METAPHOR EXTERNALIZED

Consider the metaphor »Frank is an ice cube«.

What we first have here is an equation between »Frank« and »ice cube«. This might be rendered as $A = B$.

One thing that makes this expression metaphorical is its relation to truth. Suppose that both »Frank« and »ice cube« refer to something. Yet the compound expression, »Frank is an ice cube«, does not normally refer to the situation where Frank is literaly an ice cube. It refers to the situation where Frank is a heartless professor. If we assign the expression »a heartless professor« with C, then we get the equation $A = C$.

Now let us say, that both expressions, »Frank is an ice cube«, and »Frank is a heartless professor«, refer to some situation where Frank is a careful examiner. Let us represent this last expression with $A = X$. And let us suppose that this last expression represents the literal meaning of the metaphor »Frank is an ice cube«. Let us say that the explanation of the first expression, »Frank is a heartless professor«, $A = C$, is a metaphor as well. So we have the following situation

metaphorical	Frank is an ice cube	$A = B$
	Frank is a heartless professor	$A = C$
literal	Frank is a careful examiner	$A = X$

We have two metaphorical expressions above. They are marked by the fact that the terms B and C do not refer to the real properties of things, or to real situations. They refer to some POSSIBLE situations where Frank would really be an ice cube, or where he would really be a heartless professor. But those situations are not actual, and they cannot directly non-metaphorically describe Frank as being a working professor, because he could not examine very well in the form of an ice cube, or as a creature without a heart.

These two situations, $A = B$, $A = C$ are a way of referring by linguistic means to the actual situation where $A = X$, where Frank is a careful examiner. We can have different metaphorical constructions, $A = B$, ..., $A = M$, that would refer to the same situation, taken literally, which can be described with the help of expression $A = X$. This expression, $A = X$, still might be

described as, at least to some extent, metaphorical. Yet we have to assume that there is a real situation which is being described by $A = X$.

We have to assume, further, that the possible situations $A = B$, ..., $A = M$ are made to approach the actual situation, which can be described by its literal meaning.

Consider now the literal rendering of the situation where Frank is a careful examiner, with the expression »Frank is a careful examiner«, $A = X$.

It is clear that it would be at least impractical to use the literal meanings only in describing the situations. Our language is such that we can refer metaphorically, in a non-literal way, in the most typical cases.

But let me define the metaphor now:

Metaphor $=$ def. Use of linguistic constructions $A = B$, ..., $A = M$ describing possible situations S_l, ..., S_m to refer to the actual situation S_x (which can itself be rendered by the literal linguistic construction $A = X$).

So we see that we have many means of metaphorical description of the actual situation S_x, with the help of the possible situations S_l, ..., S_m.

This is actually, I shall claim, a power which is afforded to us by our language.

Let me give the following definition now:

Linguistic *aspects* $=$ def. Metaphorical means of introducing possible situations S_l, ..., S_m by the help of linguistic expressions $A = B$, ..., $A = M$ as descriptions of the actual situation S_x (which might be rendered literally as $A=X$).

That the situations S_l, ..., S_m do not describe actual, but only possible states of affairs is clear from the fact that the terms B, ..., M in the equations $A = B$, ..., $A = M$, describing those situations, are not literally true of the situation S_x, where $A = X$.

Yet, they are very useful for referring to the actual situation S_x.

[So, to any actual situation S_x in the chain of actual situations S_{xl}, ..., S_x, there is a corresponding set of possible situations S_{xn}, ..., S_{xn}'.]

Here I am simply referring to the fact that use of language entails the use of metaphors predominantly to describe the actual situations S_{xl}, ..., S_{xn}. But this is in contradiction with the commonly held view that metaphors are not functional, and that they typically belong to culture, where they wait for some Shakespeare to use them. I do not claim that metaphors are not suitable for such excellent purposes. Yet, I do think that they are primarily made for more directly useful, prosaic purposes, such as survival in the environment. I think that our language gives us the means to build metaphorical expressions not primarily because of poetic goals, but because of more prosaic ones, like those of survival in actual situations. Metaphors are the most powerful linguistic means available to us, helping us match actual situations by means of possible situations, Moreover, the description of those situations is false from the point of view of the actual ones. It is not literally true that $A = B$, that Frank $=$ an ice cube. Yet this can bring us nearer to what the situation where Frank is, is about, as a means for us to react to the situation, in as far as we are concerned with it. This is the basic case. But even such metaphors as, for example, »The wind thinks outrageous thoughts aloud«, seem to have such functions.

Now, let me define aspect:

Aspect $=$ def. The indirect means of assesing the actual situation.

It is through indirect, non-literal means, that we assess the actual situation in the case of Frank being a carefull examiner, as we use different metaphors. Those metaphors can be many. And this is a supplementary way of characterizing the aspect. There are many possible situations, described by many possible metaphorical constructions, and I think that this aspectual approach to the actual situation is very powerful.

