

Language can be thought of as metaphor. Is this an appropriate metaphor?

Hamlet: Denmark's a prison.

Rosencrantz: Then is the world one.

*Hamlet: A goodly one, in which there are many confines,
wards and dungeons, Denmark being one o'th' worst.*

Rosencrantz: We think not so, my lord.

*Hamlet: Why, then 'tis none to you, for there is nothing either
good or bad but thinking makes it so. To me it is a prison.¹*

The starting point for this discussion is Nietzsche's assertion:

What, then, is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms – in short, a sum of human relations, which have been enhanced, transposed, and embellished poetically, rhetorically, and which after long use seem firm, canonical, and obligatory to a people: truths are illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are; metaphors which are worn out and without sensuous power; coins which have lost their pictures and now matter only as metal, no longer as coins.²

In this early essay, 'On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense', Nietzsche is referring specifically to the possibility of linguistic truth within language. I choose to focus on the idea of metaphor, drawing on related disciplines, and developing as this discussion progresses, a better idea of what metaphor is and how it functions. Given Nietzsche's proposition – that in language truth and concepts only exist metaphorically – it seems fitting to proceed by evaluating how appropriate a metaphor this is for understanding language. Hence the question, "Language can be thought of as metaphor. Is this an appropriate metaphor?"

¹ Shakespeare, William, *Hamlet, The Norton Shakespeare: Based on the Oxford Edition*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997) p.1696, II, ii, lines 239 – 245.

² Nietzsche, Friedrich, 'On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense', *Deconstruction in Context: Literature and Philosophy*, ed. Mark. C. Taylor (University of Chicago Press, 1986) p.219).

Aristotle, in his *Poetics* defined the metaphor as the “application of an alien name by transference either from genus to species or from species to genus, or from species to species, or by analogy”³. Furthermore, Aristotle argued that all metaphors can be reduced to and replaced by an equivalent literal phrase⁴. In contemporary debate, the substitutional view is opposed to the interactional view of metaphor, wherein each contextual occurrence generates appropriate semantic resonances from within the terms. The Concise Oxford Dictionary⁵ defines metaphor as the “application of name or descriptive term or phrase, to an object or action to which it is imaginatively, but not literally applicable”. One can see that this definition follows from Aristotle, but significantly in its distinction between imaginative and literal relations, there enters the idea of a social consensus of categories delineating what constitutes literal applicability.

In examining writing on metaphor, we shall see that it becomes helpful to consider metaphor as existing on a spectrum of linguistic conventionality. The terms conventional metaphor and novel metaphor seem to be mirrored by terms such as dead metaphor and living metaphor in academic studies of metaphor. The contention stands that whereas conventional, dead metaphors are no longer noticed (for example, the computer’s *memory*⁶ is *full*), novel, living metaphors can still be perceived as a sometimes shocking act of imaginative union (e.g., depression is a *cancer* of the mind). Metaphors are sometimes codified as “A is B” relationships, whereby in the process of interpretation certain characteristics of B (the base) are transposed onto A (the target). I would argue that although the language of metaphors often uses the word “is”, the “is” represents a relationship best expressed by the term: “can be thought of as” – and not “equals” (=), not “is equivalent to” (~).

When we interpret language to derive the intended meaning of a speaker, Johnson makes the point that we “interpret an utterance metaphorically when to do so makes sense

³ *Poetics* 1457b, quoted here from Kofman, Sarah, ‘Metaphor, Symbol, Metamorphosis’, *The New Nietzsche*, ed. David B. Allison, (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1985) p.213, note 8.

⁴ Coyne, R.D. Chapter 7, Metaphors and Machines, ‘Metaphor, Being and Computer Systems Design’, Excerpt from 1995. *Designing Information Technology in the Postmodern Age: From Method to Metaphor*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts. Available from http://cezanne.caad.ed.ac.uk/msc/new_directions4/

⁵ *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, ed. J. B. Sykes, seventh edition, (Oxford, Oxford University Press: 1982) p.636.

