

**The ABSURDITY of  
understanding metaphor:  
A Case study in the PRASANGIKA  
MADHYAMIKA BUDDHIST THESIS  
OF THE meaninglessness of all  
views**

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# introduction

This book is another case study, via an epistemological investigation into “metaphoric thought”, based on the Prasangika Madhyamika Buddhist thesis that all our concepts, all our categories, all our ideas, all theses, all antitheses all philosophies all epistemologies, all ethics, all ontologies, all metaphysics, etc in other words all views, are meaningless, as they all collapse into absurdity via a dialectical *reductio ad absurdum* form of argumentation. What Dean did for “thought”, in his *Contentless Thought : A Case Study in the Meaninglessness of all Views*”, this book attempts to do with “metaphoric thought, namely to add one more case study to the indirect proof that all views collapse into absurdity.

Dean makes the point that a proof of the thesis that all views reduce to absurdity cannot be made deductively as this would mean that there was one view (i.e. the view in regard to the principles of the proof which did not reduce to absurdity). The demonstration of the thesis can only be made by the totality of the reductios which reduce views to absurdity. Thus the demonstration of the thesis is not a direct one but amounts to an indirect demonstration of the thesis. The process of reduction is as long as there are views. Not until the last view is reduced to absurdity will, or can, the thesis that all views collapse into absurdity can be completely proved.. When all the case studies have been completed the result will be to substantiate the Prasangika Madhyamika Buddhist thesis and thus demonstrate that all concepts, all categories, all theses all antitheses and all philosophy and all views, including the views of this thesis, end in meaninglessness if Aristotelian logic is an epistemic condition of truth. The end result of all these reductios it is claim is that **EVERYTHING IS MEANINGLESS** including the arguments that try and explain how we understand metaphor. All these arguments collapse into absurdity with the consequence that it is impossible to understand how we understand metaphor –that process will always be a mystery so long as we use language and Aristotelian logic to make the investigation.

Dean argued, in his *Contentless Thought : A Case Study in the Meaninglessness of all Views*, that any argument that put an essence to “thought” would collapse into absurdity or meaningless thus making the mental realist and cognitivist paradigms untenable. In the cognitive paradigm it is argued that “thought” is constituted by language or in other words is the medium/basis, or essence of “thought”. In this paradigm it is inconceivable that creatures with out language can have ‘thoughts’. Dummett argues that “the study of thought is to be sharply distinguished from the study of psychological process of thinking and ... the only proper method of analysing thought consists in the analysis of language.”<sup>1</sup> Carruthers notes that it is only by equating “thought” with language that a philosophy of language can analyse philosophically problematic concepts “... focusing upon their mode of expression in language. For only then will our ‘thoughts’ themselves use language for their very foundation.”<sup>2</sup> In a philosophical sense Carruthers claims that it is only by language being necessary for “thought” that the study of language will be the study of cognition. Dummett takes the position that “... the philosophy of thought can be approached only through the philosophy of language.”<sup>3</sup> That is to say there can be no account of what “thought” is, independently of its expression (i.e. language) ...”<sup>4</sup> Similarly Dummett argues that language represents our reality; as he states “... language [is] a medium of our thinking, and our representation of reality.”<sup>5</sup> Dummett in passing mentions some philosophical dissent from these points of view; a view which argues for the idea of a pre-linguistic basis to “thought”. Dummett maintains that those philosophers who argue for this point of view “... are overturning the fundamental axiom of all analytical philosophy and hence have ceased to be analytical philosophers.”<sup>6</sup> Philosophers who argue that “thought” is independent of language and does not presuppose language are Garath Evans, Ned Block, Christopher Peacocke and Colin McGinn.. Block’s analysis of

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<sup>1</sup> M. Dummett, 1978, p.458.

<sup>2</sup> P. Carruthers, 1998, p.18.

<sup>3</sup> M. Dummett, 1991, p.3.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p.103.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, p.4.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, p.4.

language is in terms of distinctive functional roles.<sup>7</sup> Peacocke on the other hand argues in terms of canonical acceptance conditions.<sup>8</sup> McGinn argues that the medium/basis, or essence of “thought” are concepts.<sup>9</sup> The cognitive paradigm is represented by such philosophers as Wittgenstein<sup>10</sup>, Dennett<sup>11</sup>, Dummett<sup>12</sup>, Glock<sup>13</sup>, Carruthers<sup>14</sup>, Field<sup>15</sup>, as well as cognitive scientists as Lev Vygotsky<sup>16</sup>, B. L. Whorf<sup>17</sup> and E. Sapir<sup>18</sup>.

This book deals with the understanding of “metaphorical thought” and argues that any account of metaphor understanding that assumes a mental realist or cognitivist position will collapse into absurdity or meaninglessness thus making the understanding of metaphor impossible. This book shall be based upon empirical arguments, with regard to metaphor, in the cognitive sciences and philosophical perspectives on metaphoric ‘thought’ i.e. Black, Beardsley, Ricour, Searl, Davidson. Using three mechanistic modals of metaphoric comprehension and construction: imagistic; verbal associative and abstract representation I will show that these mechanistic arguments end in: circularity of argument: infinite regress: dilemmas and paradox if we assume that “thought” has an essence i.e. language images etc,

If *something* where the medium/basis, essence of “thought” then we can never acquire new knowledge about anything (as some argue comes about through the understanding metaphor). This is because we would be perpetually and for all eternity locked in with our set baggage of some “thing” and no way to increase that baggage. Pylyshyn cogently captures the problem As he states,

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<sup>7</sup> N. Block, 1986.

<sup>8</sup> C. Peacocke, 1986, 1992.

<sup>9</sup> C. McGinn, 1996, p.83-106.

<sup>10</sup> L. Wittgenstein, 1921, 1953.

<sup>11</sup> D. Dennett, 1991.

<sup>12</sup> M. Dummett, 1991.

<sup>13</sup> Hans-Johann. Glock, 1997.

<sup>14</sup> See note 61 above

<sup>15</sup> H. Field, 1977.

<sup>16</sup> L. Vygotsky, 1962.

<sup>17</sup> L. Whorf, 1956.

"if ones intellectual apparatus consists of a set of concepts or conceptual schemata [images, linguaform, natural language] which are the medium of thought, then one can only learn (or apprehend) what can be expressed in terms of these concepts [images, linguaform, natural language]. On the other hand, if it were possible to observe and to acquire new 'knowledge' without benefit of these concepts [images, linguaform, natural language], then such knowledge would not itself be conceptual [images, linguaform, natural language], or expressed in the medium of thought, and therefore it would not be cognitively structured, integrated with other knowledge, or even comprehended. Hence it would be intellectually inaccessible."<sup>19</sup>

The notion of how new knowledge, or insights can come about is itself a thorny problem. One answers to the problem is that it is via metaphors that new knowledge is generated. This book will look at a number of theories in regard to the understanding of metaphors to assess whether *something* can be the medium/basis of "thought" for such generation. The conclusions arrived at in this book is namely that so long as we argue that "thought" has a medium/basis or essence then how new insights are generated, or new knowledge, and the understanding of metaphor will always remain unknowable. This is because any model of metaphor understanding which assumes that there is an essence to "thought" i.e. language or images etc will collapse into absurdity or meaninglessness.

My evaluation of each of the major representative views outlined above, if we assume as some cognitivists do, that language and/or images and or *anything* else are the medium/basis, or essence of thought, is that they all have the same

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<sup>18</sup> E. Sapir, 1921.

<sup>19</sup> Z. Pylyshyn, 1998, p.544

problem, dilemmas, circularities, infinite regresses, paradoxes and contradictions crop up as consequences of arguments that try to explain and analyze the mental act of thought in terms of types of an essence of “thought” i.e. images, or language. This is because "images" and "language" or *anything* else require mental activity in order to be dealt with. The theorists tend to talk metaphorically about metaphor in terms of "frame", "focus", "call to mind", "flash of insight", etc. They use mechanistic models but mechanism is nothing but a metaphor as well. Thus there is a circularity from the very start embedded in their models. For how can one explain metaphor in terms of metaphor with out begging the question As Mac Cormac notes “how can one presume to have explained anything when the very account given to provide understanding of metaphor as a cognitive process assumes that very same cognitive process”<sup>20</sup> What these problems indicate is that the creative contributions of the mind will always be hidden from any view that regards language and/or images and/or *anything* else to be the medium/basis, or essence of thought. So long as metaphorical mechanistic models are put forward to explain metaphor we must always get paradox, regress and circularity when we try to understand the nature of thought itself. A philosophy of language is inappropriate for an understanding of thought and the mind itself. All that a philosophy of language does is demonstrate its own uselessness in accounting for these phenomena. This uselessness is highlighted by the absurdities via *reductio ad absurdum* the 'philosophy of language' generates in its explanation of metaphorical thought.

This book argues that it is through the notion of metaphor that we gain a clearer understanding of what ‘thought’ is. This understanding is that if there is such a thing as metaphor then “thought” cannot have an essence, , i.e. language or images, as cognitivists and mental realists do, because an essence to “thought” makes the understanding of metaphor impossible. This is because all models of metaphor

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<sup>20</sup> E. R. Mac Cormac, 1985, p.3

understanding that assume an essence to “thought” collapse into absurdity or meaninglessness.

Analytic philosophies preoccupation with literal meanings hinders us in understanding ‘thought’; because it cannot explain or account for creativity in regard to new ideas; concepts; or images. Current arguments in philosophy, in regard to the notion of metaphor, challenge the whole analytic philosophical tradition stemming from Frege. These arguments in fact undermine the whole approach to the meaning which in the Fregean tradition is based around the literal sense of a word hooking onto things in the world which they designate<sup>21</sup>. A. Richards argues that “ ‘thought’ is metaphoric and proceeds by comparison, and metaphors of language derive therefrom”<sup>22</sup> M. Johnson notes that according to Richards metaphor “..permeates all discourse. In so far as our ordinary conceptual system is metaphorically structured, the pretence is to do with out metaphor”<sup>23</sup> N. Goodman argues that metaphor “ permeates all discourse, ordinary and special.”<sup>24</sup> Lakoff and Johnson argue that “no account of meaning and truth can be adequate unless it recognises and deals with the way in which conventional metaphors

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<sup>21</sup> The Fregean tradition of analytic philosophy is based around the literal sense of a word hooking onto things in the world which they designate. According to G. Lakoff there are at least five assumptions that the analytical philosophical tradition makes. As Lakoff notes:

“All everyday conventional language is literal, and none is metaphorical

All subject matter can be comprehended literally, with out metaphor

Only literal language can be contingently true or false

All definitions given in the lexicon of a language are literal, not metaphorical

The concepts used in the grammar of a language are literal; none is metaphorical”

(G. Lakoff, 1998. p.257)

<sup>22</sup> I. A. Richards, 1936, p.94.

<sup>23</sup> M. Johnson, 1981, p.18

<sup>24</sup> N. Goodman, 1968, p. 80

structure our conceptual system.”<sup>25</sup> G. Yoos argues that our apprehension of metaphor almost never involves prior awareness of literal meaning.<sup>26</sup> Johnson on this point notes that “ the last few years have compelled general acknowledgement that any adequate account of the identification and comprehension of a metaphor must explain the complex interaction of both extrasentential and extralinguistic knowledge.”<sup>27</sup> Now an investigation into the understanding of metaphor comprehension and construction has the consequence that if “thought” has an essence then the understanding of metaphor becomes impossible.

