

METAPHORS We Live By

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Concepts We Live By

Metaphor is for most people a device of the poetic imagination and the rhetorical flourish—a matter of extraordinary rather than ordinary language. Moreover, metaphor is typically viewed as characteristic of language alone, a matter of words rather than thought or action. For this reason, most people think they can get along perfectly well without metaphor. We have found, on the contrary, that metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature.

The concepts that govern our thought are not just matters of the intellect. They also govern our everyday functioning, down to the most mundane details. Our concepts structure what we perceive, how we get around in the world, and how we relate to other people. Our conceptual system thus plays a central role in defining our everyday realities. If we are right in suggesting that our conceptual system is largely metaphorical, then the way we think, what we experience, and what we do every day is very much a matter of metaphor.

But our conceptual system is not something we are normally aware of. In most of the little things we do every day, we simply think and act more or less automatically along certain lines. Just what these lines are is by no means obvious. One way to find out is by looking at language. Since communication is based on the same conceptual system that we use in thinking and acting, language is an important source of evidence for what that system is like.

Primarily on the basis of linguistic evidence, we have found that most of our ordinary conceptual system is metaphorical in nature. And we have found a way to begin to identify in detail just what the metaphors are that structure how we perceive, how we think, and what we do.

To give some idea of what it could mean for a concept to be metaphorical and for such a concept to structure an everyday activity, let us start with the concept ARGUMENT and the conceptual metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR. This metaphor is reflected in our everyday language by a wide variety of expressions:

ARGUMENT IS WAR

Your claims are *indefensible*.

He *attacked* every weak point in my argument.

His criticisms were *right on target*.

I *demolished* his argument.

I've never *won* an argument with him.

You disagree? Okay, *shoot!*

If you use that *strategy*, he'll *wipe you out*.

He *shot down* all of my arguments.

It is important to see that we don't just *talk* about arguments in terms of war. We can actually win or lose arguments. We see the person we are arguing with as an opponent. We attack his positions and we defend our own. We gain and lose ground. We plan and use strategies. If we find a position indefensible, we can abandon it and take a new line of attack. Many of the things we *do* in arguing are partially structured by the concept of war. Though there is no physical battle, there is a verbal battle, and the structure of an argument—attack, defense, counterattack, etc.—reflects this. It is in this sense that the ARGUMENT IS WAR metaphor is one that we live by in this culture; it structures the actions we perform in arguing.

Try to imagine a culture where arguments are not viewed in terms of war, where no one wins or loses, where there is no sense of attacking or defending, gaining or losing

ground. Imagine a culture where an argument is viewed as a dance, the participants are seen as performers, and the goal is to perform in a balanced and aesthetically pleasing way. In such a culture, people would view arguments differently, experience them differently, carry them out differently, and talk about them differently. But we would probably not view them as arguing at all: they would simply be doing something different. It would seem strange even to call what they were doing "arguing." Perhaps the most neutral way of describing this difference between their culture and ours would be to say that we have a discourse form structured in terms of battle and they have one structured in terms of dance.

This is an example of what it means for a metaphorical concept, namely, ARGUMENT IS WAR, to structure (at least in part) what we do and how we understand what we are doing when we argue. *The essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another.* It is not that arguments are a subspecies of war. Arguments and wars are different kinds of things—verbal discourse and armed conflict—and the actions performed are different kinds of actions. But ARGUMENT is partially structured, understood, performed, and talked about in terms of WAR. The concept is metaphorically structured, the activity is metaphorically structured, and, consequently, the language is metaphorically structured.

Moreover, this is the *ordinary* way of having an argument and talking about one. The normal way for us to talk about attacking a position is to use the words "attack a position." Our conventional ways of talking about arguments presuppose a metaphor we are hardly ever conscious of. The metaphor is not merely in the words we use—it is in our very concept of an argument. The language of argument is not poetic, fanciful, or rhetorical; it is literal. We talk about arguments that way because we conceive of them that way—and we act according to the way we conceive of things.

The most important claim we have made so far is that metaphor is not just a matter of language, that is, of mere words. We shall argue that, on the contrary, human *thought processes* are largely metaphorical. This is what we mean when we say that the human conceptual system is metaphorically structured and defined. Metaphors as linguistic expressions are possible precisely because there are metaphors in a person's conceptual system. Therefore, whenever in this book we speak of metaphors, such as ARGUMENT IS WAR, it should be understood that *metaphor* means *metaphorical concept*.

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The Systematicity of Metaphorical Concepts

Arguments usually follow patterns; that is, there are certain things we typically do and do not do in arguing. The fact that we in part conceptualize arguments in terms of battle systematically influences the shape arguments take and the way we talk about what we do in arguing. Because the metaphorical concept is systematic, the language we use to talk about that aspect of the concept is systematic.

We saw in the ARGUMENT IS WAR metaphor that expressions from the vocabulary of war, e.g., *attack a position*, *indefensible*, *strategy*, *new line of attack*, *win*, *gain ground*, etc., form a systematic way of talking about the battling aspects of arguing. It is no accident that these expressions mean what they mean when we use them to talk about arguments. A portion of the conceptual network of battle partially characterizes the concept of an argument, and the language follows suit. Since metaphorical expressions in our language are tied to metaphorical concepts in a systematic way, we can use metaphorical linguistic expressions to study the nature of metaphorical concepts and to gain an understanding of the metaphorical nature of our activities.

To get an idea of how metaphorical expressions in everyday language can give us insight into the metaphorical nature of the concepts that structure our everyday activities, let us consider the metaphorical concept TIME IS MONEY as it is reflected in contemporary English.

TIME IS MONEY

You're *wasting* my time.
This gadget will *save* you hours.

I don't have the time to give you.
 How do you spend your time these days?
 That flat tire cost me an hour.
 I've invested a lot of time in her.
 I don't have enough time to spare for that.
 You're running out of time.
 You need to budget your time.
 Put aside some time for ping pong.
 Is that worth your while?
 Do you have much time left?
 He's living on borrowed time.
 You don't use your time profitably.
 I lost a lot of time when I got sick.
 Thank you for your time.

