

More than Cool Reason
A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor

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Preface

It is commonly thought that poetic language is beyond ordinary language—that it is something essentially different, special, higher, with extraordinary tools and techniques like metaphor and metonymy, instruments beyond the reach of someone who just talks. But great poets, as master craftsmen, use basically the same tools we use; what makes them different is their talent for using these tools, and their skill in using them, which they acquire from sustained attention, study, and practice.

Metaphor is a tool so ordinary that we use it unconsciously and automatically, with so little effort that we hardly notice it. It is omnipresent: metaphor suffuses our thoughts, no matter what we are thinking about. It is accessible to everyone: as children, we automatically, as a matter of course, acquire a mastery of everyday metaphor. It is conventional: metaphor is an integral part of our ordinary everyday thought and language. And it is irreplaceable: metaphor allows us to understand ourselves and our world in ways that no other modes of thought can.

Far from being merely a matter of words, metaphor is a matter of thought—all kinds of thought: thought about emotion, about society, about human character, about language, and about the nature of life and death. It is indispensable not only to our imagination but also to our reason.

Great poets can speak to us because they use the modes of thought we all possess. Using the capacities we all share, poets can illuminate our experience, explore the consequences of our beliefs, challenge the ways we think, and criticize our ideologies. To understand the nature and value

of poetic creativity requires us to understand the ordinary ways we think.

Because metaphor is a primary tool for understanding our world and our selves, entering into an engagement with powerful poetic metaphors is grappling in an important way with what it means to have a human life.

We have written this book to analyze the role of metaphor in poetry. In it, we take up general questions of the theory of metaphor, and, more widely, questions of rhetoric, meaning, and reasoning. The book should therefore prove valuable to students and researchers in literature, linguistics, philosophy, psychology, anthropology, and cognitive science.

We have tried to write the book in a style accessible to undergraduates who are learning to read poetry in depth. We hope it will help them to understand how poetic metaphor works.

O N E

Life, Death, and Time

“Because I could not stop for Death”

Because I could not stop for Death—
He kindly stopped for me—
The Carriage held but just Ourselves—
And Immortality.

Metaphors are so commonplace we often fail to notice them. Take the way we ordinarily talk about death. The euphemism “He passed away” is not an arbitrary one. When someone dies, we don’t say “He drank a glass of milk” or “He had an idea” or “He upholstered his couch.” Instead we say things like “He’s gone,” “He’s left us,” “He’s no longer with us,” “He’s passed on,” “He’s been taken from us,” “He’s gone to the great beyond,” and “He’s among the dear departed.” All of these are mundane, and they are metaphoric. They are all instances of a general metaphorical way we have of conceiving of birth, life, and death in which **BIRTH IS ARRIVAL, LIFE IS BEING PRESENT HERE, and DEATH IS DEPARTURE**. Thus, we speak of a baby being “on the way” and “a little bundle from heaven,” and we send out announcements of its “arrival.” When Shakespeare’s King Lear says

Thou must be patient; we came crying hither:
Thou know’st the first time that we smell the air
We waul and cry . . . (*King Lear*, 4.4)

he is using an extension of the very ordinary metaphorical conception of birth as arrival (“came hither”) that we use when we speak of a baby being on the way. Mark Twain said he “came in” with Halley’s comet and would “go out”

range of expressions such as “pass away,” be “no longer with us,” “gone,” “among the dear departed,” and so on.

A third major parameter along which metaphors may differ is what we have loosely called basicness. The basicness of a metaphor is its conceptual indispensability. Take, for example, PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS and TIME MOVES. It is virtually unthinkable for any speaker of English (as well as many other languages) to dispense with these metaphors for conceptualizing purposes and time. To do so would be to change utterly the way we think about goals and the future. That is what we mean by saying that such metaphors are basic to the conceptual system on which our language and our culture are based. On the other end of the scale, the metaphor that the evening is a patient etherized upon a table is quite dispensable for the ways we think and for the structure of our conceptual system. And our lives do not noticeably differ if we do not happen to have this metaphor. Somewhere in the middle of the gradient is a basic conceptual metaphor like LIFE IS A FIRE. We probably all have this basic conceptual metaphor, and we use it to some extent in our thinking. But, in the main, relatively little would change in our thinking or our lives if we did not have this conceptual metaphor. It is more dispensable than LIFE IS A JOURNEY, and less dispensable than Eliot’s metaphor of the evening as a patient etherized upon a table.

