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METAPHOR WITHOUT PROPERTIES

ABSTRACT: Virtually all currently discussed accounts advert to a shift or replacement of a property or properties in describing what happens to the ordinary words in metaphors. And the mechanism of this shift tends to involve an overt or sometimes hidden appeal to similarity, or to some notion that is essentially connected to it. In the first part of the paper, I argue that this route is a dead end, and in the second part I offer my own preferred alternative. That alternative is not argued for, or developed in detail – that is done in my book *Objects of Metaphor* – but my main aim in the paper is simply showing how radically it differs from the property route.

1. INTRODUCTION

As is often said of football matches, my paper consists of two halves. Nor is this comparison idle: one half of a match is not necessarily a guide to the interest or outcome of the game, and, while I hope both halves of my paper appeal, you may well find interest in one, even if you have problems with the other.

The first half is argumentative: though I can't do full justice to it in the time I have, it sketches an argument against an assumption that underlies many current accounts of metaphor. The second is more expositional: it is a sketch of my proposal for dealing with metaphor without that assumption.

Given that the argument in the first half addresses an assumption shared by many otherwise different accounts of metaphor, a survey of these accounts would be useful. That said, expect a light-touch survey – very much a case of no names, no pack drill.

Part I
Against Properties

2.

Everyone seems to agree that, however we come to understand the phenomenon of metaphor, the responsibility for metaphorical effects in any given utterance or set of utterances can be sheeted home to individual words or phrases which somehow induce those effects. Yet while there is agreement that metaphor is, as is often said, lodged in the words, there is quite a variety in the ways the functional items in metaphors are handled by different theorists.

In reviewing this variety, I shall schematically label the functional items in metaphors by the obvious acronym 'MFI'. For a reason which I will come to in a moment I prefer this to more conventional terms, but there is no harm in your thinking that, in some cases at least, MFIs can be identified with what others call metaphor 'vehicles': i.e. phrases such as 'is the sun' in 'Juliet is the sun'.

2.1. Direct Accounts

One large and varied group of *direct* accounts take MFIs to include – at least initially – ordinary words, having whatever fixed lexical or compositional content they would have if they were not metaphor-active. The task for any such account is then to explain how these MFIs come to be understood in ways that are clearly out of the ordinary. There are basically two ways for doing this that have been proposed by direct theorists. On the one hand, some story is told about processes for transmuting the meanings of MFIs into contentful units, distinct from the ordinary ones but appropriate to relevant metaphors. And, on the other hand, there is an alternative kind of story in which ordinary MFIs, though not subjected to further content transmutation, still somehow,

for all their ordinariness, come to convey a replacement content appropriate to relevant metaphors.

As the literature confirms, it is by no means easy to tell these two kinds of story apart in specific cases. One familiar attempt to distinguish them has it that the first proposal looks to transmutation to provide a novel truth-conditional content for the words in the utterance appropriate to its metaphorical status; whereas the second keeps the original truth-conditional content fixed, and looks to processes, typically described as pragmatic, to locate a further replacement content that helps with the metaphor.

Unfortunately, as is also clear in recent debates, this way of making the distinction is itself controversial, precisely because there is no agreement about either the nature of, nor even the label for, what I tentatively called 'truth-conditional content'. Some find this way of speaking acceptable, others insist that there is a subtlety missed here that requires a specialised notion of *what is said*, or *what is strictly said*, or some such. And, much more radically, there are those who insist that we shouldn't be looking for any such content in the first place.

Fortunately, it won't be necessary to settle any of this here. Disappointing as it might be to some, I intend to put on one side the currently lively debate about how to distinguish accounts of metaphor which are fundamentally semantic, though with help from pragmatics, from those which are fundamentally pragmatic, though with help from semantics. Insofar as I need some label to describe that content which, in a given case, makes sense of a metaphor, I shall simply speak of 'metaphor-apt content', and will assume that any account must show how MFIs make an appropriate contribution to such content. Also, in this paper, I shall focus only on those accounts which find it reasonable to think that, in some form or other, there *can be* metaphor-apt content. Dropping my policy of 'no names' just this once, I am not here going to consider Davidson's refusal to so much as entertain this possibility.

2.2. Indirect Accounts

I was careful to say that accounts in the first group take the words in MFIs as their ordinary selves, thus leaving open the possibility that there is more to MFIs than those words and phrases usually thought

of as metaphor 'vehicles'. Indeed, I coined 'MFI' precisely to allow just this possibility, one which, as I shall now explain, is realised in a second group of *indirect* accounts.

