

## *Embedded Metaphor and Perspective Shifting*

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*Non-cognitivism is an approach to metaphor that denies the existence of any metaphorical meanings. A metaphor's only meaning is its literal meaning. The interpretation of metaphor, on this approach, does not consist in metaphorical contents being communicated by being either semantically encoded or pragmatically communicated. Rather, metaphor operates in an entirely non-linguistic way that does not require the postulation of such meanings. Metaphors cause people to see connections, even to grasp new thoughts, but they do not do so by meaning those thoughts or connections. Non-cognitivism faces a stern challenge from the problem of embedding: metaphors embedded in propositional attitude reports seem to require metaphorical meanings in their truth-conditions. In this paper, we argue that existing attempts to solve this problem for non-cognitivism have been unsuccessful. We then offer a new solution that differentiates two scope readings of embedded metaphors and explains each in turn. The paper thus suggests that non-cognitivism has enough resources to account for embedded metaphors.*

**Keywords:** Metaphor; non-cognitivism; perspective shifting.

### *1. The problem of embedded metaphors*

Do metaphors mean something more than their literal contents? Most philosophers of language think that they do. They divide, roughly into those who think that metaphorical meanings are the result of pragmatic processes applied to literal contents to generate metaphorical meanings which are conveyed through either implicature or expli-

ture (Grice 1975; Wilson and Carston 2006; Récanati 2004) and, more rarely, those who postulate metaphorical meanings as semantic values (the most prominent contemporary proponent of this view is Stern 2000). A more radical alternative view, originating with Davidson (1978), is that there is no such thing as metaphorical meaning: “metaphors mean what the words, in their most literal interpretation, mean, and nothing more” (1978: 32). This view is known as non-cognitivism. Metaphors may *cause* people to grasp intended thoughts, or to see connections between things, and so on, but they do so by other means than by encoding those things as contents (or, indeed, implicating or explicating them). Metaphors are understood in the way that paintings or pieces of music are understood, not in the way that sentences are.

Embedded metaphors, for example metaphors embedded under attitude verbs such *believes*, *hopes*, *knows*, etc., pose an immediate problem for non-cognitivism. According to non-cognitivism, metaphors have no meaning beyond their literal meaning. The metaphor “hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul” is simply false, because hope is a feeling of expectation. Whatever explanation the non-cognitivist offers of how this metaphor is employed in human communication cannot appeal to some metaphorical content encoded by this sentence. Rather the explanation will have to appeal to a story about how an utterance of a straightforward falsehood stands in a causal relation towards its hearer such that this relation results in the speaker achieving something by that utterance. The above non-cognitivists offer a range of detailed accounts of how this can be elucidated. But what about an utterance of the following?

- (1) James believes that hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul.

The attitude report in (1) does not say something literally false about hope, it reports James’ state of mind. And, like all propositional attitude reports of the form *S Vs that P*, a plausible semantic theory would predict that it is true just in case *A* stands in the correct attitude relation to *P*: that James stands in the belief relation to the proposition expressed by the sentence “hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul.” But, intuitively, (1) does not report that he believes a literal falsehood. It might report that James believes that hope allows us to rise above or overcome adversity. So the proposition that (1) reports James as believing is the metaphorical content of the embedded sentence, not its literal meaning. In short, the truth-conditions of (1) require that the embedded proposition is the very same thing that non-cognitivism denies the existence of, namely the metaphorical content of the sentence. If we accept the relatively uncontroversial premises that truth-conditions supply the meanings that speakers understand and that (1) is a perfectly meaningful construction that ordinary English

speakers can understand with ease, then we seem to have a powerful counterexample to non-cognitivism.<sup>1</sup>

In addition, it is worth noticing that this type of belief report may either report that S represents some content to themselves metaphorically and believes it, or it can be a metaphorical representation of a content that S believes without representing it to themselves metaphorically. This distinction seems to support cognitivism. This is because if a metaphor M encodes a non-literal meaning M\* when uttered by S, cognitivists will distinguish cases where M contributes its literal meaning or M\* compositionally to the content of the construction S *believes that M*.

In this paper, we will argue that non-cognitivism can account for metaphors in the above belief report cases. We will begin Sect. 2 with an introduction explaining the distinction between these two readings. We name them “de re readings” and “de dicto readings.” After that, Sect. 3 will consider two unsuccessful non-cognitivist solutions dealing with the problem, both of which refuse to accept the legitimacy of de re readings and insist that de dicto readings are the only admissible readings of metaphorical belief reports. In Sect. 4, we aim to propose a non-cognitivist account of de re readings of embedded metaphors. In Sect. 5, we offer an account of de dicto readings of embedded metaphors.

