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# THE INADEQUACY OF PARAPHRASE IS THE DOGMA OF METAPHOR

BY

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**Abstract:** Philosophers have alleged that paraphrases of metaphors are inadequate. They have presented this inadequacy as a datum predicted by, and thus a reason to accept, particular accounts of ‘metaphorical meanings.’ But to what, specifically, does this inadequacy claim amount? I argue that, if this assumption is to have any bearing on the metaphor debate, it must be construed as the comparative claim that paraphrases of metaphors are inadequate compared to paraphrases of literal utterances. But the evidence philosophers have offered does not support the comparative inadequacy of paraphrases of metaphors. I offer my own empirical evidence against the inadequacy assumption.

How would you paraphrase the metaphor, ‘Music is the universal language?’ Does it suggest *that music is understood by everyone*, or just *almost everyone*? Maybe it ‘means’ *that enough speakers of music reside amongst each group to facilitate its use as a conduit across cultural barriers*. Does it invoke resemblances between musical and linguistic meter, or between melody and intonation? A moment’s reflection suggests that, to fully understand even such a relatively simple metaphor, one might need to work through numerous such obvious resemblances. However, analogous questions arise when we reflect on how we would paraphrase similar literal utterances, such as, ‘French is the language of Quebec?’ Does it convey *that everyone in Quebec understands French*, or just *almost everyone*? Does it impart a certain official standing to the language?

Some have argued that the difficulty of paraphrasing metaphors suggests and is explained by the absence of ‘metaphorical meanings.’ One cannot write a sentence that means the same thing a metaphor metaphorically means if a metaphor lacks metaphorical meaning.<sup>1</sup> But I contend that the inadequacy of metaphor paraphrases should bear on debates over

metaphorical meaning only insofar as the purported inadequacy is a comparative one. We should not draw specific conclusions about metaphors from the general inadequacy of paraphrases. I then attempt to show by experimental means that paraphrases of metaphors and literal utterances are equally inadequate.<sup>2</sup>

Though centered on the theory of metaphor, the present discussion of paraphrasability is likely to be of relatively broad interest. I defend the relevance of experimental evidence to at least one philosophical topic (metaphorical meaning). And reflection on the present assessment of paraphrases of metaphors and literal utterances is also likely to have implications beyond the theory of metaphor, for the theory of meaning and philosophy of language generally. I will briefly consider some such implications at the end of this paper.

### 1. *Introducing the ‘inadequacy assumption’*

It is often assumed that paraphrases of metaphorical utterances are inadequate. Among the theorists who have endorsed this ‘Inadequacy Assumption’ (*IA*), in one form or another, are Max Black (1954), Donald Davidson (1978), John Searle (1979), Merrie Bergmann (1982), Richard Moran (1989), Marga Reimer (2001), and Samuel Guttenplan (2005). In this section I will attempt to explain why *IA* matters. That explanation turns on a distinction between two general types of views about metaphor and the different considerations that favor each view over the other.

Accounts of metaphor divide into the two mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive groups that I want to discuss based on how they respond to a single question: Does understanding a metaphor consist in grasping a particular proposition distinct from that expressed by the utterance understood literally? But before we answer this question, we should clarify some of the concepts it invokes. First, what is a *proposition*? Whatever else they may be, for our purposes, it is enough to say that propositions are truth-evaluable and that some propositions are the contents of some thoughts, sentences, and utterances. Though we need not endorse it, the standard view, whereby propositions are functions from possible worlds to truth-values, accords with this paper.

Let us now turn to a more difficult issue: What is it for a proposition to be *expressed by an utterance understood literally*? To get clearer on this notion, we should break down the question. First, what is it for a proposition to be expressed by an utterance? What I mean by the idea of a proposition expressed by an utterance, and (as will become clear in subsequent discussion) what most philosophers who have taken up *IA* seem to have had in mind, is a proposition intended by speakers and – in successful instances of communication – intuitively grasped by hearers, which serves

as a primary contribution to the calculation of conversational implicatures in ordinary instances of linguistic communication. I additionally agree with most contemporary philosophers of language that such propositions are not (at least not generally) the purely compositional contents of spoken sentences. As contemporary research makes clear, these intuitive utterance meanings differ from sentence contents derivable via composition and traditional linguistic sources of context sensitivity.<sup>3</sup> Nor do such utterance meanings appear to be implicatures, derivable by Gricean principles of communication from more primitive, propositional sentence contents. Though the details of the picture are still under debate, it is now largely accepted that the generation of many of the primary propositions (e.g. non-implicatures) expressed by utterances of sentences in specific contexts – or utterance meanings – involves pragmatic adjustment of sentence components that have not traditionally been thought of as indexicals.<sup>4</sup> It involves pragmatic adjustment of expressions which are not part of what I will henceforth refer to as the basic set.

Having made some headway into the question of what it is for a proposition to be expressed by an utterance, I will now say something about what it is for an utterance to be understood literally. As just discussed, derivation of intuitive utterance meanings involves contextual specification of expressions outside the basic set. Philosophers and linguists sometimes use ‘literal’ in a technical way, to exclude all expressed contents the derivation of which involves non-traditional, linguistic context sensitivity. But this use does not accord with the ordinary distinction between the literal and the figurative, which is at issue in this paper. In most contexts, for instance, deriving the intuitive meaning of this utterance – ‘I’ve got to *grab* a cab. My plane leaves at *five p.m.*’ – would involve non-traditional context sensitivity. To understand the utterance, the expression *grab* would have to be adjusted away from its lexicalized meaning. Although *five p.m.* has traditionally been thought to be indexed to a time zone of utterance, in this context it admits of further sensitivity: The speaker would not have uttered falsely had her plane been scheduled to leave at 4:55, rather than five p.m. precisely. Despite such non-traditional sensitivity, we would *ordinarily* classify such utterance meanings as literal. What criteria this ordinary distinction between literal and figurative language rests upon is not obvious.<sup>5</sup> Presently, it is important to note only that it exists. The question at issue, then, is this: Does understanding a metaphor consist in grasping an intuitively non-literal utterance meaning?

Grasping a propositional content in thought has been identified with having a cognitive state. Then, following the usual terminology within the literature, we can call those who deny that understanding a metaphor consists in having a cognitive state with a specific propositional content distinct from that expressed by the metaphorical utterance understood literally, *non-cognitivists*. According to this specification, Donald David-

son (1978), Marga Reimer (2001), and Richard Rorty (1987), among others, are non-cognitivist. *Cognitivists*, such as Max Black (1954), Paul Grice (1989), John Searle (1979), and Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson (1995), are those who claim that understanding a metaphor consists in having a cognitive state with a propositional content distinct from that expressed by the metaphorical utterance understood literally.<sup>6</sup>

We might further elucidate the two positions by way of an example. A cognitivist would claim that understanding the metaphor, 'Jonah is Napoleon Bonaparte,' consists at least in part in grasping a particular proposition distinct from that literally expressed by the utterance. Perhaps it consists in grasping the proposition that, 'Jonah is a brilliant strategist who achieves his objectives efficiently.' On the other hand, while a non-cognitivist might claim cognitive states are required in or antecedent to the process of understanding the metaphor, she would nonetheless deny that understanding it *consists in* the having of a cognitive state with a specific content distinct from that expressed by the metaphor understood literally. Instead, a non-cognitivist *might* hold that you come to understand the metaphor about Jonah when you come to 'see' – in a way not equivalent to grasping some proposition – his relation to his goals as you 'see' Napoleon's conquest of Egypt.

