Metaphor Wars:

Conceptual Metaphor in Human Life

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Chapter 1

What Are Metaphor Wars?

Lovers of language adore metaphor. There is nothing more thrilling for metaphor enthusiasts than to stumble across a phrase or passage that beautifully and concisely captures a metaphoric understanding of some idea or event. Classic metaphors, such as William Shakespeare's "Juliet is the sun," or Robert Burns's "My love is like a red, red rose," express sentiments about people and experiences that are almost impossible to state using language other than metaphor. Both metaphors assert something new about their topics (i.e., "Juliet" and "My love") in terms of concepts from very different aspects of life (i.e., "the sun" and "a red, red rose"). We marvel at the creative dexterity of gifted speakers and writers for their special talents in both thinking about certain ideas in new ways, and communicating these thoughts in vivid, poetic forms. Many metaphors have special linguistic, aesthetic, and possibly cognitive, functions deserving our close attention and persistent admiration.

Metaphor scholars are often fanatical in their pursuit of metaphoricity in language and life. They closely study language and other human actions/artifacts for clues on people's metaphoric conceptions about their lives and experiences of the world around them. Consider one example of metaphor in action by reading a brief narrative that was delivered by Chris Mathews on his American TV political discussion program "Hardball" (Sept 28, 2012).[1] Mathews was commenting on the upcoming TV debate between President Barrack Obama and his opponent, Mitt Romney, in the 2012 Presidential contest. Read the passage and note instances where words and phrases possibly convey metaphorical meanings.

> "Let me finish tonight with next week's first debate in Denver.
>
> "I'll be out there to watch the two of them go at it. I have no real idea what to expect. I think Romney will take some hard shots; he may spend the whole 90 minutes blasting away at the President, serving him with one indictment after another, hoping that something will stick.

> "I think Obama will play with him, parry the assaults, block the blows, try to keep his head clear so he can avoid getting hurt. I think it will start slow with both men trying to be cautious, neither able to land a punch, not hard enough to register with the tens of millions watching.
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> "Then it will happen: Romney will deliver what is clearly a pre-rehearsed moment, a sound byte. It will be something about Obama not delivering on a promise, something about the economy he said he'd do but hasn't. He will expect the President to defend himself.
>
> "When he does, pointing to what he inherited from Bush, Romney will pounce. He'll say that Obama's not running against Bush. This will be the Romney strategy: get Obama to pass the buck on the tough economic recovery and then land his Sunday punch.
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> "I suppose President Obama knows this is all coming and is preparing to deal with it. The good news is this: a month ago, all his rival had to do was say that Obama's done his best – he got his stimulus, got his healthcare program … and here we are. I think that might have nailed it – a month ago.
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> "Something's changed. It could have been something as definite as Bill Clinton's speech but people don't feel stuck like they did, don't think all we need is some other president – and that's Romney's problem, and it's a big one."

Mathews' commentary depicted the upcoming Presidential debate as a sporting event or, more specifically, a boxing match. Many words and phrases give evidence of the POLITICAL DEBATES ARE BOXING MATCHES metaphor, including "Romney will take some hard shots," and will be "blasting away at the President," but Romney will "expect the President to defend himself," and that "Obama will play with him, parry the assaults, block the blows, try to keep his head clear so he can avoid getting hurt," even if both men may not be "able to land a punch," although eventually Romney "will pounce" and be able to "land his Sunday punch."

Why did Mathews design his commentary about the Presidential debate around the metaphoric concept of POLITICAL DEBATES ARE BOXING MATCHES? A traditional assumption is that people use metaphor for specific rhetorical purposes, namely to express ideas that are difficult to convey using literal language, to state something in a compact manner, to memorably capture the vividness of our phenomenological experience, and, at times, to be polite.[2] Mathews's commentary appears to be motivated by several of these communicative goals. His choice of boxing metaphors conveys vivid, memorable images of the forthcoming Presidential debate that would be challenging to describe using non-metaphoric discourse.

But what if metaphors were not just special rhetorical devices? What if metaphors were fundamental tools that structure how people ordinarily think about abstract ideas and events? One possibility is that people's understanding of many aspects of everyday reality is constituted by enduring metaphorical schemes of thought. Metaphor does not

signify an unworldly transcendence from ordinary language, thought, or reality. Instead, what is most clichéd and conventional about reality are those aspects of experience that are primarily constituted by metaphorical thought![3]

The proposal that metaphor is as much a part of ordinary thought as it is a special feature of language has been voiced by a few rhetoricians, philosophers, and others for hundreds of years. Yet this "metaphor in thought" thesis gained its greatest attention from the 1980s on with the rise of conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) within the field of cognitive linguistics, most notably starting with the publication in 1980 of the widely-read book *Metaphors We Live By,* co-authored by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson. Unlike earlier scholars who speculated on the metaphorical basis of thought, Lakoff and Johnson provided systematic linguistic evidence to support the claim that there are metaphors in mind or "conceptual metaphors." Although some linguistic metaphors clearly present novel conceptualizations of different objects and ideas (e.g., "My love is like a red, red rose"), many conventional linguistic statements reflect the existence of enduring conceptual metaphors.

For example, consider the following list of verbal expressions, originally discussed in *Metaphors We Live By*

> "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 my arguments."

Each of these linguistic statements gives concrete realization to different aspects of the metaphoric concept in which we conceive of arguments as wars. The ARGUMENTS ARE WARS conceptual metaphor has as its primary function the cognitive role of understanding one concept (arguments) in terms of a different, often more familiar, concept (wars). Conceptual metaphors arise whenever we try to understand difficult, complex, abstract, or less delineated concepts, such as arguments, in terms of familiar ideas, such as wars. As Lakoff and Johnson wrote, "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 decisions and defend our own. We gain and lose ground. We plan and use strategies… Many of the things we do in arguing are partially structured by the concept of war."[4]

Chris Mathews's commentary reflected a more specific instantiation of the ARGUMENTS ARE WARS conceptual metaphor by suggesting how political arguments may be a particular kind of competition, namely a boxing match.

