

## MODERATE NON-COGNITIVISM: THE PERLOCUTIONARY ACCOUNT OF METAPHORS

I argue for a non-cognitivist theory of metaphor. The main theses defended by current versions of non-cognitivism can be summarized as follows:

- a) There is no metaphorical meaning.
- b) There is no such thing as a metaphorical assertion, question etc.

Let us call a theory endorsing these theses *radical non-cognitivism* (RNC). As opposed to this, I wish to argue for the following theses:

- c) There is metaphorical content.
- d) There need not be metaphorical assertions, questions, etc.

Let us call the theory characterized by this second set of theses *moderate non-cognitivism* (MNC).

I will argue for MNC by discussing the following set of statements:

- (1) Metaphors have the effect of *making the hearer notice resemblances*.
- (2) This effect plays a crucial role in establishing the speech act content of the metaphorical utterance. Speech act content might be understood, here, as either locutionary content or as an indirectly communicated content.
- (3) This effect of metaphors is a perlocutionary effect, since it has all the decisive characteristics perlocutionary effects have.
- (4) Perlocutionary effects cannot play a role in determining the speech act's content (i.e., locutionary content).
- (5) Perlocutionary effects cannot 'lead' to illocutionary effects, i.e., they cannot play a role in indirect communication.

These five statements form an inconsistent set. I remove the inconsistency by denying (4) and modifying (5). This move supports theses c) and d).

(1) and (2) are obvious and widely accepted, and I shall not challenge them. (3), by contrast, is denied by most philosophers. However, no systematic investigation has been done to support the rejection of (3). In fact, I claim that systematic investigation will reveal that (3) is true. I contrast different theories of perlocution and show that, in all theories put forward so far, metaphors' effect turns out to be perlocutionary.

Given that (3) is true, RNC would claim that (2) is false and would remove the inconsistency by denying that it is the speech act content of metaphorical utterances that is determined by the effect of metaphors. I argue, with reference to some pertinent examples, that such a move on the part of RNC is wrong.

As a result, the only possibility left is to deny or to modify (4) and (5). I argue that Bach and Harnish's (1979) theory of speech acts warrants this move, (although the proposed MNC is at odds with their analysis of metaphorical speech acts). MNC, however, is not a theory for all metaphors. In my view, no unified theory of metaphors can be plausibly established.

### *References*

Bach, Kent and Robert Michael Harnish. 1979. *Linguistic Communication and Speech Acts*. Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England: The MIT Press.