Consider, for example, simile accounts of metaphor. Proponents begin, as do those in the first group, by treating the words in MFIs as their ordinary selves. However, instead of trying to go directly from the ordinary contribution of those words to the contribution required for metaphor-apt content, the simile theorist calls on an additional resource, namely a simile that is relevantly related to the metaphor. Appealing to a relevant simile is intended to help in the selection of content for the original metaphor, but, on my way of understanding this appeal – and I hasten to say that it is not the standard way – we should not think of the simile account as calling on a movement from metaphor to related simile. Instead, we should think that what the simile theorist proposes is expanding the relevant MFI by adding a special unmarked conceptual device to the words conventionally understood as the metaphor vehicle. Easier to illustrate with an example: what is proposed for:

(1) (J) Juliet is the sun,

is an MFI consisting of the words 'is the sun' and a conceptual element which acts on those words, an element that is often, but not invariably, marked by 'like'. This MFI might be displayed this way:

(2) *like* 'is the sun'

Representing the simile account this way helps one to understand its perennial appeal, while avoiding a distracting detour through worries about how similes are related to metaphors.

Though my take on simile accounts introduces the idea of MFIs as containing something more than the words that actually occur in a metaphor, it is not the only proposal around that works this way. The demonstrative account of metaphor, at first blush a very different kind of account, is in form close to the simile account. Where the simile account can be represented as adding an unmarked conceptual item to relevant MFIs, the demonstrative account posits the [Met]-operator. This operator induces a special sort of context sensitivity in what are ordinarily contextually insensitive words. Thus, whereas the predicate 'is the sun' in:

(3) The astronomical body around which the earth revolves is the sun,

has its usual fixed meaning, in (J) this same predicate comes to have a context-sensitive, non-fixed content. In my scheme, the demonstrative account represents the MFI in (J) as:

(4) [*Met*] 'is the sun',

and it should be clear that the underlying purpose of this MFI is not all that different from the one suggested by the simile account. In both cases, the extra item in the MFI is intended both to make a place for a metaphor-apt content and to give us some guidance about the right way to come by this content. (I will have more to say about this below.)

2.3. Shell Accounts

Each of the first two kinds of account assume that relevant metaphor-active words have a fully formed content, albeit one which typically is not yet the metaphor-apt content that we require. In contrast, and rather more radically, a third group of accounts dispenses with the idea that MFIs contain words whose content is, as it were, fully formed. Instead, MFIs are taken more as shells which consist of words, phrases or relevant structural entries, and whatever lexical and encyclopaedic information goes with those entries, but it insists that these MFIs come to have content in the first place only as a result of appropriate interaction with contextual factors. Given this – and this is part of the reason the proposal is radical – there is no reason at all to distinguish metaphor content from any other; the generation of metaphor-apt content is merely part of a continuum that includes whatever is appropriate to generate whatever kind of apt-contents are needed to make sense of utterances generally. Thus on this view, one often associated with radical contextualism, there is no basic difference in the way content is arrived at for 'Juliet is a young woman' and 'Juliet is the sun'. The former might be more accessible than the latter to speakers and hearers, but the processes involved are the same.

2.4. Conflated Sentences Accounts

The first three kinds of account include most of those that are now widely discussed. However, there is another worth mentioning: the conflated sentence account. Though details are important for fully understanding this view and its justification, its basic structure can be understood with an example. Consider Keats's:

(5) And hateful thoughts enwrap my soul in gloom.

Any MFI for this metaphor would certainly include at least the word 'enwrap', but the conflated sentences account goes much further, filling out the MFI with two complete sentences constructed by both parsing out and adding to the vocabulary of the original, as in:

(6) **Hateful thoughts** fill **my soul** with **gloom**.

(7) Clothes **enwrap** my body **in** wool.

We are then urged to seek a metaphor-apt content for Keats's original sentence in the interaction between these two sentences, neither of which is to be understood as metaphorical. I shall briefly return below to consider how it is proposed that this might be effected. Here is a table summarising my survey:

Table 1: Views of the Nature of Metaphor

Account type	**MFI**	**Metaphor-apt Content**
Direct	Selected words with their ordinary content	Transmutation or replacement of ordinary content
Indirect	Selected words and some guiding element, such as *Like*, or *[Met]*	Novel content for words in MFI induced by the guiding element
Shell	Selected word-forms and lexical and encyclopaedic entries	Ground-up construction of content using word forms, entries and context
Conflated sentence	Two different sentences constructed around selected words in the metaphor, with each sentence describing a different situation	Content generated by comparing the situations described by each sentence

3.