There are several reasons to prefer cognitivist accounts of metaphor. In the first place, we often seem to disagree about the truth or falsity of metaphorical utterances when the literal truth or falsity of the utterance is beyond dispute. You call Roscoe, the bouncer at our favorite bar, a pit bulldog. I counter, 'You lie. He's a pussycat!' Or, for another example, consider that epistemologists disagree as to whether the justificatory structure of belief is a web or a building. Cognitivism is well placed to make sense of such disputes as to the truth or falsity of the non-literal meaning of a metaphor: These are disputes over the truth-evaluable contents in which metaphor understanding consists.<sup>7</sup>

Another reason to prefer cognitivism has to do with the role of metaphors in cognitive exercises. For exercises involving the manipulation of propositional contents, such as constructing and following an argument, the propositional content employed at any stage matters. If a particular proposition is not deployed at a particular point in the argument, the sought conclusion will not be justifiably reached. Yet, for many arguments, no literal statement of the requisite proposition is made at the appropriate place in a statement of the argument. Rather a metaphor alone is supplied, which, if understood literally, would provide a wildly inappropriate proposition, one which could not serve to justifiably deliver the sought conclusion. For example, a philosopher might contend that if tying one's shoes is reasonably regarded as a complex behavior, then it must be conceivably decomposable into certain sub-functions. She might then claim that it makes sense to conceive of tying one's shoes as being

accomplished by a team of little men who live in one's head, not by a single little man.<sup>8</sup> And she might thereby conclude that tying one's shoes is decomposable into certain sub-functions. It's debatable whether the conclusion of this argument is justifiably reached. However, this would not be even debatable if the second premise of this argument were not understood figuratively. Cognitivists need make no additional assumptions in order to explain the potentially effective nature of this and other arguments that involve metaphors. They can contend that the truth-evaluable, linguistically expressible proposition in which understanding the metaphor consists is the relevant premise in this potentially effective argument.

In fact, the previous consideration suggests another reason to prefer cognitivism about metaphors: the theory is better integrated with theories about surrounding matters than is non-cognitivism. Not only constructing and understanding arguments, but also expressing and comprehending linguistic phenomena in general are explained in terms of grasping truth-evaluable content. A theory which conceives of metaphor understanding as consisting in the grasping of propositional contents is better integrated with these theories of related linguistic phenomena than is a theory that suggests understanding a metaphor consists in non-cognitive seeing-as.

Although these reasons tell in favor of a cognitivist account of metaphor, some philosophers have held that such a theory also comes with certain explanatory burdens. Of particular interest is the purported requirement for any cognitivist theory to explain the inadequacy of metaphorical paraphrases. Non-cognitivists appear to have the upper hand in explaining this purported inadequacy: Truth-evaluable, linguistic expressions that are meant to convey metaphorical significance fail because that significance is not essentially truth-evaluable. Some non-cognitivists have built an argument against cognitivism from this purported inadequacy (see Davidson, 1978; Reimer, 2001). They have argued that if metaphors had propositional, non-literal meanings which we grasped in understanding these metaphorically, then we would be able to paraphrase those meanings.<sup>9</sup> We are not able to paraphrase such purported meanings, these non-cognitivists have claimed – though we may perhaps gesture vaguely, or articulate some limited set of things the metaphor has made us notice. They have concluded that metaphors do not have propositional meanings other than their literal meanings. That is, they have concluded that non-cognitivism is correct. So one reason *IA* is important is that it figures in a prominent argument for non-cognitivism about metaphor. As I discussed briefly in the introduction, I think there are other reasons why *IA* is an important topic of research. I will touch on some of these briefly in the last section of the paper. But the main aim of this paper is to defend cognitivist accounts of metaphorical meaning against non-cognitivist arguments from *IA*, by showing that the case for *IA* is flawed, and that we have good

reason to suppose that paraphrases of metaphors are not (in the relevant way) inadequate.<sup>10</sup>

Within the theory of metaphor *IA* is primarily important because of the role it plays in the just discussed argument for non-cognitivism. But support for *IA* is surprisingly not unique to non-cognitivists. Cognitivists, too, have accepted the assumption, and felt it was something that required an explanation. What specifically have theorists of both camps meant by the inadequacy claim? And why have they endorsed it? A discussion of the former will occupy the next section. The latter will be the focus of the section after next.

## 2. *The inadequacy assumption specified*

Like the previous question about metaphor understanding, *IA* calls for specification. Two questions are of central importance: What is a paraphrase? And what is it for one to be adequate? I think a fairly intuitive notion of paraphrase has been assumed by proponents of *IA*, though it is not fully elucidated by the common adage, 'a paraphrase says the same thing a different way' (see, for example, Camp, 2006a). How similar is similar enough for two linguistic expressions (e.g. sentences or utterances) to count as saying the same thing? I take it that they need not have identical content for the one to count as a paraphrase of the other, they simply need to say much the same thing.<sup>11</sup> Identity of content could only obtain between an expression, itself, and other expressions involving substituted synonymous terms. But we accept as paraphrases expressions which do not arguably contain only synonymous terms. Furthermore, as Quine (1951) argued, the assumed possibility of synonymy may itself be nothing more than an indefensible dogma. Thus, while a fully adequate paraphrase may be one which says *exactly* the same thing as its target, many paraphrases – perhaps all actual ones – are not *fully* adequate.

Another issue that is likely to arise when we entertain the possibility of assessing the adequacy of metaphor paraphrases is what can be the target of a paraphrase. If paraphrases were construed stringently as *sentences* with *sentence meanings* very similar to those of other target *sentences*, it might make little sense to speak of a paraphrase of a metaphor, since a metaphor's metaphorical content may well not be sentence meaning. The discussion of utterance meanings, from the last section, tells against such a construal. But there are additional reasons for supposing that, in assessing the inadequacy assumption, theorists have not been imposing this stringent conception of paraphrase. Indeed, the conclusion that paraphrases are inadequate is supposed to lead us to draw conclusions regarding the nature of metaphorical meanings – conclusions about what we were attempting to capture with our purportedly inadequate paraphrases

of metaphors. The argumentative role of *IA* thus requires that we not rule out as a matter of definition the possibility of paraphrasing something other than a sentence. What we are trying to capture with a paraphrase of a metaphor is a truth-evaluable content which is the intuitive meaning of the metaphorical utterance. Our success or failure at capturing such a thing is supposed to reveal whether such a thing exists.

Though not generally explicit about it, many philosophers who endorse *IA* may also assume that a paraphrase must be fully literal. One motivation for this literality constraint may come from a desire to construe paraphrases strictly – as *sentences* with *sentence meanings* very similar to the meanings of particular target utterances. However, some theorists, such as Recanati (2004), have argued that literal meaning *is not necessarily* sentence meaning. Others, such as Stern (2000) have argued that metaphorical meaning *is* sentence meaning. If either party is right, then this motivation for the literality constraint is undermined. Furthermore, it is clear that when we assess the adequacy of a paraphrase in the manner in which proponents of *IA* ask us to (which I will discuss in the next section), we are not simply assessing the meaning of the metaphorical utterance, we are assessing the similarity between that metaphorical meaning and the meaning of the purported paraphrase *as we intuitively understand it*. But few conceptions construe sentence meanings expansively, as the meanings intuitively understood by hearers. As mentioned above, theorists as diverse as Searle (1978), Bach (1994), Sperber and Wilson (1995), and Recanati (2004) have raised objections to such expansive conceptions of sentence meaning. So it is not clear that in assessing *IA* we should adopt a strict construal of paraphrase, and it is far from certain that the literality constraint could achieve such a construal anyway. Therefore, I reject the literality constraint on paraphrases, and I will not endorse the strict construal of paraphrases.<sup>12</sup> I construe paraphrases non-committally, simply as utterances that capture target utterance meanings.