## 2. Two readings for belief report cases

These two readings correspond to the common distinction between de re and de dicto attitude reports. For example, the literal belief report underlined in 2 has both a *de re* (2a) and a *de dicto* (2b) reading:<sup>2</sup>

- (2) Having tried them both in the guitar store, Amy believes that the 1972 SG sounds better than the 1989 SG.
- (2a) [The x: x is a 1972 SG][The y: y is a 1989 SG](Amy believes that x sounds better than y).
- (2b) Amy believes that ([The x: x is a 1972 SG][The y: y is a 1989 SG] (x sounds better than y)).

Whereas 2b requires Amy to conceptualise the two guitars under the concepts provided by the definite descriptions, 2a is true simply if she believes that the objects in question stand in the right relation to

<sup>1</sup> Gricean implicature accounts of metaphor also owe us an explanation of (1) just as much as non-cognitivists do.

<sup>2</sup> For ease of exposition we have treated the definite descriptions as quantifier phrases containing bound variables along the lines developed by those who endorse a Russellian theory of definite descriptions. Alternative accounts of definites can be offered and those accounts can also recognise the distinction between de re and de dicto attitude reports. The Russellian analysis of the distinction as a matter of the relative scope of the attitude verb and a quantifier is a simple way of making the distinction apparent, however, hence our choice to draw on it in this example.

one another, regardless of how she herself conceptualises those objects (perhaps she cannot distinguish one from the other). The same holds true of metaphorical belief ascriptions: when we report that James believes that hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul this can be true just in case it employs a metaphor in order to communicate that the metaphor can convey what James believes (*de re*) or it can also be read as reporting that James entertains that very metaphor himself (*de dicto*).

Some might object to our recognition of *de re* readings of embedded metaphors. For example, if one holds to a view along the lines of Camp (2006), according to which metaphors are *characterizations* of objects, the *de re* reading may seem less plausible. For Camp, roughly, a characterization gives us a set of salient properties that the speaker of the metaphor is communicating by their choice of that metaphor. One persuaded that this is the right way to think about metaphor may well take this to support a rejection of the plausibility of *de re* readings. If we are reporting James' attitudes when we state that James believes that hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul, we might have grounds here for insisting that the choice of metaphor will only be apt if it characterizes hope in the way that James does. Accordingly, this may count against recognising the *de re* reading as plausible.<sup>3</sup> However, we do not think this is the case. Camp's notion of a characterization is an insightful one and is particularly useful for understanding how to think of metaphors on *de dicto* readings of embedded cases. But it can also admit *de re* readings. It is important to note that, on the *de re* reading, the characterization would effectively take wide scope over the propositional attitude verb. In other words, it is a way of characterizing the belief from the perspective of the reporter, not of the attitude holder. So a *de re* report "James believes that hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul" characterizes James' attitude in accordance with the perspective of the reporter, rather than characterizing hope from James' perspective. These two can be hard to disentangle as they are obviously closely aligned. Characterising James' attitude in this way obviously will be a very similar enterprise to reporting his characterisation of hope as the thing with feathers that perches in the soul. But they are not the same enterprise. Suppose, for example, that James lacks the imaginative resources to understand that labelling hope as the thing with feathers that perches in the soul can be an effective metaphor to communicate its function. But he does nonetheless think that hope is a thing with feathers. Then the *de dicto* reading is false, but the *de re* one is true. Why? Because James does not characterize hope under the representation *a thing with feathers that perches in the soul*. But our use of that representation to characterize his highly negative and distrustful attitude towards hope is apt

<sup>3</sup> We are not attributing this rejection of the *de re* reading to Camp herself, it should be noted.

all the same. Thus we maintain that both *de re* and *de dicto* readings are plausible.

### 3. *Some non-cognitivist proposals*

Some prominent non-cognitivists have offered responses to the problem of embedding. Here we explain why we find those responses inadequate.

The first proposal is offered by Davies (1984). Davies denies that metaphors should be understood in accordance with the same framework as we apply to ordinary descriptive contents. The function of a metaphor, he insists, is not to encode a propositional content that is true or false. Metaphors function by helping those who appreciate them to recognise certain truths, but those truths themselves are not part of the content of the metaphors. Understanding metaphor, on this view, is not a matter of linguistic competence but of something more akin to aesthetic appreciation. Echoing ideas in Davidson, it seems that understanding metaphor for Davies is of the same kind as appreciating a painting or a work of music. Whatever content is arrived at in this process, it is not linguistically encoded. Davies does not directly address the problem of embedding as we have presented it here (namely, in terms of the truth-conditions of propositional attitude reports that embed metaphors). He does however briefly consider cases that raise the spectre of metaphors being the objects of belief. He takes the fact that the following cases sound infelicitous to support his claim that metaphors are not believed:

- (3) I believe this: you are a rose.
- (4) Of course this is true: you are a rose.

If Davies is correct that metaphors cannot be the objects of belief, then it would presumably follow that belief reports apparently employing them should not be interpreted at face value. Davies' examples strike us as puzzling, however. They do indeed sound odd, but it is not really clear that this has anything to do with the fact that they contain metaphors. They are just peculiar ways of speaking. More natural constructions like the following sound quite acceptable:

- (5) I believe that Juliet is a rose.
- (6) Truly, Juliet is a rose.

