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When Juliet Was the Sun: Metaphor as Play

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ABSTRACT. In most accounts of metaphor, similarities play a prominent role. When e.g. Romeo says 'Juliet is the sun', he is commonly taken to extend an invitation to the hearer to explore Juliet's sun-like features; her being warm, bright, sustaining, etc. are thought to be highlighted by the metaphor. A problem about this kind of interpretation is that it is often difficult to find support for its content as well as its form in the actual context of the metaphor. I will put forward a different approach to metaphor according to which the speaker of a metaphorical 'S is P' sentence casts the subject as the predicate in her discursive and imaginative play. The function of the metaphor is not to suggest unstated similarities between the subject and the predicate, but essentially to permit the speaker to make further utterances about the subject in terms of the predicate, either in order to represent features and actions of the subject or to make the subject appear in a certain way.

1. Introduction

In this paper I will put forward an approach to metaphor according to which it does not serve to suggest unstated similarities between things from different domains. Rather, metaphor serves to initiate a kind of discursive and imaginative play brought about in the discourse which follows upon the

¹ Email: palle.leth@philosophy.su.se The research reported in this paper was supported by the Swedish Research Council under project no. 437–2014–255.

metaphorical sentence. Play initiating metaphors cannot be isolated from the context in which they appear, for what is important about them is precisely the discourse which they give rise to. These metaphors do not invite the hearer to take the single sentence as a starting point for association, but to make sense of what the speaker herself goes on to say in the wake of her metaphor.

There are in recent metaphor theory basically two opposing tendencies. On the one hand, there is the deflationary account according to which metaphor is nothing but an extreme kind of *ad hoc* concept (Sperber & Wilson 2008). The meaning which words bring to the occasion of an utterance is potential only; it has to be modified, either by narrowing or broadening, in order to make sense in the context at hand, and so an *ad hoc* concept is created. If this is the regular way of words, then the metaphorical use of words is not especially deviant. Metaphors are just at the far end of a continuum of ubiquitous meaning modification. In reaction to this account, on the other hand, there are various defences of the specificity of metaphor. It is insisted that metaphor essentially involves seeing something as something which it is not or of using something as a prism for thinking about something else. This is what explains the creativity, the revelation and the rationale of metaphor and this aspect is neglected if metaphors only adapt to the purposes at hand.

I believe that for many traditional instances of metaphor the *ad hoc* concept approach is quite adequate. But I also believe that there are other

instances of metaphor which should be given a different treatment, in so far as they give rise to a special kind of imaginative activity which does not occur in *ad hoc* concept modification. What I hope to show is that some of these instances involve discursive play rather than the kind of comparison described by most approaches to metaphor. Metaphor is certainly not a very uniform phenomenon.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows. First I will present the comparison approach to metaphor. I will then question this approach by looking at the actual context of the phrase which has most often served as illustration, namely 'Juliet is the sun'. From this consideration the conception of metaphor as initiating discursive and imaginative play will emerge. Finally I will consider the prospects of generalizing this approach by applying it to some other classic instances of metaphor.

2. Comparison Views of Metaphor

The view of metaphor which I will be reacting against is the one that holds that the juxtaposition of the subject and the predicate in a metaphorical sentence of the form 'S is P' serves to invite the interpreter to compare the subject and the predicate and to find the features which these two different things have in common. Blackburn, in discussing 'Juliet is the sun', puts the view succinctly: 'The metaphor is in effect an invitation to explore comparisons.' (Blackburn 1984, p. 174; cf. also Davidson 1978, p. 256.)

This approach to metaphor, in all its varieties, was perhaps first sketched by Richards (1936) and then given a fuller statement in Black. Black's leading idea was to replace the substitution view of metaphor with an interaction view of metaphor. Contrary to what was more or less claimed in the classic conception of metaphor, the predicate in a metaphorical sentence 'S is P' does not replace a literal equivalent in an ornamental fashion (e.g. Fontanier 1830, p. 99). Rather, in a radically more dynamic way, the 'system of associated commonplaces' (Black 1954, p. 40) of the predicate interacts with the subject to yield a whole array of properties and implications. Much of the discussion in the wake of Black's seminal paper has been concerned with the shape of the mechanism responsible for the generation of emergent features and whether metaphor is a semantic and cognitive phenomenon or merely pragmatic and imagistic. These issues will not be addressed in what follows. I will here focus on what I take to be the features in common between comparison views of metaphor, irrespective of the important differences between them.

