Black’s Metaphor

The Chairman plowed through the discussion.

Metaphors are about meaning (semantics and pragmatics) because a translation into another language would use the very same metaphor to mean the same thing.

Contexts and particular circumstances matter: “That Utensil”

3 Views of Metaphor

Substitution View of Metaphor:

- A metaphoric expression is a substitute for a literal expression that has the same meaning. (31) Metaphor is decorative.

  Richard is a lion. = Richard is brave.

Comparison View of Metaphor:

- A metaphor is similar or analogous in meaning to its literal equivalent.

  Richard is a lion. = Richard is like a lion (in being brave).

However, vague/ not really sufficient:
Relies on the fact that “What M stands for is similar to what L stands for.” But, similarities are not givens, they can be matters of degree, and we need to know in what respects we are to think of L and M as similar.

Interaction View of Metaphor:

- Frame and Focus stand in dynamic interaction

  Interaction is between systems of things not things themselves. The metaphor is not so much about plowing or running a meeting, as it is about the things that I can expect everyone in my community to associate with plowing, in this sense metaphors are relations between systems of
commonplaces. Interactive in that it affects the way I think about ‘running a meeting’ as well as the way I think about ‘plowing.’

The interaction itself is an interaction of weighting and emphasis. So that when I say, “Man is a wolf.” I draw attention to certain features about men, that organizes and prioritizes the system of commonplaces for ‘man’, for the task which I have in mind. Black says that “man” is seen through “wolf” and uses the metaphor of screen. For instance, imagine describing a battle exclusively in the terms of chess, this would be to see a battle through the screen of chess. Some features become emphasized and others neglected. This supplies ‘insight’ and is cognitively important. The organization that develops, from the use of metaphor is not one that can be paralleled by a literal list, the list does not weight, and it fails to provide insight.

I think this is mostly explanatory, not so much predictive. Suppose I am observing a department meeting, and I notice that Mohan is being little bit snappy. I wonder at the cause of all this and Audrey, who is a much worldlier soul than I, says, “Man is a wolf, and there can only be one Alpha-male in the pack.” In this case the metaphor is explanatory. This raises questions about the relation of metaphor and analogy, because Audrey is clearly asking me to make an analogical inference based on,

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\text{Alpha-Male : Relations to wolf pack :: Mohan : Relations to the department}
\]

This would be the preliminary metaphor, and then it would be extended to account for all sorts of particulars.

**Hesse’s The Explanatory Function of Metaphor**

Hesse asserts that the deductive model of scientific explanation is defective and should be supplemented by the view that theoretical explanation is the metaphoric rediscription of the domain of the explanandum.

**Primary system** is the domain of the explanandum - that which is to be explained, the actual phenomena themselves not literal descriptions of them.

**Secondary system**: system of commonplaces from either the observational language or familiar theory from which the model is taken.
Examples:

Sound (ps) is propagated by wave motion (a familiar theory). NOT Sound is like light in being propagated by a wave.

Gases (ps) are collections of randomly moving massive particles (a system in observational terms).

Note: Not any secondary system can be applied to a primary system to provide metaphors and models: models are refutable (fluid theory of heat, classical wave theory of light). Hesse seems to be thinking of explanation in a more encompassing way than is standardly done, because what she calls explanations have to also be predictive, so they are actually more like what we would call theories. (I think)

Metaphors cause a shift in meaning as the primary is ‘seen through’ the secondary: Sound comes to mean sound waves, and waves come to mean the sort of thing that could transport sound. (the mechanists: ‘nature is a machine’)

Hesse says that the interaction view for theoretical models is ‘incompatible with assumptions generally made in deductive accounts of explanation, namely, that descriptions and descriptive laws in the domain of the explanandum remain empirically acceptable and invariant in meaning to all changes in explanatory theory.’ (164) The thing being explained changes depending on the metaphorical explanation in just the way that if we were explaining something about man, the meaning of ‘man’ would change if we invoked “Man is a lamb” as opposed to “Man is a wolf” in the explanation. (does this really count as a change in meaning?) The explanans that come to bear on the explanandum affect how we think about the explanandum.