There are three central concerns in regard to the notion of metaphor. Firstly what is metaphor? i.e. how do we identify it? Secondly how does metaphor work? i.e. what is the mechanism of it?--How is it processed? Thirdly what is its cognitive status? i.e. the nature of metaphorical meaning i.e. can they be true or false etc. Now these concerns are interdependent hence this thesis will concentrate on the arguments around the mechanism of metaphoric procession; as this gives insight to the non-linguistic basis of ‘thought’ and thinking. Johnson<sup>28</sup> points out that though there is a plethora of literature on the mechanism of metaphoric procession this literature is really an elaboration of three theories: substitution; comparison or similarity; interaction<sup>29</sup>. Theorists who have outlined comparison arguments are: P. Henle<sup>30</sup>; Osgood<sup>31</sup> and Tversky<sup>32</sup>. Theorists who have argued for an interactionist point of view are: Beardsley<sup>33</sup>; Ricoeur<sup>34</sup>; Hester<sup>35</sup> Lakoff<sup>36</sup>; Lakoff & Johnson<sup>37</sup>;

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<sup>25</sup> G. Lakoff & M. Johnson, 1980a, p.486.

<sup>26</sup> G. Yoos, 1971.

<sup>27</sup> M. Johnson op. cit., p.23.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid*, p.24

<sup>29</sup> In substitution the metaphor “A is B” i.e. Man is Wolf is a way of indirectly presenting some literal meaning like Man is fierce. In comparison the metaphor “A is B” i.e. Man is a Wolf is a way of presenting indirectly an idea like Man is like a wolf, in being. In interaction the metaphor “A is B” i.e. Man is a Wolf is an interaction between the associated common place meaning of A with those of B. The understanding of the metaphor is not based on comparing but the ideas that the terms A and B bring to mind..

<sup>30</sup> P. Henle, 1958

<sup>31</sup> C. E. Osgood, 1953, 1963, 1980

<sup>32</sup> B. Tversky, 1977

<sup>33</sup> M.C. Beardsley, 1962

<sup>34</sup> P. Ricoeur, 1977, 1978

Reese<sup>38</sup> ; Verbrugge & McCarrell<sup>39</sup> ; Billow<sup>40</sup>; Indurkha<sup>41</sup>; Hausman<sup>42</sup>; Mac Cormac<sup>43</sup>. Now all these theories are mediational approaches in that they argue for some mediational structure that mediates the similarity and interactive reactions involved in the comprehension of metaphor. These mediational structures have been elaborated in terms of: concept theory; verbal associative theory; imagery based theories; abstract semantic theory; and dual-coding theory. Now as Paivio & Walsh note “ each class of theory asserts or implies that the click of comprehension of a metaphor depends on some kind of click of structural match in regard to the information activated by the linguistic metaphor, or the construction of some new relational entity from such information.”<sup>44</sup>

This book argues that all these theories in fact do not go to the heart of the matter. The mechanistic elaboration of ‘thought’ has the effect that it makes the agent a passive vessel for the mechanistic process. The mechanism throws up the metaphor not the active involvement of the agent. In this regard the metaphor is not created by the agent but is controlled by the stimuli through which the mechanism works. In which case the notion of “thinking” becomes redundant, because “thinking assumes an active agent. If the person is an active agent in the generation of understanding metaphor then it will be shown we end with the absurdity of an infinite regress. This thesis will show that the active creator of the metaphor must first know what he intends to say before he has used the mediational structure to convey the metaphor. In other words he must know what image or word or what ever he is going to use; thus there must be some ‘thought’ prior to these mediational structures but here it will be seen we end in an infinite regress.

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<sup>35</sup> M . B. Hester, 1966

<sup>36</sup> G. Lakoff, 1998

<sup>37</sup> G. Lakoff & M . Johnson, 1980a, 1980b

<sup>38</sup> H. Reese, 1968

<sup>39</sup> R. R. Verbrugge & N. S. McCarrell, 1977

<sup>40</sup> R. M. Billow, 1975, 1977.

<sup>41</sup> B. Indurkha, 1994

<sup>42</sup> C. R. Hausman, 1983.

<sup>43</sup> E. R. Mac Cormac, 1985

<sup>44</sup> A. Paivio Hester, M. Walsh, 1998, p. 312.

Thus we have a three absurd consequences 1) either “thought” has an essence and thus the understanding of metaphor becomes impossible because such an essence means that all models of metaphor understanding then collapse into absurdity or meaninglessness, or 2) because of the mediational mechanism man is a passive agent in the generation of metaphor understanding and as such the whole notion of “thinking” becomes redundant and with it the notion of metaphor understanding 3) man is an active agent in the generation of metaphor understanding as such we end in an infinite regress. These absurd consequences mean that it becomes impossible to understand metaphor.

“Metaphoric Thought” may have an essence, but any attempt to *a priori* prove it collapses into absurdity; likewise the thesis that “metaphoric thought” has no essence *a priori* collapses into absurdity; an essence of “metaphoric thought” can only be based upon faith. This case study in regard to “metaphoric thought” is thus an example, in the totality of inductive demonstrations, which gives weight to the Prasangika Madhyamika Buddhist thesis that all views are meaningless and as such our freedom to choose any meaningless view we like. But then this being a view itself will collapse into meaninglessness if Aristotelian logic is an epistemic condition of truth; this leads to the absurdity of all views; total negation, full blown nihilism, the negation of the negation, the meaninglessness of meaninglessness—the void (emptiness).

Hercules washed out the stables of King Auygeias from years of accumulated **shit** what this book does via its ‘critique of metaphor’ washes away the centuries of philosophical dross accumulated from the pre-Socratic philosophers to the present. This amounts to a ‘critique of metaphor’ the silencing of discourse around metaphor thus no sound is uttered the world becomes silent as Wittgenstein roared ‘of what I do not know I cannot speak’.

# the ABSURDITY OF UNDERSTANDING METAPHOR

***A PRIORI* ARGUMENTS AGAINST A  
*PRIORI* ARGUMENTS FOR A MEDIUM/BASIS -  
LINGUISTIC, IMAGISTIC OR ANYTHING ELSE-  
TO metaphorical THOUGHT**

“ the homunculus crops up whenever one mental act (such as seeing) is analyzed in terms of a type of thing (such as an image in the brain) which itself requires mental activity in order to be dealt with.”<sup>45</sup>

It will be shown that dilemmas, circularities, infinite regresses, paradoxes and contradictions crop up as consequences of arguments that try to explain and analyze the mental act of thought in terms of types of things, i.e. images, or language. This is because "images" and "language" themselves in order to be dealt with require mental.

**THESIS**

Dean argued, in his *Contentless Thought*, that the content of a thought is not constituted by language and/ or an image and/or a concept and/or *anything* else. He argued that a thought must be prior to and exist independent of language and/or an image and/or a concept and/or *anything* else. Language and/or an image and/or a concept and/or something else may express or be the vehicle of a thought. A thought may become comprehensible to us via language and/or an image and/or a concept and/or something else. But language and/or an image and/or a concept and/or something else does not constitute, or is synonymous with a thought; or in other words is the medium/basis, or essence of thought. A thought is in fact pre-linguistic and/or pre-imagistic and/or a pre-conceptual and/or pre-*anything* else. To use a metaphor thought and language and/or an image and/or a concept and/or *anything* else are like wine and a glass. The glass, i.e. language and/or an image and/or a concept and/or *anything* else is the carrier or vehicle of the wine, but both are separate and distinct entities. To paraphrase Frege a thought clothes itself in the garment of language and/ or an image and/or a concept and/or *something* else to be expressed, but it is not constituted by these garments.

This chapter will similarly argue the understanding of metaphors, the generation of new insights and ideas is pre-linguistic, and/or pre-imagistic and/or pre-conceptual and/or pre-*anything* else. This chapter will argue that all processes that describe how we understand metaphors are mechanistic and mediational. They are mechanistic in that they postulate structures, or features which once set in motion operate to produce automatically our understanding of metaphors. They are mediational in that they postulate an intermediary "thing" that mediates the meaning. This mediation is in some case performed by "images" [Hester, Ricoeur, Lakoff] "systems of commonplaces" [Black], "beliefs meanings and associations" [Searle], beliefs, or un-codified knowledge[ Davidson]. This chapter argues that the mechanistic mediational model of metaphor comprehension, in conjunction with the claim that language and/or images and/or *anything* else is the medium/basis, or essence of thought, leads to the result that metaphoric thought

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<sup>45</sup> A. O'Hear, 1985, p.225

must be pre-linguistic and/or pre-imagistic and/or pre-*anything* else. It will be shown that mechanistic mediational models generate paradox and regress if thought is solely linguistic and/or imagistic and/or *anything* else. I argue that if we are to avoid these paradoxes and regresses we must abandon the notion that language and/or images and/ or *anything* else is the medium/basis, or essence of metaphorical thought. Similarly the consequence of the regress is that we will never be able to ascertain what is the medium/basis or essence of thought is. This medium/basis or essence will always be one level below *anything* suggested. Consequently whatever the medium/basis or essence of metaphorical thought is, it will always remain unknowable. Thus my argument is paradox or regress result if language and/or images and/or *anything* else is the medium/basis, or essence of thought.

## **WHY LOOK AT METAPHOR?**

Why look at metaphor in regard to whether language and/or images or *anything* else is the medium/basis, or essence of thought? In contemporary philosophy the study of metaphor is regarded as illuminating questions about the nature of language and thought. As Kittay notes "...the study of metaphor will ... force revisions of our basic views of language and thought ..."<sup>46</sup> The study of how we understand metaphors takes us to central questions in regard to how new ideas and meanings are generated. How the mind processes metaphors sheds light upon what the medium/basis, or essence of thought may or may not be. In this regard some philosophers think that an understanding of the nature of understanding metaphors is crucial for the understanding of thought. This chapter will show that so long as language and/or images are regarded as the medium/basis, or essence of thought then an understanding of thought is held back. Though language and/or images or *something* else may be the vehicle through which communication, expression, creativity or our views of the world are conveyed, language and/or images are nevertheless only the vehicle through which the mind unfolds itself. Philosophers have concentrated on the contributions language and images play in this unfolding,

but this concentration has not taken into consideration adequately enough the creative contribution of the mind itself. A study of metaphor is crucial for an understanding of this creative pre-linguistic pre-imagistic, pre-*anything* else unfolding. For the study will show that all mechanistic accounts of metaphor comprehension, in conjunction with the assumption that language and/or images and/or *anything* else is the medium/basis, or essence of thought, lead to paradox and regress.