The basic and foremost assumption is that in a metaphorical 'S is P' sentence the predicate ascribes or intimates – depending on whether this is taken to be semantic or pragmatic – properties resulting from some kind of interaction between the subject and the predicate. It is frequently suggested that the function of the predicate is to offer a perspective, a frame or a prism for thinking about the subject. Thanks to the juxtaposition of the subject and the predicate, the hearer sees the subject as something which it is not and is

invited to explore the similarities between the subject and the predicate. Some of the properties associated with the predicate are perhaps not directly applicable to the subject, but may be suitably modified to apply. This is supposed to lead the hearer to revelations and insights concerning the nature of the subject. It is thus thought to be the hearer's task to follow up on the suggestion made by the speaker and to work out the properties which somehow are shared by the predicate and the subject and see which implications are made, according, of course, to what fits into the context at hand. This process is thought to be endless or at least open ended; metaphors are particularly appreciated for being infinitely suggestive. In sum, the mere juxtaposition of the subject and the predicate results in a firework of properties, similarities, suggestions, which, though effectuated wholly by the hearer, is somehow thought to be the speaker's achievement.

Let us now look at what comparison views of metaphor may offer by way of interpretation of the metaphor 'Juliet is the sun'. Here are some samples from across the decades:

Romeo means that Juliet is the warmth of his world; that his day begins with her; that only in her nourishment can he grow. And his declaration suggests that the moon, which other lovers use as emblems of their love, is merely her reflected light, and dead in comparison; and so on. (Cavell 1965, pp. 78–9)

Suppose I say ['Juliet is the sun']. Then, I think, it does follow that Juliet is the brightest thing I know, that everything else is lit by her

presence, that I am inevitably drawn to her though I know this must be dangerous, etc. (Cohen 1976, p. 250)

Thus when Romeo says that Juliet is the sun we can profit from the metaphor indefinitely: we can move among respects in which someone's lover is like the sun: warm, sustaining, comforting, perhaps awesome, something on which we are utterly dependent... This process is quite open-ended. (Blackburn 1984, p. 174)

A second interpretation of ['Juliet is the sun'], therefore, takes the predicate 'is the sun' to express a "metaphorically related" property, e.g., the property of being the most excellent thing in its domain; on this interpretation, Romeo's utterance expresses the proposition (roughly) that Juliet is unequalled among women. (Stern 1985, p. 679)

Juliet is warm, she is bright and dazzling, she is the center of Romeo's world, his day begins with her, and so on. (Does she, like the sun, burn alive those men who draw too near?) (Tirrell 1991, p. 341)

I understand by Romeo's words that Juliet is worthy to be and about to become the source of whatever emotional comfort, whatever vitality, whatever clarity Romeo's life will contain from here on out... and so on. (Hills 1997, p. 122)

And if we do adopt this perspective, even temporarily, then certain of Juliet's features – such as her beauty, her uniqueness, and the warmth with which she fills his heart – will be highlighted in our thinking, and will take on a new significance for us. [...] Likewise, in uttering ['Juliet is the

sun’], Romeo communicates, among other things, that Juliet is the most beautiful girl in Verona. (Camp 2008, pp. 2 & 7 respectively)

Stock sums up the pattern of these proposals in saying,

To think of Juliet as the sun is to represent to oneself a state of affairs involving Juliet and her sun-like features [...] (Stock 2013, p. 211)

For all the interpreters it is a matter of course that Romeo’s utterance points out Juliet’s similarity to the sun and amounts to an hyperbolic declaration of love. There is perhaps no direct evidence against neither the form nor the content of this kind of interpretation. Evidently hearers find ‘Juliet is the sun’ evocative and Romeo could well mean something along these lines. As long as we confine ourselves to the single sentence it may seem very natural to imagine that some sharing of properties occurs. Nevertheless one may want to have some explicit support for such an interpretation. On what grounds is it assumed that the sentence ‘Juliet is the sun’ by itself says or suggests so very many things and precisely the things proposed? Is there e.g. any textual evidence for any of the sun-like features proposed or for Romeo’s wanting us to explore such features at all? I think that the justification both of the form and the content of this kind of interpretation is called for, especially since, to my lights at least, these proposals are rather associative and arbitrary, neither obviously relevant nor interesting. That Juliet is warm, vital and beautiful for Romeo is something we could have

predicted without his saying 'Juliet is the sun'. The mission of the comparison view was after all to replace the vacuity and shallowness of the substitution view. I therefore propose to look at what the actual context of 'Juliet is the sun' suggests. The function of the metaphor will appear to be quite different from what theorists traditionally have assumed.