Given that this is so, Davies owes us an explanation of how his account is to be extended to constructions like these. On Davies's view, when James says "hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul" and Benvolio says "yes, I agree," James is intending Benvolio to see something, and Benvolio's utterance "I agree" signifies that he grasps and endorses it. So no metaphorical meaning as such is involved.

Could this explanation be extended to account for "James believes that hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul?" Well presumably it would then have to be a report that James had also grasped

the thing this metaphor is supposed to get us to appreciate. But then Davies' proposal would have to argue that James did so by understanding *this very sentence*. But this is not the only situation where we would be warranted in asserting that James believes that hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul. Perhaps this particular metaphor has never actually occurred to James but he does have a different description for hope. This would warrant an assertion of (1) on its *de re* reading. But this eludes explanation on Davies's account as that would clearly lead us straight back into the very problem that as a non-cognitivist we are trying to avoid—the idea that the metaphor *means* something that S is being reported to believe. In other words, Davies's account seems to work only for cases where (1) reports a situation where the metaphor “hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul” was a “live” metaphor<sup>4</sup> in James thought, but cannot accommodate a use of (1) to metaphorically describe James' belief that the metaphor “hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul” can convey what he believes that does not attribute to him the conscious apprehension of that metaphor.

In other words, Davies only offers an explanation of the *de dicto* reading of (1) and denies that there is a *de re* reading. But, as we have argued above, this is contrary to the evidence. Accordingly, his defence of non-cognitivism is incomplete unless he can offer compelling reasons why (1) should only be read as a *de dicto* report not as a *de re* one.

Another recent defence of non-cognitivism that does attempt to pursue just this kind of response to the embedding problem, is offered by Lepore and Stone (2010). On their account, as we also saw with Davies, metaphors serve a non-linguistic purpose: they are used to influence hearers, to make them see things in a certain sort of a way, even to get them to believe certain things—but they do not achieve these ends by *meaning* these contents that hearers arrive at. But the point of a metaphor, the thing it is used to get hearers to arrive at, seems to be playing a semantic role when the metaphor is embedded.<sup>5</sup> This is clearly contrary to their approach. They respond by denying that there is some content which can be isolated from the metaphorical vehicle as its content even in these situations. The response rests on their insistence that an embedded metaphor can only be truthfully reported by an attitude report if the attitude holder actively accepts the metaphor

<sup>4</sup> When we say it is “live” metaphor, it means that the speaker entertains the very metaphor himself.

<sup>5</sup> Keating (2015) objects to Lepore and Stone's account of how metaphors function on the grounds that it is not clear why the propositions that speakers of metaphors intend to cause their hearers to grasp are not thereby counted as speaker meanings. This objection seems more pressing for them than other non-cognitivists as they seek to ground metaphorical communication within a co-operative process between speakers and hearers. Keating's call for greater justification in construing this process as somehow fundamentally different to the co-operative processes familiar in pragmatics seems reasonable to us.

(i.e., if the belief report is understood as reporting that the embedded metaphor is apprehended “live” by the attitude holder). For example, if Chris is reported as believing that *No man is an island*, this report is not veridical simply if Chris believes that humans are socially interconnected beings. It:

[...] also requires that Chris accepts the metaphor as apt, and moreover that Chris is drawn from there by metaphorical thinking to appreciate that people are all inter-connected by social relationships. The metaphor must be active in Chris’s thought, and so it must somehow also be active in the truth conditions of [*No man is an island*]. (Lepore and Stone 2010: 175)

By taking this line, Lepore and Stone think that they can sidestep the embedding problem by effectively insisting that rather than being a full-blown belief report, a metaphorical belief report is in fact a report of the metaphorical thinking that the subject underwent. In other words, “Chris believes that no man is an island” does not report the content of Chris’s belief, it reports that Chris was in the situation where he believed something that was connected, in whatever way the non-cognitivist recognises as generally explaining how metaphor works, to the literal sentence “no man is an island.” For example, if we understand what speakers intend us to grasp by an utterance of this sentence by recognizing relevant similarities, then the belief report simply reports that Chris was in the position of recognizing those similarities in response to entertaining that literal content. In short, like Davies, Lepore and Stone respond to the embedding problem by first insisting that embeddings under attitude verbs are *de dicto* by default. However, they do offer some justification for this exclusion of the *de re* reading by seeking to reduce the *de dicto* reading to a report that the attitude holder stands in the relevant non-cognitive relation to the very sentence displayed in the report. But the only thing grounding this reduction, it seems, is their intuition that this is the only way to interpret the report.

