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I.

IN THIS PAPER I shall argue that the relations between metaphorical and literal kinds of language may be illuminated and clarified by comparison with corresponding differences and similarities between represent*ing* and represent*ed* objects. A kind of "picture theory" of metaphorical language will be proposed (though one which draws more on Wittgenstein's *Investigations* than on the *Tractatus*[1]), in which successful metaphorical phrases[2] are taken as being about things which are capable (in context) of being seen or recognized as *representing* or *depicting* that which the words ordinarily refer to or describe when being used literally. Example: suppose that someone disparagingly (and metaphorically) says of an ineffective guard-dog, "that dog is a dead sheep." This will be explained as "that dog can be seen (or: recognized) as representing a dead sheep."

This kind of approach to metaphorical language has some significant advantages over more usual approaches, such as those which treat metaphorical language as in some way involving violations or denials of the ordinary linguistic rules for the application of the relevant terms.[3] These advantages will become apparent as the discussion proceeds. Broadly, they center around the fact that representational objects can indeed be very dissimilar to that which they represent (hence accounting for the "non-literal" aspect of metaphor), while the things which are thus represented are yet ordinary things (hence explaining how ordinary words having their usual meanings may be used metaphorically).

The fact that this kind of explanation is broadly referential is also in its favor; no fundamentally ineliminable or unanalyzable use need be made of the concepts of meaning, connotation, expression, linguistic rule, and similar concepts from the usual philosophical grab-bag in this area of discussion. Furthermore, the theory has several advantages over other referential theories, such as those of Goodman and Henle,[4] which advantages will become apparent as the discussion proceeds.

In the initial example given above, the specifically metaphorical part of the metaphor is the substantival phrase "a dead sheep." An example where a verb is used metaphorically would be "The chairman plowed through the discussion":[5] this on analysis would become something like "The chairman's interactions with his committee during the discussion were capable of being seen as representing his plowing through some inert material which offered little resistance." (I am assuming that it is legitimate to include some literal paraphrase of the condensed implications of a specific metaphor in giving examples of a theoretical approach to the topic: such specific paraphrases are relevant to a particular metaphor, but are independent of the general kind of analysis being given to any metaphor.) And other kinds of metaphor could also be accommodated in the approach; for instance, an adjectival metaphor such as "an argumentative melody" describes the melody as being capable of being seen as representing something argumentative.

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II.

The analysis given will now be broken down into its components, and the function of each described. To begin with, the analysis uses the concept of something *representing* something, rather than just that of something *being a representation of* something. The distinction is between the subclass of objects which normally or conventionally represent things (e.g., representational paintings or photographs), and which hence are representations; and the wider class of objects which may in some context be seen or used *as representing* something, even though they are not necessarily "representations of" those things. Since ("live") metaphors use words in an unusual or even creative way, it is naturally the wider idea of represent*ing* which is most relevant to their analysis. However, it is a strength of the present kind of analysis that the concept of a "dead" metaphor which is no longer a metaphor proper, and yet which still bears signs of its non-literal origin (such as "he is the backbone of his team") can conveniently be explained in terms of represent*ation,* i.e., normal or conventional representing.

Secondly, the analysis uses the concept of something being *seen* or *recognized* as representing something. A main reason for this extra element is that it may be possible to have a case of an object representing X, which nevertheless no one can see or recognize as representing X. For example, a rich man who has hidden his money might draw a (non-standard, coded) map in which some mark represents its location X; then he dies. Surely that mark still represents the location X, even though no one can see or recognize it. Now in the case of metaphor, words which no one can see or recognize as representing anything would not count as metaphorical at all (but rather as meaningless, contradictory, merely literal, and so on). For even if their author had seen them as being metaphorical, this fact (or his testimony) would only count as evidence of deviant perception or judgment on his part, because of the important "public" dimension of language-use (as emphasized

by Wittgenstein). Hence, "metaphorical" uses must be cases where something (in some relevant context) can be *seen* or *recognized* as representing X.