3. When Juliet Was the Sun

Romeo and Juliet have recently met at the Capulets' party and Romeo is now in the garden beneath Juliet's window. He utters 'He jests at scars that never felt a wound' when suddenly a light appears in the window.

But, soft, what light through yonder window breaks?
It is the east, and Juliet is the sun.
Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon,
Who is already sick and pale with grief
That thou her maid art far more fair than she.
Be not her maid, since she is envious;
Her vestal livery is but sick and green,
And none but fools do wear it. Cast it off. (Shakespeare, *RJ* II.ii.2–9)

Romeo immediately establishes a parallel between the light in the window and the eastern light. If the light in the window is the eastern light and the

cause of the eastern light is the sun, then Juliet is the sun, in so far as she is the cause of the light in the window, having lit the lamp. Romeo then asks the sun to arise and kill the moon, the moon's being envious that the sun is more beautiful than she. The moon is 'already' 'pale with grief' and the sun is the moon's 'maid'. These latter utterances seem a little puzzling. Since when was the sun the moon's maid? If the moon's envious of the sun's beauty, was it not since ever? Should the moon be killed because it is envious? The overall suggestion is that the sun is superior to the moon and that there is no reason for the sun to be inferior. But who ever doubted that the sun was superior to the moon, in beauty, power and excellence?

One way to solve these riddles is to consider that, if the sun is Juliet, it may be the case that the moon is someone too. There is indeed in the mental vicinity someone who deserves to be removed from the pedestal, namely Rosaline. She is Juliet's cousin and was until very recently the object of Romeo's love. At the beginning of the play Romeo suffers from his love of Rosaline. We do not know much about Rosaline, but a great obstacle to Romeo's feelings is that they are not reciprocated. The problem is perhaps not with Romeo, but with love itself. Rosaline has 'forsworn to love' (I.i.221), having, according to Romeo, 'Dian's wit' (I.i.207), i.e. Diana, the goddess of hunting and chastity, associated with the moon. It is precisely because of this predicament that Romeo's friend Benvolio encourages Romeo to come to Capulet's party and thereby have the opportunity to 'take [...] some new infection to [his] eye' (I.ii.48). Things work out in

accordance with Benvolio's good intentions (at least at first), for no sooner has Romeo entered the party than he gets sight of Juliet and asks 'Did my heart love till now?' (I.v.51). Juliet is more responsive than Rosaline: they promptly make their sonnet rhyme, even though Juliet does not reciprocate Romeo's kissing 'by th' book' (I.v.109).

Juliet is certainly a worthier object of Romeo's love than her cousin and in a way this is all too evident, but nevertheless, for all its evidence, when feelings change so rapidly, this is something which deserves to be pointed out to all the parties concerned. Rosaline should be as overwhelmed by Juliet's beauty as Romeo is, she should be sad that she is no longer the object of Romeo's love, Juliet is superior and Rosaline is inferior. Telling himself and the others how things now are strengthens Romeo's brand new love for Juliet. From the perspective of the specific relationships within this amorous situation, the lines which might seem puzzling can be given a rather straightforward reading. Romeo asks Juliet to step out on her balcony and remind himself and also poor Rosaline of her superiority. Thereby Rosaline will definitely be replaced as the object of his love; killed, as it were, simply by Juliet's arising in Romeo's mind. Juliet need not fear the comparison with Rosaline, for Rosaline (or Romeo) is already painfully aware of her inferiority. As for chastity, it is only to be hoped that Juliet will not turn out to be an adept of Diana's.