Unfortunately, no evidence in support of Lepore and Stone’s intuition that the metaphor must be “live” in the thoughts of the attitude holder is provided. Our view is that the intuition is incorrect. If we report that James believes that hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul, it seems to us that our report is true if (though not *only if*, as we shall explain below) James thinks hope allows us to rise above or overcome adversity. We can indeed report attitudes using metaphors that the reported attitude holder is simply not in a position to understand, let alone to have as active in their thoughts. For example, I can describe a six year-old child as thinking *that the entire universe revolves around them*. But the six year old child does not have this metaphor active in their thought—they may simply lack the cognitive resources to have that kind of metaphor active in their thought—but they can have a self-centred attitude towards themselves and lack of consideration towards others. This is all that is needed to license the

metaphorical description of their cognitive state and this is all that is meant by the belief report in this particular instance.<sup>6</sup>

So far we have argued that both Davies and Lepore and Stone are mistaken in seeking to deny the plausibility of a *de re* reading. We will argue below, in fact, that *de re* readings can be fully explained by a non-cognitivist account of metaphor. Of course, one might think that we therefore have little grounds for complaint against these two competitors: if we can explain *de re* readings, then surely all we need to do to secure a robust non-cognitivist analysis of metaphors embedded under attitude reporting verbs is to add our account of *de re* readings to one of these accounts which explain the *de dicto* readings. However, while we are indeed in general sympathy with the non-cognitivist project of these authors, we do think that their particular accounts of the *de dicto* readings are problematic. Thus, while we hope that our account can strengthen the non-cognitivist's case, and so is intended to be offered as a contribution to that project, we also think there are significant explanatory gaps in the accounts that we have considered. In the remainder of this section, we aim to identify those explanatory gaps. We will then go on to propose an account of how *de dicto* readings function to fill those gaps, alongside our account of the *de re* readings.

Not only is the position Lepore and Stone defend at fault in its failure to recognise *de re* readings of embedded metaphors, it also leaves the interpretation of the verb under which the metaphorical material is embedded shrouded in secrecy. To put this point very simply: what triggers a hearer to recognise when an attitude verb is a genuine propositional attitude reporting relation, and when it is reporting the non-cognitive relation that is taken to underlie the speakers interaction with the metaphor? Take, for example, a case of the sort that Cohen (1978) labels “twice true” metaphors—namely those metaphors which are intuitively understood as communicating a metaphorical truth while also being literally true:<sup>7</sup>

(7) Trump is an animal.

This can be embedded under a belief attribution:

(8) Biden believes that Trump is an animal.

<sup>6</sup> It could well be that this apparent report is not really describing a belief of the child's at all, but simply giving a metaphorical description of their general character, selfish attitudes, or lack of concern for others. That might look like a *de re* belief report but in fact it would not be because it wouldn't be a *belief* report at all. We agree that such cases are tricky. But it is not unrealistic that some such utterances are genuine *de re* reports of a child's belief that they are *entitled* to X, without attributing to them the *de re* belief that takes them to entertain the very sentence “the world revolves around me!” Other examples, such as James' belief that hope allows us to rise above or overcome adversity as grounding a *de re* belief attribution using (1) are less controversial—see our discussion of Camp on characterizations in section 2 for further defence of the reading there.

<sup>7</sup> See also Keating (2015) for discussion of such cases.



But there is a difference in what belief is being reported, depending on whether the embedded sentence is literally or figuratively interpreted. Now of course it is not particularly problematic for belief sentences to be ambiguous: we have already noted that attitude reporting sentences are ambiguous between *de re* and *de dicto* readings; and, more mundanely, placing any lexical or syntactic ambiguity under the scope of a belief report will usually preserve that ambiguity:

- (9) Mary believes that Suzy likes to play a little guitar to relax.  
 (10) Jane believes that Mary met Suzy when she was living in London.

In the case of (9) the word *little* may denote the size of the guitar, or the amount of playing that Suzy likes to do. Hence (9) is ambiguous between at least two belief reports. Similarly, the surface grammar of (10) is ambiguous between reporting Jane's belief that Mary met Suzy when *Mary* was living in London, or Jane's belief that Mary met Suzy when *Suzy* was living in London, as well as Jane's belief that Mary met Suzy when *Jane* was living in London. However, the situation Lepore and Stone envisage is more problematic. On their view, we do not really have an ambiguity in the object of Biden's belief in (8). There is no metaphorical meaning of the embedded sentence for Biden to believe on their view. Hence, this reading is not really a belief report at all. The ambiguity, if there is one, does not reside in the embedded sentence as this sentence only has its one, literal, meaning. It must reside, then, in different senses of the verb "believes." Hence, Lepore and Stone seem committed to the view that the "metaphorical" interpretation (whereby we take Biden to see the same connections that we do if we interact with the embedded sentence in the right sort of way) does not attribute a belief to Biden at all. But, in that case, what does the word "believes" mean in (8)? It now looks dangerously close to itself encoding a metaphorical meaning here—Biden does not *literally* believe any metaphorical meanings according to the non-cognitivist, because there are no metaphorical meanings for him to believe. In which case, presumably, a non-cognitivist analysis of this seemingly metaphorical use of "believes" must be provided. At best, we now have an undesirable and, we submit, implausible level of complexity at work in the account. For we will now have to say that we have two levels of connection-seeing at play: the "metaphorical" use of "believes" triggers some process in us which allows us to see certain kinds of connections which in turn lead us to recognize another episode of connection-seeing which Biden is being reported as having taken part in, as triggered by the embedded sentence. But surely part of the appeal of non-cognitivism is that it avoids unnecessary interpretive complexities of this sort. This proposal seems to us no simpler than simply postulating metaphorical meanings in the first place. Indeed we are not convinced that this double layering of non-cognitivism to explain away an apparently metaphorical sense of belief that arises out of a prior attempt to explain away an apparently metaphorical object of this "belief" is even coherent.