It should be emphasized that no special or non-standard concept of perception or recognition is being appealed to in the present explanation of an object being seen or recognized as representing something.[6] Indeed, the concept can be explained in the following way. Objects can properly be called signs or representational objects only if they have some informational content which can be extracted. In the hypothetical case mentioned above, the relevant information (the location X) could no longer be extracted in the relevant context (that of investigation by others after its maker's death). In any context in which relevant information about some X *can* be extracted from a representing object Y by normal perception or recognition, it is appropriate to describe this as a case where Y can be *recognized or perceived to be representing X* (or: recognized or perceived *as* representing X).

Further, this kind of situation may be related to the distinction between *representation* and *representation as:*[7] "representation as X" requires that (in some context) the representing object gives enough information for normal perceivers to identify, recognize or perceive what is represented *as being X,* whereas "representation" minimally requires only that the relevant object *be* a representation of X, whether or not it is perceivable thus. Example: there are two kinds of photographs of flying saucers; those which show some nondescript speck, about which it is claimed that it is (i.e., that it does represent) a flying saucer, even though one cannot tell that it *is* a flying saucer just by looking; and the other kind, which both represents a (claimed) flying saucer and which contains some part which is *recognizable as* a flying saucer. Only of the latter kind can one say that it is a representation of something *as* a flying saucer, and this is true if and only if something in it is normally *recognizable* or *identifiable* as a flying saucer.

The second recognitional component has

another important function in the analysis, which is based on its integral connection with representation *as*. The following sceptical problem is sometimes posed about representation: since it is at least to some degree conventional, and since it is always possible to find *some* way of relating any two things so that one counts as a representation of the other, would not any theory of metaphor (or any other theory) based on representation be vacuous, since anything can represent anything else? Now, whether or not this is a genuine problem, it is plainly a problem only for theories which merely use a minimum concept of representation which excludes representing *as*. This is because representation *as* X requires that sufficient information be given by a representing object (in some relevant context) so that it is possible to recognize something as X when perceiving it; and clearly this is a very stringent condition upon what counts as being represented in a given context by something. In other words, the condition stated by the second component of the analysis is restrictive enough so that such problems about the *general* concept of representation can properly be ruled irrelevant to the analysis in hand.

Thirdly, the analysis uses the concept of something being *capable of* being seen or recognized as representing X. This condition is not simply a more explicit spelling-out of the above point concerning the non-privacy of "seeing as" for words in a public language. Instead it is required in order to distinguish "occurrent" uses of perceptual or recognitional concepts (such as would be used in an analysis of *"Now* I see the rabbit in this duck-rabbit drawing!"*) from "dispositional" uses of them. For if an analysis is to be given of what it is for words to have a metaphorical use, as opposed to analysing what it is for a person to *take* some words metaphorically on a particular occasion, it seems that appeal must be made to the *disposition* or capacity of the relevant referents to be seen or recognized as representing X, rather than to how they are actually being recognized on a given occasion. (Roughly, objects have such a capacity when competent, normal observers usually *do* recognize them as representing X in the relevant linguistic context. There are, of course, philosophical problems connected with the analysis of dispositional statements in general, but for present purposes this rough explication should be adequately clear.)

III.

What is there to be said for this proposed analysis or theory of metaphor? One basic reason why the present approach is more adequate than most of the standard theories is its referential, non-subjective approach. Instead of analysing metaphors in terms of meanings, connotations, and so on, appeal instead is made to ordinary objects (including of course any kind of event, state, process, etc.) and their representational capacities, relative only to our shared perceptual and recognitional abilities. Thus even if the concept of representation were intrinsically just as problematic as that of metaphor (which it is not), the present approach would at least have the virtue of avoiding the notorious intensional subjectivist dangers of "meanings," "components of meaning," and "similarities."

Another basic advantage of the theory is related to the fact that no *comparison* is required between distinct objects as part of the basic explanatory structure provided for metaphors. For example, on my analysis of "that dog is a dead sheep," acceptance of its appropriateness or truth does not require that one sees the dog, then compares it with real or imagined dead sheep; all that is necessary is one's seeing that the dog can represent a dead sheep. And similarly for examples like "an argumentative melody": no mental searching-around for images of argumentative persons, real or imaginary, is required, since all that is necessary is recognition of the melody as argumentative, i.e., as representing something argumentative.

