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# The Cognitivist/Non-Cognitivist Divide in Metaphor Studies

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## Abstract

One way to classify theories of metaphor is to apply the cognitivist/non-cognitivist distinction to them. Conceptual metaphor theory is called cognitivist (Knowles and Moon 2006). Donald Davidson's theory of metaphor is called non-cognitivist (Donald Davidson 1978). The distinction comes from philosophy. There has been a paradigm shift in the study of metaphor toward cognitivist based theories. Thus the philosophical distinction should help us in distinguishing just which theories are relevant today. The problem is that the philosophical distinction does not correctly distinguish cognitivist theories from non-cognitivist theories.

The article starts by introducing a classic way to divide theories of ethics and aesthetics between cognitivist and non-cognitivist labels. This method is applied to non-cognitivist theories of metaphor. It fails to classify these correctly. Next, a more contemporary set of criteria are introduced. These criteria are associated with Elizabeth Camp and Marga Reimer. The criteria are shown to again misclassify non-cognitivist theories of metaphor. A revision is suggested. It fails to file cognitivist theories properly. Classic and contemporary philosophical ways of dividing metaphorical theories between cognitivist or non-cognitivist labels fail.

## Common Criteria for Identifying Non-Cognitivist Theories

We want to establish a way to distinguish cognitivist theories of metaphor from non-cognitivist theories of metaphor. To do this, we examine how cognitivist theories of ethics (and aesthetics) are distinguished from non-cognitivist theories of ethics (and aesthetics) and extrapolate criterion from there.

There are two ways we might want to identify a non-cognitivist theory of ethics. First, a non-cognitivist theory of ethics may be distinguished propositionally. This provides for a propositional criterion. Second, a non-cognitivist theory of ethics may be distinguished psychologically. This provides for a psychological criterion. I will introduce each criterion in turn below.

### *A propositional Criterion*

A classic criterion that we can apply to sentences and utterances in order to determine whether they have cognitive content or not is this:

(General Propositional Criterion) A sentence/utterance has cognitive content iff the sentence/utterance has truth conditions/propositional content, and does not have cognitive content otherwise

With this in mind, we can specify the criterion for determining whether or not a theory of ethics is cognitivist or non-cognitivist:

(Propositional Criterion for Ethics) A theory of ethics is a cognitivist theory of ethics iff it entails that ethical sentences/utterances have cognitive content, and it is non-cognitivist iff it entails that ethical sentences/utterances do not have cognitive content

We can develop a criterion for aesthetics by swapping out reference to ethics and ethical sentences/utterances and replacing them with references to aesthetics and aesthetic sentences/utterances. More importantly, we can do the same for metaphorical theories. This gives us the following:

(Propositional Criterion for Metaphorical Theories) A theory of metaphor is a cognitivist theory of metaphor iff it entails that metaphorical sentences/utterances have cognitive content, and it is non-cognitivist iff it entails that metaphorical sentences/utterances do not have cognitive content

This establishes one criterion for judging whether or not theories of metaphor are cognitivist or not.

#### *A Psychological Criterion*

A second way of distinguishing a non-cognitivist theory of ethics from a cognitivist theory is psychologically. A psychological criterion that we can apply to sentences and utterances in order to determine whether they have cognitive content or not is this:

(Psychological Criterion) A sentence/utterance is cognitively significant iff the sentence/utterance expresses cognitive attitudes (like belief), and not cognitively significant iff the sentence/utterance does not express cognitive attitudes (like belief)

This allows us to develop a second criterion for determining whether or not a theory of ethics is cognitivist or non-cognitivist:

(Psychological Criterion for Ethics) A theory of ethics is a cognitivist theory of ethics iff it entails that ethical sentences/utterances express cognitive attitudes (like belief), and it is non-cognitivist iff it entails that ethical sentences/utterances do not express cognitive attitudes (like belief)

We can alter the criterion for theories of aesthetics or metaphor. For metaphor, the relevant criterion is this:

(Psychological criterion for Metaphor) A theory of metaphor is a cognitivist theory of metaphor iff it entails that metaphorical sentences/utterances express cognitive attitudes (like belief), and it is non-cognitivist iff it entails that metaphorical sentences/utterances do not express cognitive attitudes (like belief)

This establishes another criterion for judging whether or not theories of metaphor are cognitivist or not.