## THE DEBATES

Johnson points out that though there is a plethora of literature on the mechanism of metaphoric comprehension this literature is really an elaboration of three theories.<sup>47</sup> These three theories are substitution, comparison or similarity, interaction.<sup>48</sup> All these theories are, as we shall see, mediational approaches in that they argue for some mediational structure that mediates the similarity and interactive reactions involved in the comprehension of metaphor. These mediational structures have been elaborated in terms of concept theory<sup>49</sup>, verbal associative theory<sup>50</sup>, imagery based theories<sup>51</sup> and dual-coding theory.<sup>52</sup> The

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<sup>46</sup> E. Kittay, 1989, p.10

<sup>47</sup> M. Johnson op. cit., p.24

<sup>48</sup> In substitution the metaphor "A is B" i.e. Man is Wolf is a way of indirectly presenting some literal meaning like Man is fierce. In comparison the metaphor "A is B" i.e. Man is a Wolf is a way of presenting indirectly an idea like Man is like a wolf, in being. In interaction the metaphor "A is B" i.e. Man is a Wolf is an interaction between the associated common place meaning of A with those of B. The understanding of the metaphor is not based on comparing but the ideas that the terms A and B bring to mind. Theorists who have outlined comparison arguments are: P. Henle [ P. Henle 1959], Osgood [ C. E. Osgood, 1953, 1963, 1980 ] and Tversky [B. Tversky, 1977]. Theorists who have argued for an interactionist point of view are: Black [ M. Black, 1984, p.63-82]; Beardsley [M. C. Beardsley, 1962] Ricoeur [ P. Ricoeur, 1977, 1978]; Hester [ M. B. Hester , 1966] Lakoff [G. Lakoff, 1988]; Lakoff & Johnson [G. Lakoff & M. Johnson, 1980a, 1980b]; Reese [H. Reese, 1968]; Verbrugge & McCarrell [R. R. Verbrugge & N. S. McCarrell, 1977]; Billow [R. M. Billow, 1975, 1977]; Indurkha [B. Indurkha, 1994]; Hausman [C. R. Hausman, 1983]<sup>48</sup>; Mac Cormac [E. R. MacCormac, 1985].

<sup>49</sup> Johnson & Lakoff

<sup>50</sup> Black, Beardsley, Searle and Davidson

<sup>51</sup> Hester, Ricoeur, and Lakoff

different theories, as we shall see, assume or postulate different intermediary mediating structures which the creator or interpreter of metaphor uses for the comprehension of metaphorical relations. In traditional verbal associative theory the mediators of the metaphorical relations are assumed to be verbal associations. In imagery-based theories it will be seen that comprehension come via structural similarities in perceptual/imagistic memories. As Paivio & Walsh note, in regard to these models, “ each class of theory asserts or implies that the click of comprehension of a metaphor depends on some kind of click of structural match in regard to the information activated by the linguistic metaphor, or the construction of some new relational entity from such information.”<sup>53</sup> Nevertheless in all cases this click or "insight" is not explained. It is assumed as we shall see that this "insight is just thrown up in some automatic manner by the mediating elements. Even apart from this lacuna in explaining the insight, if we argue that language or images are the sole medium/basis, or essence of thought then we inevitably end up with the regress and paradoxes of the mechanistic mediational models mentioned above. This thesis will maintain that if we are to put forward mechanistic mediational models then thought must be pre-linguistic and/or pre-imagistic and/or pre- *anything* else.

All the philosophical theories elaborated in this chapter are in fact, as we shall see, elaborations upon Black's interaction theory. Whether the theorist puts forward a verbal opposition theory, or imagist, or semantic, or pragmatic, or dual-coding theory they all basically try and explain metaphoric comprehension as a click or insight resulting from the juxtaposition and interaction of incongruent elements within the metaphor. Each theory claims that this process is mediated by an intermediary element, but though the mediating elements may differ the process remains interactive. There are theories which do not have images or language as the mediator. Osgood outlines a theory which evolves emotions as the mediatory

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<sup>52</sup> Paivio and Walsh

<sup>53</sup> A. Paivio Hester, M. Walsh, 1998, p. 312.

between the incongruent elements in the metaphor.<sup>54</sup> The selection of which theorist to cover is a subjective thing based upon how one regards the importance and relevance of the theorist. My criteria of selection is based upon the fact that the theorists discussed have laid out directions for others to build upon. Upon these directions others have elaborated and fine tuned their basic premises. Theorists from each of the main theory types will be discussed. Black and Beardsley will be critiqued, from verbal opposition theory, because in the case of Black most theories take him as a starting point. In the case of Beardsley he offers an account which tries to explain elements of the metaphoric comprehension process Black left vague and in the attempt lays out a process that others have tried to elaborate on. Searle and Davidson will be discussed for a number of important reasons. Searle and Davidson have taken the study of metaphoric comprehension into new directions with their pragmatic interactionist accounts. Searle because he offers the first very detailed account. Davidson because he undermines most of the proceeding theory of metaphor in articulating his account. Searle gives us a pragmatic account of metaphor comprehension in contradistinction to the semantic accounts of Black and Beardsley. With Searle we get the first elaborate outline of metaphoric comprehension. Davidson will then be critiqued because Davidson turns the discussion of metaphor on its head by denying that there is a metaphorical meaning in addition to a literal meaning. Davidson also raises fundamental issues in regard to "meaning" and "truth" in his discussion of metaphor. Hester and Ricoeur will be discussed in regard to imagist theories. Hester will be used because he outlines an imagistic gestalt account of metaphoric comprehension that Lakoff will take up in his accounts. Ricoeur offers a fairly sophisticated Kantian account of metaphoric comprehension which Johnson claims will lead metaphoric theorists into some very interesting directions. I will look at Lakoff because Lakoff in fact attempts to undermine the whole philosophy of language tradition in regard to metaphor and in the process offers an account which is becoming popular in the contemporary debates around metaphor.

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<sup>54</sup> C. E. Osgood, 1953.

## PRESUPOSTIONS

Throughout this chapter I claim that the creator of metaphor must first know what he intends to say. This claim is based upon the idea that the human is an active creator of understanding and not just a passive responder to stimulus via an automatic mechanism of understanding. This chapter will argue that it is only by regarding humans as active creators of understanding that any sense can be made of such things as "thinking". If we assume that the human is only a passive responder to stimulus then all that happens in his brain is that the stimulus throws up what is needed for understanding. The human is activated by a stimulus and a mechanism which, not under his volition, produces the logical result; all that the human is is a capsule to house the mechanism of understanding. In this regard we must give up the idea that the human "thinks" because under this passive responder idea he does not "think" the mechanism automatically produces the understanding without his input. Thinking requires meaning and understanding of the symbols manipulated by the mind; and a mechanism does not have understanding or know the meaning of the symbols it manipulates. As we saw in chapter two, McGinn, in his book *The Character of Mind*, likewise notes that a passive responder leaves out consciousness and the realisation that humans are active creators of meaning.<sup>55</sup> Thus to retain the notion of "thinking" we must assume that the human is an active generator and creator of understanding. To be an active creator of understanding has a number of consequences if the medium/basis, or essence of thought is in language and/or images, and/or any 'thing' else.

If the content of thought is only language and/or images, and or *something* else then the creator must know what he creates before he states it because by default he can only think in language and/or images, and or *something* else. In other words he can only discover *something* which he creates, but he must already know that

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<sup>55</sup> C. McGinn, 1996, pp.107-116

which he creates before he creates it; because thought's only possible content is itself; i.e. *something*. In this regard I claim that the understander of metaphor must know what he intends to say before he has used the mediational structures to convey the metaphor. I agree with Paivio and Walsh when they claim " ... the creator of metaphor must first grasp the significance of a metaphorical relation before it is uttered."<sup>56</sup>

Another argument which supports the claim he must know what he intends to say before he has said it is based upon the notion of memory. If we are to claim that there is memory and that the medium/basis, or essence of thought is language, and/or images, and or some 'thing' else' then the human creator must already know what he needs to access from memory. This is because if he can only think in language, and/or images, and or *something* else then he must be using language, and/or images, and or some 'thing' else' to access the is language, and/or images, and or *something* else' in memory.

This chapter will argue we have a dilemma in the above arguments. Namely either 1) the human just responds to stimulus and the automatic mechanism of metaphor understanding and we give up the notions of "think" and or 2) the human is an active agent that finds in memory the required language, and/or images, and or *something* else to give meaning to his consciousness. If we adopt the first horn of the dilemma then the notion of "thinking" becomes redundant. If we adopt the second horn of the dilemma then as we shall see the idea that language, and/or images, and or *something* else is the medium/basis, or essence of "thought" leads to paradox, regress and dilemmas irrespective of whether humans are passive responders or active creators

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<sup>56</sup> A. Paivio & M. Walsh, 1998, p.309.

## **VERBAL OPPOSITION THEORY: BLACK, BEARDSLEY, SEARLE, DAVIDSON**

Black claims that metaphor comprehension is to be explained for some metaphors by the meaning of the terms i.e. semantically and for other metaphors by the context of the utterance i.e. pragmatically.<sup>57</sup> Black identified three main theories in regard to metaphor comprehension: substitution, comparison, interaction. In "substitution" the "... metaphorical expression is used in place of some literal expression."<sup>58</sup> An example would be "A is B"; i.e. "Man is a slug" as a way of indirectly suggesting a literal meaning like "Man is slimy".

In "comparison" the metaphor "... consists in the presentation of the underlying analogy or similarity."<sup>59</sup> An example would be "A is B" i.e. "Man is a slug" as an indirect way of putting across the idea that "Man is like a slug, in his essence or being." Johnson notes that in this view we have a pragmatic understanding of the metaphor i.e. the literal similarities have meaning in the context of the utterance. As he states "... the meaning of the metaphor is a literal set of relevant similarities picked out by the context of the utterance."<sup>60</sup> Black criticised the comparison view on the grounds that it "suffers from a vagueness that borders on vacuity."<sup>61</sup> Black argues that for any two objects there can be similarities and the problem with the comparison theory is that it does not explain how the similarities are picked out.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> M. Black, 1984, .p.66. 67.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, p.68.

<sup>59</sup> M. Black, op.cit, p.71.

<sup>60</sup> ibid, p.24.

<sup>61</sup> M. Black op.cit p.71.

<sup>62</sup> ibid, pp.71-72. Searle likewise criticises the comparison theories on similar grounds to Black. Searle claims the theory has no explanatory power in understanding metaphor comprehension because to say "S is like P" with respect to R does not tell us how we are to assign values to R. The problem according to Searle is similar to Black's criticism "similarity is a vacuous predicate: any two things are similar in some respect or other. Saying that the metaphorical "S is P" implies the literal "S is like P" which does solve our problem [of metaphor comprehension]."[ J. Searle, 1998, p.96]

Searle puts forward a criticism of comparison theory along the lines is that that in asserting a relation of similarity between two objects, the comparison theorist sets up truth conditions which give existence to the objects being compared; i.e. they generate an ontological existence for the object referred to. The result of this comparison is that the claim of metaphoric utterance in regard to similarity is taken to be true.<sup>63</sup> In other words Searle claims that the comparison view assumes the existence of the objects being compared, but he argues that this claim must be false as in cases of "Sally is a dragon" since clearly dragons don't exist.<sup>64</sup> Consequently according to Searle "at its crudest, the comparison theory is just muddled about the referential character of expressions used metaphorically."<sup>65</sup>

In interaction, according to Black, the metaphor is comprehended due to "... two thoughts of different things active together and supported by a single word or phrase, whose meaning is a resultant of the interaction."<sup>66</sup> In a metaphor we have the metaphorical sentence which is the frame and the words or words used metaphorically which form the focus the focus.<sup>67</sup> The frame is the literal meaning of the metaphorical sentence and the focus the words or word that is used non-literally.<sup>68</sup> An example would be "Sally is a dragon". "Sally is a dragon" taken literally is the frame but "dragon" is used non-literally in the metaphorical expression and is referred to as the focus. In given context the focal word obtains a new meaning different from its literal meaning or from any literal substitute meaning.<sup>69</sup> In other words "the new context (the "frame" of the metaphor ...) imposes extension of meaning upon the focal word ...<sup>70</sup>This extension and change of meaning in this interaction is brought about according to Black by what

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<sup>63</sup> *ibid*, pp.90-95.