Romeo's discourse continues and what else he says is not without importance, but the sun terms end when Juliet steps out on the balcony and

Romeo utters in plain prose ‘It is my lady, O, it is my love!’ (II.ii.10). There are certainly more features to take into account for a full and serious reading of ‘Juliet is the sun’, such as additional circumstances and the remaining occurrences of *sun* and other light terms in the play. My commentary is meant to be nothing but a sketchy and preliminary reading of the most immediate context of ‘Juliet is the sun’ and to be as unoriginal and uncontroversial as possible. However, some editors let Juliet enter immediately before II.ii.2, which affects the way we read the first lines. And some commentators identify the moon with Diana rather than with Rosaline. Anyhow, I do not think that divergences in understanding the lines in these and other respects would affect the form of reading I have proposed.

4. The Specificity of the Account

According to this reading of Romeo’s discourse, what is the function of the phrase ‘Juliet is the sun’? It seems that it would be quite apt to say that by saying that Juliet is the sun, Romeo, as it were, casts Juliet as the sun, i.e. starts playing at Juliet’s being the sun.

The immediate reason for Romeo’s casting Juliet as the sun is her being the cause of the window light, as the sun is the cause of the eastern light, the window light having been cast as the eastern light in the first place. The phrase ‘Juliet is the sun’ in itself does not say or suggest more than this casting. But Romeo does not stop there. Once Juliet is cast as the sun, it is

possible to speak of her beings and doings and of her features and actions in terms of beings and doings and features and actions of the sun. If Juliet is the sun, what is Rosaline? Rosaline is the moon. If Juliet is the sun, what is it for her to step out on the balcony? It must be to arise. If Juliet is the sun, what is it for her to replace Rosaline in Romeo's mind? It is simply to kill the moon. Casting Juliet as the sun thus permits Romeo to make further utterances about her in terms of the sun. In some cases, our establishment of counterparts is, though not definite, quite straightforward. Romeo thus seems to make some rather determinate points which we get at with sufficient confidence. In other cases, there is much less precision. Romeo is playing at Juliet's being the sun and at Rosaline's being the moon, but also at the sun's being Juliet and at the moon's being Rosaline in such a way that there is a wilful mix of vocabularies and that there is no definite content to be gathered from some of his further utterances. The imprecision seems to be part of the pleasure.

It does not seem then that Romeo extends an invitation to the hearer to explore the similarities between Juliet and the sun. Romeo does not draw our attention to some unstated similarities between Juliet and the sun. Instead, he draws our attention to what he goes on to say. Romeo does not invite the hearers to do the job, he does the job himself; he is the one who exploits his having said 'Juliet is the sun'. This phrase offers him a locus for going on talking about Juliet. We should not ask, 'In which respects is Juliet similar to the sun?', but rather, e.g., 'Who is the moon?', 'What is it for

Juliet to arise and kill?'. Our task is rather to establish counterparts than to explore similarities. The counterpart relation involves perhaps similarities, but not necessarily. In principle no similarity is required for an object to represent another object. So this process does not seem to correspond to an associative and perspectival seeing-as along the lines usually suggested by theorists.

Another important difference from traditional metaphor accounts is that nothing follows by itself from Juliet's being (cast as) the sun. We saw above that Cohen claims that from saying 'Juliet is the sun', certain things follow and Hills says that 'even if [Romeo] had said "Juliet is the sun" and left it at that, large portions of the set would have fallen into place for suitably prepared listeners' (Hills 1997, p. 137). But I do not think that Romeo commits himself to anything in particular nor that we can predict the implications of his saying 'Juliet is the sun'. From Juliet's being the sun, it does not follow that she must be radiant or nourishing or the centre in her domain. For his playing and discursive purposes, Romeo exploits certain features of the sun, e.g. its relation to the moon and its rising, and leaves others completely aside. Hence there is scarcely any endlessness. Romeo profits from his metaphor to make some more or less determinate points about himself, Juliet and Rosaline and he leaves it at that. For interpreters there is no reason to be concerned with any features other than those actually exploited.

From the perspective of this play account of metaphor, a phrase like ‘Juliet is the sun’ is not really significant if it is isolated from its surrounding discourse. The kind of reading I have proposed locates content, implications and suggestions, not in the phrase ‘Juliet is the sun’, but in the further utterances which this phrase gives rise to. The function of ‘Juliet is the sun’ is merely, by casting Juliet as the sun, to initiate Romeo’s imaginative and discursive play.

