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"Truth-values and metaphors"

Metaphors have always been of interest to philosophers for this reason—apparently they mean more than they say. Within the British tradition of philosophy, metaphors were not regarded as problematic (despite their interest) until recently. They were dismissed as deviant, misleading embellishments tastelessly imposed on the canons of clear discourse. In the latter half of the twentieth century, however, a freshly awakened concern with metaphor stems perhaps from two realizations: that metaphors are integral to our use of language, in common discourse and scientific theory as much as in poetry (Hawkes 1972), and that they seem to contravene the intimate connection then made between the meaningfulness of words and sentences and their use in the making of truthful assertions. The first of these points is usually accepted but the second occasions ongoing debate.

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1 See Hobbes 1962, I, ch. 4 and Locke 1961, III, chs. 9, 10.
In this chapter, I suggest that traditional theories of the nature of metaphor are mistaken in claiming that metaphors possess a non-literal, metaphoric meaning in virtue of which they make significantly true (or false) statements. I claim that metaphors are appreciated as non-assertoric; that is, as neither true nor false. I hope to make clear that such a view closely accords with the way metaphors are understood and evaluated. Finally, I show that two objections to traditional views of metaphor are convincingly met by the new theory.

The attempt to define metaphor usually takes the form of a description of the mechanisms by which metaphor works. The main theories now popular belong to three types. The first, which dates back to Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, is known as the Comparison Theory. In its various forms the Comparison Theory analyzes the metaphor "a is b" as "a is like b in certain unspecified respects" or "a and b are differently like some unspecified c in certain unspecified respects", or "a is to an unspecified c as b is to an unspecified d". The Comparison Theory holds that metaphor is a form of indirect or implicit comparison. By contrast, the Connotation Theory advocated by Beardsley (1962b) identifies a logical conflict between the core meanings of the words used in a metaphor, so that one

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2 Proponents of the Comparison Theory include Henle (1958) and Miller (1979).
or more words must be understood according to their marginal meanings.

The Interaction Theory, maintained by Max Black (1955), is regarded by some as related to the Connotation Theory. The Interaction Theory holds that the metaphoric sentence has at least two subjects, one of which has its normal reference and colors the conception of the other subjects, so that the meaning of the whole sentence results from the interaction between the meanings of the various subject words.

These and other theories have been attacked and defended at length. I do not review these arguments. Instead, I lump these theories together, calling them the Traditional accounts, and consider their shared assumptions, which are as follows:

1. Read literally (that is, giving the constituent words their usual or core meanings) most metaphors are simply false, trivially true, inappropriate, pointless, or absurd (Mooij 1976:27-8).

2. The metaphor should not be read literally. It has a metaphoric meaning (or cognitive content) that transcends its literal meaning. The metaphoric meaning is as much a part of the meaning of the metaphor as is the literal meaning of the words used.

3. The metaphoric meaning of the metaphor is asserted by the metaphor's maker and the metaphor is significantly true (or false) as a statement of this meaning.
4. The metaphorical meaning of the metaphor is not entirely independent of the literal meaning of the words used. In some way, either extensionally or intensionally, the literal meaning generates the metaphorical content. Nelson Goodman's charming definition of metaphor illustrates this point: "a metaphor is an affair between a predicate with a past and an object that yields whilst protesting" (1968:69).

This last assumption deserves amplification. Most writers recognize that the literal meaning of the words used remains active within the metaphor, generating a tension that leads to the audience's recognition that they are dealing with a metaphor. Metaphors are not puns, relying on ambiguities of meaning. Nor are they new coinings of meanings for old words that take no account of the accepted meanings of those words. And metaphors are not ordinary assertions in which, it just so happens, the utterer has misused some of the words. Metaphor is a use of language, not a misuse or abuse of it. The power of the metaphor "My love is a rose" relies on the fact that "rose" retains its usual meaning in this metaphorical use. But clearly, if "rose" has its usual meaning in the metaphor, it does not have its primary use. We could not teach a child the meaning of the word "rose" if we introduced it to the word only in contexts where it has a live metaphorical use. So, while the metaphorical use takes account of the literal meaning of the word, in the metaphorical context the meaning is extended, apparently, by its new use. It is the specification of what is
involved in this extension that provides the point of departure for the various Traditional accounts. In their terms, they disagree on the way the metaphoric meaning or content of the metaphor is secured by and derived from the literal meanings of the words used—whether it is by comparison, connotation, interaction, or some combination of these processes.