Finally, given our specific purposes in assessing *IA*, we must also maintain that two utterances that merely vary from one another in terms of the syntax of the uttered sentences cannot count as paraphrases of one another. If they did, the question of whether or not it is more difficult to paraphrase a metaphor or a literal utterance would admit of an obvious answer: neither. To see this, consider that we can capture what is significant about the metaphor, ‘God is my witness,’ by writing, ‘my witness is God,’ in salient contexts of utterance. This is no more or less difficult than it is to capture what is significant about, ‘Hank is my witness,’ by writing, ‘my witness is Hank.’ So, let’s characterize a paraphrase as an utterance (fully literal or not) that mostly captures the intuitive point of another utterance, where the uttered sentence is not merely a syntactic variant of the other uttered sentence.

I turn now to the question of what it is for a paraphrase to be adequate. Fortunately, cognitivists and non-cognitivists have been rather explicit about what they mean when they say metaphor paraphrases are inadequate – as we can see by reading their statements on the topic. For instance, of metaphor/paraphrase pairs, such as ‘Richard is a gorilla’/‘Richard is fierce, nasty, and prone to violence,’ cognitivists such as Searle (1979) write, ‘Notice that in each case we feel that the paraphrase is somehow inadequate, that something is lost’ (p. 82). Black (1954), likewise, endorses this inadequacy interpretation, writing that in a paraphrase:

... the implications, previously left for a suitable reader to educe for himself, with a nice feeling for their relative priorities and degrees of importance, are now presented explicitly as though having equal weight. The literal paraphrase inevitably says too much – and with the wrong emphasis. (p. 46)

In a similar vein, non-cognitivists such as Davidson (1978) claim that, ‘when we try to say what a metaphor “means,” we soon realize there is no end to what we want to mention’ (p. 263). Reimer (2001) alleges that, ‘even literal paraphrases of those metaphors arguably used to make assertions – metaphors like “No man is an island” or “Every dog has its day” – *invariably* fail to capture something *essential* to any metaphor that is not completely dead’ (p. 147). Clearly, many prominent philosophers who have written on the topic of metaphorical meaning agree that, even if a metaphor and its purported paraphrase have *somewhat* overlapping content, the latter often leaves out some essential idea or expresses some content very different from the content of the target metaphor, and can therefore not be considered an adequate paraphrase.

The inadequacy assumption that has been central to debates concerning metaphorical meaning is the claim that, although a metaphor and its purported paraphrase may have somewhat overlapping content, the paraphrasing utterance generally expresses content that leaves out some important idea present in, or adds in an important idea absent from, the content of the target metaphor. Because of this, purported paraphrases of metaphors inadequately paraphrase their target metaphors. At the beginning of the next section, I will argue that philosophers concerned with metaphorical meaning are committed to one important modification of *IA*: They must construe *IA* as a comparative claim. I will then examine previous philosophical assessments of *IA*.

### 3. *Existing assessments of the inadequacy assumption*

According to *IA*, purported paraphrases of metaphors are often too different from target metaphors to constitute adequate paraphrases. How



should we evaluate *IA*? Typically, philosophers have invited their readers to assess the adequacy of choice metaphor/paraphrase pairs, then, after suggesting particular ideas the paraphrases leave out or add in, they have concluded that *IA* is correct. But several chronic problems plague these existing philosophical assessments of *IA*. In this section I discuss three such problems that threaten the success of any attempted assessment of *IA*. My experimental evidence against *IA*, presented in the next section, avoids the difficulties I'll outline here.

Each of the problems I will discuss relates to a certain re-conceptualization of *IA*. This re-conceptualization is non-optional to those who endorse *IA* and maintain its relevance to discussions of metaphorical meaning. If it is to bear any weight in debates concerning metaphorical meaning, *IA* must be understood as the comparative claim that paraphrases of metaphors are inadequate *compared to paraphrases of other (specifically, literal) utterances* – not as the claim that paraphrases of metaphors are inadequate (full stop). If the absolute claim were what some theorists meant by *IA*, it would not be of much interest to the metaphor debate. So what if metaphors are difficult to paraphrase? Perhaps (as the study I will describe in the next section suggests) all utterances are difficult to paraphrase. In that case, the difficulty presumably has to do with paraphrase itself and is not of central importance to an account of metaphor. To put this point another way, if we do not know the baseline of paraphrase adequacy, how can we know that paraphrases *of metaphors* are inadequate? Inadequacy presupposes a standard of adequacy. If paraphrases are *generally* inadequate, the inadequacy of paraphrases of metaphors does not warrant a special explanation.

In response to this argument for the comparative nature of *IA*, Reimer suggests that non-cognitivists may be assuming that understanding literal utterances consists in having cognitive states. So even if literal utterance paraphrases are inadequate, literal non-cognitivism could not explain that fact. On the other hand, the inadequacy of metaphor paraphrases may be explained by the non-cognitive nature of metaphors (personal communication). It is widely held that understanding literal utterances consists in having cognitive states, so Reimer's is a salient way to deny the comparative version of *IA*. Nonetheless, to conclude that the two inadequacies admit of different explanations constitutes an extravagant flouting of parsimony. If paraphrases of metaphors and literal utterances are equally inadequate, we should first investigate a single explanation to do with paraphrase in general before positing one explanation for metaphors and another where literal utterances are concerned.

With the recognition of *IA*'s comparative nature comes the first problem I will discuss for previous assessments. Often in philosophical assessments of *IA* evidence for the inadequacy of paraphrasing metaphors is presented

independently of evidence for the ease of paraphrasing other utterances. Reimer (2001), for example, points out the failings of a number of paraphrases of metaphors without arguing that literal utterances are easy to paraphrase. Such one-sided arguments fail to establish *IA*. For though many theorists who engage in such arguments may take the ease of literal paraphrase for granted, it is far from obvious that literal utterances are in fact easy to paraphrase – at least, it is not obvious that they are easy to paraphrase *in the same way metaphors are purportedly difficult to paraphrase*. Existing assessments of *IA* present us with figurative utterances removed from related contexts.<sup>13</sup> If they show us anything it is that figurative utterances are difficult to paraphrase independent of context. But Searle (1978), Travis (2001), and Recanati (2004), among others, do a good job of pointing out just how hard it is to specify what exactly *literal utterances* mean independent of a related context. Thus it is a substantive point whether literal utterances are easy to paraphrase in the way proponents of *IA* typically attempt to show metaphorical utterances difficult to paraphrase – that is, *independent of a related context*. Evidence for *IA* must demonstrate both sides of the comparative claim; it must demonstrate that paraphrases of metaphors are inadequate in the same way that paraphrases of literal utterances are adequate.