The actual context of ‘Juliet is the sun’ thus suggests that neither the form nor the content of the interpretive proposals that we quoted earlier are accurate. The context does not support any of the properties proposed nor that any comparison at all is at issue. This does not prevent similarity accounts from being adequate for other metaphors of course. However, I will in the next section consider the prospects of generalizing the play account emerging from the context of ‘Juliet is the sun’ beyond this case.

Before proceeding though, I would like very briefly to compare my play account with Walton’s game account of metaphor. Walton speaks of metaphors as introducing games and also insists on the amount of unpredictability and uncertainty involved. Nevertheless, his conception of the game in question is substantially different from the play we have observed in the case of Romeo’s saying ‘Juliet is the sun’, as can be seen in this quote:

Many metaphors, especially the more interesting ones, do not enable us to go on with assurance. They leave us uncertain or perplexed or in disagreement about applications of the original metaphorical predicate and others in its family. It is very unclear what games are introduced by 'Juliet is the sun,' or by the description of a musical passage as a 'rainbow.' Not only can we not specify the principles of generation, we are not prepared to identify with any assurance which people are metaphorically the sun and which are not (no matter how well we know them), or what musical passages are rainbows. (Walton 1993, p. 53)

The game Walton is thinking of seems to be confined to the single sentence and can be repeated. It also seems to be concerned with attributes of the subjects which it is applied to. This is not the case with Romeo's 'Juliet is the sun'. The question which his utterance gives rise to is not who else is the sun, but what arising amounts to and who the moon is, etc. The metaphor does not generate predicates, but further utterances. We can continue Romeo's playing at Juliet's being the sun and go on talking about her in sun terms; to call somebody else the sun would be to start a new session.

5. Generalizing the Play Account

5.1. This Pine is Barked

When all is lost for him, Antony says with reference to himself:

this pine is barked [...] Shakespeare, *AC* IV.xii.23.

Similarity accounts of metaphor would no doubt use the pine as a prism or perspective for thinking about Antony and thereby exploit his pine-like features. All sorts of suggestions are expectable. According to the account which emerged from the context of ‘Juliet is the sun’, however, we do not have to compare Antony to a pine. The metaphorical predication need not be concerned with similarities and implications, but only with assigning a role to the subject. Just as in the case of ‘Juliet is the sun’, the initial casting may be quite fortuitous. This is not the first occurrence of the word *pine* in the scene. Antony has already said:

[...] Where yond pine does stand
I shall discover all. [...] (Shakespeare, *AC* IV.xii.1–2)

There is thus a pine in the vicinity and pines are already on Antony's mind. The pine comes in handy when he engages in playful discourse and it generates the possibility of talking of himself in pine terms. He continues:

[...] and this pine is barked
That overtopped them all. [...] (Shakespeare, *AC IV.xii.23–4*)

Thus, the question we should ask is not how Antony is similar to a pine, but what, if Antony plays the part of a pine, it is for him to be barked and overtop others. Presumably it has something to do with his having been superior to his former companions, Octavius and Lepidus, and with his being now stripped of his strength or on the verge of death.

Are there no similarities between Antony and pines resulting from his representing himself under the image of a pine, so to speak? It need not be denied that something imagistic may also be going on and this may have effects on the interpreter's imagination. But content, implications and suggestions should not be generated from the 'image' itself, but from what the 'image' permits to say, i.e. from the rest of the discourse. The initial metaphor permits Antony to make further utterances in pine terms and our immediate task is to establish the counterparts. Antony just happens to take the pine's part and as a consequence being barked and overtop can be used to represent features of his situation. Fundamentally, the intelligibility of

Antony's discourse does not seem to rest on imagistic comparisons between himself and pines.

5.2. Time Out of Joint

Hamlet says:

The time is out of joint [...] (Shakespeare, *Ham.* I.v.186)

This is often taken as very suggestive. However, he continues in the following way:

The time is out of joint; O cursed spite
That ever I was born to set it right! (Shakespeare, *Ham.* I.v.186–7)

If we read Hamlet's metaphor in its context, we do not primarily ask for similarities between the time and being out of joint. Rather, we observe that Hamlet's saying that the time is out of joint permits him to go on saying that he will set it right and we ask what it is for Hamlet to set the time right, if it is out of joint. It seems that we capture the global signification of this piece of discourse by saying that Hamlet commits himself to stabilizing a situation where things have come apart. This is not something we arrive at by reflecting on the first part of the quote in isolation.