To see what this is all about, let me introduce another of our means of perceiving actual situation via aspect; in particular the one that is most important, visual perception, It is clear that in visual perception we do not perceive situations in the world directly, we perceive them through aspects.

To be able to perceive such things as chairs and pencils and cats, we use an aspectual means of approach, by computing different information available to us in our surroundings and the information that is already stored in the brain. In a similar manner, we use many metaphorical aspects to reach the literal meaning in the language, the actual situations in the world. If we are interested in Franks, pencils and cats in the actual world, we mainly get interested in them by means of aspects. We reach for essences in the world via aspects, we grab the literal through the metaphorical. I think that this is a description of the way we operate.

I think that possible situations, the aspects, are a very powerful means of assessing actual situations: we better grasp the things via aspects.

This is best shown if we see the metaphor as part of the power of our language to *perceive* the actual world, just like visual and other types of perception.

Yet there is a powerful tradition that does not accept this naturalistic approach of seeing langue as continuous with other types of perception. This approach starts from the assumption that metaphors are typically internal to our language as a part of culture, and that if they are to be discovered anywhere, it is predominantly in our heads. They seem not to have anything to do with the task of surviving in the way that e. g. visual perception does. Yet this strikes me as implausible, because we *do* use metaphors in our language, and we use them, as I claim, to assess the external situation. So, metaphors have an externalist function (for our behaviour in our environment), and their real task is in fulfilling this very function, not some other that is primarily aesthetic. It is, for example, a simple truth that, *as organisms,* our use of language is mostly metaphorical, not literal. I shall thus claim that the correct way of interpreting metaphors would be externalistic, and I shall try to outline some support for this claim. I begin by saying something about the aspectual character of visual perception, as one form of perception, comparing it later to the role of linguistic perception. I am sure that their aspectual organisation is what makes them so useful for us as organisms behaving appropriately in our environment. And I think that in the case of language, this aspectual side is brought in by metaphors, and that this has been done with some evolutionary purpose.

Let me thus sketch the argument.

Firstly I shall provide a rough idea of what internalism and externalism are. Internalism is interested in explanations of mental states without considering the corresponding external reality. Externalism says that in explanations of mental states, external factors are important.

It is not the case that internalism would claim that mental states are not related to external factors. All it says is that those external factors are of no interest to psychologists or philosophers.

But what has internalism in the philosophy of mind to do with metaphor? Metaphor is usually grasped as something internalistic, or at least as something individualistically explicable. Yet, as I argued above, metaphor has powerful links with our surroundings. The main idea is that what we get, we do not get directly, but we get it the hard way. For organisms like humans, the important information is the information about what is given through aspects, not direct information about objects.

Aspects are at the center of the argument. I mention their role in visual perception first, and then in linguistic perception. In the latter case they are introduced by metaphors. I link both observations about aspects in claiming that metaphors should be interpreted externalistically.

(A) Organism O perceives object OB under aspects A's.

This could be countered by the claim that the organism can only perceive directly, not via aspects.

That this is not the case can be seen in visual perception. We have internal and external aspectual features there. The internal are in events, in the mind as it computes incoming information. The eyes are moving all the time. Nevertheless, they typically produce the appropriate fit with the surroundings.

External aspects are the variables in the surroundings. These variables are manifold. We perceive a jumping cat more readily than an electric typewriter.

Aspects are important in preceiving the moving cat first.

Thus

(B) Aspects A's of perception are (i) internal aspects Ai's
                                                    (ii) external aspects Ae's.

The following seems to be the case:

(C) Ai's depend on Ae's.

Consider this: information about both the moving cat and the typewriter is external. There has to be at least some external aspectual information about the surroundings of the organism in order that the internal processing concerning this information can be triggered. Otherwise we could not call this perception.

(a) By means of language L, organism O delivers information I concerning environment E.

Language is made for communication. This communication would hardly have any sense if it were not connected to the environment of the organism.

(b) Information I, concerning environment E, is provided under aspects A's (in the language of organism O).

This is the claim that information provided by the language, as the language is used by the organism (not by logicians, in the case of artificial language), is typically aspectual.

(c) The objects OB's are important for the organism O in the environment E.

This is a general claim that fits well with perception and with language. It says that what is typically important for an organism are the objects in its environment. Organisms such as humans, typically perceive objects because

their perceptual apparatus is made in a certain way. And that is because of the importance of objects in their lives and for their survival (feeding, fighting, reproducing). This seems to hold for visual perception. But given a moment's thought, it is true for language as well. Why should we not claim that language typically delivers information concerning objects and the various relations among objects, as well as processes concerning objects, including animals and other humans?

(d) Information I, about the objects OB's, is sucessfully delivered by aspects A's in the language L.