Lakoff and Johnson forged a new path for the "metaphor in thought" thesis by providing extensive, systematic linguistic evidence showing that metaphors were both ubiquitous in language and had a major role in the creation and continued structuring of abstract concepts. Since 1980, an enormous body of empirical evidence from cognitive linguistics, and related disciplines, has emerged detailing how conceptual metaphors

underlie significant aspects of language, and are evident in many nonlinguistic facets of life, including categorization and social judgments, bodily gestures, mathematics, music, art, dance, and material culture.

The range of fields that have conducted conceptual metaphor analyses is large and diverse, including Linguistics, Psychology, Philosophy, Computer Science/AI, Anthropology, Education, Neuroscience, Communications, Literature/Literary Studies, Political Science, Mathematics, Business/Organizational Studies/Marketing, Sociology, Economics, Law/Legal Studies, Classics, Architecture, Nursing Science, Geography, History, Theater Arts, Music, Art/Art History, Dance, Biology, Physics, Chemistry, Religious Studies, Film and Media Studies, and Egyptology. Conceptual metaphor analyses have uncovered root systems of metaphors underlying theory and research in each of these academic fields, and have proven to be an invaluable tool for scholars with applied interests in 1st- and 2nd-language learning, pedagogical practices, cross-cultural communication, advertising and marketing, doctor-patient interactions, psychotherapy, translation studies, and politics, to name just a few topics.

In many people's view, CMT is the most dominant theory within the large, diverse multidisciplinary world of metaphor research. The literary theorist and critic Wayne Booth wrote back in 1978, somewhat tongue in cheek, that the increasing interest in metaphor, even back at that time, suggests that by the year 2039, there will be more students of metaphor than people.[5] Although it is unclear if Booth's prophecy will come true, CMT is primarily responsible for the incredible popularity of metaphor within many academic fields and among certain lay audiences. A visit to any large metaphor conference, such as *Researching and Applying Metaphor (RaAM),* or a closer look at the pages of scholarly journals, such as *Metaphor and Symbol, Metaphor and the Social World, Metaphorik.de,* and *Cognitive Linguistics* will find most scholars working within the general framework of CMT, even if some people also have criticisms of the theory. Skeptics of CMT, including those who reject most of its assumptions and conclusions, still often acknowledge the tremendous influence that the "metaphor in thought" thesis has had on metaphor scholarship, as well as in larger debates about the nature of mind, meaning, and embodiment.

The Broader Impact of Conceptual Metaphor Theory

Empirical research on conceptual metaphors has had major impact on four broad concerns in the humanities and cognitive sciences.

First, CMT has been a significant part of cognitive linguistics' program to offer a new way of thinking about linguistic structure and behavior. Abandoning the traditional generative approach to linguistics, one that embraces the autonomy of language from mind, cognitive linguistics explicitly seeks out connections between language and cognition, and more deeply, language and experiential action. This new vision of linguistics stresses the importance of incorporating empirical findings from a wide variety of cognitive and biological disciplines to create a theoretical description of language. CMT has been specifically important in uncovering the detailed contents of linguistic meaning and the relevance of embodied experience in structuring abstract concepts and symbols. Consequently, CMT provides a major alternative to classic

modular views of language that see thought and language as separate architectural systems of the mind, with the body and mind occupying different realms of human experience. CMT shows how the study of metaphor offers insights into the overall unity of human conceptual structures, bodily experience, and the communicative, even aesthetic, functions of language.

Second, CMT offers a theoretical framework, and certain empirical evidence, for understanding the pervasiveness of metaphorical language and thought across a wide range of cognitive domains and cultural/linguistic environments. The traditional view of metaphors asserts that these figures express only temporary, "one-shot," construals of objects and ideas, as in "My lawyer is a shark," which do not necessarily impact the fundamental, literal contents of human thought and language. Under this perspective, metaphors may be extraordinarily useful in momentarily thinking about certain ideas in new ways, and communicating these thoughts in a vivid manner, although human knowledge is primarily constituted in disembodied, literal terms. Yet CMT demonstrates that metaphor is neither a rare, linguistic phenomenon nor merely a pragmatic aspect of language use. Instead, work originating within cognitive linguistics, and extending to many other fields, has revealed how metaphor should, at the very least, be recognized as a fundamental scheme of thought serving many cognitive, communicative, and cultural/ideological functions.

Third, the claim that significant parts of abstract thinking are partly motivated by metaphorical mappings between diverse knowledge domains has altered our scholarly conception of the relationship between thought and language. Prior to Lakoff and Johnson's first book, most discussions of language and thought dependencies were narrowly focused on questions related to the Sapir–Whorf hypothesis, particularly within the domain of color. Research in the cognitive sciences during the 1960s and 1970s demonstrated an increasing interest in semantic memory, and showed how conceptual knowledge was both necessary for language understanding and could be analyzed in various representational formats. But this work gave primary emphasis to the architecture of conceptual knowledge (e.g., the organization of semantic memory), and far less to the actual contents of what people know. Most notably, there were few attempts to explicitly model highly abstract knowledge domains (e.g., politics, scientific knowledge, ideas about the self, emotion concepts). CMT provides one way of thinking about how abstract concepts were established and influenced different domains of human thought, as well as ordinary language use and understanding.

Finally, CMT has been a leading force in what some refer to as the "second revolution" in cognitive science, namely the interest in the study of embodied cognition.[6] Cognitive linguistic analyses of language and gesture and psycholinguistics research, in particular, have played a prominent role in showing the significant degree to which metaphorical concepts are rooted within recurring patterns of bodily activity that serve as source domains for people's metaphorical understandings of many abstract concepts. The great irony here is that metaphor, rather than emerging from rare, transcendent imaginative thought, provides evidence on the embodied foundation of abstract thinking and action. CMT significantly advances our understanding of the dynamic links between bodily experiences, and ubiquitous thought patterns about abstract topics, linguistic structure and behavior, and culture.

Attacking Conceptual Metaphor Theory

Despite its influence and popularity, there have been major criticisms of CMT beginning with the publication of *Metaphors We Live By,* and continuing to this day. These negative reactions to the "metaphor in thought" thesis have led to a series of battles among metaphor scholars, both within and across academic disciplines, which together constitute the metaphor wars that are the subject of this book.