What we think the above discussion shows is that Lepore and Stone (and, indeed, Davies) leave at least two unacceptable explanatory gaps in their accounts of embedded cases. On the one hand, they fail to explain what guarantees that embedding metaphors under propositional attitude verbs has a different result to embedding literal sentences under such verbs. But, if they are going to deny that the resulting constructions can be read in a *de re* as well as *de dicto* fashion, this needs explaining. After all, literal belief reports are seemingly ambiguous between the two, so what makes the embedding of metaphor special? On the other hand, no account is given of precisely how we effect the shift in perspective whereby we understand (11) to be reporting a connection-seeing event by Trump that does not routinely happen for belief reports. After all, we do not need to understand (11) as directing us to consider an episode of connection-seeing from Trump's perspective:

(11) Trump believes that Biden lives in the White House.

In the next section, we will elaborate further on the kind of perspective shift that is at work in the *de dicto* reading of metaphors embedded under attitude verbs. In the following section, we will propose a solution to fill those gaps.

#### 4. *De re and de dicto* *embeddings of metaphor under believes*

Recall our original belief report, (1). We can intuitively recognise an ambiguity in this report that is best explained by appeal to the *de re/de dicto* ambiguity of the report, as outlined above:<sup>8</sup>

*De Re:*

[Hope is such that x ] James believes that x is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul.

*De Dicto:*

James believes that [hope is such that x] x is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul.

In the *de re* reading, the metaphor “hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul” conveys the thing that James believes without committing to the claim that James has that metaphor in mind. In the *de dicto* reading, James believes that hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul by virtue of having that very metaphor before

<sup>8</sup> An alternative reason one might take for the scope behavior of the embedded metaphor here may be that the metaphorical part “hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul” is perhaps ambiguous between a descriptive and a pejorative or insulting sense. On this view, it will take wide scope if occurring in the latter sense by virtue of the semantic properties it has as an expressive (see Potts 2007 for extensive discussion of expressives). Nonetheless, we take this to be inessential to the issues at hand, as there are plenty of non-insulting metaphors that display the same behavior with respect to scope. For example, “James believes that hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul.”

his mind and assenting to its truth. The strategy we have observed consistently emerging among those who face difficulties in accounting for the two readings has been to deny the reality of the de re reading. For our non-cognitivists this was because they were able to offer some account of the de dicto reading by insisting that it is not really a report of a belief, rather it is a report of the sort of situation that James found himself in when confronted by the metaphor *hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul*. Rather than grasping a metaphorical meaning, he engaged with the sentence in some non-cognitive fashion (perhaps he saw some connections, or was caused to entertain some thought that was not linguistically encoded or implicated by the original sentence). This is what is really being reported, according to the non-cognitivist.

From the perspective of non-cognitivism, this strategy strikes us as ill-advised and unnecessary. It is ill-advised because the de re reading is just as plausible as the de dicto, so it puts non-cognitivism in the dialectically weak position of having to argue that people are wrong to think metaphors can be employed to describe the beliefs we report others as having. It is unnecessary because there is a non-cognitivist explanation of the de re reading. The easy explanation is to insist that the de re reading is not a description of a belief at all. Why? Because it characterises the belief metaphorically and, according to non-cognitivism, metaphors do not describe things. They function by causing hearers to see connection between things in a way that does not require any semantic content above the literal meaning of the metaphor. The non-cognitivist interpretation of the de re reading should be no different: on the de re reading, (2) is an attempt on the part of the reporter to cause their audience to see something by saying something literally false about James' state of mind. It is a metaphor apparently about James' belief, in the same way that *hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul* is a metaphor apparently about hope. Or if one prefers to find a metaphor which employs a verb phrase to make the similarity clearer, *James believes that hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul*, characterizes James' belief metaphorically in the same way that *Cobain sings with the voice of the dispossessed* characterizes Cobain's singing metaphorically. No special explanation is required for the former that was not already needed for the latter.