5.3. Life Is a Shadow, a Player, a Tale

In Macbeth's monologue upon his being informed of his wife's death, there occurs a series of disparate metaphors.

Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more. It is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury
Signifying nothing. (Shakespeare, *Mac.* v.v.23–7)

Traditional metaphor theory would have us reflect on the implications of life's being compared to shadows, players and tales. Since these could be seen as paradigm instances of inferior reality, the overall similarity would perhaps be that life is illusory. But there does not seem to be any direct evidence that Macbeth is especially concerned with the illusory character of life. The overall implication will actually be different if we look at what Macbeth's metaphors permit him to say.

The important thing about life's being a shadow is not that it is merely a projection, it is that it is walking, i.e. that it is transitory. With respect to life's being a player, the question to ask is what it is for life, if it is a player, to strut and fret its hour upon the stage and then be heard no more. Perhaps the implication is that while life lasts, there is a lot of commotion, but at the end it appears that the worry was vain. As for life's being a tale, our

question is not the general one of what it is for life to be a tale, but specifically what is it for life, if it is a tale, to be told by an idiot and to be full of sound and fury signifying nothing. The tale told by an idiot comes with a pretence as to moment, but once it is told it reveals itself as mere vanity. Life may certainly be illusory, but Macbeth's emphasis seems much rather to be on life's being futile. This implication is nothing that we get at by a comparison between life and shadows, players, tales in the abstract. It is not in place until Macbeth puts it in place by using his initial metaphors as loci for making further predications. It is wholly carried by these further predications without which Macbeth would be signifying nothing.

Compare this reading with what Lakoff and Johnson say about this passage:

This nonconventional metaphor evokes the conventional metaphor LIFE IS A STORY. The most salient fact about stories told by idiots is that they are not coherent. They start off as if they were coherent stories with stages, causal connections, and overall purposes, but they suddenly shift over and over again, making it impossible to find coherence as you go along or any coherence overall. A life story of this sort would have no coherent structure for us and therefore no way of providing meaning or significance to our lives. (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, p. 174)

Lakoff and Johnson extract a metaphor from Macbeth's discourse and then bring their own associations to bear on it. Coherence is certainly an important quality of stories and perhaps stories told by idiots lack coherence, but Macbeth hardly gives any clue as to coherence's being at issue. I do not claim that my interpretation is anything but sketchy, but the interpretation of metaphors should not result from the interpreter's own assumptions and associations, however plausible they may, but be tied to the actual details of the text.

5.4. Old Fools are Babes

Goneril says à propos of her father Lear:

Old fools are babes again [...] (Shakespeare, *KL* I.iii.20)

Many take Goneril to invite us to explore the similarities between old persons and babies. Davidson, e.g., says:

We can learn much about what metaphors mean by comparing them with similes, for a simile tells us, in part, what a metaphor merely nudges us into noting. Suppose Goneril had said, thinking of Lear, 'Old fools are like babes again'; then she would have used the words to assert a similarity between old fools and babes. What she did say,

of course, was ‘Old fools are babes again’, thus using the words to intimate what the simile declared. (Davidson 1978, p. 253)

For Davidson, the question is whether the similarity between old people like Lear and babies is asserted or intimated. This question does not really seem to be to the point. Goneril’s remark in its immediate context reads:

[...] Now by my life
Old fools are babes again and must be used
With checks as flatteries, when they are seen abused. (Shakespeare, *KL*
1.iii.19–21)

Goneril hardly nudges us into noting a similarity between Lear and babies, the similarity is quite explicitly conveyed: old fools and babes are similar in so far as they both must be ‘used with checks and flatteries’. Goneril neither asserts nor intimates any further similarities. The habit of isolating metaphorical predications and speculate about the similarities suggested is quite vain. Furthermore, Goneril’s main point is not that old fools and babes are similar to each other in this respect, but that old fools must be used with checks as well as flatteries. Checks and flatteries are associated with the education of children, it is with children that we use checks which appear as flatteries to them or accompany every check with a flattery. Saying that old fools are babes casts old fools as babes and permits Goneril to apply the babe terms ‘checks and flatteries’ to old fools. We are not to imagine the

babe like features of old fools, but rather to ask what using checks and flatteries with old people amounts to.

