

eth-century abstract painting draw considerably on the debates about ornament in the nineteenth century. True, he occasionally offers contemporary abstractions as examples of some of the effects discussed. However, Gombrich draws a fundamental distinction between such matters and his aim: "Remembering my own normal reaction to decoration before I had embarked on this investigation, I was tempted to call this book 'The Unregarded Art.' . . . Painting, like speaking, implicitly demands attention whether or not it receives it. Decoration cannot make this demand. It normally depends for its effect on the fluctuating attention we can spare while we scan our surroundings" (p. 116). So Gombrich, no great fan of abstract painting (1963), has chosen to complement his study of realistic representation in *Art and Illusion* with a study not of those abstractions and semiabstractions that hang on the important walls of important museums and mansions, but of the ones that hug coffee spoons and architectural columns, the ones we take for granted.

One could regret this. I confess myself to a moment of regret when, halfway through *The Sense of Order*, I happened to visit the Fogg Art Museum at Harvard University. On display was a Calder piece, standing on the floor about chest high, its top a horizontal gesture of wires and metal plates pivoting on the base. For some reason, I found it wholly engaging. Not only did it allow, even compel, my regard, but it departed strikingly from the perceptual armamentarium of ornamental design. There was little repetition in a narrow sense. There was calculated asymmetry. The curvilinearities were complex, but within the reach of vision to know them one by one and all together, a feast for the eye where one *could* consume every dish, to reverse Gombrich's expression. "This," I said to myself, "has nothing to do with the sense of order."

But in the end there were no regrets. The old saying about gift horses seems relevant here. E. H. Gombrich has made us his gift, and there is no need to grumble about how he could have done this or could have done that. He has, in fact, chosen a neglected corner of our vision and sought to illuminate it for us. The point is nicely made by the way he frames his discussion—with a discussion of a picture frame. At the close of his introduction, Gombrich has a few remarks to make about an elaborate picture frame, circa 1700, surrounding the *Madonna della Sedia* by Raphael. Gombrich says, in part, ". . . on the face of it, it seems an extraordinarily pointless activity to expend so much skill and labour on carving and gilding these festoons with laurel leaves and berries, stretched between fictitious curly brackets of extraordinary elaboration, which fasten them between shell-shaped forms" (p. 15). But by the end of the last chapter, Gombrich is ready to return with his readers of more informed perception to this same frame. "To the reader who has shared this journey with me it should have looked pro-

gressively less puzzling. We recognize in it a version of the cartouche with four animated motifs oriented toward the field of force they enhance. They are progenies of Gorgon's heads . . ." And so on. Yes, the frame has become more meaningful, one's vision less naïve, in consequence of the rite of passage imposed by *The Sense of Order*.

Note

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That there is an essentially metaphorical component in many diverse realms of symbolic behavior has become a popular, and even fashionable, concept, and thus it seems particularly timely to consider some of the philosophical implications of the concept of metaphor itself. The publication of this latest collection of essays, which had originally appeared as an issue of *Critical Inquiry*, should serve to alert scholars to the richness of contemporary thinking on metaphor that can generally benefit discussions of symbolic phenomena. While much of the debate in this volume is aimed explicitly at problems in literary communication, this approach should not prevent a fruitful extension to related issues in other fields. Furthermore, the concept of metaphor is not only relevant to the objects we seek to understand but sheds considerable light on the very process of analysis. Metaphor, then, seems doubly relevant: It clarifies the structure of certain forms of symbolic communication and theories about communication as well.