Metaphor wars are fought by participants with many different motivations and goals. Some researchers wish to explore how metaphors reflect individual creativity, artistic traditions, and cultural motifs. Different scholars want to understand what metaphors reveal about people's communicative abilities in changing social circumstances. Other metaphor enthusiasts focus on the effects that metaphors have on people's thoughts, emotions, and interpersonal relationship. Still other researchers study the ways people interpret metaphorical meanings as a window into the nature of meaning, as well as conscious and unconscious human cognition.

Some of these varying interests stem from longstanding disciplinary concerns leading scholars to battle over whether CMT offers a satisfactory theory of meaning (for philosophers), insights into creativity and poetic practice (for literary scholars), an online account of people's immediate comprehension of verbal metaphor (for psycholinguists), or cultural models (for anthropologists). Yet metaphors wars do not easily group into disciplinary categories (e.g., linguistics vs. philosophy vs. psychology vs. literature) or into a simple distinction between scientists and humanists. Individual scholars are often attracted to the topic of metaphor precisely because of what it reveals about multiple facets of human experience. Speaking personally, studying metaphor is endlessly fascinating for its lessons about the interactions of embodiment, language, and thought, and its relevance to everything from culture and history to neurons and unconscious cognition. CMT has offered me a way of understanding the emergence of meaning in both everyday life and spectacular realizations of the human spirit in art.

This complexity in how scholars approach the topic of metaphor may, however, accurately reflect the multitude of ways metaphor manifests itself in human experience. For this reason, there may never be a clear winner in the wars over conceptual metaphor. Such a conclusion should not sway us from trying to adjudicate some of the many disputes which continue to churn within the interdisciplinary world of metaphor scholarship. But resolving the debates about conceptual metaphor requires a comprehensive understanding of the vast empirical literature specifically designed to study CMT, and a sensitive analysis of why some scholars, nonetheless, react so negatively to the very idea of conceptual metaphors.

Consider again Chris Mathews's political commentary and his different boxing metaphors for the Obama vs. Romney debate. Did Mathews's choice of many conventional expressions necessarily indicate that he was thinking of the Presidential debate in a specific metaphorical manner? CMT scholars would argue that Mathews' speech, especially his systematic use of boxing metaphors, provides empirical evidence

on the power of conceptual metaphors, such as POLITICAL DEBATES ARE BOXING MATCHES, in structuring people's thinking about abstract topics. But skeptics would likely respond that Mathews merely spit out a series of clichéd phrases which have littered the English language for some time. Politics just happens to be talked about in certain conventional ways, some of which originated in metaphorical thinking. Still, the fact that a contemporary speaker, such as Mathews, used particular words or phrases does not imply that he was cognitively drawing cross-domain comparisons between political debates and boxing matches.

The major argument in metaphor wars concerns the legitimacy of drawing inferences about human thought and experience from the analysis of what people say and write. How do we really know if a speaker's metaphorical talk necessarily indicates active metaphorical thought? Some scholars voice skepticism about the conclusions of CMT because of its reliance on pure intuition in their systematic analysis of conventional expressions, novel metaphors, and polysemy. They seek more scientific evidence, testing falsifiable hypotheses, to prove that so-called conceptual metaphors are "psychologically real," and not the mere fictions of cognitive linguistic analyses.[7]

Critics also typically do not believe that conventional phrases, such as "Romney will take some hard shots," count as legitimate metaphors because these are so common or clichéd.[8] Traditional metaphor scholarship in many fields focuses on resemblance, or "A is B," metaphors, such as "Juliet is the sun," "Man is wolf," and "My surgeon is a butcher."[9] Certain cognitive linguistic analyses have been proposed for how people may interpret "A is B" metaphors, especially within conceptual "blending theory."[10] But the fact remains that most of the evidence in favor of CMT comes from an examination of metaphorical words and phrases that do not fit the traditional "A is B" form. For some, CMT appears to be too reductive, and spoils the cherished idea that metaphors, like "Juliet is the sun," are special, creative linguistic forms and aesthetically appealing precisely because of their active, poetic qualities.[11]

CMT is also faulted for its failure to offer reliable guidelines for determining how different linguistic expressions are necessarily motivated by particular conceptual metaphors.[12] What are the criteria for specifying how some linguistic statements, such as those listed above from *Metaphors We Live By,* directly point to the existence of one kind of conceptual metaphor (e.g., ARGUMENTS ARE WARS) as opposed to some other (e.g., DISPUTES ARE SHOOTING CONTESTS), or even no conceptual metaphor at all.

Some linguists, especially those working in applied areas (e.g., educational linguistics, literary analysis, corpus linguistics), voice concern about the difficulty of reliably identifying conceptual metaphors underlying naturalistic conversation and texts. The complexities of real-life discourse makes it far more difficult to perform conceptual metaphor analyses compared to working with isolated, constructed linguistic examples frequently studied by cognitive linguists. Without explicit criteria for conceptual metaphor identification, critics see no reason to posit the existence of conceptual metaphors as either generalization about the language system or critical parts of the human cognitive unconscious.

Anthropologists and linguists similarly contend that CMT fails to properly acknowledge the cultural forces that shape metaphorical thinking and language.[13] The

attempt to locate the cognitive and embodied, including neural, bases for metaphorical language, in many people's view, ignores the larger social and communicative goals that speakers and writers have when using metaphor, as well as the historical customs and ideological beliefs that may motivate some metaphoric discourses. Mathews's commentary, for instance, did not simply sprout from his private conceptual system, but emerged within a complex network of cultural understandings about Presidential campaigns and political debates. Efforts to ground linguistic metaphors in cognitive and, perhaps neural, structures miss the vital social nature of metaphorical speech acts.

In a different context, although much research from experimental psycholinguistics supports certain claims of CMT,[14] several psychological studies report evidence contrary to the idea that conceptual metaphors are automatically accessed when people use and interpret verbal metaphors.[15] These empirical results are consistent with arguments that many conventional expressions are not really motivated by underlying conceptual metaphors and, again, raise questions about the linguistic research in favor of CMT.

