprets his opponents to be making a claim that metaphorical meanings constitute an extra layer of *word* meanings, and consequently, that metaphor is analogous to ambiguity, in that a word may have two different meanings” (1987, p. 637).<sup>40</sup> So,

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<sup>40</sup> In Davidson’s general theory of meaning, however, word and sentence meaning go hand in hand. For him, other than a semantic theory being compositional, it must also be interpretative, in the sense that it should be possible for

Davidson inveighs against positing additional ‘metaphorical’ or ‘figurative’ meanings to the words that compose a metaphor and then argues that since the words do not have extra meanings other than what they mean literally, metaphorical sentences only have literal meanings. In doing so, Davidson rescues semantics from accounts based on extended word-meanings and also from the multiplicity of meaning and truth with respect to the words in a metaphor. Now, so long as we are dealing with the words of a metaphorical sentence, Davidson’s account seems plausible.

A point of departure with Davidson here is that both his attack on the theories and the theories he was attacking miss one crucial point about metaphor: a metaphor is not necessarily a metaphor because a word has been used ‘metaphorically’ or in an unfamiliar way. It is only when we take the word, be it the ‘focal’ word of the metaphorical sentence, as the unit of analysis that we worry as to whether the word has an ‘extended’ meaning or reference. Indeed, words in every sentence have no ‘extra’ meanings other than what they mean literally, but their composition into sentences marks an important difference between figurative and literal sentences. That is, word-literalism does not imply sentence-literalism when the expressions in question have been construed metaphorically or figuratively. It is one thing to say that the words in a metaphor only have literal meanings and another thing to say that the metaphorical sentence has only a literal meaning or interpretation. One can endorse the claim that the words of a metaphor have no special, extra, non-literal meanings without further endorsing the claim that the metaphorical sentences composed out of the individual words have literal meanings. Idiomatic expressions are paradigmatic cases of counter-examples not only to compositionality in general but more particularly to the constraint (c) on the meanings of complex expressions or

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the theory to be used to understand speakers and their linguistic behaviour. Since a theory of meaning is a theory of truth for Davidson, one constructs a systematic truth theory from both the meanings of the words and sentences of a language.

sentences in general which requires that the meaning-type of the constituents transfer to the meaning-type of the complex expression.

Idioms are generally considered to be expressions whose meanings are conventionalized in the sense that “their meaning or use can't be predicted, or at least entirely predicted, on the basis of a knowledge of the independent conventions that determine the use of their constituents when they appear in isolation from one another” (Nunberg, Sag & Wasow, 1994, p. 492). An idiomatic expression defies the principle of compositionality in that the meaning of the idiomatic expression is not determined by a compositional function of the meanings of its constituents (Chomsky, 1965, 1980; Katz 1973; Kracht 2011).<sup>41</sup> The meanings of idiomatic expressions like ‘kick the bucket’ and ‘take the bull by the horns’ are not determined by the meanings of their component parts despite their having syntactic structures. Interestingly also, the words of these idiomatic expressions do not acquire extra meanings other than their literal meanings but the idiomatic meanings of the expressions are not dependent on the literal meanings of the words even where their composition into a whole fail. That is, in spite of the fact that the parts do not compose into a whole in determining their idiomatic meanings, the idiomaticity of the expressions is not a function of the idiomaticity of the words that make them up.<sup>42</sup> In other words, if the constraint of the meaning of complex expressions (c) holds, then when the expressions are given idiomatic meanings this should result from the constituent words having

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<sup>41</sup> Nunberg, Sag & Wasow (1994) have shown that not all idiomatic expressions are non-compositional. They distinguish “idiomatically combining expressions” like ‘pull strings’ whose meanings could be distributed among its parts, from “idiomatic phrases” like ‘kick the bucket’ which do not distribute their meanings to their parts. My concern in the main is with idiomatic phrases.

<sup>42</sup> One could point out that this is so because idioms are lexicalized expressions that should be treated as single words. However, this view is unattractive. As Titone & Connine point out, “there is evidence showing that idioms possess a great deal of internal semantic structure. Idioms are modifiable with adjectives or relative clauses (e.g. *She did not spill any of those precious beans*), and parts of idioms may be quantified (e.g., *She didn't spill a single bean*), emphasized through topicalization (e.g., *She didn't spill the beans yesterday, but spilled them today*) without disrupting comprehension or awareness of their idiomaticity (Nunberg et al., 1994; Sag, 1976; Williams, 1977)” (p. 1659).

idiomatic meanings (just as when they are interpreted literally, the words should have their literal meanings at play). But although the expressions have idiomatic meanings their constituent words do not acquire any extra meanings other than their literal meanings, and hence, the constraint on the meaning of complex expressions (c) cannot be accurate.

The point here is that we can allow that the words that compose any figurative expression maintain their literal meanings but this concession does not imply that figurative expressions only have literal meanings. This is because the analysis and interpretation of a figure of speech like an idiom starts rather at the phrasal or sentential level. An idiom obviously is different from a metaphor – a metaphorical expression can be live and novel in characterizing one thing in terms of another thing while an idiom is a set phrase whose meaning cannot be inferred from the meanings of the words that make it up, and whose usage is characteristic of a group of people. A significant difference between a metaphor and an idiom is that unlike an idiom, an understanding of the literal meanings of the words in a metaphor aids in the interpretation of the metaphor. However, the analysis and interpretation of metaphor takes a cue from idioms: a metaphorical sentence can have a meaning, a meaning other than what it literally means even though the words that compose the metaphor as Davidson has strongly argued only have literal meanings.<sup>43</sup> How does this cash out?

In any context of use both metaphorical sentences and idiomatic expressions can be understood and interpreted literally. Compare the idiom “she kicked the bucket” to the metaphor

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<sup>43</sup> It is possible for one to argue that idiomatic expressions are not necessarily breaches of compositionality, and that the cases of idioms neither affect nor make compositionality false. The rule of compositionality is meant to apply to non-idiomatic uses of language. This argument seems right. But the point here is not that the rule of compositionality is breached or made false by idiomatic expressions. The point rather is that idiomatic expressions, in being figurative expressions, do not require that their meanings imply that the words that make up the expressions also acquire figurative meanings. This suggests that the meaning of a figure of a speech does not imply that the words of that figure of speech have figurative meanings or applications. So, in the case of idioms, their meanings do not depend on the meanings on the words that compose them, and there is no further requirement that the words should have figurative meanings. This is the principle that I am claiming holds in the case of metaphors.

“Gabriele is a crocodile.”<sup>44</sup> When we combine the literalist thesis with compositionality ‘she kicked the bucket’ just means that she kicked the bucket, and similarly, ‘Gabriele is a crocodile’ means that Gabriele is a crocodile. Construed figuratively, it seems okay to say that ‘she kicked the bucket’ *means* that she is dead. Or perhaps, we should say that in an appropriate context, one utters ‘she kicked the bucket’ to mean that she is dead. *That she is dead* becomes the content or the proposition asserted by the idiom-user. (This is quite different from the *effect* the idiom might have on an audience, if any). If the sentence “she kicked the bucket” could mean both she kicked the bucket and she is dead then we can say that the sentence has two meanings depending on the use to which it is put: used literally, it has the meaning (LM) that she kicked the bucket, and used figuratively (as an idiomatic expression), it has the meaning (MM) that she is dead. The difference between LM and MM lies in the role compositionality plays in the determination of the meaning of the sentence: whereas LM results from the meanings of the individual words of the sentence MM does not; MM is not worked out from the meanings of the individual words of the figurative expression.

A similar situation is what obtains in metaphor. In terms of LM, “Gabriele is a crocodile” means that Gabriele is a crocodile which might seem false or absurd. But understood figuratively, it can have the MM meaning that Gabriele is impulsive and angry. What is interesting about the metaphorical case is that the MM meaning, while it does not result out of the composite of the literal meanings of the words (for then we will have LM), is linked in a peculiar way to the words of the sentence, not in terms of literal meaning, but usually, in terms of certain cultural and idiosyncratic features or connotations associated with the words of the

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<sup>44</sup> In an interview with Linda Blandford of *The New York Times Magazine*, the mezzo-soprano opera singer, Cecilia Bartoli, talked about her family and her childhood experience with her elder brother, Gabriele, who was a professional viola player. She said this of him: “My brother is a crocodile – he is impulsive and angry, he changes like the wind.” Quoted in Linda Blandford’s, “Baby diva”. *The New York Times Magazine*, March 14, 1993.

metaphor. These cultural, religious, moral, aesthetic and idiosyncratic features we associate with certain words and phrases are, in an important sense, not part of what we will ordinarily call the literal meaning. It is not part of the literal meaning of Gabriele being a crocodile that he is impulsive and angry. This suggests that a determination of the meaning of the metaphor from a composite of the literal meanings of the words will mischaracterize the expression as a metaphor. In both the idiomatic and metaphorical cases, the words of the expressions retain their usual literal meanings but a compositional determination of their meanings misses the point of their figurativeness; that is, apprehending their LM meanings is just to take the expressions literally.

The idiom, 'she kicked the bucket' means she is dead, period. However, if we understand both metaphors and idioms as figurative devices which defy the laws of compositionality and constraint (c) resulting in metaphorical and idiomatic expressions having MM as characterized above then it seems that we cannot think of the MM of a metaphor as merely a paraphrase (or effect or insight) and that of an idiomatic expression as a meaning or proposition. It is true that there could be more than one interpretation or meaning we could come up with for a metaphorical sentence. But this will not yield different *kinds* of meanings. There are only the two kinds of meanings here – LM and MM – depending on whether the meanings are calculated based on compositionality or not. Just as a literal sentence could be ambiguous or have multiple meanings under LM so a metaphorical sentence could have a variety of meanings under MM; the various meanings under MM are all *possible* meanings that are partly determined and constrained by the contexts and circumstances in which the metaphorical sentence is used. The distinction between LM and MM in terms of whether they are faithful to the principle of compositionality can be used to mark a difference between metaphors and ambiguous sentences. The different meanings of an ambiguous sentence are all determined by a compositional analysis

of the literal meanings of the words where either the different lexical meanings of the words are used in the analysis (as for instance in the case of 'he went to the bank') or that the compositional structure is permuted (as in the case of 'he killed the man with an umbrella'). Metaphors are not ambiguous either lexically or structurally. For the different meanings of a metaphor belong to MM which does not entertain the use of compositional analysis.

So, in agreement with Davidson, the words in a metaphor, like those of most figurative expressions, retain their ordinary meanings and significations, but unlike Davidson, the meaning of a metaphorical sentence is not computed from the literal meanings of the words that make it up. Metaphors and other figurative expressions defy the principle of compositionality. Since the principle of compositionality does not apply in the case of metaphors, it implies that metaphorical sentences, contra Davidson, do not have *only* literal meanings and should not be evaluated with literal truth conditions. Does this imply that metaphorical sentences have *additional* meanings other than their literal meanings? This will amount to similarly asking whether an idiomatic expression has an additional meaning other than its literal meaning. Is the meaning that she is dead an additional meaning of the idiomatic expression 'to kick the bucket'? It is obvious that the idiomatic meaning of 'she kicked the bucket' just *is* that she is dead because the sentence has been construed figuratively or idiomatically. And as we have seen, this meaning is the MM that is not a resultant of the compositional analysis of the words of the sentence. This MM is not a meaning in addition to the LM of the sentence since the sentence has been construed figuratively. In the same vein, construing the sentence 'Juliet is the sun' literally and realizing that the sentence is false or absurd is not an indictment on the sentence when it is construed metaphorically. The MM of the metaphor is not a meaning extra or additional to its LM as if they are derived from the same analysis. What exists here is a meaning difference in kind which

reflects a difference in construal of the sentence: a sentence construed literally employs a compositional analysis in determining what it means literally; that same sentence construed metaphorically or figuratively, adopts a non-compositional analysis in determining what it means non-literally.

In summary, we have three models for associating meaning and content with metaphors in relation to the literal:

Models	Words	Process	Sentences
Model 1	Literal meanings Metaphorical meanings	Compositionality →	Literal meanings Metaphorical meanings
Model 2	Literal meanings	<u>Compositionality</u> →	Literal meanings
Model 3	Literal meanings Literal meanings	Compositionality → Non-compositionality	Literal meanings Metaphorical meanings

The first model is the view that Davidson attacks which posits that metaphors trade on the ambiguity of words, that words have literal and metaphorical senses, and hence metaphorical sentences have two meanings (Henle 1959; Beardsley 1962, 1978; Goodman 1968, 1979). This model ought to explain how words come to acquire metaphorical meanings and how they are composed to form metaphorical meanings of sentences. A major problem for this model is how it can satisfactorily explain the phenomenon of dead metaphors: as Davidson puts it, when the dead metaphor ‘he was burned up’ was active, “we would have pictured fire in the eyes or smoke coming out of the ears” (1978, p. 38). Davidson’s own view is the second model which posits that words have only literal meanings and the sentences they compose also have only literal meanings. But this view, as we saw in the earlier chapter, is not able to satisfactorily explain how one comes to fail to grasp the metaphor even though one understands its literal meaning; and as I will show below, the view is also not able to account for how two people can disagree over the

proposition expressed by a metaphor even in situations where the literal meaning of the metaphor seems irrelevant to the disagreement or where the two parties can engage in disagreements even though they agree on the literal meaning of the metaphor.

The view I have tried to formulate above is the third model which grants that words in a sentence have only literal meanings but the meanings of the sentences they constitute are either literal or metaphorical depending on whether the meanings are derived from a compositional analysis or not. Metaphors' affinity with idioms that I drew above suggests that the non-compositional transition from literal-word-meaning to metaphorical meaning is a matter of sentence, as opposed to speaker, meaning. Speaker-meaning is a viable alternative route that is non-compositional in nature, but this route need not make any pronouncement about the literal-metaphorical status of the words of a metaphor. The third model pursued here is an affirmation of the fact that the words of a metaphor do not acquire mythical or mysterious non-literal meanings. But more importantly, one can use an idiom to speaker-mean (SM) something else other than its LM or MM; SM is pragmatic meaning and it arises in the use of both literal and figurative expressions and in our linguistic practices in general. This means that for literal sentences, we can have LM and SM as in the case of implicatures; and for figurative expressions we can also have LM and SM as for instance in the cases of understatements and ironies. But SM alone does not establish that figurative expressions like idioms have in addition to LM, MM which is semantic meaning. The model pursued here is that in addition to SM and LM, metaphorical expressions have MM, and this semantic meaning can be different from, or similar to, although not necessarily derived from, the pragmatic speaker-meaning.

### 2.3.2. The problem of many contents

A possible objection to the analysis above is that there is a kind of *definiteness* associated with literal meaning and content such that even if we allow both metaphors and idioms to have MM, that of the idiom is definite and given. We cannot appropriately talk of *the* meaning or *the* content of a metaphor like we do with an idiomatic expression. If there is no definite content to a metaphor this will suggest that it is not a genuine linguistic item that we should be concerned with associating it with meaning and content. However, this objection is not well motivated. The point of the “inexhaustibility” (Cohen, 1975) of the interpretation of metaphor cannot, and should not, be construed as a defect of metaphor. It should also not be construed as the yardstick for attributing content to metaphor. Inability to paraphrase a particular metaphor and/or the indeterminacy of the right kind of paraphrase for a metaphor, are not in themselves indicators of the absence of any content that the metaphor might have. Rather, the ability to paraphrase (most) metaphors into propositional form is an indication that metaphors have contents.

If a metaphor expresses two or more propositions or if it has more than one interpretation, or if it can be paraphrased into more than one sentence, then it is not a matter of it having ‘no content’ but that it has ‘many contents’. A denial of the content of metaphor rests on the flawed principle that many contents mean no content at all; it is like when you say too much, you end up not saying anything at all. Although a metaphor says too much, it at least says something. And it is because it says something that we are able to give at least one paraphrase of it.

The objection that many contents imply no genuine linguistic item loses its sway when we consider treatments of vagueness and borderline predicates in the literature where vague sentences are made truth-evaluable by such methods as supervaluationism (Fine, 1975; Keefe,

2000, 2008; Cobreros, 2008). Vagueness is considered a semantic phenomenon<sup>45</sup> (Keefe 2008, Cobreros 2008) resulting from semantic indecision in the sense that “nothing in the world, either in the use or in any other factor relevant to the determination of the meaning of a vague predicate, *decides* which of the ways in which we could make precise the predicate is correct.” (Cobreros, 2008, p.292). Vague sentences are therefore considered to be indeterminate; they are neither true nor false. However, a supervaluational model can be applied to a vague sentence to make it either (determinately) true or false by means of an *admissible precisification* whereby the sentence is made more precise. In this way, the vague sentence is true if and only if it is true on all ways of making it precise, and false if and only if it is false on all ways of making it precise, and neither true nor false otherwise (Fine, 1975; Keefe, 2000, 2008). The point of supervaluationism in relation to vagueness is to show how a vague sentence or a multiple-referring expression can be made truth-evaluable and be accorded a definite truth value. If we can provide a semantics for vague sentences, then despite the differences between metaphors and vague sentences there might be, the indefiniteness objection to metaphors cannot be used to deny its capacity to be appraised for truth. For, on a supervaluational operation on a metaphor, one can take a metaphor to be true or false on all admissible ways of precisifying them, where the precisification could be in the form of literalizing or paraphrasing the metaphor. The claim here is that metaphors, like vague sentences and borderline cases, have contents which admit of many possible precisifications/paraphrases; and just as the many contents a vague sentence may have does not preclude it from being appraised for truth, it cannot be correct that metaphors having many contents imply that they are not genuine linguistic items that can be truth-evaluable.

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<sup>45</sup> Williamson (1994) for instance, regards vagueness as an epistemic phenomenon by treating the proposition a vague sentence expresses as a borderline case which is either true or false but we are ignorant of which value it is.

### 2.3.3. Metaphor from the perspective of the metaphor-maker

Besides the rather disparaging remark about metaphor as a noise, both Rorty and Davidson explain metaphor with respect to the effects it has on the hearer. While this may be true – that is, metaphors have certain effects on hearers – the explanation is one-sided and inadequate: on one hand, it gives no explanation of metaphor from the speakers' perspective; and on the other hand, the explanation it gives cannot effectively be extended to the maker of a metaphor. How is the speaker to understand her metaphorical utterance if she is merely making an *unfamiliar* noise? What effect is metaphor to have on the maker of the metaphor? How is the metaphor to cause a change in beliefs and desires if it is to be construed as merely a noise from the speaker's perspective? Talk of the effects of metaphor seems accurate when we are considering the role of metaphor from the point of view of the audience or hearer but it seems inappropriate to suggest that the metaphor also causes certain effects in the one making it. The causal account of metaphor fails to note that there can be both *internal* and *external* noises. External noises may have effects on us and cause us to do certain things or behave in certain ways. But internal noises are internally generated, and hence the effects the noises may have on others may not necessarily apply to the generator of the noise. In the case of metaphor, the effects metaphor is seen to produce do not apply to the maker of the metaphor. Hence, an account of metaphor that only explains metaphor in terms of noises and effects on the part of the audience is an inadequate one.

It is one thing to say that a metaphor can *cause* one to entertain certain beliefs and propositions, and another thing to say that a metaphor is an outward expression of the beliefs and propositions one has (or is) entertained (or is entertaining). We can agree with Davidson and Rorty (for the sake of argument), that the sorts of things that a metaphor may cause one to

entertain are not propositional in nature, but this agreement does not imply that the metaphor *itself* cannot express a proposition that has been entertained by the maker of the metaphor. One cannot use the non-propositional character of the sort of things a hearer is caused to entertain to deny the propositional character of the metaphorical statement that the speaker of the metaphor may assert. What a metaphor may be *used to do*, what a metaphor may *cause* one to do or entertain, and the *effect* of what a metaphor may have on anyone, do not offer an analysis of, and cannot be used to explain, what a metaphor *is*.<sup>46</sup> What a metaphor *is* – a statement or utterance borne out of the beliefs and propositions conceived and entertained by a speaker – and what a metaphor may *suggest* or *point out*, are also separate issues. One has to be cautious not to conflate, first, the essence and work of metaphor, and second, the analysis of metaphor from the perspectives of the hearer and speaker. We can delineate the activities of the speaker and hearer of a metaphor from the ‘work’ of the metaphor itself. ‘Nudging’, ‘poking’ and ‘directing of attention’, a metaphor can do but this work of the metaphor does not say anything about whether metaphors can be associated with the expression of propositional contents. If we are interested in what a metaphor can be used to do, and the causes and effects associated with a metaphor, the analysis can begin from the metaphor itself and the force it has on hearers. If we are interested in the meaning or interpretation of a metaphor, if we are poised to give paraphrases of a metaphor, we can attempt this from the perspective of the hearer by developing strategies and mechanisms the hearer could use, although in most cases, this cannot be done adequately independently of the intentions of the speaker. But we cannot use our conclusions about the causes and effects of a

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<sup>46</sup> Here, the distinction is between the functions and effects of metaphor on the one hand and the constitution of metaphor on the other hand. The functions and effects may be used to elucidate what metaphor is but they cannot stand for what constitutes a metaphor. Similarly, the things a metaphor may cause a hearer to entertain can be distinct from the thing – a proposition, perhaps – a metaphor may assert.

metaphor on the hearer to posit certain assumptions about the making of the metaphor or about the essence of the metaphor itself.

Let us suppose with Davidson and Rorty that we should understand metaphor as *seeing* one thing *as* another thing. From a causal account then, we can explain how a metaphor (or perhaps the metaphor-maker) *causes* the hearer to see one thing as another thing. But we cannot appropriately explain by the account that the speaker or the metaphor-maker is *caused* to see one thing as another thing. In fact, the seeing-*as* experience happens prior to the causes and effects that take place. The metaphor-maker is not caused to see anything by the metaphor and neither does the metaphor have any effect on the metaphor-maker; the metaphor rather reflects what the metaphor-maker has already seen or experienced. A metaphor is like ‘a bump on the head’ Davidson says, but on whose head? It cannot be on the head of the metaphor-maker. A metaphor is like ‘a joke’ but who is to get the joke? It is not about whether the joke is funny or not – a comedian gets his own joke as he is the one making it. A causal account cannot explain the making of novel metaphors even if it can explain the reception of novel metaphors. Thinking of metaphors in terms of effects leaves out the production of metaphors even if the metaphor-maker is using the metaphor to bring out certain effects in others. A cause-effect approach to the understanding of metaphor cannot extend to the making, conception, and evaluation of metaphor.<sup>47</sup>

What causes and effects could there be when the metaphor-maker uses a metaphor in a soliloquy? We can make sense of how a metaphor-maker may attempt to bring about certain

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<sup>47</sup> Davidson could respond to the criticism in this paragraph by saying that although the speaker is not *caused* to do anything, the speaker uses a metaphor with the primary intention of producing certain effects in his hearers. And hence, the making, conception, and evaluation of metaphor can be understood in terms of the intention to produce effects and the subsequent success or effectiveness of those effects on hearers. However, this response is not satisfactory: it merely shifts the locus of the criticism to the effects on hearers. And, as I go on to argue in the next paragraph, this primary intention to produce effects is not applicable in cases where the speaker is speaking to himself alone. In soliloquies, it is not only that the speaker is not caused to make a metaphor, he also does not use a metaphor with the intention of producing an effect in himself.

effects in his audience, and perhaps, where there is no audience, the intended effect may not be successful or applicable. But this presents a problem in the case of soliloquies where the metaphor-maker is his own audience, that is, in this case, the metaphor-maker utters the metaphor to himself rather than to a perceived audience. In this case, it does not seem right to suppose that the metaphor-maker utters a metaphor to bring about some effects in him or to cause himself to see certain insights. The making of a metaphor is an intentional action and it is not clear how a metaphor-maker nudges himself into noticing things when he utters a metaphor to himself. The causal theorist could explain that the soliloquist uses a metaphor *as if* there was an audience and that the absence of an existing audience does not imply that there are no causes and effects of the metaphor; it only shows that these effects do not act on anyone but would if there were indeed existing audiences. This explanation may seem plausible in a particular kind of soliloquy. We can distinguish between two senses of soliloquies: in the one sense, a speaker makes a speech to himself with an audience in mind like in the cases of practicing a speech one is to give at a later date or when an actor on stage gives a monologue; in the other sense, the speaker has no intended or perceived audiences other than himself like in the cases of thinking out loud or making a note to oneself. It is the second of these senses that causes a problem for the causal account. Where there is a perceived audience, the maker of the metaphor may have certain beliefs about how his metaphorical utterance will affect his audience or the various effects his utterance might have. But the causal account is not able to explain where these beliefs come from and how they are generated. Where there are invisible or perceived audiences, and where there are no audiences at all (perhaps, other than the speaker himself) from the speaker's perspective, the causal account cannot satisfactorily explain how speakers deliberately utter metaphors to themselves.

#### 2.3.4. The social practices of using metaphors

There are certain features of our use of metaphor that give us good reason to assume that metaphor has meaning and content rather than mere effects on us. Our shared communal practice of employing similar metaphors in everyday discourse attests to the fact that there is a meaning that is grasped and shared by all. Rarely are live metaphors confined to individual speakers in a community. The same active metaphors may be used by a number of speakers or writers in a particular linguistic community. An effect-based approach to metaphor only assumes that one is dazzled upon hearing a metaphor, that one is directed to notice certain similarities between two things. But even if we grant that this is the only business of metaphor – directing one’s attention to notice similarities – the ability of two or more people using the same metaphor to enable others to notice the same similarities presupposes that there is a meaning and content of the metaphor that is shared by them.

If Davidson is right that what many people refer to as the content of a metaphor is merely an effect metaphor has on hearers how can we predict that the same or a similar effect can occur each time a particular metaphor is used? How is the hearer able to grasp a metaphor, exploit it, and use it to produce similar effects on others? How can we judge which effect is appropriate or inappropriate to have in each context of use of the metaphor? If someone is banged on the head but feels no pain he has a deviant reaction, yet we don’t criticize him. But if a hearer fails to get the point of a metaphor—treating it as only having literal content or getting the wrong metaphorical interpretation—then he is apt for criticism. Causal patterns only have deviant instances; and causal deviance doesn’t warrant censure. Since receipt of a metaphor can, on occasion, warrant censure, it is not a merely causal phenomenon. The censure or criticism that is associated with metaphors is even more salient with respect to the making of metaphors. A

principal feature of metaphors that was highlighted primarily by rhetoricians is the aesthetic or ornamental value of metaphors: metaphors are useful for embellishing speeches. Hence, rhetoricians developed rules and guidelines for making apt and poetic metaphors that will make speech pleasant. Hackneyed and trite metaphors, and metaphors that involved obscene language were criticized for being unpleasant to the ear, and the makers of such metaphors were seen to lack the artistic skills of making figures of speech. If metaphors are like ‘bumps on the head’ as Davidson argued, the criticisms associated with metaphors will not be applicable; indeed, talk of using metaphors to embellish speech or appreciating metaphors for the aesthetic value will be meaningless. To the extent that some metaphors can be appraised as live, vivid, insightful, astute, and to the extent that some metaphors can be criticized as being banal, pale, unimaginative, metaphors are not merely causal prods; nudges and pokes and prods are not inherently praised or criticized.

If we can meaningfully talk about grasping or understanding a metaphor, what is it that we grasp and understand? The effect? The content? Isn't the ability to grasp a particular metaphor and effectively use that metaphor in other contexts with the expectation that others understand and utilize that metaphor an indication of something more than effects at play? If metaphor only has a point or if it merely intimates one to see something in a certain way, we cannot conclude from this that grasping the point of a metaphor or being nudged to perceive certain similarities will result in one using the same metaphor to put across the same point or to nudge others to perceive the same similarities. If a speaker who was once a hearer of a metaphor can use the metaphor to provoke the same effect on others that it had on him, this implies that (i) the speaker was aware of the effect the metaphor had on him, (ii) the speaker, was aware of the effect the metaphor user intended to bring about, and (iii) the speaker expects the same effect to

be produced in his audience. Similarly, if the speaker uses a metaphor to put across the same point that will mean that (i) the speaker knew and grasped the point of the metaphor when he heard it, (ii) the speaker knew that that was the point intended by its user, and (iii) the speaker knows and expects that his audience will grasp that point of the metaphor.

However, it is very mysterious how one becomes aware of the effect of an utterance on him and becomes aware that that was the intended effect of the utterance and that in using the same utterance he will be bringing about the same effect. Also, if all there is to metaphor is the effects it has on one, it is not clear whether the effects include the ability to pass on the same metaphor to achieve similar effects in others. And similarly, an effect-based account of metaphor cannot explain one's ability to teach and explain metaphors to others, for in teaching and explicating metaphors to others we do not just indicate what the causes and effects of metaphors are. In the first place, many metaphors like Shakespeare's "All the world's a stage, / And all the men and women merely players" has been used throughout the generations since Shakespeare's time. Perhaps, when it was first used in his play, *As You Like It*, Shakespeare intended to produce certain effects in his audience by making them perceive some similarities between the stages of human life and what actors do in a play. But what has preserved the metaphor and its subsequent use in diverse situations by different people other than its first hearers cannot be attributed to the effects the metaphor has had on people. Sameness of the effects of the metaphor on two people cannot account for their ability to use the metaphor to produce the same or similar effects. Meanings are such things that are transferrable; effects are generally not.

To illustrate, when two people exhibit the same effects of an illness or a drug in a temporal order where the first person exhibited the effects at an earlier time before the second, an explanation positing an underlying common cause will be more plausible than an explanation

that posits transfer of effects. In fact, the effects of a drug cannot be transferred from one person unto another unless the other person is also administered with the same drug. In the same vein, the effects of a metaphor cannot be transferred to others unless the others grasp the meaning of the metaphor. This seems more intuitive when one considers the point that we can teach and explain metaphors to others. In the *Merchant of Venice*, Shakespeare, through the character Antonio uses the world-stage metaphor in another way:

I hold the world but as the world, Gratiano –  
A stage where every man must play a part,  
And mine a sad one (Act 1, Sc 1)

Presumably, the world-stage metaphors in both plays will have similar effects on the audience. However, to explain the differences in the metaphors (for in the *As You Like It* case, Shakespeare was more concerned with the ‘seven ages of man’ from infancy to old age), to provide an interpretation of the metaphors, and to teach the metaphor to others, one would have to appeal to more than the effects of the metaphor. And a plausible candidate for this extra appeal is the meaning or content of the metaphors.

Many things are transferable without having to invoke the grasp of meaning, one may argue, and that the fact that metaphors could be passed on from one person to another does not imply that this is possible by means of grasp of meaning. What justifies the view that in the cases characterized above, in the use of metaphors to bring about certain effects in others, meaning is at stake? Suppose that three people (A, B and C) experience the same effect of a metaphor. Now, it is possible that A can use the metaphor to cause the same effect in others, B can use the metaphor to bring about a different effect in others (B intends to pass on a different effect in others), and C is unable to use the metaphor despite experiencing the effect of it. What explains

the abilities of A and B and the inability of C? A reasonable supposition here is that C is not able to use the metaphor because she does not get it, she does not understand it, she does not grasp what it means, even if she is aware of the effect it had on her. And many metaphors are quite abstruse and recondite. But even in the case of very simple metaphors, one could experience what their effects are without being able to use them. A plausible explanation for C's inability to use a metaphor that has had an effect on him is that C does not grasp the meaning of the metaphor. The difference in the abilities of A and B can also be attributed to their understanding – grasp of meaning – of the metaphor. To be able to use a metaphor in multiple contexts, to be able to use a metaphor to intend to achieve a different effect, marks the presence of understanding the metaphor, such an understanding we have seen, involves both the grasp of meaning and the ability to use the metaphor. Meaning is, therefore, at stake in both the ability to use a metaphor and the inability to use a metaphor in situations where one is aware of the effect of the metaphor.

In practice, hearers rarely ask for the meaning or interpretation of metaphors they freshly encounter; yet, they work out the meaning of those metaphors and employ the same metaphors in their own discourses with the expectation that other hearers will be able to work out what the metaphors mean. The capacity to work out what a novel metaphor means unaided by the metaphor-maker involves, at the very least, a kind of reflective comprehension of the effects of the metaphor. *Hearers can become users* of certain metaphors not only because of their ability to appreciate the point of metaphors or the similarities they are directed to perceive but more importantly because they can reflect on, and understand, the content of metaphors. This observation is common to both literal and metaphorical uses of language. The crude causal

account cannot adequately explain how hearers of metaphors can become effective users of metaphors.