What if we apply these criteria to theories of metaphor, will they account for the non-cognitivist/cognitivist divide as it applies to these theories? No. In order to understand why, I will introduce two classic theories of metaphor. Each of which is commonly labelled non-cognitivist.

1. The Positivist Treatment of Metaphor
2. Donald Davidson's Non-Cognitivist Theory of Metaphor

We will find that only one of those theories can be correctly classified by the criteria above.

### The Positivist Treatment of Metaphor

The first treatment of metaphor that I want to introduce is the positivist treatment of metaphor. Since positivists developed the non-cognitivist treatments of ethics and aesthetics (e.g. Ayer 1936, Stevenson 1937), we would expect the criteria to sort the positivist treatment of metaphor into the correct box. This would be the non-cognitivist box. They seem to.

Positivism is a broad church, so I want to be more specific about the kind of positivism in question. The kind of positivists that I have in mind are the logical positivists or verificationists. I want now to introduce some key passages from the writings of these positivists in order to infer more about how they treated nonliteral meaning. Specifically, I rely on the writings of A J Ayer and Rudolf Carnap. Let's start with Ayer. Ayer writes:

In the vast majority of cases the sentences which are produced by poets do have literal meaning... [T]o say that many literary works are largely composed of falsehoods is not to say that they are composed of pseudo-propositions....If the author writes nonsense, it is because he considers it most suitable for bringing about the effects for which his writing is designed (Ayer 1936, 14)

We may suppose that a subset of poetic sentences are metaphorical or used metaphorically. Following Ayer, these sentences are false or absurd. For verificationists, if a sentence is false, it is meaningful and, therefore, cognitively significant. Moreover, if a sentence is absurd (logically contradictory), it is meaningful and, therefore, cognitively significant. Examples might be:

- (1) The 45th President of the US was a baby [false]
- (2) I am not myself today [absurd]

Ayer is arguing that many poetical sentences *are cognitively significant*. Given our examples, this is also something that can be said of sentences that are used metaphorically.

I turn now to Rudolf Carnap. Carnap (1942) divided the study of language, following C. W. Morris (1938), into pragmatics, semantics, and syntax by abstraction. Carnap (1942) introduces us to the division like this:

[W]e may distinguish three factors involved: the speaker, the expression, and what is referred to, which we shall call the designatum of the expression (Carnap 1942, 9).

But we need not necessarily also deal with speakers and designata. Although these factors are present whenever language is used, we may abstract from one or both of them in what we intend to say about the language in question. Accordingly, we distinguish three fields of investigation of languages. If in an investigation explicit reference is made to the speaker, or, to put it in more general terms, to the user of a language, then we assign it to the field of pragmatics. (Whether in this case reference to designata is made or not makes no difference for this classification.) If we abstract from the user of the language

and analyze only the expressions and their designata, we are in the field of semantics. And if, finally, we abstract from the designata also and analyze only the relations between the expressions, we are in (logical) syntax. The whole science of language, consisting of the three parts mentioned, is called semiotic (Carnap 1942, 9).

Expressions can be abstracted from their users or uses. Alternatively, expressions can be referred to their users or uses. A *sentence* is associated with a type of expression abstracted from its use and user, the *utterance* of the sentence is associated with its use or user. This division is important to what follows.

We saw above that many *sentences* that are used metaphorically are cognitively significant. However, when we consider Carnap's writings, we find reason to believe that their *utterances* cannot be said to be cognitively significant, for no utterances that are made metaphorically are cognitively significant.

Here are two passages that support this claim:

The aim of a lyrical poem in which occur the words "sunshine" and "clouds" is not to inform us of certain meteorological facts, but to express feelings of the poet and to excite similar feelings in us. A lyrical poem has no assertive sense, nor theoretical sense, it does not contain knowledge (Carnap 1935, 29)

Metaphysical propositions—like lyrical verses—have only an expressive function, but no representative function. Metaphysical propositions are neither true nor false, because they assert nothing, they contain neither knowledge nor error, they lie completely outside the field of knowledge, of theory, outside the discussion of truth or falsehood. But they are, like laughing, lyrics, and music, expressive. They express not so much temporary feelings as permanent emotional or volitional dispositions (Carnap 1935, 29)

Consider the following sentence:

(3) A ray of sunshine<sub>M</sub> came through the curtains

Tracking Ayer, since the sentence has truth conditions *the sentence is cognitively significant*. But consider the sentence to be spoken metaphorically. Tracking Carnap, *the utterance is not cognitively insignificant*. This is because the metaphorical part (underlined and subscripted "M") is not being used to talk about a meteorological fact.