Time in our culture is a valuable commodity. It is a limited resource that we use to accomplish our goals. Because of the way that the concept of work has developed in modern Western culture, where work is typically associated with the time it takes and time is precisely quantified, it has become customary to pay people by the hour, week, or year. In our culture TIME IS MONEY in many ways: telephone message units, hourly wages, hotel room rates, yearly budgets, interest on loans, and paying your debt to society by "serving time." These practices are relatively new in the history of the human race, and by no means do they exist in all cultures. They have arisen in modern industrialized societies and structure our basic everyday activities in a very profound way. Corresponding to the fact that we act as if time is a valuable commodity—a limited resource, even money—we conceive of time that way. Thus we understand and experience time as the kind of thing that can be spent, wasted, budgeted, invested wisely or poorly, saved, or squandered.

TIME IS MONEY, TIME IS A LIMITED RESOURCE, and TIME IS A VALUABLE COMMODITY are all metaphorical concepts. They are metaphorical since we are using our everyday experiences with money, limited resources, and valuable

commodities to conceptualize time. This isn't a necessary way for human beings to conceptualize time; it is tied to our culture. There are cultures where time is none of these things.

The metaphorical concepts TIME IS MONEY, TIME IS A RESOURCE, and TIME IS A VALUABLE COMMODITY form a single system based on subcategorization, since in our society money is a limited resource and limited resources are valuable commodities. These subcategorization relationships characterize entailment relationships between the metaphors. TIME IS MONEY entails that TIME IS A LIMITED RESOURCE, which entails that TIME IS A VALUABLE COMMODITY.

We are adopting the practice of using the most specific metaphorical concept, in this case TIME IS MONEY, to characterize the entire system. Of the expressions listed under the TIME IS MONEY metaphor, some refer specifically to money (*spend, invest, budget, profitably, cost*), others to limited resources (*use, use up, have enough of, run out of*), and still others to valuable commodities (*have, give, lose, thank you for*). This is an example of the way in which metaphorical entailments can characterize a coherent system of metaphorical concepts and a corresponding coherent system of metaphorical expressions for those concepts.

Metaphorical Systematicity: Highlighting and Hiding

The very systematicity that allows us to comprehend one aspect of a concept in terms of another (e.g., comprehending an aspect of arguing in terms of battle) will necessarily hide other aspects of the concept. In allowing us to focus on one aspect of a concept (e.g., the battling aspects of arguing), a metaphorical concept can keep us from focusing on other aspects of the concept that are inconsistent with that metaphor. For example, in the midst of a heated argument, when we are intent on attacking our opponent's position and defending our own, we may lose sight of the cooperative aspects of arguing. Someone who is arguing with you can be viewed as giving you his time, a valuable commodity, in an effort at mutual understanding. But when we are preoccupied with the battle aspects, we often lose sight of the cooperative aspects.

A far more subtle case of how a metaphorical concept can hide an aspect of our experience can be seen in what Michael Reddy has called the "conduit metaphor." Reddy observes that our language about language is structured roughly by the following complex metaphor:

IDEAS (OR MEANINGS) ARE OBJECTS.
LINGUISTIC EXPRESSIONS ARE CONTAINERS.
COMMUNICATION IS SENDING.

The speaker puts ideas (objects) into words (containers) and sends them (along a conduit) to a hearer who takes the idea/objects out of the word/containers. Reddy documents this with more than a hundred types of expressions in English, which he estimates account for at least 70 percent of

the expressions we use for talking about language. Here are some examples:

The CONDUIT Metaphor

- It's hard to *get* that idea *across* to him.
- I *gave* you that idea.
- Your reasons *came through* to us.
- It's difficult to *put* my ideas *into* words.
- When you *have* a good idea, try to *capture* it immediately *in* words.
- Try to *pack* more thought *into* fewer words.
- You can't simply *stuff* ideas *into* a sentence any old way.
- The meaning is right there *in* the words.
- Don't *force* your meanings *into* the wrong words.
- His words *carry* little meaning.
- The introduction *has* a great deal of thought *content*.
- Your words seem *hollow*.
- The sentence is *without* meaning.
- The idea is *buried* in terribly dense paragraphs.

In examples like these it is far more difficult to see that there is anything hidden by the metaphor or even to see that there is a metaphor here at all. This is so much the conventional way of thinking about language that it is sometimes hard to imagine that it might not fit reality. But if we look at what the CONDUIT metaphor entails, we can see some of the ways in which it masks aspects of the communicative process.

First, the LINGUISTIC EXPRESSIONS ARE CONTAINERS FOR MEANINGS aspect of the CONDUIT metaphor entails that words and sentences have meanings in themselves, independent of any context or speaker. The MEANINGS ARE OBJECTS part of the metaphor, for example, entails that meanings have an existence independent of people and contexts. The part of the metaphor that says LINGUISTIC EXPRESSIONS ARE CONTAINERS FOR MEANING entails that words (and sentences) have meanings, again independent of contexts and speakers. These metaphors are appropriate in many situations—those where context differences don't

matter and where all the participants in the conversation understand the sentences in the same way. These two entailments are exemplified by sentences like

The meaning is *right there in* the words,

which, according to the CONDUIT metaphor, can correctly be said of any sentence. But there are many cases where context does matter. Here is a celebrated one recorded in actual conversation by Pamela Downing:

Please sit in the apple-juice seat.

In isolation this sentence has no meaning at all, since the expression “apple-juice seat” is not a conventional way of referring to any kind of object. But the sentence makes perfect sense in the context in which it was uttered. An overnight guest came down to breakfast. There were four place settings, three with orange juice and one with apple juice. It was clear what the apple-juice seat was. And even the next morning, when there was no apple juice, it was still clear which seat was the apple-juice seat.

In addition to sentences that have no meaning without context, there are cases where a single sentence will mean different things to different people. Consider:

We need new alternative sources of energy.

This means something very different to the president of Mobil Oil from what it means to the president of Friends of the Earth. The meaning is not right there in the sentence—it matters a lot who is saying or listening to the sentence and what his social and political attitudes are. The CONDUIT metaphor does not fit cases where context is required to determine whether the sentence has any meaning at all and, if so, what meaning it has.