Clearly, how we should analyze the truth-value of metaphors is vital. Ted Cohen (1979:4) identifies the issue this way: "The central, fundamental question concerns meaning. Does a metaphorical statement possess, in addition to its literal meaning (with respect to which the statement will be, typically, absurd, or false, or pointless), another (metaphorical) meaning wherein resides its capacity to be true as well as to provide the twist of insight we derive from some good metaphors?" And Goodman (1979:175) observes: "The oddity is that metaphorical truth is compatible with literal falsity". In different ways, each of the Traditional accounts aims to show how the metaphor possesses a metaphoric content that overrides its literal content. Despite being false or trivially true at the literal level, the metaphor is said to state a significant truth in virtue of its metaphoric meaning. Apparently, if metaphors provide us with new understandings, this is because they state metaphoric truths that trump the truth-value that holds at the literal level of the metaphor.
This view has been attacked by Donald Davidson (1979). He maintains that the work of the metaphor is carried on by the literal meaning of the words used and not by some special meaning that the metaphor bears. Metaphors literally direct our attention to an experience of a similarity between the subjects of the metaphor. Metaphors do not specify the nature of this similarity via a metaphoric content. Davidson develops his theme through a consideration of simile. He notes that a simile states that \( a \) is like \( b \) without specifying the respects in which they are similar. (If the respects are specified, we have direct comparison rather than simile.) Any paraphrase of the simile specifying relevant similarities between \( a \) and \( b \) goes beyond what is stated in the simile; namely, that there is an unspecified likeness between \( a \) and \( b \). We would not regard the paraphrase as an attempt to "unpack" a special meaning belonging to the words used; simile is achieved by the usual meanings of the words used. Similes do not require intermediate meanings to make their points. In the same way, he suggests, the metaphor wears its meaning on its face. It runs on the familiar linguistic tracks that the plainest sentences do. There is no novel "metaphoric content" to be captured by a paraphrase. Metaphors nudge us into noticing similarities. There is nothing finite in scope nor propositional in nature conveyed by metaphor. Appreciating a metaphor, he says, is like noticing what is in a picture. A picture is not worth a thousand words or any other number;
words are simply the wrong currency here. Ted Cohen (1979) draws a different (more appropriate, I think) analogy in making a similar point: the paraphrase of a metaphor loses the metaphor in the way that the explication of a joke loses the joke. The explication of a joke is no more a part of the joke than is a paraphrase of a metaphor a reformulation of a meaning to be located in the metaphor.

Davidson's position is not, as Black (1979a) mistakenly supposes, a new version of the Comparison Theory. In claiming that metaphors, like similes, draw our attention to likenesses, Davidson is not attempting to reduce metaphor to simile. In fact, rather than effecting a reduction of metaphor to the level of simile, he is suggesting an upgrading of simile to the level of metaphor. This is a line pursued also by Searle (1979), Black (1979b), and Ortony (1979), all of whom recognize that the problems posed by metaphors are also posed by similes, so that an account of the one in terms of the other contributes nothing to the solution of the difficulties raised by either. The reduction could only convince if similes were literal comparisons, which they are not. The obvious difference between metaphor and simile consists in this: whereas most metaphors are literally false, all similes are trivially true.\(^3\) In either case, the

\(^3\) Ortony (1979) claims that some similes, for example "An encyclopedia is like a gold mine", are literally false. I deny this. An
interpretation of the metaphor or simile goes beyond the false or trivially true literal meaning of the words used, and there is the same difficulty in regarding either as possessing a cognitive content that is reformulated in the paraphrase.