Metaphors have also been used in teaching in classrooms in many different ways: for instance, it has been used to teach systems thinking and the clarification of concepts in organizational theory (Taber, 2007), to aid the solving of mathematical problems (Chapman, 1997), and in the teaching and learning of science (Tobin & Tippins 1996). The success in the use of metaphors in teaching and learning suggests that the particular metaphors used are easily grasped by learners which aid in their cognitive abilities to solving problematic cases. And again, appeal to the effects or insights of metaphors alone cannot explain both teachers' reliance on metaphors and learners' ability to utilize metaphors to understand other more complicated subjects.

Will it be plausible for the Davidsonian Anti-Truth theorist to surmise that in the discussions above where meaning was invoked we were only talking about *literal* meaning? That for instance, the reason why A and B are able to use the metaphor to bring about certain effects is because they grasp the literal meaning of the metaphorical sentences? That cannot be right, for if literal meaning was at stake then C should equally be able to use the metaphor. All A, B, and C understand the literal meaning of the metaphor, and so if there is a difference in their abilities to use the metaphor then that difference cannot reside in their grasping of literal meaning. To motivate the view that more than literal meaning is at stake, and that there is more to the effects of a metaphor we can think of the practice of translating metaphors. Metaphors, unlike idioms, can be translated from one language (or be appropriated from one linguistic community) into another without necessarily losing their figurativeness; but their reception and interpretations differ from one culture or linguistic community to another, for when translation occurs, the

cultural background and value systems of the source and host languages are taking into account (Newmark 1988; Dobrzynska 1995). The Akan metaphor 'sika yɛ mogya', for instance, which can be rendered as 'money is blood' has a proverbial and didactic aura to it that the English equivalent lacks.

According to Dobrzynska (1995), there are three possibilities opened to a translator who seeks to adopt a metaphor into another language: "he or she can use in his or her text an exact equivalent of the original metaphor (this procedure can be represented as  $M \rightarrow M$ ); he or she can look for another metaphorical phrase which would express a similar sense (the procedure that can be represented as  $M_1 \rightarrow M_2$ ); finally, he or she can replace an untranslatable metaphor of the original with its approximate literal paraphrase (the  $M \rightarrow P$  procedure)" (p. 599). Interesting questions to ask with respect to these possibilities of translation of metaphors are these: What is principally involved in the translating of a metaphor from one language to another? What aspect or feature of a metaphor warrants or makes it possible to translate it into another language? The answers to these questions cannot be the effects (or even the insights) of the metaphor. Translation occurs over the meanings or senses of the expressions in the source language into the target language. In a good translation, if two metaphorical expressions are translations of each other, then they can be intersubstitutable within a complex expression *salva significatione*, that is, without a loss of their meaningfulness. This is why Dobrzynska indicated that the translator look for an expression in the target language with the same or similar 'sense' to the metaphor to be translated. The possibility of translating metaphors from one language into another without a loss of both their figurativeness and meaningfulness counts against positing that metaphors only have literal meanings.

The same metaphor may have different interpretations depending on the socio-cultural context in which it is used. For instance, metaphorically calling someone a shark is generally understood in the United States and South Africa negatively as saying of that person that she is ruthless, rapacious or voracious, while in Ghana the metaphor is understood positively as saying that the person is (academically) intelligent and smart. Certain everyday metaphors like ‘time is money’, ‘money is blood’, and ‘life is war’ are proverbial in substance, in that, different cultural groups and linguistic communities bring their cultural and social experiences to bear on the understanding and interpretation of such metaphors. The interpretation of metaphors is both situational (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) and culturally conditioned (Dobrzynska 1995). This phenomenon where certain metaphors are generally understood in a certain way by one linguistic community and differently by another establishes two things: commonality and differences in meaning and the predictability of the meaning of the metaphor in multiple contexts.

Another crucial feature of our practices of using of metaphors is our capacity to use metaphors in arguments and engage in drawing certain inferences and implications from metaphorical sentences. Consider these two arguments from Martinich (1996):

- (1). “My love is a red rose.  
A red rose is beautiful, or sweet smelling, or highly valued....  
Therefore, my love is beautiful, or sweet smelling, or highly valued....” (p. 431)<sup>48</sup>
- (2). “No man is an island  
Every island is separated from every other thing of its own kind, does not depend upon any other thing of its own kind for its existence or well-being, and is not diminished by the destruction of any other of its own kind; ....  
Therefore, no man is separated from every other thing of its own kind, does not depend upon any other thing of its own kind for its existence or well-being, and is not diminished by the destruction of any other of its own kind.” (p. 435)<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> The ellipsis is intended to show the open-endedness of the metaphor

<sup>49</sup> Martinich, however, thinks that ‘no man is an island’ is not a metaphor. For according to him, “every metaphorical proposition is false” (p. 430) and “it is true and not false that no man is an island” (435) although he

Martinich considers (1) a valid argument and (2) an invalid argument. We need not worry about the validity of the arguments containing metaphors; it is enough to see that metaphorical sentences can serve as premises in arguments; metaphorical sentences play a role in reasoning. As premises of arguments, they can serve as reasons and justifications for conclusions, and stand in need of reasons and justifications. The observation that metaphors can serve as premises and conclusions of arguments and that we can draw inferences from the metaphors we put forward suggest that metaphors must have meanings and contents. In reasoning with metaphors, users and their audiences are able to make inferences from the metaphors and provide other statements (metaphorical and literal) that tend to extend and explicate further the meaning and import of the metaphors. Consider also, the popular Psalm 23 from the Bible:

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.  
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures;  
He leadeth me beside the still waters.  
He restoreth my soul:  
He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness, for his name's sake.  
Yeah, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,  
I will fear no evil: for thou art with me,  
Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.

What is going on here in the psalm is that the Psalmist starts with the metaphor 'the lord is my shepherd' and provides inferences that we can draw from the metaphor: if the lord is my shepherd then I shall not want, he will lead me to green pastures, his rod and staff with comfort me, etc.<sup>50</sup> Tirrell (1989) has called this phenomenon the 'extending of metaphor'. 'The Lord is my shepherd' in our example is for her the 'initiating metaphor' and the other expressions as the 'extensions' of the metaphor which together with the initiating metaphor form a 'metaphorical

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concedes that the Donne's line is a figure of speech. I regard it as a metaphor because I do not subscribe to the view that the identifying mark of a metaphor is literal falsity.

<sup>50</sup> This does not suggest that the Psalmist himself is actually making these inferences and connections; it is enough for his audience and readers of the Bible to draw these connections as they ponder on the initial metaphor.

network or chain'. The Psalmist presents us with an inferential metaphorical network where we see that his not wanting and being led to green pastures follows from his initial metaphor that the lord is his shepherd. For Tirrell, understanding a metaphor amounts to being "able to make appropriate uses of its extensions" (p. 18). Sometimes, the metaphor-maker herself provides the various extensions of the metaphor which develops and explains the metaphor in more detail. An example Tirrell uses is from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* where Lady Capulet not only tells Juliet to 'read o'er the volume of Young Paris' face' but extends her metaphor to provide better and further particulars of what is involved in this kind of reading:

Read o'er the volume of Young Paris' face,  
And find delight writ there with beauty's pen;  
Examine every married lineament,  
And see how one another lends content;  
And what obscur'd in this fair volume lies  
Find written in the margent of his eyes.  
This precious book of love, this unbound lover,  
To beautify him, only lacks a cover. (Act 1 Sc 3)

Tirrell herself stops short of saying that the extensions of the metaphor serve as unpacking the meaning and content of the metaphor; her interest is in showing how extended metaphors impact our understanding of metaphors. However controversial the relation between the original metaphor and its extensions could be, the possibility of providing extensions to a metaphor suggests that the original metaphor had a meaning and a content, for it does not sound intuitive to suggest that the effects of the metaphor were being extended. The meaning of a metaphor can be extended; its effects cannot be analogously extended.

From the discussion in this section, we can conclude that the Davidsonian Anti-Truth theorist's denial of the meaning and content of metaphors is implausible, and her positing of a causal account to explain metaphors is theoretically inadequate. The various practices we engage

in using metaphors and our cognitive capacities do so – using metaphors in soliloquies, reasoning – all suggest that metaphors are so much more than the Anti-Truth account would grant.

### **2.3.5. Metaphor and Disagreement**

A final feature about metaphor worth noting is that we can agree and disagree with, assent and dissent to, certain metaphorical utterances. Such agreements and disagreements reflect our understanding of metaphors - we cannot agree or disagree on a metaphor if we do not understand it. Also, if we can agree or disagree over a metaphorical sentence then it implies that the sentence has been recognized or identified as a metaphor, since a genuine disagreement cannot obtain between two people over a particular sentence if one construes the sentence metaphorically and the other understands it literally. The two people clearly agree about the statement as put forward literally but disagreement only emerges when the sentence is considered metaphorically.

There are several ways in which disagreement can occur in our use of metaphor. In one way, disagreements can occur over the significance or import of a metaphor. In this case, the parties to the disagreement accept the sentence or utterance as a metaphor but only disagree on what the metaphor is meant to achieve or the effects it is intended to have. For instance, if Fred tells us that “Paul is a gorilla” we could disagree on what Fred wants to draw our attention to about Paul or the effects he intends his utterance to have on us. The point or effect of the metaphor may be to warn us about Paul, or to tell us something new about Paul, or to make us see why Fred dislikes Paul, or to make us see Paul in a certain way – perhaps to see how fierce he is. Since a metaphor may have more than one point or effect this is a type of disagreement over which point or significance of the metaphor is acceptable. Relatedly, there can also be a

disagreement between two parties over the inferences, implications or conclusions that can be drawn from a metaphor. Two people can also disagree over the appropriateness or otherwise of an employment of metaphor in a particular context of discourse. And, lastly, a disagreement can occur over the appraisal or evaluation of metaphor. All these are disputes we could have about metaphor but not the sort of cases we could classify as genuine or substantive disagreements about the contents of metaphors. Can there be ‘content disagreement’ involving metaphors?

Let us begin by looking at what is meant by a substantive disagreement over the content of an assertion. In fact, what disagreement consists in is the subject of an ongoing debate in the literature that studies the phenomenon from both semantics and epistemology. Adopting a rather vague, but intuitive, notion of disagreement, Kompa (2014) characterizes disagreement as involving two necessary conditions: “speakers are in disagreement with each other only if (a) there is a certain intuition of conflict and (b) something they disagree on” (p. 2). One can think of the conflict or tension as an incompatibility or inconsistency between the beliefs (Feldman, 2007), attitudes (Goldman, 2009; Huvenes, 2012, 2014), or acceptances (MacFarlane, 2007; Elgin, 2009b; Belleri, 2014) of the disagreeing parties. The incompatibility arises between the truth or accuracy of the acceptances or judgements of the disagreeing parties which involves the “accuracy of one acceptance ‘precluding’ (MacFarlane, 2007), ‘ruling out’ (Rieppell, 2011), or ‘excluding’ (Marques, 2013) the accuracy of the other acceptance” (Belleri, 2014, p. 291). What is it that one party accepts or endorses that the other rejects which results in the incompatibility in their doxastic attitudes? The answer lies in the second condition of disagreement that Kompa points out: ‘something’ they disagree on.

Consider the following case of disagreement between A and B:

A: Nelson Mandela died in 2014

B: (I disagree,) Nelson Mandela died in 2013

When A asserts that Mandela died in 2014 and B asserts that he died in 2013, the disagreement occurs over the truth of the proposition asserted by the first speaker, A. The propositions their utterances express are inconsistent – the accuracy or truth of one precludes the accuracy or truth of the other. What stands in a relation of incompatibility or inconsistency is the contents of their assertions – the two contents cannot both be true from the same context of evaluation. As Lasersohn (2005) expresses it, there is a “relation between content and contradiction” (p. 649) which gives rise to disagreements. That is, two people may not be in a disagreement if they utter two sentences, where one is a negation or a denial of the other, but the sentences express different contents or propositions. A typical example is sentences containing contextually sensitive linguistic items like the indexical ‘I’. Suppose this discussion ensues between C and D:

C: I am in Cape Town

D: I am not in Cape Town

Despite the fact that D’s sentence is a negation of the sentence uttered by C, D and C cannot be said to be in disagreement. This is because the indexical ‘I’ picks out different people depending on the speaker. This means that the proposition expressed by C’s sentence is different from that expressed by D’s and hence D’s assertion is a denial of a different proposition than that expressed by C. The proposition asserted by D is consistent with that asserted by C. This shows that for there to be a genuine disagreement between two parties, there has to be a content – a proposition – the truth of which one believes, accepts, endorses, while the other disbelieves or rejects.

We can attempt a formulation [F] of a genuine content disagreement in this way:

If A and B disagree with each other then there is a proposition  $p$  such that

- i. A believes or accepts  $p$  (by uttering a sentence  $s$  that expresses the proposition that  $p$ )
- ii. B disbelieves or rejects  $p$  (by uttering a sentence  $t$  that expresses the denial of  $p$ )<sup>51</sup>

Armed with a notion of disagreement, the task now is to show whether this phenomenon obtains with metaphor and what the response of the causal account will be. We have seen that disagreement is intricately connected to content and that a case of disagreement implies that there is a propositional content the truth of which one party to the disagreement accepts and the other denies. Since the causal account denies any content or proposition to metaphor it means that there cannot be a genuine case of content disagreement with metaphor. But this is contrary to our intuitions – we can and do disagree with metaphors that involve the acceptance and rejection of contents.

Consider these two cases of disagreements:

- A: Mary is a pussycat
- B: I disagree.
  
- A: Mary is a sheep
- B: No, she is not! She is a tiger

From our discussion above, we can reason in this way:

1. If A and B disagree then there is *something*  $\phi$  they disagree on. (Kompa's condition A)
2. Assume that  $\phi$  is the effect or the insight of the metaphor A asserts.
3. If  $\phi$  is the effect the metaphor is to have on B, then B cannot genuinely disagree with A

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<sup>51</sup> It has been argued by Lopez de Sa (2014) that the notion of disagreement covers cases that go beyond that of contradictory judgements or incompatible attitudes with respect to one and the same content and where no intuition of conflict arises. And Huvenes (2012, 2014) has illustrated that there are cases of disagreements especially those involving sentences that contain predicates of taste where two people disagree even though the contents of the sentences are consistent with each other. Hence, following Sundell's (2011) characterization of the varieties of disagreements, I will take the formulation above as "Content Disagreement" – that is the type of disagreement which has to do with the truth of the propositional content asserted in one utterance and denied in the other. Content disagreement then involves either contradictory judgements with respect to one and the same content or judgements with contradictory contents.

4. If  $\phi$  is the insight of the metaphor then there can be no intuition of tension or conflict between A and B (Kompa's condition B)
5. But A accepts, believes  $\phi$  while B rejects, disbelieves  $\phi$
6. And there is a sense of conflict between their acceptances
7. Hence,  $\phi$  is not the effect or the insight of the metaphor (From 2-6)
8. This is a case of content disagreement (From 5, and Formulation [F])
9. Therefore,  $\phi$  is a proposition or content (from [F]).

If there is something that B is disagreeing about when A says that 'Mary is a pussycat' then she is disagreeing about the propositional content of the metaphor.

Reimer (2001) considers these two metaphors by Mathew Arnold and John Donne:

A: Yes! in this sea of life enisled,...  
We mortal millions live alone.

B: No man is an island.

Defending Davidson's account, she suggests that although someone who believes that 'man is a social animal' might agree with B while disagreeing with A, this is not a case of genuine disagreement. She thinks that "genuine agreement/disagreement makes sense only when something 'propositional' – something truth conditional – is grasped" and that this something propositional cannot be understood as the proposition expressed by the "metaphor itself" (p. 152). The metaphor-maker, according to her, "*needn't* mean anything propositional, and when he does, what he means is not expressed *by the words themselves*" (p. 152). In a Davidsonian fashion, Reimer explains that Arnold (in contrast to Donne) only "wanted to draw attention to man's alienation from his fellow man" (p. 152).

It is not clear why if the metaphor is to express a proposition then the proposition should be that which is expressed *by the words themselves*. Notice that the words of the sentences

themselves only have literal meanings and will express literal propositions in the sense of LM above. In that case, the two sentences will express different propositions and hence there can be no substantive disagreement. But as we have pointed out above, the issue of metaphorical disagreement implies, first, the recognition that the disagreement occurs only when the sentences are considered metaphors, and second, the occurrence of disagreement presupposes understanding the metaphors. So, the disagreement we are interested in here is not about the literal propositions the sentences express, hence, it is not about what the words themselves express. It, therefore, begs the question to argue that there cannot be genuine disagreements involving metaphors because of the propositions that the words of a metaphor literally express.

Surely, there cannot be a substantive disagreement here if Arnold's use of the metaphor is to draw attention to man's alienation from others and Donne's metaphor is to draw attention to the sociality of man. This characterization of the 'attention drawing' aspect of metaphor merely alludes to the effect, import or significance of the metaphor; that is, it characterizes a disagreement in significance. But as Reimer says, one metaphor is 'drawing attention' to the sociality of man and the other to the alienation of man. So, what are these things – the sociality and alienation of man – that these metaphor makers are drawing our attention to? More importantly, can one's belief and acceptance of the one be incompatible with the belief and acceptance of the other? Can there be tension between the acceptances of the two views? If the answer is yes to these questions then one plausible explanation for the conflict that arise from the acceptances of the two views is that that which our attention is being drawn to constitutes the contents of the metaphor.

There is reason to suppose that the disagreement between Arnold and Donne or that between A and B in our previous examples are substantial disagreements that involve

propositional contents. Genuine or substantive disagreements can be identified by the use of “explicit marks of disagreements, such as ‘No’, ‘I disagree’, ‘you’re mistaken’ or ‘that’s false’” (MacFarlane, 2014, p. 9). The presence of these marks does not necessarily imply content disagreements. However, according to MacFarlane, these marks such as ‘that’s false’, ‘that’s not true’, ‘that’s true’ function as *propositional anaphora*, that is, they are function as “pronouns referring back to the proposition” (p.19) expressed by an earlier assertion. For instance, where Tom asserts that “the vice-chancellor is a bulldozer” and Harry responds by saying that “No, that’s not true”, the use of the “that” here refers to the proposition expressed by Tom’s assertion. Harry’s response here expresses his disagreement with the content of the assertion made by Tom.

If, as argued by Davidson and Reimer, a metaphorical assertion like ‘the vice chancellor is a bulldozer’ only has a literal content or expresses a literal proposition, Harry’s response will be conversationally infelicitous or inappropriate. For, the metaphorical assertion *is* literally false and hence, responding to it by saying that ‘that’s not true’ or ‘that’s false’ is both inappropriate and uninformative. But if Harry is warranted in making his response, if he is understood to be denying the assertion made by Tom, and if his use of ‘that’ refers to the proposition expressed by Tom’s assertion, then it is plausible to suppose that there is a propositional content other than the literal content of Tom’s assertion that Harry rejects here. Reimer has to explain how it seems natural and not infelicitous for Harry to respond to Tom’s metaphorical assertion in the way he does although both Tom and Harry accept that the metaphorical assertion is literally false. The intuitive conflict in the dialogue between Tom and Harry can be attributed to the content expressed by Tom’s assertion that Harry disagrees with. In our practices of using metaphors we can have disagreements – disagreements not merely over the significance or effects of metaphors but the contents expressed by the metaphors. The notion of disagreement (or ‘content

disagreement’) involves an incompatibility in the attitudes of the disagreeing parties towards a particular proposition. And if disagreements can occur with metaphors then we can infer that metaphors must have contents for disagreements to be possible.

### **2.3.6. Conclusion**

We can conclude this part of the chapter by noting that the Anti-Truth causal account of metaphor gets it right by arguing that the words in a metaphor do not have additional or extra meanings other than their literal meanings. The account also seems plausible in indicating that metaphor also ‘nudges’, ‘provokes’, and ‘intimates’ us to do things in certain ways because they have effects on us. But for reasons given above, the account is not favourable in its further thesis that metaphors having effects is opposed to their having content, meaning or truth. I have tried to show that one can accept the central thesis of the causal account of metaphor (when it is understood in terms of word-literalism) and still posit that metaphors have content and meaning. The fact that we can use/misuse metaphors, that we can understand/misunderstand metaphors, and the fact that we can agree/disagree with metaphors, and the fact that we do reason with metaphors in arguments and make inferences from metaphors – all go to show that associated with a metaphor is a propositional content that we can grasp and evaluate.

### **2.4. Pro-Truth: Paraphrases to capture the propositional contents of metaphors**

The criticisms of the Anti-Truth theorist’s denial of the meaning and content of metaphors and the arguments we adduced in favour of metaphors having contents, suggest the following desiderata for a satisfactory account of metaphorical content:

1. *Non-compositionality*: The account should explain how the content of a metaphor is not arrived at by a compositional analysis, although, unlike that of an idiom, the content is connected to the meanings of the constituents that make it up.
2. *Figurativeness*: The account should explain the ways in which the metaphorical is distinct from the literal in terms of the derivation of their contents.
3. *Disagreement*: The account should be compatible with how there can be genuine disagreements involving metaphors.
4. *Assertion and Retraction*: The account should show speakers' ability to put forward claims and stand by those claims or retract earlier claims. It should also be able to explain how metaphors can serve as premises and conclusions of arguments.
5. *Inference and Extension*: The account should explain speakers' ability to make inferences from metaphorical claims and be able to extend and explicate original metaphors
6. *Use in Soliloquies*: The account should make sense of speakers' use of metaphors in monologues and in soliloquies where there are no intended audiences.
7. *Hearers' Uptake*: The account should be able to explain hearers' immediate understanding of metaphors and their ability to use the metaphors in other contexts to produce effects on their hearers.

A Pro-Truth theorist is one who admits that metaphorical statements are truth-evaluable because they have or express propositional contents that are either true or false. To use Cecilia Bartoli's description of her brother Gabriele as example,

"My brother is a crocodile – he is impulsive and angry, he changes like the wind"

the first part of her remark – ‘my brother is a crocodile’ – is a metaphor<sup>52</sup>; and the second part – ‘he is impulsive and angry, he changes like the wind’ – is considered variously as the content, meaning, interpretation, or paraphrase of the content of the metaphor. This is an interesting case where the metaphor-maker seems to offer a particular explication of what the metaphor means, thereby, saving curious hearers from coming up with a number of interpretations the speaker could have intended. The metaphor is about a subject and a predication of a property to the subject, the predicate presents us with a *description* of the subject – it is an attribution of a particular property to the referent of the subject term of the metaphor. The metaphorical statement has a semantic value – it is true or false if the subject ‘fits’ the description, or it is the way in which it is being described. Taken literally then, the description is false (on the assumption that Cecilia Bartoli herself is human and not a crocodile) but since the statement *is* a metaphor (or is being used as a metaphor), it is the second part of the remark – the paraphrase – which gives the interpretation of the property being attributed to Gabriele in literal terms that confers truth (or falsity) to the metaphor. That is, the metaphorical statement has truth value, and the truth value is derived from, and dependent upon, the truth or falsity of the corresponding interpretation or paraphrase of the metaphor. In this example then, the description of Gabriele as a crocodile is true if it is true that Gabriele is impulsive and angry and changes like the wind.

This reveals an intricate interrelationship among the concepts of truth, meaning, content and paraphrase. It is thought that meaning, together with the way the world is, determines truth, and in the case of metaphor, the meaning or content of a metaphor is captured by a paraphrase, and so a paraphrase, given the way the world is, determines the truth of a metaphor. Davidson (1978) and others in the non-cognitivist tradition of metaphor (Rorty, 1979, 1987, 1989; Reimer,

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<sup>52</sup> Another way of talking about the statement is to say that it is being used *as* a metaphor. The statement itself could also be another figure of speech like an irony or overstatement, or simply an insult, although both the linguistic (from the text) and the non-linguistic (from the interview, especially) contexts do not warrant any such construal.

2001; Cooper 1986, 1993; Lepore & Stone, 2010, 2015) are leery of paraphrases, not that paraphrases cannot be given but that a metaphor has no content or meaning to be captured by a paraphrase. A metaphorical utterance, according to Davidson, does not communicate a specific propositional content, and, if we are to paraphrase a metaphor, we will come to realize that there is an endless number of things a metaphor could suggest. Others like Black (1955, 1962) who admit that metaphors have contents are sceptical as to whether paraphrases can be given to capture the specific and definite contents of metaphors; they are even more sceptical about whether paraphrases can be given to exhaust all the possible contents a metaphor may express.

These concerns have not deterred some theorists from providing paraphrases to capture the contents of metaphors. Searle (1979, 1993), Martinich (1984), Fogelin (1988), Hills (1997), Levinson (2001), Cavell (2002), and Camp (2006a, 2006b, 2008) not only think that paraphrases can be given but that the ability to provide literal paraphrases for metaphors imply that metaphors have contents. For Levinson (2001), “the fact that the task of exhibiting in literal language the metaphorical meaning of a metaphor might not, perhaps, ever be *completely* discharged – the fact that it might always be possible to expand or supplement the paraphrases in which one seeks to cash out such meaning – should not be thought to license the inference that therefore the task *cannot* be carried out, and thus that the paraphrases offered at any given point necessarily fail to articulate *any* part of the meaning that a metaphor possesses” (p. 8). Therefore, he is not “afraid” to offer paraphrases of metaphors because he believes that paraphrases “strive to capture” and “exhibit” metaphorical meaning (2001, p. 7, 11). The charge of the impossibility, inappropriateness or inadequacy of a paraphrase to capture the meaning or content of a metaphor, it is believed, does not imply that a metaphor does not have a propositional content. Hills (1997), Bezuidenhout (2001), Camp (2006a, 2006b) contend that many literal utterances

cannot be paraphrased, and yet, their unparaphraseability does not yield the conclusion that literal utterances lack propositional contents. In the same way, the fact that many metaphors are impervious to paraphrases, or that their paraphrases do not adequately capture their contents, cannot be used as an argument against their lack of propositional content.

Advocates of paraphrases, or more broadly, those who think that paraphrases are the means of revealing the contents of metaphors, however, disagree on the mandate and work of paraphrases. Whereas Fogelin (1988) opines that the paraphrase of a metaphor which is to be given by an elliptical simile is itself figurative, many other theorists, especially Elizabeth Camp (2006a, 2008), prefer that the paraphrase gives the content of a metaphor in a literal and explicit form. And, whereas Cohen (1978, 1997), Moran (1989), Hills (1997), Levinson (2001) posit that there is a paraphraseable cognitive content of a metaphor and a non-paraphraseable content which is mostly the metaphor's 'suggestiveness' or 'imagistic force', others like Camp (2006a, 2008) think that the cognitive effects of a metaphor and the contents a speaker insinuated or suggested should not be included in the work of paraphrases. Setting aside these issues and concerns with paraphrases, the main concern here is with how metaphors come to have or express the contents that paraphrases are purported to capture.

There are two broad views or accounts of how we derive the content of a metaphor or of how a metaphor comes to express the content captured by paraphrases. They are the *Indirect Expression* and the *Direct Expression* accounts of metaphorical content depending on whether we derive the content of a metaphor via a mechanism of what a speaker means or implicates by uttering a metaphor or that the metaphor itself directly expresses a propositional content with the aid of certain pragmatic elements. The two views rely on a distinction in the philosophy of language between 'what is said' (or sentence-meaning) and 'what is communicated' (or 'what is

meant' or speaker-meaning)<sup>53</sup> and what should be the proper location of the content of metaphorical utterances.

#### **2.4.1 The *Indirect Expression* account of metaphorical content**

Taking a cue from indirect speech acts and a general theory of the cooperative mechanisms and implicatures that arise in conversations, pragmatic theorists of metaphor (Grice, 1989; Searle, 1979; Bergmann 1982; Martinich, 1984, Camp 2006a, ), draw a distinction between 'what is said' and 'what is meant' arguing that in metaphor, a speaker says one thing (or only 'makes as if to say' one thing) with its normal literal meaning in order to communicate or mean something else with a distinctive propositional content. The content of the metaphor does not belong to 'what is said' but rather to what is communicated or meant. Metaphorical meaning is, therefore, conveyed indirectly by saying something else, something false. Reckoning that what is said – 'S is P' – is literally false or absurd, the hearer adopts certain strategies in working out the speaker's intended meaning of the metaphor – 'S is R' – by computing the relevant values of R from the salient characteristics associated with P. The result is no different from merely providing a paraphrase of the metaphor, except that this process offers a procedure for the nomination and selection of the content of the metaphor that approximates the intended meaning of the speaker.

For instance, James Pinkerton, the former Bush Administration policy analyst, called Clinton "a male Southern belle who charmed his way to the top" and that "he is a pinball moving

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<sup>53</sup> The distinction is not always clear-cut and various authors have different conceptions of what counts as 'what is said' and 'what is meant' (Recanati 2004). Sometimes the distinction is given as two modes of meanings: semantic meaning – what is said – and pragmatic meaning – what is speaker-meant; sometimes what is 'speaker-meant' is reserved for 'what is implicated' by a sentence (Grice 1975); some authors think that certain contextual and pragmatic factors belong properly to 'what is said' (Bezuidenhout 2001, Recanati 2001, 2004, 2005), while others think they belong to what is meant or implicated (Camp 2006, Hall 2009). For the purposes of the discussion here, I shall use 'what is said' for sentence-meaning and 'what is meant' for speaker-meaning.

back and forth to the pressures of external events, without any internal gyroscope to guide him.”<sup>54</sup> Pinkerton is saying something true or false *of* Clinton – but this ‘something’ is different from what his utterance means literally. This ‘something’ is what is communicated (as opposed to what is said), the intended meaning(s) of the metaphorical utterance that is (are) given by paraphrasing or interpreting the utterance. The communicated meaning of an utterance, captured by the paraphrase, determines the truth or falsity of the metaphorical utterance. According to Camp (2006a), a paraphrase “should capture the content of the speaker’s intended illocutionary act” which means that “it should state how the world would have to be for the speaker’s claim (promise, etc) to count as true (or otherwise satisfied)” and that the paraphrase “must state that content in a literal and explicit fashion” (p. 2).<sup>55</sup>

One paradigmatic account of the *Indirect Expression* view is that of Bergmann (1982). “When language is used literally to assert a proposition, there is an intimate connection between the words used and the proposition asserted: the words literally *express* the proposition” (p. 234), says Bergmann. But obviously, “a person who uses a sentence metaphorically does not use it to assert the proposition that is literally expressed by the sentence”; nonetheless, “a particular sort of relation must hold between the sentence used and the proposition asserted” which is determined by the speaker’s meaning. “What is distinctive of all metaphorical uses of language” says Bergmann “is that the content of what is communicated is a *direct* function of salient characteristics associated with (at least) part of the expression – rather than of the literal meaning of that part” (p. 234). The salient characteristics of a thing, according to Bergmann, include

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<sup>54</sup> Michael Kelly, “Words and Deeds; The Guinier Affair Aggravates Clinton’s Credibility Problem,” *The New York Times*, June 6, 1993, <http://www.nytimes.com/1993/06/06/weekinreview/words-and-deeds-the-guinier-affair-aggravates-clinton-s-credibility-problem.html>.

<sup>55</sup> Camp further explains that not only should the semantic content of the paraphrase be the same as the content of the speaker’s intended speech act, but that “it should enable an otherwise linguistically competent speaker to understand the original utterance’s content simply in virtue of understanding the meanings of the paraphrasing sentence’s constituent terms and their mode of combination” (p. 2).

“those characteristics which we would typically list on the spot if asked to state what we believe is *distinctive* of that thing” (p. 235). As an example, she notes that the salient characteristics associated with a name like Einstein include properties commonly attributed to Einstein such as that of being a scientist and of being brilliant. Hence, the content of the claim that “John is an Einstein” becomes “John is a brilliant scientist”; and this works because, as she puts it, “the proposition I have asserted is then a function of the literal meaning of ‘John’ and of the salient characteristics associated with ‘Einstein’” (p. 235).<sup>5657</sup>

The *Indirect Expression* view in locating the content of metaphors in speaker-meaning or the intentions of the speaker has certain merits and virtues. First of all, it offers a non-compositional analysis of the content of metaphors, and thus satisfying the first desideratum for a satisfactory account of metaphorical content. Unlike literal sentences whose semantic contents are a function of the contents of the words and their mode of composition, metaphors have pragmatic contents which are recovered through the intentions of the speakers and the salient characteristics that are commonly associated with certain words of the metaphor. Secondly, by endowing metaphors with a meaning and content, the view shows that metaphors are not merely abuses of language or ‘unfamiliar noises’ or that they are pragmatically deficient. The account undermines both an ‘emotivist’ view that takes metaphors as merely the expression of emotions, and an ‘expressivist’ view that says, crudely, that in uttering a metaphor one is not asserting

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<sup>56</sup> Bergmann also allows that saliency should be sensitive to, and dependent on, the context of the utterance. The notion of saliency (and ‘relevancy’ for Sperber & Wilson 1986) of characteristics as producing the content of metaphors also underpins Black’s (1955, 1962) ‘interaction’ theory and the pragmatic theories of Searle (1979, 1993) and Martinich (1984).

