

PHIL 332: Philosophy of Language
Class 35: Martinich on Metaphor

1. Martinich uses Grice's theory of conversational implicature to give an account of metaphor.
2. So he takes metaphor to be a pragmatic phenomenon, not a semantic one. What exactly does this mean?
3. But he says, somewhat confusingly: There is a sense in which the sentence used metaphorically has a metaphorical meaning, but it is a consequence of a pragmatic mechanism, not what makes the metaphor possible.
4. Martinich makes a lot of the distinction, which he attributes to Grice, between *saying* and *making as if to say*.

Compare: a speaker sincerely asserting 'This is a fine town', with a speaker using it ironically.

(He claims there are various senses of 'say', but is this right?)

5. Martinich claims that a person who speaks metaphorically is not *saying*, but *making as if to say*. If he uses 'My love is a red rose', he is not saying that his love is a red rose, but making as if to say that his love is a red rose.

He is not asserting that his love is a red rose; he does not speak falsely if she is not literally a red rose.

He is aiming at truth.

6. To some extent he is using 'My love is a red rose' literally – he is using 'My love' literally.

In the case of 'That butterfly is annoying', the speaker is using 'is annoying' literally.

7. In speaking metaphorically, the speaker flouts the maxim of quality and generates a conversational implicature.

(Note that Martinich's account of the mechanism of conversational implicatures is a bit dodgy.)

8. Example: 'My love is a red rose'.
9. Every metaphor either is false (*standard* metaphor) or is supposed to be false (*nonstandard* metaphor).

10. No metaphor can be a lie: lies must be unostentatious – they violate the maxim of quality; metaphors are ostentatious – they flout the maxim of quality.
11. Metaphors are typically vague and indeterminate. The Gricean approach can explain this: conversational implicatures are open disjunctions of propositions.
12. *Hyperbole*. This is also a case of flouting the maxim of quality. It is not the same thing as overstatement. Even if the same sentence is used.
13. *Meiosis*. This is a case of flouting the maxim of quantity. There is no need to interpret the speaker as making as if to say – can interpret her as saying.
14. *Irony*. The speaker is not saying, for otherwise he would be contradicting himself (is this right?). The speaker is making as if to say.
15. *Nonstandard metaphor*. This is rare. Example: ‘Caroline is our princess’. The same mechanism is in play, just a different maxim is being flouted.
16. Martinich argues that the following are not metaphors: ‘No man is an island’, ‘Jesus was a carpenter’, ‘Moscow is a cold city’. (Presumably he means that our typical uses of these are not metaphorical).