

PHIL 332: Philosophy of Language
Class 33: Metaphor

1. Clear(?) examples:
 - a. Simon is a rock
 - b. Juliet is the sun
 - c. She wore me down
 - d. I stepped up to the plate
 - e. Now is the winter of our discontent

Note: It is not expressions that are metaphorical, but *uses* of expressions. Each of these sentences can be used non-metaphorically (I am careful here not to say: can be used literally).

2. This raises a couple of questions:
 - a. Are there any expressions which cannot be used metaphorically?
 - b. Are there any expressions which can only be used metaphorically?
3. Lycan claims that “virtually every sentence produced by any human being contains importantly metaphorical or other figurative elements” (p. 209). (Note the sloppiness.) I guess he has in mind:

‘caged emotions’, ‘abandon the project’, ‘carry out the agenda’, ‘execute the plan’, ‘an aging joke’, ‘anarchy on the freeway’, ‘bound by a contract’, ‘brand of music’, ‘braking news’, ‘bursting with flavor’, ‘colliding philosophies’, ‘comfortable with my decision’, ‘direction in life’, ‘political fallout’, ‘road map to peace’, and so on.

Is he right?

4. Are typical uses of the following metaphorical uses?
 - a. It is raining
 - b. Zeynep uses a nice font
 - c. It is raining cats and dogs
5. We also have *dead metaphors*: ‘river mouth’, ‘inclined to drink’, ‘rich dessert’, ‘dead microphone’, ‘dead metaphor’.

Does the dying happen slowly, or abruptly?

6. It seems that the speaker means something (propositional) over and above what the sentence literally means (what she has said), and that to understand the speaker one must understand what this is. If so:

- a. Is it something that she has also said?
 - b. Is it something that she has implicated?
7. The naïve simile theory: metaphors are abbreviated similes (yuck).
- a. Simon is like a rock
 - b. Juliet is like the sun
 - c. She did something like wear me down
 - d. I did something like step up to the plate
 - e. Now is like the winter of our discontent

Is what the speaker has actually said? Or is it just something that the speaker means?

Is the simile part of the *syntax* of the sentence?

8. Objections:
- a. If this is right, then metaphors are literally true; but they are not. (I think this is a bad objection.)
 - b. If this is right, then metaphors ought not seem a bit strange. (I think this is a bad objection.)
 - c. If this is right, then metaphors ought to be easier to explain than they are. (I think this is a bad objection.)
 - d. Similes are uninformative, but metaphors are not. (I think this is a bad objection.)
 - e. How is Simon like a rock? It seems that we have not eliminated the metaphor. (This might actually be a good objection.)