In short, a serious study of metaphor must address a wide and complex set of theoretical issues. Let us turn to them now.

TWO

The Power of Poetic Metaphor

What Is Not Metaphorical

To understand what is metaphorical, we must begin with what is not metaphorical. In brief, to the extent that a concept is understood and structured on its own terms—without making use of structure imported from a completely different conceptual domain—we will say that it is not metaphorical.

The word “extent” was chosen with care. A given concept may be metaphorically understood and structured in some respects but not in others. Consider dogs, for example. We do not conventionally understand a dog’s appearance via a mapping between it and a completely different conceptual domain. Thus, part of our conceptualization of a dog is nonmetaphorical: the four legs, wagging tail, cold wet black nose, and so on. Of course, we may invent all the metaphors we please in which nonmetaphorical concepts are targets. We might say, for instance, that a dog’s wagging tail is its flag, signaling to us. But this does not mean that the wagging tail cannot be understood nonmetaphorically as just a tail; to the extent that it is so understood it is not metaphorical. Moreover, the dog’s tail is not conventionally, automatically, and unconsciously understood as a flag. That is, the tail-as-flag metaphor is not part of our *conventional* concept of a dog’s tail. So far as we can tell, there is nothing metaphorical about the conventional concept of a dog’s tail.

But when we understand a dog as being “loyal,” we are understanding an instinctive property of the dog in terms of a human personality trait. When we conceptualize a dog as “loyal,” we are conceptualizing that aspect of the dog via

metaphor. In short, it is misleading to think of concepts as a whole as being either all metaphorical or all nonmetaphorical. Metaphoricity has to do with particular aspects of conceptual structure. Part of a concept's structure can be understood metaphorically, using structure imported from another domain, while part may be understood directly, that is, without metaphor.

As we have seen, death is understood via a range of metaphors. But, of course, death is in part understood directly as well: when one is alive, one is functioning; when one is dead, one is not functioning. This is a nonmetaphorical aspect of our understanding of death. As such, it can be used as the source domain for other metaphors. For example, if we say "The phone is dead," we are using the general **MA-CHINES ARE PEOPLE** metaphor, which maps human death onto the failure of the machine to operate. It is the *nonmetaphorical* understanding of death that is mapped in this metaphor—not the metaphorical understanding of death in terms of departure, cold, darkness, and so on. The metaphorical understanding of death is used to comprehend other aspects of death than mere nonfunctionality.

Light is another example of a concept that is partially understood on its own terms and partially understood via metaphor. We perceive light, react to it emotionally, and know that it allows us to see things. But light as a scientific phenomenon requires a further understanding. We have two common scientific metaphors for light: as waves and as particles that move faster than anything else in the universe. But this metaphorical understanding of light is not used in the metaphor by which we understand life as light. The aspects of the concept of light we use in the life-as-light metaphor have nothing to do with the metaphorical conception of light either as particles or as waves. The life-as-light metaphor depends instead on certain nonmetaphorical knowledge about light: that it promotes growth, that it makes us happy for the most part, that it allows us to see and gain the knowledge necessary for our survival, and so on. Thus light has an aspect independent of the particle and wave metaphors, an aspect which is used as the basis for the metaphorical understanding of other concepts. It also has an

aspect (namely, its physical nature) which is metaphorically understood and is not used as the basis for other metaphors.

The idea that metaphoricity is all or none arises from the fact that we have a range of concepts that are not normally understood metaphorically at all. Things that we think of as being straightforwardly physical—rocks and trees and arms and legs—are usually things that we have conceptualized not metaphorically but rather in terms of what we take to be our bodily experience. In addition, the source domains of many metaphors are typically understood without metaphor. Thus, departures, journeys, plants, fire, sleep, days and nights, heat and cold, possessions, burdens, and locations are not themselves metaphorically understood, at least insofar as they form a basis for the metaphorical understanding of other concepts. We conventionally understand these concepts not by virtue of metaphoric mappings between them and different conceptual domains but rather by virtue of their grounding in what we take to be our forms of life, our habitual and routine bodily and social experiences.