Many readers, however, may encounter some difficulty in reading these essays: A good deal of knowl-

edge about metaphor as well as philosophy is by and large assumed; the reader approaching this book as an introduction will occasionally be both frustrated and baffled. On the other hand, the greater one's exposure to the history of the debate on metaphor, the more certain is the feeling that the present collection does not significantly broaden the scope of that debate. Given the Foreword's promise, one might have hoped that a truly interdisciplinary perspective would emerge. Such a perspective would gain theoretical sophistication and force from the recent contributions of theories on play, humor, ritual, and linguistic anthropology, to name but a few potentially exciting resources. Without in any way diminishing the value of aesthetic and literary theory to the subject of metaphor, it is fair to say that the exclusion of divergent points of view restricts the boundaries of the discussion. True, there are offerings from developmental psychology, art, and theology, but in crucial ways these accept the basic logic of the philosophical debate and do not change its shape in the way that, for example, Bateson's communicational theory does (Bateson 1972). For that matter, certain philosophical objections to theories of meaning and literal language would gain momentum from recent developments in sociolinguistics, where notions of ordinary language have been attacked (cf. Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 1976).

The collection can be thought of as addressing three basic, and not unrelated, questions. The first asks to what extent, and in what manner, metaphor can be said to possess cognitive content. This issue is best encountered in the essays by Paul Ricoeur and Donald Davidson, whose views stand in opposition to one another, but reverberations of it are heard throughout all the essays. In part, the second question forms a response to the first: To what extent can metaphor be best explained by its contextual use in social discourse? Here we find suggestions from psychology, philosophy, and rhetoric that much is to be gained from a context-dependent notion of metaphorical meaning. The other essays can be seen to explore the consequences that various root metaphors have in their respective disciplines and to pose the related question of whether there can exist a discourse not fundamentally permeated by metaphor.

Historically, the first question has been the crucial one, with centuries of scholars expelling metaphor from the province of cognitive discourse. Vico and the romantic movement posed the first vigorous challenge to this traditional prejudice, insisting that language's original roots are primarily metaphorical and furthermore claiming a primacy of the poetic function in revealing the world as it is experienced; however, the romantic view still retained the traditional exclusion of metaphor from intellectual activity, even if it reversed the priority of that activity. It was in this century, perhaps when scientific discourse became increasingly

self-conscious about its use of explanatory models, that the role of metaphor in cognition earned legitimacy. Most would locate the pivotal text as Max Black's *Models and Metaphors*, in which the interaction theory of metaphor was proposed, claiming, among other things, that metaphor was not reducible to literal assertions and that metaphor does not so much formulate an antecedent similarity as create it.

In this intellectual era the notion of truth as created rather than discovered has found ready acceptance. Still, the status of such newly generated "meaning" or "truth" does remain problematic in relation to conventionally accepted, or literal, truths. One can reject metaphor in a way that is clearly forbidden with literal assertions, and the grounds on which one rejects the two differ in important ways. To participate in an imaginative vision is perhaps to gain certain insight, but tempered by the understanding that such insight may be rejected. Donald Davidson's essay insists that we not confuse such insight with meaning. His claim is that there is no hidden message in metaphor apart from its literal meaning. Theories of metaphor have mistaken the effect of the metaphor, which is to stimulate and invite comparison, for an encoded content. "The common error," claims Davidson, "is to fasten on the contents of the thoughts a metaphor provokes and to read these contents into the metaphor itself." Such a hard-headed stance certainly makes a star of Davidson, prompting heated responses from such worthy opponents as Nelson Goodman and Max Black. The predictable problems of the ensuing dialogue result, in part, from highly divergent notions of "meaning" as well as "cognitive content." Karsten Harries's neat reminder that certain slang expressions ("He's an ac-dc") clearly do express cognitive content disposes of part of Davidson's argument. Harries is subtle enough to realize, however, that to the extent that Davidson is dealing with more complex examples of poetic metaphor, he may indeed be onto something, since the "aboutness" of such metaphors is always elusive (cf. Sperber 1977).