These examples show that the metaphorical concepts we have looked at provide us with a partial understanding of what communication, argument, and time are and that, in doing this, they hide other aspects of these concepts. It is

important to see that the metaphorical structuring involved here is partial, not total. If it were total, one concept would actually *be* the other, not merely be understood in terms of it. For example, time isn’t really money. If you *spend your time* trying to do something and it doesn’t work, you can’t get your time back. There are no time banks. I can *give you a lot of time*, but you can’t give me back the same time, though you can *give me back the same amount of time*. And so on. Thus, part of a metaphorical concept does not and cannot fit.

On the other hand, metaphorical concepts can be extended beyond the range of ordinary literal ways of thinking and talking into the range of what is called figurative, poetic, colorful, or fanciful thought and language. Thus, if ideas are objects, we can *dress them up in fancy clothes, juggle them, line them up nice and neat*, etc. So when we say that a concept is structured by a metaphor, we mean that it is partially structured and that it can be extended in some ways but not others.

that conflict with those of the mainstream culture. But in less obvious ways they preserve other mainstream values. Take monastic orders like the Trappists. There LESS IS BETTER and SMALLER IS BETTER are true with respect to material possessions, which are viewed as hindering what is important, namely, serving God. The Trappists share the mainstream value VIRTUE IS UP, though they give it the highest priority and a very different definition. MORE is still BETTER, though it applies to virtue; and status is still UP, though it is not of this world but of a higher one, the Kingdom of God. Moreover, THE FUTURE WILL BE BETTER is true in terms of spiritual growth (UP) and, ultimately, salvation (really UP). This is typical of groups that are out of the mainstream culture. Virtue, goodness, and status may be radically redefined, but they are still UP. It is still better to have more of what is important, THE FUTURE WILL BE BETTER with respect to what is important, and so on. Relative to what is important for a monastic group, the value system is both internally coherent and, with respect to what is important for the group, coherent with the major orientational metaphors of the mainstream culture.

Individuals, like groups, vary in their priorities and in the ways they define what is good or virtuous to them. In this sense, they are subgroups of one. Relative to what is important for them, their individual value systems are coherent with the major orientational metaphors of the mainstream culture.

Not all cultures give the priorities we do to up-down orientation. There are cultures where balance or centrality plays a much more important role than it does in our culture. Or consider the nonspatial orientation active-passive. For us ACTIVE IS UP and PASSIVE IS DOWN in most matters. But there are cultures where passivity is valued more than activity. In general the major orientations up-down, in-out, central-peripheral, active-passive, etc., seem to cut across all cultures, but which concepts are oriented which way and which orientations are most important vary from culture to culture.

Ontological Metaphors

Entity and Substance Metaphors

Spatial orientations like up-down, front-back, on-off, center-periphery, and near-far provide an extraordinarily rich basis for understanding concepts in orientational terms. But one can do only so much with orientation. Our experience of physical objects and substances provides a further basis for understanding—one that goes beyond mere orientation. Understanding our experiences in terms of objects and substances allows us to pick out parts of our experience and treat them as discrete entities or substances of a uniform kind. Once we can identify our experiences as entities or substances, we can refer to them, categorize them, group them, and quantify them—and, by this means, reason about them.

When things are not clearly discrete or bounded, we still categorize them as such, e.g., mountains, street corners, hedges, etc. Such ways of viewing physical phenomena are needed to satisfy certain purposes that we have: locating mountains, meeting at street corners, trimming hedges. Human purposes typically require us to impose artificial boundaries that make physical phenomena discrete just as we are: entities bounded by a surface.

Just as the basic experiences of human spatial orientations give rise to orientational metaphors, so our experiences with physical objects (especially our own bodies) provide the basis for an extraordinarily wide variety of ontological metaphors, that is, ways of viewing events, activities, emotions, ideas, etc., as entities and substances.

Ontological metaphors serve various purposes, and the

various kinds of metaphors there are reflect the kinds of purposes served. Take the experience of rising prices, which can be metaphorically viewed as an entity via the noun *inflation*. This gives us a way of referring to the experience:

INFLATION IS AN ENTITY

Inflation is lowering our standard of living.

*If there's much more inflation, we'll never survive.
We need to combat inflation.*

Inflation is backing us into a corner.

Inflation is taking its toll at the checkout counter and the gas pump.

*Buying land is the best way of dealing with inflation.
Inflation makes me sick.*

In these cases, viewing inflation as an entity allows us to refer to it, quantify it, identify a particular aspect of it, see it as a cause, act with respect to it, and perhaps even believe that we understand it. Ontological metaphors like this are necessary for even attempting to deal rationally with our experiences.

The range of ontological metaphors that we use for such purposes is enormous. The following list gives some idea of the kinds of purposes, along with representative examples of ontological metaphors that serve them.

Referring

*My fear of insects is driving my wife crazy.
That was a beautiful catch.*

We are working toward peace.

The middle class is a powerful silent force in American politics.

The honor of our country is at stake in this war.

Quantifying

It will take a lot of patience to finish this book.

There is so much hatred in the world.

DuPont has a lot of political power in Delaware.

You've got too much hostility in you.

Pete Rose has a lot of hustle and baseball know-how.

Identifying Aspects

The ugly side of his personality comes out under pressure.

The brutality of war dehumanizes us all.

I can't keep up with the pace of modern life.

His emotional health has deteriorated recently.

We never got to feel the thrill of victory in Vietnam.

Identifying Causes

*The pressure of his responsibilities caused his breakdown.
He did it out of anger.*

Our influence in the world has declined because of our lack of moral fiber.

Internal dissension cost them the pennant.

Setting Goals and Motivating Actions

He went to New York to seek fame and fortune.

Here's what you have to do to insure financial security.

*I'm changing my way of life so that I can find true happiness.
The FBI will act quickly in the face of a threat to national security.*

She saw getting married as the solution to her problems.