Of course, just because these conceptualizations are nonmetaphoric does not mean that they are mind-free. It does not mean that they are somehow given to us directly by the objective world. On the contrary, cultural anthropologists often investigate just the ways that experience is understood differently in different cultures. But their grounding is not metaphoric. It is instead in patterns of what we take to be habitual and routine experience, both biological and social, that we know unconsciously and in rich interactional detail, because we live these patterns.

In the case of profoundly conventionalized conceptual metaphors, such as the basic metaphors we discuss in this book, aspects of one concept, the target, are understood in terms of nonmetaphoric aspects of another concept, the source. A metaphor with the name **A IS B** is a mapping of part of the structure of our knowledge of source domain **B** onto target domain **A**. Before we can discuss the nature of such mappings, we must first discuss what the structure of knowledge in a conceptual domain is like.

Metaphor and Knowledge

Understanding any poem requires knowledge. We take for granted much of the everyday knowledge we need to understand poetry. Take, for example, the following poem from the Sanskrit tradition.

Neighbor please
keep an eye on my house
my husband says the water from the well
is tasteless
so even when I'm alone
I have to go into the forest
where the Tamāla trees
shade the river-bank
and maybe the thick reeds
will leave marks on my body¹

The poem presupposes the common knowledge that passionate sexual activity can leave marks on the body. It also takes for granted the knowledge that, in India at the time of the poem, illicit sexual liaisons commonly took place in the tall, thick reeds along river banks. Without such knowledge about reeds, we would not be able to make sense of another Sanskrit poem:

There where the reeds are tall
is the best place to cross the river
she told the traveller
with her eye on him
(*The Peacock's Egg*, p. 155)

Conventional metaphor, of course, also depends on conventional knowledge. In order to understand a target domain in terms of a source domain, one must have appropriate knowledge of the source domain. Take, for example, the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor that we discussed in chapter one. Our understanding of life as a journey uses our knowledge about journeys. All journeys involve travelers, paths

¹ W. S. Merwin and J. Moussaieff Masson, trans., *Sanskrit Love Poetry* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977). Copyright © 1977 Columbia University Press. Used by permission. Reprinted as *The Peacock's Egg* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1981), p. 101.

traveled, places where we start, and places where we have been. Some journeys are purposeful and have destinations that we set out for, while others may involve wandering without any destination in mind. To understand life as a journey is to have in mind, consciously or more likely unconsciously, a correspondence between a traveler and a person living the life, the road traveled and the "course" of a lifetime, a starting point and the time of birth, and so on.

One of the reasons that this form of understanding is powerful is that it makes use of a general knowledge of journeys. This knowledge has a skeletal structure rich enough to distinguish journeys from other kinds of activities, but not so rich as to rule out any particular kind of journey. As a consequence, the understanding of life as a journey permits not just a single simpleminded conceptualization of life but rather a rich and varied one. Because our knowledge of journeys includes options for types of journeys, the metaphorical understanding of life in terms of a journey includes options for a corresponding variety of understandings of life. To the extent that one views life as purposeful, those purposes are viewed as destinations, and we can act accordingly by setting out to reach them, getting around impediments, and accepting guidance. Correspondingly, to the extent that we see life as not involving purposes, we can view our journey as wandering and observing the landscape.

Two things permit such richness: the structure of our knowledge of journeys and our ability to map from that structured knowledge to a conception of life. The structure of our knowledge of journeys can be seen as having well-differentiated components such as travelers, a starting point, a path, impediments, and so on; some are required and some, like destinations, vehicles, companions, and guides, are optional. We will call knowledge structured in such a skeletal form a "schema," and we will use the term "slots" for elements of a schema that are to be filled in. Thus, a JOURNEY schema has a slot for TRAVELER that can be filled by any particular person whom we understand to be on a journey. Indeed, the very concept of a traveler can be defined only relative to the concept of a journey. Under-

standing that someone is a traveler is understanding that he fills the role of TRAVELER in a JOURNEY schema.

The metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY is thus a mapping of the structure of the JOURNEY schema onto the domain of LIFE in such a way as to set up the appropriate correspondences between TRAVELER and PERSON LEADING A LIFE, between STARTING POINT and BIRTH, and so on.