<sup>64</sup> *ibid*, p.91

<sup>65</sup> *ibid*, p.91

<sup>66</sup> M. Black *op.cit*, p.72.

<sup>67</sup> *ibid*, pp.72-74.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid*, p.72-74, (also see M. Black, 1998, p.27.)

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*, p.73.

<sup>70</sup> *ibid*, p.73.

he calls the "system of associated commonplaces". The "system of associated commonplaces" are the associated meanings that attach to a word. "Wolf" for instance has the associated meanings of fierce, voracious, predator, etc. Black argues that in the metaphor "Man is a wolf" "... we may say [there] are two subjects - the principle subject, Man (or men) and the subsidiary subject, Wolf (or wolves). Now the metaphorical sentence in question will not convey its intended meaning to a reader sufficiently ignorant about wolves. What is needed is not so much that the reader shall know the standard dictionary meaning of "wolf"- or be able to use the word in literal senses- as that he shall know what I call the system of associated commonplaces."<sup>71</sup> In this regard the "system of associated commonplaces" mediates the comprehension. As Johnson notes "‘A is B’ i.e. Man is a Wolf is an interaction between the associated commonplace meaning of A with those of B"<sup>72</sup>. In "interaction" the entire system of commonplaces (e.g. that of wolf) is used to "filter" or organise our conception of some other system (e.g. that of man).<sup>73</sup> As Johnson notes the "... interaction is a screening of one system of commonplaces by another to generate a new conceptual organisation of, a new perspective on, some object."<sup>74</sup> There is in other words an interaction between the principle subject and the "system of associated commonplaces" of the subsidiary subject.

In a more recent work Black make a few finer distinctions.<sup>75</sup> When a metaphor is dislodged from its original discourse we must make use of the "system of commonplaces" or endoxa to guide us in comprehending the metaphor. When however the metaphor is lodged in a rich linguistic and situational context then what Black calls the "implication-complex" supplements or over rides the "system of commonplaces."<sup>76</sup> As Black notes, "... the secondary subject, in a way [is] partly dependent upon the context of the metaphorical use, determines a set of what

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<sup>71</sup> *ibid*, p.73-74.

<sup>72</sup> M. Johnson, *op.cit*, p.24.

<sup>73</sup> M. Black, *op.cit*, p.74.

<sup>74</sup> M. Johnson, *op.cit* , p.28.

<sup>75</sup> M. Black, 1998.

<sup>76</sup> *ibid*, 1998, p.27-29.

Aristotle called *endoxa*, current opinion shared by members of a certain speech-community. But I also [emphasise] that a metaphor producer may introduce a novel and non-platitudinous 'implication-complex.'<sup>77</sup> In metaphorical comprehension the metaphor works by "projecting upon" the primary subject a set of "associated implication", comprised in the implicative complex that are predictable of the secondary subject.<sup>78</sup> Thus in the context of a particular metaphorical statement there is an interaction such that " (a) the presence of the primary subject incites the hearer to select some of the secondary subject's properties; and (b) invites him to construct a parallel implication-complex that can fit the primary subject; and (c) reciprocally induces parallel changes in the secondary subject."<sup>79</sup> Thus we see, for all Black's fine tuning, the meanings of the incongruent elements in the metaphor are extended by the "implication-complex" in the same way the "system of commonplaces" did in his former characterisation of the understanding metaphor.

Searle criticises the interaction theory of metaphor comprehension on two grounds. He claims that interaction theory maintains that as a requirement for metaphorical comprehension one of the elements in a metaphorical statement must be literal if it is to function as the vehicle, in Richard's use, or frame in the jargon of Black.<sup>80</sup> Searle argues this requirement is false because "in uttering "Sally is a block of ice", we referred to Sally using her proper name literally, but we need not have."<sup>81</sup> Searle objects to the theory of interaction on the grounds that the meaning a speaker of a metaphor wishes to convey is not the result of an interaction between elements of the sentence in the sense of "interaction."<sup>82</sup> He argues in the metaphorical expression "Sally is a block of ice" "... there is no question of any interaction between the meaning of the 'principle subject' ('Sally') and the

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<sup>77</sup> *ibid*, p.28.

<sup>78</sup> *ibid*, p.28

<sup>79</sup> *ibid*, p.28.

<sup>80</sup> J. Searle, *op.cit*, p.93.

<sup>81</sup> *ibid*, p.93.

<sup>82</sup> *ibid*, p.94.

'subsidiary subject' ('block of ice'). 'Sally' is a proper name; it does not have a meaning in quite the way in which 'block of ice' has a meaning."<sup>83</sup> As Searle claims the meaning of such things as indexical expressions and proper nouns is exhausted in their referring function such that there can be no semantic residue left over in which to take part in "interaction".<sup>84</sup>

Searle characterises the failure of interaction theory in Fregean terms when he notes that "... interaction tries to explain [metaphor] as a relation between senses and beliefs associated with reference."<sup>85</sup> Searle argues that for interaction theory, in metaphor comprehension, semantic and mental processes cannot involve references themselves "... but must be at the level of intentionality, that is they must involve relations at the level of beliefs, meanings associations, and so on."<sup>86</sup> As we saw in the case of Black these mediatory relations are the "system of commonplaces" which interact between a literal frame and a metaphorical focus. In terms of the idea that language is the sole medium/basis, or essence of thought this interactive mediatory intermediary notion of the "system of commonplaces" generates real problems for interaction. As we shall see the theory ends up with paradoxes and regresses.

Even apart from Searle's to interaction theory, interaction theory has a major paradox and regress embedded in it - as do all mediational theories. This paradox leads to the insight that the understanding of metaphor cannot be mediated via language. In other words metaphorical thought must be pre-linguistic. We saw that the 'system of commonplaces' or the "implication-complex" mediates the interaction of the incongruent elements. These "implication-complexes" or this

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<sup>83</sup> *ibid*, p.94.

<sup>84</sup> S. Levin, 1998, p.114

<sup>85</sup> J. Searle, *op.cit*, p.94.

<sup>86</sup> *ibid*, p.94.

"system of commonplaces" can be either encoded in language or they can be encoded in something non-linguistic. If they are encoded in language we end in paradox. If they are encoded in something non-linguistic we end in paradox and regress, as we shall see when I discuss Davidson.

The claim that language is the medium/basis, or essence of thought means that for the "system of commonplaces" to be "thought" they must be in language. The paradox thus is, metaphorical thought, being language, means that metaphorical thought must find an idea or "system of commonplace" which is in language. However it must already know that which it finds before it finds it. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, if the content of thought is solely in language then the initial creation of the metaphor must itself be in language but this means that the creator must have known the metaphor before he created it since the only content of thought is language. This means that the creator to grasp the significance of a metaphorical relation before it is uttered must do so in language - because its only content is itself i.e. language - here we have the paradox he must know before he knows it. Secondly obviously the "system of commonplaces" to be accessible must be stored; i.e. we must assume a memory. But because there must be a memory through which the creator can come back time and time again to retrieve a "system of commonplaces" we end up with a paradox and regress. The metaphor creator must find a common place association in memory to express his thought, but he must know this "commonplace" before he knows it, if language is the sole medium/basis, or essence of thought. For to retrieve the commonplace from memory he must already know what he wants to retrieve. But if thought is only in language then a thought [in language] must have been used to access a linguistic commonplace. Thus the creator must have known what he wanted before he knew what he wanted in order to find it in memory. In a similar manner Paivio and Walsh note that "... the creator of the metaphor must first grasp the significance of

a metaphorical relation before it is uttered."<sup>87</sup> If we are to avoid this paradox we must give up the notion that thought is language. However if we do this then the interactionist theory shifts the problem of metaphor comprehension from the notion of "systems of commonplaces" one level lower, since there must be something prior to the realisation that the "system commonplaces" expresses the metaphor creators thoughts; but then we start on a infinite regress, since what is prior to this? In this regard we can never find what is the basis or medium/basis, or essence of metaphorical thought .

This shifting of the problem one level lower is also what becomes of the problem with Beardsley's interactionist model of metaphor comprehension. As we saw with Black's verbal-opposition theory, metaphor generates an "insight" into metaphor meaning by actualising or bringing to mind connotations that are potentially there but as yet unnoticed. Where Black claimed that metaphors do their work by calling upon a "system of commonplaces" Beardsley claims that metaphors actually actualise connotations not yet brought forward in our conceptual system.<sup>88</sup> Now even though Ricoeur notes that Beardsley cannot fully account for metaphor comprehension because he does not explain where the connotations come from<sup>89</sup> Beardsley's account suffers from the same problems of all mechanistic mediational models; namely paradox and regress.

Beardsley claims that there is a tension or conflict in a metaphor that is not present in literal expressions.<sup>90</sup> According to Beardsley in a metaphor "here is a felt difference between two sets of properties in the intension, or signification, of general terms: first, those properties that ... are taken to be necessary conditions for applying the term correctly in a particular sense ... second those properties that

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<sup>87</sup> A. Paivio & M. Walsh, 1998, p.309.

<sup>88</sup> M. Beardsley, 1984, pp.114-115.

<sup>89</sup> P. Ricoeur, 1977.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid, p.111.

belong to the marginal meaning of the term, or its ... connotation..."<sup>91</sup> . In this regard Beardsley argues that there is a "logical opposition" between a central meaning and the meaning of other terms. He states "the term 'logical opposition' here includes both direct incompatibility of designated properties and a more indirect incompatibility between presuppositions of the term."<sup>92</sup> The connotations of a word according to Beardsley are drawn from what he calls the "potential range of connotation" or the accidental properties of a word.<sup>93</sup> It is these accidental properties that become the mediator for metaphorical comprehension and the actualisation of new connotations. As Beardsley argues "... thus think of a number of properties characteristic of trees ... leafiness, shadiness...Some of these such as leafiness ... belong among the recognised connotations of trees...other properties such as sliminess ... though they may be sufficiently characteristic of trees to be available in the potential range of connotations. They may wait so to speak, lurking in the nature of things for actualization ..."<sup>94</sup>

According to Beardsley the inherent conflict or "logical opposition" within a metaphor causes the predicate of the metaphor to lose its ordinary meaning and acquire a new intension, via the mediation of the "potential range of connotations" associated with the subject. In other words there is an interaction between a central meaning (its ordinary designation) and a marginal meaning (its connotation). In the metaphor there is a juxtaposition or logical opposition between the ordinary designated properties of the two. This juxtaposition causes a failure of primary reference or designation of a term which forces us to call up the accidental properties or "potential range of connotations" around the term. These accidental properties can generate new connotations which are then applied to the term. As Beardsley argues, in regard to the metaphor "th' inconstant moon", "... the word 'inconstant' has no connotations. When, therefore, we find 'inconstant moon', we seize upon the verbal opposition, alright, but when we look for relevant

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<sup>91</sup> *ibid*, p.111

<sup>92</sup> *ibid*. p112.