<sup>57</sup> Emma Borg (2001) agrees with Bergmann that “there is a definite cognitive content associated with a metaphor” (p. 247); she also agrees with Bergmann that “each metaphorical utterance is somehow associated with a set of further propositions, which diverge in some respect from the proposition literally expressed, but where this set of associated propositions is also constrained by the proposition which is literally expressed” (p. 236). Instead of the set of associated propositions being determined by the salient characteristics associated with the terms of a metaphor, Borg posits that the set of propositions is determined by “the operation of a special figurative interpretation function, *f*, which takes as input the literal meaning of the sentence uttered, *p*, together with ...a ‘conceptual framework’...and yields as output a set of further propositions, which give us the set of possible figurative interpretations of the sentence uttered” (p. 237).

anything at all. Metaphors are also speech acts whose meanings depart from their linguistic or sentential meanings in a way that shows that their users are cooperating in a communicative discourse. Metaphors are intentionally employed to achieve certain goals and effects. And thirdly, the intentions of the speaker together with certain pragmatic features associated with the words of the metaphor provides us with a procedure for recovering the content of a metaphor and for judging the adequacy of the paraphrases.

However, the *Indirect Expression* view is unattractive as an account of metaphorical content because it does not adequately satisfy the third to sixth desiderata for a satisfactory account of metaphorical content – *disagreement, deductive and inductive reasoning, assertion and retraction, inference and extension, and use in soliloquies*. If the content of a metaphor is the proposition that is speaker-meant or the intention of the speaker then the account cannot explain satisfactorily how a metaphor can serve as a claim in a disagreement or a premise in an argument. In a genuine disagreement, one party puts forth a claim and endorses the propositional content of that claim while the other party rejects the claim or the content of that claim. This allows for the first party to provide reasons to support and justify her claim or retract the claim in the face of evidence against it. If the content of a metaphor is given by the intention of the speaker or what is speaker-meant, retracting and supporting the claims put forth in a disagreement will not be possible. For what one retracts is not the proposition that is speaker-meant but that which is meant by the sentence in context.

According to MacFarlane (2011), “to retract an assertion (that is, a particular *act* of asserting) is to ‘take it back’, rendering it ‘null and void’, the way a retracted offer is null and void” (p. 83). How can one ‘take back’ a metaphorical assertion when the content of that assertion is the intention of the speaker or that which is speaker-meant? What the speaker

intended to mean cannot be taken back. In fact, one can sincerely retract or take back an assertion and still hold on to what he intended or meant by that assertion. But if we can decouple the assertion and retraction of claims from what speakers intend by those claims then the contents of claims – that which we can assert and retract, that which we can assent and dissent to, that which we can agree and disagree with – cannot lie in what speakers intend. The problem here with the *Indirect Expression* view is the proposal that in metaphor one says something – ‘S is P’ – but means something else – ‘S is R’, that is, in metaphor “the speaker utters a sentence that means literally that the object S falls under the concept P, but where the speaker means by his utterance that the object S falls under the concept R” (Searle, 1993, p. 110). Suppose, for example, that Thomas says metaphorically of George that “George is the excrement of the Council” where he speaker-means that the Council got rid of George because he was no longer of use to them. Amidst protests from George and others that the metaphor is ethically offensive, Thomas can apologize and withdraw his assertion that George is the excrement of the Council. However, since what he speaker-meant, that George was discharged since he was no longer useful to the Council, is not offensive, Thomas can withdraw his metaphor and still hold on to what he speaker meant. In the face of evidence contrary to the fact that George was discharged because he was not useful, what will amount to a retraction of Thomas’ metaphor? Does Thomas retract or take back the fact that S is P or that S is R? What one takes back or retracts is a linguistic utterance but if one didn’t mean what he uttered then what does he retract or take back? On the assumption that what he uttered – S is P – is a metaphor, he cannot retract his metaphor by retracting a paraphrase of the metaphor, the S is R.

The metaphor, ‘Richard is a gorilla’, according to Searle, can be uttered to mean “Richard is mean, nasty, prone to violence, and so on, even though both speaker and hearer know

that in fact gorillas are shy, timid, and sensitive creatures, but generations of gorilla mythology have set up associations that will enable the metaphor to work even though both speaker and hearer know these beliefs to be false” (1993, p. 105). Searle considers this as a principle for computing the R term from the P term, that is, in situations where P things are said to be R even though R is false of P. Now, if we allow Richard is mean, nasty, etc., – the S is R – to be the content of the metaphor Richard is a gorilla, how do we make sense of the situation where Richard is indeed shy and timid? And again, which of the two does one retract in the face of counter-evidence – the S is P or the S is R? And what sense can we make of one disagreeing with, or denying the content of the metaphor, where in this case the content is false.

Disagreement is possible even in situations where the second interlocutor does not know or cannot recover what the first interlocutor speaker-means by his claim. And this is because in most cases, what the first interlocutor speaker-means by his assertion is quite irrelevant to whether others will accept, endorse or deny his assertion. Indeed, the point of *denying* an assertion is only proper in the context where the content of the assertion does not reside in the intentions of the speaker. We can allow that in the course of a disagreement, it will be evident that the first interlocutor speaker-meant something else by his assertion and this might resolve the locus of the dispute. However, this will not dispel the criticism that in retracting his statement, the first interlocutor cannot be retracting what he speaker-meant.

Searle observes correctly that “A speaker says S is P, but means metaphorically an indefinite range of meanings, S is R<sub>1</sub>, S is R<sub>2</sub>, etc” (1993, p. 111). But this observation presents two challenges: one with respect to soliloquies, and two with respect to the view that the meaning of metaphors is what is speaker-meant. In the case of soliloquies, if a speaker utters a metaphor and means an indefinite range of things then it raises the question of whether the

speaker meant anything at all by his utterance. If a speaker means something by his utterance of a metaphor to himself what is the point of uttering the metaphor to himself and meaning something else by what he utters? Why would the speaker go through the dual process of saying one thing and meaning something else when he is simply talking to himself? The challenge here is that in positing an additional layer of speaker meaning, the *Indirect Expression* account is not well-suited to explain why speakers will want to engage in indirectness when they are speaking to themselves.

The second challenge can be expressed by saying that speaker-meaning is not ontologically prior to *the meaning* of a metaphor. It is an indisputable fact that a particular metaphor can have multiple meanings, and where there are, say, three different meanings of a metaphor, a speaker cannot utter the metaphor to mean all three meanings. Speaker-meaning disambiguates rather than introduces a fresh meaning to a metaphor. The principles involved in computing the values of the R term from the salient characteristics of the P term does not forge into existence a new meaning; so long as the computation of the values of R is done with reference to the P term, we arrive at an existing meaning of the metaphor. So, in a particular context, a speaker utters S is P to mean S is R<sub>1</sub> where S is R<sub>1</sub> is the meaning that is salient and relevant to the context. Speaker-meaning picks out one of the meanings of the metaphor and that is why speaker-meaning is not ontologically prior to the meanings of the metaphor.

The case for the assertion and retraction of metaphorical contents in disagreements also applies to the inferential relations we can make when we use metaphorical statements as premises and conclusions of arguments. To be able to evaluate arguments for their strength and validity, the contents of premises and conclusions are not construed as the propositions that are speaker-intended. This allows one to infer the proper logical and non-logical connections among

the premises and conclusions of arguments. The ability to make inferences from certain metaphorical claims, and the ability to draw connections among various metaphorical and other figurative expressions in a particular text, show that the contents of metaphorical claims are not what the speaker intends them to be. It is not peculiar to metaphor that the potency of the inferences we draw follows what is said rather than what is speaker-meant. Compare these two arguments:

(1)

p1: My love is a red rose.

p2: A red rose is beautiful, or sweet smelling, or highly valued.

c: Therefore, my love is beautiful, or sweet smelling or highly valued.

(2)

p1: The sun is the luminous celestial body around which the earth and other planets revolve

p2: Juliet is the sun

c: Therefore, Juliet is the luminous celestial body around which the earth and other planets revolve.<sup>58</sup>

The use of metaphors in these arguments affect the soundness and persuasiveness of the arguments. Someone who makes these arguments may speaker-mean a number of things by her use of the metaphors. However, the evaluation of the arguments, the relation of the premises to the conclusions, and the soundness or otherwise of these two arguments can only be determined from treating the content of the metaphors from what-is-said. Indeed, it is based on the content of what is said that we determine the second argument as fallacious while the first argument is a valid one. This suggests that the effectiveness and appropriateness of inferences from premises to

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<sup>58</sup> Sometimes, metaphors can be used to reason fallaciously by means of equivocation where there is a switch in the senses of the expressions in a syllogistic argument. The kind of error committed in this argument is a species of the fallacy of equivocation known as *quaternio terminorum* which is characteristic of lexical ambiguity.

conclusions follows from what is said – the utterances made. We can draw inferences from metaphorical statements in spite of what their original makers had intended them to mean. We evaluate the propriety of inferences in reference to the meanings and contents of the claims from which the inferences are made, and it does not seem plausible that such meanings and contents belong to the intentions of speakers. Because the *Indirect Expression* view of what constitutes the content of a metaphor cannot satisfactorily explain the use of metaphors in disagreements and argumentative reasoning it is not an attractive account of metaphorical content.

#### **2.4.2. The *Direct Expression* account of metaphorical content**

A ‘contextualist’ conception of ‘what is said’ which allows contextual factors to ‘intrude’ into ‘what is said’ so that an aspect of the content of ‘what is said’ is pragmatically determined, will defend the view that metaphorical meaning and content belong to, and are directly expressed by, ‘what is said’. This contextualist conception allows that the conventionally encoded meaning or the semantic meaning of a sentence underdetermines ‘what is said’ and that the pragmatic processes of ‘enrichment’ and ‘loosening’ add certain elements of content to the encoded content or meaning. This view sees metaphor on a continuum with ordinary uses of language like ‘loose talk’. The view has been defended in varied forms by Sperber & Wilson (1986, 1987), Carston (2002, 2010a), Recanati (1995, 2004), Bezuidenhout (2001), Wearing (2006).

Bezuidenhout (2001), for instance, defends a “direct expression view” of metaphor as belonging to ‘what is said’. According to her, “when one utters a sentence in some context intending it to be understood metaphorically, one directly expresses a proposition, which can potentially be evaluated as either true or false. This proposition is what is said by the utterance in that context” (p. 156). How is the directness of the expression to be understood? When one utters a sentence, she intends that her hearer uses the syntactic and semantic clues provided by the

sentence “along with non-linguistic information available in their mutual cognitive environment, in order to recover what is said” (p. 165). For instance, when someone wants to know where I have been so far on a particular morning and I utter the sentence:

I’ve been to upper campus.

the sentence is “pragmatically enriched” to restrict my being to campus at some particular period of time in the past. What I said from a contextualist point of view then becomes something like:

Richmond has been to the upper campus of the University of Cape Town *on the morning of utterance*.

Similarly, when I enter a house and I stand in the hallway and utter:

It is silent here.

I expect my hearer to treat the word ‘silent’ as an *ad hoc* concept (Carston 2010a,b, 2011) by using the semantically encoded meaning of the word ‘silent’ as one clue, and a pragmatic process of ‘loosening’ to recover what I have said. The pragmatic processes of loosening and enrichment that aid in the recovery of ‘what is said’ in the cases of loose talk are the same mechanisms that work with metaphors. This view about the directness of metaphors is also influenced by psychological data about the comprehension of metaphors in the sense that the comprehension of metaphors is mostly direct without one having to cancel a literal comprehension or interpretation before understanding the metaphor (Gibbs, 1992; Glucksberg & Keysar, 1993). But why should the content of the metaphor be included in what is said? Bezuidenhout offers us this dialogue (2001, p. 157):

A: How about Bill?

B: Bill’s a bulldozer

A: That’s true. But isn’t that a good thing in this case? We want someone who’ll stand up to the administration and get things for our department.

C: I disagree that he's a bulldozer; that exterior hides someone who's basically insecure. But either way, Bill wouldn't make a good chair.

Bezuidenhout explains that “in this dialogue A and C are agreeing and disagreeing, respectively, with the metaphorical content of B's utterance” and that “the most natural construal to put on such a dialogue is that B says something, that B says it with assertoric force, and that A and C are either agreeing or disagreeing with what B says” (p. 157). As Camp (2006b) explained further in her criticism of Bezuidenhout's view, “it would be natural to report B as having *said* that Bill is a tough guy who doesn't let obstacles stand in his way” (p. 284). Not only are ordinary speakers willing to use ‘say’ to “*report* metaphorically expressed contents”, but also that metaphor makes the speaker's intended content “explicit” in the sense that “hearers can respond to the speaker's intended content by echoing her words” (Camp, 2006b, p. 282); and this is why we have to include metaphor in ‘what is said’.

Although she thinks that metaphors directly express propositions, Bezuidenhout acknowledges that the open-ended nature of metaphor allows that there could be more than one proposition being expressed by a metaphor, and hence, the recovery of the contents of a metaphor may never be exhausted. But she opines that the problem of the inexhaustibility of the content of metaphor in itself is not an “embarrassment” and that the problem arises both for the direct expression view and the indirect communicative view of pragmatic theories. Just as there could be an indefinite number of propositions expressed by a loose use of, for instance, “it is silent here” depending on the context in which it is uttered, so a metaphor may directly express a number of propositions.

Assimilating metaphor to loose talk too, Catherine Wearing (2006) also locates metaphor in the domain of ‘what is said’, arguing that if the content of metaphor was an implicature or something that is otherwise communicated, reasonable responses like ‘No, she's not’ or ‘So she

is' to Romeo's metaphor 'Juliet is the sun' would be infelicitous. She notes that such responses affirm or deny what Romeo has said, "taking Romeo to have said that Juliet is *metaphorically* the sun", and that such responses are felicitous because they respond to the metaphorical content "as if it is what is said" (p. 312). Wearing, unlike Bezuidenhout, prefers to limit talk of 'expression of propositions' to literal uses of language and considers how we can have a metaphorical 'analogue' for literal content. She says that "what is needed is something that could *both* function as content in the same sort of way that the proposition literally does *and* capture what a metaphorical utterance seems to mean or to express" (p. 324). Her preferred locution is "count as an X" (or 'counts as an X' or 'counting as an X', as the case may be). She gives an example of what she takes to be a metaphor – 'the woods are laughing' – and explains that understanding the metaphor involves understanding how the woods *count as* laughing, that is, what the woods are doing which count as laughing in the context in which they are described. The metaphorical content – what the woods are doing which count as laughing – determines whether the metaphor is true or false. According to Wearing, this property of laughing, that which the woods are said to be doing, can be 'approximated' by a paraphrase such as "making a light, fluttery, happy-sounding noise". "The content of the metaphor as a whole", Wearing posits, "is something like the proposition that the woods are laughing-in-the-sense-of-making-a-light-fluttery-happy-sounding-noise" (p. 324). In a similar formulation, Wearing writes that "the content of the metaphor is simply the way in which its subject counts as being as it is described: what the woods are like such that they count as laughing" (p. 326). What fixes 'counting as an X'? Or more importantly, which way of counting as an X among contending properties is the correct way? Wearing informs us that "something counts as an X as long as it is *close enough* to

really being an X” and that the correct way of counting as an X is “the one the speaker has in mind” (p. 325).<sup>59</sup>

The *Direct Expression* view has some advantages over the *Indirect* speaker-meaning account of metaphorical content. It is able to explain how we are able to agree/disagree with, and assent/dissent to, metaphorical statements put forward in a communicative discourse. Unlike the speaker-meaning account, it does not offer a two-step approach to the interpretation of metaphors, where a cancellation of the literal content precedes adverting to the intentions of the speaker. By inclusion of the pragmatic tools of loosening and enrichment, the *Direct Expression* account shows how the content of a metaphor is underdetermined by a purely semantic compositional analysis.

Nonetheless, the *Direct Expression* account does not give a satisfactory account of the *figurativeness* of metaphorical expressions. By assimilating metaphors to loose talk, and seeing the interpretation of metaphors on a continuum with literal expressions, the *Direct Expression* view fails to take account of the figurativeness and the phenomenological experience that goes into *the making* of metaphors.<sup>60</sup> It is crucial in showing that the meaning and interpretation of metaphors, and the mechanism used to arrive at such meanings and interpretations, are not

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<sup>59</sup> This seems to suggest that Wearing is conceding to at least part of the content being determined by the intentions of the speaker. Wearing’s account leaves us thirsty for a broader and comprehensive account of how we can determine the contents of metaphors that have nothing to do with adjectives like ‘laughing’ – something she failed to do. Take for instance, the metaphor from the beginning of this piece – ‘My brother is a crocodile’. On Wearing’s account, the content of the metaphor will be determined by asking, perhaps, what counts as a crocodile, or more charitably, what counts as being a crocodile? Or perhaps, we should rather ask “what is it that Gabriele does that count as being a crocodile?” There could be something that one could be doing that counts as being a crocodile but it is not clear that, or how, anger, as it turned out, is the property in reference here. It is very curious how Wearing will analyze the content of similes – the curiosity arises because one thing ‘counting as’ another thing seems very much like what we will take a simile that explicitly uses ‘as’ and ‘like’ in its comparison to be doing.

<sup>60</sup> In sections 2.3.3 and 2.3.4 I argued the speaker’s side of things in the making of metaphors is crucial to an account of metaphorical content. Proponents of both the *Direct Expression* and the *Indirect Expression* views could posit that my emphasis on the speaker’s side of things does not directly attack their positions since their accounts focus on the hearers’ interpretations of metaphors. While this may be true, their disregard of the speaker’s side of things goes to establish one significant point: that their accounts do not offer an adequate and satisfactory account of the content of metaphors. An adequate account of the content of metaphors must incorporate both the kinds of things speakers do in the making of metaphors and the kinds of things hearers do in the interpretation of metaphors.

markedly different from that of literal expressions, one also shows the markedly features that distinguish the metaphorical uses of language from the literal. One such feature is the experiential or phenomenological point of view that constitutes the making of metaphors. This is one thing that marks the metaphorical as a *figure* of speech. This figurative dimension should be factored in providing an account of the content of metaphors.

There is a sense in which the appropriate meaning and content of a metaphor could be provided for only by considering the speaker-meaning of the metaphor. Both the *Direct* and *Indirect* views appeal to salient and relevant characteristics or connotations of the words in the metaphor in determining the meaning and content of metaphors. However, in most cases, we will not be able to tell what is salient and distinctive about most things; in many cases also, we can understand the metaphor and even determine its content without recourse to, and despite being oblivious of, the salient characteristics distinctive of the terms of the metaphor. Consider Theodore Roethke's *I knew a Woman*<sup>61</sup>

I knew a woman, lovely in her bones,  
When small birds sighed, she would sigh back at them;  
Ah, when she moved, she moved more ways than one:  
The shapes a bright container can contain!  
Of her choice virtues only gods should speak,  
Or English poets who grew up on Greek  
(I'd have them sing in chorus, cheek to cheek).

How well her wishes went! She stroked my chin,  
She taught me Turn, and Counter-turn, and Stand;  
She taught me Touch, that undulant white skin;  
I nibbled meekly from her proffered hand;  
She was the sickle; I, poor I, the rake,  
Coming behind her for her pretty sake

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<sup>61</sup> From the *Collected Poems of Theodore Roethke*, Anchor Books, 1974.

(But what prodigious mowing we did make).

What does Roethke mean by “she was the sickle; I, poor I, the rake”? If we work with the cutting and gathering characteristics that are distinctive of sickles and rakes respectively, we will lose the intended meaning of the metaphor. Roethke is employing the device of *double entendre* here where the subtle interpretation – rather than the obvious one – that suggests some sexual positioning or intercourse is the intended meaning of the metaphor. And this fits in well with the overall sexual glamour about the woman he *knew*. The saliency of characteristics associated with things – the sickle and the rake in this case – fails to give us the communicated content of the metaphor. Appeal to the intended meaning of the speaker is relevant here in determining the content of the metaphor.

## **2.5. From phenomenology to praxis: the contentfulness of metaphors**

A satisfactory account of metaphorical content, I posited, should satisfy these desiderata: the content of a metaphor should go beyond a semantic compositional analysis; it should take account of its figurativeness; it should account for the ability to engage in genuine disagreements involving metaphorical claims; it should account for speakers’ assertion and retraction of metaphorical claims; it should account for the use of metaphors in reasoning as premises and conclusions of arguments; and it should account for the ability to make inferences from metaphorical claims. The explanatory strategy of such an account need not be to provide paraphrases as a means of capturing the content of metaphors or showing that metaphors have propositional contents. The explanation need not proceed from locating metaphors either in ‘what is said’ or ‘what is speaker-meant’ and then showing how they can adequately explain away the practice of using metaphors in such things as argumentation and disagreements.

Rather, the propositional contentfulness of metaphors is *conferred* on metaphors in virtue of the normative practices we engage in in using metaphorical expressions. The practice of using metaphors in reasoning and the making of inferences, the engagement in disagreements involving metaphors, the capacity to endorse, retract, and justify metaphors put forward in conversations – all these practices are evidences of the content of metaphors. Metaphors *directly* possess content due to the fact that they can serve as premises and conclusions of arguments which can serve as reasons for our beliefs.

The phenomenological experience involved in the making of metaphors, which captures its figurativeness, should be connected to metaphors *in actu*. Davidson may be right in characterizing metaphors as ‘seeing one thing as another thing’. But as we have pointed out earlier, the speaker’s perspective in the making of metaphors should be considered in thinking of metaphors as involving a seeing-*as* experience. The metaphor-maker sees or conceives of x as y but he does not *say* that ‘I see x as y’ or ‘I am thinking of x as y’; what he says is a reflection or formulation of what he sees or conceptualizes. In other words, what he says – *that* x is y – is a formulation in words, of what he sees or has seen – where he saw or is seeing x *as* y. This means that the metaphor, ‘x is y’ is a *direct expression* of the perceptual experience and the conceptual articulation of the metaphor-maker. In this way, seeing-*as* becomes *saying-that*. A difference between the literal ‘x is y’ and the metaphor ‘x is y’ is partly constituted by the phenomenological experience that is involved in the making of the metaphor.

There has been a number of paraphrases and interpretations of the intended content of Romeo’s metaphor that “Juliet is the sun” which have been provided by considering the salient characteristics associated with the sun and the textual environment in which Romeo made his

statement. Let us consider Camp's (2006a) 'map' of the intended content of which she thinks that the first one is more salient:

1. Juliet is an exemplar of beauty and goodness
2. Romeo's love for Juliet will steadily blossom and grow
3. Juliet is worthy of worship
4. Juliet nurtures Romeo's maturity
5. Romeo's thoughts begin and end with Juliet
6. Juliet makes Romeo feel warm and glowing
7. Juliet is the most beautiful lady
8. Juliet's beauty is natural and original

These do not even include those provided by Stern (2000, 2006), Cavell (2002), Hills (1997). The problem with paraphrases is how Romeo's utterance could mean *all* of these. But the real problem, I think, is whether Romeo could mean *any* of them. Paraphrases are constructed based on the metaphor, and are often constructed independent of the intentions of the speaker. But now imagine we present these paraphrases to Romeo (or to Shakespeare for that matter), what could Romeo (or Shakespeare) possibly say about, or react to, these paraphrases? Something like this (let's just stick to the fourth paraphrase):

1. That's exactly what I had in mind
2. That's very interesting, I didn't think of it that way
3. I don't even know that means
4. Not exactly quite that, but that's another way of putting it
5. Oh no, I was rather thinking along the lines of paraphrase 8.

We can imagine Romeo's affirmation or denial of, resistance to, or hesitation to assent to, the particular paraphrase in question. We can also imagine Romeo's attempt to explain what he meant *exactly* either by using other less vague metaphors, or more effectively by using literal sentences in the explanation. What this experiment suggests is that Romeo had a *distinct* thought, conception, or belief about Juliet which he couched in the metaphorical statement, and where this distinctive thought is generated through the experience of seeing Juliet as the sun. This explains his resistance to, or affirmation of, the paraphrase that was presented to him.

The phenomenological experience, or the figurative dimension, that goes into *saying-that* Juliet is the sun is accounted for in both the offering of a non-compositional analysis of 'Juliet is the sun' and the taking of the expression as a *claim* that can be affirmed, endorsed, justified, or denied, rejected, and possibly retracted. Indeed, 'Juliet has had breakfast' and 'Juliet is the sun' are both claims whose contents can be provided by the same mechanism – through a pragmatic process of enrichment – but this mechanism alone blurs the line between the metaphorical and the literal in not taking into account the phenomenological experience that occurs behind the scenes in one and not in the other. On the account being pursued here, the non-compositional treatment of metaphors, like other figurative expressions such as idioms, result from the figurative or creative dimension that goes into making them. A metaphor then, is propositionally contentful courtesy of its use in our inferential practices, in disagreements and agreements, in deductive and inductive reasoning; and the phenomenological experience and the conceptualization that goes into the making of metaphor presents metaphors as claims that can be affirmed or denied, supported or retracted.

## 2.6. Conclusion

The Anti-Truth theorist says that metaphorical sentences have no meaning other than the meanings they literally express because the words of a metaphor do not acquire extra non-literal meanings. My response is that word-literalism does not amount to sentence literalism and that metaphorical sentences are figurative expressions whose meanings are not determined solely by a compositional function of the meanings of their constituents. The Anti-Truth theorist says that metaphorical sentences do not have any propositional contents (other than their literal contents) and that what people consider as non-literal contents of metaphors are just the effects metaphors have on hearers. My response is that metaphors having functions and effects does not preclude their having propositional contents other than the contents they literally express. And that, our practices of using metaphors in arguments and disagreements and the making of inferences from metaphors, for instance, attest to their having propositional contents. These practices make metaphors propositionally contentful.

Some Pro-Truth theorists admit that metaphors have meanings and contents and that their meanings are given by the intentions of the speakers or that their meanings can be located in what speakers utter them to mean. My response is that lodging the meanings of metaphors in speaker-meaning is not able to satisfactorily explain how metaphors can serve as premises and conclusions of arguments and how we are able to engage in assertions and retractions with metaphors. Other Pro-Truth theorists posit that metaphors are on a par with loose talk and other literal uses of language and that their meanings belong to 'what is said' contextually and pragmatically construed. My response is that by assimilating metaphors to loose talk and other literal uses of language, this proposal blurs the distinction between the literal and the metaphorical and does not take into account the conceptualization and the phenomenological

experience that is involved in the making of metaphors. My suggestion is that our normative and inferential practices of using metaphors confer propositional contentfulness unto metaphors and that the treatment of metaphors as claims and the non-compositional analysis involved in determining their meaning stem from the figurative dimension involved in the making of metaphors.

## CHAPTER III

### THE INVITATIONAL ACCOUNT OF METAPHOR

#### 3.1. Introduction

In our inquiry into the truth evaluability of metaphors, we have been concerned, in the previous chapters, with the content of metaphors. That is, whether metaphorical sentences express propositional contents (other than their literal contents) that could be appraised for truth. We highlighted the role of the speaker in the making of metaphors, and the social and normative practices involved in the use of metaphors, as imbuing metaphors with propositional contents. However, the role of the speaker in the making of metaphors, many have argued, militates against the truth evaluability of metaphors. What matters in the inquiry into whether metaphors are truth evaluable, their argument goes, are the *aims* and *purposes* involved in speaking metaphorically or in the making of metaphors. Truth is not a *constitutive aim* of speaking metaphorically, and thus, metaphorical sentences are not truth-evaluable.

This chapter is concerned with an account of metaphor – what we shall call the *Invitational Account* – that makes the truth-evaluability of metaphors dependent on the intentions involved in uttering metaphorical sentences in communicative discourses. The account posits, in one vein, that a metaphorical utterance is not aimed at making a truth claim; it is not the aim of speaking metaphorically that one conveys a specific proposition that such-and-such is the case. In another vein, the account posits that the *constitutive* aim or norm for speaking metaphorically is to *invite* (or encourage, suggest, propose) others to do something. Invitations are generally not appraised for truth. And thus, metaphorical utterances are not appraised for truth. The Invitational Account is underpinned by the Argument from Phenomenology discussed in Chapter I in the sense that because the making of metaphors involves seeing one thing as another thing,

the maker of a metaphor is not primarily concerned with truth. But the proponent of this account is not concerned with the propositional status of metaphors; she is rather concerned with metaphor as a speech act, and thus, her argument can be persuasive whether or not metaphorical sentences express propositional contents.

The proponent of this account can also agree with many of the claims I advanced in Chapter II, for instance, that metaphors are propositionally contentful and that they feature in disagreements, but she insists that such an analysis of the truth-evaluability of metaphors in terms of their propositional contentfulness misses a crucial point: the aims and purposes of conversational interlocutors in using metaphors. That is, the question of the truth-evaluability of metaphors should not be answered from an investigation of the content of metaphors – whether those contents are propositional or non-propositional – rather, the question should be answered by considering why language users employ metaphors. Approaching the question from the aims and purposes of using metaphors, however, swings the debate in favour of considering metaphors in non-propositional terms. Conducting the analysis from the reasons why we use metaphors, rather than from the perspective of what metaphors mean, reveal that metaphors are evaluated on many dimensions – truth not being one of them.

I will argue that the *Invitational Account* is unsatisfactory and inadequate; unsatisfactory, because the aims and purposes of producing metaphorical utterances or speech acts in general are not appropriate determinants of their truth-evaluability, and, inadequate, because of its insistence on a particular aim of employing metaphors – that of invitations – as what is constitutive of speaking metaphorically. The view that there is a norm constitutive of speaking metaphorically is an unfounded one, and the distinction between constitutive and context-specific aims of using metaphors is not a precisely determined one. Speakers have variable aims and adopt variable

norms in speaking metaphorically, none of which is essential to the making of metaphors. By dwelling on the invitational aims of using metaphors, the *Invitational Account* does not take into consideration the kinds of *commitments* that speakers display in their use of metaphors and the kinds of *inferences* that speakers in turn *license* their hearers to make; these commitments and inferences imply that some metaphorical utterances are truth-claims, and they show that speakers do more with metaphors than issuing invitations.

### 3.2. The Invitational Account of Metaphor

The *Invitational Account* is a form of the Anti-Truth position that holds that truth is not an appropriate cognitive dimension on which metaphors can be appraised. The account is grounded on the view that speakers' aims and intentions for using metaphors and the purposes to which metaphors are put count against evaluating metaphors for truth. Speakers do not aim at truth, nor intend to make true claims, when they speak metaphorically. Hearers on their part recognize and acknowledge these intentions of speakers when they receive and understand metaphors. Some writers who subscribe to this Anti-Truth invitational account of metaphor are Loewenberg (1975), Mack (1975), Blackburn (1984), Cooper (1986), and Lamarque & Olsen (1994).

Cooper (1986) provides us with a mode or context within which a discussion of metaphor and truth-aptness should be carried. He writes:

“Understanding the nature of metaphor – in this instance, its relation to truth-conditions – is not to be divorced from understanding *how and why we employ and receive them*. The latter understanding is not something to be tacked on later to an already completed analysis of metaphor's nature. We cannot, I have argued, decide whether a metaphor should be called ‘true’ just by looking at it and a list of the propositions to which it leads people. Only when we examine *why metaphors get used*, and *the nature of our concerns in construing them*, do we recognize that, for the most part, truth-value does not transfer to the

metaphor from the items on the list. Metaphors, in short, are not vicars of truth (p. 247, emphases mine).

Cooper's suggestion here is that the debate about whether metaphorical utterances can be truth-apt cannot occur independently of our understanding of the aims involved in the production and reception of metaphors. He is of the view that when we come to understand why we use metaphors and what concerns us in using them, we will come to realize not only that truth-values often do not transmit from literal propositions or paraphrases to their respective metaphors, but that we will not need to appraise metaphors for truth at all. If we decide to add truth to the varied dimensions upon which metaphors are appraised, according to Cooper, "we lose more than we gain in understanding why we produce metaphors and why we are concerned to appraise them" (1986, p. 251). So, the question is why do we produce metaphors? What are our aims in making metaphors or speaking metaphorically?