Part of the power of such a metaphor is its ability to *create* structure in our understanding of life. Life, after all, *need* not be viewed as a journey. It *need* not be viewed as having a path, or destinations, or impediments to travel, or vehicles. That structuring of our understanding of life comes from the structure of our knowledge about journeys. When we reason about life in terms of destinations, forks in the road, roadblocks, guides, and so on, we are importing patterns of inference from the domain of journeys to the domain of life. For example, we can infer from the fact that someone is spinning his wheels that he is not getting anywhere and will not reach his destination. We can infer from the fact that someone has hit a roadblock that if he is to continue on he must deal with it in some way: remove it, get over it, get around it, or find another route. Much of our reasoning about life involves inferences of this sort. Thus, the power to reason about so abstract an idea as life comes very largely through metaphor.

We understand and reason using our conceptual system, which includes an inventory of structures, of which schemas and metaphors are established parts. Once we learn a schema, we do not have to learn it again or make it up fresh each time we use it. It becomes conventionalized and as such is used automatically, effortlessly, and even unconsciously. That is part of the power of schemas: we can use these ready tools without having to put any energy into making or finding them. Similarly, once we learn a conceptual metaphor, it too is just there, conventionalized, a ready and powerful conceptual tool—automatic, effortless, and largely unconscious. The things most alive in our conceptual system are those things that we use constantly, unconsciously, and automatically. They include conceptual schemas and conceptual metaphors.

For the same reasons that schemas and metaphors give us power to conceptualize and reason, so they have power over us. Anything that we rely on constantly, unconsciously, and automatically is so much part of us that it cannot be easily resisted, in large measure because it is barely even noticed. To the extent that we use a conceptual schema or a conceptual metaphor, we accept its validity. Consequently, when someone else uses it, we are predisposed to accept its validity. For this reason, conventionalized schemas and metaphors have *persuasive* power over us.

At this point we can see how that power arises. Metaphors have an internal structure. Each metaphorical mapping consists of the following:

- Slots in the source-domain schema (e.g., journey), which get mapped onto slots in the target domain (e.g., life). In some cases the target-domain slots exist independently of the metaphoric mapping. For example, the traveler slot gets mapped onto the living person slot, which exists in the domain of life independently of the metaphoric mapping. Other target domain slots are *created* by the mapping. For example, to map the PATH slot of the JOURNEY schema into the domain of life means understanding the events of one's life as constituting the points of a path, which necessitates creating a COURSE OF LIFE slot in the LIFE domain.
- Relations in the source domain (journey), which get mapped onto relations in the target domain (life). For example, take the idea of a traveler reaching a destination he set out for. This maps onto the idea of a person achieving a purpose in life. So the source domain relation REACHING holding between TRAVELER and DESTINATION gets mapped onto the target domain relation ACHIEVING holding between PERSON and PURPOSE.
- Properties in the source domain, which get mapped onto properties in the target domain. For example, a traveler has strengths and weaknesses which affect the way he conducts the journey, deals with impediments, and so on. This maps onto the idea of a person having strengths and weaknesses for conducting life, for dealing with problems, and so on. Thus if we can say of someone that

he is strong enough to roll over anything that gets in his way, we are saying with this metaphor something about his way of dealing with difficulties in his life.

- Knowledge in the source domain, which gets mapped onto knowledge in the target domain. Our knowledge of a domain allows us to draw inferences about that domain. When a domain serves as a source domain for a metaphoric mapping, inference patterns in the source domain are mapped onto the target domain. For example, if you hit a dead end, you cannot go on in the same direction and have to find another route. If you hit a metaphorical dead end in life, you must find another course of action.

We have now identified the following sources of the power of metaphor:

- *The power to structure.* Metaphorical mappings allow us to impart to a concept structure which is not there independent of the metaphor. Death—one's own and that of others—is an important part of human life that we seek ways to comprehend. If death is conceived of as a departure, then it becomes natural to conceive of death as the beginning of another journey, like the journey of life, with a final destination of its own. Only if we conceive of death in this way can we ponder the nature of the final destination.
- *The power of options.* Schemas are very general, as they must be to cover the range of possible instantiations. Options about what details will fill out a schema occur at higher and lower levels. At the most general level, there are optional components in a schema: a journey may or may not have a vehicle, a guide, a companion, provisions, and so on. The fact that the components of a schema are slots that can be filled in by more specific information provides for options at lower levels. For example, a journey may be either on land or on sea or through the air or through space. The JOURNEY schema contains the concept VEHICLE as an option, but not the concept CAR, which is a more specific kind of vehicle. An expression like “the fast lane” fills in the VEHICLE slot

with the special case, CAR. The phrase “life in the fast lane” thus uses the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor, with the VEHICLE slot in the JOURNEY schema filled in by CAR and the PATH slot filled in by THE FAST LANE. Such options allow us to enrich the basic metaphorical structure and derive new understandings of the target domain.

