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Metaphor between the cognitivist paradigm
and the hermeneutic paradigm

PhD THESIS

SUMMARY

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Contents

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Abstract

Metaphor is a widely discussed topic nowadays with, scholars from numerous fields taking a serious interest in it. Our attention to the subject was drawn by articles written by George Lakoff, and a little research into the problem brought up a wide array of texts. The topic is fascinating and we approach it all the time with renewed interest.

In the plethora of material that we discovered, it was difficult to decide upon a certain subject; however, we chose to approach the two most important lines of research: cognitive and hermeneutic, in a comparative fashion, in order to bring out that which is common to them. This was an important task because in all the material we have researched, not one other study has tried such a feat. Therefore, we wanted to see if the

two lines of research were indeed so incompatible that collaboration between them was completely out of the question.

Our hypothesis is that collaboration is possible, and as such we proceeded to the actual demonstration of this fact. However, the results were a bit surprising, as they were not entirely as expected. It turned out that direct collaboration is not something entirely doable because the two disciplines discussed are interested in different things. But borrowing is encouraged and even desirable.

Another hypothesis concerns the second chapter of the paper and it regards some accusations that Gerard Steen has brought to literary critics who, in his view, claim to be writing studies about reception but are in fact speaking about interpretation. As far as this point goes, we found out that Steen is mainly right, but that the scholars do mention reception as well, although perhaps to a lesser degree.

Steen also says that these authors speak more about ideal readers, as literary critics are, and not real readers. Literary critics have a lot of time to dedicate to reading and to finding and analysing metaphors, while ordinary readers have less time and less patience. The latter must find a personal interest in books in order to be determined to read them. This is why Steen is much more interested in the mental processes entailed by real readers and not by ideal readers. In his view, real readers reveal much more about the actual process of reading than ideal readers do.

In this respect, Steen is right again, but not entirely. Although the writers do speak mostly about ideal readers or even textual constructs, they do leave room for the arbitrary that is brought into the picture by real readers. They say that the textual constructs are blueprints, and they are actualised differently by readers. Iser says that it would not even be desirable for readers to actualise the blueprints in the same way, because then all interpretations would be the same.

Our research methods include philosophical investigation, analytical undertakings, interpretative and comprehensive undertakings, argumentative undertakings and philosophical reflection.

The research was structured into five chapters out of the desire to cover as much ground as possible. We wanted to lay out the ideas of some of the most influential scholars that have written about metaphor,and to facilitate the discussion of authors who

borrow ideas from them and that is the purpose of the first chapter, which is about I. A. Richards, Max Black, Monroe C. Beardsley, Paul Searle and Donald Davidson. Also, they are important names in the history of the study of this topic, and that is why such a chapter, which could lay the ground for more complex discussions, is essential. This chapter also makes an introduction into the problems which are discussed in connection with metaphor, and displays the usual arguments are that are waved against some of the main postulates.

I got the idea for the second chapter from Gerard Steen's book, *Understanding figurative language*, a cognitivist book, where the author investigates the actual mental processes that are involved in the understanding of metaphor in literature. In this book, Steen affirms that studies which declare themselves to be about the process of reception are actually about interpretation and that the actual readers are not the ones taken into account but ideal readers, which gives no insight into the processing of information. And these statements made me curious, and so I proceeded to find out if they were true. It turns out that indeed that basic accusations are valid, but that the literary critics who wrote those studies do not completely ignore the issues Steen talks about. They do indeed talk mostly about ideal readers, but they do leave room for actual ones.

In the next chapter, we approach some of the cognitivist models of metaphor processing and highlight some of their main benefits and problems. In the analysis and comparison of three basic cognitivist models of metaphor processing, the result was that the best model was the one that combined features of the two most important types of cognitivist models, one of them being comparison models. The three models analysed are George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's conceptual metaphor model, Sam Glucksberg and Boaz Keysar's interactive property attribution model and Dedre Gentner and Peter Wolff's structural alignment model. And the most comprehensive model of the three, although to a certain extent, they all fulfill their task pretty well, is DedreGentner and Peter Wolff's.

Chapter IV contains some of the most relevant accounts of metaphor that I have encountered in philosophy. They are also among the newest. The first and the last constitute a sort of interactionist-hermeneutical theories, which were the ones used for the actual comparison; the second one comes from analytical philosophy, and perhaps has

more in common with the cognitive models. Carl R. Hausman was the first one considered, and his theory was interesting to us because he proposes a new account of interactionism. As far as the problems of analogy and paraphrasability are concerned, he completely excludes them from a discussion about metaphor in order for the informativity of metaphor not to be compromised. Roger M. White was interesting to us because he does not limit his metaphor to only two terms: one metaphorical and one non-metaphorical. Instead, he speaks of bifurcated words which replace metaphorical words, and can be many more than just one per metaphor. From this point of view, this theory might be more advantageous than those that postulate one or two terms. And Paul Ricoeur was not a scholar that could be left out, as his name appears in many of the books on metaphor. His approach was valuable in terms of articulating a hermeneutic view of metaphor. He is also very unorthodox as compared to other interactionists, which makes him truly unique. One of the ways in which he strays from the other voices that speak about metaphor is by the fact that for him, similarity can be a favourable thing.

And in the last chapter we focused on the actual comparison between the two views which had been laid out in detail. It turns out that they actually have many things in common. For instance, both Lakoff and Ricoeur speak about the origins of language being metaphorical. Or, Sam Glucksberg claims to be espousing an interaction theory, which in the end turns out to be not so interactionist.

We believe that the comparison between the two paradigms has been very revealing, with several common points being discovered. Although *prima facie* cognitive science does not seem to have much in common with hermeneutics, it turns out that there are several points in which the two meet, and that although they use different languages, they often speak about the same things.

Although the results of this comparison seem to be favourable, we believe that collaboration between the two disciplines would be hard to achieve, and only if the main philosophical tenets are ignored. We must also mention that cognitive science is already in collaboration with a type of philosophy, and this is analytical philosophy. However, if elements were to be borrowed and adapted from one side to the other, it might be very fruitful.

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