Lamarque and Olsen (1994) have an answer. In their *Truth, Fiction, and Literature*, they distinguish what they regard as the *constitutive* aim of metaphor from the *context-specific* aims of metaphor. In their view, the *constitutive* aim is "definitive of metaphorical utterance *per se*" (p. 360). What is this *constitutive* aim of metaphor? They assert: "*to invite or encourage a hearer to think of, conceive of, reflect on, or imagine one thing (state of affairs, idea, etc) in terms associated with some other thing (state of affairs, etc) often of a quite different logical type*" (p. 360 emphasis in original). They characterize the essential nature of metaphor as an activity of invitation (on the part of the speaker) and a task undertaken (by the hearer). Metaphor, by its essence, then, is not to "*state that something is the case*" but rather to express the intention "*that someone is to do something*" (p. 360). The conveying of a determinate propositional content or the making of a truth claim is not the constitutive norm of metaphors and of the aims of speakers when they are speaking metaphorically.

Sometimes, a speaker may use a metaphor in certain contexts to fulfill a “further communicative purpose” (p.361). These purposes may include the fact that the speaker wants to embellish a speech act or to convey a true belief or information to the hearer. This ‘context-specific’ aim of conveying a belief or information occurs in the case of dead metaphors and in contexts where a metaphorical expression is embedded in a literal statement. In these cases, the use of the metaphor is “incidental to the truth-conditions” (p.343) of the sentence or assertion in which it occurs. To use their example, the sentence “that crafty weasel has passed the exam” is truth-evaluable in virtue of its being an assertion whose constitutive aim is to convey a truth even though it involves the metaphorical expression ‘crafty weasel’. Lamarque and Olsen point out that “the informational content, that a particular person has passed an exam, is both literal and determinate” and that the sentence “is true if and only if the person identified in the subject term has passed the exam” (p. 343). Thus, even when a speaker uses a metaphor to make a truth claim in certain contexts, this is either because the metaphor is dead or that it is only an expression which occurs in a truth-evaluable literal sentence in which case the making of the truth claim is not dependent on the metaphorical expression itself.

Lamarque & Olsen’s argument runs as follows: A metaphor by its very nature is used to invite someone, or to suggest to that person, to do something, that is, to make him attend so some likeness between two things or make him see one thing in light of another thing. Ordinarily, invitations, suggestions and imaginations are not the kinds of things that are appraised for truth even if they can be couched in propositional form. Hence, metaphorical utterances are not appraised for truth. Additionally, the thoughts and insights produced by metaphors, in agreement with Davidson, are not propositional in content. This is partly because the metaphor-maker does not intend to state that so-and-so is the case; her intention is to ask and encourage the hearer to

view the world in a certain light. Understanding this to be what pertains in the speech act of ‘metaphoring’, to borrow Mack’s (1975) phrase, is to come to realize that truth itself is not essential to metaphors. Nonetheless, Lamarque & Olsen suggest that although the conveying of information or propositional content is not a *constitutive* aim of metaphors, individual metaphors *might* convey propositional contents as part of their *context-specific* aims. And when they do, it mostly involves contents to do with some ‘low-key’ truth either because they are dead metaphors or as a result of their embedding in a literal statement. Even if individual metaphors might have truth as part of their context-specific aims in this sense, it goes to show that truth is not an essential issue to understanding metaphors. They write:

“Truth as a mode of appraisal or a constitutive aim, is not integral to the practice of metaphorical utterance any more than it is integral to the institution of literature. *Speaking metaphorically, engaging in the practice involves utterances governed by constitutive rules. These rules make no reference to truth.* They merely specify that a speaker has the Gricean-style meaning-intention that a hearer should undertake a certain kind of thought-process (thinking of one thing in terms of another, etc) without making this explicit either as a direct instruction or as a statement of comparison” (p. 363, emphasis mine).

This denial of metaphors as intended to make truth claims, and the explanation of the purposes of employing metaphor in terms of invitations on the part of speakers and the undertaking of certain endeavors on the part of the hearer is also shared by Blackburn (1984):

“The metaphor is in effect an invitation to explore comparisons. But it is not associated with any belief or intention, let alone any set of rules, determining when the exploration is finished” (p. 174).

“On this account, a good metaphor at the open-ended level is expressed by an utterance which does not say that such-and-such is the case, but rather expresses an invitation or suggestion that a certain comparison be followed up” (p. 179).

On both Blackburn’s (1984) and Lamarque & Olsen’s (1994) accounts, the expression of an invitation on the part of the speaker, and the exploration of comparisons or seeing one thing as

another thing on the part of hearer, *proscribe* metaphors from being truth claims. That is, the *Invitational Account* presents the expression of invitation in opposition to, or in contrast with, the making of truth claims. This stems from making the invitation to do something definitive of the act of metaphoring.

We can glean from the above that two main arguments capture the *Invitational Account*:

### **Argument 1**

*Only an utterance that is aimed at making a truth claim or conveying a specific propositional content can be truth apt. It is not the constitutive aim of speaking metaphorically that one conveys a specific propositional content or makes a truth claim. Hence, a metaphorical utterance is not truth-apt.*

### **Argument 2**

*Making a metaphor is putting forth a suggestion, a proposal, or an invitation for someone to do something. Suggestions, proposals and invitations are not appraised for truth. Hence metaphorical utterances are not appraised for truth.*

## **3.3. Assessment of the Invitational Account**

The *Invitational Account* has some intuitive pull when it locates the issue of truth not in terms of propositional form or content but in the aims and purposes of making utterances and producing speech acts. It conforms to our unreflective intuitions about other linguistic phenomena like the making of jokes and the production of fiction. In both fiction and jokes, the concern is not primarily about truth but on other cognitive appraisals like wittiness, aptness, appropriateness, insightfulness, and imaginativeness. The maker of a joke, when he is sincerely joking, need not intend to state matters of fact or to make claims that can be true or false; rather, she intends to elicit certain effects in her audience, to make them appreciate the humour and wittiness of her joke. The creation of fiction and jokes are among many practices we engage in

where our primary concern is not with truth. Although our concern with, or our aim for, a joke or a work of fiction may not be to make truth claims, it does not follow that we could not inquire about whether the individual statements of a joke or a work of fiction are truth-evaluable. For what can be determined to be true or false are individual statements and claims even though the individual claims may acquire their truth-value within the context of a whole piece of work. In this regard, we can assess the *Invitational Account* of metaphor by raising questions, first, of whether the issue of the truth-evaluability of any statement or set of claims is a matter of the intentions and aims involved in making those statements and claims, second, of whether in the case of metaphor the concern is anything but truth, third, of whether the practice of speaking metaphorically is governed by rules, some of which are constitutive of using metaphors, and fourth, whether, if the practice of speaking metaphorically is governed by rules, the dual process of invitation (on the part of the speaker) and a task undertaken (on the part of the hearer) constitutes that practice.

In the first place, the *Invitational Account* presents a speech-act analysis of metaphors by its focus on what speakers do in, or by, uttering metaphorical sentences in contextual situations and their interests in uttering metaphorical sentences. From this perspective, it offers an exposition of the semantic properties of utterances or sentences such as meaning and truth in terms of psychological properties like beliefs, intentions, desires and interests. Generally, such an exposition can take the form of a reductive analysis where the semantical properties are reducible to psychological properties like that of intention-based semantics by Grice (1989), Schiffer (1982), and Borg (2006), or it can be a sort of a ‘truth-maker’ theory where the truth conditions of utterances are sensitive to, determined or made by, the psychological facts of intentions and beliefs. On the particular account under consideration here, it does not only explain semantic

properties in terms of psychological facts and make the truth-conditions of utterances inherent in the psychological facts; it treats the truth-aptness or truth-evaluability of an utterance as determined by the interests and intentions of speakers. This means that truth evaluation does not attach to sentences but to the utterances of sentences in certain contexts which characteristically are accompanied by certain intentions and interests of speakers.

This view flies in the face of some minimalists' conception of candidates for truth and truth-aptnesses. For thinkers like Horwich (1990) and Wright (1992, 2003) the candidates for truth should be declarative in form and be significant. That is, candidates for truth must be "subject to certain minimal constraints of syntax – embeddability within negation, the conditional, contexts of propositional attitude, and so on – and discipline: their use must be governed by agreed standards of warrant" (Wright, 2003, p. 128). But for the proponent of the *Invitational Account*, the possession of 'propositional surface' syntax and discipline is not sufficient requirement for candidacy for truth. There is something *more* to, and *deeper* than, grammatical form and norms of correct usage for the appraisal of declarative sentences for truth. The missing link between *discipline-syntacticism* and truth-aptness, the proponent of the *Invitational Account* suggests, can be found in the aims and purposes for employing declarative sentences, the *reason why* those sentences are produced.

This proposal, however, seems counterintuitive. It is generally accepted that the declarative sentence 'snow is white' is truth-evaluable regardless of the aims and intentions a speaker may have in uttering it. The aims and intentions of a speaker are not a measure for the truth-aptness or otherwise of an expression. This is so for some very good reasons: one, hearers' ignorance of the aims and intentions of speakers in using particular expressions will render the issue of the truth-evaluability of many expressions undecidable and indeterminate; two,

knowledge of the purposes for which speakers use certain expressions will make the truth-evaluable status of expressions contextual and arbitrary, for the same expression ‘snow is white’ will be truth-evaluable in some contexts and not truth-evaluable in other contexts depending on the reasons for which the expression is used; three, the assignment of truth to expressions is a semantic phenomenon (even though some pragmatic factors may play a role in determining the truth status of certain expressions) but the aims and intentions of speakers are psychological phenomena, and it is very elusive how the psychological phenomena determine the semantic value of an expression. Indeed, declarative sentences are characteristically marked to have meaning and speakers may also mean something else by their utterance of declarative sentences but this feature of our practice of using language does not imply that the semantic status (in terms of truth) of declarative sentences is defined by the intentions of speakers. This observation is not pertinent to only literal expressions; the claim that the semantic value or truth status of a declarative expression is not determined by, or defined in terms of, the cognitive aims and intentions of speakers, is characteristic of declarative sentences, and it is neutral as to the manner or mode – literal or non-literal – in which those declarative sentences are used.

The proponent of the *Invitational Account* might cast the argument about the aims and intentions of speakers determining the truth-value status of declarative sentences as applicable only to non-literal uses of language and other uses like in the case of ethical and modal statements, and applicable to works of fiction and literature in general. But this move is also unsatisfactory; it does not acknowledge the distinction between the aims and concerns at issue with respect to the whole phenomena or piece of work, and the aims and concerns at play when we are dealing with the individual statements of that piece of work. Again, the case of fiction is instructive here: the concern with a work of fiction may not be to make any truth-claims but such

concerns are not germane to the truth status of the individual statements in a work of fiction. Similarly, our primary concern for speaking figuratively may not be about truth but it does not follow that individual figurative or metaphorical statements cannot be appraised for truth.

Let us grant that there is a speech act of ‘metaphoring’ which is unlike assertion (Loewenberg 1975) but very much like “expressing, suggesting, even imposing a viewpoint counter to fact” (Mack 1975, p. 247). A general characterization of speech acts, we will see, is not in harmony with making the truth-evaluation of utterances dependent on the intentions and aims of speakers. Austin (1962) observed that saying something is characteristically the performance of an act; it is the doing of something. A speaker can perform an ‘illocutionary act’ like ‘warning’, ‘promising’, ‘asserting’ *in* saying something, or she can perform a ‘perlocutionary act’ like ‘convincing’, ‘persuading’ *by* saying something where the speech act produces certain effects in the feelings and thoughts of hearers. Searle (1969), modifying and developing Austin’s theory and distinctions argued that there are three basic acts or things speakers perform in their utterances: “(a) uttering words (morphemes, sentences) = performing *utterance acts*. (b) referring and predicating = performing *propositional acts*. (c) stating, questioning, commanding, promising, etc. = performing *illocutionary acts*” (p. 24). For Searle, in performing an illocutionary act “one characteristically performs propositional acts and utterance acts” (p. 24); also, illocutionary acts can have effects on the actions and feelings on hearers like Austin’s perlocutionary acts. Propositional acts, for Searle, cannot occur alone without illocutionary acts, for, “one cannot *just* refer and predicate without making an assertion or asking a question or performing some other illocutionary act” (p. 25). On his view, in a complete speech act there is a reference made to a subject and something predicated of that subject (which constitutes the propositional act) and the way in which, or the illocutionary force with which, the

predicate is affirmed of the subject (which will make the act an assertion or a question, etc.). Predication, according to Searle, “presents a certain content, and the mode in which the content is presented is determined by the illocutionary force of the sentence” (p. 124); that is, different illocutionary acts could have a common content.

What is the relation between the *propositional act* and the *illocutionary act* with respect to truth? How does Searle characterize predication and truth in his scheme of speech acts? That is, how does predication ‘present’ the content of a speech act? This is Searle’s answer:

To predicate an expression ‘P’ of an object R is to raise the question of the truth of the predicate expression of the object referred to. Thus, in utterances of each of the sentences, “Socrates is wise”, “Is Socrates wise?”, “Socrates, be wise!” the speaker raises the question of the truth of “wise” of Socrates. ... “Raising the question of ...” as here construed is not an illocutionary act. Rather, it is what is common to a wide range of illocutionary acts. Thus, to repeat, the man who asserts that Socrates is wise, the man who asks whether he is wise, and the man who requests him to be wise may be said to raise the question of his being wise (of whether “wise” is – or in the case of request will be – true of him” (p. 124)

In a Gricean-style, Searle makes the relation between truth and predication more explicit in his specification of the necessary and sufficient conditions for predication. Successfully to predicate P of an object X requires the satisfaction of eight (8) conditions, the second to sixth of which are that:

- i. The utterance of P occurs as part of the utterance of some sentence (or similar stretch of discourse) T
- ii. The utterance of T is the performance or purported performance of an illocutionary act.
- iii. The utterance of T involves a successful reference to X
- iv. X is of a type or category such that it is logically possible for P to be true or false of X
- v. S intends by the utterance of T to raise the question of the truth or falsity of P of X (in a certain illocutionary mode, which mode will be intended by the illocutionary force indicating device in the sentence)

We can obtain two pertinent insights from Searle’s characterization of the propositional and illocutionary acts and their relation to truth. One, the question of truth arises, not in the purposes

and aims for the production of the speech acts, but in the predication of properties and attributes to the referents and subjects of the speech act. One can hold that the predication in a metaphorical utterance is of a different kind from that of a literal utterance; one can also hold that the meaning of the predicate expression in a metaphor (or when the predicate itself is a metaphor) is determined differently from that of a literal predicative expression. However, these positions do not violate the principle that the issue of truth arises as a result of predication and not necessarily about the kind of predication. The performance of a propositional act – referring and predicating – constitutes the avenue for the determination of the truth-evaluability of speech acts. Two, for Searle, the question of truth arises irrespective of the illocutionary force in which the utterance is made. This goes against the tradition of raising the question of truth only in the cases of assertions or the stating of claims. This aspect of Searle’s proposal is quite controversial. But the insight is that we can still raise the question of truth regardless of the mode and manner in which the utterance is presented. That is, whether the illocutionary force is to make a request, or to make a suggestion, or to make an invitation to do something, or even to make an assertion, the question of the truth-aptness of the utterance can still be raised. The location of the issue of truth in terms of the psychological notions of intentions and aims confuses the distinction drawn in speech act theory between *content* and *function*; for the content of a speech act resides in the proposition of that utterance or in the performance of the propositional act, while the function of the act inheres in the illocutionary force in which the proposition is presented.

Given these insights, we can consider the following sentences from journalists of the New York Times which are either metaphors or include metaphorical expressions:

- (1). “On Wall Street, I.B.M. isn’t just a company – it’s a religion with at least two rival theologies. One holds that the company is trapped in a cycle of inevitable decline, the

other that I.B.M is going through a wrenching transition but retains enormous strengths and the ability to come back.”<sup>62</sup>

- (2). “Many Americans, even some of his supporters, have accepted that the economy is an alligator and Mr. Bush is no alligator wrestler...But empathy with our hard times will not be enough for Mr. Clinton, should he win. He has said he can wrestle the alligator, and he will be held to it.”<sup>63</sup>
- (3). “When Mr. Clinton talked about sharing the sacrifice, he had to know that shoving the six-figure folks into a higher bracket would not be enough. There are small fish, and there are big fish. And then there is the whale, and the whale is government.”<sup>64</sup>
- (4). “Although the early morning set are not performing peacocks like the masters and mistresses of ceremonies of the popular talk shows that follow a few hours later, they are not exactly foxes either. Call them attack pussycats.”<sup>65</sup>
- (5). “Marx may have regarded religion as an opiate of the people, but Beijing regards it as an amphetamine.”<sup>66</sup>

The above cases illustrate metaphorical attribution or predication to identifiable referents.

Consider (2). In one way, we can raise the issue of whether many Americans have accepted that the economy is an alligator. The informational content of this issue will not be dependent on the metaphorical expression that the economy is an alligator and so the embedding of the metaphorical expression may have ‘context-specific’ aim. But in another way, we can raise the issue of whether the economy *is* an alligator where the issue is about whether the predication of being an alligator is true of the referent, the economy. The force of the utterance of ‘the economy is an alligator’ is that of an assertion and this explains why the author thinks that Clinton will be expected to wrestle with the alligator-economy. But if the force of the utterance is anything but an assertion, the issue of truth still rears its head due to the fact that the speaker has performed a

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<sup>62</sup> Steve Lohr, “High-States Debate on the Future of I.B.M.”, *The New York Times*, October 19, 1992, <http://www.nytimes.com/1992/10/19/business/market-place-high-stakes-debate-on-the-future-of-ibm.html>.

<sup>63</sup> Anna Quindlen, “Great Expectations”, *The New York Times*, September 16, 1992, <http://www.nytimes.com/1992/09/16/opinion/public-private-great-expectations.html>.

<sup>64</sup> Anna Quindlen, “Cut To the Cuts”, *The New York Times*, February 21, 1993, <http://www.nytimes.com/1993/02/21/opinion/public-private-cut-to-the-cuts.html>.

<sup>65</sup> Walter Goodman, “Candidates Run to the Puppy Dogs”, *The New York Times*, October 26, 1992, <http://www.nytimes.com/1992/10/26/news/critic-s-notebook-candidates-run-to-the-puppy-dogs.html>.

<sup>66</sup> Nicholas D. Kristof, “Christianity Is Booming In China Despite Rifts”, *The New York Times*, February 7, 1993, <http://www.nytimes.com/1993/02/07/world/christianity-is-booming-in-china-despite-rifts.html>.

propositional act by means of referring to the economy and predicating of it that it is an alligator. This means that even when we construe the illocutionary force of the utterance as a request or an invitation, this construal will not be incompatible with determining whether the predicate is true of the subject. Thus, in (4) where the author directs that we ‘call’ morning show hosts and hostesses ‘attack pussycats’ there is associated with this directive a propositional content from which the question of truth arises. The illocutionary force by which the metaphor is used, that of a command, does not curtail the issue of truth. The embedding of metaphorical expressions in literal sentences may not contribute to the truth-aptness and the informational content of the literal sentences; however, when such metaphorical expressions serve as predicates that attribute properties to their referents, then they raise the issue of truth, for they say *something* about their referents. Because speakers intend to say something about referents by their use of metaphorical predicates, they are able to explicate that which they say of their referents, as in (1), and they are able to connect what they say to, and contrast what they say with, what others have said, as evidenced in (5).

The second insight from Searle, that the illocutionary force of an utterance does not constrain it from being truth-evaluable (since the truth-evaluation occurs in virtue of performing a propositional act) means that the chasm that the proponent of the *Invitational Account* places between stating that so-and-so and inviting one to do something can be bridged. In performing a particular illocutionary act, one can also perform other illocutionary acts and perlocutionary acts as well. It is a false dichotomy to suppose that in stating, one may not *thereby* be performing other acts like informing, rebuking, warning, etc. Similarly, in suggesting or encouraging or inviting someone, the speaker could be stating and informing as well. If the act of ‘metaphoring’ or the act of inviting someone to explore certain comparisons is an illocutionary act the

performance of which has a perlocutionary effect or the intention of *getting someone to do something*, then the intention or effect can be achieved by stating or asserting or informing without any accompanying explicit or implicit invitation. That is, to intend that someone act in a certain way by means of a linguistic utterance, it is not necessary that one issues an invitation or make a proposal to bring about that intention. This is why, for instance, a speaker can warn his audience to move away simply by stating that the bull is about to charge (in an appropriate context) without any explicit illocutionary indicating device. In this case, the speaker intends that his audience recognize his intention by means of his utterance. The overall point here is that the issuance of an invitation by means of an utterance does not preclude the doing of other things like informing and stating. The act of metaphoring cannot be explained solely in terms of invitations.

So far, the discussion has proceeded under the assumption that there is a speech act of ‘metaphoring’ or speaking metaphorically. The proponent of the *Invitational Account* holds the view that the phenomenon of metaphor, and hence, metaphorical utterances can be studied and be explained in terms of a speech-act analysis. This speech act of ‘metaphoring’ is then examined in terms of *other* illocutionary acts like requests, invitations, suggestions and proposals. And it is treated on a par with other illocutionary acts like promising and asserting by giving constitutive rules and norms that govern the practice. These two proposals are inconsistent with each other: on the one hand, it regards the speech act of metaphoring as complex illocutionary act and defines it in terms of other basic illocutionary acts like requests and invitations; and on the other hand, it treats metaphoring as a basic speech act like assertions which are governed by constitutive rules. The speech act of metaphoring or the practice of speaking metaphorically cannot be defined in terms of other illocutionary acts and be defined in

terms of constitutive rules, for the metaphorical utterances themselves can be couched in terms of assertions, commands, requests and questions.

So, the whole characterization of *speaking metaphorically* as a separate and distinct speech act to which constitutive rules apply is mistaken. The speech act analysis suffers from a mistake at the categorial level: illocutionary verbs like ‘to assert’, ‘to warn’ ‘to promise’ are of a different sort of category from the verb ‘to metaphor’. The utterance of a metaphor can be used to assert, to warn, and to make a promise. The act of speaking metaphorically then is not a unique and distinct illocutionary act, for it can be used to perform other basic and distinct acts like assertions. This is why the *Invitational Account* characterizes metaphorically speaking in terms of other acts like invitations and suggestions. Because it is not a primary illocutionary act, it can be expressed or used in the performance of any illocutionary act, none of which is constitutive of it. Speech acts like assertions are, arguably, governed by rules, some of which are constitutive of those acts.<sup>67</sup> But it is category mistake to suppose that in making metaphorical utterances one is making such basic utterances that are governed by rules some of which are constitutive of it. Indeed, *speaking metaphorically* should be contrasted with *speaking literally* which indicates a general manner of speaking that cannot be absorbed within illocutionary acts and forces. If metaphors can be used in the making of commands, requests, assertions, interjections, then it is not itself an illocutionary act just as there is no illocutionary act for speaking literally. This means that the treating of metaphors as an illocutionary act with constitutive rules is mistaken, and the identification of another basic illocutionary act as constituting speaking metaphorically is untenable.

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<sup>67</sup> A speech act is basic if it cannot be

### 3.3.1. On the Constitutive rules of using metaphors

According to Lamarque & Olsen (1994) “speaking metaphorically, engaging in the practice involves utterances governed by constitutive rules” (363). What are *constitutive rules* that govern certain practices and speech acts? Let us consider how two philosophers, Searle (1969) and Williamson (1996, 2000), who think that speech acts like assertions are governed by constitutive rules, describe what constitutive rules are. Searle (1969) draws a distinction between *regulative* and *constitutive* rules. The crucial difference between them is that: “Regulative rules regulate a pre-existing activity, an activity whose existence is logically independent of the rules. Constitutive rules constitute (and also regulate) an activity the existence of which is logically dependent on the rules” (p. 34). Rules of etiquette, for instance, are regulative rules which govern interpersonal relationships and where these relationships exist antecedently of the rules. The rules of games like football and chess are constitutive rules for they create the possibility of playing such games; the rules constitute the playing of those games.

Searle emphasized two features of constitutive rules: one, they “create the possibility of new forms of behaviour” (p.35) and two, they “often have the form: X counts as Y in context C” (p. 35). On the first feature, he explains that for constitutive rules, “behaviour which is in accordance with the rule can receive specifications or descriptions which it could not receive if the rule or rules did not exist” (p. 35). For instance, ‘they played football’ and ‘he hit a home run’ are specifications which could not be given without constitutive rules. In contrast with regulative rules, specifications like ‘he wore a tie at dinner’ could be given whether or not any rules requiring the wearing of ties existed at all. The second feature – the form, X counts as Y – Searle explains, is not intended as a “formal criterion” for distinguishing constitutive rules from regulative ones since any regulative rule can be “twisted” to take that form. But where the rule is

framed that way and the Y term is a specification then the rule is constitutive. In the case of games, acting in accordance with an individual rule like just having twenty-two players on a field may not count as playing football but acting in accordance with a system of rules governing the game will count as playing football.

Given these characterizations of constitutive rules by Searle, could we say that speaking metaphorically is governed by constitutive rules? And that the constitutive rule is that of invitation and a task undertaking? In the first place, it does not seem right that engaging in the practice of speaking metaphorically is *logically dependent* on any rules or the rule of invitation for that matter. The invitation to see one thing as another does not constitute the act of speaking metaphorically. For, in the case of soliloquies, one can speak metaphorically without inviting any one to do anything. Speaking metaphorically, or engaging in that practice, is not dependent on the rule of invitation, and it is not dependent on any set of rules. Possibly, we can assume that the aim of invitation regulates the use of metaphors but then this will cease to be constitutive of that practice. In the second place, we can provide specifications and descriptions for metaphors independently of any rules that could constitute the practice. We can give specification for ‘he spoke metaphorically’, ‘he used a metaphor’, or even for metaphors like ‘Juliet is the sun’ even if there are no rules for speaking and using metaphors.

Davidson’s (1979) suggestion that “understanding a metaphor is as much a creative endeavor as making a metaphor, and as little guided by rules” (p. 29) is very apt here. And Taylor (2016) has asked us to take seriously the creative or ‘figuring dimension’ of language use by which metaphors are employed. For him, a metaphor constitutes the figuring of one object through another object that creates a tension between the two objects, but the tension also yields certain insights the grasp of which contributes to the “information-bearing function” (p. 140) of

language and our articulation of linguistic expressions. The creative dimension of metaphors that Davidson (1979), Black (1955, 1962, 1993) Taylor (2016) and others emphasize suggests that metaphors, the creation of metaphors, and the comprehension of metaphors cannot be reduced to certain constitutive or regulative rules. For the positing of constitutive rules governing a practice takes away the creativity on the part of speakers in making novel and ad hoc acts within that practice. The creative aspect of metaphors and the making of novel metaphors, count against any rules that might be thought to be essential to metaphors.

Now, to Williamson's characterization of constitutive rules in his discussion of assertions: According to Williamson, a rule or norm will count as constitutive of an act only if it is essential to that act: "necessarily, the rule governs every performance of the act" (1996, p. 490). For the speech act of assertion, Williamson provides this schema of constitutive rules, where 'P' is a schematic sentence letter and 'C(P)' expresses a condition:

***The C(P) rule***            One must: assert that P only if C(P).

Williamson explains that the imperative 'must' expresses the kind of obligation characteristic of constitutive rules. Of importance to our discussion here are the features of constitutive rules. Firstly, according to Williamson, constitutive rules are not conventions. "If it is a convention that one must  $\phi$ , then it is contingent that one must  $\phi$ ; conventions are arbitrary and can be replaced by alternative conventions. In contrast, if it is a constitutive rule that one must  $\phi$ , then it is necessary that one must  $\phi$ " (p. 490). Secondly, the rule must be simple and singular, that is, it should say that there is exactly one norm for the act (in his case, assertion). Third, and most crucially, the constitutive rule must be *individuating*, that is, necessarily, assertion must be the *unique* speech act that has the rule as its unique constitutive rule.

The analogue of Williamson's schema for the speech act of metaphoring will be something like:

***The C(P) rule***      One must: metaphor P only if C(P).

And for the *Invitational Account*, where the constitutive rule is the invitation to do something we get:

***The invitation rule***      One must: metaphor P only if by P one (intends to) issue(s) an invitation for her audience to see one thing as another thing.

There are many invitations that are not metaphorical, but if one is to speak metaphorically, then one necessarily performs an act, and only the act, of invitation. Is the invitation rule *individuating* of metaphorical utterances or speaking metaphorically? Certainly not! A simile, an oxymoron, a proverb, and other literal cognitive phenomena like conjectures, comparisons, and analogies or even the literal statement 'I invite you to explore one thing as another' can invite hearers to do something by exploring certain comparisons. It is not unique to metaphors or the speech act of metaphoring to invite the audience to undertake certain actions.

Is the rule simple and singular? The intention to invite others cannot be the singular norm or aim for speaking metaphorically. This is so for one good reason: violation or breach of a constitutive rule and the accompanying criticisms and penalties for violation. Williamson (1996, 2000) and others who posit norms for assertions (Weiner 2005, 2007; Lackey 2007) agree that when one breaks a rule of a game or a rule of a language or a rule of a speech act, one does not thereby cease to be playing the game, or be speaking that language, or be performing the speech act respectively. However, one is subject to certain criticisms and penalties because of the constitutive nature of the rules governing those acts. One who employs a metaphor without intending to invite others to do something will succeed in speaking metaphorically. However, we cannot conceive of the use of a metaphor without the accompanying intention as a breach or

violation of speaking metaphorically. And there seem not to be any criticisms and penalties that we can charge the one who violates the invitational norm. This is basically because the invitational rule is not the singular rule for characterizing the act of speaking metaphorically. Speaking metaphorically is governed by variable norms and rules, none of which is constitutive of the act, and hence the violation of any of those norms does not warrant criticisms and penalties.<sup>68</sup> Another reason too is that mastery of the use of metaphors or the mode of speaking metaphorically is independent of knowledge of any particular norm or rule that is supposed to constitute the act of speaking metaphorically. Indeed, mastery of the use of language itself presupposes mastery of using certain linguistic expressions literally and non-literally, and there are no norms or rules for intending to use literal or metaphorical expressions; there are no rules constituting literal uses of language just as there are no rules constituting metaphorical uses of language. A speaker may be driven by certain aims and purposes in deciding to use one mode of speech and not the other but this does not suggest that in employing the metaphorical mode of speech one is acting in accordance with certain constitutive norms.

We can safely conclude from the above that:

1. Speakers have variable aims, intentions, and purposes that accompany their speech acts whether such speech acts are employed metaphorically or literally. There is no distinct aim for speaking literally just as there is no distinct aim for speaking metaphorically.
2. When speakers speak metaphorically they may intend by their metaphors to inform their audience about something, or invite their audience to do something, or state that

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<sup>68</sup> For instance, in the metaphorical sentence “philosophy is a noble lady, partaking of the divine essence by a kind of eternal marriage” one could say that the maker of the metaphor is issuing forth an invitation for others to do something, perhaps, to see philosophy as a noble lady. However, in saying that “true it is that Death’s face seems stern and cold, when he is sent to summon those we love” the maker of the metaphor cannot plausibly be said to have intended to invite others to do something. Similarly, in saying that “if we put on the whole armour of righteousness, we shall be less likely to yield to the allurements of sin”, the speaker is not committed to inviting others to do something – to see one thing as another thing.

something is the case. In stating that something is the case, or informing their audience about something, or inviting their audience to do something, they can simultaneously be persuading, encouraging their audience. None of these acts constitute the making of metaphors.

### 3.3.2. Practices beyond invitations

In a general sense, when one's *only* intention for doing something is to invite others, he is successful in that goal only if he succeeds in inviting them. He can follow up on the invitation by merely reminding those he invited earlier, or when the first invitation was not delivered, he could re-issue another invitation. His invitees can either accept or reject the invitation, and they can undertake the activity of which the invitation sought them to do. As far as invitations go, these are basically what the 'invitor' and the 'invitee' can do. However, speakers and hearers of metaphors *do more* than what inviters and invitees do; the practices they engage in with metaphors go beyond the intention to issue invitations and the undertaking of thinking of one thing as another thing. A plausible explanation for this something more, other than, and in addition to invitations and undertakings, is that the issue of truth is at play. It is because speakers often make assertions by their utterances of metaphors that they exhibit certain commitments like endorsing and justifying metaphors. We will consider examples from Shakespeare to illustrate these points.

#### Example 1:

**OLIVER:** Get you with him, you old dog.

**ADAM:** Is "old dog" my reward? Most true, I have lost my teeth in your service. —God be with my old master! he would not have spoke such a word.