⁶ Coyne, R.D. Chapter 7, Metaphors and Machines, ‘Metaphor, Being and Computer Systems Design’, Excerpt from 1995. *Designing Information Technology in the Postmodern Age: From Method to Metaphor*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts. Available from http://cezanne.caad.ed.ac.uk/msc/new_directions4/

of more aspects of the total context than if the sentence is read literally”. Johnson’s example contrasts “*All men are animals* as uttered by Professor X to an introductory biology class and as uttered later to one of his female students to her roommate upon returning from a date”⁷. In this instance, we can see that the very act of interpreting a simple utterance is highly dependent upon this contextual transposing of inferences: an act of metaphorical unravelling.

Stern goes further, pointing out that metaphors often coexist with literal meaning. For example, Mao Tse-tung’s insightful remark, “A revolution is not a matter of inviting people to dinner”⁸ is both literally true and metaphorically true; as are Robert Frost’s lines:

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I –
I took the one less travelled by,
And that has made all the difference⁹

It is therefore the intrinsic contextuality of meaning within language which enforces its dependence upon metaphorical relations being drawn out and interpreted by the reader or listener. This suggests that rather than being a relationship which could be substituted by literal terms (the Aristotelian view), metaphor is in fact a quality of utterances which enables them to operate as a palimpsest of resonances which are interpreted or dismissed by the hearer according to factors such as context and the interpreter’s imaginative and linguistic faculties.

Language can be seen to be metaphorical in unexpected ways. When we write, “the meeting *went* from 3:00 to 4:00” we use a metaphor, albeit a dead one, since we are applying a term for motion to a stationary duration of time. Jackendoff points out that whilst one might aside, “Of course the world isn’t *really* a stage, but if it were, you might say that infancy is the first act”¹⁰; it would be unusual to say, or even to think, “Of course, meetings aren’t *really* points in motion, but if they were, you might say this one went from 3:00 to 4:00”. Pinker compares Jackendoff’s sentences:

⁷ Johnson, Mark, ‘A philosophical perspective on the problems of metaphor. In Richard P. Honeck and Robert R. Hoffman (eds.), *Cognitions and figurative language* (pp,47 – 68), Hillsdale, NJ: Lea; but quoted here from Fass, Dan, *Processing Metaphor and Metonymy* (Connecticut, Ablex Publishing Corporation: 1997) pp.64 – 65.

⁸ Mao Tse-tung; quoted here from Stern, Josef, *Metaphor in Context*, (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2000) p. 4.

⁹ Frost, Robert, ‘The Road not Taken’ 1915; quoted here from Stern, *ibid.*

¹⁰ Jackendoff; quoted here from Pinker, Stephen, *How the Mind Works*, (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1997) p.357.

The messenger *went from Paris to Istanbul*
 The inheritance finally *went to Fred*.¹¹

In the second sentence, Pinker comments, “the concept of location must not be allowed to merge with the [concept] of possession ... but it can lend [it] some of its inferential rules”¹². The somewhat abstract quantity of ownership is here represented by movement, even if occurred through the act of reading a will.

The psychologists McGlone and Harding illustrated by experiment that because English contains two metaphors for time, ambiguous statements such as “Wednesday’s meeting was moved one day forward”¹³ would be interpreted as either a move to Tuesday or to Thursday depending upon to which time metaphor the participants were hitherto exposed. These two metaphors, which directly affect the interpretation of language are, Gentner et al. explain, “the *ego-moving* metaphor, wherein the observer’s context progresses along the timeline toward the future, and the *time-moving* metaphor, wherein time is conceived of as a river or conveyor belt on which events are moving from the future to the past”¹⁴.

Suggestions are made as to why we make extensive use of metaphor in language. Pinker writes of how, as thinking animals, we use metaphors of space and force – which Pinker suggests have developed “from the module for intuitive physics that we partly share with chimpanzees”¹⁵ – as conceptual stepping stones and building blocks with which to comprehend more complex ideas. Concepts of space and force, which seem to underlie all languages, appear to be the “vocabulary and syntax”¹⁶ of mentalese. Gentner et al. concur, “We rely heavily on mappings from experiential domains such as spatial

¹¹ id., p.352.