It is a fact that our language is aspectual. It is for the most part not literal, and information concerning objects in it typically comes in the form of aspects.

This information, which is actually delivered, is surely sucessful information, in normal circumstances. This is undeniable.

(e) Aspects A's concerning objects OB's are brought by the metaphors M's in the language L.

Here is the answer to the question »By what means are aspects introduced into language?« It is a fact that aspects are introduced mainly by metaphors. Metaphors are the typical means of introducing aspects in the language.

(f) Metaphors M's are typically centered on the information I concerning objects OB's.

This seems at first to be implausible again. How in the world can something as imprecise as metaphor center the information on the objects? The answer is simply that metaphors bring information in more relevant ways via aspects, so that aspects are exactly the features that center information on the objects. It is much more easy to grasp the objects by means of aspects then directly.

Consider definitions: even when very precise, they typically explain via aspects. And there is no more precise linguistic information than that provided by definitions.

(I) Metaphors M's bring the aspects A's in the linguistic elaboration of information LEI.

Linguistic elaboration of information is different from the visual perceptual elaboration of information. Yet we have the aspects in both cases. The aspects in the case of visual processing are internal to the organism, but by being in this form, they depend on external aspects in the surroundings of the organism.

Aspects in the linguistic elaboration of information are typically brought into the picture by means of metaphors.

(II) Linguistic elaboration of information LEI is centered, with the help of metaphors M's, on the external objects OB's.

This means that objects in the surroundings of the organism are what linguistic elaboration of information is centered on. If the external objects should be moved into the picture, aspects are important to individualise them, and metaphors bring those aspects in the language. Thus, metaphors are those features that help center linguistic information foremost on external objects.

Now, the parallel between aspects in visual perception and in the linguistic elaboration of information is brought in.

((A)) Organism O uses aspect A to deliver information I concerning external objects OB's in his perception.

Take visual perception: Organisms typically use different aspects to come closer to the reality they are concerned with.

Still more, aspects (different computations in the internalist elaboration of information, and different environmental variables in the external production of information) are of the utmost importance for delivering the information about objects (and situations).

((B)) Organism O uses metaphors M's to deliver, in the language L, aspectual information A on external objects OB's.

This concerns language. In language, the organism typically uses metaphors to deliver information on external objects in its surroundings. There are no more appropriate means of delivering this information at one's disposal than those of metaphors.

((C)) With the help of aspects A's of perception, and aspects A's of language, organism O processes information about the external objects OB's.

This brings the perception and linguistic elaboration of information together. This is done by the help of aspects, in the perception and in the language.

Were it not for the aspects, there would be no reason at all for the organism to process the information, at least not in the way it usually does. And if there are some processes as complex as those of visual and linguistic perception seem to be, they surely developed for some ecological reasons, in order that the organism could adjust to its surroundings.

Now, the main thesis, or the tentative conclusion from the above:

(C) Metaphors should be interpreted externalistically.

If aspects are important for perception, and if aspects are important for the linguistic elaboration of information, then it is rational to claim that they have some common basis. This common basis is in aspectual directedness to the environment. As metaphors are the ones that are centered on the environment, with the help of their aspectual features it should be reasonable to claim that metaphors should be interpreted by their function in asessing external objects, thus externalistically.

The argument can be stated more simply:

1. Perception centers on environment because of aspects in it.

2. Linguistic elaboration of information centers on the environment because of aspects in it.

3. Metaphors are what center on the surroundings in linguistic elaboration of information, because of their aspects.

4. So, metaphors are externalist.

It should be noted that in the second part of the article, in the interests of simplification, I substituted objects for situations.

Some final remarks: I tried to show that *aspects* are what links language, with the help of metaphors, to other kinds of perception.

Those aspects can be rendered by possible situations whose role is to point more strongly than by direct means to actual situations.

Metaphor uses possible situations $S_1, \ldots, S_m$ as sources of information about the actual situation S_x.

If object O_1 is used as a source of information about object O_x, then in the case of metaphor, O_1 and O_x are not nomologically connected.

But the information depends on nomological links at the physical level of the organism (which is where the nomological links exist in the case of the use of metaphors).

Language: One *transmits* the information about Frank in referring to the ice cube.

What is it that transmits information?

The ASPECT which is common to both Frank and ice cube.

Some consequences of the theory:

(1) If the theory is correct, then children would develop metaphors quite early, a soon as they can perceive aspects. Some aspectual percepts, such as visual ones, would have at least some influence on the building of metaphorical linguistic expressions.

This is contrary to the view that the use of metaphors develops at ages as late as six or seven years. This does not seem to be the case, and children seem to understand metaphors sooner.

(2) Perception, e. g. visual perception, can be seen as »information gathering« (Gibson).

Then, the metaphor should be an *extension* of this »information gathering« by linguistic means.

On approximately these lines the theory should be elaborated further.