As in the case of orientational metaphors, most of these expressions are not noticed as being metaphorical. One reason for this is that ontological metaphors, like orientational metaphors, serve a very limited range of purposes—referring, quantifying, etc. Merely viewing a nonphysical thing as an entity or substance does not allow us to comprehend very much about it. But ontological metaphors may be further elaborated. Here are two examples of how the ontological metaphor THE MIND IS AN ENTITY is elaborated in our culture.

THE MIND IS A MACHINE

We're still trying to grind out the solution to this equation.

My mind just isn't operating today.

Boy, the wheels are turning now!

I'm a little rusty today.

We've been working on this problem all day and now we're

THE MIND IS A BRITTLE OBJECT

Her ego is very *fragile*.

You have to *handle him with care* since his wife's death.
He *broke* under cross-examination.

She is *easily crushed*.

The experience *shattered* him.

I'm *going to pieces*.

His mind *snapped*.

These metaphors specify different kinds of objects. They give us different metaphorical models for what the mind is and thereby allow us to focus on different aspects of mental experience. The MACHINE metaphor gives us a conception of the mind as having an on-off state, a level of efficiency, a productive capacity, an internal mechanism, a source of energy, and an operating condition. The BRITTLE OBJECT metaphor is not nearly as rich. It allows us to talk only about psychological strength. However, there is a range of mental experience that can be conceived of in terms of either metaphor. The examples we have in mind are these:

He broke down. (THE MIND IS A MACHINE)

He cracked up. (THE MIND IS A BRITTLE OBJECT)

But these two metaphors do not focus on *exactly* the same aspect of mental experience. When a machine breaks down, it simply ceases to function. When a brittle object shatters, its pieces go flying, with possibly dangerous consequences. Thus, for example, when someone goes crazy and becomes wild or violent, it would be appropriate to say "He cracked up." On the other hand, if someone becomes lethargic and unable to function for psychological reasons, we would be more likely to say "He broke down."

Ontological metaphors like these are so natural and so pervasive in our thought that they are usually taken as self-evident, direct descriptions of mental phenomena. The fact that they are metaphorical never occurs to most of us. We take statements like "He cracked under pressure" as being directly true or false. This expression was in fact used by

various journalists to explain why Dan White brought his gun to the San Francisco City Hall and shot and killed Mayor George Moscone. Explanations of this sort seem perfectly natural to most of us. The reason is that metaphors like THE MIND IS A BRITTLE OBJECT are an integral part of the model of the mind that we have in this culture; it is the model most of us think and operate in terms of.

Container Metaphors*Land Areas*

We are physical beings, bounded and set off from the rest of the world by the surface of our skins, and we experience the rest of the world as outside us. Each of us is a container, with a bounding surface and an in-out orientation. We project our own in-out orientation onto other physical objects that are bounded by surfaces. Thus we also view them as containers with an inside and an outside. Rooms and houses are obvious containers. Moving from room to room is moving from one container to another, that is, moving *out of* one room and *into* another. We even give solid objects this orientation, as when we break a rock open to see what's inside it. We impose this orientation on our natural environment as well. A clearing in the woods is seen as having a bounding surface, and we can view ourselves as being *in* the clearing or *out of* the clearing, *in* the woods or *out of* the woods. A clearing in the woods has something we can perceive as a natural boundary—the fuzzy area where the trees more or less stop and the clearing more or less begins. But even where there is no natural physical boundary that can be viewed as defining a container, we impose boundaries—marking off territory so that it has an inside and a bounding surface—whether a wall, a fence, or an abstract line or plane. There are few human instincts more basic than territoriality. And such defining of a territory, putting a boundary around it, is an act of quantification.

He's *in* love.
We're *out of* trouble now.
He's *coming out of* the coma.
I'm *slowly getting into* shape.
He *entered* a state of euphoria.
He *fell into* a depression.
He finally *emerged from* the catatonic state he had been *in* since the end of finals week.

Personification

Perhaps the most obvious ontological metaphors are those where the physical object is further specified as being a person. This allows us to comprehend a wide variety of experiences with nonhuman entities in terms of human motivations, characteristics, and activities. Here are some examples:

His *theory explained* to me the behavior of chickens raised in factories.
This *fact argues* against the standard theories.
Life has cheated me.
Inflation is eating up our profits.
His *religion tells* him that he cannot drink fine French wines.
The *Michelson-Morley experiment gave birth to* a new physical theory.
Cancer finally caught up with him.

In each of these cases we are seeing something nonhuman as human. But personification is not a single unified general process. Each personification differs in terms of the aspects of people that are picked out. Consider these examples.

Inflation has attacked the foundation of our economy.
Inflation has pinned us to the wall.
Our biggest *enemy* right now *is* inflation.
The dollar *has been destroyed* by inflation.
Inflation has robbed me of my savings.
Inflation has outwitted the best economic minds in the country.
Inflation has given birth to a money-minded generation.

Here inflation is personified, but the metaphor is not

Bounded objects, whether human beings, rocks, or land areas, have sizes. This allows them to be quantified in terms of the amount of substance they contain. Kansas, for example, is a bounded area—a CONTAINER—which is why we can say, “There’s a lot of land *in* Kansas.”

Substances can themselves be viewed as containers. Take a tub of water, for example. When you get into the tub, you get into the water. Both the tub and the water are viewed as containers, but of different sorts. The tub is a CONTAINER OBJECT, while the water is a CONTAINER SUBSTANCE.

The Visual Field

We conceptualize our visual field as a container and conceptualize what we see as being inside it. Even the term “visual field” suggests this. The metaphor is a natural one that emerges from the fact that, when you look at some territory (land, floor space, etc.), your field of vision defines a boundary of the territory, namely, the part that you can see. Given that a bounded physical space is a CONTAINER and that our field of vision correlates with that bounded physical space, the metaphorical concept VISUAL FIELDS ARE CONTAINERS emerges naturally. Thus we can say:

The ship is *coming into* view.
 I have him *in* sight.
 I can’t see him—the tree is *in* the way.
 He’s *out of* sight now.
 That’s *in* the center of my field of vision.
 There’s *nothing in* sight.
 I can’t get *all* of the ships *in* sight at once.

