

Lecture 7.1
Metaphor
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Pre-lecture reading:

Martinich, A. (1998), 'Metaphor', in E. Craig (ed.), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (London: Routledge).

Grice, P. (1989), 'Logic and Conversation', in *Studies in the Way of Words* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press).

1. Picking out the subject matter: what are we talking about? Can point to it by giving examples:

- (1.1) Mary is a block of ice.
- (1.2) My lover is a red rose.
- (1.3) Sarah is the vegemite on my toast.

2. Need to be careful: what is it that is metaphorical? Sentences, or *uses* of sentences (utterances)? Consider:

- (2.1) Mary is the driver of my bus.
- (2.2) Sarah is 6ft tall.
- (2.3) Mary is a block of ice.

(Interesting question: are there utterances which are borderline cases of being metaphors?)

3. It is difficult to do better pre-theoretically (i.e. before having a theory). Eg. can't pre-theoretically say that metaphor is a type of non-literal language, because according to the first theory below it is not. Note that dictionary definitions are of questionable adequacy.
4. Metaphor is to be distinguished from other 'figures of speech': irony, hyperbole, meiosis, and synecdoche.
5. The problem of metaphor: on the surface it seems to be a problem for compositional theories of meaning. Such theories need a way of arguing that it is not.
6. The **simile** theory: a metaphor is an abbreviated simile. 'Sarah is the vegemite on my toast' is elliptical for 'Sarah is like the vegemite on my toast'.

Problem: have to then say that all metaphors are literally true, which is to accuse us of widespread error.

7. The **interaction** theory: as well as literal meanings, expressions have metaphorical meanings, which may be 'ineffable'. 'vegemite on my toast' has both a literal and metaphorical meaning. The literal meaning of 'Sarah is the vegemite on my toast' is false, but its metaphorical meaning might be true. This is to treat metaphors like idioms: 'The cat is out of the bag'.

Problem: doesn't account for our ability to create and understand metaphors.

8. The **speech act** theory: what metaphors *say* is false, but what they *implicate* might be true. 'Sarah is the vegemite on my toast' says something that is false, but implicates something that might be true. Gricean account: to utter this sentence is to flout the maxim of truthfulness. It is literally false, so what does the speaker intend to convey? The opposite? No - that's irony. Must be something else - some property that both have.

Problem: is this an adequate explanation of how metaphors work?

Other reading:

Davis, S. (ed.) (1991), *Pragmatics: A Reader* (Oxford: OUP), readings 28-32.