¹² id., p.353

¹³ McGlone, M. S., and Harding, J. (1998). ‘Back (or forward?) to the future: The role of perspective in temporal language comprehension’, *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory and Cognition*, **24** (5): 1211 – 1223; quoted here from Gentner, Dedre, Brian F. Bowdle, Phillip Wolff, and Consuelo Boronat, ‘Metaphor Is Like Analogy’, *The Analogical Mind*, eds. Dedre Gentner, Keith J. Holyoak, and Boicho N. Kokinov, (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2001) p. 242.

¹⁴ Gentner, Dedre, Brian F. Bowdle, Phillip Wolff, and Consuelo Boronat, ‘Metaphor Is Like Analogy’, *The Analogical Mind*, eds. Dedre Gentner, Keith J. Holyoak, and Boicho N. Kokinov, (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2001) p. 242.

¹⁵ Pinker, Stephen, *How the Mind Works*, (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1997) p.357.

¹⁶ id., p.355.

relations and bodily force dynamics, because our models in these domains are sufficiently systematic to provide inferential structure for other domains”¹⁷.

The epistemological functions of this cognitive operation of metaphor are demonstrated by Gentner et al., who argue that metaphor, and in particular, asymmetrical metaphor, can illuminate the manner by which we assimilate knowledge. Gentner et al. prompt us to consider the following sentences:

- 1.) Some jobs are jails.
- 2.) Some jails are jobs.¹⁸

Explicitly, “people show strong directional preferences in metaphor”¹⁹. Bowdle and Gentner together conducted a study in which subjects were asked to read two short passages, similar except that one had a clearer causal systematic structure linking the events that it described. When subsequently asked to generate inferences between the two passages, subjects overwhelmingly chose to draw inferences from the more systematic, causal passage – the more informative passage – to the other, similar passage. This suggests that as we encounter new information, we move from the more systematic, more instructive forms to less systematic, less instructive forms.

When encountering an utterance which seems literally to posit that “A is B” our response is to consider how they might be similar, whilst being struck by how the terms are different. Turner expressed this in the phrase “Comparison begets categorisation”²⁰ and Gick and Holyoak supply evidence that analogy is a central part of cognition that “can provide the seed for forming new relational categories, by extracting the relational correspondences between examples into a schema for a class of problems”²¹.

In the reign of the Emperor Augustus, Vitruvius – a Roman architect – described sound in the following way:

Voice is a flowing breath of air, perceptible to the hearing by contact. It moves in an endless number of circular rounds, like the innumerably increasing circular

¹⁷ Gentner, Dedre, Brian F. Bowdle, Phillip Wolff, and Consuelo Boronat, ‘Metaphor Is Like Analogy’, *The Analogical Mind*, eds. Dedre Gentner, Keith J. Holyoak, and Boicho N. Kokinov, (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2001) p. 238.

¹⁸ id.

¹⁹ id. p.237

²⁰ quoted here from id., p. 234.

²¹ Holyoak, Keith J., Dedre Gentner and Boicho N. Kokinov, ‘Introduction: The place of Analogy in Cognition’ *The Analogical Mind*, eds. Dedre Gentner, Keith J. Holyoak, and Boicho N. Kokinov, (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2001) p.9.

waves which appear when a stone is thrown into smooth water, and which keep on spreading indefinitely from the centre ... in due formation.²²

This metaphor of waves as the means by which patterns are transmitted across space was developed over the course of centuries, given mathematical formulation, and in the seventeenth century, it begot by analogy the wave theory of light. Such analogical progression “from highly specific single-case analogies to more abstract concepts or schemas is one of the more powerful roles that analogy plays in cognition”²³, argue Holyoak, Gentner and Kokinov, and serves to tackle “scientific, mathematical and problem-oriented concepts”²⁴ as well as being observed in “concepts in everyday life”²⁵.