Davidson's argument might be put this way: the view that metaphors possess a metaphoric content that could be captured by paraphrases rather than by extensionally equivalent literal reformulations of the metaphor fails to account for the fact that a person who understands a paraphrase of a metaphor cannot thereby be said to appreciate the metaphor. The "problem" of paraphrase consists in this: if a (more or less) competent language-user fails to understand a proposition, usually it is possible to make its meaning clear by saying the same thing in other words, and hence it is possible to compile dictionaries and thesauri. Different propositions can be extensionally equivalent. Now, of course, in the case of a live metaphor, one might make the metaphor understandable by replacing it with other propositions that have the same literal extension; for example, one might substitute "Hands do not weep" for "From hands no tears flow". In these cases the metaphor survives, tattered but intact. However, a failure to understand a metaphor encyclopedia is like a gold mine at least in that both are referred to in the simile "An encyclopedia is like a gold mine".
usually involves a failure to appreciate the point of the metaphor rather than a failure to understand the literal meaning of the words used. (In the terms of the Traditional accounts, a failure to understand a metaphor is commonly a failure to understand its metaphoric content.) In such a case, one would offer a paraphrase of the metaphor. The paraphrase, even if it includes metaphors, loses the original metaphor. If the paraphrase is understood where the original metaphor was not, we are inclined to feel that the metaphor has not been appreciated. The paraphrase describes the experiences to which the metaphor was (perhaps) intended to lead one, but the appreciation of the metaphor depends on one's having those experiences rather than on one's knowing that one was intended to have them.

Metaphors seem to aim at conveying experiences rather than mere understanding. It may be that the metaphor's maker does intend to convey an understanding—that is, that he intends his audience to acquire beliefs through its appreciation of the metaphor—but if this is so, he intends this understanding to derive from an experience to which the metaphor leads the audience. If paraphrases are inadequate substitutes for metaphors, this is because they bypass the experience, not because they fail adequately to capture the understanding that the metaphor's maker intended to convey. Just as the explication of a joke is an account of the understanding to which appreciation of the joke should lead without its being an account of
a meaning hidden within the joke, so the paraphrase of a metaphor is an account of the understanding to which an appreciation of the metaphor should lead without its being an account of a metaphoric meaning possessed by the metaphor. And, if metaphors are not bearers of a metaphoric content, the temptation to regard them as stating propositional truths that override their literal truth-value is removed.

This is as far as Davidson takes his critique of the Traditional view that metaphors possess a metaphoric meaning in virtue of which they state significant propositional truths. But, as it stands, the argument is not yet convincing, for it might be challenged this way: there is no reason to assume that the meaning of all propositions can be captured without loss in other words. If paraphrases are inadequate substitutes for live metaphors, this might be because metaphors belong within a class of propositions for which there are no extensionally equivalent reformulations into other words. The "problem" of paraphrase reflects this fact, perhaps, without counting against the claim that metaphors are bearers of metaphoric content. It may be that the experience to which the metaphor leads has the importance claimed for it above, but this shows only that the truths metaphors impart can be conveyed only via such experiences because those truths cannot be fully captured in any paraphrase. The inadequacy of paraphrases of metaphor indicate only that there is more to metaphoric content than is captured in any paraphrase, so
that an appreciation of a paraphrase is not yet an appreciation of the metaphor. The fact that metaphors aim at the evocation of experiences fails to show that they do not aim primarily at the communication of a metaphoric content (via the evocation of such experiences), a content that cannot be successfully conveyed by other, more direct means. So, many of the points in Davidson's argument might be conceded without one's abandoning the claim that metaphors are bearers of metaphoric meanings.

This line of reply to the Davidsonian challenge moves the Traditional accounts toward a speech-act analysis of metaphor. It is possible to maintain that the metaphor possesses a metaphoric content (albeit one that cannot be captured in a paraphrase), while allowing that the metaphor communicates this content via the evocation of an experience, only if one can feed this content as understood by the audience back through the experience to the metaphor. In other words, if the metaphoric content is to be stated in the metaphor, one must show how it is that the utterance of the metaphor fully controls the experience by means of which this content is understood. Obviously, the literal meanings of the words in the metaphor are relevant here. They focus the attention of the audience on the metaphor's subjects. But if the metaphor is to bear a definite and finite metaphoric content, the scope as well as the direction of the experience to which the metaphor leads the audience must be controlled by the statement of the metaphor. The audience must
be able to judge that the evoked experience captures the content of the metaphor. Because the scope of an appreciation of the metaphor's point is not specified in the literal meaning of the metaphor, this scope must be apparent to the audience in its recognition of the metaphor-maker's intentions. So, if the propositional content of the beliefs acquired by an appreciative audience (through the experience to which the metaphor leads them) is to be possessed by (and not merely occasioned by) the metaphor as its metaphoric meaning, the audience must recognize through the statement of the metaphor the metaphor-maker's intention that they acquire just those beliefs. This is why the speech-act analysis of metaphor offered by Searle (1979) is compatible with the Traditional accounts, as Levin (1979) points out.