Furthermore, this non-comparative approach has the added advantage that the novel or creative aspects of some metaphors can be explained, in that one is not (for instance) limited to remembered or imagined arguments in understanding "argu-

mentative melody," but instead can try to recognize the possibly new and interesting way in which *this* particular melody represents something argumentative. Also the objectivity of any metaphor is preserved, in the sense that its interpretation is not at the mercy of arbitrary or "personal" comparisons by different people: for instance, seeing that a particular dog can represent a dead sheep does not require different people to use their own peculiar memories and associations, for recognitional abilities need not involve any comparing or associating.[8]

Just as no comparing of distinct objects is required by the present theory, so also there is no need for a concept of "similarity" between distinct things—because on the present theory, metaphors are "about" only *one* object (which can represent other things). This is of course very fortunate, since this notion of a "similarity" is known to be extremely obscure.[9] However, the additional question as to whether an object *could* represent something else without being "similar" to it in some way can be put aside here, since for present purposes nothing of great moment hangs on a choice between competing theories of representation.

The point that representation does not necessarily require similarity, and indeed that the relevant things can be very dissimilar is also important for explaining the "non-literalness" of metaphors (which includes the fact that they may not or could not be literally true, their frequent paradoxicality, and so on). The fundamental explanation provided by the theory for non-literalness of a metaphorical kind is that it involves representation (in the relevant sense), which may be conventional or normal (for "dead" metaphors), or unusual (for "live" metaphors, which involve some kind of seeing or recognizing *as*). Now a representation by definition is not an ordinary or real example of the kind of thing represented, and hence any representation, normal or otherwise, is formally "dissimilar" in a clear sense to the referents of literal uses of words. Furthermore, the specific ways in which a given representing object is dissimilar to that which is represented (e.g., the dog in the above-mentioned example to a

dead sheep) does not require any explanation in terms of "clashes" of meaning, denials or violations of "central meaning," "calculated category-mistakes,"[10] and so on, because such dissimilarities are simply part of what makes it true that the relevant object is *representing* something rather than just being a normal or real example of it.

There are two sorts of problem with the alternative kind of theory which invokes denials or violations of meaning, or category-crossings of some kind. One is the standard problem about the obscurity of meanings and components of meaning, mentioned already. The other is the fact that such views seem to force one to deny that metaphorical statements can be true (as metaphorical statements, whether or not they are also literally true), and to accept the assumption that any kind of metaphor (whether or not it forms a complete sentence) must be interpreted as overtly paradoxical or deviant.[11] However, given the possibility of the present kind of theory, such a view must surely seem inadequate as an account of metaphors generally. For many do seem naturally to make sense, and to be straightforwardly true: for instance it is hard to deny that "Nixon is the Hyena of Watergate," and even harder to believe that one has to juggle with "central" and "peripheral" meanings in order to understand it (even though I have just made it up).

On the present theory, the above assertion can be true insofar as Nixon can be recognized as representing a hyena having some unique connection with Watergate, and it naturally makes sense if interpreted thus. However, it is of course true that if one tried to interpret it *literally* rather than metaphorically (i.e., as being about Nixon's *non*-representational rather than his represensational properties), then it could not be true and it would be paradoxical, etc. Thus perhaps the most fundamental mistake of the kind of theory being criticized is that it involves taking metaphors literally rather than metaphorically! However, this kind of criticism can reasonably be made only if one has a clear theory of what it is to "take something metaphorically," and for some-

thing to be "metaphorically true": I would claim that the present "representational" approach can provide such a theory, and hence that this line of criticism is legitimate.

Specifically, on the present theory the following account can be given of what it is to take a phrase metaphorically rather than literally (and correspondingly, of what phrases are metaphorical). Appeal is being made to our ability to distinguish between ordinary and representational properties of objects; literal phrases involve the former, metaphorical the latter. Taking a phrase in one way or the other in some linguistic context involves concentrating on (or perhaps searching for) properties of the relevant kind for the relevant given objects. Then successful metaphors (see fn. 2) are those which appropriately reward such attempts (by normal readers) to take them metaphorically, i.e., by actually providing the looked-for variety of property. Unsuccessful metaphors are phrases which give one some reason to believe that they should have some representational properties, but which don't (e.g., "the moon is made of cream cheese" invites such a search, but fails to satisfy; whereas "the moon is made of blue cheese" offers at least some representational reward). And finally, phrases which express neither successful nor unsuccessful metaphors are those which do not even invite attempts to take them metaphorically.