With all this in mind, we are now in a position to apply the criteria for judging cognitivist and non-cognitivist theories of metaphor to a positivist (or verificationist) treatment of metaphor. To start, we apply the propositional criterion to the theory above. Doing so tells us that the positivist treatment of metaphor is a non-cognitivist treatment of metaphor because all metaphorical utterances are cognitively insignificant. The second criterion to be applied is the psychological criterion. By the psychological criterion, the positivist treatment of metaphor is non-cognitivist because metaphorical utterances lack cognitive content and, therefore, cannot be said to express the kind of content that is the content of a cognitive attitude. So far, so good. Let's turn to another theory commonly associated with the non-cognitivist label.

## Donald Davidson's Theory of Metaphor

I apply the criteria above to another theory that is understood to be non-cognitivist, Donald Davidson's theory of metaphor. To understand the theory, a set of key themes are introduced (by subheadings). Following that, the criteria are applied.

### *The Theory is a Non-Cognitivist Theory of Metaphor*

*According to Davidson*, his theory is a non-cognitivist theory of metaphor. Davidson says, "What I deny is that metaphor does its work by having a special meaning, a specific cognitive content" (Davidson 1978, 46). *According to others*, Davidson's theory is a non-cognitivist theory of metaphor. For example, for Reimer and Camp (2006) it is archetypal non-cognitivist theory of metaphor since it is the only one they mention. So we may safely assume that Davidson's theory is a non-cognitivist theory of metaphor.

### *Metaphorical Utterances Made with Sentences Have Invariant Literal Meanings*

In Davidson's theory, metaphors do not say anything over and above what they literally say. Words have meanings and sentences have meanings, which are their truth conditions. Words can be assigned meanings, sentences can be assigned truth conditions. These meanings and truth conditions do not shift from context to context. These meanings and truth conditions are independent of use or user. These meanings and truth conditions are, therefore, invariant to context. This is true even if we are talking about a metaphorical utterance. Davidson says: "[A] metaphor doesn't say anything beyond its literal meaning (nor does its maker say anything, in using the metaphor, beyond the literal)" (Davidson 1978, 32).

### *Literal Meaning Is Required for Metaphorical Effect*

Metaphor produces metaphorical effect. Metaphorical effects are cognitive effects. These include attending to likenesses, making comparisons, drawing analogies and parallels, visualizing, picturing, imagining, creating ways to think, organizing, thinking and feeling, holding true, believing, etc. When we think we are paraphrasing a metaphor, we are really only elucidating the cognitive effects which we associate with the metaphor (Davidson 1978, 46). Paraphrase is relevant to what is said, not to what the point of a metaphor is (Davidson 1978, 32).

Metaphorical effects are essential to metaphorical uses. Indeed, metaphorical effect is a necessary condition of metaphorical use. If the use of a sentence does not produce a metaphorical effect, it is simply not being used metaphorically (e.g. Davidson 1978, 42). If the use of an expression once produced a metaphorical effect but no longer does, it was once but is no longer metaphorical. In such a case, we have dead metaphors or idiomatic uses (Davidson 1978, 37-38). Metaphorical uses, therefore, necessitate cognitive effects.

Literal meaning is necessary to the metaphorical effects that metaphors produce. Davidson criticizes several alternative theories. His critiques often include reference to the necessity of literal meaning to the working of metaphor. Here is a passage in which Davidson is criticizing the literal simile theory of meaning:

[I]f we make the literal meaning of the metaphor to be the literal meaning of a matching simile, we deny access to what we originally took to be the literal meaning of the metaphor, and we agreed almost from the start that this meaning was essential to the working of the metaphor (Davidson 1978, 39)

Further passages celebrating the importance of literal sentence meaning to the working of metaphor are dotted throughout Davidson's paper. Davidson puts things most succinctly in the following sentence: "Metaphor makes us see one thing as another by making some literal statement that inspires or prompts the insight" (Davidson 1978, 47).

We may conclude: if literal utterance meaning is essential to metaphorical effect, then literal sentence meaning is essential to metaphorical effect. Furthermore, if literal sentence meaning is essential to metaphorical effect, then literal propositional content is essential to metaphorical effect. It follows that propositional content is essential to metaphorical use.