More recent claims by cognitive linguists, psychologists, and neuroscientists on the embodied nature of conceptual metaphors are also hotly debated within cognitive science.[16] For example, Mathews's boxing metaphors undoubtedly relate to people's bodily experiences when physically fighting, and many conceptual metaphors may be similarly grounded in recurring patterns of bodily sensation and action (e.g., LEADING A LIFE IS A TAKING A PHYSICAL JOURNEY, UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING, and CAUSES ARE PHYSICAL FORCES). Both psycholinguistic and cognitive neuroscience research offers empirical support that people experience bodily actions when using and interpreting many, but perhaps not all, verbal metaphors. Yet critics of embodied cognition, both within cognitive science and interdisciplinary metaphor studies, deplore the reduction of linguistic metaphor to bodily and brain processes.[17]

A brief look at a selection of statements critics have made about CMT illustrates some of the furor that has long fueled metaphor wars. These quotes are lifted from longer passages in which authors have gone to great length to articulate their complaints about specific features of CMT, what the theory ignores or trivializes, and how CMT often fails to address competing accounts of metaphorical language use and thought.

An early review of *Metaphor we live by,* published by the linguist Anna Wierzbicka in 1986 raised several arguments in regard to Lakoff and Johnson's positioning of conceptual metaphor as a new, experientialist, theory of meaning. Wierzbicka's main criticism focused on the book's glib dismissal of traditional perspectives on language and meaning. For example, she noted: "But what I find most disturbing about this book is the eagerness with which it seeks to cut itself off from the Western cultural heritage in general, and from Western traditions in the study of meaning, in particular." Later on, Wierzbicka argued that Lakoff and Johnson's theory of conceptual metaphor specifically downplayed the importance of traditional semantic analyses to determine what words, including metaphoric ones, really mean:

> "I deplore the new fashion in writings about meaning which makes the writers enthuse about the alleged indeterminacy of human thought, which allows them to

> condemn the search for prevision and accuracy in semantic analysis in the name of 'fuzziness' or 'experiential gestalts' (and so frees them from the obligation to pursue any such search), and which makes them hail a relaxation of standards as a sign of progress and increased wisdom."[18]

One debate on the merits of CMT arose in the pages of *Cognitive Linguistics* in 2002 between Marina Rakova and Mark Johnson and George Lakoff. Rakova's essay critiqued Lakoff and Johnson's theory of experientialism as it related to conceptual metaphor, and other topics, where she claimed that their approach was "philosophically inconsistent" and "contradicted by empirical evidence". In their reply, Lakoff and Johnson accused Rakova of "systematic misreading" and ignoring "mountains of evidence" in support of CMT.[19] In her 2003 book, *The Extent of the Literal,* Rakova offered one reflection on her debate with Johnson and Lakoff.

> "There is another comment that I cannot help making. Johnson and Lakoff (2002) accuse me of not understanding their theory and say that in my critique they 'can spot a good deal of Anglo-American analytic philosophy… as well as some flashes of Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, and Kant.' Since this is a book about metaphor I hope I may be allowed a metaphorical comparison. If I was a composer and somebody said to me in an accusatory tone that they could spot in my work flashes of Bach, Mozart, Beethoven and *Rachmaninov*, and that I failed to include country music I would say that this would have left me totally unimpressed." [20]

I confess to laughing aloud when reading this except in Rakova's book, which is technically called a "rebuttal analogy," although I believe that she vastly underestimates the poetic pleasures of country music, including the wealth of juicy metaphors that can be found in many country western songs (e.g., consider the metaphors in a single line of a Tim McGraw song titled *She's My Kind of Rain:* "She's the sunset's shadow, she's like Rembrandt's light, she's the history that's made at night, she's my lost companion, she's my dreamin' tree, together in this brief eternity."[21] Still, Rakova's writings are a good example of the angst that CMT has evoked among many metaphor scholars.

Critics have long asked whether conceptual metaphors are really necessary to explain metaphorical meaning. Cognitive linguist Vyv Evan wrote in 2003: "The problem with the level of generalization at which metaphor scholars have assumed cross-domain mappings can be studied is that it may simply constitute a post-hoc analysis due to the analyst."[22] Linguist Joerg Zinken voiced a similar concern in 2007 when he suggested that superordinate conceptual metaphors were "post-hoc artefact[s] of sorting utterances on the part of researcher[s].[23] Literary scholar Patrick Colm Hogan also argued in 2002: "We do not need to posit profound or pervasive metaphorical thought in order to account for local metaphor, for the poetic development of metaphor, or for patterns of metaphor within a given language."[24]

Certain philosophers assert that CMT is inadequate as a theory of meaning, because, as Verna Haser suggested in 2005: "Merely positing metaphorical concepts

brings us next to nothing"[25] Philosopher Gillan Parker, who embraced a "romantic" view of metaphor, noted in regard to CMT claims: "Of course, underlying many verbal poetic metaphors are determinable patterns of inference referring back to basic stock knowledge (part of which may be called 'metaphorical'): the truth of this is almost trivial. But this is probably the least interesting aspect of poetic metaphor, for that a poetic metaphor is poetic hereby becomes of secondary importance."[26] Michiel *Leezenberg* argued that CMT ignores several aspects of metaphor, including its rejection of classical truth theories of meaning, and complained in 2002 that CMT implies: "a complete reduction of linguistic metaphor to purely cognitive processes,"[27] and that, a cognitive semantic view of metaphor, "comes nowhere near making good its grandiose claims."[28]

Psychologist Steven Pinker is equally dismissive of critical parts of CMT, especially in regard to whether conceptual metaphors really form a basic level of mental representation and, therefore, overturn the need to worry about truth and objectivity in a theory of human mind and language. After reviewing various CMT claims, he offered a summary judgment:

> "The messiah has not come. Though metaphors are omnipresent in language, many of them are effectively dead in the minds' of today's speakers and the living ones could never be learned, understood, or used as reasoning tools unless they were built out of more abstract concepts that capture the similarities and differences between the symbol and symbolized. For this reason, conceptual metaphors do not render truth and objectivity obsolete…"[29]

Many other scholars complain that positing the existence of conceptual metaphors may not depict how people ordinarily use metaphorical language. Literary critic Peter Crisp summarized the problem CMT faces: "It is one thing to invent something for the purpose of illustrating hypothesized conceptual metaphors, such as ARGUMENT IS WAR or LIFE IS A JOURNEY. It is quite another thing to decide what exactly may be going on in the mind of the producer or receiver of a spontaneously occurring text containing one or more linguistic metaphors."[30]