The second problem also relates to the comparative nature of *IA*. In arguing for *IA* (and in discussions of metaphor more generally), some theorists rely on obscure, complex, or artistic metaphors to the exclusion of the full array of metaphorical speech. Cooper (1986) argues in favor of using metaphors such as, ‘Eliot’s “I will show you fear in a handful of dust,” Hofmannstahl’s [*sic.*] “dovecot” metaphor, and Nietzsche’s “Truth is a woman” ’ (p. 70), as the primary touchstones for a theory of metaphor. In her argument for *IA*, Reimer asks us to consider Auden’s line, ‘The hourglass whispers to the lion’s paw’ (p. 146). On the other hand, the most salient philosophical examples of literal utterances are all patently simple: ‘The table is covered with books,’ ‘The cat is on the mat,’ ‘Snow is white’! When a philosopher uses an abstruse metaphor in putting forward *IA*, and fails to argue the relative ease of literal paraphrase, she invites her audience to compare the adequacy of paraphrases for the metaphorical example with the adequacy of paraphrases for whatever literal utterances the audience finds salient. The contrast cases that naturally come to philosophical minds are cases of simple literal utterances. Next to those literal utterances, the target metaphors may well seem difficult to paraphrase. Less common is the case where a philosopher blatantly compares the task of paraphrasing a difficult metaphor with that of paraphrasing a simple literal utterance. But in either case the effect is the same: an illegitimate assessment of *IA*. Considerations of the comparative complexity of the utterances (even implicitly) contrasted is essential to a successful assessment of *IA*.

Of course, utterances may vary in complexity across a number of distinct dimensions. I will argue that we need not guard against incongruous complexity across some of these. First, an utterance may be more *syntactically complex* than another if it contains more syntactic constituents. So, ‘Sally went to the bridge before she went to the beach,’ is more syntactically complex than, ‘Sally went to the bridge.’ Secondly, an utterance may be more *lexically complex* than another. The lexical meaning of a term is its standard public or idiolectic meaning. A term is more lexically complex insofar as its lexical meaning decomposes into more (or more complex) concepts. One utterance will be more lexically complex than another (even of equal syntactic complexity) insofar as its constituent terms have more aggregate lexical complexity. If one holds that each concept’s lexical meaning is simple – never a composite of other concepts – one will hold that no utterance is more lexically complex than another without also being more syntactically complex. But one might also hold that utterances identical in syntactic complexity can vary in lexical complexity. For instance, one would contend that, ‘A bachelor is a mammal,’ is more lexically complex than, ‘A man is a mammal,’ if one held that the lexical meaning of ‘man’ is simple, whereas the lexical meaning of ‘bachelor’ is complex.

In addition to syntactic and lexical complexity, utterances may vary in complexity along other dimensions. For instance, understanding an utterance may require us to understand an uttered term in a non-standard (non-lexicalized) way. As Recanati (2004) writes, ‘If we take it as axiomatic that only sounds can be heard, then, in “I hear the piano,” either the sense of “hear” or that of “the piano” must be modulated for the sentence to make sense’ (p. 138). Although ‘I hear the piano,’ may be no more lexically nor syntactically complex than ‘Man is a mammal,’ understanding the former may require us to modulate the lexically encoded meaning of some term, whereas no additional process of modulation may be required to understand the latter. In that case, ‘I hear the piano,’ is more *procedurally complex* than, ‘man is a mammal.’ The more modulation of terms an utterance requires, the more procedurally complex it is. Furthermore, the modulated meaning arrived at in an instance of understanding some utterance may itself involve simple or complex concepts. So, even though each of two utterances may not be more syntactically, lexically, or procedurally complex than the other, one might have greater *derived complexity* than the other, if the concepts its modulated meaning consists in have more aggregate complexity.

I take it as a non-controversial upshot of the comparative nature of *IA* that a legitimate assessment should compare metaphors and literal utterances of similar syntactic and lexical complexity. In this respect, previous assessments have failed. But it may be that metaphors are quite generally more procedurally complex than literal utterances.<sup>14</sup> Establishing a general

difference in procedural complexity would reveal an interesting contrast between metaphors and literal utterances – and is not as entirely unlikely as establishing a general difference between the two in lexical or syntactic complexity. We should thus not exclude this possibility from the outset. The lesson I draw from the second problem with previous assessments of *IA* is the following: In assessing the relative adequacy of metaphor paraphrases we must compare literal utterances and metaphors of similar syntactic and lexical complexity.

The third problem with many existing assessments of *IA* has to do with the philosophical method of analysis itself. Typically, in arguing for *IA*, a theorist will cite a sample metaphor and ask us to reflect on all the ideas it might be taken to express. ‘How,’ it is asked, ‘could a single paraphrase capture all of that?’ Here theorists often take themselves to be appealing to the purported ‘open-endedness’ of metaphor interpretation. The relation between paraphrase adequacy and the open-endedness of metaphorical meanings is not obvious (see Cooper, 1986, pp. 70–71). Many of the ideas theorists identify as being expressed by a metaphor may best be construed as implications of the metaphor’s meaning, rather than as constituents of that meaning (in which case they are not ideas a successful paraphrase need capture). In other instances, these ideas may legitimately be construed as competing interpretations of a metaphor (considered independently of context). But as previously mentioned, philosophical analyses of literal utterances reveal similar (context-independent) indeterminacies of interpretation. As Camp (2006a) writes, ‘much ordinary talk – let alone literary writing – is loose and/or evocative in just this way, *despite* being literal’ (p. 7). For a simple example, take a literal comparison between two things: ‘a chimpanzee is like an orangutan.’ This utterance is perfectly literal, yet loose and open to a variety of interpretations. How are the two similar? Is it that they are both apes, or mammals, or hair-covered? Is it that they have mass?<sup>15</sup> In any case, dwelling on metaphors, as philosophical analyses of *IA* ask us to, is likely to distort our perception of their open-endedness. As Bergmann (1982) has noted, ‘Dwell on a metaphor long enough, even a relatively uninteresting one, and numerous and various interpretations come to mind’ (p. 231). Adequate evidence for (or against) *IA* should involve equal consideration of literal and metaphorical utterances (and paraphrases of those utterances). If it does not, the result may be biased by unequal consideration.

In the next section I discuss an experiment designed to assess the comparative adequacy of paraphrases of metaphors that avoids the problems just introduced. As with previous philosophical investigations, I do not impose specific criteria of adequacy on those assessing paraphrases. Different accounts of the criteria of paraphrase adequacy might be given. But it is tough to imagine how we could judge the adequacy of purported criteria if not by appeal to pre-theoretic assessments of paraphrase

adequacy. Thus, I side with those who have previously assessed *IA* in holding that we need not determine what specific criteria are correct in order to ascertain if *IA* is true or not. Together we presume that speakers of English are qualified to assess whether an English paraphrase of an English utterance is adequate, independent of specific, formulated criteria of assessment.

#### 4. *Are paraphrases of metaphors inadequate?*

To legitimately demonstrate *IA*, one would need to show that paraphrases of metaphors are inadequate compared to paraphrases of literal utterances when the target utterances are of similar syntactic and lexical complexity, and to do this by subjecting each kind of utterance/paraphrase pair to similar scrutiny. Previous philosophical analyses have failed to do this. Experimental analysis might fairly adjudicate the *IA* debate. Due to the nature of experimental research, participants would give roughly equal consideration to metaphors and literal utterances. One conducting such a survey could include literal and metaphorical utterances of similar complexity, and design studies and prompts intended to examine the same kind of inadequacy. I designed a study intended to meet these desiderata.