Events, Actions, Activities, and States

We use ontological metaphors to comprehend events, actions, activities, and states. Events and actions are conceptualized metaphorically as objects, activities as substances, states as containers. A race, for example, is an event, which is viewed as a discrete entity. The race exists

in space and time, and it has well-defined boundaries. Hence we view it as a CONTAINER OBJECT, having in it participants (which are objects), events like the start and finish (which are metaphorical objects), and the activity of running (which is a metaphorical substance). Thus we can say of a race:

Are you *in* the race on Sunday? (race as CONTAINER OBJECT)
 Are you *going to* the race? (race as OBJECT)
 Did you *see* the race? (race as OBJECT)
 The *finish* of the race was really exciting. (finish as EVENT OBJECT within CONTAINER OBJECT)
 There was *a lot of good running in* the race. (running as a SUBSTANCE in a CONTAINER)
 I couldn’t do *much sprinting until* the end. (sprinting as SUBSTANCE)
Halfway into the race, I ran out of energy. (race as CONTAINER OBJECT)
 He’s *out of* the race now. (race as CONTAINER OBJECT)

Activities in general are viewed metaphorically as SUBSTANCES and therefore as CONTAINERS:

In washing the window, I splashed water all over the floor.
 How did Jerry *get out of* washing the windows?
Outside of washing the windows, what else did you do?
How much window-washing did you do?
 How did you *get into* window-washing as a profession?
 He’s *immersed in* washing the windows right now.

Thus, activities are viewed as containers for the actions and other activities that make them up. They are also viewed as containers for the energy and materials required for them and for their by-products, which may be viewed as *in* them or as *emerging from* them:

I *put a lot of energy into* washing the windows.
 I *get a lot of satisfaction out of* washing windows.
 There is *a lot of satisfaction in* washing windows.

Various kinds of states may also be conceptualized as containers. Thus we have examples like these:

merely INFLATION IS A PERSON. It is much more specific, namely, INFLATION IS AN ADVERSARY. It not only gives us a very specific way of thinking about inflation but also a way of acting toward it. We think of inflation as an adversary that can attack us, hurt us, steal from us, even destroy us. The INFLATION IS AN ADVERSARY metaphor therefore gives rise to and justifies political and economic actions on the part of our government: declaring war on inflation, setting targets, calling for sacrifices, installing a new chain of command, etc.

The point here is that personification is a general category that covers a very wide range of metaphors, each picking out different aspects of a person or ways of looking at a person. What they all have in common is that they are extensions of ontological metaphors and that they allow us to make sense of phenomena in the world in human terms—terms that we can understand on the basis of our own motivations, goals, actions, and characteristics. Viewing something as abstract as inflation in human terms has an explanatory power of the only sort that makes sense to most people. When we are suffering substantial economic losses due to complex economic and political factors that no one really understands, the INFLATION IS AN ADVERSARY metaphor at least gives us a coherent account of why we're suffering these losses.

Metonymy

In the cases of personification that we have looked at we are imputing human qualities to things that are not human—theories, diseases, inflation, etc. In such cases there are no actual human beings referred to. When we say “Inflation robbed me of my savings,” we are not using the term “inflation” to refer to a person. Cases like this must be distinguished from cases like

The ham sandwich is waiting for his check.

where the expression “the ham sandwich” is being used to refer to an actual person, the person who ordered the ham sandwich. Such cases are not instances of personification metaphors, since we do not understand “the ham sandwich” by imputing human qualities to it. Instead, we are using one entity to refer to another that is related to it. This is a case of what we will call *metonymy*. Here are some further examples:

He likes to read the *Marquis de Sade*. (= the writings of the marquis)

He's in *dance*. (= the dancing profession)

Acrylic has taken over the art world. (= the use of acrylic paint)

The *Times* hasn't arrived at the press conference yet. (= the reporter from the *Times*)

Mrs. Grundy frowns on *blue jeans*. (= the wearing of blue jeans)

New windshield wipers will satisfy him. (= the state of having new wipers)

We are including as a special case of metonymy what traditional rhetoricians have called *synecdoche*, where the part stands for the whole, as in the following.

THE PART FOR THE WHOLE

The *automobile* is clogging our highways. (= the collection of automobiles)

We need a couple of *strong bodies* for our team. (= strong people)

There are a lot of *good heads* in the university. (= intelligent people)

I've got a new *set of wheels*. (= car, motorcycle, etc.)

We need some *new blood* in the organization. (= new people)

In these cases, as in the other cases of metonymy, one entity is being used to refer to another. Metaphor and metonymy are different *kinds* of processes. Metaphor is principally a way of conceiving of one thing in terms of another, and its primary function is understanding. Metonymy, on the other hand, has primarily a referential function, that is, it allows us to use one entity to *stand for* another. But metonymy is not merely a referential device. It also serves the function of providing understanding. For example, in the case of the metonymy THE PART FOR THE WHOLE there are many parts that can stand for the whole. Which part we pick out determines which aspect of the whole we are focusing on. When we say that we need some *good heads* on the project, we are using "good heads" to refer to "intelligent people." The point is not just to use a part (head) to stand for a whole (person) but rather to pick out a particular characteristic of the person, namely, intelligence, which is associated with the head. The same is true of other kinds of metonymies. When we say "The *Times* hasn't arrived at the press conference yet," we are using "The *Times*" not merely to refer to some reporter or other but also to suggest the importance of the institution the reporter represents. So "The *Times* has not yet arrived for the press conference" means something different from

"Steve Roberts has not yet arrived for the press conference," even though Steve Roberts may be the *Times* reporter in question.

Thus metonymy serves some of the same purposes that metaphor does, and in somewhat the same way, but it allows us to focus more specifically on certain aspects of what is being referred to. It is also like metaphor in that it is not just a poetic or rhetorical device. Nor is it just a matter of language. Metonymic concepts (like THE PART FOR THE WHOLE) are part of the ordinary, everyday way we think and act as well as talk.

For example, we have in our conceptual system a special case of the metonymy THE PART FOR THE WHOLE, namely, THE FACE FOR THE PERSON. For example:

She's just a pretty face.

There are an awful lot of faces out there in the audience.

We need some new faces around here.