Along similar lines, psychologist Mathew McGlone summarized his critique of CMT in 2007 by noting: "Its atmospheric influence notwithstanding, the CM view has not fared well theoretically or empirically…"[31] In 2011 McGlone later observed about CMT, in response to a paper of mine: "I have watched it curdle into a cult of confirmation biases…" "Until there is a substantial body of empirical evidence demonstrating conceptual metaphoric mediation of figurative language comprehension, claims about the theory's foundational status are little more than hyperbole…"[32]

Similar debates about the value of CMT within cognitive science were evident in 2006 when one psychologist wrote on an internet blog:

> "The evidence overwhelmingly indicates that people simply aren't performing the conceptual mappings that the Lakoff and Johnson conceptual metaphor theory requires. Fortunately, outside of the cognitive linguistics circle, this is how Lakoff and Johnson's theory is already viewed."[33]

Many have also written about the failure of CMT to address the social nature of verbal metaphor. Linguist Lynne Cameron stated her problem with the rigidity of CMT in the following way:

> "My basic objection to this claim of fixedness and invariance is that it leads to an impoverished, asocial view of metaphor that denies important realities of human noticing, reasoning and languaging, and that I find inadequate for describing and explaining what people do with metaphor and thus what metaphor 'is'. Furthermore, the scientific method of reduction(ism) that seems to underpin a cognitive linguistic drive to peel back, abstract away, and purify concepts in order to theorise, can be inappropriate for studying human phenomena; at some point in the peeling back, the flesh is damaged, the object of study changes nature and construct validity disintegrates. It is crucial to stop abstracting and generalising processes carried out in the name of theory-building before this point is reached."[34]

A related criticism, from the literary scholar Jim Swan, argued: "Explaining metaphor as the activities of unconscious, basic-led schema makes it difficult to account for the activity of a cultural subject acting as an ethical, intuitive agent capable of judgment."[35]

Finally, anthropologists argue that CMT ignores culture in a theory of metaphor. For example, Naomi Quinn presented a lengthy criticism of CMT in 1992, noting the following problems: "… the case of metaphor illustrates a uniform tendency for linguists and other cognitive scientists outside of anthropology to neglect altogether the organizing role of culture in human thought…" Quinn also suggested an alternative role for metaphor in cultural models: "…metaphors, far from constituting understanding, are ordinarily selected to fit a preexisting and culturally shared model…"[36]

These comments are indicative of the intense negativity that CMT has provoked, despite its simultaneous appeal within the metaphor community and elsewhere. As these critical observations make clear, the stakes are high in the wars over conceptual metaphor.

My Fights in These Wars

No matter what one may believe about the value of CMT, it is clearly appropriate to acknowledge that CMT has brought metaphor center stage to the highest level of theoretical discussions about mind and language within cognitive science and the humanities. But the time is ripe for a comprehensive reassessment of CMT, especially given the vast research related to conceptual metaphor from many disciplines within the cognitive sciences. I approach this task with a long personal history of involvement in the metaphor wars. When I first became interested in metaphor, and all things figurative, most scholars treated metaphor as if, in T.S. Eliot's words, it were "like a patient etherized upon a table." Like pathologists hovering over a corpse, metaphor researchers would poke at "Man is wolf" or "kick the bucket" wondering if these were dead or alive, sometimes turning the body over to see if it conveyed different meaning from the other side (e.g., does "Man is wolf" mean something different than "Wolf is man"?). But there was little concern with where metaphors came from, or what metaphor actually does when bouncing around the real world of human speakers in interaction. Even as I, and others, began to conduct experimental studies in the late 1970s looking at the effect of context on figurative language interpretation, the emphasis was really on how short discourse contexts facilitated processing of some phrases, such as "Regardless of danger,

the troops marched on," as having metaphorical as opposed to literal meaning. What metaphors actually communicated in real-life situations, the roles that metaphor had in structuring certain domains of thought, and how metaphors shaped and reflected culture, were not topics that attracted much attention.

But the revolution in metaphor studies brought about by CMT changed all that in significant ways. Metaphor was now viewed as more pervasive in everyday life and part of ordinary cognition, and not just a special, ornamental linguistic device. A good deal of my experimental research in psycholinguistics has, among other things, supported some of the proposal offered by CMT, work that has advanced the suggestion that conceptual metaphors are psychologically real. Much of my recent work has been devoted to understanding the embodied roots of metaphorical language use and thinking, an idea that is also directly relevant to some of the newest developments in CMT.[37] My involvement with CMT has taught me important lessons about the interactions of embodiment, language, and thought, and the relevance of conceptual metaphors in everything from culture and history to neurons and unconscious cognition. Most generally, CMT has offered me a way of understanding the emergence of meaning in both everyday life and spectacular realizations of the human spirit in art.

At the same time, I have long criticized CMT for its one-dimensional conception of linguistic understanding, its lack of methodological rigor by relying too much on the intuitions of individual analysts, its lack of attention to alternative proposals, and its failure to acknowledge the complexities in people's ongoing metaphorical experience. As my view of human cognition has developed over the years, I now believe that determining the role that conceptual metaphors play in human life should not result in either a "Yes, it does" or "No, it does not" conclusion. Instead, conceptual metaphors may be emergent products of multiple, nested factors (i.e., biological, historical, cultural, social, cognitive, and linguistic), and may interact with many knowledge sources and experiences to create context-sensitive, task-specific metaphorical behaviors.

Conceptual metaphor may be an essential ingredient in a comprehensive theory of metaphor, yet it clearly is not the only part of that story. I will later argue that conceptual metaphors' effect on language use, reasoning, imagination, and different human actions really depends on the specifics of who the people are, what their motivations and goals are, the specific language and linguistic devices they use, the cognitive and social tasks they accomplish, and how we as scholars assess metaphorical performance in different real-life situations. Overall, though, some of the complaints about CMT being too reductive really miss how conceptual metaphors express a deeply felt aesthetics of meaning that emerges from people's experiences of their bodies and minds in social, cultural contexts.