Hesse’s Allegations against a purely deductive model of explanation:

Given an explanandum D, and an explanans E, it is seldom if ever the case that E entails D. Rather E entails D’, and the relation between D and D’ is one of approximate fit, a complicated and non-deductive relation. My take on this is that E represents a secondary system that entails D’, which Hesse wants to say is D seen through E, at least when it is a good explanation. Furthermore (173) D’ comes to be seen, by the scientific community, as a better description of the domain to the explanandum than D. (Learning to observe)

Maybe Mohan’s actions don’t appear in the first instance as the wolf pack thing. But if it is a good explanation, I recognise a relation of approximate fit between his actual actions (the domain of the explanandum, and the referent of D), and
how I interpret his actions if understand then with “Man is a wolf” explanation (which entails D’, also referring to the domain of the explanandum).

Importantly, this is not to say that there no role for deduction, but rather is presented as something that occurs in addition to deduction, and only for theoretical explanations. The metaphorical description may be seen as replacing and correcting original literal descriptions of the same system, as the literal description is discarded as inadequate or even false. (174)

The problem of correspondence (Good for realism?) P174-175

It is classically alleged that there are problems linking terms in a theoretical language with terms in an observational language (at least there are no deductive rules for doing so, limiting the manner in which a solely deductive explanation can be explanatory). Hesse calls this the correspondence problem. I think that it is used to formulate an argument for scientific anti-realism.

Hesse says that the metaphoric view of explanation evades the problem of correspondence, because there is no purely theoretical language per se, there is only observation language, the meaning of the terms in which are continually extended through metaphoric use, yielding the terminology of the explanans. There is no problem of understanding how the explanans and explanandum are connected that would not be solved by understanding how metaphors are introduced and exploited in primary systems.

Reactions?

Regarding this notion that the secondary theory is a familiar theory whose meaning is extended to include the domain of the explanandum, what should count as a familiar theory, if we are to consider the explanation rational? (Liebniz vs. the Newtonians)

Can we really say that there is no theoretical language? How do the theoretical terms in Economics, Biology, Psychology, Archeology, Mathematics reduce down to the extension of meaning of observational terms?

Black says: Often we say, “X is M” evoking some imputed connection between M and an imputed L (or, rather, to an indefinite system, L₁, L₂, L₃,...) in cases where, prior to the construction of the metaphor, we would have been hard put to it to find any literal resemblance between M and L. It would be more
illuminating in some of these cases to say that the metaphor creates the similarity than to say that it formulates some similarity antecedently existing. (37)

Is this an accurate description of the instances where you have used metaphor and analogy? How do we come to think that two things are analogical? I don’t think it happens because we line up the horizontal relations and see how well they fit. I think that we think about things that could be analogues until one of them gives us Black’s ‘insight’ and we then look at the horizontal relations and the parallel vertical relations, especially if we want to justify a prediction. Can this be dismissed as some thing like the context of discovery?
Implications to a Theory of Analogy

What is the relation between Metaphor and Analogy?

From Aristotle, in the Rhetoric:

metaphor : analogy :: entheme : syllogism

Where an entheme is a rhetorical syllogism, or how we actually use deductive forms in discourse, e.g. ‘As all men are mortal, so is Socrates.’ No one actually talks to each other stating all three premises of a syllogism, similarly it is rare that in ordinary discourse we explicitly bring up all four terms of an analogy, rather we use metaphors.

Could there be an interactive theory of analogy, and is there more going on in an analogical inference than we have been so far representing?

Would this apply to all the different places that we make analogical inferences? (math, physics, economics, biology, sociology)

Explanation and prediction are formally similar or even identical. If Hesse is onto something, and metaphor plays an integral role in explanation, what role does metaphor play in prediction? Hesse at times seems to think that models (a species of analogy/metaphor) are essential for predictions, if they are essential, do they have to be justified, can some be better justified?

What this pose extra problems for the justification of analogical inferences? Or does it seem to imply that analogy, as a basic way we think, is only about the context of discovery, and is not the sort of thing that needs or seeks justification.