With this range of accounts in front of us – though not so close at hand for details to be a distraction – two things stand out. First, in most cases, one can appreciate how much effort is expended in isolating and describing what are basically the MFIs around which any particular account is built. Indeed, though not described using my terminology, this concern is in fact at the centre of most current debates. But, second, while this is an important task, it should be no less obvious that the real work of any account of metaphor lies in detailing the transition from MFIs to metaphor-apt contents, and here things are far from transparent.

Whether an account begins with MFIs consisting of certain words and their ordinary contents, or those same words and additional unmarked modifiers or operators, or certain word-shells accompanied by constraining lexical and encyclopaedic information, or certain sentences only some of whose words figure in the metaphor itself, what really matters in the end is what we are told about how these structures come to have, or generate, or implicate, metaphor-apt content. And I think one would rightly be disappointed by what one is offered here. Though the details of each account are no doubt important, the simple fact is that virtually all the accounts I have sketched – and the survey is pretty comprehensive – ultimately rely for the generation of metaphor content on a relatively small range of tried and tested, but, I will argue, ultimately hopeless notions. As noted at the outset, similarity in one or another guise is among them, but there are others, including appeals to salience and superordinate categorisation. However, in large part because these latter often serve as 'work-arounds' to the obvious problems of appeals to similarity, they end up sharing some of similarity's defects, albeit less obviously. Or so I will argue.

One direct way to do this would be to show what exactly is wrong with similarity, and then go through in detail showing what is wrong with the notions that have more recently tended to replace it in discussions of metaphor. But, embedded as they are in specific accounts, citing the chapter and verse needed to deal with all of these notions separately is simply not possible here. Nor will it be necessary. For another way of achieving my purpose is less direct, but no less effective. Instead

of looking in detail at similarity and its successors, the focus will be on the job description of all of these notions, a task my rather light-touch scheme of classification makes possible.

At its most general, the job description is of course that of telling a story about how the MFIs isolated by a given account contribute to metaphor-apt content. Making this job description clearer requires me to say more about the notion of metaphor-apt content, but I will work up to this by first having a look at how the first three kinds of account – and this includes virtually all of the most popular accounts – set about fulfilling this general job description.

Though these accounts are all quite different, there is a commonality that is crucial. While they say quite different things about MFIs, they all try to fulfil the job description by showing how we can associate with each MFI a property or properties which make the utterance of the metaphor intelligible. Thus, for example, trying to make sense of an utterance of:

(8) Cyril is a prune,

and finding of course that the property that is ordinarily linked to the predicate 'is a prune' clearly fails, the conclusion reached is that we must find another property or properties, which will somehow make this metaphor intelligible. In doing this, direct accounts tend to speak of 'associated commonplaces' which, in some kind of interaction with what is known about the subject of the sentence, somehow serve up the relevant property. Indirect accounts appeal to some resource beyond the words in the original metaphor, and shell accounts tend to speak of ad hoc properties made available in a context, but the ultimate aim is the same. By appeal to a notion of salient likeness or to salience in a content-fixing context or to salience in the choice of superordinate categoriser, the idea is to come up with a property that results in a metaphor-apt content. (Note: some theorists speak of concepts instead of properties, but for present purposes, the distinction between the properties expressed by some MFI and the concept associated with it will not matter.)

It can seem obvious that this is the way any account of metaphor must go, but of course this doesn't make it true. One thing that contributes to its obviousness is the tendency of writers to use subject-

predicate examples, which is understandable because, whatever else is true, there is a kind of pervasive *this-is-that* flavour to metaphors. Assuming, as I guess many do, that there is a *this* – a target – in any metaphor, and finding that the *that* – the property picked out by the predicate in a typical subject-predicate example – fails to characterise that target properly, there is a natural tendency to think that what is needed is some more appropriate property. However, the link between linguistic structures of subject-predicate form and the *this-is-that* character of metaphor is more complicated than this picture suggests. And it is not robust enough to justify the role given to the search for properties in the job description.