My plea in this book is for a fair hearing of all the cognitive science data as we continue to debate the merits of CMT. Only through a complete analysis of the extant empirical research will we ever come to broader theoretical agreements about the complexities of metaphor use and understanding. This call for a comprehensive analysis of the empirical evidence is really directed to critics of CMT, who often simply do not know of the abundant research on conceptual metaphors, as well as advocates of CMT

who sometimes blindly march forward as if it alone is the one and only true metaphor theory. Right now, there simply remains too much separation between different research enterprises on metaphor, with scholars from different theoretical perspectives pursuing their own research agendas without consideration of alternative ideas and results out there in the literature. My primary focus here will be on CMT and I will not always go into great detail about the pros and cons of alternative theoretical perspectives. Nonetheless, I strive to acknowledge other factors or variables that may be critical to a theory of metaphor, now underemphasized by CMT, which critics of conceptual metaphor have taken pains to explore in their own research and writings.

Describing the debates on metaphor as "wars" seems apt given the heated, sometimes vitriolic, nature of these academic discussions, and because of the significant theoretical implications that these arguments have for our vision of human thought, language, and action. Simply put, to maintain that metaphors are constitutive of the way people think offers a radical departure from long-standing beliefs in the literal, purely computational, highly disembodied ways people understand themselves and the world around them. More dramatically, empirical research showing that metaphor is an embodied, cognitive process, which clearly manifests as different linguistic and cultural tools, highlights the "poetics of mind," a view of experience that is far removed from the standard impression of our lives as clichéd and non-poetic.

The paradox of metaphor is that it can be creative, novel, and culturally sensitive, allowing us to transcend the mundane, while also being rooted in bodily experiences and unconscious thought patterns common to all people. Metaphor wars are the result of our continued struggle with this paradox. Yet in the metaphor wars, it may be ultimately wiser to accept the multiple functions that metaphors have in human life than to proclaim victory for one side, and defeat for the other.

Chapter 7

Conclusion and the Future

There was a time, not very long ago, when it was almost preposterous to suggest that metaphor had a major role in human life. Most everyone recognized that metaphors may occasionally burst forth, typically because of the poetic genius of very special people. Creative writers and artists possess imaginative gifts that enable them to spin words into novel metaphorical constructions. Certain verbal metaphors can pull us away from clichéd, mundane reality and let us briefly experience a transcendent, aesthetic world. All of us have some potential for appreciating the wonders of metaphor as a linguistic or artistic creation. Still, the world of metaphor has always traditionally been viewed as a special refuge that has little to do with ordinary human cognition.

Metaphor wars have been fought over a new vision of metaphorical language and thought. Contrary to the traditional view, articulated above, metaphor is a fundamental part of human conceptual systems and not just a special facet of speech and writing. The astonishing idea that metaphor may be a basic scheme of human thought has been proposed by several scholars over the centuries. It was, however, only with the publication of "Metaphors we live by" in 1980 that empirical research began appearing in support of the conceptual metaphor hypothesis. The present book presented an overview of the vast literature demonstrating that metaphor is a critical part of how we ordinarily think and talk. These studies reveal how conceptual metaphors are not the mere fictions of cognitive linguists, but are psychologically real features of human thought and expression. At the same time, many research programs described in this book have been motivated by a desire to expand CMT so that it can be more inclusive of the incredible mosaic of human experiences beyond those that are narrowly seen as within the "cognitive" domain. For example, conceptual metaphors are now widely understood to have significant roots within human embodied activity, something that few scholars would have anticipated back in 1980. Furthermore, and quite importantly, conceptual metaphors have now been shown to structure many nonlinguistic expressive experiences and, indeed, are indicative of various social, cultural, and even neural influences on human thought and language.

My primary aim in writing this book was to gather in one place many of the arguments and empirical evidence supporting the possibility that conceptual metaphors are crucial in defining human life. Describing this research is necessary because metaphor wars have too often been fought by people who simply do not know the complexity of the data that lend credence to CMT, as well as offer refinements to the theory. I am hopeful that future debates about conceptual metaphors in human life will be more informed about the empirical contents of CMT. My plea for a fair reading of the literature is intended as a cautionary warning to those who glibly dismiss the theory in its entirety, because of different linguistic intuitions, selective readings of the experimental data, or because of the theory's embrace of the terms "conceptual" and "cognitive." Productive arguments over conceptual metaphors must acknowledge all of the empirical

evidence from a variety of academic fields that directly addresses the ways conceptual metaphors add meaningful structure to human life.

One of the most forceful criticisms of CMT is that the theory is reductionist and fails to capture many of the specificities of meaningful metaphorical experience. These complaints stem, to a significant degree, from the rendering of conceptual metaphors as short, schematic pairings of words in small caps, such as LIFE IS A JOURNEY, UNDERSTANDING IS GRASPING, and ANGER IS HEAT. Critics view these simplistic summaries as the presumed entirety of conceptual metaphorical experience, almost as if these words alone represent metaphorical concepts, rather than serving as shorthand for complex, dynamic webs of thoughts and feelings, each of which are continually defined and bodily enacted. We must recognize that the labels for conceptual metaphors are only communicative devices employed in scholarly discussions and are not reflections of actual metaphorical concepts and experiences. Moreover, our understanding of every conceptual metaphor changes in each moment of real life, bodily action (i.e., linguistic and nonlinguistic). Conceptual metaphors do not sit individually in some mental cabinet, waiting to be activated and then mechanically applied in a generic way for each and every interpretive act. Instead, conceptual metaphors are always articulated in slightly different ways in each context. Just as each snowflake may be unique, despite the fact that all snowflakes are made of the same substances, the precise conditions under which each conceptual metaphor emerges make then all exquisitely particular.

It is really important to acknowledge the specificity of metaphorical experience when talking about conceptual metaphors and their functions in everyday cognition and expression. Each CMT analysis of a particular verbal metaphor, literary work, gestural action, artwork, or musical composition may suggest that one or more conceptual metaphors partly motivate what is meaningful about different communicative and expressive actions. But nobody claims that the meanings of a linguistic metaphor or a literary creation, to take two examples, are completely defined by conceptual metaphors, or that interpretations of human artifacts can be reduced to conceptual metaphors (and their embodied and/or neural roots). Still, the empirical evidence overwhelmingly validates that embodied conceptual metaphors are enduring constraints which motivate why we act in metaphorical ways and interpret human artifacts as expressing different metaphorical meanings.