<sup>93</sup> *ibid*, p.112.

<sup>94</sup> *ibid*, pp.112-113.

connotations we are balked. How, then, can we explicate it? Given the surrounding syntax and prevailing tone, it claims to make sense; there for we must try to make sense. And so we look about among the accidental or contingent properties of inconstant people in general and attribute these properties ...to the moon. And these properties would ... become part of the meaning of "inconstant" though previously they were only properties of people. Then we might say that the metaphor transforms a property into a sense."<sup>95</sup> This transforming or actualising of new connotations remains a mystery as, we noting Ricoeur's criticism above, it is not explained where the new connotations come from. Nevertheless apart from this objection Beardsley's account of metaphor comprehension suffers from the same problems as Blacks.

Where Black used the "system of commonplaces" as the mediating elements Beardsley uses the "potential range of connotation" or the accidental properties of a word to mediate between the tension or "logical oppositions" in the metaphor. If these "potential range of connotation" or the "accidental properties" are not encoded in language then as we shall see when I discuss Davidson this generates paradox and regress with the result that metaphorical thought cannot be in a linguistic or non-linguistic medium/basis, or essence Now if these "potential range of connotations" or the accidental properties' are in language we end in paradox.

The problem with Beardsley's account is the same as with Black's. Namely the creator of the metaphor must already know what the "potential range of connotation" or the accidental properties of a word are before he uses them If the "potential range of connotation" or the accidental properties of a word are in language, and if metaphorical thought is language, then metaphorical thought can only discover a "potential range of connotation" or the accidental properties of a word which it must already know. Thus the creator of metaphor must find the "potential range of connotation" or the accidental properties of a word before he knows it, if language is the sole medium/basis, or essence of thought. To avoid this

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid, p.114.

paradox we can argue that that metaphorical thought cannot be couched in language but this only shifts the problem one level lower because now we have the problem of an infinite. The regress being that there must be something prior to the "potential range of connotation" or the accidental properties of a word such that the creator of the metaphor knows that this "potential range of connotation" or the accidental properties of a word express his thought. But what is prior to this? Also at this pre-linguistic deeper level lies the solution to Ricoeur's question as to where do the new created connotations come from?

As we have seen these theories do not give much detail in regard to metaphorical comprehension apart from claiming the process is mediated by some sort of relating elements or features. Searle attempted to right this lacuna by giving detailed principles which attempted to explain how metaphors are comprehended. Searle regards the problem of how metaphors work in terms of the speech-acts distinction between word or sentence meaning (i.e. what the word or sentence means literally) and speakers' utterance meaning (i.e. what the speaker means by uttering words or sentences with literal meanings). In terms of this distinction the central problem of metaphor is to state the principles relating literal sentence meaning to metaphorical meaning. In Searle's words the hearer must have some other principles, or some other factual information, or some combination of principles and information that enables him to figure out when a speaker says "S is P" [having a literal sentence meaning] he means [metaphorically] "S is R " What is this extra element?"<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> J.Searle, 1998, p.89.

The basic principle upon which all metaphors work for Searle is the way a metaphor "calls to mind" another set of meanings and truth conditions different from the meanings and truth conditions of the literal utterance.<sup>97</sup> Searle incorporates a semantic and a pragmatic dimension in his account of metaphor comprehension. As he states "an analysis of metaphor must show how similarity and context play a role in metaphor different from their role in literal utterance."<sup>98</sup> According to Searle the heart of the problem is to state the principles that "...associate the P term (whether the meaning, truth conditions, or the denotation if there is any) with a set of possible values of R"<sup>99</sup> Though Searle states this as his goal he is candid about the fact that he does not "... believe there is a single principle on which metaphor works."<sup>100</sup> On the other hand Searle claims that there are a number of principles which go together in explanations of metaphor and the understanding of metaphors.

The problem of metaphor comprehension for Searle is divided into three parts. Firstly there is the identification of a metaphor via the principles of obvious falsehood, violation of the rules of speech, semantic nonsense and violation of the conventions of communication. Secondly, there is the question of "how do we compute the possible values of R"<sup>101</sup> Thirdly "given a range of possible values of R how does the relationship between the S term and the P term restrict that range?"<sup>102</sup> For Searle similarity plays a major role in answering these questions.<sup>103</sup> Searle outlines eight principles or mechanisms which he feels can explain how R values are inferred from Ps : 1) "things which are P by definition"<sup>104</sup>; 2) "things which are P are contingently R"<sup>105</sup>; 3) "things which are P are often said to or believed to be R even though both speaker and hearer may know that R is false of

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<sup>97</sup> *ibid*, p.89.

<sup>98</sup> *ibid*, p.95

<sup>99</sup> *ibid*, p.108.

<sup>100</sup> *ibid*, p.102.

<sup>101</sup> *ibid*, p.104

<sup>102</sup> *ibid*, p.104

<sup>103</sup> *ibid*, p.102.

<sup>104</sup> *ibid*, p.104

<sup>105</sup> *ibid*, p.104

P"<sup>106</sup>; 4) "things which are P are not R nor are they like R things"<sup>107</sup>; 5) "P things are not like R things"<sup>108</sup>; 6) "there are cases where P and R are similar"<sup>109</sup>; 7) a way of applying principles from 1-6<sup>110</sup>.; 8) distinction between metonymy synecdoche and metaphor<sup>111</sup>. What these principle are in fact are mediating elements; the mediation is performed by relating features or elements of similarity. Where interactionists mediated the incongruent parts of the metaphor via such things as the "system of commonplaces" Searle has "similarity" play the same role. Searle notes the role played by beliefs, meanings and associations in the ascribing of similarity.<sup>112</sup> The metaphor via the relating features of similarity as filtered through beliefs meanings and associations allows the hearer to "call to mind" another meaning and truth condition different from the literal one. In the cases of the metaphor "Sam is a pig" " the hearer might invoke his factual knowledge to come up with such features as that pigs are fat, gluttonous, slovenly, filthy ..."<sup>113</sup> Now though Searle claims that metaphor meaning may be derived from context of the utterance and is a matter of utterance meaning and not sentence meaning this utterance meaning is still a matter of semantics; i.e. language.

Searle notes in the case of the metaphor "Sam is a pig" that it is the hearers "knowledge" of "pig" things that comes into giving possible values to R. As Searle states "the hearer has to use his knowledge of S things and P things to know which of the possible values of R are plausible candidates for metaphorical predication."<sup>114</sup> This knowledge, as we saw, comes from the background beliefs and associations of the hearer - similar to Blacks 'system of commonplaces" Searle recognizes that there may be no literal expression of a metaphor. In this regard the full meaning of the metaphor must be non--linguistic. Nevertheless Searle claims

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<sup>106</sup> *ibid*, p.105

<sup>107</sup> *ibid*, p.105

<sup>108</sup> *ibid*, p.106

<sup>109</sup> *ibid*, p.106

<sup>110</sup> *ibid*, p.106

<sup>111</sup> *ibid*, p.107

<sup>112</sup> *ibid*, p.94.

<sup>113</sup> *ibid*, p.103

<sup>114</sup> *ibid*, p.104

that we arrive at the R values "... by way of going through the meaning of 'S is P'."<sup>115</sup> The important thing, in Searle's account is that the understanding of metaphor is semantic. The hearer comprehends the utterance with semantic content even though the metaphors full meaning cannot be literally paraphrased. On this point Searle states "they [metaphors] are not paraphrasable, because without using the metaphorical expression, we will not reproduce the semantic content which occurred in the hearer's comprehension of the utterance."<sup>116</sup> Thus even though the understanding of the metaphor is context dependent the understanding of the metaphor is via language; i.e. semantic. In Searle's model we have the problem that his account of metaphor as obvious falsehood, violation of the rules of speech, semantic nonsense and violation of the conventions of communication, does not allow us to distinguish between irony, mistakes or error of semantics, as Morgan like wise points out.<sup>117</sup> It is by connecting metaphor comprehension with language that Searle's mechanistic mediatory account ends up with the same paradoxes as all the above theories. Once again these "background beliefs"; i.e. about the nature of dragons wolfs etc ice can be encoded in language or not in language. As we shall see when I discuss Davidson if these "background beliefs" are not encoded language we also end in paradox and regress. regress.

If we claim that the "background beliefs" are encoded in language then we get paradoxes from the creator's and hearers points of view. For Searle metaphor comprehension comes by finding relating features, or similarities between the incongruent elements of the metaphor. These similarities are filtered through the 'background beliefs' and association that enter into the context of the utterance. If all thought is linguistic and these "background beliefs" are in language we have a paradox from the hearers point of view. The hearer upon hearing the metaphor must search his memories for the beliefs to filter the similarities. But he can only search his memory for the beliefs by using language - because by default language is the

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<sup>115</sup> *ibid*, p.111.

<sup>116</sup> *ibid*, p.111

only medium/basis, or essence of thought. Thus the paradox is the hearer of the metaphor must already know what relating features he needs to comprehend the metaphor with before he has found them. He can only use words to search for the words he is looking for but the word he uses to search for the word he is searching for implies that he already knows the word he is looking for. In other words if the medium/basis, or essence of metaphorical thought is language, and the background beliefs are in language, we have a paradox. Namely the hearer's thought, being solely linguistic, then the hearer can only discover an idea which it finds to match the speakers intended meaning; but it must already know that which it finds before it finds it, because its only content is itself; i.e. language.

We have seen Searle denies the claim that the understanding of metaphors comes as a result of the interaction of two incongruent elements in the sentence. For Searle comprehension comes from the pragmatic context of the utterance. At about the same time Searle presented his theories Davidson outlined a similar pragmatic account of understanding metaphor

Both Davidson and Searle claim that the metaphoric sentence means exactly what they literally say. Where Searle claimed the hearer inferred the speakers metaphoric meaning of the utterance Davidson claimed that metaphoric meaning is an interpretative act on the part of the hearer; and this interpretation may not be the meaning intended by the speaker. As Davidson states "the central error about metaphor is most easily attacked when it takes the form of a theory of metaphorical meaning, but behind that theory, and storable independently, is the thesis that associated with a metaphor is a definite cognitive content that its author wishes to convey and that the interpreter must grasp if he is to get the message. This theory is false ..." <sup>118</sup> Johnson interprets Davidson as claiming that "... there is [no] such

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<sup>117</sup> J. Morgan, 1998, pp.124-137

<sup>118</sup> D. Davidson, 1984, p.262.

thing as a metaphorical speakers meaning."<sup>119</sup> This is not my reading of Davidson, as Davidson does claim that there is something that the author of a metaphor does want us to see. As Davidson clearly states, "many of us need help if we are to see what the author of a metaphor wanted us to see..."<sup>120</sup> Nevertheless even though there is a thing the author wants us to see, according to Davidson, "there is no limit to what a metaphor calls to our attention..."<sup>121</sup> This is where the hearer's interpretation of the metaphor may be different to what the author wanted to "call to our attention". Notice that Davidson uses of the metaphor "calls to our attention" where as Searle used the metaphor "call to mind ". Richards used the metaphors "vehicle" and tenor" and Black used the metaphors "frame and "focus". In these cases, as we shall mention later, there is a kind of circularity in speaking about metaphor in terms of metaphor.