Before I give my main reason for wanting to leave any mention of properties out of metaphor's job description, a brief look at some structurally more complex metaphors might get you thinking in the right direction:

(9) Out of the crooked timber from which men are made nothing entirely straight can ever be built.

(10) Swerving at the last minute to avoid innocent bystanders, his argument came to a halt.

(11) The ball I threw while playing in the park has not yet reached the ground.

In each case, there is no doubt a *this* and a *that* – though in the final example, the *this* is not actually specified explicitly – but the idea that what is required in each case for intelligibility is some sort of property-exchange or property-construction seems wrong. It's not properties of a vehicle swerving, nor of attempts to make straight things with crooked timber, nor of balls thrown, that need to be exchanged for others in order to do the work. Without a lot of gerrymandering, properties are simply not relevant. In each case what happens is that some already characterised situation or event is directly called on to help us understand either some other situation or some thing. To be sure, these situations and events have properties – the properties that make them the situations and events they are. But since they are not themselves predicates in the first place, it seems off-key to think that their role is that of lending themselves to any kind of predicate/property transposition.

Part of the motivation for the conflated sentence account lies precisely in trying to avoid the detour through properties that comes from subject-predicate examples. In insisting that MFIs – even in what look like subject-predicate examples – contain sentences and not simply predicates, it is tailor-made for more complex examples.

Unfortunately, when it comes to saying how these sentence-sized MFIs lead us to metaphor-apt content, we are given only the standard advice that we must look to the similarities and differences between the situations described by each sentence.[1] And it is easy to see how this advice brings property-talk back onto the scene. While not mandatory – and this is itself a long story – it is natural to think that two things are similar or dissimilar in virtue of the salient properties they do or do not share.

This brings me to what I think is a more compelling, though simpler, reason for leaving properties out of the job description of accounts of metaphor: in whatever way it is implemented, the quest for relevant properties often just cannot yield the required content; or if it does, that content comes too late to be of use in accounting for the intelligibility of relevant metaphors. Hearing that Juliet is the sun – and taking ourselves to need to associate with the predicate 'is the sun' some property or properties which could make what we have heard intelligible – we might begin by looking for those properties which make Juliet and *being the sun* similar. These would be properties that the two share. Or, rightly unhappy that mere similarity is not enough, we might take our search to be for those properties that make Juliet saliently similar to *being the sun*. Or, seeing this talk of similarity as introducing an unhelpful loop, we might take ourselves to require no more than salient properties which happen to be shared by Juliet and *being the sun* – properties perhaps which we can think of as true superordinates of Juliet and the sun itself.

However, as has been pointed out more than once in the literature, if we are careful not to equivocate, Juliet and *being the sun* do not really share *any* properties, at least not any that would have a hope of being appropriate. And, given this, similarity, salience and superordination apparently cannot yield us what we want. While it is no doubt true, for example, that the sun is warm, helps us to see, makes life possible, and that we might use similar sounding phrases to describe things that

Romeo might feel about Juliet, the properties are just not the same. The sun makes us warm in delivering an average of 164 watts per m^2 to the Earth, it makes life possible in making photosynthesis possible, etc. None of these, nor any genuine properties of the sun are properties of Juliet, nor could they be.

Two points must be made straightaway. First, while the impossibility of property-sharing is clear in the Juliet example, it is not always so stark; by choosing carefully one can find examples of metaphor in which a metaphor-relevant property happens also to be a property ordinarily associated with the original predicate. But, these handpicked examples can scarcely be a guide to accounts of metaphor generally; to coin a phrase, good cases make bad law.

The second point begins with a challenge to what I have just claimed: it will be said, with some justice, that we have no problem in understanding the very transformation of properties I am apparently denying. That is, no one has any problem in understanding the kind of move that leads us to accept that Juliet is warm, makes Romeo's life possible, helps him see things clearly, etc. However – and this is my second point – my objection to the property route for metaphor only *begins* with the observation that the targets of metaphors tend not to have any of the properties ordinarily expressed by the words in their MFIs. To complete the objection, one has to take into account what is I think a clear requirement on any account of metaphor, namely, that it provide materials which, if possessed or known by speakers and hearers, would make utterances of metaphors intelligible. Indeed, this intelligibility requirement lies at the heart of what I have been calling metaphor-apt content.