The original proposal that metaphor was part of our ordinary conceptual system was never intended to dismiss the historical, cultural, social, and aesthetic dimensions of metaphorical experience. Yes, metaphor is not just a linguistic device and has many roots in pervasive patterns of cognitive and embodied activity. However, this claim, which offered a major reorientation to the ways that metaphor had traditionally be conceptualized and studied, is consistent with the fact that speaking, writing, gesturing, and creating artworks are all human actions that are clearly shaped by a confluence of factors ranging from historical and cultural forces, operating at slower time-scales, to cognitive and neural forces, working along fast time-scales. Metaphors in thought are not just static entities within an isolated cognitive system.

Contemporary debates over what is the right level of analysis or best empirical method to adopt when studying metaphor has led to unproductive stalemates because researchers too often quickly dismiss, or are even completely ignorant of, the general perspective and empirical findings offered by those working from different points of view. For example, some criticisms of CMT focus entirely on whether or not a cognitive approach is best to study and explain metaphor. I think this debate really focuses on the wrong question. Our attention should be directed toward how different types of knowledge and experience interact with one another to give rise to particular metaphorical actions. Investigating this issue demands that scholars not assume that they can simply study one facet of metaphor in some domain of experience from their own, autonomous, point of view (e.g., the cultural, social, linguistic, cognitive, neural perspectives). Instead, metaphor scholars must realize, and openly acknowledge that metaphorical actions always emerge from the interaction of a constellation of forces. What happens at the level of culture is shaped by actions at the purely linguistic level. What happens at the social level is always influenced by embodied actions and experience. What happens at the cognitive level is partly determined by neural and evolutionary constraints. The discourse level is always partly embodied, and, indeed, bodily experience is itself shaped by cultural and discourse factors. Mark Johnson nicely captures this idea of the interconnectedness of thought and language with many other dimensions of our social experience:[38]

> "Since thought is a form of coordinated action, it is spread out in the world, coordinated with the physical environment and the social, cultural, moral, political, and religious environments, institutions, and shared practices. Language – and all other forms of symbolic expression – are quintessentially social behaviors."[39]

Most generally, every level of analysis is always in interaction with every other level, such that human metaphorical actions should be properly characterized as dynamical and emergent, and not merely an assortment of isolated perspectives or properties of mind.

Despite the abundance of empirical research in favor of CMT, there is certainly room for new advances. Let me mention four topics that are ripe for scholarly attention.

First, CMT requires greater precision in reliably identifying conceptual metaphors from the systematic analysis of language patterns. Developments in corpus linguistics and automatic conceptual metaphor identification studies will be especially critical in this regard. At the very least, though, scholars should always outline the exact steps they engage in when drawing inferences about underlying conceptual metaphors from samples of language or other expressive modalities (e.g., gesture, art, music, dance). How did you first determine what was metaphorical in your sample? How did you then explicitly infer that certain conceptual metaphors, but not others, were the motivating force for overt metaphorical expressions? Furthermore, we all need to explore in greater detail how conceptual metaphors are elaborated upon through nonmetaphorical language and media. The constraining presence of conceptual metaphors is not just manifested in metaphorical language and actions. As Lakoff and Johnson earlier noted, for example, "We live our lives on the basis of inferences we derive via metaphor,"[40] and my suggestion is that some of these inferences are often characterized in nonmetaphorical ways. This possibility should be one focus of new work in metaphor studies.

Second, a classic interpretation of conceptual metaphors is that these are created from the mapping of usually concrete, often embodied, source domain knowledge which is projected to better structure target domain concepts, typically referring to ideas from a dissimilar aspect of experience. Consider the conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY where the JOURNEY source domain is understood as having image-schematic structure, as in the SOURCE–PATH–GOAL schema. CMT usually assumes that embodied source domains within conceptual metaphors are nonmetaphorical given their direct relations to recurring patterns of bodily experience across different bodily modalities.

However, our experiences of journeys, and the emergence of image schemas, such as SOURCE–PATH–GOAL, are rarely untouched by other symbolic meanings. Our physical journeys in life, again across different bodily modalities, always are imbued with existential, social, and cultural meanings, often in the form of allegorical themes. When we walk from point A to point B, our journey is dictated by our desires and goals. The obstacles we face along the path as we move toward our physical destination are interpreted given varying cultural beliefs and personal ideals. For these reasons, many recurring patterns of bodily experience are deeply socialized, enculturated, and may even be metonymic in the sense of standing for larger metaphorical, and allegorical, themes in our lives. The most important implication of this idea for CMT is that metaphorical meanings do not necessarily arise from the mappings of purely embodied knowledge onto abstract concepts. Instead, the source domains in conceptual metaphors are themselves metaphorical in nature. Of course, the metaphoricity of source domains may arise via feedback from source-to-target metaphorical mappings, especially as seen in the various entailments or correspondences created by conceptual metaphors. After all, we may understand many aspects of LIFE from our concrete, physical experiences of JOURNEYS, but the association of JOURNEYS with LIFE can clearly create a metaphorical interpretation of journey-taking activities in life.

The most important implication of this "metaphorical source domains" hypothesis is that metaphoricity in experience will not be restricted to what we typically view as abstract concepts, but will extend more massively into concrete bodily experiences and actions. Some of the experimental results from social psychological studies, reviewed in chapter 6, offer support for this claim. If this is true, metaphor will be recognized as emerging in a far greater range of human life experiences than has generally been acknowledged so far. This is surely another topic that requires much further study and discussion.