Paul Ricoeur takes the position that metaphor does have the capacity to provide untranslatable information and yield true insights about reality, and that it has this capacity by virtue of certain psychological processes, those of imagination and feeling. His thesis, in brief, is that the metaphoric form of "split reference" is structurally analogous to the processes of imagination and feeling, which themselves constitute the complete metaphorical process. Both imagination and feeling involve a "suspension" of literal systems of reference and emotion by which we are able to maintain the tensional viewpoint required by metaphor and assimilate new meanings. The metaphorical process allows us to actively shape and participate in the creation and articulation of meaning in ways denied us by ordinary language, whose meanings have already

been given to us. In metaphor, the new semantic congruence is both "felt" and "seen," that is, "We are included in the process as knowing subjects" (p. 154). Through this, we become aware of aspects of reality "which cannot be expressed in terms of the objects referred to in ordinary language" (p. 156). While Ricoeur's debt to Heidegger is clear, his theory also bears interesting similarities to Michael Polanyi's theory of knowledge in *The Tacit Dimension*, and a comparison of Polanyi's "tacit knowing" to Ricoeur's metaphorical process might further illuminate the question of how metaphor functions in cognition.

So intriguing are the structural properties of metaphor that they have overshadowed other aspects of the picture. Recently, however, theorists have shifted from a purely semiotic approach to one focusing on contextual features and the relationship between the speakers, touching upon the interrelationship between systems of signification and communication. The essays by Cohen, Davidson, and Booth reflect this trend with varying degrees of success.

Ted Cohen's essay reflects the problem alluded to earlier, that of a philosophy unaided by theoretical positions on human communication. He is vulnerable to this charge for the simple reason that his analysis, dealing with the establishment of intimacy through metaphor, might have benefited greatly from such theory. Cohen finds metaphors like jokes in that they both presuppose prior knowledge on the part of the speakers, and both serve to establish a sense of bonding from the acknowledgment of such knowledge. Literature on humor enlightens us as to the multiple complexities of such relationships, making Cohen's analysis seem oddly naïve (Fry 1963).

Wayne Booth's discussion of metaphor from the traditional approach of rhetoric is a refreshing reminder that the functional perspective on language did not arise with speech act theory; furthermore, his definition of metaphor as "all symbolic inventions that are intended to be taken nonliterally" permits him an admirably broad vision of the subject (p. 50).

The power of contextual factors is given empirical support from developmental studies of metaphorical competence. Howard Gardner and Ellen Winner suggest that children's understanding of metaphors is enhanced by embedding them in a situational context rather than drawing upon prior lexical knowledge. Also of interest are their studies of brain-damaged patients, which raise intriguing possibilities. Asked to match simple tropes with appropriate pictures, aphasiacs were able to make the correct selection while remaining incapable of paraphrasing the same metaphor; right-hemisphere patients, on the other hand, displayed the opposite tendency and offered accurate paraphrase with no corresponding ability to select the appropriate picture. Gardner and Winner conclude that "the neuropsychological evidence suggests that

both the pragmatic and featural perspectives, taken together, have some validity, with the crucial variable being the kinds of tasks posed and responses required" (p. 138).

The remainder of the essays illustrate how metaphor permeates different realms of social discourse. Paul de Man's reading of Locke, Condillac, and Kant finds their philosophical positions on metaphor fraught with figurative language. Analyzing these metaphors as a result of particular rhetorical strategies, he concludes that philosophy "to the extent that it is dependent on figuration" is literary, and cannot be understood properly unless such repressed metaphors are laid bare. Karsten Harries similarly calls attention to Heidegger's writings on the ways metaphor shapes philosophy, making "explicit the fact that philosophical texts refer us less to reality than back to other philosophical texts" (p. 83).

It should be emphasized that to admit the metaphorical component in disciplines such as science or philosophy does not impoverish the theories they generate. Granted, the presence of repressed metaphor alerts us to certain normative commitments, but this should not diminish our appreciation of the explanatory function of models in general. Nor should it commit us to the hapless relativism that scientific theories are, at best, arbitrary fictions. As Karsten Harries argues, the modern recognition of the impossibility of an unmediated reality does not render the belief in objectivity itself meaningless. On the contrary, the very ability to identify, analyze, and evaluate individual perspectives leads us to pursue a viewpoint which would permit a truly objective means of encountering reality. Lacking any belief in this possibility would undermine the basis of scientific knowledge altogether (Polanyi 1967). Furthermore the commitment to objectivity demands that we explore scientific models in terms of what they can reveal and explain about observed phenomena (Hesse 1966:162). By affirming the legitimate role metaphor plays in intellectual activity, we can better understand the insights and achievements of scientific theory, not confusing theory with literal description or carelessly rejecting it in the name of relativism.