IV.

Are there any damaging objections to the present kind of theory? I do not think so, but two major kinds of objections will be briefly discussed in order to show that they can be rejected.

One major objection could be that the concept of representation is no clearer than that of metaphor itself, so that the problems are simply being shifted rather than solved by the present approach. This kind of objection was briefly noted in the previous section, and it was pointed out that at least representations are unproblematic to the extent that they are public objects (assuming that "mental images" and other subjective entities are not dragged in). Further-

more, as the discussion of what it is to "recognize something as representing X" has shown, there is nothing mentalistic or subjectivistic in the explanation being given; it is for instance an undeniable datum that we *are* able to recognize objects as representing things, whereas there are no (other) corresponding basic facts about our understanding of metaphors (as the diversity and general unclarity of theories on the subject illustrates).

Another aspect of the present objection to representation might be that representation is arbitrary and conventional in various ways, so that the theory would not explain the precision, aptness, and so on, of many metaphors. In reply, even if much representation is conventional, this does not prevent precise use being made of such representations in metaphors; it is only the believers in "meanings," "connotations" and so on who are forced to adopt some sort of essentialism in their theory of metaphor. A more radical reply would be that, insofar as the general kind of objection is correct, metaphors themselves are infected with the very same faults. That is, given the superior methodological status of representations over other entities invoked to explain metaphors, it can simply be replied that we have to shape our ideas concerning metaphors to conform to the relevant "representational" standards. However, my own view is that representation is much less arbitrary, etc., than is sometimes supposed[12] so that current favorable intuitions concerning metaphors can survive (and perhaps even be re-invigorated by) an acceptance of the radical line of reply.

The other major kind of objection to be discussed is that a representational approach to metaphor is inherently unable to deal with many kinds of metaphor, particularly of a sort involving things (representing or represented) of a more "abstract" or nonreferential kind. It might be conceded that the theory can be made to work for metaphors in which ordinary objects, events, and so on can be represented or serve as representational objects, but that it is quite unable to handle cases like Samuel Johnson's "Time is, of all modes of existence, most

obsequious to the imagination,"[13] or more average metaphors like "the splendor of beauty" or "Love is a fire."

Several aspects of this general line of criticism need (very briefly) to be discussed. One claim is that the theory cannot deal with cases in which that which is represented is non-substantive or non-particular (adjectival, adverbial, abstract, etc.). This claim is false, for that which is represented can be of any grammatical category (see section I), for the following reason. A picture of a man need not be a picture of any particular real man; and, in a metaphor such as "an argumentative melody," the melody can represent something argumentative without there having to be some particular argumentative thing which is represented. Similarly one can argue that there can be representations *of* natural kinds such as "the lion" or "Man," and *of* abstract entities like "Imagination," or "Beauty" without there actually having to be any such entities.[14] Thus time might be seen as representing something being obsequious to the imagination, and some painting, actress, etc., might be seen as representing the splendor of beauty, hence explaining (within the present theory) the possibility of the relevant metaphors.

Another aspect of the general criticism being considered is the claim that the theory cannot explain cases when the represent*ing* object would have to be an abstract entity (or not an entity at all), such as in "Love is a fire." There are several possible replies to this attack. One is that abstract entities and predications of them are unclear, and hence suspect, or any theory of metaphor, meaning or predication, so that they require paraphrase into some more acceptable form before being analyzed.[15] Thus, for instance, "Love is a fire" might be paraphrased as "any particular love is a fire," then analyzed in the theory as "any person's state of being in love can be recognized as representing a fire," or some such. Another (related) reply would be that although "Love is a fire" really is about Love rather than just particular loves, nevertheless it is Love *as represented by* something which is said to be a fire. That is, it is being claimed that

Love can be *represented as* a fire, in the sense that something or someone representing Love represents it as being a fire. For example, an actor playing the role of a personification of Love might represent not simply Love, but Love as a fire, or as fiery, as consuming its possessor, or some such.