The non-cognitivist explanation of de re cases then, insists that they are not reports of a belief in a metaphor, they are metaphors themselves. The explanation of how a metaphor communicates de re information about what James believes should therefore take the same form as the explanation of how a metaphor inspires people to see the similarities between hope and the thing with feathers that perches in the soul. The metaphor *hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul* functions by saying something about hope that leads us to arrive at information concerning hope that is not linguistically encoded in the

original sentence. The metaphor *James believes that hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul* functions by saying something about *James'* state of mind which leads us to arrive at information concerning *James'* state of mind that is not linguistically encoded in the original sentence. If the non-cognitivist can explain the metaphor *hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul* by appeal to connections it leads its hearer to recognize, which lead that hearer in turn to the thought that hope allows us to rise above or overcome adversity, then a precisely similar explanation can be provided of the connections recognized in arriving at the thought that *James'* state of mind is distrustful towards hope.

On this view, the *de re* cases should not only be recognised by the non-cognitivist, they can be easily explained by them. It is the *de dicto* cases that are hard. Here, the usual non-cognitivist explanations run into a new obstacle because we now have the metaphorical content seemingly playing an essential role in the truth-conditions of (1): it is the metaphor itself that *James* is being reported to believe here—hence a metaphorical content is demanded as the object of his belief in order to explain what would need to be the case for (1) to be true on the *de dicto* reading. We are not simply trying to get our audience to see connections in the *de dicto* case: we are reporting that *James* sees those connections.

We have argued that a range of theorists including non-cognitivists like Davies, Lepore and Stone, share two difficulties in the face of the problem of embedded metaphors. Firstly, they fail to accommodate *de re* readings of embedded metaphors. This, we have argued, is implausible as *de re* readings seem clearly available. Presumably, what we have called the non-cognitivist explanation of *de re* cases would be consistent with Davies, and Lepore and Stone's non-cognitivist ambitions and, therefore, a welcome additional resource for them. Secondly, these theorists all lack an account of what ensures that attitude reports take obligatory wide scope when the attitude verb operates on an (apparent) metaphorical content but not when it operates on a literal content. Related to this complaint, we have argued that they lack any explanation of the mechanism which explains how the *de dicto* reading is achieved. If the embedded metaphor has no metaphorical meaning, and simply serves to place us in the position where we obtain a clear picture of the non-cognitive relation that the reported attitude holder was in, there should be some kind of explanation of how this is achieved. Otherwise, we have argued, we will be in danger of treating *believes* as itself having a metaphorical function in such roles, and this is a dangerous route for the non-cognitivist. We have offered a proposal to avoid the first difficulty. Having recognized *de re* readings as well as *de dicto* readings, we do not face the challenge of needing to account for attitude verbs taking wide scope over what they report, as we are not taking such readings to be obligatory: the reports are simply ambiguous between

de re and de dicto readings. However, we do still need an explanation of the de dicto ones. We now proceed to provide an explanation of these and the mechanism which facilitates them. This, again, is one which will draw only on the resources of non-cognitivism.

### 5. *A new non-cognitivist solution to the problem of embedded metaphor*

We explained above that non-cognitivism does not lack the resources to account for de re readings of embedded metaphors if we grant them the resources to explain ordinary, non-embedded, metaphors. We will now propose an explanation of how de dicto readings of embedded metaphors work in a way that is consistent with non-cognitivism. Returning to our preferred example:

- (1) James believes that hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul.

What we seek is an account of what this metaphor means when it reports that James himself entertained that very metaphor and took its content to be true.

Our proposal is that embedded metaphors understood on a de dicto reading are quotational constructions. In particular, we suggest that they should be read as implicit examples of what we will call *echoic quotation*. Echoic quotation, as we will see, can be produced in many quotational contexts but it is particularly evident in cases of open quotation. “Open quotation” is a term coined by Récanati (2010)<sup>9</sup> to describe a distinct form of quotation that does not recruit the quoted material to occupy the grammatical role of a singular term. Rather than referring to the material that is quoted, it acts as a context-shifting device to enable speakers to mimic or echo the thoughts and words of others in order to express the mimicked speaker’s perspective.<sup>10</sup> Closed quotation, by contrast, is quotation which does recruit the material as a singular term. Both closed and open quotation can generate the echoic uses of quotation we are interested in, as we will see in several examples below. Open quotation is particularly useful for illustrating the echoic role, however, as this seems to be the primary role of open quotation.

Consider a simple form of quotation like we have in the following example:

<sup>9</sup> Récanati would not, of course, endorse our desire to defend non-cognitivism, as he has his own account of metaphor as resulting from pragmatic explicatures. See references in the introduction above.

<sup>10</sup> Note that Récanati was not directly motivated by a desire to explain context shifting but motivated by the idea that (what he takes to be the core cases of) quotations are demonstrations in Clark’s (1996) sense and that they are not singular terms. However, open quotation includes cases where “the very words which are used to express the content of the reported attitude (or speech act) are at the same time displayed for demonstrative purposes” (Récanati 2010: 240).