In the following I argue that the reply made above to the Davidsonian argument is unsuccessful. In doing so, I attack the view that the speech-act analysis of metaphor can preserve the claim that the metaphor-maker's intentions determine the scope of the experience to which the metaphor leads the audience, and in this way I reject the claim that the metaphor possesses a metaphoric content. I concede that a metaphor's maker may intend that his audience acquire definite beliefs through their appreciation of his metaphor, that the audience may acquire the beliefs they were intended to acquire, and that they may realize that they were intended to acquire those beliefs. My disagreement is with the
suggestion that the propositional content of those beliefs can be grafted back onto the metaphor as part of its meaning. I suggest that, though the metaphor is the means by which those beliefs are transmitted, the content of those beliefs is not stated, not even indirectly, by the metaphor. The speech-act account suggests that the appreciation of metaphor can be analyzed in terms of Grice's (1957) model of utterer's occasion-meaning: the metaphor's maker intends that his audience will acquire certain beliefs, he intends that they realize that he intends this, and the audience does acquire the intended beliefs as a result of their realizing that he intends this. In challenging this account, what I deny is that the crucial third condition is met when a metaphor is appreciated.

If someone says to me "My love is a rose" and if this is a live metaphor, in recognizing it as such I know that the metaphor's maker intends me to have an experience of his loved one's being rose-like. The literal meaning of the words and the context in which the words are stated point my thoughts not only to these subjects but also in a direction. For example, the word "love" suggests that I should not dwell on the stalky build and thorny temperament of the person referred to. I know, then, that I am intended to experience something about the rose-likeness of the utterer's loved one and perhaps I also know that I am intended to acquire beliefs about the loved one as a result of this experience. But can I know enough about the metaphor-maker's intentions from his statement of the
metaphor and from the context of this statement to settle, for example, whether I have completed the intended experience? I think not. Indeed, though the notion of completeness fits appropriately with the analysis of utterer's occasion-meaning, it sits uncomfortably here. Of course, I can draw my speculation to an end and believe, quite rightly, that I have taken the point that the metaphor's maker intended me to appreciate. But rather than judging that I have grasped the intended point as a result of probing the content of his intentions, I identify the nature of his intentions in the light of my appreciation of the metaphor. I note the content of his intentions after and as a result of getting the metaphor, not the other way around. In terms of the Gricean model, the third condition for utterer's occasion-meaning is not met. The second condition can be satisfied—that is, I may recognize the content of the metaphor-maker's intentions—but the third condition is not satisfied because the appreciation of the metaphor is independent of the satisfaction (where this occurs) of the second condition. The metaphor's maker can have the intention that his audience acquires specific beliefs in their appreciation of his metaphor and he may also intend that this intention of his be recognized by them, and both these intentions may be realized, but the realization of the
second-order intention does not determine the audience's acquisition of those beliefs in a way that matches the Gricean model.\(^4\)

It is for the above reason that the speech-act analysis of metaphor is inadequate (see L. J. Cohen 1979). Its failure defeats the attempt to equate the propositional content of the beliefs to which the appreciation of the metaphor should lead one with a metaphoric content stated in the metaphor. Getting a metaphor can and does lead to the acquisition of beliefs, but the propositional content of those beliefs is not stated anywhere, not even indirectly, in the metaphor. The appreciation of metaphor provides the occasion for the acquisition of such beliefs, but metaphors are not bearers of the propositional content of the beliefs they prompt. Though some propositions do not admit of extensionally equivalent reformulations in other words, the argument offered here suggests that this fact fails adequately to explain why it is that a paraphrase is a poor substitute for a metaphor. It is not that the paraphrase

\(^4\) In Davies 1983b, I use a similar argument in a different connection: in understanding a work of art aesthetically one may accord to it the significance that the artist intended and may know that one is doing so, but because the recognition of the artist's intention does not determine one's understanding, an interest in a work as art is not an interest in it as a vehicle for communication.
does the same sort of job as the metaphor but does it less well; rather, it is that it does not do the same sort of job at all.