- *The power of reason.* Metaphors allow us to borrow patterns of inference from the source domain to use in reasoning about some target domain. For example, the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor is one of the most powerful tools we have for making sense of our lives and for making decisions about what to do and even what to believe. If, on a journey, we come to a dead end, then we must find another route to continue making progress. Similarly, if we think of our situation in life as a dead end, then we can reason accordingly: we can stay put and make no progress, or we can find another way to achieve our purposes.
- *The power of evaluation.* We not only import entities and structure from the source domain to the target domain, we also carry over the way we evaluate the entities in the source domain. For example, when we speak of life as a “dead end” we are viewing an unchanging state in a negative light as a lack of progress, rather than, for instance, viewing life in terms of the security and stability that could result from stasis.
- *The power of being there.* The very existence and availability of conventional conceptual metaphors makes them powerful as conceptual and expressive tools. But they have power over us for the same reason. Because they can be used so automatically and effortlessly, we find it hard to question them, if we can even notice them.

Cognitive Models and Commonplace Knowledge

Conceptual schemas organize our knowledge. They constitute cognitive models of some aspect of the world, models that we use in comprehending our experience and in reasoning about it. Cognitive models are not conscious

models; they are unconscious and used automatically and effortlessly. We cannot observe them directly; they are inferred from their effects. Of course, we can consciously consider and try to get at what our unconscious models might be, as we have done throughout this book in the case of metaphorical mappings.

We acquire cognitive models in at least two ways: by our own direct experience and through our culture. Thus, people who have never seen millstones can nonetheless learn, via their culture, that they are used in mills to grind grain, and that they are the enormous round flat stones that rotate about an axis. Cognitive models that are acquired via our culture are typically models that are long-standing in the culture. Cultural models of this sort are often at variance with our scientific knowledge. For example, experts on wolves maintain that wolves avoid humans whenever they can; nevertheless, our cultural model of wolves sees them as vicious beasts that attack humans without provocation, often cruelly.

Some cognitive models are very abstract. For example, we comprehend people, animals, and objects in the world as having attributes, some of which are essential to their nature. Things in the world may or may not actually have essential attributes, but we understand them as having them. This is part of a very general cognitive model that we have of the nature of things and how they behave. We also commonly ascribe the behavior of people, animals and objects to some attribute that they have, as when we think of someone who *typically acts* angrily as *being* an angry person. In such a case, we conceive of his behavior as a consequence of an attribute of his.

In chapter four, we will introduce a large-scale cognitive model—the Great Chain of Being—which ranges over the full gamut of forms of being in the universe. It is a cognitive model that we use to make sense of, and impose order on, the universe. It is acquired culturally, at least in its extended forms, and in describing it we are, of course, not suggesting that the universe really conforms to the model.

We will refer to such cognitive models in various ways throughout this book, depending on what aspect of them

we wish to stress. We have called them “cognitive models” here to stress their mental nature and to distinguish them from any claim that they represent scientific reality. We will call them “cultural models” when it seems most appropriate to stress their cultural nature, “commonplace models” when the their everyday character is at issue, and “commonplace notions” when the term “model” seems too grandiose for such a simple idea.

The Conceptual Power of Poetic Metaphor

Poetic thought uses the mechanisms of everyday thought, but it extends them, elaborates them, and combines them in ways that go beyond the ordinary.

EXTENDING

One major mode of poetic thought is to take a conventionalized metaphor and extend it. Consider, for example, the conventional metaphor DEATH IS SLEEP. That conventional metaphor is, of course, partial—it does not map everything in our general knowledge of sleep onto death but only certain aspects: inactivity, inability to perceive, horizontal position, and so on. In Hamlet’s soliloquy, Shakespeare extends the ordinary conventional metaphor of death as sleep to include the possibility of dreaming:

To sleep? Perchance to dream! Ay, there’s the rub;
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come?