[*As You Like It*, Act 1 Scene 1]

Adam does three things in response to Oliver's utterance: 1. He correctly construes himself as the referent of Oliver's utterance and that the metaphorical attribution applies to him. 2. He utilizes the metaphorical attribution and further asks whether he deserves that attribute even though Oliver did not explicitly or implicitly say anything about his value per se. 3. He implicitly accepts the metaphorical attribution and elaborates on the metaphor when he says that 'I have lost my teeth in your service'. The *Invitational Account* cannot properly account for the abilities displayed by Adam – his questioning of the metaphorical attribution and his elaboration of the metaphor. By issuing forth the metaphorical attribution, Oliver *does more* than merely intend to invite Adam to explore certain comparisons; he also intends to assert something about Adam. Adam's recognition of these intentions is what warrants his questioning and endorsement. One cannot question and endorse invitations in this way.

Example 2:

**MENENIUS:** The senators of Rome are this good belly,  
And you the mutinous members; for, examine  
Their counsels and their cares; digest things rightly  
Touching the weal o' the common; you shall find  
No public benefit which you receive  
But it proceeds or comes from them to you,  
And no way from yourselves.--What do you think,  
You, the great toe of this assembly?

**FIRST CITIZEN:** I the great toe? why the great toe?

**MENENIUS:** For that, being one o' the lowest, basest, poorest,  
Of this most wise rebellion, thou go'st foremost:  
Thou rascal, that art worst in blood to run,  
Lead'st first to win some vantage. --  
But make you ready your stiff bats and clubs:  
Rome and her rats are at the point of battle;  
The one side must have bale.--

[*Coriolanus*, Act 1 Scene 1]

This example illustrates the kinds of commitments that speakers of metaphors bring to bear in the use of metaphors. What Menenius is doing in the second speech is to justify why the First Citizen is the great toe of the assembly. Menenius makes a claim in the first speech, his audience demands an explanation or justification for the claim, and Menenius in the second speech, explains the claim, or elaborates on the claim, or justifies the claim. This is akin to what pertains in the making of assertions. And it reinforces an earlier claim I made that speaking metaphorically is not engaging in a distinct kind of speech act; or if there is a speech act of metaphoring, it is not a basic and fundamental speech act – metaphors can be components of conditionals, assertions, denials, questions, etc. Since metaphors can be used in these instances, it makes it very unlikely that there can be a constitutive norm governing them. The commitment to endorse and justify a metaphorical utterance that this example illustrates is different from the kind of justification that one could be asked to provide for the issuance of an invitation. What is going on here in Menenius second speech is not a justification of the intention to metaphor (or the intention to invite); rather it is a justification of the metaphorical utterance in his first speech.

Example 3:

**King Henry:** A speaker is but a prater, a rhyme is but a ballad, a good leg will fall, a straight back will stoop, a black beard will turn white, a curled pate will grow bald, a fair face will wither, a full eye will wax hollow, but a good heart, Kate, is the sun and the moon, or rather the sun and not the moon, for it shines bright and never changes but keeps his course truly. If thou would have such a one, take me.

[*The Life of Henry the Fifth*, Act 5 Sc 2]

In Example 3, King Henry is wooing Katharine. In one sentence he says that a good heart is both the sun and the moon, he then withdraws or retracts it, and says later that a good heart is the sun and not the moon. This withdrawal of the earlier expression squares with the fact that the sun and not the moon shines bright and never changes its course. As we saw in the previous chapter,

withdrawal or retraction is possible when what is retracted or withdrawn is considered as a claim or an assertion.<sup>69</sup> What is withdrawn is usually that which is false, or that which one no longer holds, or that which lacks support or evidence, or that which in certain cases is offensive and inappropriate. Intentions cannot appropriately be withdrawn though they can be changed. King Henry's withdrawal of his initial metaphorical utterance is independent of his intention to invite Katharine to explore certain comparisons.

Example 4:

**ELY:** But there's a saying very old and true:

“If that you will France win,  
Then with Scotland first begin.”  
For once the eagle England being in prey,  
To her unguarded nest the weasel Scot  
Comes sneaking and so sucks her princely eggs,  
Playing the mouse in absence of the cat,  
To 'tame and havoc more than she can eat.

**EXETER:** It follows, then, the cat must stay at home.

Yet that is but a crushed necessity,  
Since we have locks to safeguard necessities  
And pretty traps to catch the petty thieves.

[*The Life of Henry*, Act 1 Scene 2]

This example is to illustrate that the hearer can do more than just think of, conceive of, or imagine one thing in terms of another thing. The hearer like Exeter can draw certain conclusions and make inferences from the speaker's metaphorical utterances. The drawing of inferences and

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<sup>69</sup> I admit that ordinarily, invitations can also be withdrawn. For instance, when I invite someone to speak at a function I can withdraw that invitation at a later time. The proponent of the Invitational Account can suggest that in the example above, King Henry is withdrawing his invitation to Kate to think of a good heart as the moon. But is that *only* and *all* that King Henry is doing here? Is the withdrawal of invitations explanatorily sufficient for understanding what King Henry is doing here? What King Henry is doing here, I contend, is not just withdrawing an invitation but that he is withdrawing a claim – an assertion – that was earlier made. In saying that a good heart is the moon, and then saying immediately after that a good heart is *not* the moon King Henry is doing more than just inviting Kate to think of a good heart as a moon and then asking her not to think of it in that way.

conclusions a hearer cannot appropriately do unless he construes the utterances of the speaker to be making truth-evaluable claims.

What these examples establish are that:

- a there are certain commitments that bind speakers when they speak metaphorically, and these commitments cannot be accounted for satisfactorily when the invitational norm is thought to constitute the making of metaphors. Invitations do not naturally come with certain commitments like endorsing and justifying – these commitments naturally go with the issuance of claims and assertions.
- b Speakers do more with metaphors than invite others to do something; and hearers do more than accept invitations to think of one thing as another thing. The other things speakers do with metaphors are not incompatible with their inviting others to do things; but they are also not derived from, nor dependent on, their aims to invite hearers to do certain things. This suggests that the act of speaking metaphorically cannot be reduced to, or be explained solely in terms of, the aim of invitation. The many other things hearers are able to do with metaphors suggest that they recognize that speakers of metaphors intend to make assertions or claims by their use of metaphors. And their responses and reactions to metaphors – that they can question, endorse, deny metaphorical attributions – suggest that metaphorical utterances are no different from literal utterances as far as their being claims are concerned.

### **3.4. Conclusion**

The *Invitational Account* locates the question of the truth-evaluability of metaphors in the reasons why we employ metaphors and the norms involved in speaking metaphorically. It then posits that there is a norm or aim that is constitutive of speaking metaphorically and that the

specification of this norm implies that speakers do not make truth claims by their use of metaphors. Our assessment of this account has shown that both positions are untenable: the first position is untenable because the question of truth arises in reference to the performance of propositional acts – referring and predication; the second is untenable because speakers have variable aims and norms for speaking metaphorically, none of which are constitutive of the act per se. The implication of these results is that a speaker’s intention to invite others to undertake certain acts by their use of metaphors is not incompatible with their simultaneously stating that something is the case, or their questioning whether something is the case, or their informing others that something is the case. Hence, the *Invitational Account* does not succeed in dismissing the appraisal of metaphorical utterances along the cognitive dimension of truth.

## CHAPTER IV

### METAPHOR, BELIEF, AND ASSERTION

#### 4.1. Introduction

Two consequences of the *Anti-Truth Causal* and *Invitational* accounts are that metaphorical utterances are not expressions of beliefs and they do not count as assertions. A theorist of metaphor, however, could hold these two views – that metaphorical utterances are neither expressions of beliefs nor assertions – quite independently of the reasons adduced by both the *Causal* and *Invitational* accounts. The cornerstone on which these two views rest is the intricate and platitudinous connection that the notions of belief and assertion have with the notion of truth. An assertion, when it is sincere, is an expression of a belief; an assertion aims at truth and truth is, arguably, thought to be the constitutive norm of assertion; and hence, assertion is a bearer of truth. An area of discourse (or an utterance) is truth-apt if the utterances in that discourse count as assertions and as expression of beliefs. In the case of metaphor, one can identify a composite view that I will refer to as *Metaphorical Expressivism* (ME) which exploits the relationships among truth, belief and assertion, and argues for the irrelevancy of truth to metaphors on the premise that metaphorical utterances do not count as assertions and they do not count as the expression of beliefs.

For the Metaphorical Expressivist, *truth does not matter to metaphors*. Rather, the maker of a metaphor is expressing an experience (instead of a belief), or making a suggestion or a proposal (instead of an assertion). *Metaphorical Expressivism* and the *Invitational Account* are both Anti-Truth views which approach the question of the truth-evaluability of metaphors from the aims and purposes of making metaphors: for the *Invitational Account*, these aims and purposes – issuing invitations to see one thing as another thing – are constitutive of metaphors;

for the Expressivist, the aim of making a metaphor is not to make a truth-claim. But the arguments of the Expressivist are different from the Invitational theorist: the Expressivist adopts a literalist and representationalist view of truth and connects that to the notion of assertion and the expression of beliefs and argues, on the one side of a coin, that metaphors do not make claims to truth and thus they are neither assertions nor expressions of beliefs, and on the other side of the same coin, that metaphors do not count as assertions or expressions of beliefs and hence by that fact they are not truth-evaluable.

This chapter, then, is an assessment of the Metaphorical Expressivist's exploitation of truth's connection with assertion and belief to inform its position that truth does not matter to metaphors. Rather than showing that metaphors can be assertions and expressions of beliefs, which the previous chapters indirectly argue for, the strategy I adopt here is a critical examination of the underlying motivations for the expressivist's contention. The overall conclusion here is that the Metaphorical Expressivist's view is untenable; the untenability of the view stems from the fact it is grounded on certain mistaken assumptions and perspectives about metaphors and assertions which motivates the thought that metaphorical utterances are neither assertions nor expressions of beliefs. By revealing and discarding these mistaken assumptions and perspectives, the chapter clears a hurdle towards construing metaphors as assertions and expressions of beliefs, and by so doing, it brings the notion of truth into the appraisal of metaphors.

#### **4.2. The connection between assertion and truth**

In his Preface to his *Truth and Other Enigmas*, Dummett (1978) writes that "just because the notion of assertion *is* so fundamental, it is hard to give an account of it that does not take other notions relating to language, or at least psychological notions such as intention and belief,

as already understood” (p. xvii). In this spirit, most of the accounts of assertion attempt to explain assertion as involving beliefs and intentions (Grice 1957, 1989; Bach & Harnish 1979; Brandom 1983; Ellis 1990; Williams 2002), rationality (Douven, 2006), knowledge (Williamson 2000; DeRose, 2002), or a complex of attitudes (Grayling, 2007). Truth is, however, seen to be intricately linked with assertion that it is often a ‘platitude’ that assertion is essentially truth-involving. There are at least three senses in which this connection is cashed out. In one sense, an assertion is a claim that something is true (Jäger, 1970; Price, 1983, 1987; Wright, 1988, 1992, 2001; Cozzo, 1994; Collin & Guldmann, 2005; Weiner, 2005, 2007) that is, as briskly stated by Wright, ‘to assert is to present as true’ (1992, p. 34). Collin & Guldmann (2005) characterize truth as the key or central condition for the success of an assertion. That is, when one asserts that *p*, the key success condition of that assertion is that it is the case that *p*. This is sometimes referred to as the *fulfillment condition* of an assertion.

In another sense, assertoric discourse should aim at truth and that truth itself should be understood in terms of assertion (Dummett, 1981; McDowell, 1998). This aim of making true statements could issue in a kind of epistemic commitment on the part of the speaker to be committed to the truth, belief in or knowledge of the utterance made (Appiah, 1985; Ellis, 1990; Williams, 2002). Providing a warrant or justification for the truth of an assertion when challenged seems to naturally follow from this commitment to the truth of assertions. The third sense in which truth is linked with assertion is that truth is a constitutive norm of assertion; that is, a rule that guides the making of correct assertions is truth. The rule is often given us: *one must: assert p only if p is true* (Weiner, 2005, 2007).

The intricate interrelationship among the notions of truth, belief and assertion is significant to the issue of the truth-evaluability of metaphors. If one can show that metaphorical

utterances count as assertions then that will mean that metaphorical utterances make truth-claims and vice versa; if one can show that speakers express their beliefs by means of metaphorical utterances, then one can appraise those utterances as either true or false; if metaphorical utterances are assertions, then on one popular view of assertions, metaphorical utterances are expressions of beliefs. In arguing that metaphorical utterances are neither expressions of beliefs nor assertions, the Metaphorical Expressivist comes to the conclusion that truth is irrelevant to metaphors.

### **4.3. Metaphorical Expressivism**

The very distinct tenet of the Expressivist about metaphor is that: *truth does not matter to metaphors*. And this tenet is based on the view that metaphorical utterances do not count as assertions, and they do not count as the expression of beliefs. Expressivists, in general, are opposed to minimalism about truth-aptness, in their insistence that despite surface propositional form, certain areas of discourse or types of sentences like performatives (Austin, 1962), fiction (Divers & Miller, 1995), ethics (Ayer, 1952; Blackburn, 1984) etc, are not truth evaluable. The expressivist contends that in such areas of discourses what pertains is not the expression of beliefs but the evocation of moods and attitudes. And since such evocations of moods and attitudes are not appraised for truth, these areas of discourses have little, if not nothing, to do with truth and falsity. The Metaphorical Expressivist need not be an expressivist about other areas of discourses; she is an expressivist about metaphors in so far as she explains the refusal to attribute truth and falsity to metaphors on the basis that metaphors are not expressions of beliefs or assertions. Blackburn (1984, 1998) and Cooper (1986) are foremost Metaphorical Expressivists; other writers who espouse the views of Metaphorical Expressivism in various forms include Black (1955, 1962), Loewenberg (1975), Mack (1975), Davies (1982) and Davies

(1984). Blackburn's expressivism, for instance, extends to metaphors in his belief that the maker of a metaphor is simply *endorsing* the invitation to the hearer to explore comparisons. The expressivist views of these philosophers on metaphors can be simplified into three main claims: 1) metaphorical utterances *fail* as assertions; 2) metaphorical claims do not tell how things *really* or *actually* are in the world. 3) metaphorical utterances are not *expressions* of beliefs but lead to the *acquisition* of beliefs.

### **Claim I: Metaphorical utterances fail as assertions**

According to Loewenberg (1975),

It is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for an utterance to be a metaphor that, if taken as an assertion and interpreted literally, it is false. If the hearer concludes that the utterance *fails as an assertion*, what, if any, positive conclusion is he entitled to? What speech-act is being performed if not that of assertion? (p. 334).

An assertion, for Loewenberg, literally makes a truth claim, but a metaphorical utterance, when considered as an assertion, makes a false claim. However, a metaphor-maker does not intend to make a false claim and thus metaphorical utterances cannot be taken to be assertions. A metaphorical utterance fails the test of being an assertion, and signals that it be construed as a non-assertoric speech act. In other words, a metaphorical utterance only appears to be an assertion by purporting to make a truth-claim, but interpreted literally, it does not make a truth-claim, and since the making of truth-claims is the hallmark of an assertion, metaphorical utterances do not count as assertions. Implicit in Loewenberg's view, as I will examine later, is the assumption that assertion properly belongs to literal utterances, and that for metaphorical utterances to be counted as assertions, they have to be interpreted or construed literally.

Loewenberg answers her own question at the end of the quote above in the one below:

In concluding that such an utterance fails as an assertion, the hearer identifies it as metaphorical. He judges that the speaker was not making a truth claim about

the referents of the words in the sentence he uttered but rather a *proposal* about a way to view, understand, etc. those referents...The speaker does not assert this view because he knows that it does not represent what – actually and literally – is the case and he expects his hearers to know this. However, his utterance is not merely an expression, a blurting out, of his feelings, nor is he indifferent to his effect on hearers. The speaker is implicitly proposing that his hearer adopt the view expressed by the sentence he uttered (p. 335).

The making of metaphors, for Loewenberg belongs to the speech act of proposals where a speaker proposes to a hearer to view the terms of the metaphor in a certain way. This suggestion is in itself not new: we have seen that an invitational account of metaphor or an account based on the phenomenological experience of seeing-*as* makes a similar suggestion. What is significant about Loewenberg's view here is the fact that the proposal to view the referents of the metaphor in a certain way is premised on the fact that metaphors fail as assertions. Her explanation is grounded on the view that truth is the aim of making an assertion, and the fact that the speaker knows that the metaphorical utterance would be false shows that she was not aiming at truth, and hence the speaker was not making an assertion. Loewenberg also thinks that metaphors do not count as assertions because the claims metaphors make do not represent what is 'actually and literally' the case. This touches on the second claim of Metaphorical Expressivism.

**Claim II: metaphorical claims do not represent how things actually are in the world**

This claim is related to the first claim in the sense that a metaphorical utterance interpreted literally is false, and because it is literally false, it does not show the true state of affairs of what it claims about the world. When an utterance is construed metaphorically, the claim it makes does not tell us anything in the world; and when a metaphorical utterance is interpreted literally, it makes false claims about the world. In either case, it seems that speakers of metaphors do not aim to say what is really the case, and thus they do not purport to make assertions about the world or states of affairs. The conclusion to draw from this observation is that metaphors are not

in the business of making truth-claims about the world, and in other words, truth is not a concern when it comes to the making and appreciation of metaphors. Cooper (1986) says it succinctly here:

The notion of truth, as we normally understand it, is used to appraise utterances in terms of what they achieve. A true statement is one which successfully achieves what statements generally aim to achieve – telling how things really are. To employ the notion of truth in the appraisal of metaphor, therefore, wrongly suggests that metaphors, too, have the dominant aim of getting us to see how things actually are. (p. 250).

For,

The speaker of metaphor, on the other hand, is not aiming to state how things are, but at most to put us in the way of realizing how they are. (p. 207).

Cooper underscores the point that it will be mistaken to use the notion of truth as the currency for valuing metaphors, for metaphors do not fit the bill of representing how things actually are. Making a truth-claim is ‘telling how things actually are’ and this is reserved for literal utterances. Saying of metaphorical utterances that they are intended to make truth claims mischaracterizes what the role of metaphors is, and it suggests a misunderstanding of what it means to make a truth a claim. The notion of truth at play here is a representationalist one: a claim is true if it correctly represents what is actually the case. Telling what is really or actually the case is adopting a literal mode of speech, and hence, the notion of truth here is understood in terms of literal truth conditions.

**Claim III: metaphorical utterances are not expressions of beliefs but they can lead to the acquisition of beliefs.**

Metaphorical utterances are not expressions of beliefs: their makers do not intend to express beliefs, and they do not intend that their hearers will construe them as expressions of beliefs. Rather, the metaphor-maker by the use of the metaphorical expression is evincing an attitude or

expressing a feeling (or opinion) towards, or about, the principal subject of the metaphorical sentence. Like the moral expressivist's contention that a moral judgment like 'stealing is wrong' does not express a belief but an attitude, emotion, desire, or motivation to refrain from the act of stealing, so the metaphorical expressivist maintains that a metaphorical statement "is not a simple matter of belief, but more to do with endorsement of invitations to think of things in a certain light" (Blackburn, 1998, p. 160).

Blackburn (1984) has an interesting take on metaphors with respect to the assertion and belief of the propositional content or the literal paraphrase of a metaphor. For him, a speaker does not express a belief in the metaphorical expression and he also does not assert the content or the literal paraphrase of his metaphor. Rather, the speaker uses a metaphor as a conduit for suggesting a content – the literal paraphrase of a metaphor – to a hearer which may result in the hearer coming to believe the paraphraseable content of the metaphor. Using 'Bert is a real gorilla' as an example of a metaphorical utterance, he writes:

'Bert is a real gorilla' yields that Bert is strong, rough, and fierce. ... Is it right to describe the speaker as having asserted falsely that Bert is a gorilla? Is it right to describe him as having asserted truly the yielded propositions, that Bert is strong and rough and fierce? ... The speaker said that Bert is a gorilla, but did not assert it: he did not intend anyone to believe that this was the truth, and would not normally be taken to have displayed that it is. He did, on the other hand, intend people to believe that Bert is strong, rough, and fierce, and chose a reliable method of transmitting this belief, and of being taken to do so. But the method was one of reliable suggestion, and we do not allow that people assert everything that they reliably suggest, and are known to be reliably suggesting (p. 173)

What is interesting about Blackburn's view on metaphor is that a speaker employs a metaphor as a 'reliable method' for suggesting a belief or a view to a hearer but the speaker does not assert this belief by the use of the metaphor. When a speaker utters a literal statement like 'Bert is strong' he will be asserting the proposition that Bert is strong and he will be expressing his belief

in that proposition. However, when a speaker utters the metaphor ‘Bert is a gorilla’, he will not be asserting the literal proposition that Bert is a gorilla nor will he be expressing his belief in that proposition. But he will also not be asserting the paraphraseable content of the metaphor that Bert is strong. If he were to assert the paraphraseable content or the proposition that Bert is strong then one could evaluate the metaphor for truth vicariously via the truth-evaluation of the paraphraseable content. So, the questions of truth and assertion that could be raised in connection with metaphors do not arise in both directions – that is, the questions do not arise with respect to the metaphors themselves and their interpretations.

The view that the metaphor-maker does not express a belief by his metaphor has also been advanced by Davies (1984). For him, although the metaphor-maker does not *express* a belief by means of his metaphor, the metaphor can lead to the *acquisition* of beliefs on the part of the hearer. A metaphorical utterance can be regarded as a belief-inducing catalyst, that is, as something that can cause one to form (true) beliefs about the subjects of the metaphor or about the insights one might be directed to experience. So, on his view, we have a metaphorical utterance that is itself not belief-produced or a substitute for any belief (on the part of its maker), but a belief-causing agent or phenomenon (to its hearer). He rejects the attempt to transfer the propositional content of the belief the metaphor leads one to possess to the metaphor itself. According to him, “the appreciation of metaphor can and does lead to the acquisition of beliefs, but the propositional content of those beliefs is not stated anywhere and, in particular, it is not stated, not even indirectly, in the metaphors. The appreciation of metaphor provides the occasion for the acquisition of such beliefs, but metaphors are not bearers of the propositional content of those beliefs” (p. 296). His argument is that the beliefs acquired by the hearer are not *stated*

directly *in*, or indirectly *by* the metaphor itself. As an expression of an experience, the evaluation of metaphor for truth, for Davies, is beside the point:

Because the metaphor is not used to assert a belief, its truth-value ceases to be important. An expression of an experience is more like a sophisticated exclamation – such as "How lovely" – than it is like a statement. (p. 298)

The above three claims and the views expressed by the authors discussed above illustrate both the positive and negative views of Metaphorical Expressivism. On the negative side, the expressivist chronicles certain failings of metaphors: metaphors fail as assertions, metaphors are not expressions of beliefs, metaphors do not state how things really are. By their not making claims that such-and-such is the case, metaphors *fail* to be assertions; by their inability to tell or state how things *really* are, they *fail* as utterances that are truth-apt; and in virtue of the fact that they neither *express* the beliefs of their makers nor state directly or indirectly the beliefs their hearers are led to form, they are not the sort of things that can be determined to be either true or false. On the positive side, metaphors are expressions of experiences and emotions of their makers; they are proposals and suggestions their makers put across to effect certain emotions and beliefs in their hearers.

In denying that metaphors are assertions, a number of theorists, including some of those mentioned above, have adopted some descriptions in explaining the *assertion-like* nature of metaphors: Mack (1975) speaks of metaphors ‘masquerading’ as assertions; Walton (1990, 1993), Turbayne (1962), and Hills (1997) regard metaphors as examples of ‘make-believe’ involved in the business of ‘pretense’. Others, like Loewenberg (1975), Davies (1982), and Blackburn (1984) have resorted to the distinction between ‘*asserting that p*’ and ‘*saying that p*’ claiming that while a metaphor merely *says that* so-and-so, it does not *assert that* so-and-so. “An assertion makes a truth claim”, writes Loewenberg, but “‘saying something’ is much looser: it

may even indicate nothing more than making a significant (i.e., meaningful) utterance” (p. 332). In this sense, she adds, “all metaphorical utterances ‘say something’” because “they can all be given some interpretation” and also because they are all “purposeful utterances” (p. 332). Davies (1984) agrees with Loewenberg that a metaphorical sentence is used to “perform a *saying*, but not an *assertion*” (p. 79). He reasons in accord with Davidson that “in sincere assertion one aims at the truth; and, of course, metaphorical statements are apt to be (literally) false. But it does not follow that the metaphor producer *says* nothing at all: what he says is just what the sentence literally means” (p. 79). And in distinguishing the experience of seeing from believing a proposition, Davies (1982) contends in uttering a metaphor, “the speaker aims at that which stands to seeing the world a certain way as truth stands to believing the world to be a certain way” (p. 79).<sup>70</sup>

#### **4.4. Assessment of the Metaphorical Expressivist’s Account**

I shall argue below that Claims I-III that capture the insights of the Metaphorical Expressivist are only half-truths. The half that is true about Claim I is that in uttering a metaphor the speaker does not assert the content literally expressed by the metaphorical sentence. In this sense the utterance fails as a *literal* assertion. The italicization of ‘literal’ in the preceding sentence is crucial: for failing as *literal* assertion does not imply that the sentence also fails as a *metaphorical* assertion. The view that it fails as an assertion *simpliciter* assumes that assertion is to be understood as literal. But this assumption, I shall show below, is wrong. The half that is true about Claim II is that indeed metaphorical sentences do not state what is actually or really the case; but it does not follow from this observation that metaphors do not make truth-claims.

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<sup>70</sup> These terms, ‘saying’, ‘asserting’, ‘expressing’, and ‘stating’ that are used in discussions on propositions and assertions have varied interpretations and usages in the literature. I incur no substantive commitment to any one of them, and in the discussions here, they could be used interchangeable.

The assumption at play in Claim II is that truth is to be understood in representational terms, that is, what is true is what represents or corresponds to states of affairs as they are. The problem here is that truth is understood in terms of literal truth-conditions and hence the view that metaphors do not meet this requirement of a representational literal truth-condition is untenable. The half that is true about Claim III is that the beliefs of speakers are often not stated directly in, or indirectly by, their metaphorical utterances; however, this observation is not peculiar to, or distinctive of metaphorical utterances. A speaker can utter a literal sentence to cause his audience to acquire certain beliefs, probably the belief she holds, but her literal utterance need not express that belief for it to be an utterance that can be appraised for truth.<sup>71</sup> The requirement for a metaphorical utterance to ‘directly’ express a belief or be a direct expression of a speaker’s belief is an illegitimate one: if an utterance identified as a metaphor directly expresses a literal content or a belief that is unintended by its speaker then we cannot require the utterance to directly express a non-literal content or a speaker’s belief.

Another half that is true about Claim III is that in making a metaphor, a speaker may be conveying a particular experience to his audience. But the half that is false here is the view that this evocation or conveyance of experience implies that the speaker is not expressing or asserting a belief. The cases of religious metaphors, for instance, blur the distinction between uttering a sentence to evince an experience and uttering a sentence to express or assert a belief. That is, religious practitioners use metaphors not only to convey their experiences but also to express their beliefs in the deities they worship. Consider Christian metaphors such as ‘God is light’, ‘The Lord is my shepherd’, ‘God is love’, ‘Christians are the salt of the earth’, ‘The Lord is my rock and my refuge’. According to Meier et al (2007), “communication about the divine,

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<sup>71</sup> An example is a scenario that Searle (1965) describes of an American soldier captured by Italian troops and the soldier wanted the troops to believe that he is a German soldier and so he says that “Kennst du das Land, wo die Zitronen blühen?”

however, is often done through metaphors that invoke physical characteristics...For example, God is referred to as “the light of the world” or as a “father,” whereas the Devil is referred to as the “prince of darkness” or as a “serpent.” These metaphors are thought to exist because they allow people to communicate about what they cannot see, hear, taste, touch, or smell” (p. 699). They also write that “because we are sensory based creatures, we often use sensory-based metaphors to describe abstract concepts (i.e., concepts that do not have a concrete physicalistic basis)” (p. 700).

Two important points from their views are that one, religious practitioners talk about divine deities using metaphors, and two, religious practitioners use their metaphors to communicate things to others. Soskice (1985) takes a stronger view on point one, insisting that it is “not only possible but necessary that in our stammering after a transcendent God we must speak, for the most part, metaphorically or not at all” (p. 140). If religious practitioners talk about and express their beliefs in, and experiences with, divine beings by means of metaphors, then it seems plausible to suggest that the metaphors they employ are media for expressing those beliefs. This is why it is also possible to teach moral and religious lessons through the use of metaphors. The believer who employs a metaphor is not only attempting to cause his hearers to acquire certain beliefs, he is also expressing his belief; he is communicating his belief to his audience through his metaphorical utterances.

What motivates and informs the view that a metaphorical utterance fails as an assertion as posited in Claim I? Why should one suppose that a metaphorical utterance does not state what is actually the case, as posited in Claim II? Both Claims I and II reveal a tendency or commitment to two principles: literalism and representationalism. Literalism is an affirmation that sentences do not have any meaning, content or truth, other than their literal meanings, literal contents and

literal truths. Hence, evaluating metaphorical sentences for truth, or considering metaphorical utterances as assertions, should be cast in terms of literal truth-conditions and literal assertions respectively. Literalism is linked to representationalism which posits that the relevant criterion for truth or the making of truth claims is the capacity to tell things or represent states of affairs as they actually are. Since what is *actually* or truly the case is what the literal interpretation of a sentence gives, literalism and representationalism depend on each other for their justifications. The requirement that one says things as they *really* or *actually* are, is a requirement that one adopts a literal mode of speech; and it is in virtue of speaking literally that the issue of whether what one says conforms to reality or not arises. The representationalist who captures truth in terms of representing states of affairs as they really are, is in effect, subscribing to a literalist conception of truth; but the literalist about truth need not adopt a representationalist stance towards literal truth-conditions. It is therefore possible to be a literalist about truth without adopting representationalism, and vice versa. The *Metaphorical Expressivist* is committed to these two principles jointly or individually in her rejection of the truth-evaluability of metaphors.

The commitment to literalism is what fuels Claim I – that metaphorical utterances fail as assertions. This claim is underpinned by a more general view that assertion is literal and that the platitude that truth is the aim of assertion should be understood to mean that assertion aims at literal truth. The commitment to representationalism motivates Claim II – that metaphorical claims do not represent how things actually are in the world. This claim is a consequence of the more general view that there is a bifurcation between descriptive and non-descriptive uses of language and metaphor belongs to the non-descriptive uses of language. The commitment to both literalism and representationalism can further be used to provide an additional support for why metaphors should not be appraised in terms of truth: metaphor is akin to other cognitive and non-

linguistic devices like symbols, models, and maps, but these non-linguistic devices are not evaluated for truth. In what follows, I shall argue that the general views that underlie Claims I and II of the *Metaphorical Expressivist* are untenable, and that the principles of literalism and representationalism which give expression to these views are not plausible.

#### 4.4.1 Is assertion literal?

We recall from Loewenberg (1975) the reasoning that metaphorical utterances fail as assertions because when they are considered as assertions and ‘interpreted literally’ they are false, for assertions aim at truth; but speakers do not intend for their metaphorical utterances to be interpreted literally, and so they do not intend to make assertions with their metaphorical utterances. What underlines this reasoning is the view that what counts as an assertion is something literal, and the truth that an assertion aims at is the literal truth.<sup>72</sup> And this is why a literal interpretation of a metaphor disqualifies the metaphor from being an assertion. At first glance, this reasoning is mistaken for one obvious reason. As it has been shown by Cohen (1975, 1976) and others, it is not a necessary condition for an utterance to be a metaphor that if it is interpreted literally it has to be false. The cases of twice-true metaphors, on Loewenberg’s account, will mean that such metaphors will be regarded as assertions since their literal interpretations render them literally true. And this in turn will mean that Loewenberg will have to admit that some metaphors succeed, rather than fail, to be assertions.<sup>73</sup> This conclusion can only

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<sup>72</sup> More explicitly, the underlying assumption is that it is impossible to assert anything *other than* the literal content of one’s utterance, and analogously, it is impossible to express a truth except with a literal interpretation.

<sup>73</sup> Loewenberg could argue that all metaphorical utterances fail as assertions because they are either obviously false or perhaps contravene some Gricean maxims. But this argument will be flawed since the obviousness of an utterance does not mean that it cannot be an assertion even if it is a false one. In a conversation, an utterance that is obvious may not add anything to the conversational score or serve as update to the conversational context but it will still be an assertion alright. In the same way, an utterance that flouts or contravenes a Gricean maxim does not imply that the utterance cannot count as an assertion. Loewenberg could admit that twice-true metaphors are assertions on the basis that they are true on their literal interpretation but insist that these are just minor and rare cases of metaphors and that since most metaphors are literally false a general account of metaphors must eschew the notion of assertion.

survive for a short while. What is more important is this: how should we construe the aims of speakers who employ these twice-true metaphors?