The play account of metaphor which emerged from considering the context of 'Juliet is the sun' seems thus to be capable of accounting for also other instances of metaphor. In particular it involves a higher degree of attention to the textual detail and permits us to avoid arbitrary associations. A natural thought might be that the traditional similarity account and this play initiating account could well interact in the case of many metaphors. I will end by two examples which hopefully shows similarities and play go in different directions. These examples will also display an additional function of metaphor. Apart from the capacity of metaphor to initiate the representing of features and actions of the subject by means of terms associated with the predicate, there is the function of merely making the subject appear in a certain way.

5.5. The Cat Feet of the Fog

Here is a poem of Sandburg which is often quoted in the philosophical metaphor literature:

The fog comes
on little cat feet.

It sits looking
over harbor and city
on silent haunches
and then moves on. (Sandburg 1916)

Sperber and Wilson comment on the second line:

On little cat feet' evokes an array of implications having to do with
silence, smoothness, stealth. (Sperber & Wilson 2008, p. 121)

Sperber and Wilson presumably arrive at this interpretation by some comparison between fogs and the way cats walk or the characteristics which they associate with the way cats walk. It is certainly not implausible that the poet invites the reader to some such comparison. But there is scarcely anything in the way of textual evidence neither for the form nor the content of such an interpretation. On what grounds are we supposed to assess such an interpretation and tell whether precisely these implications are the implications most reasonably actualized? Some would perhaps say that no assessment is called for, the poem's being meant to be nothing but evocative. Sperber and Wilson note:

It is not part of the explicit content of the poem that the fog comes
silently, or smoothly, or stealthily. (Sperber & Wilson 2008, p.
122)

One could of course ask whether it is part of the content even at the implicit level. There is after all nothing to indicate this, apart from the interpreter's imagination.

In the face of such uncertainty, it is perhaps safer to say that the second line of the poem attributes the role of a cat to the fog. This role attribution permits the poet to go on talking about the fog in cat terms. In the second stanza, the fog is consequently said to sit and look and have haunches. The question seems to be, if the fog is a cat, what is it for the fog to sit looking on silent haunches? It is difficult to know. Perhaps it has something to do with the way of cats: they have a profound rest and at an unpredictable point of time, they move on. Sometimes it is easy to find counterparts, sometimes it is difficult and not necessary. Most of the uncertainty remains and the interpreter's imagination is certainly involved. But if the poet extends an invitation, I think it is rather with respect to answering the question above than to exploring similarities. Do similarities really contribute to our understanding and appreciation of the poem?

For Sperber and Wilson metaphor creates the concept of a property and attributes it. According to the play account, metaphor attributes a role and serves as the occasion for making further utterances in the wake of this role attribution.

5.6. Clothing of Delight

In Blake's 'The Lamb', the speaker says:

Gave thee clothing of delight,
Softest clothing wooly bright; (Blake 1789, pl. 8)

In a textbook article on figurative language, McLaughlin explains the functioning of metaphor by means of this example:

The "proper" meaning of "clothing" clearly doesn't apply to the lamb. Wool is part of the lamb's body, not something added over it for warmth and beauty, as clothing is. And because this meaning obviously does not apply, we have to ask what elements of the meaning of "clothing" do apply to the lamb's wool. It keeps him warm; it gives him beauty. (McLaughlin 1990, p. 82)

McLaughlin's account is typical of the way many theorists think of metaphor. The word does not make immediate sense and therefore it is assumed that it suggests similarities between what it properly denotes and what it is applied to in the context at hand. Since these similarities are not stated by the author, they are to be worked out by the interpreter. The similarity between the lamb's wool and clothing is proposed to consist in the wool's keeping warm and giving beauty. But apart from there being no

actual evidence that the speaker is concerned with any similarities between the lamb's wool and clothing, McLaughlin himself gives reasons to downplay the importance of establishing such similarities, for he immediately continues:

It makes the lamb seem almost human, as it does seem to the child, who doesn't think of the differences between himself and the lamb but, rather, of the category they share as god's creatures. (McLaughlin 1990, p. 82)