Having established for metaphor this position as a primary conceptual, cognitive and interpretational mode, how far is it possible to move to recognising language itself as metaphor, to seeing every word as metaphorical?

Leezenberg relates the results of the Russian psychologist Alexander Luria who carried out investigations among illiterate peasants in Uzbekistan in the early 1930s. Luria presented the subjects with pictures of a hammer, a saw, a log and a hatchet. The subjects were asked which of these items did not belong there. In contrast to those subjects who were literate and had received schooling, the unschooled subjects were heard unanimously to protest along the lines, “They all fit there! The saw has to saw the log, the hammer has to hammer it, and the hatchet has to chop it”²⁶. When prompted, “Could you call them tools?”, one response was, “Yes, you could, except a log isn’t a tool. Still the way we look at it, the log has to be there. Otherwise, what good are the others?”²⁷. From this, Leezenberg affirms Luria’s interpretation that one of the effects of literacy, of increased immersion in language, is to make its subjects more comfortable with and complicit in, the process of classification as categorisation. Leezenberg later notes, with regard to the manner by which language forms categories – even we might add at the basic level of the signifier – that:

²² id. pp.5-6.

²³ id. p.6.

²⁴ id.

²⁵ id.

²⁶ Luria, A.R. (1976) *Cognitive development: Its Cultural and Social Foundations* (trans. M. Lopez-Morillas & L. Solotaroff) (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1976); quoted here from Leezenberg, Michiel, *Contexts of Metaphor, Current Research in the Semantics / Pragmatics Interface, Volume 7*, (Oxford: Elsevier Science Ltd, 2001), p.21.

²⁷ id. p.22

many of the “facts” of our world, especially those related to external properties, are indeed socially created: thus, an individual can have the (external) property of being a king, only in virtue of social structures and institutions. Likewise, the external properties of objects like tools and crowns are not merely determined by their physical features, but also by their functions or roles in human and social behaviour and practices ... the properties the objects have are imposed by our goals and theories (or practices) as much as by ‘objective reality’.²⁸

One should add here, that in the case of Luria’s subjects, contiguous, metonymic relations seem to be privileged for them above the broader categorisations of taxonomy which one is inclined, in this light to regard as metaphorical. Leezenberg, goes on to argue, having defined a concept as “not itself a symbol, but what is *expressed* by a symbol; epistemologically, a concept *is* rather than *has*, a meaning”²⁹:

On the present view, everyday concepts are not fixed representations that stop undergoing changes ... Rather, they are evolving structures which are always indeterminate, instable and context-dependent to some extent, and which can always be expanded or modified on the basis of new data.³⁰

Leezenberg emphasises “the processes of socialisation that play an essential role in concept formation, and the social pressures towards conformity in linguistic behaviour”³¹. An extension of Leezenberg’s arguments would lead us to consider the use of metaphor as an act of continuing reinterpretation and redefinition of concepts within, and in opposition to, the constraints of social normative influence.

In language, categories are useful only in so far as they are part of a social consensus. Saussure conceives of language as being a collective storehouse, a communal social product: “If we could embrace the sum of word-images stored in the minds of all individuals, we could identify the social bond that constitutes language. It is a storehouse filled by the members of a given community through their active use of speaking”³². These arbitrary designations within language – of signified to signifiers – are only consistent in as far as they are sustained by a social contract. However, metaphor, particularly novel metaphor, is characterised by transposing signifieds into contexts which are not socially sanctioned. Nietzsche writes of the “liar”³³, “He abuses the fixed

²⁸ id. p.290

²⁹ id. p.252

³⁰ id. p.295

³¹ id.

³² Saussure, Ferdinand de, *Course in General Linguistics*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), p.13.

³³ Nietzsche, Friedrich, ‘On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense’, *Deconstruction in Context: Literature and Philosophy*, ed. Mark. C. Taylor (University of Chicago Press, 1986) p.217).

conventions by arbitrary changes or even by reversals of the names”³⁴. If we can characterise the more extreme end of the spectrum of metaphorical language as an acting outside of the socially condoned communal storehouse of linguistic values, what status then does metaphor share with this Nietzschean conception of lying as redefinition? Both are accepted or reviled according to social definitions of acceptable literalness and unacceptable figurativeness.