It might be objected that such a reply simply avoids the problem of how an abstract entity could represent anything, by insisting that such things are always represent*ed* rather than represent*ing*. This is true. However, it is based upon a (personal) scepticism about the existence and status of abstract entities. If there is anyone who believes that there really are such things, and that they can be legitimate subjects of predication and so on, I see no reason why he should not also accept that such abstract objects *could* represent other things. After all, the account of objects being able to represent other things has not been limited to any favored class of objects or things: I assume that *any* genuine entity could have representational attributes.

Thus it can be concluded that the present theory can deal very adequately with both "concrete" and "abstract" metaphors. Furthermore, it is arguable that the present treatment of "abstract" metaphors gives the whole theory a decisive advantage over competing theories of metaphor using "meanings," etc., in that such entities are even more obscure in the "abstract" cases than normally, whereas the present approach could help to clarify the status of "abstract entities" and of references to them.

[1] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford, 1963); *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (London, 1922).

[2] Successful metaphorical phrases are phrases which are (in the context of their use) both recognizably metaphorical (as opposed to purely literal, nonsensical, etc.), and which also are broadly good rather than bad (e.g., appropriate rather than inappropriate, true rather than false; or whatever other contrasting terms might be relevant to judging the success, rather than the relative failure, of a metaphorical use of a phrase). See section III for some discussion of successful metaphors versus unsuccessful or non-metaphors.

[3] E.g., Alwynne Mackie, "The Structure of Aesthetically Interesting Metaphors," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 12 (1975), 41-49;

Donald B. Stewart, "Metaphor, Truth and Definition," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism,* XXXII (1973), 208-18; Nelson Goodman, *The Languages of Art* (New York, 1968); Monroe C. Beardsley, "The Metaphorical Twist," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research,* 22 (1962), 293-307; Andrew Harrison, "Poetic Ambiguity," *Analysis* (1963), 54-57; Max Black, "Metaphor," reprinted in his *Models and Metaphors* (New York, 1962), pp. 25-67.

[4] Nelson Goodman, *The Languages of Art,* Section II; Paul Henle, *Language, Thought and Culture* (Ann Arbor, 1958), Chapter 7.

[5] An example Max Black discussed in his paper, "Metaphor."

[6] In particular, Wittgenstein's concept of 'seeing as,' which he apparently conceived of as a special non-standard kind of perception which is inapplicable to ordinary cases of seeing the characteristics of objects (including representational objects), plays no part in my explanation. (For Wittgenstein's concept, see Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations,* part II.)

[7] Nelson Goodman discusses a similar distinction in *Languages of Art,* Section I.

[8] For related criticisms of "comparison" theories of metaphor, including Henle's "Iconic Signification" theory, see Beardsley, "The Metaphorical Twist," pp. 294-96.

[9] See, e.g., Nelson Goodman, "Seven Strictures on Similarity," in Lawrence Foster and J. W. Swanson (eds.), *Experience and Theory* (Massachusetts, 1970), pp. 19-30.

[10] See the references in fn. 3.

[11] That some metaphors can be true (as metaphors, rather than simply as being literally true) is argued for by Ted Cohen, "Notes on Metaphor," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism,* XXXIV (1976), 249-59; and by Timothy Binkley, "On the Truth and Probity of Metaphor," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism,* XXXIII (1974), 171-80.

[12] See also, R. Squires, "Depicting," *Philosophy,* 44 (1969), 193-204.

[13] Quoted in Beardsley, "The Metaphorical Twist," p. 295; a valuable source of criticisms of the kind being considered, even though there they are directed only against traditional "object-comparison" kinds of theory.

[14] If the concept of representation is widely enough used to apply to linguistic representations as well, the point can be related to the familiar thesis that the mere existence of such terms does not commit us to the independent existence of corresponding entities.

[15] Cf., e.g., Quine's well-known views on the subject; e.g., in W. V. O. Quine, *Word and Object* (Massachusetts, 1960).