Davidson claims that"... metaphors mean what the words, in their most literal interpretation, mean and nothing more."<sup>122</sup> He continues "I depend on the distinction between what words mean and what they are used to do. I think metaphor belongs exclusively to the domain of use. It is something brought off by the imaginative employment of words and sentences and depends entirely on the ordinary words and hence on the ordinary meanings of the sentences they comprise."<sup>123</sup> As Johnson has noted, "... Davidson has argued that some of the apparent muddle is due to an erroneous assumption underlying virtually all standard theories of metaphor to date - namely, the assumption that there is some special metaphorical meaning in addition to the metaphor's literal meaning ..."<sup>124</sup> For Davidson the metaphor prompts us into a metaphorical comprehension of the sentence because the sentence makes a literal claim that is manifestly false<sup>125</sup>. Note that Davidson agrees with Searle in regard to Searle's claim that metaphors are statements that are literally false. In this way Davidson's theory has the same

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<sup>119</sup> M Johnson, op. cit, p.34..

<sup>120</sup> D. Davidson, op.cit, p.264.

<sup>121</sup> ibid, p.263.

<sup>122</sup> ibid, , p.245.

<sup>123</sup> ibid, , p.247.

<sup>124</sup> M. Johnson. 1981, p.34.

problem as Searle's namely it cannot distinguish between irony and outright semantic mistakes. The meaning of the metaphor is the interpretation that the hearer gives to the literally false sentence. The hearer engages in a cognitive process that gives meaning to a series of novel relationships. On this point Levin captures Davidson's ideas when he states "... the metaphoric enterprise takes place at the 'receiving' end of the transaction. Whatever the author of the metaphor may have intended to communicate, the utterance itself has only its literal meaning; as a reaction to this meaning, however, the hearer is stimulated to entertain and process a series of novel relationships."<sup>126</sup>

In regard to this process Davidson holds that the understanding of metaphors comes via mediatory intermediaries. As he states "A metaphor does its work through other intermediaries ..."<sup>127</sup> Now where Searle regarded similarities and background beliefs as being part of the mediatory process Davidson sees "likeness" and beliefs as playing a similar part. According to Davidson a background of beliefs is required in order to have a thought. As he states, "having a thought requires that there be a background of beliefs..."<sup>128</sup> In regard to metaphor he notes, "a metaphor makes us attend to some likeness, often a novel or surprising likeness between two or more things."<sup>129</sup> In order to ascertain these likenesses the hearer must bring his beliefs to bear on the incongruent elements in the literally false sentence.<sup>130</sup> In this way his beliefs, like Searle's 'background beliefs', play a similar role as does Black's "system of commonplaces" in that they become the intermediaries for metaphoric comprehension.

Davidson claims that the metaphorical meaning the metaphor makes us have an "insight" of is non-propositional. As Davidson states "... a metaphor calls to our

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<sup>125</sup> D. Davidson, op.cit, p.263.

<sup>126</sup> S. Levin, 1998, p.116

<sup>127</sup> D. Davidson, op.cit, p. 262

<sup>128</sup> *ibid*, p.157

<sup>129</sup> *ibid*, p.247.

<sup>130</sup> *ibid*, p.250-252.

attention<sup>131</sup> and much of what we are caused to notice is not propositional in character."<sup>132</sup> The metaphor creates this insight by not conveying a coded message. On this point Davidson notes "... a metaphor does its work [by not ] conveying a coded message ..."<sup>133</sup> Thus the non codified content of the metaphor has the effect that the "insights" metaphors generate are not propositional. Where for Searle the understanding of metaphors involved the hearer making inferences about the intended meaning of the speaker; for Davidson the meaning of the metaphor is an interpretative activity on the part of the hearer involving un-coded aspects of the beliefs of the hearer. These claims of Davidson create the same problems of all the above mediatory mechanistic models if we maintain that the medium/basis, or essence of thought is language and/or anything else.

Now even if the insight is a non- propositional thought if the process that got to that insight is linguistic and/or *anything* else then we end with the paradoxes we saw above. As we saw in chapter two Davidson does maintain that there can be no thought without a system of beliefs. It is in regard to these systems of beliefs that the paradoxes and regress are generated. There are at least three alternatives in regard to these system of beliefs.' Firstly, if these beliefs - coded and/or un-coded - are encoded in language; then as we shall see we end in paradox. Secondly, if the un-coded aspects of belief which outline the 'likeness' metaphor 'calls' to our attention are not semantic, or in language then we end; in regress. Now the first paradoxes indicate that that language - coded or un-coded - cannot be the medium/basis, or essence of metaphorical thought. The second consequence of regress indicates that there cannot be anything that can be the medium/basis, or essence of thought.

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<sup>131</sup> Note hear the similarity with what Searle called "calls to mind" METAPHORS TO EXPLAIN METAPHORS

<sup>132</sup> *ibid*, p.263.

<sup>133</sup> *ibid*, p.262.

Firstly, assuming beliefs are encoded in language then we have a paradox from the hearers' points of view; exactly like the paradox for Searle's hearers' points of view. If all thought is linguistic then this "system of belief" - coded and/or uncoded - must be in language. Thus the hearer upon hearing the metaphor must search his memories to find the beliefs for the likeness. But he can only search his memory of belief by using language - because by default language is the only medium/basis, or essence of thought. Thus the paradox is, the hearer of the metaphor must already know what relating features he needs to understand the metaphor before he has found them, because he can only use language to search for the linguistic terms he is looking for. But the language he uses to search for the linguistic terms he is searching for implies that he already knows the terms he is looking for. In other words, if the medium/basis, or essence of metaphorical thought is language we have the paradox that the hearer's thought, being solely linguistic, can only discover the linguistic term which it finds, but it must already know that which it finds before it finds it, because its only content is itself i.e. language. If thought is solely linguistic then the hearer's thought [which can only be in language by default] can only discover a likeness in the speaker's sentence which he must already know before he finds it because its only content is itself; i.e. language.

Secondly, if the un-coded aspects of our beliefs are not semantic or in language we end up with an infinite regress. Levin claims that the un-coded 'likeness' in Davidson's outline are in fact not semantic. Levin claims that, according to Davidson,

"... in construing a metaphor we must bring to bear our knowledge of the world (encyclopaedia knowledge); that is the implicated likeness being novel the knowledge here in question will not be codified knowledge, the kind implicitly incorporated in words as used with their normal extensions

and sentences with their normal predications. Instead, metaphors require us to think of the world objects in unprecedented, hence non-semantically codified relations."<sup>134</sup>

This interpretation of Davidson has the consequence that we end up with the result that there can be no basis to thought. Under this interpretation then it is obvious that due to the un-coded non-semantic beliefs the basis of metaphorical thought is not language. But there is a problem. Namely if the un-coded non-semantic beliefs are prior to the semantic interpretation of the metaphor, then what is prior to the un-codified beliefs? There must be something prior to these un-codified beliefs for the mind must search for them. But in order to search for them there must be something other than them doing the searching. Here we get either a paradox or regress. If the un-codified beliefs are sort out by other un-codified beliefs we get the same paradox as we get above in regard to semantic beliefs. The hearer can only discover an un-coded "likeness" which he finds; but he must already know that which he finds before he finds it, because its (thought) only content is itself; i.e. un-coded beliefs.

Davidson notes that the metaphors "insight" is not propositional; this generates a paradox and regress from the point of view of the speaker. Firstly if the metaphor is not propositional then the creator of the metaphor must have used non-linguistic aspects to arrive at his metaphoric creation. This creation can only be a semantic approximation to his non-propositional metaphorical "thought" creation. If metaphorical thought is in language then we have the paradox that the creator of the metaphor must already know what semantic content he is trying to express before he has created the metaphor. If the medium/basis, or essence of metaphorical thought is only language we have the paradox that thought being solely linguistic (then thought i.e. language) can only discover an idea which it creates. Since it

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<sup>134</sup> S.Levin, op.cit, p.116.

(thought) must already know that which it creates before it creates it; because its only content is itself i.e. language. Secondly if Davidson will have us believe that the metaphorical thought/utterance of the creator is not propositional then we have a regress. Obviously the creator of the metaphor must then be using language i.e. semantic content to approximate his non-propositional metaphorical thought. Thus there must be something prior to language which generates the non-propositional metaphorical thought, But what is prior to this ?

An interesting alternative to these paradoxes of Davidson's theory comes as a result of his theory of meaning. In terms of his theory of meaning the medium/basis, or essence of metaphoric thought can not be language. This is because of two reasons. Firstly, Davidson's account of truth has the result that there must be a Mentalese. Secondly, in terms of this Mentalese we end up with a regress as we shall see.

Davidson claims that "... literal meaning and literal truth conditions can be assigned to words and sentences apart from particular contexts of use."<sup>135</sup> For Davidson these truth conditions are Tarski-like truth conditions. An interpreter of a sentence according to Davidson applies Tarski-like truth conditions to ascertain the meaning of the sentence.<sup>136</sup> As we saw above it is Tarski-like truth conditions which tell the hearer that a sentence is false and thus a metaphor. Now it is the setting up of these truth conditions that leads Davidson's account of the understanding of metaphor into regress. Vermazan captures this regress of Davidson when he states

"Davidson would have it that speakers understand English in virtue of knowing the truth conditions of English sentences. Thus Dudley understands 'Snow is white' in virtue of knowing via his finite theory of

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<sup>135</sup> D. Davidson, 1984, p.247.

<sup>136</sup> *ibid*, pp.131-139

that the sentence is true iff snow is white. In order to accomplish the latter epistemic achievement, Dudley must have (somehow) represented to himself that 'Snow is white' is true iff snow is white. But this requires an internal representation, say a 'language of thought' capable of expressing the proposition that snow is white; and so the problem of meaning has only been put off. To suggest a truth - theoretic semantics now be provided for the Mentalese language launches an obviously vicious regress cognate with what D.C. Dennett has called 'Hume's Problem' of self-understanding representations."<sup>137</sup>

In other words, Davidson's interpreter ascertains that the metaphor is a literally false sentence; this requires him, through self-reflection, to set up an internal representation of the Tarski-like truth conditions for the sentence. But in order to set up these truth conditions he must represent them in language, as he can only think in language, thus he must know the truth conditions of the sentence before the sentence is uttered; if not paradox at least circularity. In other words the hearer of the sentence "Snow is white" knows it to be true by virtue of knowing his Tarski like truth conditions which make the sentence true "iff snow is white". Now to accomplish this epistemic feat the hearer has represented to himself that "Snow is white" is true iff snow is white. But to do this requires a self reflective internal representation in language expressing the proposition that 'snow is white'; but this just is circular if thought can only be in language. Similarly if language is not the medium/basis, or essence of metaphoric thought we end in a regress. To ascertain the truth of the literally false sentence the hearer must again set up an internal representation, in his mind, of the truth conditions of the sentence but this must require a language. Then we might ask what process prior to the language sets up the language of truth conditions?