It seems tenable therefore to argue that levels of acceptable figurativeness are culturally defined and that the metaphor serves to broaden categories. Jakobson claims that “any individual use of language, any verbal style, any trend in verbal art displays a clear predilection either for the metonymical or for the metaphorical device”³⁵. This idea is subsequently developed in the essay ‘Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances’: to be an opposition which can manifest itself as a cultural predilection. “In Russian lyrical songs, for example, metaphoric constructions predominate, while in the heroic epics the metonymic way is preponderant”³⁶.

Thus we come to talk of social standards for unacceptable levels of imaginative relations. The implied equivalence of the *A is B* formulation can be misleading unless the person who receives the utterance has prior knowledge of each of the terms. Love is not a rose, and repeated figurative transfigurations of category boundaries – even those which are already well known – could be said to undermine them. Depending therefore, upon the register of the context and cultural climate of literality in which metaphors are received, the degree to which transposition of one category onto another is acceptable will vary.

Metaphor becomes incorporated into the language until the accepted mode of thought is very hard to recognise as precisely that – as a provisional approximation. Useful metaphors become assimilated, idiomatic and die. By analogy, the same process must take place with regard to linguistic truth in language. What at first was merely provisional, merely a metaphor, becomes such an accepted mode of thought that to see it as figurative, to think outside it requires an imaginative and metaphorical leap which is

³⁴ id. p.218.

³⁵ Jakobson, Roman, ‘Aphasia as a Linguistic Topic’, *Selected Writings*, Volume II (Mouton, 1971), p.238.

³⁶ Jakobson, Roman, ‘Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances’, *Selected Writings*, Volume II (Mouton, 1971), p.255.

incompatible with terms such as “truth”. In their book, *Metaphors We Live By*, Lakoff and Johnson in an afterword, comment, “We still react with awe when we notice ourselves and those around us living by metaphors like TIME IS MONEY, LOVE IS A JOURNEY, and PROBLEMS ARE PUZZLES. We continually find it important to realise that the way we have been brought up to perceive our world is not the only way and that it is possible to see beyond the “truths” of our culture”³⁷.

For Nietzsche, every word is metaphorical. With the concept “leaf”³⁸ in ‘On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense’, Nietzsche raises the spectre of an absent Platonic form, an ideal lying behind the “innumerable, more or less similar cases”³⁹ to which we apply the categorisation “leaf”. Thus Nietzsche writes that “Every word immediately becomes a concept, inasmuch as it is not intended to serve as a reminder of the unique and wholly individualised experience to which it owes its birth”⁴⁰. Hofstadter has a similar radical scepticism with regard to the meaning inherent in words. With reference to analogy, he writes, “my belief is that metaphor and analogy are the same phenomenon”⁴¹ and goes on to suggest, “that every concept we have is essentially nothing but a tightly packaged bundle of analogies, and to suggest that all we do when we think is to move fluidly from concept to concept – in other words, to leap from one analogy-bundle to another – and to suggest, lastly, that such concept-to-concept leaps are themselves made via analogical connection”⁴².

It is this role of imagination in the use of words-as-concepts which prompts Nietzsche, Kofman argues, to insist that philosophy remains ““a prolongation of the mythic instinct””. In a synthesising interpretation of Nietzsche’s *The Birth of Tragedy*, *Philosophy in the Tragic age of the Greeks*, and *The Philosopher’s Book*, Kofman summarises Nietzsche’s stance: “Imagination permits us to grasp analogies; only afterwards does reflection intervene to replace analogies with equivalences, suggestions

³⁷ Lakoff, George and Mark Johnson, *METAPHORS We Live By*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), p.239.

³⁸ Nietzsche, Friedrich, ‘On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense’, *Deconstruction in Context: Literature and Philosophy*, ed. Mark. C. Taylor (University of Chicago Press, 1986) p.218.