#### *A General Assumption about Language*

The next thing I want to do is to introduce a general assumption that Davidson makes about language. Consider the following introduction to his paper "Thought and Talk":

The dependence of speaking on thinking is evident, for to speak is to express thoughts...Someone who utters the sentence 'The candle is out' as a sentence of English must intend to utter words that are true if and only if an indicated candle is out at the time of utterance, and he must believe that by making the sounds he does he is uttering words that are true only under those circumstances. These intentions and beliefs are not apt to be dwelt on by the fluent speaker. But though they may not normally command attention, their absence would be enough to show he was not speaking English, and the absence of any analogous thoughts would show he was not speaking at all (Davidson 2001, 155).

The beginning of the passage is clear, speaking is dependent on thought. The latter half of the passage is clear, the kind of thought that speaking is dependent on is belief (along with intentions based on such beliefs). The beliefs take two forms. Suppose  $S$  is a sentence and  $S$  has the literal truth conditions  $p$ . Then, the beliefs are these:

1. The belief that  $S$  is true iff  $p$
2. The belief that by making such and such sounds under so and so conditions something true is uttered

How does this apply to metaphor? Straightforwardly. The following suppositions hold for the metaphorical context. Suppose  $S^*$  is a sentence that has the literal truth conditions  $p^*$ . Suppose an utterer,  $u$ , utters  $S^*$ . Then  $u$  has thoughts about  $S^*$  and has beliefs about (as well as intentions related to)  $S^*$ . What beliefs? These:

1. The belief that  $S^*$  is true iff  $p^*$
2. The belief that by making such and such sounds under so and so conditions something patently false or patently true is uttered

I draw these conclusions based on the following passages. First:

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 (Davidson 1978, 41).

This passage indicates we must treat the sentences that are used to make metaphorical utterances in the normal literal way with respect to truth and falsehood. Following Davidson, we have said, *u* has thoughts and beliefs about *S*. Following Davidson, we have seen one set is about the literal truth about *S*. Following Davidson, we have said that *S* is true iff *p*. Treating *S\** and *p\** in the normal literal way with respect to truth and falsehood (where *S\** is the sentence used in the metaphorical context and *p\** is its literal truth conditions), we get the same result: *u* believes that *S\** is true iff *p\**.

The second ascription of belief with respect to patent falsity and truth is justified by passages like the following:

Generally it is only when a sentence is taken to be false that we accept it as a metaphor and start to hunt out the hidden implication. It is probably for this reason that most metaphorical sentences are patently false, just as all similes are trivially true. Absurdity or contradiction in a metaphorical sentence guarantees we won't believe it and invites us, under proper circumstances, to take the sentence metaphorically (Davidson 1978, 42)

Similarly:

Patent falsity is the usual case with metaphor, but on occasion patent truth will do as well. "Business is business" is too obvious in its literal meaning to be taken as having been uttered to convey information, so we look for another use; Ted Cohen reminds us, in the same connection, that no man is an island. The point is the same. The ordinary meaning in the context of use is odd enough to prompt us to disregard the question of literal truth (Davidson 1968, 42)

With Davidson, I am assuming that an individual who uses a sentence metaphorically understands what her words mean and do. I have said, therefore, she believes her sentence is true under such and such circumstances. Given the passages cited, in the usual cases she believes that her sentence is false. In some special cases, she believes that her sentence is true but conveys no information.

One more conclusion can be drawn from the passages cited. Whatever can be said about the speaker can be said about the hearer. The audience for the metaphorical utterance must also hold certain beliefs. These beliefs track the speaker's beliefs. This is to say, the audience for the metaphorical sentence holds:

1. The belief that *S\** is true iff *p\**
2. The belief that by making such and such sounds something patently false or patently true is uttered

To understand the point of a metaphor, literal meaning is required. This suggests the first belief is held. In the passages cited above, Davidson tells us metaphorical sentences are so obviously false, they *guarantee* the audience won't believe them. Or they are so true that they *appear* odd enough for us to reject their truth, which presupposes the sentences in question are believed to be patently false or obviously true. That triggers the cognitive processes by which the metaphorical effects are generated.

It is clear from our discussion, then, that sentences that are uttered metaphorically are accompanied by beliefs that are central to their use and understanding. We are now in a position to apply the criteria above to Davidson's "non-cognitivist" theory of metaphor. Is Davidson's theory of metaphor a non-cognitivist theory of metaphor? It doesn't seem to be if we apply the criteria introduced above. Let me explain.