If metaphors do not possess a special metaphoric meaning, the only propositional truth-values they can possess are those attaching to their literal (and only) meaning. One might wish to claim, however, that metaphors express non-propositional truths. I detect some such account in Paul Ricoeur's writing (1979), though probably he would not recognize my version of his position. More than most, Ricoeur emphasizes that the appreciation of metaphor involves an experience rather than the grasping of a propositional truth. When I say "My love is a rose", despite the literal falsity of what I say, I aim to get others to experience an aspect of rose-likeness presented in the character (or appearance, or whatever) of my loved one. In seeing the rose-likeness presented in the character of my loved one, the audience appreciates a non-propositional truth that, though not stated by the metaphor, is a truth I intend the audience to understand in grasping the point of the metaphor. The metaphor does not describe my experience of my loved one. Rather, it leads the audience to an experience of an aspect of the character of my loved one and thereby realizes my intention in making the metaphor. This view has the apparent virtue of preserving the notion that metaphors express (non-propositional) truths, while avoiding the claim that such truths reside in a metaphoric content possessed by the metaphor.
Now, if non-propositional truths are truths that cannot be expressed in language (as opposed to truths that are not easily expressed in language), the notion is a dubious. If such truths are unstatable in principle, they could not be intersubjectively verified, and without the possibility of public checks on their applications in any given case, would be meaningless. But if non-propositional truths are truths conveyed by means other than by their direct assertion, the idea of them is acceptable. It is in this sense that it might be claimed that metaphors convey non-propositional truths. The metaphor conveys the truth that the character of the loved one presents a specific aspect of rose-likeness, and this truth is conveyed by the metaphor's leading the audience to notice this aspect of the loved one's character rather than by asserting directly that her character presents such an aspect.

My objection to this account should be apparent from the previous discussion. If the metaphor is the occasion for the response and not a bearer of a special, metaphoric meaning, why regard it as displaying non-propositional truth? Non-linguistic performances, such as nods and winks, can meet the conditions for utterer's occasion-meaning as specified by Grice, and one might reasonably say such performances convey truth non-propositionally, meaning that they convey in a non-propositional manner truths capable of propositional statement. But in the case of live metaphor, the suggestion that non-propositional truths are
expressed looks to be gratuitous and misleading. If truth attaches to anything in the case of metaphor, it attaches to the beliefs acquired by the audience in appreciating the metaphor (and it attaches to these beliefs in a straightforwardly propositional manner). The only truth-value that can be meaningfully attributed to the metaphor is the truth-value it possesses when read literally.

Where does this attack on the idea that metaphors have metaphoric content leave the Traditional accounts? As attempts to define metaphor, they fail. They should best be viewed as describing the techniques by which metaphors are created and interpreted. The Traditional accounts testify to the known facts of the process by which metaphors are understood, rather than explaining how metaphors are a distinctive use of language.⁵

⁵ This same point could be made about the invocation of Wittgenstein's notion of "seeing as", for instance in Davidson 1979, Ricoeur 1979, and Black 1979a. To note merely that getting a metaphor is like seeing a as b is not to explain very much when the point at issue is not whether we do succeed in perceiving a relationship between the metaphor's subjects but is instead, to explain how it is that we overcome the tension between the metaphor's subjects when adopting this perceptual mode.
Apart from the uncontroversial first, each of the assumptions on which the Traditional accounts are based has been questioned in the discussion so far. While allowing that the literal meaning of the words in a statement of the metaphor does important work (in identifying both the subjects and the direction of the experience by which one might attempt to appreciate the metaphor), I have denied that the "work" of the literal meaning (when coupled with the metaphor-maker's intentions) consists in generating a metaphoric content. I have argued that live metaphors do not possess such content. They cannot be used to assert significant propositional truths and they cannot be usefully described as expressing non-propositional truths. What, then, distinguishes metaphor from more usual, directly informative utterance? Davidson suggests that it is the use of metaphor that is distinctive: a metaphor is used to intimate something, but it does not mean what it intimates. Davidson does not, however, flesh out an account of this use. I attempt to do so now.