(12) The current prime minister of the UK is called “Boris Johnson.” In (12) the function of the quotation operation is extremely simple—it just acts as a nominalizing operation to convert an expression into a name of that expression. But quotation is also used of course to report exact speech, as in this example:

(13) Bertrand Russell said, “I am not a Christian.”

This form of speech report can be understood in much the same way as the first kind of quotation: the quotation names the thing that Russell said. But now consider the following examples:

(14) Oxford vaccine shows “encouraging” immune response in older adults.

(15) There are things of which we cannot speak, and I agree with Wittgenstein that, on these, “we must remain silent.”

In these examples, we have a form of *echoic* quotation in which the quoted material is both used and mentioned at the same time. The quotation makes clear that this is a word for word transcription of the quoted material, but that material is put to use by the person who is doing the quoting in their own assertion. We might say that, in these examples, the material is both cited and endorsed.

Quoted material in echoic quotational contexts does not have to be endorsed however. It can also be a way of presenting the perspective of another without endorsement. Consider this news headline, which employs echoic quotation but (unlike 13) does so in a way that makes it clear that the speaker does not share the perspective introduced by the quoted material:

(16) “Human foot” spotted in Gateshead turns out to be potato.

Clearly, the quotation in (16) is not a mere mention of the material it quotes, but is a way of using it to portray a perspective without sharing or endorsing it. On the contrary, it introduces the perspective identifying the mistake of the speaker who mistook a potato for a human foot. These sorts of instances of echoic quotation are common. Notice that we have examples of both open (14, 15) and closed (16) quotation performing this echoic function. Open quotation, however, gives a particularly vivid example, as it often quotes material that can only be naturally understood in this echoic manner. Consider this pair of examples (adapted from the examples used below by Récanati):

(17) Come on now, Donald! “This election was rigged,” “they stole my Presidency,” [...] when are you going to face up to the truth?

(18) Donald keeps getting upset and saying “this election was rigged.”

Both are reports of Donald’s speech and attitudes, but they report in very different ways. Whereas (18) merely reports the words that Donald said, (17) employs those words to occupy his perspective in recounting the episode. It echoes, or mimics, his speech so as to imitate him in representing his view. Récanati helpfully characterises the difference, as follows:

The contrast between open and closed quotation is illustrated by the following pair of sentences:

(7) Stop that John! ‘Nobody likes me,’ ‘I am miserable’ ... Don’t you think you exaggerate a bit?

(8) John keeps crying and saying ‘Nobody likes me.’

In (7) a token of ‘Nobody likes me’ and ‘I am miserable’ is displayed for demonstrative purposes, but is not used as a singular term, in contrast to what happens in (8), where the quotation serves as a singular term to complete the sentence ‘John keeps crying and saying \_\_\_\_.’ Sentence (7), therefore, is an instance of open quotation, while (8) is an instance of closed quotation. (Récanati 2010: 231)

Open quotation, then, provides a clear illustration of the echoic reading of quotation. But once we recognise it in the open cases, we can also identify it in the closed cases, as discussed above. It is this echoic reading, we suggest, that is perfect for capturing the *de dicto* readings of embedded metaphors.

Echoic quotation in the cases considered thus far introduces the quoted material as demonstrating what a speaker said in order to mimic that speaker. This mimicry is not restricted to contexts involving verbs of saying.<sup>11</sup> We can just as readily report a range of propositional attitudes in ways that make it plain that we are adopting the perspective of the attitude holder under a form of pretence. Consider this example:

(19) Trump believes that us whining liberals are undermining his authority.

In the example, it is natural to interpret the pejorative phrase “whining liberals” as mimicking the attitude that the speaker attributes to Trump, and not at all natural to interpret it as expressing the speaker’s own attitude. It would, in fact, be reasonable to reconstruct the sentence by adding quotation marks around the phrase to make this clear.

A similar story holds from embedded metaphors, which, we have seen, have two readings: a *de re* one which does not present the metaphor as being itself before the mind of the reported attitude holder, and a *de dicto* one which does. This *de dicto* one simply presents the metaphor as it occurs from the perspective of the subject. Such cases, we submit, are best understood as instances of echoic quotation of the sort we have just outlined. The *de dicto* reading is thus a mimicry of the agent of the reported attitude which is effected by an implicit echoic quotation operation.<sup>12</sup> The operation can be made explicit to illustrate this:

(20) James believes that hope is the “thing with feathers that perches in the soul.”

With *de dicto* readings secured by a context-shifting echoic quotation operator, the non-cognitivist has a complete account of embedded

<sup>11</sup> See Récanati (2010) in 226–228.

<sup>12</sup> See more about implicit echoic quotation examples in 20–21.

metaphors in attitude reports. The quotation “thing with feathers that perches in the soul” mimics the attitude attributed to James. There is no special problem of explaining metaphors embedded under attitude verbs for the non-cognitivist. The context-shifting nature of echoic quotation allows us to present the attitude-holder’s perspective in such a way that the same mechanism involved in making sense of James’ own utterance of the metaphor can extend to the mimicry of his utterance in the embedded case.