Though there are differences in the semantic accounts of Black and Beardsley and the pragmatic accounts of Searle and Davidson what connects them is their belief

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<sup>137</sup> B. Vermazen, 1989, p. 248.

that there is a thing such as a "literal meaning" to a metaphorical sentence. Regardless of the problems surrounding the notion of "literal meaning" this idea must be assumed by these theorists or else the discussion of metaphor cannot begin. As Ortony notes "... those, like Searle, who advocate more extreme positions are willing to agree that the notion of literal meaning is not without its problems, still that notion has to be presupposed in order for their accounts to get off the ground."<sup>138</sup> The distinction between the literal and metaphorical must be made if the discussion of metaphor is not to collapse into incoherence. We need the literal meaning of a sentence to give meaning to the notion of a metaphorical meaning. Thus as Kittay notes "if we deny the literal in language, we deny the possibility of metaphor as well."<sup>139</sup> In presenting a theory of metaphor in contradistinction to those offered via a "theory of language" Lakoff in fact denies that in most cases there is any literal meaning to a metaphorical sentence. In other words he denies the literal metaphorical distinction. Rumelhart likewise denies that there is any literal metaphorical distinction - at least in their psychological comprehension.<sup>140</sup> But Lakoff goes one step further in also denying that metaphor comprehension has anything to do with language at all. As he states "the generalizations governing poetic metaphorical expression are not in language, but in thought."<sup>141</sup> Lakoff attempts to undermine certain assumptions of some analytic philosophers who are preoccupied with literal meanings. According to Lakoff this preoccupation hinders us in understanding thought because it cannot explain or account for creativity in regard to new ideas concepts or images. Lakoff claims that current arguments in philosophy, in regard to the notion of metaphor, challenge the whole analytic philosophical tradition stemming from Frege. These arguments in fact undermine the whole approach to meaning which in the Fregean tradition is based upon the literal sense of a word hooking onto things in the world which it designates.<sup>142</sup> Now

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<sup>138</sup> A. Ortony, 1998, p. 8..

<sup>139</sup> E. Kittay, 1989, p.20

<sup>140</sup> D. Rumelhart, 1998, pp.83-112.

<sup>141</sup> G. Lakoff, 1998, p.203

<sup>142</sup> The Fregean tradition of analytic philosophy is based upon the literal sense of a word hooking onto things in the world which they designate. According to G. Lakoff there are at least five assumptions that the analytical philosophical tradition makes. As Lakoff notes:

on one level this thesis agrees with Lakoff that metaphoric thought is not linguistic, but disagrees with Lakoff when he claims that images can play a role in metaphor comprehension.

Lakoff claims that the old literal-metaphorical distinction was based upon the wrong assumptions. Nevertheless there are many non-metaphorical concepts.<sup>143</sup> These non-metaphorical concepts relate to the concrete physical world whereas when we talk about emotions and abstractions we must talk about a metaphorical understanding.<sup>144</sup> Metaphor comprehension, according to Lakoff, is a cross-domain conceptual mapping. Metaphor involves understanding one domain of experience in terms of another domain of experience. A mapping involves finding ontological correspondences between objects in a source domain and objects in a target domain.<sup>145</sup> Thus for the metaphor "love is a journey" "love" is the target domain and "journey" the source domain.<sup>146</sup> According to Lakoff the mapping involves "a fixed pattern of ontological correspondences across domains that may, or may not, be applied to a source domain knowledge structure or a source domain lexical item."<sup>147</sup> Now according to Lakoff the comprehension of the metaphor "love is a journey" is not via words but via the conventional ways we conceptualise a love relationship.<sup>148</sup> The comprehension of the metaphor is an inferential comprehension resulting from the incongruent source domain throwing up fixed correspondences due to activation from the incongruent target domain. Where the "... mappings ... project source domain inference patterns onto target domain

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"All everyday conventional language is literal, and none is metaphorical

All subject matter can be comprehended literally, with out metaphor

Only literal language can be contingently true or false

All definitions given in the lexicon of a language are literal, not metaphorical

The concepts used in the grammar of a language are literal; none is metaphorical" (G. Lakoff, 1998. p.257)

<sup>143</sup> *ibid*, p.205

<sup>144</sup> *ibid*, p.205

<sup>145</sup> *ibid*, p.245

<sup>146</sup> *ibid*, pp. 206-207.

<sup>147</sup> *ibid*, p.210.

<sup>148</sup> *ibid*, p.208.

inference patterns."<sup>149</sup> Metaphoric mapping across conceptual domains are of two types: conceptual mappings and image mappings.<sup>150</sup> Though words are not part of the source domains meaning Lakoff claims that images give to the source domain a cognitive nature. As he states "metaphorical mappings preserve the cognitive topology (that is, the image-schema structure) of the source domain, in a way consistent with the inherent structure of the target domain."<sup>151</sup> This thesis has no argument with Lakoff in regard to the non-linguistic nature of metaphor comprehension. Where I gainsay Lakoff is in his claim that images play a role in the comprehension process. For as we shall see below the notion that images can be a medium/basis, or essence of thought leads us into paradox and regress.

We have seen that verbal-opposition theory can explain metaphor comprehension as an induced insight catalysed by either calling up connotations, as in the case of Black, or actually actualising them in the case of Beardsley. A theory which, like Lakoff, claims that language is not involved in metaphor comprehension is that of imagism. As we saw in chapter two imagist arguments have been put forward by Locke, Hume, and Russell. Now imagist mechanistic claims in regard to the medium/basis, or essence of thought incur similar problems as does verbal associative theory. These problems are paradox and regress

## **IMAGES: HESTER, RICOEUR**

Hester outlines an account of the understanding of metaphors which incorporates mediatory images and an interactionist mechanics. Hester's like Lakoff and Johnson focuses on the gestalt switch of insight induced by a good metaphor Hester argues that "... metaphorical seeing is a seeing as between the metaphorical subject and

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<sup>149</sup> *ibid*, 208

<sup>150</sup> *ibid*, p.245.

<sup>151</sup> *ibid*, p.215.

the metaphorical predicate, either one or both of which must be image-exciting"<sup>152</sup> Metaphorical seeing is as Johnson notes a "... seeing-as the images are those called up by the meaning of the words in the metaphor. In some metaphors both terms are "image-laden" but in others one term will be image-exciting and it will be used to understand the more abstract term ..."<sup>153</sup> For Hester the comprehension of the metaphor comes as gestalt switch or interaction between the subject and predicate of the sentence. In the sentence "Man is a worm" the comprehender of the metaphor uses images of "Man" and "worm" to form a gestalt around the similarities which the two images conjure up in the imagination. As Johnson states "understanding 'Man is a worm' for Hester requires an imaginative grasp of the common gestalt between men and worms, namely, the senses in which men are like worms."<sup>154</sup> In this account we see that images play the same role in Hester's theory as does the "system of commonplaces" does in Black's or the "potential range of connotation" or the accidental properties of a word does in Beardsley's. As with both of these verbal associative theories Hester's imagistic theory ends in paradox or a regress.

There are two classic objections to imagistic theory. Firstly many of our words and concepts stand for things that have an image. As Carruthers points out "... it seems plain that no image, or sequence of images, can, of itself, carry the content of even a simple thought such as [that all grass is green let alone of a complex proposition such as [ that life may be discovered on Mars in the next ten or twelve years]."<sup>155</sup> Secondly Wittgenstein argued that if the meaning attached to an uttered thought was an image then it would be possible to peel away the utterance to leave just the image As Carruthers notes, "... say aloud, and mean 'It is windy today', just as you would in normal conversation. Then do what you did again, only just with the meaning remaining with out effecting any utterance ..."<sup>156</sup> Now Wittgenstein notes

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<sup>152</sup> M. Hester, 1966, p.207

<sup>153</sup> M. Johnson, op.cit, p.30

<sup>154</sup> *ibid*, p.30

<sup>155</sup> P. Carruthers, op.cit, p.32.

<sup>156</sup> *ibid*, p.32.

that this peeling away is not possible. Consequently thought cannot be imagistic.<sup>157</sup> Nevertheless some metaphors are imagistic such as "death is a grim reaper" Namely we visualise meaning by the picture of a hooded character carrying a bloody scythe. Similarly in poetry images are used to convey the poets intention. As Johnson notes "... some poetic metaphors involved images ..."<sup>158</sup> Thus for those metaphors which do involve images Hester's, and all imagistic theories, collapse into regress and paradox. The paradox being that the creator of the metaphor must know which image i.e. grim reaper he is going to use in his metaphor to convey his metaphorical meaning before he chooses that particular image. The image does not appear before the mind before the creator has decided to use it; it appears before the mind after the thought as an appropriate image to convey the thought. If metaphorical thought is solely imagistic then we end up with the paradox that the creator has before his mind the image before he knows he needs/creates that images to convey his meaning. If metaphorical thought is not imagistic then there must be something prior to the image which throws up the image as an appropriate image to express itself; but what is prior to this? An interesting argument could be that language is prior to the image but then we end up with the same problems we saw with verbal associative theory.

Another imagistic account of understanding metaphor, with the same problems as Hester's, which uses ideas from Kant, is that of Ricoeur. This account is important since Johnson claims that "this strategy hold promise especially for those who would claim that metaphor is cognitively irreducible."<sup>159</sup> Ricoeur claims that the understanding of metaphor comprehension is a boundary problem between a psychological theory of the imagination and feeling and a semantic theory.<sup>160</sup> By a semantic theory Ricoeur means "an inquiry into the capacity of metaphor to provide untranslatable information."<sup>161</sup> According to Ricoeur the models of Black and Beardsley cannot explain metaphor comprehension without including the

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<sup>157</sup> L. Wittgenstein, 1953, section 332.

<sup>158</sup> M. Johnson, op.cit, p.30.

<sup>159</sup> M. Johnson, op.cit, p.41.

<sup>160</sup> P. Ricoeur, 1981, p.228

imagination and feeling.<sup>162</sup> Ricoeur incorporates images imagination and feelings into his theory of metaphorical comprehension. Ricoeur notes that he attempts "... to derive the alleged significance of metaphorical phrases from their capacity to display streams of images and to elicit feelings. My thesis is that it is not only for theories that deny metaphor any informative value and any truth claim that images and feelings have a constitutive function."<sup>163</sup> Ricoeur uses Kant's notion of imagination as a schematising synthetic operation to provide the psychological theory to support his semantic account of metaphor comprehension<sup>164</sup>. For Ricoeur metaphorical meaning is not "... merely a semantic clash but is instead the generation of new predicative meaning which emerges from the collapse of literal meaning."<sup>165</sup> Ricoeur notes that where interaction theory delineated but did not solve the transition from literal incongruence to metaphorical congruence he seeks to solve this problem of transition.<sup>166</sup> here are two steps in Ricoeur's account of metaphor comprehension. Firstly there is his Kantian account of imagination as a productive mode which schematises or provides for a synthetic operation of understanding.<sup>167</sup> In understanding metaphor via an imaginative leap, two unassociated systems of meaning (subject and predicate) come together into a unity of synthesis to reveal new meaning while retaining surface incompatibilities.<sup>168</sup> Ricoeur calls this synthetic process, in which incongruent elements of the imagination interact (i.e. interaction theory) "predicative assimilation"<sup>169</sup> Secondly there is a pictorial dimension to metaphor. Through "predicative assimilation" the images mediate or fill out the meaning of the metaphor.<sup>170</sup> Ricoeur notes that images are not necessarily mental pictures but can be ways of presenting relations in a depicting mode.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> *ibid*, p.228

<sup>162</sup> *ibid*, p.229.