Third, CMT needs to further explore the ways conceptual metaphors may be organized and applied within different dimensions of human life. This imperative does not imply that a system of conceptual metaphors must be completely logical or internally consistent. As Lakoff and Johnson aptly observed, "Our conceptual systems are not consistent overall, since the metaphors used to reason about concepts may be inconsistent."[41] Nonetheless, greater attention should be given to showing how conceptual metaphors may interact with one another, as well as with many other kinds of figurative and non-figurative schemes of thought. Conceptual metaphors are not fully, and discretely, recruited in each instance of their application. Rather, conceptual metaphors are articulated in partial, probabilistic, ways, which exactly define the

particularities of metaphorical experience. Some work consistent with this idea is already ongoing within cognitive linguistics (e.g., gesture studies), and research from psycholinguistics and cognitive neuroscience will be especially useful in detailing gradations in the emergence of conceptual metaphors.[42] The partial nature of conceptual metaphorical experiences vary given the people studied, the languages they use, the particular forms of metaphorical language employed and encountered, and the specific, adaptive challenges they all face when a metaphor arises. Metaphor wars have too often been a fight over whether conceptual metaphors are necessarily always present or completely absent in various moments of thought, language, and other human expressions. These dichotomous arguments should diminish once scholars embrace a more nuanced, dynamic vision of how metaphor actually contributes to real-world meaningful experience.

Finally, conceptual metaphors do not dictate all aspects of thought and language, but should be properly understood as significant, but not exclusive, constraints on how we create metaphorical experience in human life. For example, CMT is not a complete theory of how language is understood, because conceptual metaphorical knowledge must be complemented by a diversity of other linguistic, cognitive, and social-cultural processes. CMT proponents would do well to explore the ways that enduring conceptual metaphors interact with social, pragmatic information within the constraints of real-time cognitive processing to offer more comprehensive, and psychologically real, models of metaphorical language use. Similarly, conceptual metaphors may not be a motivating or an emerging force for every instance of verbal metaphor understanding. Champions of CMT need to explicitly describe what the theory can and cannot explain, and not simply present isolated analyses that are always consistent with the theory.

Let me briefly summarize some of my personal thoughts about conceptual metaphors. My claim is that conceptual metaphors are best understood in the following five broad ways:

1. Conceptual metaphors are emergent in context from the interaction of many cultural, social, linguistic, cognitive and neural forces. No single force, or level of experience, entirely explains where metaphorical ideas come from or continue to shape everyday metaphorical experience.
2. Conceptual metaphors are important constraints on metaphorical experience, but do not completely define all aspects of how people create metaphorical meaning.
3. Conceptual metaphors are not fully activated, one-by-one, in every instance of their application within human life. People often experience conceptual metaphors in partial, probabilistic ways depending on their past experiences, the languages they speak and types of verbal metaphors they use, their bodily actions, and adaptive challenges (e.g., their personal and social goals, the contexts they inhabit, the physical world etc.).
4. Conceptual metaphors often have source domains that are themselves understood in symbolic, metaphorical ways.
5. Conceptual metaphors, because they are emergent, are always dynamic and exquisitely particular within each context. They are sensuous, multimodal,

> often arise in nonlinguistic experience, and are much more embodied, communicative articulations than small recipes or linguistic symbols inside people's heads/brains.

Wars can be terrible to be part of and I admit frustration with the ways the wars over conceptual metaphors have sometimes been waged in scholarly circles. Nonetheless, certain long-time struggles about important intellectual ideas can be instructive and beneficial to all participating combatants. The theory of conceptual metaphor represents a paradigm shift in the study of metaphor and mind. We have learned a great deal about the diversity of metaphorical experience as a result of CMT. There is still much to be discovered. My desire is that this book may provide a new starting point for metaphor research, one that leads forward to a less contentious journey than has been travelled in the recent past. Let us all take great pleasures in our scholarly studies of metaphor as we move toward a more nuanced, sophisticated theory of the ways that conceptual metaphor helps create meaning in human life.

Chapter 1

[1] http://hardballblog.msnbc.com/_nv/more/section/archive?author=chrismatthews

[2] Ortony (1975).

[3] Gibbs (1994); Lakoff & Johnson (1980, 1999).

[4] Lakoff & Johnson (1980: 4).

[5] Booth (1978).

[6] Lakoff & Johnson (1999).

[7] Vervaeke & Kennedy (1996); Murphy (1996).

[8] Jackendoff & Aaron (1991); Pinker (2007).

[9] See Black (1954); Gentner & Bowdle (2008); Glucksberg (2001); Sperber & Wilson (2008).

[10] Fauconnier & Turner (2002, 2008).

[11] Parker (1998).

[12] See Gibbs (2011a) for discussion.

[13] Howe (2007); Quinn (1992).

[14] See Gibbs (2011); Gibbs & Colston (2012) for reviews

[15] Keysar et al. (2000).

[16] Feldman (2006); Gibbs (2006); Lakoff (2008); Lakoff & Johnson (1999); Johnson (1987).

[17] Haser (2005).

[18] Wierzbicka (1986:307).

[19] Rakova (2002: 215); Lakoff & Johnson (2002: 260, 251, 261).

[20] Rakova (2003: 178-179).

[21] http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/timmcgraw/shesmykindofrain.html

[22] Evans (2003: 75).

23 Zinken (2007: 461).

[24] Hogan (2002: xx).

[25] Haser (2005: 190).

[26] Parker (1998; 430).

[27] *Leezenberg* (2001: xx).

[28] Ibid. 144.

[29] Pinker (2007: 276).

[30] Crisp (2002: 11).

[31] McGlone (2007: 122).

[32] McGlone (2011: 572 and 566).

[33] http://scienceblogs.com/mixingmemory/2006/09/

[34] Cameron (in press).

[35] Swan (2002; 447).

[36] Quinn (1992: 57 and 60, respectively).

[37] Gibbs (1994, 2006, 2011a); Gibbs & Colston (2012).

Chapter 7

[38] Johnson (2007: 151).

[39] This viewpoint on the distributed nature of human cognition has been widely discussed within the cognitive sciences. See Clark (1997); Gibbs (2006); Hutchins (1995), for example.

[40] Lakoff & Johnson (2003: 273).

[41] Ibid. p. 273.

[42] A close examination of the psycholinguistic findings, for example, clearly indicates that not every person always recruits each and every relevant conceptual metaphor when understanding all instances of verbal metaphors. The recruitment of conceptual metaphors may, once more, be quite task, and person, dependent and more generally is a matter of degree than all or none.