## 6. Conclusion

Our solution to the problem of embedded metaphors demonstrates that the non-cognitivist faces no special problem in explaining how metaphors can be embedded under attitude reports. The solution rests on a strategy of “divide and conquer:” first, we divide attitude reports into *de re* and *de dicto* readings, and then proceed to explain each differently. A *de dicto* reading employs an implicit echoic quotation operator to shift the embedded material to the reported context. Accordingly, the explanation of how we understand “S believes that M,” where M is a metaphor, on this reading is the same as that which explains how we understand S when she herself utters M. The reported context is accessed by the context-shifting quotation operator, meaning that any non-cognitivist account of how S’s utterance of M is to be understood will transpose to the *de dicto* reading of “S believes that M.” A *de re* reading does not require the same context shift as it gives a metaphorical description of the attitude holders state of mind, rather than a description of a metaphor that the attitude holder has in mind. Thus whatever explanation the non-cognitivist avails herself of in explaining a metaphorical description of an object *o* as *F*, will transpose to the case where *o* is the state of mind of the individual so described. Of course, one who is unconvinced by non-cognitivism in general will not be likely to find anything in this explanation to change their mind. But they should be willing to concede that the non-cognitivist faces no *additional* challenge when it comes to explaining metaphors embedded under attitude reports. Non-cognitivism does not stand or fall on this issue, we conclude.

Despite our solution to the problem of explaining metaphors when embedded under attitude reporting verbs, there is a remaining puzzle about embedding that seems especially problematic for non-cognitivism. The following example takes the same form as a problematic case noted by Wilson and Carston (2019):

Tim: Robert is a bulldozer.

Bob: Robert is better to be a bulldozer than a Robin Reliant.

Although Wilson and Carston label such cases as “embedded metaphors,” they seem rather different to the cases of embedding under propositional attitude reporting verbs. The puzzle for the non-cogni-



tivist, however, is very similar.<sup>13</sup> Bob's reply takes for granted, and indeed develops, the *metaphorical* meaning of Tim's assertion. Taken literally, the predicate "is a bulldozer" does not support the inference that anything in its extension is being a better bulldozer than being any Robin Reliant (where "being a Robin Reliant" is taken literally). The conversation appears to presuppose, and exploit, the metaphorical content that non-cognitivist refuse to recognize. It might be more helpful to call this the problem of *extended* metaphor, rather than embedded metaphor, given that (a) there does not seem to be any obvious lexical item that the metaphor is embedded under, and (b) the same puzzle might be thought to arise even if Tim alone were to extend the metaphor without assistance from Bob (hence it need not be conversationally embedded either). Whatever we call the problem, it requires a solution, although such considerations make us hesitant to subsume a solution to it under any general solution to the problem of embedding.

There is more to be said about extended metaphor than we can offer here, so our suggestions on this are tentative, but it does seem plausible that the mechanism we have employed to analyse *de dicto* attitude ascriptions can be utilised by the non-cognitivist to make sense of what is happening in these cases. Bob's reply adopts Tim's perspective, hence it is naturally interpreted in the same quotational manner that we have provided for *de dicto* belief ascriptions involving metaphor. Effectively, what Bob is doing in the example is occupying Tim's perspective and then building on the same metaphorical narrative that Tim develops in the first utterance. If this is right then, again, the non-cognitivist can appeal to a context-shifting operation to put Bob's audience in the same situation as Tim's—if the non-cognitivist can explain how Tim's metaphor impacts on his audience, they will be able to inherit the same explanation when it comes to explaining Bob's extension of it. If there is a good non-cognitivist explanation of non-embedded, non-extended

<sup>13</sup> A related "problem of embedding" for the non-cognitivist is the problem of embedding under logical operators. In sentences like "If hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul, then we had better keep a watchful eye on it," or "unless our intelligence agents are mistaken, hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul," most will have the intuition that it is the metaphorical content of "hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul" that is contributed to the truth-conditions of the complex sentence. But the non-cognitivist cannot offer any such metaphorical content to play that role. Alas, we do not see a way to extend our solution to the problem of embedding under attitude verbs to these cases. Here, it seems to us that the non-cognitivist simply has no choice but to "bite the bullet" and deny that any metaphorical content is contributed to the conditional. Just as with atomic sentences, the non-cognitivist has to insist that no content beyond the literal meaning is at work in these cases. The non-cognitivist, in our view, should construe these sentences as literal conditionals that perform a function of causing hearers to see things in a certain kind of way. They should not see them as conditionals which assert that *if* one views things a certain kind of way, *then* some literally described content follows. That would be asking metaphors to contribute a content to a conditional that the non-cognitivist has no right to recognize.

metaphors, there should be no special problem of either embedding or extending them.

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