First, let us apply the propositional criterion to Davidson's theory. If a theory of metaphor entails that a metaphorical sentence/utterance has cognitive content, then the theory is a cognitivist theory of metaphor. By this criterion, Davidson's theory is a cognitivist theory of metaphor. Metaphorical utterances entail literal sentence meanings. Literal sentence meaning entails propositional content and, therefore, cognitive content. In conclusion, metaphorical utterances entail cognitive content. This establishes that Davidson's theory is a cognitivist theory of metaphor by the propositional criterion.

Next, let us apply the psychology criterion to Davidson's theory. If a theory of metaphor entails that metaphorical sentences/utterances express cognitive attitudes, then the theory of metaphor is a cognitivist theory of metaphor. By this criterion, Davidson's theory is a cognitivist theory of metaphor. *Speaking* entails beliefs. Making a metaphorical utterance is speaking. So making a metaphorical utterance entails having beliefs. The set of beliefs include a belief about what makes the sentence true and a belief about whether or not it is true. Beliefs are cognitive attitudes. Speakers who use metaphorical sentences, therefore, hold such attitudes. They must also express such beliefs because, to quote Davidson, "their absence would be enough to show [someone] was not speaking English, and the absence of any analogous thoughts would show [they were] not speaking at all." By the criterion in question, Davidson's theory is a cognitivist theory of metaphor.

But, furthermore, what can be said of a speaker can be said of her audience. The audiences that understand metaphorical sentences and understand that they are used metaphorically must hold similar beliefs. They must believe that:

- (a) The sentences uttered are true under such and such circumstances, false otherwise,
- (b) The sentences uttered are patently true or false in the circumstances under conditions.
- (c) The speaker believes (a) and (b)

They would not understand the speaker to be speaking metaphorically if they believed that the speaker did not believe (b). This is implied by Davidson's theory because *understanding* that the speaker is saying something that is patently false or true is what *invites* us to take the utterance metaphorically. Again, the conclusion follows, by the criterion in question, Davidson's theory is a cognitivist theory of metaphor.

By both criteria, then, Davidson's theory is a cognitivist theory of metaphor. But this is absurd since Davidson and his interpreters interpret his theory as non-cognitivist. I conclude the criteria above wrongly classify theories of metaphor and must be abandoned. We must, therefore, seek different criteria and this is what I will try to do next.

### **The Reimer-Camp Definition**

The classical way to divide theories between cognitivism/non-cognitivism doesn't work for metaphor. We must look for an alternative. Reimer and Camp (2006), hereafter Reimer-Camp, provide more contemporary criteria

for classifying a treatment of metaphor as non-cognitivist. Presumably, theories that do not fall under that label will be cognitivist. I turn to their writing next. They write:

The central claim of [non-cognitivist] theorists is that a sentence used metaphorically has no distinctive cognitive content aside from its literal content. Non-cognitivists thus resemble Griceans in denying that the words uttered themselves have any special meaning. They depart from Griceans, though, in also denying that there is any determinate propositional thought which the speaker intends to communicate by means of those words. (Reimer-Camp 2006, 857).

Non-cognitivists are, therefore, taken to believe that:

- (A) When a sentence is used metaphorically, it has no cognitive content apart from its literal content (if it has that)
- (B) When a sentence is used metaphorically, there is no determinate propositional thought that the sentence communicates (or could attempt to communicate)

I make one assumption. The criteria above provide two conditions that are necessary and sufficient in distinguishing a non-cognitivist theory of metaphor from a cognitivist theory of metaphor.

We have already seen that similar criteria fail to correctly classify non-cognitivist theories correctly. I will only briefly, therefore, go through the reasons why these criteria fail to classify non-cognitivist theories correctly.

The positivist treatment of metaphor entails (A) since it implies that sentences that are used metaphorically have no other cognitive content than their literal content if they have that. It may also be supposed to imply that there is no propositional thought that a speaker communicates in using the sentence since the metaphorical *utterances* of any sentence, even literal true or false ones, are empty with respect to cognitive content. Thus the criteria above do seem to work when classifying the positivist treatment of metaphor. But we will see that they break down when applied to Davidson's theory.

