METAPHORE AND LANGUAGE

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Abstract: The article describes traditional theories of the metophores, its functions in religious language. It first makes the case that more recently evolved theories of metaphor appear to be more equipped to explain the nature of religious language before taking into account the assertion that metaphors influence vast swaths of our language and, by extension, our experiences. Lastly, it examines some of the more important ramifications of this assertion for our comprehension of religious experience and religious language.

A figure of speech known as metaphor occurs when we discuss one item using language that is often used to discuss another. Despite the fact that metaphor is used often in both everyday and overtly lyrical speech and literature, metaphorical expressions were generally considered inferior than nonfigurative ones until the 20th century. Plato is often credited as holding that only literal language can be genuine, which has led to the idea that metaphors only have a minimal linguistic function. The majority of philosophers believed, until recently, that metaphors were only decorative and that they could be translated into literal language without losing their meaning. To put it another way, they supported the "substitution theory," which holds that some figurative terms are used in place of nonfigurative ones in metaphorical language usage. Therefore, only replacing the original term will remove the metaphor. Some philosophers didn't start creating more useful theories of metaphor until the twentieth century, when people started to think about language in other ways. It should come as no surprise that these novel ideas may be used to clarify the nature of religious language given the significance of metaphor in religious literature. Max Black followed in the footsteps of I. A. Richards, who was the first to question the function of metaphors in language and, thus, the first to reject the replacement hypothesis.

Both maintain that metaphors may be employed to express ideas that cannot be expressed in any other manner, rather than being purely decorative and reducible to literal language as the replacement theory said. As a result, they are indispensable to our language. Both Richards and Black argue against the replacement theory by rejecting the idea that meaning is conveyed by individual words. Richards attempted to clarify the much more nuanced link between words and meaning through what he refers to as a "interanimative" theory of metaphor.

Richards suggests that the meaning of words can only be determined by taking into account "the interplay of the interpretive possibilities of the whole utterance" in which the words are lodged, as opposed to interpreting individual words as having a meaning that is fixed independently of both their usage and the context of their utterance.17 The possibilities for interpretation are expanded in the case of metaphor. Think about how "pig" is used as a metaphor for "glutton." When we refer to someone as a pig, we conjure up images of both gluttons and pigs. When using a metaphor, according to Richards, "two ideas of separate objects are active together and supported by a single word or phrase, whose meaning is the result of their interaction.

Therefore, a metaphor is more complex than just combining two words, each of which has a set meaning, to create a meaning that somehow combines the two original meanings. Instead, an effective metaphor, according to Richards, "interanimates" the two original meanings to produce a new meaning. To put it another way, metaphors work by bringing together meaning pairs that aren't often considered together. According to Richards, both are necessary for the metaphor to be effective as a meaning-generating device.

Black came up with a similar idea, which he refers to as the "interactive theory of metaphor," but he also adds that metaphors highlight particular aspects, which in turn affects how we perceive things.

"Any human traits that can be talked about in 'wolf-language' without undue strain will be rendered prominent, and any that cannot be pushed into the background," he argues using the metaphor "Man is a wolf."

The wolf metaphor organizes our perception of man by emphasizing certain aspects while suppressing others. Therefore, Black maintains that the metaphor functions in a far more nuanced manner than the conventional replacement theory recognizes by combining the various frames of meaning that the terms "man" and "wolf" evoke. The metaphor alters our perspective of man by making us choose which parts of discussions about wolves are applicable to humans and which are not. If the metaphor is successful, the connotations attached to the word "man" will now be somewhat shaped by those attached to wolves.

As a result, there will have been a significant shift in our perspective on males that cannot be adequately captured in words. Furthermore, our perception of wolves will shift because, "if calling a man a wolf paints him in a particular light, we must remember that the metaphor makes the wolf seem more human than he otherwise would."

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