If literal truth is the aim of assertions then one can suggest that the speaker who asserts a twice-true metaphor like ‘no man is an island’ aims at the literal truth. However, if the literal truth of the assertion of ‘no man is an island’ is the aim of the speaker, then the assertion ceases to be regarded as a metaphor. This will wrongly suggest that ‘no man is an island’ is *either* an assertion *or* a metaphor where it is an assertion when it is literally construed. It needs to be disentangled why the suggestion of the disjunction will be wrong. If we make ‘true on a literal interpretation’ the mark of an assertion, we risk considering all twice-true metaphors assertions.<sup>74</sup> Most metaphors can be negated to yield being ‘true on a literal interpretation’, as for instance, ‘Juliet is not the sun’. On the other hand, if we make ‘aimed at literal truth’ the condition for assertion then there cannot be any metaphorical assertions simply because understanding utterances as metaphors presupposes some sort of overriding of their literal content. But then, this condition no longer becomes a condition for assertion but a condition for a *literal assertion*.

The worry that arises here is that, if the metaphorical utterance is not required to be interpreted literally, and the speaker of a metaphor does not intend her utterance to be construed or interpreted literally, then why is it required that the metaphor be aimed at literal truth to count as an assertion? The condition ‘aimed at literal truth’ is apt and relevant only in light of the condition ‘true on a literal interpretation’ or when a literal construal is appropriate. One cannot provide literal conditions - in terms of aims and interpretations - and insist that metaphors meet

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However, this line of argument is not persuasive. Twice-true metaphors are not special cases of metaphors for by the tool of negation many literally false metaphors such as ‘life is a bed of roses’ can be turned into a twice-true metaphor ‘life is not a bed roses’.

<sup>74</sup> We cannot make this a necessary condition, since many genuine assertions are false. And we cannot make it a sufficient condition, since its implausible to suppose that asserters will assert obvious or irrelevant truths.

these conditions, all the while insisting also that metaphors should not be construed literally. It will be wrong then to suggest that metaphors fail to meet these conditions, that they fail to be assertions, for metaphors do not, and cannot, take these tests. In a good and general sense, the student who does not take an exam cannot be considered to have failed it. The question of what counts as an assertion is not synonymous with the question of what counts as a literal assertion. And similarly, the trite saying that an assertion aims at truth is not to be construed as indicating that an assertion aims at literal truth.

The relationship between truth and assertion, where truth is thought to be the aim of an assertion, should not be understood in isolation independently of a general account of what counts as an assertion. That is, the relationship between truth and assertion should be brought to bear on, or be reflected in, the broader framework of understanding the nature of assertion. In the philosophical literature, there are at least three broad accounts of the nature of assertion: norm accounts, communicative accounts, and commitment accounts. The 'norm' accounts characterize assertion in terms of conditions under which assertions can be correctly and properly made. The fundamental tenet of norm accounts is that assertion is governed by rules. Assertion is therefore, a 'normatively constituted activity' such that a speech act is an assertion if it is governed by the norm. These norms are thought to be individuating; that is, they are what make assertion unique. The general rule of norm accounts can be schematized as: *one must: assert p only if C(p)* where C will be the constitutive norm. So if knowledge is the norm, then the rule becomes: *one must: assert p only if one knows that p*. The various proposals for the constitutive norm of assertion has been truth (Weiner, 2005, 2007); belief (Bach & Harnish 1979; Bach, 2008); knowledge (Williamson, 1996, 2000; Hawthorne, 2004; Unger, 1975; DeRose, 2002); rational credibility

(Douven, 2006; Lackey, 2007); reasonable belief (Kvanvig, 2009a; Turri, 2013); certainty (Stanley, 2008).<sup>75</sup>

The communicative accounts of assertion involve accounts that are based on the conversational or discourse practices of speakers of a language. These accounts focus on the significance and effects of assertion on speakers and hearers in a linguistic exchange. Principal of these accounts is that of Stalnaker (1978), and in a sense that of Grice (1957, 1989). Connecting the notions of the ‘context set’, ‘presupposition’, ‘proposition’ ‘possible world’ and common ground, Stalnaker (1978) argues that “the essential effect of an assertion is to change the presuppositions of the participants in the conversation by adding the content of what is asserted to what is presupposed” (p. 86); and that “to make an assertion is to reduce the context set in a particular way.” Bach & Harnish (1979) and Recanati (1987), following Grice have developed accounts of assertion that involve the beliefs and intentions of speakers in a communicative discourse.

The ‘commitment’ accounts of assertion take a social approach to assertion and explain assertions as involving social and epistemic commitments on the part of the speaker of an assertive sentence. For these accounts asserting that *p* is to be committed to the truth or belief that *p*, and to be responsible for providing reasons or justification for *p* when challenged. Notable accounts include that of Brandom (1983, 1994), Wright (1992), Searle (1969), MacFarlane (2011), Ellis (1990), Williams (2002).<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Cappelen (2010) presents an alternative view that he refers to as the “No-Assertion” view where he argues that, by analogy with kissing and driving, assertion is a non-normative activity. According to him, assertion is not essentially constitutive of norms that make it unique from an ordinary notion of ‘saying that’, and that assertion can be “evaluated by contextually variable norms, none of them constitutive” of the speech act of assertion.

<sup>76</sup> Pagin (2004) has argued that assertion is not social in this sense.

Now, on these broad accounts of the nature of assertions, it is neutral to an assertion whether it is literal or metaphorical. For instance, on the commitment account whereby to make an assertion is to undertake certain commitments and to license others to draw certain inferences from the assertion made, a metaphorical utterance can constitute an assertion or be asserted in so far as the speaker undertakes certain commitments and licenses others to do so. Similarly, if the making of an assertion involves reducing or adding to the context set in a conversation, then the making of a metaphor could count as an assertion in this way. This fact that on a broader account of the nature of assertion metaphors can count as assertions is a minor point here. The main points are that: 1) a broader understanding of the nature of assertion does not rule in favour of the fact that assertion is literal; indeed, what counts as an assertion is indifferent to whether it is literal or metaphorical; 2) the relationship between truth and assertion should be couched within a broader framework of what counts as an assertion. The challenge to Loewenberg and others who favour a literalist account of assertion is that they need to ground their bias for the literal on a view of assertion rather than on a conception of meaning like Davidson's account of metaphors. For, utterances have meanings – and there can be disagreements as to whether they possess metaphorical meanings in addition to their literal meanings – but whether the making of those utterances constitute assertions should be based on a theory of what counts as an assertion and not the *kind* of meaning it is supposed to possess. The Anti-Truth theorist proceeds from an account of meaning and uses that account to justify whether an utterance constitutes an assertion or not. The suggestion I am motivating here is that the question of what counts as an assertion can be answered independently from a prior conception of meaning. And if this is correct possibility, then the Anti-Truth theorist is challenged to provide an account of assertion like the ones briefly explained above that eliminates metaphors. As far as the main (and varied accounts)

of assertion given in the literature goes, these accounts do not eliminate metaphors from being assertions in virtue of their meanings.

This second point is crucial. How could the platitude that ‘truth is the aim of assertion’ be given expression on the commitment account of assertion? In undertaking the commitment to justify and provide reasons for an assertion when challenged, the speaker thereby commits herself to the truth of her assertion. The assertion being aimed at truth is then not construed in terms of literal truth or in terms of matters of fact in the world. The aim at truth is reflected in both the logical and non-logical commitments that the speaker undertakes in endorsing and justifying his assertion. This is the way I suggest that the connection between truth and assertion be understood when it comes to metaphors. A metaphorical utterance can count as an assertion when in the making of it the speaker commits herself to its truth and becomes responsible for endorsing and justifying it when it is challenged. In this way, the speaker of the metaphor is not concerned with whether the metaphorical assertion is true (or false) on a literal interpretation or whether it was aimed at stating a literal truth. The reasons and justifications that the speaker provides for his metaphor are not intended to address the literal interpretations of the metaphor, for the challenge to a metaphor does not arise because of its literal construction.

So, the claim that metaphors fail to be assertions is unjustified. This claim assumes that an assertion is literal and the aim of an assertion is literal truth. These assumptions seem inapt in reference to twice-true metaphors; and these assumptions cannot serve as appropriate conditions for being an assertion. A broader understanding of the nature of assertion which gives expression to the view that truth is the aim of assertion reveals that metaphors can be assertions, and their speakers in asserting them, commit themselves to their truth and to their justifications and endorsements.

#### 4.4.2. Descriptive and non-descriptive uses of language

“Can a metaphorical statement ever reveal ‘how things are?’” asks Max Black (1993, p.38). Black prefers the linguistic locution ‘how things are’ in his question to the more familiar way of asking the same (or a similar) question under the rubric of ‘truth’ such as ‘can metaphorical statements be true?’ Black’s preference for this locution is evidenced in both his distaste for ascribing truth to metaphors and in his affirmative answer to the question he posed. He thinks that the evaluative terms, ‘truth’ and ‘falsity’, properly belong to fact-stating uses of language, and that this ascription of the semantic notion of truth to the fact-stating statements of language is intimately tied in with other semantic and epistemic concepts like ‘evidence’, ‘belief’, ‘contradiction’ and ‘knowledge’. To illustrate with one of his examples, when one hears the metaphor

(1) *Nixon is an image surrounding a vacuum*

it will be inappropriate to ask the following questions: “‘Are you perhaps lying?’, ‘What’s your evidence?’, ‘How do you know?’” (Black, 1993. p. 38). The inappropriateness of these questions is due to his view that metaphorical statements are not fact-stating, and hence, unless these are merely rhetorical questions, we cannot fathom the sense in which we could provide answers to them. Whereas one can assign truth and falsity to a fact-stating statement like ‘Nixon was a shopkeeper’ and seek to adduce evidence for such a claim, one cannot do so for the metaphor. In view of this, Black contends that it will be a “violation of philosophical grammar to assign truth or falsity to strong metaphors” (1993, p. 39). Nonetheless, our unbridled tenacity to say things like ‘how true’ and ‘that’s true’ in response to the metaphor in (1) above, according to Black, can be explained in terms of our recognition of the fact that the metaphor, in addition to its aesthetic effect, *really does say something* (p. 39).

So, despite his aversion to the assignment of truth to metaphorical statements, Black thinks that metaphors can reveal ‘how things are’. Two questions rear their heads here: What is this *something* that the metaphor says? What is this *how-things-are* that the metaphor is supposed to reveal? Black’s brief response<sup>77</sup> to the first question, in reference to the metaphor in (1) is that Nixon is “indeed what he is metaphorically said to be” (p. 39). But this response is uninformative. We began with the view that (1) is a metaphor, which by Black’s characterization, is a peculiar use of language *distinct* from a fact-stating use of language, and yet *states something*. How else will it be a metaphorical *state-ment*? Presumably, what a metaphor states, then, is not a fact – it is not something we can give evidence for, it is not something we can claim to be either true or false – but to say that what a metaphor states is simply what it states begs the question.

Indeed, the notion of truth is related to other notions like justification and knowledge; it is also related to other terms like evidence and facts. And often these other notions and terms are discussed and understood in terms of truth, and vice versa. But the issue of the truth-evaluability of a statement is more of a semantic issue, and the inquiry is to do with whether certain statements or uses of language should be appraised for truth. Philosophers have been concerned with the truth-value of conditional statements, mathematical statements, statements in the future tense, statements whose referential subjects do not exist, etc. A conditional statement can be either true or false but the ascription of a truth-value to a conditional statement is independent of whatever facts it might purport to express. Similarly, a mathematical statement is either true or false but the debate among nominalists, realists, and anti-realists about mathematical statements is to do with whether mathematical statements state facts and the nature of those facts. Fact-

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<sup>77</sup> Black did not specifically pose these two questions and offer responses to them. But his remarks can be construed as offering responses to the questions I have posed.

stating is not the determinant of the truth-value of a mathematical statement and the proofs we construct to show the validity of mathematical statements implies that such statements are true. The point is that, whether in the case of mathematics or metaphors, the stating of facts does not determine the truth-evaluability of mathematical and metaphorical statements. The relationship between fact-stating and truth-evaluability is not that the first determines the second. One who argues from the non-fact-stating status of metaphors to their truth-evaluability already assumes a realist position and casts the debate in terms of whether true statements express facts or correspond to certain facts in the world. But the question of the truth-evaluability of metaphors need not be raised solely from a realist point of view.<sup>78</sup>

Black's distinction here between fact-stating statements and metaphors mimics the *bifurcation thesis* in the expressivist tradition between descriptive and non-descriptive uses of declarative sentences (Blackburn 1998; Price, 2013). Blackburn (1998), for instance, suggests that metaphors are non-truth evaluable because they are non-descriptive uses of language:

Fiction is an interesting example, in that the natural thing to say, at least about writing fiction (as opposed to reporting on established fictions), is that the (atomic) sentences written do not deserve to be called true or false because the author's intention is not to describe the real world, at least in terms of the names employed or the events represented as having happened. But that gives the obvious opening for the expressivist to insist that the same is true, for instance, of simple expressions of emotion or attitude, even when these have indicative form. Yet another pertinent example will be acceptance or rejection of metaphors. These are typically couched in indicative sentences, certainly governed by norms of appropriateness, found in complex embeddings, yet certainly not intended or evaluated as straightforward cases of truths or falsehoods. This is how the expressivist says it is in more controversial examples, such as commitment to conditional, moral, modal, or other claims. These may illustrate dispositions to bad movements of thought or bad attitudes. (p. 159).

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<sup>78</sup> I concede that mathematical realists who make fact-stating the core the truth-evaluability of mathematic statements will disagree with many of things I have said in this paragraph, but their disagreements with my claims here will not take away the import of what I have attempted to articulate here.

Blackburn contends that simple expressions of emotions or attitudes and fiction can be couched in indicative form, but they do not deserve to be called true or false because the intention of their speakers, in using them, is not to describe anything about the real world. These sentences do not have descriptive content despite their being governed by norms and their occurrence in complex embeddings. In the case of fiction, the sentences do not represent anything that has happened in the actual or real world. And in the case of metaphors, speakers do not intend to describe anything in the world when they use metaphors. Hence, if truth-evaluation is applied to descriptive uses of language then metaphors, in general, are not assessed for truth.

The distinction between descriptive and non-descriptive uses of language may be useful to the view that there are certain kinds of expressions that are not evaluated for truth despite their apparent syntactic forms. However, the view that metaphors belong to only the non-descriptive arm of the distinction is unsatisfactory. Metaphors *can* be descriptive of their subjects and states of affairs in the world and speakers can intend them as such; and if they can be used both descriptively and non-descriptively, then the distinction is of no significance to the case of metaphors. Let us suppose that Black's 'Nixon is an image surrounding a vacuum' is a non-descriptive use metaphor. Consider a case of a very obvious metaphor that was used in the wake of the arrest of the Sicilian Mafia, Salvatore Riina, in 1993 as reported by Alan Cowell:

His brother Gaetano, who went to Palermo's Palace of Justice today to arrange legal help for Mr. Riina, spoke briefly to reporters. "My brother is a gentleman," he told them. "You are vultures."

Does Gaetano intend to describe something true or false of the reporters by his use of 'you are vultures'? It appears so. The question of whether the reporters are *really* vultures should be understood as asking about whether, metaphorically speaking, they are vultures. This way, the issue about whether he is describing or referring to them as the animal vultures does not arise. In

this example, the speaker is doing more than merely evincing an attitude or expressing an emotion – the speaker is saying something descriptively about the reporters and intends his audience to construe him as doing so. If this and other cases of metaphors considered in the previous chapters count as descriptive uses of language where their speakers intend them as such, then metaphorical uses of language can belong to both the descriptive and non-descriptive arms of the dichotomy. And if this is the case, then the distinction is of no significance to metaphors, and as such, it cannot be used to deny the truth-evaluability of metaphors.

The distinction between descriptive and non-descriptive uses of language is grounded in the intentions of speakers and so metaphors are said to be non-descriptive because their speakers do not intend to describe anything about the world. But how do we determine the intentions of speakers in using a bit of language or a metaphor? The intentions of speakers in using metaphors can be determined both by the context in which metaphors are used and the kinds of things that speakers do in using metaphors. In terms of context, metaphorical sentences appearing in works of fiction, for instance, will be used non-descriptively because the sentences in fiction do not describe things in the actual world. The kinds of things speakers do in using metaphors, however, more importantly, reveal the sort of intentions they have; that is, the intentions of speakers are made manifest in the things they do with their utterances. These things to a large extent determine the descriptive content and the truth-evaluable status of their utterances. We have seen in the previous chapters that speakers are able to use metaphors in disagreements and as premises and conclusions in arguments; they are able to do provide reasons and justifications for their metaphors; they are also able to draw inferences and conclusions from their metaphors. What sort of intentions could we associate with a speaker who engages in a disagreement with a metaphor or who reasons with a metaphor in an argument? What sort of intentions could we

associate with speakers when they do endorse, justify and withdraw their metaphors? Surely, if they do not intend to say or describe something, if they do not intend to state that such-and-such is the case, then they will not be committed to endorse, justify, and withdraw their metaphors. But because they often engage in these practices, they sometimes use metaphors both descriptively and non-descriptively. And again, this makes the use of the distinction between descriptive and non-descriptive to adjudicate between whether metaphors are truth-evaluable or not a fruitless one.

#### **4.4.3. Metaphor and other non-linguistic devices**

The distinction between fact-stating sentences and metaphors or that between descriptive and non-descriptive uses of metaphor considered above is a paradigmatic symptom of an underlying disposition to treat specifically, the metaphorical, and more generally, the figurative, in purely instrumental terms. Metaphor is seen as a ‘device’ (cognitive and/or linguistic), an ‘instrument’ or a ‘tool’ *within* language use. Seen as a device, the relevant questions regarding the metaphorical become questions about what they are used *for*, what they are good *for*. In relation to these *instrumental-goal-oriented* questions, we develop *instrumental-know-how* techniques for the proper usage of this tool called *metaphor*. In one vein, this instrumental perspective of metaphor leads us to focus on the effects we can achieve by the use of metaphors and the causal explanations for our using them. In another vein, couching the use of metaphors in instrumental terms enables us to compare and classify metaphors among other linguistic devices like indexicality, modality, probability; and we compare and categorize metaphors in the same boat with other declarative statements like mathematical and ethical statements. But crucially, we treat metaphors on a par with other non-linguistic devices like maps, charts, graphs and pictures.

And when we are not too charitable we relegate metaphors to the order of unfamiliar noises, birdsongs, and jokes.

Once we have this instrumental mentality towards metaphor, our concern becomes what we can, and cannot, do with the device of metaphor – or rather, what the device itself can, and cannot, do or achieve. Alas, the distinctions and the limitations of the tool are hereby drawn: Is metaphor a linguistic or a conceptual device? Is metaphor a fact-stating or a non-fact-stating linguistic device? This instrumental perspective on metaphor often leads us to view the device of metaphor as a telescope or microscope – a mediating device. Let us call this device a *metascope*. The concern now becomes what can we *see* through this *metascope*? Can this device reveal ‘how things are’? Can this device make us see (and know) what there is? Does this device provide us with a lens through which we could see *reality* as it is? Can this device show us another reality, an *alter-reality*? Can we ever believe or know anything through the lens of *metascope*? All the various issues and questions I have raised in these last paragraphs may be very pertinent questions, but the thought here is that these questions and concerns are generated as a result of viewing metaphor primarily in instrumental terms. And as such, these questions, and the answers they require, are skewed towards our conceptions of the uses and limitations of the metaphorical device.

Max Black’s answer in the affirmative to his question we started with is a classic example of the instrumental conception of metaphor I have been considering. Black’s position is that metaphor is a cognitive device, it is a “cognitive instrument through which their users can achieve novel views of a domain of reference” (1993, p. 38). The cognitive instrument allows us to recognize what Black calls the *representational aspect* (p. 39) of metaphors; in other words, metaphors are devices for representing ‘how things are’. Black likens metaphor to other

cognitive devices like charts, maps, graphs, photographs and models, saying that these are representational devices for “*showing* ‘how things are’” (p. 39). He infers correctly that in all these other cognitive representational devices, we assess them as being ‘correct’ or ‘incorrect’, and rarely, if ever, do we say that maps are true or false. So, a metaphor is a cognitive representational device for showing or revealing ‘how things are’ and we evaluate metaphors on the lines of correctness or incorrectness and not on the lines of truth or falsity. I have maintained Black’s locution – ‘how things are’ – throughout this discussion because Black himself does not explain what he means by that.

Black avoids talking about truth with respect to metaphor but embraces talking about metaphorical representations mainly because of his conception of metaphor in an instrumental sense – metaphor is a cognitive representational device. To reiterate an earlier question I posed, what is this *how-things-are* that the metaphorical device is supposed to show or reveal? A map is a diagrammatic representation of an area, and if it is an accurate one, we speak of the map as showing or revealing to us *what is there* in that area. Surely, the marks on a map are not the same as the landmarks and buildings in the area, but this is the sense in which the marks *represent* the landmarks. But we can also say that the landmarks are *represented* on the map in such a way that, if the map is accurate, reality, what-is-there in the area, is projected onto the map, the representational device. That is, there is a representational relation between the represented (object), the area, and the representation, the map.

Is this the relation that obtains when metaphor is construed as a device? For one thing, a correct or accurate map is only correct or accurate *of* something, perhaps, a particular geographical terrain. We can draw fictitious or imaginative maps, but we cannot properly speak of such maps as *correct* (or *incorrect*) or *accurate* (or *inaccurate*), though we can talk of them as

representing a certain terrain even if there is no such terrain. A map is correct or accurate only in virtue of what it actually depicts; hence, the cartographer starts his drawing from the standpoint of an already perceived reality. But not necessarily so with the metaphor-maker: ‘correctness’ and ‘accuracy’ are not the stock-in-trade evaluative terms that the metaphor-maker is concerned with, and so she need not worry about what a metaphor is correct or accurate *of*. This is because, unlike the cartographer, she need not start her metaphor-making from the standpoint of an already perceived reality. In fact, rather than aiming to make her marks reflect or depict the object of representation, she often aims at casting the object in a *new* and *different* light. Rather than revealing or showing ‘what is there’ or ‘how things are’, the metaphor-maker can obscure ‘what is there’, and the metaphor-maker can bring to light what is unnoticed and unperceived. The projects of the cartographer and the metaphor-maker are different, and the ‘devices’ they each use have different purposes, that of the cartographer, if she is not being deceptive, is to represent ‘what is there’ with his device, the map. The above disanalogies between metaphors and maps are apt to show that (1) metaphors and maps may be similar in certain respects but they differ in terms of how we appraise or evaluate them; (2) the evaluation of maps in terms of their being correct or accurate *of* something in the world stems from their being *representations*, for the very nature of representations is marked by their being representations *of* something, but metaphorical utterances are not representations *of*; and because they are not representations *of*, they cannot be supposed to reveal things in the world.

The discussion of the disanalogies between metaphors and maps is to highlight an explanatory approach that conceives of metaphors in representational terms to argue for the conclusion that metaphors do not really represent states of affairs in the world and hence they should not be appraised for truth. When metaphor is construed as a lens or device, our attention

is then directed towards a representational mode of talk; we begin to question and reflect on what a metaphor is able to make us see, and then we inquire further about whether what the metaphor enables us to see corresponds to the facts or reality itself. If we claim that the metaphorical device reveals the facts then we pose epistemic questions about the evidence and justification for that revelation. On this approach, once it becomes apparent that the things metaphors reveal cannot be verified or confirmed empirically, the inquirer retreats and recasts the supposed revelation in non-truth-evaluable non-epistemic terms so that the initial questions about the truth-evaluable status of metaphors either become misplaced or irrelevant.

Similarly, once the inquirer hits a rock when she construes metaphors as cognitive statements that are truth-evaluable, she reworks her theory and construes metaphors as cognitive devices like maps and models, and then cast her evaluative terms in tandem with the evaluative terms applicable to cognitive devices like maps. That is, she construes metaphors in representational terms akin to pictorial representations. The problem with this approach to understanding metaphor is not that metaphors are not in an important sense like maps and pictorial representations; the problem is not that we shouldn't understand metaphors in instrumental terms as cognitive devices; the problem rather is that we tend to understand metaphors *only* in instrumental terms, and then we use the instrumentality of metaphor (what it is used *for*, what it makes us *see*) as the basis for proscribing metaphors from the court of truth. A related approach is to ban metaphors from truth-making discourses and then explain the use of metaphors as part of a theory of manipulation, or the making of invitations, or the putting forth proposals. However, the understanding of metaphor in instrumental terms does not preclude our understanding of metaphors among truth-evaluable, information-conveying, and fact-stating, uses of language. Metaphors can be seen as classed among cognitive devices or invitations or

proposals, *and* be evaluated for truth. Similarly, the expressivist may be right in thinking of metaphors as the expression of experience or emotions, but as it was argued in Chapter I, thinking of metaphors in experiential terms does not preclude it from being considered as information-conveying assertions.

#### **4.6. Conclusion**

Metaphorical Expressivists contend that truth does not matter to metaphors because metaphorical utterances are not expressions of beliefs or assertions. In the previous three chapters I have argued for why metaphors can count as assertions and be regarded as the expressions of beliefs. The analytical strategy pursued in this chapter in response to the claims of Metaphorical Expressivism is to show that these claims acquire their force from, and are grounded in, certain assumptions about assertions and metaphors. These assumptions are that assertion is literal, that metaphors are non-descriptive uses of language, and that metaphors are similar to other cognitive devices which are not appraised in terms of truth. If these assumptions hold then metaphorical utterances cannot be couched in terms of truth. I have attempted to show that these assumptions and claims are not persuasive, and that: 1) truth's connection with assertion does not imply that assertion is literal; 2) metaphors belong to both descriptive and non-descriptive uses of language, and hence the dichotomy between two uses is not significant to show that truth does not matter to metaphors; 3) the issue of the appraisal of metaphors in terms of truth is biased against metaphorical truth when the issue is couched in representational terms.

## CHAPTER V

### AN INFERENTIALIST-BASED ACCOUNT TO UNDERSTANDING

#### METAPHORICAL ASSERTIONS

##### 5.1. Introduction

In Chapter I, I argued that construing metaphors in terms of a seeing-*as* phenomenological experience does not rule out the possibility of imbuing metaphors with propositional contents. In Chapter II, I offered arguments in favour of associating metaphors with contents that are propositional in nature; and I argued also that the practices of endorsing and retracting metaphorical utterances, the use of metaphors as premises and conclusions of arguments, and the ability to draw inferences from metaphors, all show that metaphors have contents that can be appraised for truth. And, in Chapters III & IV, I advanced reasons to show that metaphors can be used as assertions *and* be used to suggest, propose, or invite others to do certain things. In the present chapter, I pursue an explanatory approach to the use of linguistic expressions that gives theoretical expression to these ideas and arguments advanced in the previous chapters. The kind of explanatory strategy pursued here is a *non-reductive, uniform, and inferentialist-based* approach to understanding metaphor. It is non-reductive in the sense that it does not explain and evaluate the metaphorical in terms of the literal; it is uniform because it does not provide a *sui generis* kind of ‘metaphorical truth’; it is an inferentialist-based approach in treating metaphor from a pragmatically articulated point of view by understanding the questions of truth, content, and assertion, in relation to metaphor, in terms of what we *do* in using metaphors. An inferentialist-based approach to metaphor is the most appealing approach that gives meaning to the non-reductive and uniform principles stated above, and it is the most

satisfactory approach that gives theoretical expression to the view that metaphors are propositionally contentful and that they are truth-evaluable assertions.

The inferentialist-based approach to understanding metaphor pursued here is based on Robert Brandom's (1994, 2000) inferential semantics account of discursive practices. Brandom's inferentialism treats assertion from the point of view of the social practices we engage in the game of 'giving and asking for reasons', that is, it treats assertions on the basis of the commitments and entitlements – the basic normative attitudes – that speakers undertake when they make claims. This game of 'giving and asking for reasons' implies that *asserting* and *inferring* are the fundamental kinds of *doings* in our social-linguistic practices<sup>79</sup> The crucial argument I make is that, fundamentally, the making of metaphorical claims can be understood from this game of 'giving and asking for reasons' – asserting and inferring – and it is on the basis of these things we do in using metaphors that metaphorical claims have propositional contents that can be evaluated for truth. However, Brandom's inferential account in its complexity presents an account of literal meaning and content but metaphors have contents distinct from that possessed by literal utterances. Hence, Brandom's account is modified and complemented with an account of *presuppositional accommodation*. The modification is required to make the normative social practices of 'giving and asking for reasons' suitable for the understanding and appreciation of metaphors. This modification is apt to show that while both the literal and the metaphorical are indistinguishable in terms of what we fundamentally *do* in using literal and metaphorical sentences, literal and metaphorical sentences differ mainly in the kind of inferential involvements they have and the normative score-keeping practices within which the inferential

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<sup>79</sup> Brandom also thinks that asserting and inferring are explicable in terms of the more basic normative statuses: commitment and entitlement.

connections are articulated. The insight from accommodation theory is to account for both the contextualism associated with metaphors, and the acceptability of metaphorical moves in the language game despite their literal impropriety.

I shall begin, in §5.2, with a motivation for a non-reductive approach to understanding metaphorical sentences that treats the notions of content, assertion and truth not from a representational point of view but from the standpoint of our social practices in using language. I will outline Brandom's inferential semantics in §5.3. In §5.4, I will present the uniformity principle of what we fundamentally do in using language – asserting and inferring – pointing out that we do these basic things in using both literal and metaphorical sentences. This principle follows from Brandom's inferential semantics outlined in the previous section. Since the inferential roles of literal sentences and the propriety of the inferences we make with literal sentences are distinct from metaphorical sentences, I will present an inferential articulation of metaphors that embraces insights from presuppositional accommodation that will make metaphors fit into the game of 'giving and asking for reasons'. What this inferential articulation of metaphors mean, and how it can make sense of other accounts of metaphors like the causal and invitational accounts discussed in the previous chapters, shall be discussed in §5.5.

## **5.2. Negotiating the literal-metaphorical relationship: towards a non-reductive approach**

The questions we have been engaged with so far involve the content and truth of metaphors: do metaphorical statements express propositions? Is the (supposed) content of a metaphor propositional in nature? Are (and should) metaphorical statements (be) appraised for truth and falsity? Are metaphorical statements expressions of beliefs (on the part of the metaphor-maker) or are they only *causes* of beliefs (on the part of the hearer)? Do metaphorical expressions correspond to states of affairs in the world or represent reality as it is? Do

metaphorical expressions in the declarative form count as assertions or are they essentially proposals and suggestions? Most of the answers to the above questions we have gleaned from the literature have been provided, in part, by an attempt at understanding the intricate relationship and the distinctive differences between the literal and the metaphorical. Where the metaphorical is assumed to be subservient to the literal, the issues of content, truth and assertion, with respect to metaphor, are either reduced to, and explained in literal terms of truth and content, or metaphor is denied having anything to do with such notions – truth, content, and assertion are the preserve of the literal. Where the metaphorical is a master of its own, often times, it is assumed that a kind of *sui generis* truth and content can be appropriately applied to it.

In the previous chapters, I motivated the view that attempts at denying that metaphors are truth-apt or that they are evaluated for truth have not been satisfactory. Also, arguments for the view that metaphors have no contents, and that they are merely stimuli in a cause-and-effect relation, have been inadequate. But, these attempts are inadequate and unsatisfactory primarily because they adopt a particular direction and focus of inquiry into the truth and content of metaphors. A basic lesson in propositional or sentential logic presupposes a distinction of statements (or propositions) from other types of sentences like questions and commands. A ‘statement’, we are taught, is a sentence that can be determined to be either true or false. Obviously, there are different types of statements, but the property they all share is their having truth-values. So, when we ask whether a metaphorical *statement* or claim can be true or false, what are we really asking? When we inquire about the content of a metaphor and whether that content is propositional, what forms the basis of our inquiry?

To be clear, these questions are not about *how* the truth and content of metaphorical statements are determined; we are not really after the *who* or the *what* makes our metaphorical

statements true. What forms the basis of our inquiries into the truth and content of metaphor is an acceptance of ‘the given’ – the literal. What a statement is, what truth and reality consist in, are already construed in literal terms. It might seem absurd to ask whether a statement is either true or false, for a statement *is* what is either true or false. What counts as a statement is construed to be coextensive with what counts as a literal statement. There is no denying that what counts as the norm or the ordinary manner of speaking is the literal. There is also no denying that the literal meaning of a metaphorical statement aids in the understanding of the metaphor. So, naturally, the playing field is provided for by the literal; the players and circumstances surrounding the field are all decorated with the literal. If you agree with the Davidsonian account of metaphor, you may also take it that the referee is also literal. How will metaphor fare in this game?