This metonymy functions actively in our culture. The tradition of portraits, in both painting and photography, is based on it. If you ask me to show you a picture of my son and I show you a picture of his face, you will be satisfied. You will consider yourself to have seen a picture of him. But if I show you a picture of his body without his face, you will consider it strange and will not be satisfied. You might even ask, "But what does he look like?" Thus the metonymy THE FACE FOR THE PERSON is not merely a matter of language. In our culture we look at a person's face—rather than his posture or his movements—to get our basic information about what the person is like. We function in terms of a metonymy when we perceive the person in terms of his face and act on those perceptions.

Like metaphors, metonymies are not random or arbitrary occurrences, to be treated as isolated instances. Metonymic concepts are also systematic, as can be seen in the following representative examples that exist in our culture.

THE PART FOR THE WHOLE

Get your *butt* over here!
 We don't hire *longhairs*.
 The Giants need a *stronger arm* in right field.
 I've got a new *four-on-the-floor V-8*.

PRODUCER FOR PRODUCT

I'll have a *Löwenbräu*.
 He bought a *Ford*.
 He's got a *Picasso* in his den.
 I hate to read *Heidegger*.

OBJECT USED FOR USER

The *sax* has the flu today.
 The *BLT* is a lousy tipper.
 The *gun* he hired wanted fifty grand.
 We need a better *glove* at third base.
 The *buses* are on strike.

CONTROLLER FOR CONTROLLED

Nixon bombed Hanoi.
Ozawa gave a terrible concert last night.
Napoleon lost at Waterloo.
Casey Stengel won a lot of pennants.
 A Mercedes rear-ended *me*.

INSTITUTION FOR PEOPLE RESPONSIBLE

Exxon has raised its prices again.
 You'll never get the *university* to agree to that.
 The *Army* wants to reinstitute the draft.
 The *Senate* thinks abortion is immoral.
 I don't approve of the *government's* actions.

THE PLACE FOR THE INSTITUTION

The *White House* isn't saying anything.
Washington is insensitive to the needs of the people.
 The *Kremlin* threatened to boycott the next round of SALT
 talks.
Paris is introducing longer skirts this season.
Hollywood isn't what it used to be.
Wall Street is in a panic.

THE PLACE FOR THE EVENT

Let's not let Thailand become another *Vietnam*.
 Remember the *Alamo*.
Pearl Harbor still has an effect on our foreign policy.
Watergate changed our politics.
 It's been *Grand Central Station* here all day.

Metonymic concepts like these are systematic in the same way that metaphoric concepts are. The sentences given above are not random. They are instances of certain general metonymic concepts in terms of which we organize our thoughts and actions. Metonymic concepts allow us to conceptualize one thing by means of its relation to something else. When we think of a *Picasso*, we are not just thinking of a work of art alone, in and of itself. We think of it in terms of its relation to the artist, that is, his conception of art, his technique, his role in art history, etc. We act with reverence toward a *Picasso*, even a sketch he made as a teen-ager, because of its relation to the artist. This is a way in which the PRODUCER FOR PRODUCT metonymy affects both our thought and our action. Similarly, when a waitress says "The ham sandwich wants his check," she is not interested in the person as a person but only as a customer, which is why the use of such a sentence is dehumanizing. Nixon himself may not have dropped the bombs on Hanoi, but via the CONTROLLER FOR CONTROLLED metonymy we not only say "Nixon bombed Hanoi" but also think of him as doing the bombing and hold him responsible for it. Again this is possible because of the nature of the metonymic relationship in the CONTROLLER FOR CONTROLLED metonymy, where responsibility is what is focused on.

Thus, like metaphors, metonymic concepts structure not just our language but our thoughts, attitudes, and actions. And, like metaphoric concepts, metonymic concepts are grounded in our experience. In fact, the grounding of metonymic concepts is in general more obvious than is the case with metaphoric concepts, since it usually involves direct physical or causal associations. The PART FOR

WHOLE metonymy, for example, emerges from our experiences with the way parts in general are related to wholes. PRODUCER FOR PRODUCT is based on the causal (and typically physical) relationship between a producer and his product. THE PLACE FOR THE EVENT is grounded in our experience with the physical location of events. And so on.

Cultural and religious symbolism are special cases of metonymy. Within Christianity, for example, there is the metonymy DOVE FOR HOLY SPIRIT. As is typical with metonymies, this symbolism is not arbitrary. It is grounded in the conception of the dove in Western culture and the conception of the Holy Spirit in Christian theology. There is a reason why the dove is the symbol of the Holy Spirit and not, say, the chicken, the vulture, or the ostrich. The dove is conceived of as beautiful, friendly, gentle, and, above all, peaceful. As a bird, its natural habitat is the sky, which metonymically stands for heaven, the natural habitat of the Holy Spirit. The dove is a bird that flies gracefully, glides silently, and is typically seen coming out of the sky and landing among people.

The conceptual systems of cultures and religions are metaphorical in nature. Symbolic metonymies are critical links between everyday experience and the coherent metaphysical systems that characterize religions and cultures. Symbolic metonymies that are grounded in our physical experience provide an essential means of comprehending religious and cultural concepts.

Challenges to Metaphorical Coherence

We have offered evidence that metaphors and metonymies are not random but instead form coherent systems in terms of which we conceptualize our experience. But it is easy to find apparent incoherences in everyday metaphorical expressions. We have not made a complete study of these, but those that we have looked at in detail have turned out not to be incoherent at all, though they appeared that way at first. Let us consider two examples.

An Apparent Metaphorical Contradiction

Charles Fillmore has observed (in conversation) that English appears to have two contradictory organizations of time. In the first, the future is in front and the past is behind:

In the weeks ahead of us... (future)
That's all behind us now. (past)

In the second, the future is behind and the past is in front:

In the following weeks... (future)
In the preceding weeks... (past)

This appears to be a contradiction in the metaphorical organization of time. Moreover, the apparently contradictory metaphors can mix with no ill effect, as in

We're looking *ahead* to the *following* weeks.

Here it appears that *ahead* organizes the future in front, while *following* organizes it behind.