A metaphor (usually, but not always—see Mooij 1976:26) has a propositional form. When a speaker makes a metaphor intentionally, he does not assert the propositional content of the metaphor. The only propositional content possessed by the metaphor is its literal meaning and the metaphor's maker does not believe that states a significant truth. The metaphor's maker aims not at asserting belief but at conveying an experience to his audience. If you said to your love "Of course this is
false: you are a rose", he or she would not be very impressed. If you said "Of course this is true: you are a rose", he or she would be puzzled. "I believe this: you are a rose" and "I disbelieve this: you are a rose" are similarly strange. The metaphor's maker is not saying that his love is a rose; he is not asserting the propositional content of the metaphor. Instead, he is expressing the thought, entertained without belief, of his love's being a rose.

The utterance of the metaphor is the expression of a knowingly entertained thought and not the statement of an assertion. The metaphor is an expression rather than a description of an experience. Because the metaphor is not used to assert a belief, its truth-value ceases to be important. The expression of an experience is more like a sophisticated exclamation—such as "How lovely!"—than it is like a statement. The appropriate response to a metaphor is the thought, entertained without belief, that the metaphor states a significant truth. This thought is entertained as a means to the evocation of an experience that reveals the point at which the utterance of the metaphor aims. The subjects and the direction of the thoughts entertained without belief are given by the (literal) propositional content of the metaphor and the context of the metaphor's utterance. Though the propositional content of the metaphor plays a part in controlling as well as occasioning this experience, neither it nor the utterer's intentions determine the scope of this experience. Any
paraphrase of the metaphor consisting of assertions loses the non-assertoric character of the metaphor. To attempt to paraphrase an exclamation with an assertion would be similarly mistaken, would similarly lose the exclamation. As Davidson correctly observes, the utterance of a metaphor directs the audience's attention not to truth-values but to experiences. But Davidson is wrong to suggest that words are the wrong currency for an account of the experience; it is assertions, not words *per se*, that are inadequate here.

On the matter of the audience's recognition that it is dealing with a metaphor, it is possible to follow while reinterpreting the Traditional accounts. In its context, we recognize that the metaphor "*a is b*" says something patently false, trivially true, or perhaps absurd when understood as an assertion of belief. We are jolted to regard the metaphor as non-assertoric. We entertain without belief the thought of *a*'s being *b* as a means to the dawning of some interesting aspect of *a*'s *b*-ness. The direction of this experience is indicated without being determined by the (literal) propositional content of the metaphor.

So, if metaphors are not appreciated as true or false, how are they evaluated? Obviously, not as right or wrong, correct or incorrect, but as successful or unsuccessful, convincing or unconvincing, revealing or unrevealing, appropriate or inappropriate.
Sometimes one replies to a metaphor with "yes" or "no", though no paraphrase of the metaphor is attempted. It might be thought this shows that one is agreeing or disagreeing with a truth stated by the metaphor. How are such cases to be treated? I have allowed that metaphors might be uttered with the intention that the audience will acquire a belief. Where this is recognized by the audience, agreement or disagreement is appropriate. Where a metaphor is intended to lead to a new understanding, and this is apparent to the audience, the audience might reply to the metaphor with, for example, "yes, I know". However, for reasons argued previously, I deny that in such cases one is agreeing with a truth that is somehow stated in the metaphor. One is agreeing with a truth that has not been stated anywhere; one is agreeing to a truth to which one was led by one's grasping the point of the metaphor. The truth to which one agrees is one that might have been stated in an assertion paraphrasing the metaphor.