To guard against researcher bias, I did not – as certain philosophers have done when asserting *IA*<sup>16</sup> – generate my own paraphrases for metaphorical and literal utterances. Rather, in an initial phase of my study, I had University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill undergraduates ( $N = 14$ ) generate paraphrases for particular target utterances. Each participant was asked, for each of four utterances, ‘to write another utterance of your own which means the same thing.’ The target utterances made up four pairs of one literal and one metaphorical utterance of similar grammatical structure, lexical complexity, and theme (see Table 1):<sup>17</sup>

**Table 1** Target utterances

Theme:	Metaphor:	Literal Utterance:
Language	Music is the universal language.	French is the language of Quebec.
Advice	Never give your heart away.	Always count your change.
Copilots	God is my copilot.	Bill Thompson is my copilot.
Cars	My other car is a Boeing 747.	My other car is a Hyundai Elantra.

After participants generated lists of paraphrases for target sentences, the best paraphrase for each target was selected. To again avoid

researcher bias, UNC undergraduates ( $N = 56$ ) were asked to choose the paraphrase ‘. . . which you think most nearly means the same thing as . . .’ the target utterance, and write its letter in the blank. Each participant was asked to select the best paraphrase for four of the eight target utterances above. For each utterance, four paraphrases generated in phase one of the study were possible choices as the best paraphrase.<sup>18</sup> Conditions were randomized and no ordering-effects emerged. For each utterance, a ‘best paraphrase’ was selected on the basis of participants’ answers (see Table 2):

**Table 2** Target utterances and ‘best paraphrases’

<b>Theme:</b>	<b>Target Utterance:</b>	<b>Best Paraphrase (% selecting):</b>
Language	Music is the universal language.	Music connects people across language and cultural barriers. (77%)
Language	French is the language of Quebec.	The people of Quebec primarily speak French. (50%)
Advice	Never give your heart away.	Do not ever fall too deeply in love. (62%)
Advice	Always count your change.	Make it a habit to check that you’ve received correct change. (55%)
Copilots	God is my copilot.	God is helping me to get where I want to go. (47%)
Copilots	Bill Thompson is my copilot.	I have a copilot named Bill Thompson. (58%)
Cars	My other car is a Boeing 747.	I also have a Boeing 747. (43%)
Cars	My other car is a Hyundai Elantra.	In addition to this car, I have a Hyundai Elantra. (42%)

In the third phase of the study participants evaluated the adequacy of the best paraphrases. In the interest of finding any significant difference that might exist between assessments of paraphrases, it was important to have larger numbers of participants in this final phase. Thus, I trimmed the four pairs to be analyzed to two pairs. The pairs selected were those in which the best paraphrases generated the largest total percentage of votes. On this basis, the ‘Language’ and ‘Advice’ metaphor/literal utterance pairs were selected.

In order to test paraphrase adequacy, I presented each undergraduate ( $N = 108$ ) with two utterances and their best paraphrases.<sup>19</sup> Participants were asked several questions about each utterance and its paraphrase (target utterances were labeled *A*; paraphrases were labeled *B*):

1. How similar is the meaning of B to A? (This was judged on a scale from 1 to 7, with 1 representing, 'not at all similar,' and 7 representing, 'exactly the same.')
2. Does either utterance leave some idea out that the other includes? (This was a forced, yes/no choice.)
3. If so, which utterance, and what does it leave out?

How did participants evaluate the paraphrases? Was the inadequacy assumption borne out? As this paper's title suggests, participants did not judge paraphrases of metaphors to be less adequate than paraphrases of literal utterances. Statistically speaking, the mean-similarity scores for the utterance pairs mentioned above were not significantly different (see Table 3):<sup>20</sup>

**Table 3** Mean-similarity scores for the utterance pairs

	Metaphorical	Literal
Language	5.07	4.73
Advice	4.23	4.44

There was also no statistically significant difference between participants' assessments of whether or not paraphrases of metaphorical or literal utterances in general left anything out, or between such assessments regarding paraphrases of the metaphorical or literal utterance in the Advice pair.<sup>21</sup> However, significantly fewer participants felt that the paraphrase of the *metaphorical utterance* left something out in the language pair.<sup>22</sup> So the paraphrase of the metaphorical utterance in this pair was thought to be more adequate. The percentages of people who felt something was left out were as follows (see Table 4):

**Table 4** Percentage of participants who thought the *metaphorical utterance* left something out in the language pair

	Metaphorical	Literal
Language	65.5%	84.6%
Advice	82.3%	82.2%

So far as these examples are concerned, the best paraphrases of metaphors and literal utterances seem to be equally inadequate. If anything, this study suggests that metaphors may be *slightly more paraphrasable*, for the most adequate paraphrase was judged to be of a metaphorical utterance, and

the paraphrase of this utterance was significantly less often judged to have left anything out.<sup>23</sup>

One might object that this evidence is too slight to constitute a refutation of *IA*. But previous philosophical discussions of *IA* turned on only a few examples. So if a limited sample class is a problem for my argument, it is a problem for my opponents' arguments as well. Nonetheless, to bolster my case against *IA*, I repeated essentially the same test, but modified it to allow for more data. Instead of asking participants in the third phase three questions about each utterance/paraphrase pair, I asked only one: How similar is the meaning of *A* to *B*? This allowed me to fit six pairs of utterances onto each survey, greatly increasing the data generated. And since participants were more likely to say some idea was left out when they felt a paraphrase and its target utterance had dissimilar meanings, asking only the similarity of meaning question still suggests how answers to the leaving-out question would turn out for various utterances and their paraphrases.

In phase one of the test, paraphrases were generated for twelve pairs of metaphors and literal utterances of similar syntactic and lexical complexity, and theme. After phase two, these were whittled down to eight pairs of utterances, on the basis of the lack, in one utterance or another, of a clear 'best paraphrase.' 140 UNC undergraduates participated in the third phase of the study. Each participant was randomly assigned six utterances and their paraphrases. Participants were randomly assigned two, three, or four of each kind of utterance (i.e. metaphorical/literal). Two pairs of utterances were cycled in, so that all eight utterances were ranked. Two of the surveys were incomplete, and so were not included in the analysis. This left 138 surveys, or 828 separate rankings of closeness of meaning for 16 utterances (eight metaphorical, eight literal) and their paraphrases.