To see that there is, in fact, a coherence here, we first

The experientialist myth agrees that understanding does involve all of these elements. Its emphasis on interaction and interactional properties shows how meaning always is meaning *to* a person. And its emphasis on the construction of coherence via experiential gestalts provides an account of what it means for something to be significant to an individual. Moreover, it gives an account of how understanding uses the primary resources of the imagination via metaphor and how it is possible to give experience new meaning and to create new realities.

Where experientialism diverges from subjectivism is in its rejection of the Romantic idea that imaginative understanding is completely unconstrained.

In summary, we see the experientialist myth as capable of satisfying the real and reasonable concerns that have motivated the myths of both subjectivism and objectivism but without either the objectivist obsession with absolute truth or the subjectivist insistence that imagination is totally unrestricted.

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Understanding

We see a single human motivation behind the myths of both objectivism and subjectivism, namely, a concern for understanding. The myth of objectivism reflects the human need to understand the *external* world in order to be able to function successfully in it. The myth of subjectivism is focused on *internal* aspects of understanding—what the individual finds meaningful and what makes his life worth living. The experientialist myth suggests that these are not opposing concerns. It offers a perspective from which both concerns can be met at once.

The old myths share a common perspective: man as separate from his environment. Within the myth of objectivism, the concern for truth grows out of a concern for successful functioning. Given a view of man as separate from his environment, successful functioning is conceived of as *mastery over* the environment. Hence, the objectivist metaphors KNOWLEDGE IS POWER and SCIENCE PROVIDES CONTROL OVER NATURE.

The principal theme of the myth of subjectivism is the attempt to overcome the alienation that results from viewing man as separate from his environment and from other men. This involves an embracing of the self—of individuality and reliance upon personal feelings, intuition, and values. The Romanticist version involves reveling in the senses and the feelings and attempting to gain union with nature through passive appreciation of it.

The experientialist myth takes the perspective of man as part of his environment, not as separate from it. It focuses

on constant interaction with the physical environment and with other people. It views this interaction with the environment as involving mutual change. You cannot function within the environment without changing it or being changed by it.

Within the experientialist myth, understanding emerges from interaction, from constant negotiation with the environment and other people. It emerges in the following way: the nature of our bodies and our physical and cultural environment imposes a structure on our experience, in terms of natural dimensions of the sort we have discussed. Recurrent experience leads to the formation of categories, which are experiential gestalts with those natural dimensions. Such gestalts define coherence in our experience. We understand our experience directly when we see it as being structured coherently in terms of gestalts that have emerged directly from interaction with and in our environment. We understand experience metaphorically when we use a gestalt from one domain of experience to structure experience in another domain.

From the experientialist perspective, truth depends on understanding, which emerges from functioning in the world. It is through such understanding that the experientialist alternative meets the objectivist's need for an account of truth. It is through the coherent structuring of experience that the experientialist alternative satisfies the subjectivist's need for personal meaning and significance.

But experientialism provides more than just a synthesis that meets the motivating concerns of objectivism and subjectivism. The experientialist account of understanding provides a richer perspective on some of the most important areas of experience in our everyday lives:

- Interpersonal communication and mutual understanding
- Self-understanding
- Ritual
- Aesthetic experience
- Politics

We feel that objectivism and subjectivism both provide impoverished views of all of these areas because each misses the motivating concerns of the other. What they both miss in all of these areas is an interactionally based and creative understanding. Let us turn to an experientialist account of the nature of understanding in each of these areas.

Interpersonal Communication and Mutual Understanding

When people who are talking don't share the same culture, knowledge, values, and assumptions, mutual understanding can be especially difficult. Such understanding *is* possible through the negotiation of meaning. To negotiate meaning with someone, you have to become aware of and respect both the differences in your backgrounds and when these differences are important. You need enough diversity of cultural and personal experience to be aware that divergent world views exist and what they might be like. You also need patience, a certain flexibility in world view, and a generous tolerance for mistakes, as well as a talent for finding the right metaphor to communicate the relevant parts of unshared experiences or to highlight the shared experiences while deemphasizing the others. Metaphorical imagination is a crucial skill in creating rapport and in communicating the nature of unshared experience. This skill consists, in large measure, of the ability to bend your world view and adjust the way you categorize your experience. Problems of mutual understanding are not exotic; they arise in all extended conversations where understanding is important.

When it really counts, meaning is almost never communicated according to the CONDUIT metaphor, that is, where one person transmits a fixed, clear proposition to another by means of expressions in a common language, where both parties have all the relevant common knowledge, assumptions, values, etc. When the chips are down, meaning is negotiated: you slowly figure out what you have in common,

what it is safe to talk about, how you can communicate unshared experience or create a shared vision. With enough flexibility in bending your world view and with luck and skill and charity, you may achieve some mutual understanding.

Communication theories based on the CONDUIT metaphor turn from the pathetic to the evil when they are applied indiscriminately on a large scale, say, in government surveillance or computerized files. There, what is most crucial for real understanding is almost never included, and it is assumed that the words in the file have meaning in themselves—disembodied, objective, understandable meaning. When a society lives by the CONDUIT metaphor on a large scale, misunderstanding, persecution, and much worse are the likely products.

Self-understanding

The capacity for self-understanding presupposes the capacity for mutual understanding. Common sense tells us that it's easier to understand ourselves than to understand other people. After all, we tend to think that we have direct access to our own feelings and ideas and not to anybody else's. Self-understanding seems prior to mutual understanding, and in some ways it is. But any really deep understanding of why we do what we do, feel what we feel, change as we change, and even believe what we believe, takes us beyond ourselves. Understanding of ourselves is not unlike other forms of understanding—it comes out of our constant interactions with our physical, cultural, and interpersonal environment. At a minimum, the skills required for *mutual* understanding are necessary even to approach *self*-understanding. Just as in mutual understanding we constantly search out commonalities of experience when we speak with other people, so in self-understanding we are always searching for what unifies our own diverse experiences in order to give coherence to our lives. Just as we seek out metaphors to highlight and make coherent what we have in common with

someone else, so we seek out *personal* metaphors to highlight and make coherent our own pasts, our present activities, and our dreams, hopes, and goals as well. A large part of self-understanding is the search for appropriate personal metaphors that make sense of our lives. Self-understanding requires unending negotiation and renegotiation of the meaning of your experiences to yourself. In therapy, for example, much of self-understanding involves consciously recognizing previously unconscious metaphors and how we live by them. It involves the constant construction of new coherences in your life, coherences that give new meaning to old experiences. The process of self-understanding is the continual development of new life stories for yourself.