I put the requirement this way because, contrary to much recent literature, I do not think that a philosophical account of metaphor should be taken as an account of metaphor-processing, but that issue is not important here. What is important is that, whether as a constraint on intelligibility or on processing, it requires that any materials in the account be independent of the intelligibility of the metaphors it sets out to explain. Thus, appeals to linguistic knowledge, non-linguistic knowledge, context, and other such factors are fine, indeed necessary. But it is simply not acceptable to credit speakers and hearers with materials that can only come from their having already found the relevant metaphors

intelligible. And it is the violation of this constraint which completes my argument against those accounts which, in searching for appropriate properties to fill out metaphor-apt content, appeal to what can only be available after that content, or something close to it, is already in place.

Part II
Metaphor-apt Content By Other Means

4.

Neither similarity nor any of the notions closely linked to it seem able to deliver, in an explanatorily acceptable way, the properties that are central to many accounts of metaphor. It is not possible to overstate the seriousness of this failure, even though I have only just sketched the argument for it. For all the effort that has been expended on subtly different treatments of MFIs themselves, the fact is that without an appropriately characterisable route to relevant properties or concepts, or without something to put in place of pursuing this route, we simply don't have a philosophical account of metaphor.

Serious problems often call for radical solutions. Though details belong, and have been given elsewhere, I shall offer a condensed (and illustrated) sketch of mine.[2]

I take as my starting point an account of metaphor that is no longer much discussed, namely one proposed by Henle[3] and taken up by Alston[4]. Henle writes:

> Metaphor, then, is analysable into a double sort of semantic relationship. First, using symbols in Peirce's sense, directions are given for finding an object or situation. This use of language is quite ordinary. Second, it is implied that any object or situation fitting the direction may serve as an icon of what one wishes to describe.[5]

Being one of Henle's own examples, consider again Keats's metaphor:

(12) And hateful thoughts enwrap my soul in gloom.

Henle sees this sentence as involving an MFI which happens to resemble one of those given by the conflated sentences account, viz.:

(13) A cloak enwraps my body in wool,

and he wants us to take this sentence as directing us to the perfectly ordinary situation it describes – a situation which is intended to help us understand the metaphor. Or, to use the standard example that Henle doesn't discuss, we can say that in the Juliet case, the MFI is the predicate 'is the sun', and that this directs us to the familiar celestial object. But how does the situation of a cloak's enwrapping my body and an object, the sun, provide us with the metaphor-apt content that we need to explain the original utterances? Here what Henle and Alston say is disappointing. Appealing to Peirce's notion of iconicity[6], Henle explains the relationship between the pairs as that of 'likeness': being enwrapped in gloom is like being enwrapped in a cloak, and the sun is like Juliet. And Alston has no hesitation in speaking here of 'similarity'[7].

What I propose instead is that once we have an object or situation (or event) – and I am happy to call all these objects in a general sense – there is a path to metaphor-apt content which doesn't appeal directly to similarity, nor take us through any of the routes to alternative properties described above. But my proposal requires some background. And though there isn't space to convince you of my view here, I hope what I say by way of exposition encourages you in that direction.

The origins of my view lie in a question that doesn't immediately touch on metaphor. To what extent can objects – non-linguistic objects – take on the functions that we ordinarily attribute to words? (Note that, as already suggested, I count objects here liberally, to include material objects, as well as such things as events, states of affairs, situations, facts.) Two things lead me to ask this question.

The first is the fact that when you come to think about them in a certain way, words themselves are objects, albeit rather special ones. They are phonetic or graphical objects which depend for their *significance*, as one might say, on being embedded in what can be described broadly as networks of social practice. But many non-linguistic objects can also be described as having *significance* in this same way.

The second is the fact that we commonly and unproblematically use non-linguistic objects as referring devices. Telling a dinner party story

about a recent accident, someone might use the saltcellar on the table to stand in for her car. Musical themes often announce the imminent entrance of some character in a film or opera. Seeing particular landscapes, or finding yourself in a familiar situation, might well conjure up someone or something from the past. And this list takes only a little imagination to be indefinitely broadened and extended. Aside from the intrinsic interest of these examples, what strikes me about them is just how natural it is to describe them as cases of reference. What this suggests is that we think of reference – an undoubtedly semantic activity – as one we can accomplish with or without words. So, at least in respect of reference, objects can and do perfectly well take over a function that we typically associate with words.