Comparing the average 'similarity of meaning' ranking for each metaphor and its paraphrase to the ranking for the analogous literal utterance and its paraphrase, we get the following results (mean similarity ratings on the right of Table 5):

**Table 5** Comparison of the average 'similarity of meaning' ranking for each metaphor and its paraphrase with the ranking for the analogous literal utterance and its paraphrase

	<b>Target Utterance:</b>	<b>Paraphrase:</b>	<b>Avg:</b>
<b>M</b>	Some jobs are prisons. <sup>24</sup>	Some jobs are tedious and personally confining.	3.59
<b>L</b>	Some jobs are promotions.	Some jobs are a reward for doing well in previous jobs.	4.63



**Table 5** *Continued*

	<b>Target Utterance:</b>	<b>Paraphrase:</b>	<b>Avg:</b>
<b>M</b>	Power is in the hands of the king.	The king is in charge.	4.86
<b>L</b>	A sword is in the hands of the king.	The king presently holds a sword.	5.17
<b>M</b>	Many people never live for fear of dying.	A lot of individuals don't live life to the fullest for fear of dying.	5.07
<b>L</b>	Many people never fly for fear of dying.	Many people choose not to fly because they're afraid of dying on an airplane.	5.28
<b>M</b>	A good friend is worth more than an excellent stock portfolio.	Friendship is more valuable than wealth.	4.79
<b>L</b>	A good savings account is worth more than an excellent stock portfolio.	Having money in the bank is safer than <i>maybe</i> having more money later.	3.63
<b>M</b>	Some wives are worse than rashes.	Some wives cause more pain and suffering than rashes.	4.93
<b>L</b>	Some wives are worse than girlfriends.	Sometimes having a wife is worse than having a girlfriend.	3.79
<b>M</b>	Capitalism is the religion of our country.	Most people in our country live according to, or endorse, capitalist principles.	3.62
<b>L</b>	Christianity is the religion of our country.	The United States practices mostly Christianity.	3.54
<b>M</b>	He divorced himself from the American Civil Liberties Union.	He left and has nothing more to do with the ACLU.	5.14
<b>L</b>	He revoked his membership in the American Civil Liberties Union.	He used to be a member of the ACLU, but withdrew his membership.	5.89
<b>M</b>	Butchering is the business of a Russian foot soldier.	A Russian soldier's job is to kill things.	4.18
<b>L</b>	Butchering is the business of a meat packing plant.	Butchering is part of the industry of meat packing plants.	4.54

So it seems that sometimes paraphrases of metaphors are more adequate; and sometimes paraphrases of literal utterances are. However, no clear trend towards the comparative adequacy of paraphrases of literal utterances emerged.

In addition to comparing the results for different pairs of metaphors and literal utterances, we can compare the paraphrase adequacy for metaphorical and literal utterances in general. To this end, a 'metaphorical score' and a 'literal score' was generated for each participant, by averaging his or her rankings of the similarity of meaning between each metaphorical utterance and its paraphrase, on the one hand, and each literal utterance and its paraphrase, on the other. I then averaged these metaphorical and literal scores across all participants. There was no significant difference between the mean 'metaphorical score' (4.45) and the mean 'literal score' (4.54).<sup>25</sup>

My assessments avoid the previously discussed problems of other assessments. And they suggest that paraphrases of metaphors are not inadequate compared to paraphrases of literal utterances. If there are not other problems unique to my experimental assessments, then these present a reason to conclude that cognitivism about metaphor faces no pressure from the claim of inadequacy. Together with the theory's other strengths, we would have good reason to concede that some version of the view is probably correct. I cannot show there are *no* shortcomings of my assessments which previous assessments avoid. It is clearly the burden of the proponent of IA to show if there are some. Nonetheless, I will defend my assessments against some of the more obvious potential challenges in the final section.

### 5. *Objections considered*

One might object to my experimental analyses by making the strong claim that theoretically sophisticated judgments are the only ones relevant to assessments of paraphrase adequacy. But what theoretical sophistication is purportedly at issue? Two of the more obvious suggestions are seriously problematic. Sophistication with the theory of metaphor cannot be what is at issue, since, as previously mentioned, IA plays a major role in *establishing* metaphor theory. To require a sophisticated theory of metaphor as a qualification for assessing IA would rob the assumption of significance. One might instead suggest that sophistication with the distinction between what is meant by a sentence and what is meant by a speaker is at issue – for how can participants accurately judge the similarity of sentence meanings without knowing what constitutes sentence meaning, as opposed to what a speaker might mean in uttering a particular sentence? But the discussion of sections one and two reveals that this suggestion is also misguided. In assessing paraphrase adequacy we are assessing how well an utterance captures the metaphorical meaning of another utterance, not necessarily how similar are the meanings of two sentences. It is tough to see what particular theoretical sophistication might matter to assessments of

paraphrase adequacy. It is perhaps tougher to see how theoretical sophistication could possibly make the difference between relevant and irrelevant assessments of paraphrase adequacy. The obvious criteria for whether an assessment is relevant is whether that assessment is competent, and assessments might be competently made without the benefit of theory or incompetently made with it. Furthermore, as I will presently discuss, there is good evidence to suggest the assessments made by participants in my studies are competent.

Paraphrase assessments are relevant to *IA* insofar as they are issued by attentive, astute, and otherwise competent judges. Are my ordinary participants competent judges? Participants' answers to the third question in the rating phase of the first study suggest that they are. Participants' assessments of what was left out were generally thoughtful and on target. For example, a number of people pointed out that, 'never give your heart away,' seemed to constitute a total ban, while 'do not ever fall too deeply in love,' seemed only a restriction of degree. And 'French is the language of Quebec,' was often thought to be a less than perfect match for, 'The people of Quebec primarily speak French,' both because the latter includes a restriction of generality, while the former says nothing about the universality of the language, and because the former carries a certain 'officialness,' which is not replicated in the latter. Apart from any specific reason to doubt the competency of my subjects in judging a good paraphrase then, their answers to the question regarding what was left out seem to support it. Furthermore, the conclusion suggested by my studies is not that paraphrases of metaphors are adequate; it is that paraphrases of metaphors are not inadequate compared to paraphrases of literal utterances. Or, more accurately, it is that paraphrases in general are equally inadequate. If my participants held that paraphrases of metaphors and literal utterances were universally wonderful, it might be reasonable to suppose that they had missed differences between target utterances and their paraphrases. Instead, participants judged both sets of paraphrases to be lacking, and their answers to the third question suggest they were cognizant of real differences between targets and paraphrases.

Instead of contending that my participants are bad *judges* of the adequacy of paraphrases, a proponent of *IA* might contend that they are bad *paraphrasers*. Someone who was more highly skilled at the nuanced use of language than a public university undergraduate might be a better paraphraser, and the paraphrases generated by a better paraphraser might reveal the purported inadequacy. This is possible, of course, but to have any relevance here, a proponent of *IA* would have to make the further claim that professional philosophers *are* such better paraphrasers. Otherwise this would not be a way in which my assessment is deficient compared to previous purely philosophical assessments. Why might one suppose that philosophers are better paraphrasers than undergraduates? Clearly many

professional philosophers write and read much more than most undergraduates. They are also professionally trained at assessing language. This greater experience with language might make one more sensitive to similarities and differences of meaning, and to that degree able to generate better paraphrases. But it must also be conceded that professional philosophers are very much more accustomed to dealing with literal language than they are to dealing with figurative tropes such as metaphor. This acuity with literal language, rather than a unique inadequacy in metaphor paraphrases, could explain why literal utterances strike philosophers as comparatively amenable to paraphrase. If we wanted the universally best paraphrasers, we should perhaps look to English or literature departments.

