

to cognition. It principally argues against the assumption, still prevalent in philosophy and cognitive science, that language is inherently literal. This assumption traditionally takes the form of a series of claims about figurative language, namely: that it is 'deviant' (p. 5); that it 'violates widespread communicative norms of speaking truthfully and unambiguously' (p. 20); and that it 'requires additional cognitive effort to be understood' (p. 82). In fact, as Gibbs points out, figurative language 'is found in virtually all aspects of our everyday thinking and speech' (p. 20), as well as in scientific theories, legal reasoning, myths, the arts and a variety of cultural practices. People do not in general consider the use of figurative language (e.g. 'He was boiling with anger'; 'She bit his head off'; 'They wouldn't spill the beans'; 'The White House isn't saying anything') to be in violation of normal usage, and controlled experimentation has established that it does not take people longer to understand and correctly react to such language. Much of the book is devoted to establishing this fact through surveying the extensive analysis of figurative language in everyday speech and writing contained in many studies and journals that philosophers do not normally get to read (e.g. *Metaphor and Symbolic Activity*, or *Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behavior*).

However, the book has a grander purpose than merely that of establishing the omnipresence of figurative language in everyday talk and in numerous forms of writing. Working with the assumption that 'language is not independent of the mind but reflects our perceptual and conceptual understanding of experience' (p. 434), it argues that figurative language reflects common schemes of figurative cognition. People do not only talk and write figuratively – they *think* figuratively. One example provided by Gibbs is that of people's understanding of anger. Most figurative descriptions of anger ('Bill is getting hot under the collar'; 'She blew up at me') reflect people's metaphorical conceptualization of anger as: 'ANGER IS HEATED FLUID IN A CONTAINER' (p. 7). Even poets who write about anger will refer to, and elaborate upon, this basic conceptual metaphor of anger. It is not the case that people think of anger in some other, literal manner and then feel compelled to convert this thought into a figurative description. Rather, this is the way that people think of anger in the first place. Gibbs thus argues that we should reject another assumption which is prevalent in philosophy and cognitive science: that thought itself is somehow 'literal'. According to him, the mind is deeply 'poetic', that is, it is normally engaged in figurative thought. The omnipresence of figurative language is for him direct evidence for 'the fundamental poetic character of everyday thought' (p. 454).

It remains to be seen whether Gibbs' arguments will be accepted by philosophers writing on metaphor. He is often impatient with them (about Davidson's and Rorty's view of metaphor he says: 'Nevertheless, the metaphor-without-meaning view is of little value to cognitive theorists interested in how metaphors are understood' (p. 222)). It would be a shame however if this clearly-written, well-researched and extremely informative book, which has already been acknowledged in other circles as something of a definitive work, did not feature in future debates on the subject of figurative language in philosophy.

Duke University

James Edwin Mahon

*The Poetics of Mind: Figurative Thought, Language, and Understanding*  
By Raymond W. Gibbs, Jr  
Cambridge University Press, 1994. Pp. x + 527. ISBN 0-521-41965-4. £59.95.

Raymond Gibbs is a cognitive scientist who has published widely in the areas of experimental psychology, semantics, linguistics and literary criticism. This book is the culmination of his research on figurative language (metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, analogy, oxymoron, irony, and idiomatic speech) and its relationship