For obvious reasons, this got me to thinking about predication. Even a cursory look at the literature suggests that reference and predication are of equal standing, though they are fundamentally different activities which are harnessed to one another. They are jointly necessary to that simplest kind of truth-directed structure, either of language or thought, that Quine[8] and Strawson[9] call the 'basic combination'. Wiggins, speaking for many others, succinctly captures the relationship of the elements in the basic combination – and their difference – this way:

> Names name, predicates describe, and having these complementary functions names and predicates are made for one another.[10]

What the rhetoric of philosophical logicians suggests is that reference and predication are not reducible to one another, and that what holds of one would have an appropriate counterpart in the other. However, looking into the treatment typically given to predication, this is simply not the case. Sparing you most of the detail, what one finds is that predication is most often – and without much discussion – explained via reference. Thus, many follow Strawson in saying that a predicate *specifies* a concept under which particulars can be collected. And specification here is clearly a referential notion, albeit one which differs in Strawson's story from straightforward reference to particulars.

Aside from this reductive explanation of predication in terms of reference, it turns out too that predication, in stark contrast to reference, is simply not understood as something that humans beings manage both

inside and outside language. Indeed, as it is typically understood, the very mention of predication conjures up some form of words, so that the very idea of 'non-linguistic predication' can seem an oxymoron.

Now I of course understand why things are this way. Linguistic predication is complex: it interacts with quantification, not simply reference, and predicates can themselves occur in referential position. In dealing with this complexity, philosophical logicians need a characterisation that takes in all the ways in which linguistic predicates can function, and something like the referential treatment offers the best hope of this. But the need for this treatment has somehow managed to bury the insight that, in their most primitive manifestation in the basic combination, reference and predication are different but equal partners.

When equals are not treated as such, and when the very vocabulary we use makes it impossible to speak of them as equals, some degree of consciousness-raising is called for. In respect of predication, what seems to be urgently required is a new label for this primitive semantic activity, one which doesn't automatically rule out its being accomplished by non-linguistic means. And then, once labelled in this neutral way, we should be able to see whether there really are instances of it which are no more problematic than instances of non-linguistic reference.

My preferred label is the old-fashioned grammatical term 'qualification', as in the claims, perhaps not even true, that 'adjectives qualify nouns', and 'adverbs qualify verbs'. You should think of qualification as something that linguistic predicates can do, but which is – at least potentially – something that an object can also do. Qualification is thus to be understood as functioning at the same level of generality as 'reference'. When we are told that:

(14) (R) X refers to Y,

we have no trouble in thinking of X as either some word or words, or as an object. Similarly, when we are told:

(15) (Q) X qualifies Y,

we should take ourselves to be free to think of X as either a linguistic predicate or as some object. (Note the awkwardness that we would have if this schema (Q) were to employ 'predicates' in place of 'qualifies'.)

Label aside, I expect that the main question about qualification is how to understand exactly what it is. Well, the short answer is that, while I can say something, it is not really possible to give anything like a proper *analysis* of the notion. Nor should this be surprising, given that I insist on strict equality between reference and predication. Asked what it means to claim that X refers to Y, philosophers tend to say such things as X picks out, stands for, indicates or specifies Y. But, helpful though they are, these are variants ways saying that X refers to Y, not analyses of it. Moreover, I don't think I am on shaky ground in saying that, for all their ingenuity in using causal and other relations, philosophers have yet to come up with any satisfactory analysis: so far as I am aware there is simply no way to explain reductively what it is for a human being to use X to refer to Y.

Similarly, when asked what makes it true that X qualifies Y, the best I can do is to say that X tells us something, gives information, makes us understand something about Y. Wiggins has it that predicates *describe*, and I am happy enough to add this to the list, so long as one can leave behind the idea that a description is always something linguistic. I intend these ways of putting the matter to be helpful, but none are in any sense analyses of qualification, and, when X is a linguistic predicate, they are near synonyms of predication itself. But the situation here is no different from reference, so I am unapologetic about it.

Analysis apart, more could be said about qualification and especially about its relationship to reference, predication and the basic combination itself. However, for present purposes what is most important is that you get the hang of it, and the best way to do this is with some examples. My hope is that, even while accepting that my examples are somewhat contrived, they will persuade you that the use of objects (in the broad sense) as qualifiers is really a ubiquitous phenomenon. That they can seem contrived is merely a consequence of my being unable to reproduce here the qualificational effects that our direct encounters with objects can have. Instead, I ask you to imagine those encounters by listening first to the text and then taking in the image.