One might accept that ordinary, pretheoretic intuitions about paraphrases are relevant to *IA*, and that, in fact, paraphrases of the metaphorical and literal utterances that constitute the target utterances of my study are equally inadequate, but point out that there are more complex utterances and contend that the results received here would not be replicated if the study were conducted using such utterances. It might be the case, for example, that it is harder to paraphrase a relatively simple literal utterance than a more complex literal utterance precisely because the idea expressed by the simple utterance is so simple! How many ways are there of saying, 'snow is white,' after all? But with metaphors, simple lexical meanings do not equal simple metaphorical meanings. A relatively simple utterance might have juicy metaphorical significance – significance which admits of a variety of linguistic expressions. When we come to utterances that express more complex ideas, the objection runs, we will see the adequacy gap emerge between paraphrases of literal and figurative utterances. And this is a reason why existing assessments are to be preferred – in those assessments theorists examine more complex utterances, where the inadequacy gap is likely to emerge.

According to this purported deficiency in my method of assessment, the simplicity of the target literal utterances explains why the paraphrases of those utterances were inadequate, but it does not explain why paraphrases of metaphorical utterances were inadequate. But in that case there must be some different explanation for why participants' judged metaphor paraphrases inadequate to the degree that they did. But the degree to which participants judged paraphrases of metaphors inadequate was just the degree to which they judged paraphrases of literal utterances inadequate. Clearly it is more parsimonious to suppose that statistically identical assessments of adequacy admit of the same explanation than to suppose that they admit of completely different explanations.

Alternatively, one may object to my experimental assessment of paraphrase adequacy by suggesting that the metaphors I consider are fairly familiar, and thus more amenable to paraphrase than more novel metaphors would be. But are more familiar metaphors easier to para-

phrase, as this objection suggests? We can gain some insight into this question by examining the inadequacy of paraphrases for various individual metaphors considered in my studies. Perhaps none of those I consider are amongst the most novel metaphors; but certain of these are clearly more novel than others. By comparing the adequacy of paraphrases of the more novel metaphors to the adequacy of the more familiar ones, we can gain some insight into whether familiarity breeds paraphrasability, as the present objection suggests. The utterances, 'Never give your heart away,' and, 'Power is in the hands of the king,' are intuitively much more familiar than the utterances, 'Many people never live for fear of dying,' and, 'Some wives are worse than rashes.'<sup>26</sup> Yet paraphrases of the latter pair of utterances were judged better than paraphrases of the former pair. This suggests that comparatively familiar utterances do not admit of more adequate paraphrases.

One might persist that paraphrases of *truly* novel metaphors – metaphors such as the aforementioned, 'I will show you fear in a handful of dust,' or, 'Truth is a woman,' for example – would be inadequate compared to paraphrases of correspondent literal utterances. This is not something existing analyses attempt to show, so it is not a deficiency my analysis suffers from and existing analyses do not. Furthermore, it is not obvious to me that, 'I will show you dust mites in a handful of dust,' or, 'Truth is what obtains,' would be more adequately paraphrasable. But I concede that my experiments do not fully resolve the issue of comparative paraphrasability. What I have done with the present experiments is to try and resolve some of the problems in existing analyses of *IA*. Those analyses support judgments about paraphrasability on the basis of context-independent consideration of utterances and their paraphrases. I have preserved this context independence in the present study, and this study suggests that even simple and familiar metaphors *and* literal utterances are not adequately paraphrasable independent of context. I have offered reasons for thinking that this mutual inadequacy would not disappear if the utterances were simply more complex or less familiar. But I suspect that paraphrasability, like processing time, might improve were we to embed utterances in related contexts.<sup>27</sup> Nor does this discussion rule out the possibility that embedded literal utterances are more paraphrasable than embedded metaphorical ones. But I do not suspect, nor is there a clear reason to suppose, that this is the case.

## 6. Conclusion

The assumption that communication-relevant, propositional meaning is derivable and assessable independent of context has been a common-place in the philosophy of language. As I have just pointed out, it is one that the

present studies and previous assessments trade on. But this assumption has (as discussed above) been challenged. Let the empirically-revealed inadequacy of metaphor *and* literal utterance paraphrases proffered and considered independent of context remind us of the important role context plays in the derivation of communication-relevant propositions, even for literal utterances. Continued research into the role of context in such derivation is essential. A complementary, methodological implication is also warranted by these considerations: To draw solid conclusions about general theses concerning linguistic phenomena such as paraphrasability and meaning, we need to consider sentences within explicit contexts of utterance, as well as independent of these. In future experimental work I hope to examine simple and complex utterances embedded in related contexts in order to draw less restricted conclusions concerning paraphrase.

Above I tentatively argued that the best evidence concerning the matter – the evidence considered in this paper – reveals that paraphrases of metaphors are not inadequate compared to paraphrases of literal utterances. Subsequent potential challenges have not impugned this conclusion, though they have led us to emphasize the restricted nature of this evidence. At this point, we have better reason to conclude that cognitivist accounts of metaphor are not threatened by the non-cognitivist's argument from the inadequacy of paraphrase than to accept the alternative. Given the other explanatory benefits of cognitivism, it also seems probable – though perhaps less certain – that some version of cognitivism is correct.<sup>28</sup> Finally, we might hope that, after considering the argument of this paper, theorists of metaphor would refrain from appeals to the obviousness of *IA* in the future. For now it appears that is merely the dogma of metaphor. While not all dogmas are ill founded, this one appears to be.<sup>29</sup>

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> This is emphatically not a technical point about the appropriate bounds of the concept of 'meaning.' As I will discuss later, I am using 'metaphorical meaning' in an intuitive way here. I mean to be picking out a common sense notion of 'meaning' that is not equivalent to sentence meaning.

<sup>2</sup> I am construing 'metaphor' broadly, to include intuitively clear instances of figurative utterances, such as similes and figurative metonymies. Other utterances, such as those involving irony, are not clearly figurative, so are not meant to be included in the subject of this paper.

<sup>3</sup> Some discussions of the distinction between sentence and utterance meaning include Searle (1978), Bach (1994, 2001), Travis (2001), Recanati (2004), Horn (2005), and Soames (2008). There are two main theoretical approaches to utterance meaning. Indexicalists, such as King and Stanley (2005), Stanley (2002, 2005), and Stanley and Szabó (2000), contend that utterance meanings are compositional from pronounced expressions and unpronounced (or

covert) variables represented in the logical forms of sentences. According to indexicalists, context is relevant to utterance meaning calculation insofar as it is necessary for disambiguation and specification of pronounced and covert indexical expressions. But Linguistic Contextualists, such as Bezuidenhout (2002, 2006), Carston (2002, 2004), Recanati (2004), Sperber (1994), and Sperber and Wilson (1995), deny extensive covert structure, instead holding that utterance meanings are partially determined by pragmatic processes that operate on pronounced expressions, but are not linguistically mandated. The differences between these approaches are not directly relevant to this discussion.

<sup>4</sup> See Kaplan (1989) for an influential statement of the traditional indexical expressions.

<sup>5</sup> See Phelan, ms. for one suggestion.

<sup>6</sup> In the case of Relevance Theorists, such as Sperber and Wilson, the metaphorical and literal interpretation of an utterance are not synchronically available. In an instance of understanding, one grasps only the metaphorical interpretation. Nonetheless, we can understand this as distinct from what would ordinarily be classed a literal interpretation, derivable from the uttered sentence in distinct contexts.