Starting with the literal as ‘the given’ and inquiring about metaphor is not the issue *per se*; the issue rather is the explanation and understanding of metaphor within the ambit of the literal. When the inquiry begins with the standards and tools of the literal and seeks to explain how metaphor fits those standards, the inquiry is already skewed, and metaphor is already doomed to fail in the analysis. The resistance to appraising metaphor on the dimension of truth is partly because metaphor does not fit the bill. But what bill? What sets the bill? And when we try to make metaphor meet the standards, it comes with some uneasiness – it is as if we have pegged a pentagon into a rectangular slot. We cannot set the literal stage and demand metaphor to dance to our satisfaction.

This is not to deny that the metaphorical is in an important sense dependent on the literal. But we need to be clearer on what the dependency relation entails and what the primacy of the literal involves. The primacy of the literal is a primacy in respects of what? The primacy of the

literal is in respect of the production and interpretation of metaphor: words do not acquire mystical meanings when they are used in metaphors; and the literal meanings of the words aid in the interpretation of the metaphor – indeed the interpretation of the metaphor is often done using literal language. But the primacy of the literal should not be extended to the appraisal of the metaphor: we get nowhere by insisting that metaphors are literally false, absurd or inconsistent; we will simply be appraising metaphor in literal terms. The use of literal language in the production and interpretation of metaphor results in our understanding of metaphor but this understanding is incomplete with respect to our appraisal of metaphors for truth.

The fact that A depends, or is parasitic, on B does not entail that A should be reduced to B: dependency does not entail reduction. The dependency relation that exists between the literal and the metaphorical should be understood as a *dependency-for*, that is, the question to be asked is that the metaphorical depends on the literal *for* what? The answer, as we have seen in Chapter II, is that the metaphorical depends on the literal for its explication, interpretation, paraphrasing. This means that the literal has a *communicative priority* over the metaphorical. It is obvious that when we want to explain a literal sentence we do not usually resort to the use of metaphors in the explanation but when we want to explain the meaning or content of a metaphorical sentence we usually use literal sentences (or other less abstruse metaphors) in doing so.<sup>80</sup> The fact that we understand a metaphor partly on the basis of our understanding of the literal meanings of the words it contains does not imply that the metaphorical depends on the literal in its evaluation for truth. This is why when we appraise metaphors in literal terms we are forced to say that

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<sup>80</sup> The literal plays two roles in the appreciation of metaphors: (i) understanding a metaphor presupposes understanding the literal meanings of the words used; (ii) paraphrases and explications are provided in literal language. These two roles reveal how the literal is prior to the metaphorical: it is prior in the first, to the understanding of metaphors, and in the second to the explication of a metaphor. These two roles aid in the making and reception of metaphorical utterances. But what I contend here is that there is no evaluative dimension to these roles; that is, the priority of the literal here cannot be extended to cover appraising metaphors for truth.

metaphorical sentences are often patently or obviously false. But it is conversationally uninformative to know that a metaphor is literally false, for literal falsity is merely a kind of heuristic for identifying an expression as a metaphor. What is relevant and informative to the conversation is whether the identified metaphor is true or false, and this kind of evaluation does not defer to the literal truth-condition of the metaphor. The metaphorical may be parasitic on the literal for interpretation for communicative purposes, but the metaphorical is not parasitic on the literal for its appraisal for truth.

An approach that starts, in its analysis, with the notions of literal representation, content, truth and assertion, and seeks to inquire whether these notions are applicable to metaphor can be both eliminatory and reductive. The inquiry into whether metaphorical statements can be true or false starts with an initial elimination of metaphor from truth-talk and seeks to show whether this elimination must be maintained in the final analysis. But the bar is set too rigidly if it winnows out metaphor from considerations of truth and representation. Metaphor is trapped in the labyrinth of the literal: metaphor is constrained to meet the demands of the literal, and yet it cannot meet any such demands. If we take specification of truth conditions as the *sine qua non* of truth evaluability then we seem to be forced to say that when S is used metaphorically we face a dilemma in filling in the question mark in: S is true iff ..?. For, if metaphors are precluded from appearing on the RHS of the biconditional, then we are insisting on an implausible reduction of metaphorical meaning to literal meaning. If not, then the content of the theory is itself, in part, metaphorical and thus will be rejected by those who deny that there is such a content. So, we end up in a stalemate.

By starting with a notion of representation, the concern is with how our utterances reflect or represent reality. This is like playing a ‘matching game’ that Price (2013) describes here:

Imagine a child's puzzle book, designed like this. On the left side of the page are some peel-off stickers...The aim of the game is to match each of these stickers to the corresponding object in a picture on the right-hand side of the page. The game is successfully completed when every sticker has been placed in its correct location. Now think of the right-hand side as the world and the stickers as statements that we take to be true of the world. For each statement, it seems natural to ask what *makes* it true – what fact in the world has precisely the 'shape' required to do the job. Matching true statements to the world seems a lot like matching stickers to the picture; and many problems in philosophy seem much like the problem the child faces when some of the stickers are hard to place. (p. 23)

The problem that the child will face in playing the matching game involving metaphors is not that some metaphorical stickers will be hard to place but that many of the stickers will not appropriately match or correspond to an object in the picture. So, the child will not be able to play the game. Metaphors are already excluded from the game – they would not have counterparts on the right-hand side to fit them because we are using the *same* puzzle book. The assumption at play in the game is that since metaphorical sentences are like literal sentences the matching game that works for literal sentences should work for metaphorical sentences as well. Although one can play a matching game involving literal sentences, it is not appropriate to require that the game work for metaphorical sentences as well if we are using the same book; and if we use a different book we are caught on the second horn of the dilemma above. The child is not able to play the game involving metaphors because first, it is supposed to be a matching game so it already eliminates metaphors since they do not have counterparts on the other side, and second, the child is using the same puzzle book which works for literal sentences and she is being asked to play the game involving metaphors.

The approach under consideration is also reductive – it sets up a literal playing field and invites metaphor to be explained in the terms and conditions of the literal. The explanations of propositional content in representational terms, truth and assertion in terms of correspondence to

reality, set the touchstone for the analysis and appraisal of metaphor, all the while acknowledging that the literal and the metaphorical are two modes of speaking. The problem with this approach stems from seeing specification of meaning as always specification of truth conditions which is cast in literal terms. The fact that the one mode of speech depends on the other does not imply that the dependant mode of speech should be explained and understood in terms of that on which it depends. Stated differently, the relation between the literal and the metaphorical should not be exploited by appraising the metaphorical in terms of the literal. ‘Seeing one thing in terms of another thing’ has not only been a locution for characterizing the nature of metaphor, it has also been the *modus operandi* of theorizing about metaphors; that is, metaphor itself is explained and understood in terms of something else. Metaphor is seen in terms of models and maps; it is modelled after demonstratives; it is understood along the lines of analogies and similes; it is likened to jokes, bumps on the head, birdsongs etc. Since the seeing-*as* locution is itself a figurative or metaphorical way of characterizing metaphor, perhaps, these other ways in which metaphor is understood are themselves metaphorical constructions. For, if to see one thing in terms of another thing is to employ a metaphor, then to see or understand metaphor *itself* in these other terms is metaphorical.

But while we may not have qualms with construing the nature of metaphor in a seeing-*as* manner, we should not be satisfied with modelling metaphor after other things. The former seeing-*as* is a characterization or a definitional apparatus, but the latter construal of metaphor in terms of other things is reductive. There may be nothing wrong with a reductive analysis of terms and concepts, except that in the case of metaphor, the reduction works under the influence of an unjustified premise, which is that, since metaphor cannot meet the standards of truth, representation and assertion – standards set by the literal – we look for terms in which we can

understand metaphor's apparent exhibition of the trappings of truth and assertion. Or we model it in terms of other things like jokes where the issue of truth does not arise.

To understand metaphor *qua* metaphor, to understand metaphor in relation to truth and assertion, however, we must begin with our practices of using language in general, and our use of metaphors in particular, and then account for the notions of truth and assertion in terms of our linguistic practices. This calls for a different approach to the understanding of metaphor: an approach that does not reduce and explain metaphor in literal terms; an approach that does not begin with a set standard to evaluate metaphor; and most importantly, an approach that explains content, truth and assertion, without a prior demarcation of, and which is oblivious to the differences between, the literal and the metaphorical. In effect, we need a level playing ground of what pertains in our use of language – both literal and metaphorical uses –and then try to understand truth and assertion within our practices of using language. Robert Brandom (1983, 1994, 2000) has offered us an account of understanding assertion and truth within our discursive practices: this account helps us to understand and appreciate metaphor in relation to truth and assertion.

### **5.3. Brandom's inferential articulation of linguistic practices**

It is an obvious observation that most of our utterances and statements stand for, represent, and are about things and states of affairs in the world. According to Brandom, one explanatory strategy to capture this observation, *representationalism*, is to begin with an understanding of representation, truth and reference, “and on that basis explain the practical proprieties that govern language use and rational action” (1994, p. 69). But Brandom thinks that we cannot have a suitable notion of representation or truth *in advance* of our thinking about the correct use of our linguistic expressions. For Brandom, the representational dimension of

propositional and other conceptual contents is intelligible only in the context of “*linguistic social practices of communicating by giving and asking for reasons in the form of claims*” (1994, p. 153). Rather than using the concept of truth and reference as primitive or basic semantic concepts to the understanding of other semantic concepts like meaning and inference, Brandom provides an account of our linguistic practices that takes asserting and inferring as fundamental and then he explains truth and reference in terms of their expressive and inferential roles. He privileges *inference* over truth and reference by adopting an explanatory strategy that understands the meaning of linguistic expressions and the conferment of propositional content in terms of the role they play in reasoning.

Inference, for Brandom, is a kind of *doing*. So Brandom reverses the order of explanation by starting with an account of what one is *doing* in making a claim and then seeks to elaborate from it an account of what is said and the propositional content of what is said. He understands asserting something as “putting it in a form in which it can both serve as and stand in need of *reasons*: a form in which it can serve as both premise and conclusion in *inferences* (2000, p. 11). He explains propositional contentfulness in terms of being ‘fit to serve both as a premise and as a conclusion’ in inferences. Instead of construing *saying* (thinking, believing) *that* such and such in terms of its correspondence to states of affairs in the world, Brandom asks us to understand it “in terms of a distinctive kind of knowing *how* or being able to *do* something” and the relevant sort of doing here is understood by its “inferential articulation” (2000, p. 17). He explains further:

Saying or thinking *that* things are thus-and-so is undertaking a distinctive kind of *inferentially* articulated commitment: putting it forward as a fit premise for further inferences, that is, *authorizing* its use as such a premise, and undertaking *responsibility* to entitle oneself to that commitment, to vindicate one’s authority, under suitable circumstances, paradigmatically by exhibiting it

as the conclusion of an inference from other such commitments to which one is or can become entitled (2000, p. 11).

The above quote needs unpacking. Brandom is motivated, in part, by finding distinctive features that make human beings – and not animals like parrots – sapient beings who have the capacity to engage in discursive or concept-using practices. That is, he is interested in knowing what is involved in discursive beings undertaking certain commitments by their utterances, how their utterances come to be assessed as appropriate or inappropriate, and how certain consequences and implications follow from their utterances. His answer to the above inquiries is that the linguistic practices humans engage in are norm-governed social practices, the performances of which are subject to normative attitudes of their practitioners and the attribution of normative statuses to the performers of this social linguistic practice. What differentiates discursive beings and their practices from that of non-discursive animals, according to Brandom is “to be the subject of normative *attitudes*, to be capable of acknowledging proprieties and improprieties of conduct, to be able to treat a performance as correct or incorrect” (1994, p. 32).

The sociality of the discursive practice lies in the normative statuses – the undertaking and attributing of commitments and their attendant undertaking of responsibility for those commitments – and normative attitudes – acknowledging the propriety or impropriety of performances – while the linguistic nature of the practice lies in the institution of the speech act of assertion – the making of claims that can stand for, and be in need of, reasons. The making of claims, asserting, is intimately connected to the practice of inferring in such a way that for Brandom, “asserting cannot be understood apart from inferring” (1994, p. 158); for the making of a claim is connected to the consequences that follow from that claim and the way in which that claim can be used as a reason for another claim. As Wanderer (2008) explains in his book on Brandom, “For a performance to be treated as an act of asserting, the asserter must have some

mastery over the role of that assertion in "the game of giving and asking for reasons"; that is, what other claims it gives reasons for and what claims are reasons for it" (p. 20). For Brandom, this practical ability of mastering the inferential roles of a claim does not only constitute understanding the claim but also that this mastery is constitutive of being able to make that claim. The inferential involvements of a claim or the network of inferential connections that a claim has to other claims, the propriety of the speaker's commitment to the claim and the appropriateness of the inferences one can make from that claim to others, suffice to determine the semantic content of that claim. The appropriateness of the inferences largely depends on, and is often determined by, the normative statuses and attitudes, the commitments and entitlements of the performers in a conversation.

Brandom understands the linguistic practices of 'giving and asking for reasons' – asserting and inferring – and the institution of normative attitudes and statuses within the framework of a game which is governed by rules and where certain moves or performances of the game players are deemed appropriate or inappropriate. In this game, the conversationalists are players and score-keepers who undertake commitments in virtue of their own moves, and attribute commitments to other players on the basis of the propriety of their moves too. Game players and score keepers can assume the status of being entitled to make certain moves and undertake certain assertional commitments, and also attribute certain entitlements to others, for the game has a "default and challenge structure" (Brandom, 1994, p. 176). A move in this asserting-inferring game authorizes other moves by the speaker and licenses others to make other moves or attribute commitments to the speaker. The speaker's move can be challenged, and when it is challenged, the speaker undertakes the responsibility to provide reasons to justify and vindicate his assertion, or she could retract the assertion if the circumstance demands it. Score-

keeping in this game of ‘giving and asking for reasons’ is also a kind of doing where the score-keeper adopts certain normative attitudes towards the performances of the game players and updates the scores of the game in accordance with the propriety of the rules governing the game. The correctness and appropriateness of moves in the game determine the kind of normative attitudes that score-keepers adopt to the performances of players in the game.

Brandom’s inferentialist account of the semantic content of sentences, in a nutshell, is a pragmatic account that treats the uses of language in terms of a social normative practice where the making of assertions and the inferential involvements of assertions are basic and principal to the understanding of language use. These practices are situated within a framework where the making of assertions involves the undertaking of commitments, the attribution of commitments to others, the licensing of others to make certain inferences from the assertion, and the responsibility to justify one’s assertions when challenged. Importantly, for Brandom, the semantic notions of truth and reference play no role in the structure of these proprieties.

In privileging assertion and inference over truth and reference, how does Brandom conceive of truth ascriptions within this game of asking and giving reasons? For Brandom, instead of starting with a metaphysical account of truth such as the correspondence theory and using that to account for beliefs and assertions which are construed to be representations that can be true, he offers an approach of understanding truth ascriptions in terms of the *act* of calling something true. The approach he recommends “seeks to explain what is asserted by appeal to features of assertings, what is claimed in terms of claimings, what is judged by judgings, and what is believed by the role of believings (indeed, what is expressed by expressings of it) – in general, the content by the act, rather than the other way round (2000, p. 4). In other words, the emphasis is on a pragmatic construal of truth, the act of calling something true, rather than the

descriptive content of what is associated with what is called true; this is to say that in calling something true one is praising or endorsing it rather than describing it.

Taking a claim to be true, then, is undertaking a sort of ‘normative stance or attitude’ towards that claim, that is endorsing it or committing oneself to it. Endorsing a claim or committing oneself to it, according to Brandom, is understood “in terms of the role the endorsed claim plays in practical inference, both in first-person deliberation and in third-person appraisal” (1988, p. 77). Truth, on Brandom’s view, is seen not as a property independent of our attitudes but it is understood in terms of ‘taking-true’ or ‘treating-as-true’. He writes that “in calling something true one is *doing* something, rather than, or in addition to, *saying* something. Instead of asking what property it is that we are describing a belief or claim as having when we say that it is true, [we] ask about the practical significance of the act we are performing in attributing that property. We accomplish many things by talking, and not all of them are happily assimilated to describing how things are” (1988, p. 77). Undertaking a normative stance or commitment towards a claim, we have seen, is understood as putting it forward as fit to serve as, and stand for, the premise and conclusion of an argument.

#### **5.4. An inferential articulation of metaphors**

I shall contend below that Brandom’s account of the propositional content of sentences and the making of assertions as sketched above, complemented by insights from *presuppositional accommodation*, is appropriate for treating metaphorical utterances as being propositionally contentful, and for taking metaphorical claims as assertions that can be evaluated for truth. In other words, an inferentialist account of the use of language provides us with a theoretical framework within which metaphors count as assertions and can be appraised for truth. As remarked in the introduction, the modification of Brandom’s account is meant to show that

while both the literal and the metaphorical are indistinguishable in terms of what we fundamentally *do* in using literal and metaphorical sentences, literal and metaphorical sentences differ mainly in the kind of inferential involvements they have and the normative score-keeping practices within which the inferential connections are articulated.

Three related questions are pertinent to the adoption of Brandom's inferentialism to the understanding of metaphors, the first of which is central:

1. How do metaphor and metaphorical utterances feature in an inferential articulation of this game of 'giving and asking for reasons'?
2. What determines the commitments and entitlements that go with a *metaphorical* claim since in the Brandomian game the commitments and entitlements that go with a claim are determined by the normative practices which are rule-governed and which give rise to literal meaning?
3. What inferential relations, if any, can we associate with a metaphor? What sanctions those inferential relations? And given the indeterminacy of metaphorical meaning and interpretation and the indeterminacy of the inferential relations of a metaphor, what sort of propositions could we associate with a metaphor with indeterminate inferential relations?

These questions are crucial if we are to adopt inferentialism as a theoretical framework for understanding metaphors in relation to truth and assertion. So first, how does Brandom's explanatory approach help us to understand and appreciate metaphor? We do not have to accept Brandom's inferentialism over representationalism – we might even think that Brandom has not succeeded in persuading philosophers to jettison representationalism for inferentialism. However, with respect to our understanding of metaphor in relation to content, truth and

assertion, the worries expressed in §5.2 above are ample reasons to *prefer* inferentialism over representationalism in the particular case of metaphors. It is preferable to have an account that articulates content and assertion in terms that do not give priority of place to one of the two modes of using language – the literal and the metaphorical. It is more desirable to have an account that does not begin with the notions of representation and truth which have been marked and branded in literal terms and conditions.

What is the sense in which inferentialism does not necessarily give priority of place to literal content and literal assertion? First and foremost, Brandom's account helps us to understand our social, normative and linguistic practices in using language – both literal and metaphorical uses of language. In focusing on what we are *doing* in making claims or saying something, his account is neutral as to whether what we are saying is literal or metaphorical. That is, the distinctive and basic kinds of doing – asserting and inferring – that Brandom identifies are not peculiar to literal uses of language. In both literal and figurative uses of language, we engage in the drawing of inferences: we put forth claims that can serve as, and stand in need of reasons. In both literal and metaphorical uses of language, we can justify the claims we put forth, and we can challenge the claims that other interlocutors put forward in our conversational practices. Similarly, in asserting metaphorical and literal statements, we undertake certain commitments and license others to make inferences from those claims. That we can draw inferences from metaphorical utterances, justify and retract metaphorical utterances, have been pointed out especially in Chapter II.

So, inferring here is the common denominator in our linguistic practices of making literal and metaphorical claims. This implies that the propositional content of our claims will have to be

inferentially articulated, since what can serve as, and stand in need of, reasons must be propositionally contentful. The basic argument here, therefore, is this:

- P1 – Putting forward a metaphorical statement is putting forward something that can serve as a reason and stand in need of reasons.
- P2 – What can serve as, and stand in need of reasons, is propositionally contentful
- C: Hence, putting forward a metaphorical statement is putting forward something that is propositionally contentful.

What is important about this argument is that we can run the same argument for putting forward literal claims: putting forward a literal statement is putting forward something that can serve as, and stand in need of reasons; what can serve as, and stand in need of reasons, is propositionally contentful; hence putting forward a literal statement is putting forward something that is propositionally contentful. Since the two arguments are identical, we can simply omit the words ‘literal’ and ‘metaphorical’ to obtain: putting forward a statement is putting it in a form that can serve as, and stand in need of reasons; what can serve as, and stand in need of reasons, is propositionally contentful; hence putting forward a statement is putting it in a form that is propositionally contentful. What does this result tell us? It shows that there is what we can term as the *principle of uniformity* in terms of the basic kind of doing with respect to literal and metaphorical uses of language. This principle indicates that *asserting* and *inferring* are neither specific to, nor distinctive of, literal uses of language. And since, on an inferentialist account, these pragmatic practices confer semantic contentfulness on sentences, literal and metaphorical sentences come to have propositional contents in fundamentally the same way. In addition, this uniformity principle nullifies the bifurcation between descriptive and non-descriptive uses of language and the explanatory work that the distinction is supposed to achieve. For, since inferentialism considers inferring, rather than truth and reference, as basic and primary, descriptive contentfulness is not a useful determinant for understanding our uses of language.

Once this distinction is collapsed, it becomes intelligible to evaluate metaphorical and literal utterances for truth from the same mode of appraisal.<sup>81</sup>

Despite the sameness of the fundamental thing we do in using literal and metaphorical sentences, it can be argued that the game of giving and asking for reasons is suitable for only literal sentences. For the rule-governed nature of the game, the undertaking and attributing of commitments and the score-keeping by players, the propriety of the moves in the game and how such moves are assessed, and the consequences of the moves in the game and how they are determined – all these make sense within a literal understanding of the discursive practices of sapient beings. And Brandom, it could be argued, intended his inferentialism to account, primarily, for literal uses of expressions. To a certain degree, I agree. But there is a possibility of *extending* the details of Brandom's account to include uses of metaphorical sentences, and hence, saving the uniformity principle. This possibility is what I will explore below.

The completeness of any account of our linguistic practices, to a large extent, can be judged on the basis of its accounting for both literal and figurative uses of language. Performers in linguistic practices, and interlocutors in linguistic exchanges, often do employ metaphors and other figurative expressions. Let us assume that Brandom's deontic score-keeping account of assertion and semantic content is explicit on literal uses of language, then on the basis of the obvious fact that conversational game-players often do employ metaphorical assertions, how do the game-players and score-keepers construe metaphorical moves and update the conversational

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<sup>81</sup> It is crucial to note that the *principle of uniformity* that regards the literal and metaphorical as being propositionally contentful in fundamentally the same way does not suggest that there is now no distinction between the literal and the metaphorical. As I show below, the kind of inferential roles and commitments and the process of accommodation involved in capturing the content of metaphors sets the metaphorical distinct from the literal. The inferentialist framework I develop below does not dissolve the distinction between the literal and the metaphorical as some Pro-Truth theorists do, for they dissolve the distinction by seeing the metaphorical to be on a continuum with the literal. The metaphorical, on their view, is just a loose talk. Such a view is reductive and unappealing in accounting for the assertorial content of metaphors. The inferentialist framework here is neither reductive nor sees the metaphorical as being on a continuum with the literal.

score accordingly? Another obvious fact about linguistic exchanges: conversationalists *primarily* engage in their discourses using the literal mode of speech; that is participants in a conversation mainly speak literally, and their assertions are largely understood literally. The literal meanings of their words, and the literal truth-conditions of their sentences are crucial to the flow of their conversations and for the achievement of semantic uptake. But there is something else that happens in conversations, something that Rorty (1989) describes as “tossing a metaphor into a conversation” (p. 18) and what many others have described as ‘figuratively speaking’ or ‘metaphorically speaking’. So the question above is about how to give an account of speaking metaphorically by making a move in the language game. That is, how do we articulate the pragmatics of speaking metaphorically in this game of ‘giving and asking for reasons’?

The explanation pursued here is to treat *metaphorically speaking*<sup>82</sup> as a presupposition marker when it is explicitly used to prefix an assertion, or as a tacit expression presupposed when a speaker asserts a sentence that is identified as a metaphor. This presupposition is pragmatic in the sense used by Stalnaker (1973, 1974, 2002) and Soames (1982), in that it is speakers and not sentences that presuppose anything. However, this *metaphorically speaking* presupposition is not a proposition: it is not a proposition – a declarative sentence that is either true or false – that is already accepted as part of the common ground of a conversation; and it is not a proposition that is a consequence of a (metaphorical) sentence, the truth or falsity of which affects the semantic value of the sentence. There is, therefore, a distinction between this kind of presupposition of speaking metaphorically and the presuppositions that can be associated with the speaker’s metaphorical utterance. This kind of presupposition is also distinctive in the sense

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<sup>82</sup> or *speaking metaphorically*

that it is not a suppressed premise to be supplied by the hearer in a conversation.<sup>83</sup> It is a presupposition in the sense of signalling how the assertion is to be understood and interpreted, and therefore, the inferential involvement of the assertion is contingent on acceptance of the presupposition. The *metaphorically speaking* presupposition, in its non-explicit form, marks a ternary relation between the sentence, the context in which it is used, and the speaker's intention in using the sentence. In saying that 'Richard is a lion', for instance, a speaker presupposes that he is *speaking metaphorically* when he is cooperating in the discourse and obeying the Gricean rules of conversation and that the context and the circumstances of the utterance makes it appropriate for construing the utterance metaphorically.<sup>84</sup>

I shall adapt Soames' definition of 'utterance presupposition' in explaining this distinctive kind of presupposition of speaking metaphorically. According to Soames,

An utterance U presupposes P (at t) iff one can reasonably infer from U that the speaker S accepts P and regards it as uncontroversial, either because

- a S thinks that it is already part of the conversational context at t, or because
- b S thinks that the audience is prepared to add it, without objection, to the context against which U is evaluated (1982, p. 486).

The use of 'utterance presupposition' here is apt as a pragmatic presupposition in terms of speaker-presuppositions because, as Soames points out, "a speaker whose utterance presupposes P often himself presupposes P" (p. 486). As indicated above, the presupposition of *speaking metaphorically* is not a proposition that is presupposed by the utterance itself, for in addition to

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<sup>83</sup> While I prefer to think of the presupposition of *speaking metaphorically* as not a proposition, construing it as a proposition does not undermine the significance of the view developed here.

<sup>84</sup> The presupposition of *speaking metaphorically* is primarily about the speaker's communicative act rather than the informational content the metaphor contributes to the common ground. The subject matter of the metaphor can be a presupposition that needs to be added to the context of communication, but this is a different kind of presupposition from that of *speaking metaphorically*.

speaking metaphorically, the speaker's utterance itself could have other presuppositions too, and hence, Soames' definition will be modified here to reflect this kind of presupposition. Also, more often than not, that one is speaking metaphorically is not *already part* of the conversational context. The presupposition of *metaphorically speaking* can be captured in this way:

An utterance U presupposes that the speaker S is *speaking metaphorically* at t iff one can reasonably infer from U that S accepts that he is speaking metaphorically and regards it as uncontroversial, either because

- a S thinks that the conversational context at t makes it appropriate to construe U only as a metaphor, or because
- b S thinks that the audience is prepared to add the presupposition, without objection, to the context against which U is evaluated.

Consider a simple conversation that ensues between two philosophy professors who have just come out from a meeting with their head of department, Schneider:

Tom: What do you think of this new head of department?

Dick: Schneider is a fox

Tom: Well, I think he is more of a serpent

Dick: Either way, he is treacherous.

Dick's initial utterance presupposes that he is speaking metaphorically and this presupposition seems uncontroversial from the context in which he is talking about his head of department. In this case, the fact that the conversation is about a human being, coupled with the obvious literal falsity of his assertion, make it appropriate to construe his assertion as a metaphor. An utterance or a sentence by itself is, in most instances, neither literal nor metaphorical: it is construed or interpreted literally or metaphorically depending on the context in which it is uttered or used and

the intention of the speaker in uttering the sentence. The conversational context in this case determines that the utterance be construed as a metaphor in virtue of the speaker's intention to speak metaphorically and his interlocutor recognizing that he is speaking metaphorically. Tom's recognition of Dick's speaking metaphorically informs his own use of a related metaphor. The presupposition is sustained by Tom's recognition that Dick is cooperating in the conversational discourse and expects that his utterance will be construed metaphorically. Dick's expectation that his audience will find it uncontroversial that he is speaking metaphorically and add that information to the context and against which his audience will evaluate his utterance is captured in the second condition of the definition. The metaphorically-speaking presupposition has the merit of ensuring the acceptability of the utterance of the speaker and the subsequent evaluation of the speaker's utterance.

What is the purpose of this presupposition marker (i.e. *metaphorically speaking*) in the score-keeping game of giving and asking for reasons? Among the moves the linguistic game-player can make is the asserting of a metaphorical claim. In making this move, the speaker presupposes that he is speaking metaphorically in the sense explained above. The metaphorical claim itself usually will be literally inappropriate – it could be literally false, semantically anomalous, pragmatically a misfire, a category mistake, and so on – but the *recognition* of the presupposition (tacitly or explicitly expressed) and the contextual parameters within which the utterance is made leads to both the *acceptability* and *appropriateness* of the move. Understanding the three key words italicized in the preceding sentence – *recognition* of the presupposition marker, the *appropriateness* and *acceptability* of the metaphorical utterance – and the relationship that exist among the three, will shed light on the inferential articulation of metaphors within this Brandomian framework.

A speaker's metaphorical utterance comes with what we have called the presupposition of speaking metaphorically. The speaker, in the first place, relies on his hearer's capacity to acknowledge this presupposition behind his utterance, and in the second place, the speaker expects his hearer to recognize the presuppositional intent of his utterance. Hornsby (1994) and Hornsby & Langton (1998) have characterized a phenomenon that exists between users of language whereby the speaker and hearer depend on a "mutual capacity for uptake" as users of language and a reliance on a "minimal receptiveness" of users in their role as hearers, as *reciprocity*. According to Hornsby & Langton (1998), "people who share a language have the capacity not simply to understand one another's words, but also to grasp what illocutionary acts others might be trying to make" (p. 25) and that in a successful linguistic exchange "a speaker tries to do an illocutionary thing; a hearer recognizing that the speaker is trying to do that thing is then sufficient for the speaker to actually do it" (p. 25). Reciprocity then allows that language users exploit the capacity of others recognizing their illocutionary intent, like staking a claim, and the capacity to acknowledge and receive the communicative intentions of others. This means that the achievement of uptake on the part of hearers is crucial to the success of one's intended illocutionary act. One implication of this view is that the staking of a claim or asserting something is not necessarily achieved by convention or by its adherence to certain rules but by the awareness of the audience of what the speaker's intention is.

The notion of reciprocity is apt here in grounding the linguistic moves that speakers make which come with the metaphorical presuppositions. The recognition of the presupposition marker on the part of the hearer and the speaker's expectation that the hearer recognizes his presuppositions is dependent on this mutual capacity for uptake and receptiveness. That is, the speaker's uttering a metaphor, and the hearer's recognition of the speaker's utterance as a

metaphor is made possible by virtue of the phenomenon of reciprocity. Reciprocity then suffices for regarding the metaphorical utterances of the game-players as the making of claims, for their status as claims depends on whether the game players take them to be so. That is, by means of reciprocity, the move of a game-player (when it is a metaphor) is successfully recorded as the making of a claim by other game-players and score-keepers – and this not because the move is in accordance with the rules of the game *per se* but because it arises from the point of view that speakers *do something* with their words and utterances.

Reciprocity alone, however, does not entail the *acceptability* of an utterance as a metaphor. The existence of the metaphorical presupposition, the phenomenon of reciprocity, trebled with a process of presupposition *accommodation* accounts for the appropriateness and acceptability of metaphorical utterances in the game. Accommodation, originally understood in relation to presuppositions refers to the process or mechanism by which an utterance that requires a presupposition to be acceptable, and where the presupposition was not part of the common ground of the conversation before the utterance, that presupposition “comes into existence” (Lewis, 1979, p. 340) at the time of the utterance. That is, if the conversation requires that the presupposition of an utterance is added to the conversational score for the utterance to be acceptable, that presupposition is accommodated and added to the conversational score. The conversational scoreboard or record is therefore adjusted to receive the presupposition. As a mechanism a hearer adopts to update the score of the conversation, accommodation does not only imply that a hearer adjust the context of the conversation to receive the current utterance of the speaker but that the hearer also makes a “tacit extension” (Karttunen, 1974, p. 191) of the conversational context by his acquiescence of the presupposition. By tacitly extending the context to accommodate the presupposition of the speaker, the hearer adopts a strategy that

makes the utterance of the speaker true and acceptable (Richard, 2004, 2008). The hearer updates the conversation and the conversational score by adding the presuppositional information to the shared common ground of the conversational context. The process of accommodation, therefore, guarantees the appropriateness of the speaker's utterance, for in deciding to acquiesce to the presuppositional suggestion of the speaker, the hearer comes to regard the utterance of the speaker as an appropriate move in the conversational game.