1. Roberta has been locked in a battle with most of the members of her department. On a windy Sunday morning, she goes for a walk. She thinks: there is no reason for me to change my position at the department meeting tomorrow. She then comes across this:

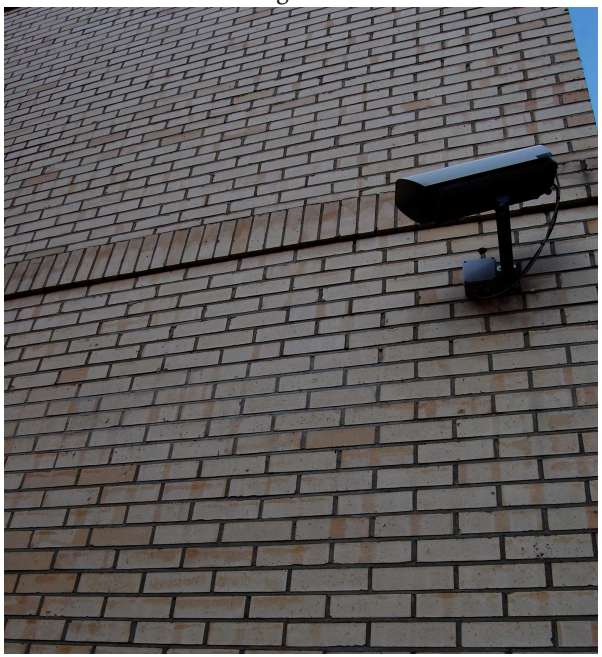
Figure 1

2. Working all morning, Peter goes out to the shops pleased that he has written several paragraphs which he believes contain a clear and sound argument which is solid proof against counterexample. But then he sees this:

Figure 2

3. John is thinking about the character of a colleague whom he finds difficult, though in ways he cannot quite describe. He sees this:

Figure 3



4. The beginning of the academic year:

Figure 4

5. Approaching one's sixtieth birthday:

Figure 5

It is important to emphasise the indirectness of these examples: in each case you are told something about the thought processes of an individual, and then shown a photographic Image of what that person sees or imagines. Actual cases of qualification would not need this kind of stage-setting, and can range much more widely. Still, I hope the examples suffice as illustrations of the basic tendency we have to find in objects information about other objects. This cognitive ability – indeed, I would say semantic ability – should be put alongside, though distinguished from, the correlative ability we have to take objects as referring devices, and it should be sharply distinguished from different and perhaps more philosophically familiar cases of the world's informativeness. Thus, while it is certainly true, for example, that tree rings are a source of information about the age of the tree – a causally-based source – none of my examples of qualification fit this model; causality plays no more of a role in qualification than it does in linguistic predication.

Before returning to metaphor, I need to make one final and absolutely crucial point about qualification. In presenting the examples I had to provide some background text to help you interpret the Images, and I realise that this text and the Images that followed make it seem easy to draw various narrative conclusions. Thus, hearing what I had to say about Roberta's predicament, one might go on to say, for example,

that the Image of the tree showed Roberta how *risky* it was for her to stand up to departmental opposition. And this might in turn tempt you to think that the Image was merely a device for importing or highlighting – dare I say, referring to – certain properties of Roberta's predicament. However, it is important that you recognise that this temptation is merely an artefact of the presentation. Qualification is not something that need take place in a linguistic setting, nor should it be thought of simply as a stand-in for something linguistic. Indeed, it functions prior to any talk of properties or concepts. Encountering situations, states of affairs, events, or material objects can lead directly to informational insights which can guide our future thoughts and actions without our ever having articulated the nature and content of those insights. The fact that a theorist, looking at a particular case, might come to be in a position to *say* something about an insight is neither here nor there as far as the exercise of qualification is concerned, because whatever is said comes downwind of the insight itself. Roberta didn't decide to give in to her colleagues on the committee because she first came to appreciate some property true of the fallen tree which she then applied to her situation. If anything, it is the reverse: she took the fallen tree to describe her situation, decided to act on that, and only having done so would she, or we, be in a position to work out what was true of her situation which made it reasonable to have reacted as she did to her encounter with the tree.

5.

Now qualification is not metaphor: for a start, unlike qualification, metaphor is intrinsically linguistic. Still, I think that, if handled correctly, qualification is the key to giving an account of metaphor, one that doesn't go through the property route or anything like it.