Here, it seems to me, McLaughlin touches on the real function of the metaphor in question: anthropomorphizing the lamb. This however is not something which is effectuated by the use of 'clothing' alone. Let us look at the whole first stanza:

Little Lamb who made thee
Dost thou know who made thee
Gave thee life & bid thee feed,
By the stream & o'er the mead;
Gave thee clothing of delight,
Softest clothing wooly bright;
Gave thee such a tender voice,
Making all the vales rejoice:
Little Lamb who made thee

Dost thou know who made thee (Blake 1789, pl. 8)

‘Clothing’ appears as an element in a series of acts: ‘gave thee life’, ‘bid thee feed’, ‘gave thee clothing of delight’, ‘gave thee such a tender voice’. We might be tempted to ask, ‘How is the lamb’s wool similar to clothing?’ and ‘How is the lamb’s sound like a voice?’ and our imagination will be able to come up with similarities. In some of the cases we can find analogues or take the actions to be qualified in a certain way. At a more global level, however, the function of applying seemingly distinctively human predicates to the lamb seems to be to suggest that God treats lambs on a par with humans. This is something which is suggested by the whole series and requires our not confining our attention to singular phrases. Furthermore it is something which does not require us to figure out how wool is similar to clothing, in so far as the application of clothing, a human artefact, to the lamb makes the lamb appear human independently of any similarities between clothing and wool.

McLaughlin’s remarks go in opposing directions. On the one hand, ‘clothing’ is thought to suggest that the lamb’s wool keeps her warm and gives her beauty. On the other hand, ‘clothing’ is thought to suggest that the lamb is human. These two different suggestions are quite independent of each other and in so far as we take an interest in the one, we need not take an interest in the other. Thus it is not clear that the similarity account and the

play account should be thought to interact. The textual support in this case goes in one direction only.

5.7. The Cheeks of the Pillow

This counts as the first metaphor in Proust's *Search*.

I would rest my cheeks tenderly against the lovely cheeks of the pillow, which, full and fresh, are like the cheeks of our childhood.
[*J'appuyais tendrement mes joues contre les belles joues de l'oreiller qui, pleines et fraîches, sont comme les joues de notre enfance.*]
(Proust 1913, p. 4 [4])

Some think that Proust speaks of 'the cheeks of the pillow' in order to suggest that the pillow is soft. Such a reading does not make the metaphor very interesting. Instead it seems promising to conceive of the metaphor as enabling Proust to talk of the pillow as lovely, full and fresh, i.e. to apply cheek terms to the pillow. Here it is not a matter of counterparts. The metaphor serves as a pretext for ascribing predicates to an object which rather belong to another object and thereby make the object appear in a certain way. The application of cheek terms to the pillow, which is permitted by the initial casting of the pillow as a cheek, serves to make the pillow appear as an erotic object. There is perhaps similarity in the vicinity:

both the pillow and cheeks are erotic objects. But this similarity is not an effect simply of talking about the ‘cheeks of the pillow’, but is only suggested by the predicates the application of which is permitted by first talking about the cheeks of the pillow. The play initiated by the metaphor consists in eroticizing the pillow, irrespective of any softness.

6. Conclusion

In some cases, a speaker does not utter a metaphorical sentence ‘S is P’ in order to invite the hearer to compare the subject and the predicate and work out similarities. Rather the speaker casts the subject as the predicate and thereby initiates her own discursive play consisting in applying further predicates to the subject. Such an application may be used to represent features and actions of the subject or to make the subject appear in a certain way. A metaphorical sentence may certainly constitute an image and as such it may work upon the hearer’s imagination, but no similarities are implied by the mere ‘S is P’ predication; content, implications, suggestions are wholly located in the surrounding discourse. According to the play account, what matters to such metaphors is not the hearer’s associations, but the speaker’s further utterances; not what the hearer imagines, but what the speaker says; not unstated and endless similarities, but certain more or less determinate features. Focus is shifted from the metaphorical sentence itself to what it permits the speaker to go on saying. The play account of metaphor

which I have here started exploring seems to capture a distinct function of metaphor, in addition to the functions theorized by the *ad hoc* and similarity accounts already in existence.

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