<sup>7</sup> Reimer (2001) has suggested that the proposition one deems false when one disagrees with a metaphorical statement is simply a proposition that the maker of the metaphorical utterance accepts, one which it is made obvious she accepts by her making that very metaphorical statement. But Reimer has to explain why the Spanish Nationalist finds it so unnatural to say he disagrees with *Guernica*, though that painting makes it obvious that Picasso accepts *that the bombing of the Basque village was a terrible thing*. Why, if we can agree or disagree with something because of the ideas it merely implies, do we not agree with things other than metaphors, which merely imply, and do not essentially express, ideas?

<sup>8</sup> Fodor (1968) uses this metaphor for different argumentative ends.

<sup>9</sup> It has also been suggested that we would be able to offer adequate *literal* paraphrases of these metaphorical contents. I will address that stronger claim in the next section.

<sup>10</sup> Non-cognitivism has sometimes argued from the absence of metaphorical paraphrases, not from the inadequacy of metaphorical paraphrases. But the absence claim is stronger. If metaphors admit of paraphrases that are not (in the relevant way) inadequate, then ipso facto they admit of paraphrases.

<sup>11</sup> Again, as discussed above, I assume that propositions are the truth-evaluable contents of some thoughts, sentences and utterances. Thus, I cash identity of content for two utterances or sentences as identity of the propositions they have as their contents. Two utterances, for example, say the same thing if they have the same propositional contents. As to whether propositions are best conceived as mind-dependent or independent – thus, as to whether type or token identity is required – as well as to other issues regarding propositions, I will remain non-committal.

<sup>12</sup> Some may think that a non-circularity requirement constitutes an additional reason for the literality assumption. But no one would regard a literal paraphrase of a literal utterance as circular. Given the emergence of positions which construe literal and metaphorical meanings as of a kind, this circularity requirement for metaphorical utterances is suspect.

<sup>13</sup> See Davidson (1978), Searle (1979), and Reimer (2001) for example.

<sup>14</sup> Indeed, as mentioned in Section 1, the technical notion of ‘metaphor’ from philosophy and linguistics equates the metaphorical with the procedurally complex. But I am concerned here (as philosophers have been in the past) with using data about paraphrasability to draw conclusions about a non-technical notion of metaphor – a folk-linguistic concept. It may nonetheless turn out that this folk notion of metaphor encompasses only utterances that require modulation.

<sup>15</sup> If comparisons are thought not to be the best examples, given the potential semantic context-sensitivity of ‘like,’ consider any other example from the contextualism literature:

'Steel isn't strong enough,' (strong enough for what?); 'Peter is finished,' (finished with what?); etc.

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, Searle (1979) and Reimer (2001).

<sup>17</sup> In this, as in other phases of the studies I discuss, no participant was assigned more than one utterance from any single metaphor/literal pair.

<sup>18</sup> The paraphrases were culled on the basis of plausibility as a successful paraphrase and similarity to other potential paraphrases chosen for inclusion in phase two. For example, the potential paraphrases, 'I know it doesn't look like I am stylish or rich, but I do own some stylish, fancy-looking things like my Hyundai Elantra,' and 'In Quebec, they speak French,' were rejected for these reasons, respectively. One may worry that such culling reintroduces the problem of researcher bias. But this worry needs to be weighed against a concern for survey fatigue. Furthermore, it is intuitively very unlikely that many participants would have selected implausible paraphrases such as that mentioned above, and including paraphrase analogues threatened to split the vote between equally good, similar paraphrases.

<sup>19</sup> Assignment to conditions was randomized. Roughly one third of participants received two metaphors and their paraphrases, while another third received two literal utterances and their paraphrases, and the last third received a metaphor and a literal utterance, together with their paraphrases. The study was conducted in this way to see if evaluating one kind of utterance first affected the evaluation of the other. This was not the case.

<sup>20</sup> A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare similarity assessments for paraphrases of literal and metaphorical utterances in general, but these were not significantly different:  $F(1, 212) = 0.018, p = 0.892$ . Assessments of paraphrases for individual pairs were also compared, using independent sample T-tests. But in neither pair were the paraphrases of metaphorical or literal utterances significantly more similar: Language,  $t(105) = 1.382, p = 0.17$ ; Advice,  $t(105) = -0.778, p = 0.439$ . (One survey was discarded from these and the immediately following analyses because it was incomplete.)

<sup>21</sup> In general:  $X^2(1, N = 214) = 2.629, p = 0.105$ ; Advice pair:  $X^2(1, N = 107) < 0.001, p = 0.996$

<sup>22</sup>  $X^2(1, N = 107) = 5.201, p = 0.023$

<sup>23</sup> The structure of this study had two primary sources: consideration of previous experimental work on utterance interpretation and a strong desire to avoid researcher bias. In previous experimental work (Yoon, 1994; Geurts, 2002), researchers asked subjects whether specific 'donkey sentences' correctly described different reported or pictured situations. Considered independently, this approach is preferable to the one taken by Gibbs and Moise (1997), who asked subjects what they thought was said by particular sentences. As Recanati (2004) points out, the latter approach presupposes, 'the ability to report what is said' (p. 14). However, given my desire to avoid researcher bias, it struck me that the best approach to assessing participant's intuitions about utterance meaning was not to adopt one of these methods independent of the other, but to instead devise a hybrid model. My model avoids researcher bias by allowing participants to generate and select the best paraphrases. But it also avoids putting heavy weight on participants' abilities to report what is said. The phase in which participants select from generated paraphrases constitutes an independent check on inept reports. And, in the final phase, as in the work by Yoons and Geurts, participants judge the similarity of utterance meanings.

<sup>24</sup> This example is modified from a timing study by Glucksberg *et al.* (1997).

<sup>25</sup>  $t(137) = 0.84, p = 0.40$

<sup>26</sup> These intuitions regarding familiarity were born out by a Google search of the online corpus. I attempted to search for minimal figurative strings included in these utterances, so as not to overlook any similar, though not identical, figurative expressions. A search of 'give your heart away' returned about 38,000 hits, whereas 'power is in the hands' returned about



386,000 hits, the most of any clearly figurative string from the studies. On the other hand, 'people never live' returned about 7,250 hits – but some of these were literal constructions, such as, 'Did the Founding Fathers intend that poor people never live past their 40s?' Likewise, 'wives are worse than,' returned about 2,440 hits, but, again, some of these – such as, 'some [men] feel their wives are worse than they are' – were clearly literal.

<sup>27</sup> See Ortony *et al.* (1978). Camp (2006b) provides a useful summary of work from psychology and cognitive science on metaphor. See also Glucksberg (2001).

<sup>28</sup> In particular, my results – which suggest no significant difference between the adequacy of metaphor and literal utterance paraphrases – are particularly salutary to cognitive accounts of a deflationary variety, such as Sperber and Wilson (2008), which deny a real distinction between the metaphorical and the literal. (See Phelan, ms. for a discussion of such accounts, as well as some independent problems for these.)

<sup>29</sup> Many people offered help with and helpful suggestions on earlier versions of this paper. I would like to thank Dorit Bar-On, William Lycan, Eric Mandelbaum, Pablo Mondal, Ram Neta, Jesse Prinz, Dave Ripley, Hagop Sarkissian, Dustin Stokes, and Mark Warren. Particularly instructive were comments by Joshua Knobe, Marga Reimer, and an unnamed reviewer at *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*. This work was supported by an Andrew W. Mellon Foundation/ACLS Dissertation Completion Fellowship.

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