³⁹ id.

⁴⁰ id.

⁴¹ Hofstadter, Douglas R., ‘Epilogue: Analogy as the Core of Cognition’, *The Analogical Mind*, eds. Dedre Gentner, Keith J. Holyoak, and Boicho N. Kokinov, (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2001) p.526.

⁴² id. p.500.

with causal relations, and to impose any standardisation of concepts”⁴³. It is for this reason, Kofman, posits, that Nietzsche sees metaphor as being the ““most accurate, most simple, most direct””⁴⁴ style. Metaphor is the only means by which we can see relational groupings – by saying: these items can be thought of as “leaves”, these actions as “honesty”⁴⁵. Nietzsche’s standpoint in ‘On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense’ is that without comparing dissimilar terms in this manner, we could not form conceptual categories.

At a linguistic level then, we examine in what ways Nietzsche’s views are complimented by the operations of language as described by Saussure. Saussure writes, “Instead of pre-existing ideas then, we find ... *values* emanating from the system”⁴⁶. For Nietzsche too in *The Birth of Tragedy*, Kofman observes, “In contrast to the Aristotelian Tradition, the metaphor is no longer referred to the concept, but, rather, the concept is referred to the metaphor”⁴⁷. For Saussure, values emanate from the system and for Nietzsche, it is the metaphor which generates these values. Kofman uses Nietzsche’s idiom: “the essence or nature of things is itself enigmatic; genera or species, then, are only human, all too human, metaphors”.

Nietzsche’s goes further to say, in ‘On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense’, that “we know nothing of an essence-like quality”⁴⁸ such as the category ““honesty””⁴⁹. Nietzsche argues that we only know “numerous individualized, and thus unequal actions ... we distil from them a *qualitas occulta* with the name of “honesty””⁵⁰. In Saussurian terms then, Nietzsche is protesting that since we have no contact with the signifier and we can only ever understand it through empirical approximations from a number of signifieds, it is therefore conceited to believe that we possess the kind of knowledge of the signified that we presume in our literal use of language. To claim that we can have no

⁴³ Kofman, Sarah, ‘Metaphor, Symbol, Metamorphosis’, *The New Nietzsche*, ed. David B. Allison, (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1985) p.209.

⁴⁴ id.

⁴⁵ Nietzsche, Friedrich, ‘On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense’, *Deconstruction in Context: Literature and Philosophy*, ed. Mark. C. Taylor (University of Chicago Press, 1986) p.219.

⁴⁶ Saussure, Ferdinand de, *Course in General Linguistics*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), p.117.

⁴⁷ Kofman, Sarah, ‘Metaphor, Symbol, Metamorphosis’, *The New Nietzsche*, ed. David B. Allison, (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1985) p.207.

⁴⁸ Nietzsche, Friedrich, ‘On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense’, *Deconstruction in Context: Literature and Philosophy*, ed. Mark. C. Taylor (University of Chicago Press, 1986) p.219.

⁴⁹ id.

⁵⁰ id.

essential connection with the signified also necessarily follows from Saussure's argument. If "In language there are only differences *without positive terms*"⁵¹, there can be no semantic kernel. When we conceive of language as only a series of relations between dissimilar terms, we must recognise that such relationships are relationships of metaphor – the terms are dissimilar, the language relates them, they derive meaning only in relation to each other by the fact of their similar qualities and by the fact of their differing qualities. Thus it is that Nietzsche writes "Only through forgetfulness can man ever achieve the illusion of possessing a "truth" in the sense just designated"⁵².