<sup>163</sup> *ibid*, p.229.

<sup>164</sup> *ibid*, p.233

<sup>165</sup> *ibid*, p.232

<sup>166</sup> *ibid*, p.232.

<sup>167</sup> *ibid*, pp.233-235

<sup>168</sup> *ibid*, pp.232-235.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid*, p.233.

<sup>170</sup> *ibid*, pp. 235-237.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid*, p.234-236.

Ricoeur grafts a Kantian notion of the imagination onto a semantic theory to account for understanding metaphor, but for all its sophistication his theory suffers from the same problems as the preceding mechanistic modes. Ricoeur accused Beardsley of not explaining where the new connotations come from however he just shifts the problem to the Kantian imagination. Also like the mediatory elements of Black's "systems of commonplaces" and Beardsley's "potential range of connotation" or the "accidental properties of a word" Ricoeur's mediating images do not solve the problem of the transition from literal incongruence to metaphorical comprehension. As we saw above if thought is imagistic or linguistic the imagination in order to use the images must know what images to use before it finds the appropriate one to express its meaning. If the image mediates or fills out the meaning of the metaphor the creator must know that this image is the best one to use. If thought was imagistic then we have the paradox that it must know the image before it knows what images to use to express itself. Similarly if the image is only thrown up via something prior to it, we end in a regress. The imagination may form a synthetic unity of the incongruent elements in a metaphor via "predicative assimilation" but this "predicative assimilation" cannot be couched in images or language if we are to avoid regresses and paradox.

## CONCLUSION

The above has shown that there is a large debate in regard to how we understand metaphors. We have seen that some argue that we understand metaphors semantically. Others hand maintain that we understand metaphors pragmatically. The understanding of metaphors for some theorists is a process which involves images. For others it is a process involving language. For others again it is neither of these two but instead involves *something* non-semantic. My discussion has

shown that regardless of what the medium/basis, or essence of thought is the debates centre around the question as to whether comparison, or similarity or interaction best explain metaphor comprehension. We saw that the debate fits into two broad sets of theories verbal associative theorists and imagistic theorists. In discussing the verbal associative set it is evident that these different theories suggest different intermediaries, or mediators of the metaphorical comprehension. The verbal associative set of theorists suggest that this mediation is via the "system of commonplaces" or "implicative complexes" or "potential range of connotations" or "background beliefs", or "beliefs" or un-coded non-semantic features. The imagist set claim the mediation is via images. The mediatory elements of the verbal associative theorists it was shown can be either encoded in language or not in language. In regard to the intermediaries being encoded in language we saw Black, Beardseely, and Searle suggest that mediation is via respectively the "system of commonplaces", or "implicative complexes" or "potential range of connotations", or "background beliefs", from the point of view that these intermediaries are encoded in language. Davidson, on the other hand claims that the intermediary of the process is not encoded in language. It was shown that if the mediator of the process is non-linguistic, or a "system of commonplaces", or "implicative complexes" or "potential range of connotations", or "background beliefs" then we end up with paradox and regress. All these paradoxes and regress, both for a language or non-linguistic basis to the mediating features, indicate that language and/or images, and/or *anything* else can not be the medium/basis, or essence of metaphorical thinking.

Black claimed that any search for an infallible criterion of "metaphorhood" is doomed to failure since according to Black any criterion that is used will break down under certain circumstances.<sup>172</sup> This was seen to be true when I examined Searle and Davidson's definitions of metaphor. The situation when one looks at the literature, philosophical or psychological, on metaphor is as Ruthven noted, for the topic of theories on "myth", the theorists are

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<sup>172</sup> M. Black, 1998, pp. 33-34.

"resolutely monistic in their approach (and ever prone to pars pro toto fallacy, the hypostatizing of a method into an absolute, and other text book errors of logic) they avert their gaze from those exceptions and anomalies which will command the attention of the next investigator, or the one after that. Yet their initial insights are strokes of genius."<sup>173</sup>

What we can draw, from Blacks and Ruthven's claims, in regard to metaphor characterisation, is as St Augustine noted in regard to time, "I know very well what it is provided that nobody asks me; but if I am asked and try to explain, I am baffled."<sup>174</sup>

In my evaluation of each of the major representative views outlined above, I have if we assume that language and/or images and or *anything* else are the medium/basis, or essence of thought they all have the same problems dilemmas, circularities, infinite regresses, paradoxes and contradictions crop up as consequences of arguments that try to explain and analyze the mental act of thought in terms of types of things; i.e. images, or language. This is because "images" and "language" or *anything* else require mental activity in order to be dealt with. The theorists tend to talk metaphorically about metaphor in terms of "frame", "focus", "call to mind", "flash of insight", etc. They use mechanistic models but mechanism is nothing but a metaphor as well. Thus there is a circularity from the very start embedded in their models. For how can one explain metaphor in terms of metaphor with out begging the question As Mac Cormac notes "how can one presume to have explained anything when the very account given to provide understanding of metaphor as a cognitive process assumes that very same

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<sup>173</sup> K. K. Ruthven, 1976, p.2.

<sup>174</sup> *ibid*, p.1

cognitive process<sup>175</sup> What these problems indicate is that the creative contributions of the mind will always be hidden from any view that regards language and/or images and/or *anything* else to be the medium/basis, or essence of thought. So long as metaphorical mechanistic models are put forward to explain metaphor we must always get paradox, regress and circularity when we try to understand the nature of thought itself. A philosophy of language is inappropriate for an understanding of thought and the mind itself. All that a philosophy of language does is demonstrate its own uselessness in accounting for these phenomena. This uselessness is highlighted by the absurdities via *reductio ad absurdum* the 'philosophy of language' generates in its explanation of metaphorical thought.

As we saw above these paradoxes and regresses manifest differently depending upon whether we assume "man" to be either: 1) the creator of metaphorical meaning, in which he is an active producer; he is in control of his thinking or 2) "man" is a passive responder to stimuli, in which case he does not produce meaning the mental process just throws these meanings up as an automatic response to stimuli. In this alternative "man" has no control over what he thinks; in fact he does not think, thinking can only be like some computer reacting to inputs.<sup>176</sup> In my opinion the models of understanding metaphorical outlined in this

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<sup>175</sup> E. R. Mac Cormac, 1985, p.3

<sup>176</sup> Without offering sustained arguments I believe that most if not all of the literature on thinking and thought basically leads to the result that "man" is not a creator but instead a passive responder to stimuli.. Though I feel many theorists will deny this nevertheless I postulate that in essence this is what their theories lead to . I feel that philosophers are caught up in what Hegel called the "zeigist" of the contemporary scientific age. A sociology of knowledge I feel will show how historically determined all this theorising is. Historicism is the label under which 20<sup>th</sup> century thought can be understood. To my mind theorists of language in fact turn "man" into a computer like input machine that just processes information without any active control over this processing. This is because I "feel" some philosophers since Descartes are too busy with the rational and to busy trying to emulate science with mechanistic models. The problem with rationalism is that it shuns the irrational, emotional and feeling . Vitalism is ignored for the sake of being rational and scientific. What all this rationalism does is dehumanises humans and with models of metaphoric comprehension and language processing turns man into a passive machine. Consequently rationalism will al ways end up in absurdities because its mechanistic models are so far out of sink with what "humanness" really is. Until theorists start shunning rational and mechanistic models they will never understand our "humanness" As a corollary I say let philosophers and scientist bark up the wrong tree since by doing so we "humans" are safe from their grip since "man" being into power this knowledge would be turned against "humans" to control and manipulate and exploit

chapter to my mind in fact lead to the consequence that metaphor is not created by the user but is simply thrown up by a controlling mechanism in response to some stimuli affecting the user. Now though all the theorists mentioned here would vehemently deny it their theories imply behaviorism A behaviorism in the sense that metaphor is the creation of the mechanism not the user . As Paivio and Walsh note in regard to Skinners account "the response is not created by the speaker, it is simply controlled by stimuli through the mechanism of generalization."<sup>177</sup>

If we assume that "man" is the active creator of meaning then we end up with an infinite regress; if we claim the medium/basis, or essence of metaphoric thought is language or imagistic and that the metaphoric comprehension process is mechanistic. The regress results, as we saw, from the very simple fact that if there are intermediaries that mediate meaning then there must be a process that lies beneath the intermediary that processes it. In other words, all theories that assume an active creator of metaphor comprehension in fact just shift the problem from the intermediary to the process that lies beneath the intermediary. As O' Hear notes, in regard to mechanistic models of the mind "the homunculus crops up when ever one mental act (such as seeing) is analyzed in terms of a type of thing (such as an image in the brain) which itself requires mental activity in order to be dealt with."<sup>178</sup> Now if we still maintain that this process is either a language or image we end up in paradox. This paradox being that thought i.e. language or images etc could only discover an idea which it creates. However it must already know that which it creates before it creates it; because its only content is itself i.e. language or images. The cause of these absurdities result from analyzing "thinking" in terms of some type of thing; i.e. language or images or *anything* else because in order to be dealt with this type of 'thing' itself requires mental activity.

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<sup>177</sup> A. Paivio and M. Walsh, 1998, p.311.

<sup>178</sup> A. O'Hear, 1985, p.225

Thus we have a three absurd consequences 1) either “thought” has an essence i.e. language, or images etc and thus the understanding of metaphor becomes impossible because such an essence means that all models of metaphor understanding then collapse into absurdity or meaninglessness, or 2) because of the mediational mechanism man is a passive agent in the generation of metaphor understanding and as such the whole notion of “thinking” becomes redundant and with it the notion of metaphor understanding 3) man is an active agent in the generation of metaphor understanding as such we end in an infinite regress. These absurd consequences mean that it becomes impossible to understand metaphor: its comprehension, and generation.

This case study in regard to metaphoric “thought” is thus another example, in the totality of inductive demonstrations, which gives weight to the Prasāngika Mādhyamika Buddhist thesis that all views are absurd or meaningless. This case study is thus one element in the totality of demonstrations indirectly demonstrating that all is meaningless- even this meaninglessness. With the meaninglessness or absurdity of all our concepts, all our categories, all our ideas, all theses, all antitheses all philosophies all epistemologies, all ethics, all ontologies, all metaphysics there is no way *a priori* that anything can be proved, or disproved. With the collapsing into meaninglessness of all views due to the nature of language and Aristotelian logic being an epistemic condition of truth all views thus become equally *a priori* possible and impossible with no way *a priori* to determine between the two. “Metaphoric Thought” may have an essence, but any attempt to *a priori* prove it collapses into absurdity; likewise the thesis that “metaphoric thought” has no essence *a priori* collapses into absurdity; an essence of “metaphoric thought” can only be based upon faith. The comprehension and generation of metaphor will always remain a mystery as any attempt to explain them collapses into absurdity or meaninglessness so long as we use language and Aristotelian logic as an epistemic condition of truth.

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