

How does one respond to the objection that, since most, if not all, of our language is metaphorical in origin, there can be no hard and fast distinction between what is literal and what is nonliteral ?

One begins by responding—or, perhaps, prepares one's response by saying—that there is a difference between talking about different kinds of *language* and talking about different kinds, or strata, of *meaning* in language. Thus, however a term may have originated, whether or not it is literal or nonliteral is properly decided by how it is now being used.

But the heart of the response is that a term is being used literally, and therefore has a literal meaning, when it is used in the *same* sense in which it is used to apply to any other entity of the same logical-ontological type, whereas a term is being used nonliterally (or symbolically, metaphorically, analogically, etc.), and therefore has a nonliteral meaning, when it is used in a *different* sense from that in which it is used to apply to some other entity of the same logical-ontological type. Thus the presupposed criterion of the distinction between what is literal and what is nonliteral is this: a term is used literally when, within any single logical-ontological type, it applies in the same sense, rather than in a different sense, to all the different entities belonging to the type, whereas a term is used nonliterally when, even within any logical-ontological type within which it is applicable, it applies in different senses, rather than in the same sense, to the different entities within the respective type.

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