Though I have conceded that metaphors can be created with the intention that the audience acquires new beliefs, I believe this observation is generally over-emphasized. The fact that the makers of metaphors do not usually go on to paraphrase their live metaphors suggests that they are more directly concerned with evoking experiences than with imparting beliefs. One makes metaphors in preference to assertions not because metaphors lead to the acquisition of beliefs more successfully than do
assertions but rather, because one is concerned to get the audience to "see" something and not merely to know something. Possibly, metaphors are sometimes used indirectly to impart beliefs in a fashion that is more memorable and dramatic than is that of mere assertion. But I see no reason to assume that this consideration accounts for the appeal and prevalence of metaphor.

My view does not represent a return to the Emotive Theory proposed by the positivists (see Beardsley 1967:286). It maintains that metaphors are unverifiable and hence, meaningless. It suggests that, while metaphors lack a cognitive content, they interest us because they possess an emotive content. By contrast, the view for which I have argued says that metaphors are no less meaningful than are other non-assertoric uses of language. I have not denied that metaphors lead us to new understandings, though I have denied that the contents of such understandings belong to metaphors as part of their meaning.

The theory developed here pursues the consequences of Davidson's attack on the Traditional accounts. Not surprisingly, others have moved in a similar direction following Davidson's paper. The clearest foreshadowing of my view may be found in Black, who says:

If somebody urges that, "Nixon is an image surrounding a vacuum", it would be inappropriate to ask soberly whether the speaker knew that to be so, or how he came to know it, or how
he could check on the allegation, or whether he was saying something consistent with his previous assertion that Nixon was a shopkeeper. Such supplementary moves are never appropriate to any metaphorical statement except those degeneratively "decorative" or expendable ones in which the metaphorical focus can be replaced by some literal equivalent. It is a violation of philosophical grammar to assign either truth or falsity to strong metaphors. (1979b:40-1)

Yet despite this insight, Black continues to maintain that metaphors are asserted (1979b:32) and apparently fails to appreciate fully the implications of the quoted passage for his general position.

I turn now to two objections raised to Davidson's critique of the Traditional accounts. The first comes from Black (1979a). A person can make a metaphor to himself. How could one assert a metaphor to oneself—that is, express to oneself the belief that the metaphor is significantly true—while believing both that the metaphor is literally false and that it is not the bearer of a metaphoric content? Davidson has not commented on this objection, but he might easily meet it. While he holds that the metaphor has the truth-value that attaches to its (literal) propositional content, he does not maintain that this propositional content is asserted by the metaphor's maker. He does not say that the utterance of the metaphor is the expression of a thought entertained without belief, but
such a view is compatible with his argument. One can express an entertained thought to oneself—how else would one entertain it?—so there is no problem in allowing that a person can make a metaphor to himself.

The second objection, which is considered by Davidson, requires a brief introduction. So far the discussion has been confined to live metaphors, with the implication that they should be distinguished from dead metaphors. Dead metaphors have, in some way, ceased to be metaphorical. Now, the interesting point to be made about dead metaphors is that, usually, they are trivially true. For the Traditional accounts, the death of a metaphor presents no striking difficulties. They maintain that dead metaphors are true propositions in which the metaphoric meaning has been subsumed into and has changed the literal meaning of the words used. Goodman says:

In metaphor ... a term with an extension established by habit is applied elsewhere under the influence of that habit; there is both departure from and deference to precedent ... As time goes on, the history may fade and the two uses tend to achieve equality and independence; the metaphor freezes, or rather evaporates,

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6 Bache (1980) argues that a reverse process may occur, with literal meanings becoming metaphorical on some occasions.
and the residue is a pair of literal uses—mere ambiguity instead of metaphor. (1978:71)

For the Traditional accounts, the death of the metaphor involves no change in the truth-value of the metaphor. When the metaphor dies, the metaphoric meaning is absorbed by and alters the usual meanings of the words used, with the result that the truth-value of the metaphor remains unaltered.

Davidson, in holding that live metaphors are usually false, must explain how a false living metaphor can be transformed into a true dead metaphor, and how the living metaphor with nothing other than literal meaning becomes a dead metaphor in which the words have a literal but now altered meaning. He deals with this difficulty by denying that the dead metaphor states what the living metaphor intimated, while acknowledging that the metaphoric terms acquire a new literal meaning in the dead metaphor. "'He was burned up' now suggests no more than that he was very angry. When the metaphor was active, we would have pictured fire in the eyes or smoke coming out of the ears" (1979:36; see also 43).