Let us see how the criteria apply to Davidson's theory of metaphor. We can agree that David's treatment of metaphor requires that a sentence that is used metaphorically has no other meaning than its literal meaning. This is because literal meaning is invariant and this is true, therefore, even in the metaphorical context. But Davidson's theory requires that a sentence, *whatever it is used to do*, conveys belief. It is a condition *necessary to language* that a speaker communicates intentions and beliefs by using the words that she uses. Speaking requires the transmission of beliefs about the conditions in which the uttered sentence is true and beliefs about whether the conditions in which the uttered sentence is true make the uttered sentence true. For, *as Davidson says*, "their absence would be enough to show [someone] was not speaking English, and the absence of any analogous thoughts would show [they were] not speaking at all" (Davidson 2001, 155). Furthermore, *understanding* that the speaker is saying something that is patently false or vacuous on purpose *invites* us to think about what was uttered metaphorically. Understanding purpose requires understanding the speaker's belief about the sentence uttered in the metaphorical context, part of which is transmitted by the patent nature of the sentence uttered.

For these reasons we can conclude that cognitive attitudes are expressed or conveyed by the metaphorical utterance of a sentence. Thus, by Reimer-Camp, Davidson's theory is not a non-cognitivist theory of metaphor.

The implication is that it is a cognitivist theory of metaphor. This is truly absurd since the *only* non-cognitivist theory of metaphor that Reimer-Camp mentions is Davidson's! I conclude that the Reimer-Camp definition of non-cognitivism does not provide adequate criterion for distinguishing non-cognitivist theories of metaphor.

But, perhaps, we can think of ways to help Reimer-Camp. The problem with the criteria seems to centre upon (B). We might try to fix it in the following manner:

- (C) When a sentence is used metaphorically, there is no determinate thought with *nonliteral* propositional content that the sentence communicates

This does seem to work in distinguishing non-cognitivist from cognitivist theories of metaphor correctly. None of the theories in question allow for metaphorical sentences or utterances to communicate determinate thoughts that have nonliteral propositional content. It is always literal propositional content that is communicated (if that). So we seem to have fixed the Reimer-Camp criteria. But, actually, we haven't. This can be made clear by considering a last theory of metaphor.

### **Francois Recanati's Theory of Metaphor**

I have just considered the Reimer-Camp criteria for distinguishing between cognitivist and non-cognitivist theories of metaphor. It doesn't work. The criteria were adjusted. They seem to classify non-cognitivist theories correctly. However, as we shall, they also classify cognitivist theories under the non-cognitivist heading. That is sufficient reason to reject the rewritten criteria. To show this, I introduce a treatment of metaphor that I associate with Francois Recanati.

To understand Recanati's treatment of metaphor properly, we need to understand a bit more about Recanati's approach to literal meaning. Talking about literal vs nonliteral meaning, Recanati draws a distinction between three kinds of *literal* meaning:

1. T-literal meaning (type-literal meaning)
2. M-literal meaning (minimal-literal meaning)
3. P-literal meaning (primary-literal meaning)

T-literal meaning is the meaning that is associated with expression type meanings (the specific kind of meaning associated with a specific expression). T stands for "type." Type expression meaning is determined conventionally. M-literal meaning is the meaning that one gets when a dependent pragmatic process (which Recanati calls "saturation") is used to determine the meaning of an expression type. M stands for "minimal." A dependent pragmatic process is a pragmatic process that is governed by a semantic rule. The typical example of an expression that this applies to is an indexical. For example, "I." Such an indexical has an expression type meaning. This expression type meaning is a rule that connects the utterer of the indexical with the referent of the indexical. The M-literal meaning is the meaning that is determined when the referent is fixed. So, for example, consider:

- (4) Humans are mortal
- (5) We are mortal

In the first sentence, each expression has a straightforward expression type meaning, a t-literal meaning. In the second sentence, “we” has an expression type meaning, which is a rule for identifying its referent from the context of use. That is its t-literal meaning. Determining that value will determine its referent(s). That provides its m-literal meaning. T-literal meaning is not always complete in the sense it determines a set of truth conditions. Minimal meaning is complete and determines a set of truth conditions. But the M-literal meaning of an utterance often fails to match the *actual* truth conditions of an utterance. P-literal meaning succeeds in that respect.