The Derridean term *différance*, operates in a similar way to metaphor in the construction of meaning and truth. For Derrida, *différance* signifies a play of signification which depends, both for our subjectivity and the meaning of each term, upon differences between terms and the deferral of a non-existent origin. Metaphor is a relationship which I posit, tells us that something "can be thought of as" something else, yet rather than leading back to an origin of meaning closer to a presence, metaphor generates meaning by a consciousness of difference. Both represent a substitution which is provisional and which "defers the moment in which we can encounter the thing itself, make it ours, consume or expend it, touch it, see it, intuit its presence"⁵³. When Nietzsche writes of the fallacy of reaching the origin of socio-cultural forms, his words also hold true for the way in which the metaphors of categorisation in language, efface origin:

that everything which happens in the organic world is part of a process of *overpowering, mastering*, and that, in turn, all overpowering and mastering is a reinterpretation, a manipulation, in the course of which the previous "meaning" and "aim" must necessarily be obscured or completely effaced.⁵⁴

Both *différance* and metaphor are founders of categorisation: both represent "the possibility of conceptuality"⁵⁵, "the playing movement that "produces" – by means of something that is not simply an activity – these differences, these effects of difference"⁵⁶.

⁵¹ Saussure, Ferdinand de, *Course in General Linguistics*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), p.120.

⁵² Nietzsche, Friedrich, 'On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense', *Deconstruction in Context: Literature and Philosophy*, ed. Mark C. Taylor (University of Chicago Press, 1986) p.218.

⁵³ Derrida, Jacques, 'Différance', *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982) p.9.

⁵⁴ Nietzsche, Friedrich, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Douglas Smith, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 57 – 58.

⁵⁵ Derrida, Jacques, 'Différance', *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p.11.

⁵⁶ id.

Furthermore, both *différance* and metaphor are subversive forces, creators of and begotten by language: “*différance* instigates the subversion of every kingdom”⁵⁷. *Différance* and metaphor are the inevitable discrepancies that result from any effort at categorisation, they are subversive precisely because they are created out of the discrepancies and arbitrary nature of categorisation, and yet they are necessary in order to form those categories:

This unnameable is the play which makes possible nominal effects, the relatively unitary and atomic structures that are called names, the chains of substitutions of names in which, for example, the nominal effect *différance* is itself *enmeshed*, carried off, reinscribed, just as a false entry or a false exit is still part of the game, a function of the system.⁵⁸

Just as metaphors are false transpositions of categories, they are nonetheless still “part of the game” of categorisation.

To conclude, metaphor structures our thought in unexpected ways. Metaphor proposes a “can be thought of as” relationship, and this proposal is the basis for all systems of categorisation, all culturally endorsed impositions of meaning. It a primary tool of cognition and a means by which we build conceptual, epistemological knowledge. I have argued that in as literal an utterance as language will permit, language is metaphor. Metaphor is an appropriate means for seeking to understand language, because it is the creator and the begotten, the stuff of language itself.

“What then is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonyms and anthropomorphisms”. Nietzsche’s “pessimism” is accurate and unfounded. Accurate because language is the comparing of terms which are not alike. Unfounded because Nietzsche is happy to denude us of our vain delusion, our fatuous conceit that linguistic truth is inherent in language. In an “Extra-Moral” sense – in other words, in a linguistic sense – Nietzsche sees the hypocrisy of the terms “truth” and “lie”, for language is a mobile army of metaphors and both of these categories are fraudulent. Yet, given that language is metaphor, the question becomes one of which metaphor we choose to see language as. Is it indeed, a mobile army, or rather, a creative play; is it “the air in contact with a sheet of water ... the surface of the water broken up into a series of divisions, waves”, a collective storehouse, a linguistic space occupied by spheres and amorphous

⁵⁷ id., p.22.

⁵⁸ id., pp.26 – 27.

shapes, a battle ground “as on a darkling plain / Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight, / Where ignorant armies clash by night”⁵⁹ If we are to choose a metaphor for metaphor, Derrida proposes that we choose one which recognises its value: “On the contrary, we must *affirm* this, in the sense in which Nietzsche puts affirmation into play, in a certain laughter and a certain step of the dance”⁶⁰.

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⁵⁹ Arnold, Matthew, ‘Dover Beach’, 1876, available at http://users.exis.net/~jnc/nontech/dover_beach.html, stanza 5.

⁶⁰ Derrida, Jacques, ‘Différance’, *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p.27.

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