Davidson's argument does not strike me as very convincing. It is doubtful, I suggest, that the live metaphor would have evoked quite such a vivid picture. More importantly, the claim that the intimations of the live metaphor are lost when the metaphor dies is difficult to accept.
Whatever "burned up" usually meant before the metaphor died, it did not mean "very angry". If this change in meaning did not derive from the intimations of the live metaphorical use, how are we to account for this newly acquired literal meaning?

I would explain what happens when a metaphor dies in the following way: I follow the Traditional accounts in allowing that the point of the live metaphor is absorbed into and alters the meaning of the words used when the metaphor dies. This alteration occurs with a move from the entertaining of thoughts to the adoption of belief. Such a change is not difficult to describe in general terms; it must occur when one is given grounds for a new belief that replaces what once would have been a thought knowingly entertained. So, in the case of metaphor, what changes in the world would force on one the adoption of such a belief? If it is allowed that the meaning of a word is a function of its use, then if the terms in the metaphor are taken up and given a new use the meaning of those terms is altered and the currency of that use provides the grounds for the adoption of belief. In other words, when the terms in the metaphor become associated with the knowingly entertained thoughts that give the metaphor its point, that publicly recognized association forms the basis of a new use that alters the meaning of the terms and murders the metaphor, rendering its statement tautological. So, "Cigarettes are coffin-nails" becomes tautological when "coffin-nail" is given a use synonymous with
"cigarette" and people say, for example, "Pass me a coffin-nail" with the reasonable expectation of being given a cigarette. The public adoption of this new use, which marks the death of the metaphor, alters somewhat the usual meanings of both "cigarette" and "coffin-nail". The new, dead use publicly acknowledges the association of the metaphor with the knowingly entertained thought of cigarettes' being coffin-nails, which comprised the appropriate response in the former live use. It is the public adoption of the new use that provides the grounds for a belief rather than for entertaining thoughts without belief. As a dead metaphor, "Cigarettes are coffin-nails" is understood as the assertion of a (necessarily trivial) truth rather than as an invitation to an experience of a relation between cigarettes and coffin-nails. The use of the metaphoric terms within a dead metaphor can be taught, because that use is rule-governed. By contrast, live metaphors involve unique uses of words. There is no rule-governed publicly recognized use of the metaphoric terms in live metaphors that can be taught.

There is no a priori specification of which metaphors will die or of where they will die. A metaphor might die in Germany while continuing to live for German speakers in Argentina. Usually, the more striking metaphors invoke associations unique to very particular cases, so they may be less likely to die. But even if the point of a metaphor is fairly clear and the metaphor lends itself to a potentially extensive, general use,
it may not be taken into use. No doubt it is taste or fashion, and not anything inherent to the concept of metaphor, that determines which metaphors die and which continue to live. There is a point to be made in this connection, however, about the difference between poetic and scientific metaphors. It may be true that poetic metaphors aim less at the communication of information than do scientific ones (Harries 1979). But rather than implying that these different areas of metaphor require different kinds of analyses, what is relevant here is the metaphor-maker's intentions regarding the general use of the metaphor. Scientists probably hope that their metaphors will quickly die—the sooner a scientific metaphor is taken as a trivial statement of fact rather than as an invitation to entertain without belief various thoughts, the better for the theory in which the metaphor plays a part—and may consequently tend to coin ones that are half-dead already. Poets, on the other hand, probably hope that their metaphors will not die, and thereby aim to create complex metaphors unlikely to invite a suitably general set of associations that could form the basis of a widely accepted use of the metaphoric terms.

Briefly then, the position for which I have argued recommends that live metaphors are to be appreciated as non-assertoric, despite (usually) their propositional form. They express experiences rather than state beliefs. In appreciating a live metaphor one may come to acquire beliefs, but the propositional content of those beliefs does not comprise a
"metaphoric content" stated within or belonging indirectly to the metaphor. The Traditional accounts of metaphor—as bearers of a metaphoric content asserted by the metaphor's maker—are mistaken.