Roberts (2004) has identified two necessary conditions of presuppositional accommodation, the satisfaction of which makes hearers accommodate, rather than object to, the presuppositions of speakers:

- a Retrievability: what the hearer is to accommodate is easily inferable, so that it is perfectly clear what is presupposed, and it is both salient and Relevant to the immediate context, and
- b Plausibility: the accommodated material leads to an interpretation that is reasonable and unobjectionable in the context (p. 511)

These two conditions tie in with the definition of presupposition given by Soames above that the presuppositional proposition should be uncontroversial and easily inferable from the speaker's utterance. In the distinctive kind of presupposition – speaking metaphorically – that comes with the speaker's making of a metaphor, the process of accommodation ensures both the acceptability and appropriateness of the metaphor. How so? When a metaphorical utterance is made, an initial and perhaps, unreflective, reaction one can make is to see the utterance as inappropriate – a wrong move in the conversational game. However, by the hearer's recognition of the cooperative attitude of the speaker and the hearer's recognition of the illocutionary intent of the speaker by means of reciprocity, the hearer sets about to adjust the context and the

conversation to admit the metaphorical utterance.<sup>85</sup> The acceptance of the metaphorical utterance, in turn, comes about by inferring from the context that the speaker was speaking metaphorically, that is, that the speaker presupposed that he was speaking metaphorically in the sense explained above. The hearer then goes through the process of accommodation by accepting and adding the presupposition to the conversational score and then updating the conversation to make the metaphorical utterance of the speaker acceptable and appropriate. The acceptability and propriety of the metaphorical utterance depends on both the feature of reciprocity that characterizes linguistic exchanges and the process of accommodation that hearers go through to adjust the context to receive the metaphorical utterance. The initial impropriety and awkwardness that seemingly greeted the metaphorical utterance goes away; for, through accommodation, the metaphorical assertion becomes an appropriate move in the conversational game. Roberts' first condition of Retrievability is satisfied by the recognition of the presupposition marker made possible by the context and the mutual capacity of language users to recognize and be receptive to the illocutionary intent of speakers. The second condition, Plausibility, is satisfied by the fact that it is only by the accommodation of the presupposition that the meaning and interpretation of the metaphor become contextually relevant and appropriate.

The role of accommodation is not limited to the recognition and acceptance of a metaphorical sentence in a conversational context; accommodation also determines the kind of meaning we give to the metaphor and the inferential involvements of the metaphor. Accommodation sets the inferential potency and propriety of a metaphor which accounts for

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<sup>85</sup> There are cases where a speaker may not be cooperating; and there are instances where hearers cannot recognize that speakers are speaking metaphorically. Such cases may need a separate account of the acceptability of metaphors. Accepting and accommodating metaphors implies that interlocutors are cooperating in the linguistic exchange.

the metaphor's acceptability. This is so in virtue of what it is to accept the presupposition of speaking of metaphorically. What does it mean for a speaker to presuppose that a speaker is speaking metaphorically? What is a speaker's illocutionary intent for speaking metaphorically? Relatedly, if the phenomenon of reciprocity holds, how does the hearer construe the speaker's metaphorical utterance? Accommodating a presupposition associated with an utterance and updating the conversational score to include the utterance implies that one *understands* the utterance. A speaker's preference for uttering a metaphor in a conversation – when he could have chosen to speak literally for the same effect – is borne out of the expectation that his hearer will understand his utterance as a metaphor. And it is a linguistic fact that users of a language do understand both the hackneyed and novel metaphors they use in their linguistic exchanges.

If accommodating a metaphorical utterance implies understanding the utterance as a metaphor then the mastery of the inferential involvements of a metaphor is contingent on the process of accommodation. But what is it to understand an utterance – a metaphorical utterance for that matter? Understanding a metaphor may involve seeing one thing (Schneider) as another thing (a fox) or how the being of the one thing 'counts as' (Wearing, 2006) the other thing. This is the *phenomenological* or *figurative dimension* to metaphor. Explicitly qualifying one's assertion that one is speaking metaphorically or implicitly presupposing that one is speaking metaphorically means that the assertion should not be construed in terms of the normal signification of the words of the assertion, that is, the assertion should not be understood in accordance with its compositional function. Rather, the assertion should be construed in the manner where the juxtaposition of two things in the same assertion requires one to think of the one thing in terms of the other. I have argued in Chapter I that the phenomenological dimension does not suffice to understanding a metaphor. I argued there for a pragmatic conception of

understanding where understanding a metaphor goes beyond the experiential seeing-*as*, and that understanding a metaphor involves, among others, the ability to reason with the metaphor, the ability to use the metaphor in other contexts, the ability to draw inferences from the metaphor, and the ability to use the metaphor as a premise or conclusion of an argument. One crucial point here is that speaking metaphorically implies that one's utterance be taken as a metaphor which in turn implies that the audience construe the utterance figuratively, for instance, in terms of seeing one thing as another thing. Recognizing this presupposition and accepting the metaphorical utterance is the way in which accommodation embraces the phenomenological dimension of the metaphor.

In conjunction with the phenomenological dimension is the *assertional dimension* to the metaphor that completes the understanding of metaphorical claims in conversations. This is the sense of putting forward a metaphorical claim in the form that is fit to serve as, and stand in need of reasons. In other words, this is the dimension of the dual mode of asserting-and-inferring that is associated with metaphors, and it is in agreement with the pragmatic conception of understanding articulated in Chapter I. A speaker makes a metaphorical claim by putting it in a form that is fit to serve as a premise or conclusion of an argument – and the making of the claim makes it possible to reason with the claim and make inferences from it. Yet, by speaking metaphorically or presupposing to do so, the speaker intends his utterance to be construed along the line of thinking of one thing as another thing. The audience, by means of accommodation, recognizes the presupposition, construes the utterance as a metaphor, and determines the inferential roles of the utterance in accordance with her so taking the utterance as a metaphor. By accommodating a metaphor, the hearer reflects her understanding of the metaphor, where this understanding consists of both the phenomenological and assertional dimensions of the

metaphor. The relationship between the two dimensions is such that the phenomenological dimension which accounts for the presupposition of speaking metaphorically determines the kind of inferential involvement of the metaphor, and hence, it determines the assertional dimension of the metaphor. The correctness and appropriateness of the inferential involvements of a metaphor are set and constrained by the phenomenological dimension to the metaphor through the process of accommodation, as I shall now explain.

The role of accommodation in grounding both the assertional and phenomenological dimensions of metaphor stems from the idea of accommodation as the making of a tacit extension to the context of conversation or adjusting the extension of a term in order to make an utterance acceptable and true. Richard (2004, 2008) has utilized the notions of accommodation and ‘contextual negotiation’ to argue for the truth relativity of expressions whose meanings depend on the context in which they are used. Sentences which contain gradable adjectives like ‘rich’ and ‘tall’, for example, ‘Mary is rich’, have different meanings due to the varied extensions of ‘rich’ depending on how interlocutors use the expression. Gradable adjectives like ‘rich’, according to Richard, are subject to the processes of accommodation – that is, “its extension shifts to make sentences in which it is used true, provided no one objects to the use in question” – and contextual negotiation – that is, “when speakers differ over how it is to be applied to cases, they can and often do attempt to reach a consensus as to how it is to be applied, via examples, argument, mutually agreeable stipulation, and so on” (2004, p. 227). Richard explains that it is the processes of accommodation and negotiation that accounts for why a sentence like ‘Mary is rich’ expresses a claim whose truth is relative. The interesting aspect of Richard’s account for our purposes here is the way in which he conceives of the mechanism at play in the making of claims which are subject to accommodation and negotiation. He writes:

Suppose that I assertively utter 'Mary is rich', when it is not antecedently settled for conversational purposes whether Mary is in the term's extension. My statement, that Mary is rich, is as much an invitation to look at things in a certain way, as it is a representation of how things are. In saying that Mary is rich, I am inviting you to think of being rich in such a way that Mary counts as rich. If you accept my invitation - that is, if you don't demur, and carry on the conversation - that sets the standards for wealth, for the purposes of the conversation, so as to make what I say true. It is this idea - that an assertion can be as much an invitation to conceptualize things in a certain way, as a representation of how things are - that is missing from the picture of assertion on which the objection rests. There is a single notion of being rich which can be "fleshed out" - i.e., whose extension can be determined - in various ways. Sometimes, when I assert that Mary is rich, I am simultaneously presenting Mary as rich - placing her in the extension of the notion - and inviting you to go along with me. Whether you accept my invitation or not doesn't affect what claim I make.

The significant insight from Richard here is that in making an assertion that 'Mary is rich' one is simultaneously inviting others to conceptualize the way in which Mary 'counts as' being rich. Mary may count as rich in the pool of university professors but not rich in the pool of billionaires like Bill Gates. A similar insight is what obtains in the making of metaphorical assertions which corresponds to the phenomenological and assertional dimensions. In saying that Schneider is a fox, Dick is making a claim and simultaneously inviting Tom to think of the way in which Schneider counts as a fox. By accommodating the claim, Tom recognizes that Dick was speaking metaphorically by means of the invitation to think of Schneider as a fox, and also that Dick was making an assertion whose content will be given by its inferential role.

Once the presupposition of *speaking metaphorically* is accommodated and the conversational context and score are updated to make the metaphorical claim appropriate and acceptable, the inferential involvements of the metaphorical claim and the propriety of the inferences from the metaphorical claim can be given. The deductive and material inferences we can make from a literal claim are constrained by the rule-governed nature of literal claims and

the compositional analysis that is brought to bear on the understanding of the inferential involvements of literal claims. For instance, from the claim that ‘Schneider is fox’ we can logically infer that ‘Schneider is an animal’ and the propriety of this inference depends on the compositional meaning of the claim and the rules that govern the making of deductive inferences. In claiming that ‘Schneider is a fox’ a speaker undertakes a commitment to the truth of this claim and authorizes others to make inferences and other appropriate claims from it, one of which is that ‘Schneider is an animal’. And the speaker is entitled to make other claims from his initial assertion and undertake the responsibility to justify and vindicate the assertion when it is challenged.

A metaphorical claim, however, is not fettered by compositionality and its appropriateness we have seen is not dependent on the literal rules of the game. The making of the claim, the acceptability of the claim, and the appropriateness or otherwise of that claim depends on the existence of the metaphorical presupposition marker, the phenomenon of reciprocity and the process of accommodation, all of which are sensitive to the contextual parameters in which the claim is made. The inferences that can be made from the metaphor and the propriety of those inferences depend on what counts as Schneider being a fox. For instance, while ‘Schneider is crafty’ is a consequence of her being a fox in the context of the conversation, ‘Schneider is hairy’ is not.<sup>86</sup> In other words, in seeing Schneider as a fox we can infer that she is crafty but the consequence that she is hairy is not plausible when one sees her as a fox in the context of discussing Schneider. So, in the simple conversational case between Tom and Dick, the propriety of Dick’s claim that ‘Schneider is a fox’ is made possible by Tom recognizing and updating the

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<sup>86</sup> What makes a particular inference good or bad, what makes a good inference good and a bad inference bad, and the rules governing the making of such inferences will require a more comprehensive framework, one that is beyond the current scope of this thesis. The development of such a comprehensive framework will be the subject of future works.

conversational context that Dick is speaking metaphorically, and by accommodating this claim, he does not accuse Dick of making a wrong move or being uncooperative, although Tom could.

Tom's recognition of the presupposition of Dick's claim and his illocutionary intent of making an appropriate claim, coupled with his accommodating and updating the context, influences his own use of the metaphorical claim that Schneider is, rather, a serpent. This does not suggest that the appropriateness of one's metaphorical claim necessarily causes others to make metaphorical claims, or that the only appropriate move in response to a metaphorical claim is the making of another metaphor. It suggests, rather, that the appropriateness of Dick's claim as a move in the game is tacitly endorsed by his interlocutor – where this tacit endorsement is couched in terms of the accommodation of the presupposition marker – and his interlocutor also makes a move that has the same or a similar significance to his move. When Dick finally asserts that either way he is treacherous, he does not nullify their so taking their earlier assertions as metaphors; he rather shifts the conversational context back to the literal way of talking, and he expects that Tom will adjust the conversation accordingly.

The processes of accommodation that one goes through in accepting a metaphor as a correct move does not imply that one cannot disagree with another person over the content of a metaphor. Indeed, these processes offer a correct explanation for how two people cannot genuinely be in a disagreement when the first asserts that 'Richard is a lion' and the second retorts that 'No, he is not! Richard is a human being'. The second interlocutor failed to recognize the presupposition of speaking metaphorically and he does not accommodate the metaphor, or rather, he accommodates the literal content of the metaphor. There is no genuine disagreement here when the first interlocutor is speaking metaphorically and the second interlocutor construes his assertion literally and then makes an assertion that purports to contradict the literal content of

the assertion made by the first interlocutor. But it is also possible for there to be genuine disagreement where the second interlocutor understands the assertion of the first interlocutor metaphorically but disagrees with the metaphor. For instance, rather than endorsing Dick's claim that Schneider is fox, Tom can disagree with Dick and claim that Schneider is an angel or a saint. The processes of reciprocity and accommodation articulated above do not imply that hearers always agree or endorse the assertions of speakers; hearers can also disagree with, or dissent from, the metaphorical claims of speakers. But their agreement and disagreement with the claims of speakers are possible by their recognition of the presupposition of speakers speaking metaphorically, their accommodation of those presuppositions, and the inferential roles of the metaphors that are given by means of their accommodating of the metaphors. Since there is no set interpretation of a metaphor – albeit constrained by the processes of accommodation and the context of utterance – there is the possibility of a hearer choosing a particular interpretation unintended by the speaker or even the hearer failing to understand the import of the metaphor. All these possibilities do not affect the account given above – the account acknowledges these possibilities.

The undertaking of certain normative commitments and the attribution of commitments to others that participants engage in by means of their assertions are social practices that are relevant and appropriate in the making of metaphorical claims as well as literal claims. The admission or acceptance of metaphorical claims in the game of giving and asking for reasons as explored above implies that the dual statuses of commitments and entitlements that characterize social practices and the playing of games are applicable when the assertions game players make are metaphorical ones. Similarly, the determination of the semantic content of assertions by means of their inferential roles in reasoning is no different when the assertions are metaphorical

ones. How the literal differs from the metaphorical is not because the metaphorical is not fit to be instituted in the game of giving and asking for reasons, but that players of this game adopt a different mechanism in determining the propriety of the moves in the game, the propriety of the inferential involvements of those moves, and the ways in which the conversational contexts and scores are adjusted and updated.

So, Brandom's inferentialism which subjects semantics to pragmatics by explaining the semantic contentfulness of assertions by their practical role in reasoning offers a suitable avenue for understanding the making of metaphorical claims. In that, metaphorical claims are contentful in virtue of the role they play as appropriate premises and conclusions in reasoning and argumentation. The propriety of metaphorical claims and the propriety of the roles they play in reasoning are determined by the phenomenon of reciprocity and the accommodative processes that conversational participants go through in adjusting the conversational context to satisfy the presuppositional requirement that participants are speaking metaphorically. Brandom's inferentialist deontic-score-keeping framework in which he characterizes assertion and inferring, is, therefore, extended to cover metaphorical claims by incorporating the notions of the pragmatics of speaking metaphorically as a presupposition marker, Hornsby's reciprocity, and presuppositional accommodation. In view of this extension, we show the plausibility of the *uniformity principle* that indicates that, fundamentally, literal and metaphorical contentfulness are determined in the same way – by what we do in reasoning – asserting and inferring. One implication of this view is that metaphorical claims can be 'treated as' or 'taken to be' true claims in the sense in which Brandom treats the ascription of truth to assertions.

## 5.5. Implications and Merits of the Inferential Articulation of Metaphors

There are a number of things we *do* in our discursive and communicative practices but the *basic* and distinctive kind of doing on Brandom's account is *inferring*. As I pointed out earlier, inferring is neither specific to, nor distinctive of, literal uses of language. So, it will seem improper to ask what we *specifically* do in using metaphors if the assumption is that we do something radically different in using metaphors. Adopting Brandom's account not only informs us of what we basically do in using language but it implies that, at its fundamentals, we do the same thing in both literal and metaphorical uses of language. But let us suppose that we do something different, perhaps, something *extra* in using metaphors. What is it that we are *doing* when we employ a metaphor in a linguistic discourse or conversation?

One favoured answer to this question offers an explanation of metaphor both in terms of what it *causes* us to do and the *effects* it has on us. This causal account of metaphor, which we discussed in Chapter II has been advocated primarily by Davidson (1978), Rorty (1987, 1989), Cooper (1986), Reimer (2001), Lepore & Stone (2010), among others. According to Davidson (1978), a metaphor is not primarily a vehicle for conveying ideas because a metaphor has no cognitive content; a metaphor does not express a proposition that can be determined to be true or false. A metaphor is rather like a hint, or a joke, or a bump on the head, which 'causes' or 'nudges' us to notice the similarities between the two things being compared. On the causal account, a metaphor can provoke thoughts and ideas in us, it can make us attend to some likeness and similarities between two things, it can cause us to notice something in a different way, but all these are *effects* metaphors have on us. In connection with the causal account is an 'invitational account' to the question of what we *do* in using a metaphor in a conversation which we discussed

in Chapter III. On this account, the constitutive aim of metaphors is to invite or encourage a hearer to see one thing *as* another thing (Lamarque & Olsen 1994).

We have already adduced reasons for why both the causal and invitational accounts are unsatisfactory. But in the context of this discussion, it is crucial to point out that the causal and invitational accounts present the kind of doing that is *extra*, rather than *fundamental* to our use of metaphors. We can distinguish a fundamental from an extra doing by drawing a contrast between *doing-in* and *doing-with*. The causal and invitational accounts present us with what we do *with* metaphors: we invite others to see things in a different way; we encourage others to think of one thing in terms of other things; we cause others to see the things we are seeing. This kind of use, *doing-with*, we can engage in even without metaphors, as for instance, in pictorial representations and juxtapositions. We can use metaphors without necessarily inviting anyone to see or do anything. What we do *with* metaphor is intrinsically connected to the successes and failures of our use of metaphors. We can evaluate the success or otherwise of our inviting someone to see something when the other sees or fails to see what we are showing; spurring one to think or act in a certain way is successful or not if one is brought to think or act in that way. But a metaphor *is* a metaphor whether it is successful or not in achieving its effects. On the other hand, what we do *in* using metaphor is what is basic to our practice of putting forward metaphorical statements – and that we have identified as the ability to formulate it as fit for a premise or conclusion in reasoning. This basic kind of doing is insensitive to the successes and failures of the insights and purports of metaphor. But more importantly, the inferential account pursued above shows that in uttering a metaphor we can do two things simultaneously: we assert or make a claim, and by asserting a claim we could also invite others to conceptualize one thing in terms of another thing. This implies that the causal and invitational accounts do not provide

adequate analysis of our use of metaphors: in focusing on the phenomenological dimension of metaphors, they leave out the assertional component to the understanding of metaphors.

An inferential articulation of the basic kind of doing in using metaphor provides us with a comprehensive account of the roles of the interlocutors and the linguistic expression in our communicative practices. There is what the *speaker* does, what the *hearer* does, and what the *linguistic expression* itself effects in hearers: these *three-doings*, each independently necessary but jointly sufficient for our understanding of the doings associated with metaphor. An account that focuses on what the metaphor brings about – nudging us to see something, directing our attention to see certain similarities, provoking certain thoughts in us – is focusing on but one of the three-doings, and as such, an adequate and satisfactory account cannot be propounded from that. The Davidsonian account is guilty of this one-sided approach to the use of metaphor. An invitational account is primarily focused on what the speaker does, and so are other accounts that focus on the intentions of the speaker. Similarly, the focus on the acquisition of beliefs and the effects of metaphor on the part of the hearer is inadequate in itself to give a comprehensive account of metaphor.

The point here is not that we cannot give varied accounts of metaphor that depend on the particular aspect of doing that we are focused on; the point rather is that, in accounting for the content and truth of metaphors, we miss out providing an adequate and comprehensive account if we do not take into consideration the three-doings involved. Indeed, a metaphor may nudge us into noticing certain similarities, but it is a far cry from this feat of metaphor to conclude that a metaphor has no content or that it is not truth-evaluable. Similarly, a metaphor may have certain effects on us, and perhaps, a speaker may employ a metaphor to invite us to attend to certain comparisons, but it wouldn't follow from these that metaphorical statements cannot be

assertions. But from an inferentially articulated kind of doing in terms of commitments and entitlements, we get a basic and comprehensive picture of what we do in using metaphors. By putting forward a metaphorical claim the speaker undertakes a commitment by endorsing the claim as fit for a premise or conclusion in reasoning. Whether the speaker, in undertaking such a commitment *thereby* invites, encourages, suggests or proposes something to the hearer is explainable in terms of the inferences that the speaker licenses and the hearer is entitled to draw.

If the speaker primarily invites or encourages the hearer then she is not required to provide a vindication or justification for her invitation. In fact, it wouldn't seem appropriate for a hearer to challenge an invitation or a suggestion. That the speaker can endorse a claim, and provide justification or warrant for the claim when it is challenged, stems from the fact that the claim put forward is fit to serve as the premise or conclusion of an argument. Understood this way, the hearer of a metaphor is not just a passive recipient of an invitation; the call to action, the directive to observe something, and the promise of seeing one thing as another thing, are rooted in the practical ability of the hearer to determine whether the claim put forward by the speaker is appropriate to serve as the premise or conclusion in reasoning. The interpretation the hearer can offer to the metaphorical statement is sensitive to the inferential relations that she can deduce from both the linguistic and the non-linguistic context of the claim put forward.

When the hearer is the speaker, that is, when the hearer accepts a metaphorical statement and in turn employs the same metaphor in that same or another discourse, she can defer the meaning and justification to the original speaker. This is why even till today we still defer the meaning and significance of 'Juliet is the sun' to Romeo (or to Shakespeare for that matter). The hearer can also challenge the metaphorical statement which can result in the speaker either retracting the metaphor or giving reasons to justify and vindicate the metaphorical assertion. So,

in this game of ‘giving and asking for reasons’ we can make sense of the occurrence of *disagreements* that ensue between interlocutors not only about the insights a metaphor can provide but also about the truth and falsity of the metaphorical claim itself. The metaphorical expression *itself* is not merely a stimulus that spurs one into action, it is not simply an absurd or anomalous statement that requires the hearer to make sense of, it is not simply a causal catalyst that leads to the acquisition of beliefs; it is a claim, an assertion, with a propositional content, by virtue of it being fit to serve as, and stand in need of, reasons.

The three-doings involved in our use of metaphor is related to what we can call as the three-stages in the understanding of metaphor: *production*, *interpretation*, and *appraisal*. Like in the case of the three-doings, many accounts of metaphor that deal with the questions of truth and assertion are unsatisfactory because of the focus and limitation to only one of the three aspects in the three stages of understanding metaphor. With the *production* of metaphor, we are primarily concerned with the making of metaphor, usually from the point of view of the speaker. Allusions to the intentions of the speaker have been made to buttress the view that metaphors are not assertions, for it is assumed that the speaker of a metaphor does not intend to put forward any truth claim or assert anything. Relatedly, the speaker does not express any belief by the making of metaphor. The verdict: metaphors are neither assertions nor expressions of beliefs nor truth-apt.

But this verdict survives on a huge jump from the making of metaphor to the *appraisal* of metaphor. The making of anything – the cognitive processes that go into the production of it – is often quite distinct from the judgment and evaluation we accord to it, even if the maker is the judge. When we are concerned with the evaluation of metaphor for truth, we are within the realm of *appraisal*. And as it is usually the case, critics of artwork or even literary critics offer their

criticisms with or without their knowledge of the intentions and beliefs of the artists and writers of the works they criticize. The making of metaphor is one thing, but the product we appraise – the metaphor itself – lends itself for evaluation irrespective of our knowledge of the mechanisms involved in its production. Surely, the intentions of the speaker and the cognitive processes involved in making metaphors help us to understand metaphors in many respects, but this understanding is inchoate and inadequate. The movement from production to appraisal is not an inferential one, that is, we cannot draw a conclusion about the appraisal of metaphor from the production of it. In other words, from the purposes and aims of making metaphors, we cannot derive an answer to the question of appraising metaphors.

In the same vein, we cannot move from the *interpretation* of the metaphor to the evaluation of it. This is the sense in which we cannot use the multiplicity or the inexhaustibility of the paraphrases of a metaphor – what the interpretation of the metaphor provides us – in determining whether metaphors should be appraised for truth. Both the production and interpretation of metaphor are pertinent to the understanding of metaphor but they are orthogonal to the appreciation of metaphor *qua* metaphor, where the appreciation here is in reference to truth. And as we have been discussing above, when our attention is focused on the *appraisal* of metaphor, we should conduct the appraisal within a framework that is not littered with the strings and pulls of the literal. An articulation of such a framework for appraising metaphor is what we have been recommending thus far.

Brandom's inferential semantics as explained above can be used as a model for understanding metaphor in relation to truth: in terms of the practical significance of the act of using metaphor. Taking a metaphor as true is taking a normative stance towards it, that is, endorsing or undertaking a commitment towards it. Undertaking a commitment towards it is

understood as putting it forward as fit to serve as a premise or a conclusion of an argument; that is, we can give and ask for reasons for it. This means that the metaphor plays a practical role in the making of inferences. And as we saw earlier, being fit to serve as or stand in need of reasons implies that it is propositionally contentful. And of course, as claims that serve as, and stand in need of reasons, metaphors exhibit the features of assertions.

## **5.6. Conclusion**

We can take stock of the main ideas articulated above:

1. An inferentialist-based account of our linguistic practices takes a non-reductive and uniform approach to dealing with the issues of the content and truth of metaphors without casting these issues in terms of literal content and literal truth-conditions.
2. This inferentialist-based account explains content and truth from the pragmatics of what we fundamentally do – asserting and inferring – in using linguistic expressions. The various accounts of metaphors we have discussed in this dissertation – causal, invitational, metaphorical expressivism – explain certain things we do in using metaphors but these things the accounts posit we do are not fundamental to our use of metaphors.
3. The use of metaphors as premises and conclusions of arguments, and the possibility of drawing inferential relations from metaphors imply that metaphors have propositional contents and that they are assertions. This in turn implies that metaphors are truth-apt and they can be evaluated as being either true or false. As assertions, the uses of metaphorical claims go with certain commitments and responsibilities on the part of speakers and hearers which are made possible by means of the inferential relations they give rise to.
4. We can make sense of Brandom's inferential semantics as it pertains to metaphor when we modify his account with insights from presuppositional accommodation. The

phenomenon of accommodation explained above accounts for both the presupposition of speaking metaphorically which is a consequence of the intentions of speakers, and the assertional aspect of metaphors which accounts for taking metaphorical utterances as assertions that have inferential consequences. This inferential articulation of metaphors is made possible by the process of accommodation and the phenomenon of reciprocity.

## CONCLUSION

Language users are concerned with truth because they want to distinguish among their utterances and expressions those that convey information, state that something is the case, or correspond to states of affairs in the world. These sentences or utterances that make claims about the world, convey information, and state that things are such-and-such, they evaluate as either true or false. Metaphorical sentences, despite their being expressed in indicative form, are recalcitrant to being evaluated as true or false. For, on the one hand, they are highly imagistic and poetic, reflecting the perspectival outlook of their users who juxtapose two distinct concepts from separate domains of discourse; and on the other hand, language users intend to convey something or make certain claims, by their use of metaphors. This dissertation has investigated the nature of metaphors in relation to the question of whether they are to be appraised or evaluated for truth. The investigation into the question of the truth-evaluability of metaphors naturally led to the examination of other cognate issues like whether metaphors express contents that are propositional in nature, whether metaphorical sentences count as assertions or the expression of beliefs, and whether metaphorical sentences can feature in the premises and conclusions of arguments. The connection to these cognate issues is apt in showing that if metaphors have propositional contents, if they count as assertions and expressions of beliefs, and if they feature significantly in reasoning with arguments, then they are truth-apt, truth-evaluable. This dissertation has affirmed that metaphorical sentences are truth-apt in this respect.

Two strands of arguments connected the various chapters into a complete whole: the one strand critically examined and rejected some principal arguments offered against the truth-evaluability of metaphors; the other strand proposed an inferential articulation of metaphors and the ways in which metaphorical sentences can be understood to be truth-evaluable. These two

strands go hand in hand: the reasons offered for the rejection of the anti-truth-evaluable arguments grounded and composed the positive account of understanding metaphorical sentences as truth-evaluable. The main arguments in the dissertation that highlighted and interwove the two strands are: One, the seeing-*as* experience in which metaphor is couched does not imply that metaphorical sentences are not truth evaluable. While the seeing-*as* experience is non-propositional, it does not constitute understanding of metaphors; for understanding involves grasping of propositions and the ability to reason with what is grasped. Since language users do understand metaphors, they grasp propositions, and therefore, metaphorical sentences can be appraised for truth. The way to understand the phenomenological seeing-*as* experience is by treating it as a presupposition of speaking metaphorically. This presupposition influences the parameters within which the metaphor can be interpreted, and the accommodation of this presupposition informs the acceptability of the metaphor and the kind of inferential connections to be associated with the metaphor.

Two, a causal explanation of metaphor in terms of what it causes speakers to do and the effects it has on hearers is not sufficient grounds for denying that metaphorical sentences are propositionally contentful. A non-compositional treatment of metaphors shows that metaphors have contents other than the contents they literally express. The proper location of the content of metaphors is in the social and normative practices language users engage in using metaphors. Such practices as the use of metaphors in disagreements and in reasoning and argumentation inform an inferential articulation of metaphors. The use of metaphors as premises and conclusions of arguments and the inferential connections one can draw from metaphorical sentences confer propositional contentfulness onto metaphors.

Three, this inferential articulation of metaphors is conceptually more appealing and explanatorily better than a representational explanation of metaphors cast in the literal terms of fact-stating and correspondence to states of affairs. Metaphorical assertions are truth-evaluable not because they belong to fact-stating discourses or descriptive uses of language but in virtue of their inferential roles. This implies that literal meaning and content, literal paraphrases, and literal truth-conditions, are not the appropriate evaluative models for appraising metaphors for truth.

And four, the issuing of invitations to do something and the making of suggestions and proposals are significant to the making and use of metaphors but they are neither constitutive of, nor peculiar to, the speech act of metaphoring. In inviting others to do something by the use of metaphors, speakers *ipso facto* make assertional claims that are apt to be appraised for truth.

This dissertation is significant in offering an inferential articulation of metaphors that incorporates a theory of presuppositional accommodation and the phenomenological seeing-*as* experience associated with metaphors to affirm the view that metaphorical sentences are truth-evaluable. The conclusions of this dissertation are also significant in placing metaphors among truth-making and truth-telling discourses; they are also important in affirming the view that besides the embellishment of speech and other aesthetic benefits, the uses of metaphors play significant cognitive and conceptual roles in ordinary and specialized discourses. The dissertation, in effect, offers a challenge to the way one ought to think about the linguistic phenomena categorized as tropes and figures of speech which are thought to be deviations from the ordinary and normal way of speaking. In showing that metaphorical sentences and literal sentences do not differ fundamentally in terms of their truth-evaluability, the dissertation raises pertinent issues regarding how figures of speech and metaphor in particular, are defined,

understood, and used in reasoning. By affirming that metaphors are truth-evaluable, this dissertation throws a challenge to semantic theories, truth theories, and theories of assertion: a complete semantic theory, truth theory, or theory of assertion, is one that does not bracket off metaphors but provides an account that reflects the use of metaphors in our discursive practices. The research in this dissertation can be furthered and extended to the other figures of speech to ascertain whether the conclusions drawn here are only peculiar to metaphors or that an inferential articulation of all figures is possible. Another area of research worth pursuing is within the inferential articulation of metaphor itself: what kinds of inferences can one draw from metaphors and how are such inferences different from those that one could draw from literal sentences? How are metaphors to be understood in the domain of inferential role semantics? How is the meaning of metaphors to be determined from the point of view of inferential semantics? These and many other questions are worth pursuing in a bid to developing a comprehensive inferential articulation of metaphors. In conclusion, this dissertation affirms that metaphorical sentences are truth-evaluable; and they are so in virtue of the practices of asserting and inferring that language users fundamentally engage in their use of metaphors.

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