The experientialist approach to the process of self-understanding involves:

Developing an awareness of the metaphors we live by and an awareness of where they enter into our everyday lives and where they do not

Having experiences that can form the basis of alternative metaphors

Developing an "experiential flexibility"

Engaging in an unending process of viewing your life through new alternative metaphors

Ritual

We are constantly performing rituals, from casual rituals, like making the morning coffee by the same sequence of steps each day and watching the eleven o'clock news straight to the end (after we've seen it already at six o'clock); to going to football games, Thanksgiving dinners, and university lectures by distinguished visitors; and so on to the most solemn prescribed religious practices. All are repeated structured practices, some consciously designed in detail, some more consciously performed than others, and some emerging spontaneously. Each ritual is a re-

peated, coherently structured, and unified aspect of our experience. In performing them, we give structure and significance to our activities, minimizing chaos and disparity in our actions. In our terms, a ritual is one kind of experiential gestalt. It is a coherent sequence of actions, structured in terms of the natural dimensions of our experience. Religious rituals are typically metaphorical kinds of activities, which usually involve metonymies—real-world objects standing for entities in the world as defined by the conceptual system of the religion. The coherent structure of the ritual is commonly taken as paralleling some aspect of reality as it is seen through the religion.

Everyday personal rituals are also experiential gestalts consisting of sequences of actions structured along the natural dimensions of experience—a part-whole structure, stages, causal relationships, and means of accomplishing goals. Personal rituals are thus natural kinds of activities for individuals or for members of a subculture. They may or may not be metaphorical kinds of activities. For example, it is common in Los Angeles to engage in the ritual activity of driving by the homes of Hollywood stars. This is a metaphorical kind of activity based on the metonymy THE HOME STANDS FOR THE PERSON and the metaphor PHYSICAL CLOSENESS IS PERSONAL CLOSENESS. Other everyday rituals, whether metaphorical or not, provide experiential gestalts that can be the basis of metaphors, e.g., "You don't know what you're opening the door to," "Let's roll up our sleeves and get down to work," etc.

We suggest that

The metaphors we live by, whether cultural or personal, are partially preserved in ritual.

Cultural metaphors, and the values entailed by them, are propagated by ritual.

Ritual forms an indispensable part of the experiential basis for our cultural metaphorical systems. There can be no culture without ritual.

Similarly, there can be no coherent view of the self without personal ritual (typically of the casual and spontaneously emerging sort). Just as our personal metaphors are not random but form systems coherent with our personalities, so our personal rituals are not random but are coherent with our view of the world and ourselves and with our system of personal metaphors and metonymies. Our implicit and typically unconscious conceptions of ourselves and the values that we live by are perhaps most strongly reflected in the little things we do over and over, that is, in the casual rituals that have emerged spontaneously in our daily lives.

Aesthetic Experience

From the experientialist perspective, metaphor is a matter of *imaginative rationality*. It permits an understanding of one kind of experience in terms of another, creating coherences by virtue of imposing gestalts that are structured by natural dimensions of experience. New metaphors are capable of creating new understandings and, therefore, new realities. This should be obvious in the case of poetic metaphor, where language is the medium through which new conceptual metaphors are created.

But metaphor is not merely a matter of language. It is a matter of conceptual structure. And conceptual structure is not merely a matter of the intellect—it involves all the natural dimensions of our experience, including aspects of our sense experiences: color, shape, texture, sound, etc. These dimensions structure not only mundane experience but aesthetic experience as well. Each art medium picks out certain dimensions of our experience and excludes others. Artworks provide new ways of structuring our experience in terms of these natural dimensions. Works of art provide new experiential gestalts and, therefore, new coherences. From the experientialist point of view, art is, in general, a

matter of imaginative rationality and a means of creating new realities.

Aesthetic experience is thus not limited to the official art world. It can occur in any aspect of our everyday lives—whenever we take note of, or create for ourselves, new coherences that are not part of our conventionalized mode of perception or thought.

Politics

Political debate typically is concerned with issues of freedom and economics. But one can be both free and economically secure while leading a totally meaningless and empty existence. We see the metaphorical concepts of **FREEDOM, EQUALITY, SAFETY, ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE, POWER**, etc., as being different ways of getting *indirectly* at issues of meaningful existence. They are all necessary aspects of an adequate discussion of the issue, but, to our knowledge, no political ideology addresses the main issue head-on. In fact, many ideologies argue that matters of personal or cultural meaningfulness are secondary or to be addressed later. Any such ideology is dehumanizing.

Political and economic ideologies are framed in metaphorical terms. Like all other metaphors, political and economic metaphors can hide aspects of reality. But in the area of politics and economics, metaphors matter more, because they constrain our lives. A metaphor in a political or economic system, by virtue of what it hides, can lead to human degradation.

Consider just one example: **LABOR IS A RESOURCE**. Most contemporary economic theories, whether capitalist or socialist, treat labor as a natural resource or commodity, on a par with raw materials, and speak in the same terms of its cost and supply. What is hidden by the metaphor is the nature of the labor. No distinction is made between meaningful labor and dehumanizing labor. For all of the labor

statistics, there is none on *meaningful* labor. When we accept the **LABOR IS A RESOURCE** metaphor and assume that the cost of resources defined in this way should be kept down, then cheap labor becomes a good thing, on a par with cheap oil. The exploitation of human beings through this metaphor is most obvious in countries that boast of “a virtually inexhaustible supply of cheap labor”—a neutral-sounding economic statement that hides the reality of human degradation. But virtually all major industrialized nations, whether capitalist or socialist, use the same metaphor in their economic theories and policies. The blind acceptance of the metaphor can hide degrading realities, whether meaningless blue-collar and white-collar industrial jobs in “advanced” societies or virtual slavery around the world.