Henle said that the first thing we do with the functional words in a metaphor is to treat them as Peircean symbols: as 'directions . . . for finding an object or situation'. And he added: 'this use of language is quite ordinary'. While there is more to these directions than Henle recognises, I think that this part of his account is basically on the right track. Instead of 'directions' I prefer to describe the move from the words in a metaphor to an object as *semantic descent*.

In rough outline, there are two moves we need in order to make metaphors intelligible: the first is that of semantic descent from the level of language – the level typically used to characterise the world – to the world itself, whether these consist of particulars, events, situations or states of affairs. And the second is that of seeing the various objects we get by such descent as qualifiers. In a fuller account, much more would need to be said about both of these moves, but let me finish with a brief note about each of them.

First, semantic descent is not reference pure and simple. Though it certainly involves that movement from words to objects we think of as reference, it is controlled in subtle ways by the words used. Kant's planks are 'crooked', not 'plain sawn', Juliet is 'the sun', not 'the nuclear energy source at the centre of the solar system'. Such differences in the words used do not change referential targets, but, depending on the case, they set the stage for the qualification which follows, and this is what I mean when I say that the descent is 'controlled'. For my second point is that qualification in the context of metaphor is almost always more complicated than in the examples used earlier. In those cases, there was direct perceptual contact with objects, and this is not usual in metaphor. Some cases come close: all one needs is a little imagination to think of the event which would count as the qualifier in:

(16) Swerving at the last minute to avoid innocent bystanders, his argument came to a halt.

And the qualificational information furnished by this event requires no complicated contextual stage setting.

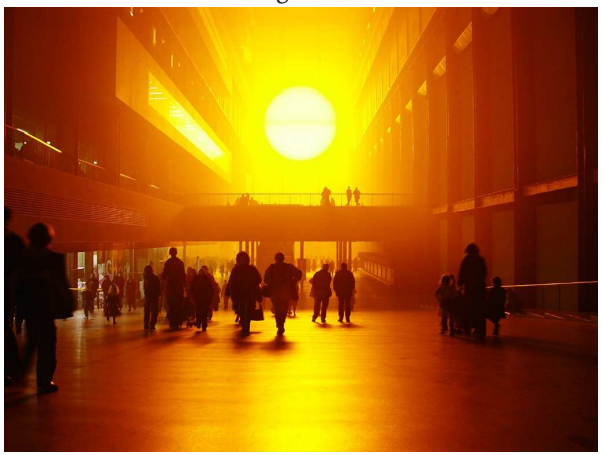
Note too that there is an interesting, and now commonplace, idiom in which the concept of metaphor is explicitly called on, but which involves a kind of directness typical of cases of simple qualification. Here is an example:

(17) The sunken tanker and its unpredictable cargo which might devastate the coast at any time is a metaphor for the terrorist menace facing Western nations.

Given that what precedes the expression 'is a metaphor for' is usually an object in my sense, I hear in that expression my notion of qualification trying to get out.

Still, these direct kinds of case are not typical, and there are many metaphors where the descent is not to actual objects, but to possible or imagined ones. Moreover, whether the objects are actual or not, one must pay attention to the words used to control descent – both within metaphors and in their immediate context – and pay no less attention to the cultural significance of the objects got by such descent. Think here of Romeo's metaphor, an example which I admit is one of the most difficult for my view. In order to render the qualification it involves acceptably determinate, one must take into account both the role of the word 'sun' and the cultural role that the sun would have had for Shakespeare's contemporaries. As an aid to seeing what I am getting at, consider Eliasson's 2003 Weather Project exhibition at the Tate-Modern in London. Those of you fortunate enough to have seen it might get an inkling of what I have in mind, but for those who didn't, I leave you with this:

Figure 6



and ask you to note both that Eliasson designed the Weather Project only after asking 100 employees of the Tate what aspect of the weather most affected their emotional lives, and only attendance at the exhibition could make clear just how deeply it affected the many visitors during that Winter. Note too, for what it is worth, that the Tate-Modern is located just next to Shakespeare's Globe Theatre.

Notes

[1] See for example White (1996), p. 80.
[2] The whole story is in my *Objects of Metaphor*.
[3] Henle (1958).
[4] Alston (1964).
[5] Op. cit., p. 178.
[6] See Peirce (1966), p. 368.
[7] Op. cit., pp. 98-9.
[8] Quine (2005).
[9] Strawson (1974), first chapter, 'The Basic Combination'.
[10] See p. 323 of Wiggins (1984).

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