The role of metaphor is further clarified by David Tracy's detailed account of religious and theological use of metaphor. Although a reader's unfamiliarity with contemporary theology may make Tracy's a particularly difficult essay, it is worth reading for its successful integration of the interaction theory of metaphor with concrete textual analysis. Arguing that the study of metaphor is central to the understanding of religious experience and thinking, Tracy notes:

The statement "God is love" does not say literally what God is, but *produces* a metaphorical meaning for what God is like. In this redescriptive sense, the statement defines who, for the Christian, God *is*. [p. 103]

Tracy convincingly demonstrates that a view of metaphor that refuses its capacity to generate new meanings cannot do justice to the role metaphor plays in religious thinking.

Caution must be taken, though, in extending Tracy's analysis to a more general notion of the truth value of metaphor. In the case of Scripture, it seems clear that metaphor does indeed help to establish a world. But, one is forced to wonder with Karsten Harries, "to what extent does the scriptural paradigm help to illuminate poetry in general and, more especially, the poetry of this godless age?" (p. 172). Harries argues that contemporary poetry as well as art stands in a radically different relation to reality than do the words of Scripture, consequently producing a different use of metaphor. His discussion traces some of the movements in notions of poetic unity and metaphor. He locates the telling moment in the transition from the traditional mimetic theory, which viewed art as about reality and saw its object as potentially transcending human understanding, to the aesthetic view of art, which insists that art be autotelic and resistant to mimesis. Referentiality, according to the aesthetic view, threatens the telos of the work of art insofar as it relates to a reality outside art. Thus, the purpose of art is to be a "thing" in the world, to resist its own inherently metaphorical structure. The work of art is always at once a material object and a communication, but the pursuit of presence seeks, in effect, to repress the latter. Insofar as referentiality seems to be unavoidable, the pursuit of such presence inevitably creates a tension, which Harries relates to the prevalence of collision metaphor in modern poetry, where ordinary meanings of words are subverted altogether. The paradoxical reversal of this is that as poetry, as well as art, approaches this extreme denial of meaning

it may acquire a revelatory power all its own: from the ruins of literal sense emerges not a new semantic congruence but a silence that is heard as the language of transcendence. [p. 172]

Furthermore, Harries's hermeneutical account makes it clear that metaphor is not always best confined to the domain of pragmatics and the "overly restricted theory of meaning on which it rests" (p. 169). A theory of meaning that denies that sedimentation of rich meanings that attach themselves to words and symbols also denies us access to the potentialities of artistic and poetic works. There is a peculiar process at work when these associations are declared somehow less "real" than univocal meanings. It is important to note that such deliberations about meaning do not have merely philosophical consequences, especially for those of us who are interested in artistic interpretation. Not only is the potential meaning of a text a fundamental presupposition upon which acts of in-

terpretation rest; it is also the case that textual analysis, by suppressing the availability of multivocal interpretation, is restricted and, in many cases, unjustified. Our commonsense notions inform us that we can "miss the point" of a metaphor, a film, or a painting, and we believe that additional information and knowledge can enlighten us. Lacking such notions, art historical interpretation becomes absurd. Thus, the question of metaphor is inevitably drawn back into the larger issues of meaning and communication which must support it.

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As the interest of social scientists in the expressive forms of culture increases, new methods are needed to analyze these forms on a scientific basis. Researchers in dance and body movement have such a tool in Labanotation, a rigorous and highly developed system for the analysis and notation of all forms of movement.

Labanotation (Hutchinson 1954) is the trade name for a system of movement notation developed by Rudolf Laban, a dance educator-scholar born in Bratislava in 1879 (Thorton 1971), who revolutionized the dance world through both his philosophy of movement and his pragmatic approaches to movement-related problems. Nahumck has presented us with an introduction to this system designed for dancer and re-