P-literal meaning is the meaning that one gets when an independent pragmatic process is used to determine the meaning of an expression type. An independent pragmatic process is one of three processes that determines the meaning of an expression type by appealing to the context because the *context requires this* rather than because an expression type meaning mandates it. Such processes are contingent. There are three types of process:

1. Free enrichment
2. Loosening
3. Semantic transfer

Examples are:

- (6) We’ve had breakfast
- (7) He swallowed my lie
- (8) The reds won

With free enrichment we enrich, or add information, to determine the truth conditions of an utterance. (6) has an m-literal meaning. But no one ever contemplates it. Rather, it is usually taken to mean:

- (9) We had breakfast this morning

rather than its m-literal meaning:

- (10) We’ve had breakfast sometime in our lives

(9) is the p-literal meaning determined by free enrichment. It provides *actual* truth conditions.

With loosening, we broaden the meaning of a term. So, for example, each expression of (7) has an expression type meaning, they combine to produce nonsense or a sentence that is invariably untrue. Again, hardly any competent speaker will associate (7) with its m-literal meaning. Rather, it is taken to mean:

- (11) He believed the lie that the utterer of the sentence told

That is its p-literal meaning, determined by loosening the meaning of “swallow” to allow lies to be swallowed. Alternatively, we might say that the meaning of “swallow” has been modulated, where this is to activate some qualities associated with swallowing and deactivate others. For example, a property associated with *reception* is active in the meaning, but the property of *passing through the throat* is not.

Last, we have a metonymic use of the expression “the reds,” referring to a football team (e.g. Liverpool FC) based on the colour of the shirts the team wears. The expressions “the” and “red” have t-literal meanings and can combine to form a further complex meaning. An m-literal meaning. What is important here is the p-literal meaning. The p-literal meaning is the meaning that the expression “the reds” gets when it is used to refer to the football team in question.

Corresponding to these three types of literal meaning are three types of non-literal meaning:

1. T-nonliteral meaning
2. M-nonliteral meaning
3. P-nonliteral meaning

T-nonliteral meaning is the meaning that extends beyond t-literal meaning i.e. meanings that are determined contextually either by mandated dependent pragmatic processes or optional and contingent pragmatic processes. So, for example, a t-nonliteral meaning is m-literal meaning, p-literal meaning, or secondary meaning (yet to be introduced). M-nonliteral meaning is p-literal meaning or secondary meaning (Recanati 2004). P-nonliteral meaning is secondary meaning. But what’s that?

An example of secondary meaning is implicature. For example, consider the following set of utterances:

- (12) How was the dinner?  
(13) It was interesting

On the assumption that “dinner” refers to the food eaten at dinner, the answer implies:

- (14) The food eaten at dinner was awful

This is an implicature. On hearing (13), an interpreter will note the answer to the question is not directly relevant. The interpreter will, thereby, understand that the speaker wants to communicate something other than any literal meaning that can be associated with (13). The interpreter will, thereof, work out that the interpreter meant (14) by saying (13). In Gricean terms, (13) will be the assumption needed to preserve the conversational principle. This kind of process is, for Recanati, always a conscious or consciously retrievable *inferential* process and this goes some way to defining secondary meaning and contrasting it to p-literal meaning. With p-literal meaning the processes that determine meaning are subpersonal, they are not conscious, even though the meanings they determine are available to the interpreter. They are also *not* inferential. This brings us to metaphor.

Consider a sentence much favoured by Recanati:

- (15) The ATM swallowed the card

The p-literal truth conditions for (15) are familiar to us. The m-literal truth conditions are less so—and, in fact, given your stance on category mistakes, there may be none. The pragmatic processes that determine the p-literal truth conditions for (15) are free enrichment on each “the” and loosening on “swallow.” These pragmatic processes determine the truth conditions for (15) silently, so to speak; they are non-inferential, subpersonal, and

automatic. Though, of course, the truth conditions are consciously available. *All of this is cognitive*. (What else could it be?) Thus this is a *cognitive* treatment of *literal* meaning.

Now consider the following sentence:

(16) The surgeon is a butcher

A similar story could be told here. “Butcher” is modulated in a way that allows the particular surgeon in question to fall under it. The process is silent, subpersonal, automatic, and cognitive. Also, the meaning is available.

The sentences above might be considered metaphorical. But even if they are, they are still instances of literal meaning. As Recanati says, “The paradigm case of nonliteral meaning is metaphor. Now metaphor, in its central varieties, I count as *p*-literal” (Recanati 2004, 76).

