

## CLASSICAL THEORY OF METAPHORS

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**Abstract:** *The article examines the classical theory of metaphor proposed by Aristotle, which interprets metaphor as the transfer of meaning based on similarity. The main tenets of the theory, its historical development, and criticisms are discussed. The limitations of the classical approach, which does not consider the cognitive role of metaphor, are highlighted. Nevertheless, its significance for the development of linguistic research is noted.*

**Keywords:** *classical theory of metaphor, Aristotle, meaning transfer, stylistic device, cognitive linguistics, analogy, metaphor development, metaphor criticism.*

Metaphor is an important and universal phenomenon in language and culture, playing a key role in cognition and the transmission of meanings. For centuries, metaphor was viewed as a stylistic device used to embellish speech and create figurative expressions. This approach was later known as the "classical theory of metaphor," originating in the works of ancient Greek philosophers and rhetoricians, such as Aristotle. This article explores the main principles of the classical theory of metaphor, its development, and criticism in the context of modern linguistic studies.

The classical theory of metaphor is based on the concept of metaphor as a specific linguistic tool used for the transfer of meanings. From this perspective, metaphor is a trope, that is, a means of artistic expression widely used in literature and rhetoric.

According to the classical theory, a metaphor is a way of transferring a name from one object to another based on their similarity. The main idea of classical metaphor can be summarized as follows:

1. **Meaning Transfer:** A metaphor arises when the meaning of one word is transferred to another object based on analogy or similarity.

- Example: In the expression "**a sea of people**," the word "sea" transfers its meaning to a large crowd of people, based on their numerical similarity.

2. **Stylistic Function:** Metaphor is seen as an element that enhances speech, giving it expressiveness and emotional coloring.

- Example: In the phrase "iron will," the word "iron" serves as a source of meaning, describing willpower as something strong and firm.

Historical Development of the Classical Theory

Aristotle was the founder of the classical theory of metaphor, providing its first definition in his work "Poetics." Aristotle defined metaphor as the transfer of meaning from one object to another based on similarity. In his view, metaphor is more than just a decorative element; it helps convey meaning through images and analogies, facilitating perception and understanding.

Aristotle identified four types of metaphors:

1. Metaphor by Analogy: Meaning is transferred based on functional or characteristic similarity.

- Example: "Time has sharp teeth"— a metaphor where sharp teeth symbolize the destructive force of time.

2. Metaphor by Substitution of Species for Genus: A specific phenomenon is replaced by a more general concept.

- Example: "He left this world" instead of "He died."

3. Metaphor by Substitution of Genus for Species: A general concept is replaced by a more specific one.

- Example: "Soldiers are lions," where lions signify bravery.

4. Metaphor by Part-Whole Substitution: A part of a phenomenon replaces the whole phenomenon.

- Example: "A new star has risen" — referring to a successful person.

The development of the classical theory continued during the Renaissance and the Early Modern Period. Metaphor remained primarily a trope used in literature and rhetoric. During this time, the theory expanded significantly, and metaphors began to be seen as a way to convey complex abstract concepts through concrete images.

#### Criticism of the Classical Theory of Metaphor

Despite the importance of the classical theory, its limitations became evident in the 20th century. The main criticisms of the classical approach include:

1. Narrow Understanding of Metaphor: The classical theory reduces metaphor to a mere decorative and stylistic tool. It does not consider its cognitive function, namely, the role of metaphor in the process of thinking and understanding.

2. Limited Examples: The classical theory relies on literary examples and does not consider metaphors in everyday language, despite their prevalence in daily speech and their significant role in communication.

3. Lack of Cognitive Approach: The classical theory does not view metaphor as a means of structuring thought. However, research by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, presented in their book "Metaphors We Live By," demonstrated that

metaphors are essential elements of human cognition and help structure abstract concepts.

#### Modern Approaches and the Influence of the Classical Theory

Modern cognitive studies of metaphor, such as the works of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, challenge the main principles of the classical theory, arguing that metaphors are fundamental to human thought and understanding. They propose a cognitive theory of metaphor, viewing it as a means of interpreting the world.

Nevertheless, the classical theory remains significant for understanding the historical development of linguistics and rhetoric. It laid the groundwork for further studies and helped establish the view of metaphor as a universal language that helps people describe complex and abstract concepts through images.

The classical theory of metaphor, originating in ancient times, played a key role in understanding metaphorical expressions as a means of artistic expression and embellishment in speech. Despite its limitations, this approach significantly influenced the development of linguistics and became the foundation for later theories. Modern metaphor research builds on and expands the classical theory, viewing metaphor not only as a stylistic device but also as an important cognitive tool that reflects ways of perceiving and comprehending the world. Thus, the classical theory of metaphor remains a significant stage in the history of language studies, serving as a foundation for further research in cognitive linguistics and cultural linguistics.

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