But let us consider this sentence:

(17) Fishermen are spiders

That’s commonly considered to be an inapt metaphor (Glucksberg 2008). Inapt means it doesn’t strike us as a very good metaphor (Glucksberg 2008). Following Recanati, the utterance of a sentence like this will lead to a certain tension. This tension is marked by a conflict between the *t*-literal meanings and the *p*-literal meanings and a worry about how the former are related to the latter. *In such a case, the utterance appears to us as metaphorical*. That is, when the *p*-literal meaning of an utterance comes into conflict with the *t*-literal meaning of an utterance, we deem there is something *special* about the utterance. This *specialness* is associated with *perceived metaphoricity*. A certain phenomenological experience of an utterance is what leads us to classify a *p*-literal utterance as metaphorical. Key passages supporting this interpretation are these:

[F]or something to count as nonliteral in the ordinary sense it must not only go beyond the conventional significance of the uttered words (*m*-non-literalness), but it must be felt as such (Recanati 2004, 75).

That felt nature, as we have said, is typically the felt conflict between the *t*-literal meaning and its *p*-literal. Thus, Recanati writes:

The more noticeable the conflict, the more transparent the departure from *t*-literal meaning will be to the language users. Beyond a certain threshold, cases of sense extension will therefore count as special and non-literal in the ordinary sense despite their *p*-literal character (Recanati 2004, 77).

Let me summarise. The sentence (17) has a *t*-literal meaning. The *t*-literal meaning either (a) fails to express a complete proposition, or (b) if it does, it expresses a literal proposition. If so, the proposition it expresses is conventionally determined. An utterance of (17) has an *m*-literal meaning. It expresses a literal proposition. It is semantically determined and does not involve independent pragmatic processes. It does not express a metaphorical proposition. But also the utterance of (17) has a *p*-literal meaning. The utterance expresses a proposition that is *literal*. Independent pragmatic processes produce not only a complete proposition but a proposition that reflects the truth conditions of an actual situation. This is a non-inferential subpersonal, automatic process and *it is a cognitive process*. Again, *the utterance does not express a metaphorical proposition*.

The sentence meaning, the t-literal meaning, and the complete and correct utterance meaning, the p-literal meaning, may give rise to a *felt conflict* between the t-literal meaning and the p-literal meaning. If so, the utterance is felt to be *special* and thereof said to be *metaphorical*. *It does not follow that the p-literal proposition is a metaphorical proposition.* (The same analysis can be given for (15) and (16) beyond the aforementioned threshold.) If this is true, the metaphorical utterance can be said to express a *literal proposition* (a p-literal proposition) *which*, we know, *is cognitively determined*. The metaphorical utterance does not express a metaphorical proposition. Therefore, the theory gives us a *cognitively determined proposition* for every metaphorical utterance. But it does not entail a *metaphorical proposition* for any metaphorical utterance. We are now in a position to apply the revised Reimer-Camp criteria to Recanati's treatment of metaphor.

The first part of the criteria says that when a sentence is used metaphorically, it has no cognitive content apart from its literal content (if it has that). This can be said to be true on Recanati's theory. When (17) is uttered, it has no cognitive content apart from its literal content, that is, it's p-literal content. The second part of the criterion says that when a sentence is used metaphorically, there is no determinate thought with *nonliteral* propositional content that the sentence communicates. This can be said to be true on Recanati's theory. When (17) is uttered, the determinate thought that is communicated is the one characterised by the p-literal meaning of (17) and that is all it can be since metaphoricity is phenomenological, not propositional. The criteria in question, therefore, renders Recanati's theory non-cognitivist. But this is surely absurd, since the meaning of a metaphorical utterance (as with any) is determined *cognitively*. The reworked version of the Reimer-Camp criteria is a dud.

## Conclusion

There has been a paradigm shift in the way metaphor is studied. The paradigm shift focuses on cognitivist content and, therefore, makes cognitivist theories of metaphor more relevant. Traditionally, philosophical criteria have been used to distinguish non-cognitivist theories from cognitivist theories of metaphor. We have considered a classic version of the criteria and a contemporary version of the criteria. Both fail to classify non-cognitivist theories of metaphor correctly. These criteria must be abandoned. If the division of the theories into non-cognitivist and cognitivist is still relevant, a new criterion has to be found. Philosophical criteria don't seem to work. Perhaps, more scientific criteria will.

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