ELABORATING

Another principal mode of poetic thought that goes beyond the ordinary is the nonconventional elaborating of schemas, by filling in slots in unusual ways rather than by extending the metaphor to map additional slots. As always, when we say that the poet is elaborating the schema or extending the metaphor, we mean that we, the readers, are doing the elaborating and extending in ways that we take to be indicated or at least suggested by the poem. For example, let us consider a passage that can be elaborated in more than one way: Horace’s reference to death as the “eternal exile of the raft.”

According to the conventional metaphor of death as departure, we conceive of death as departure away from here, without possibility of return, on a journey, perhaps in a vehicle. The conventionalized metaphor is no more specific than that. We may take it that Horace is using this metaphor but filling in the slots, that is, elaborating it, in an interesting way. Being away from here is characterized by the special case of exile. The vehicle is an unusual one—a raft. These ways of making the DEATH IS DEPARTURE metaphor specific add considerable conceptual content to the metaphor of death as departure. Exile, after all, is not merely being away from here. It is banishment; it is unwanted; it assumes that one would prefer to return; it is an unnatural state; and so on. A raft, moreover, is not something that takes us swiftly, directly, luxuriously, or securely to a given destination. It is something we are not in control of because we are at the whim of the currents, and it leaves us exposed to the elements. We can take Horace to mean by “eternal exile” that we are forever out on the raft. In that case, the raft does not even have a destination. This elaborating of the death-as-departure metaphor in such an unconventional way results in our understanding death differently and reasoning about it differently. Compare Horace’s use of death as departure with Dickinson’s special case of the same general conventional metaphor:

Afraid? Of whom am I afraid?
Not Death, for who is He?
The porter of my father’s lodge
As much abasheth me.

Dickinson includes the destination, and fills in the destination as home (“my father’s lodge”). The way we have read the Horace poem denies the existence of any destination at all. For Dickinson death is not fearful, whereas for Horace it is. Thus, filling in the same conventional metaphor in different ways can lead us to different conclusions about how we should feel about death.

Of course, there is another reading of Horace’s phrase, a more conventional one. One can read Horace as merely referring by the “eternal exile of the raft” to the raft of

Charon, who takes dead souls across the Styx to their eternal exile in the underworld. If we read the phrase that way, then Horace’s filling in of the death-as-departure metaphor still remains very different from Dickinson’s: in both there is a destination, but in Dickinson’s poem it is home, and in Horace’s poem it is exile, the opposite of home.

QUESTIONING

In addition to elaborating conventional metaphor, poets go beyond the normal use of conventional metaphor to point out, and call into question, the boundaries of our everyday metaphorical understandings of important concepts. Indeed, the major poetic point being made can be the inadequacy of the conventional metaphor. As Catullus says,

Suns can set and return again,
but when our brief light goes out,
there’s one perpetual night to be slept through.
(Catullus 5)

Here Catullus is both using A LIFETIME IS A DAY and pointing out the breakdown of that metaphor at the crucial point, namely, mortality.

A similar case occurs in the passage from *Othello* cited in chapter one, where Othello contemplates killing Desdemona and says to a lighted candle,

If I quench thee, thou flaming minister,
I can again thy former light restore,
Should I repent me; but once put out thy light,
Thou cunning’st pattern of excelling nature,
I know not where is that Promethean heat
That can thy light relume.

Still another case occurs in the Sanskrit tradition, where the concept of release is central and is typically understood metaphorically as the absence of emotions and qualities. Here the poet challenges the metaphor, suggesting that a sensual letting go is better than nothingness as a metaphor for release:

Some in this world insist
that a certain whatever-it-is

that has no taste of
joy or sorrow
no qualities
is Release
they are fools
to my mind the
body unfurling
with joy of being young
flowering out of love
her eyes floating as with wine and
words wandering with love
then the undoing of the knot
of her sari
that
is Release
(*The Peacock's Egg*, p. 167)

COMPOSING

Finally, let us turn to what is perhaps the most powerful of all ways in which poetic thought goes beyond the ordinary way we use conventional metaphoric thought: the formation of composite metaphors. As we have seen, there may be more than one conventional metaphor for a given target domain. For example, life may be viewed metaphorically both as a day and as a precious possession. One of the things that characterizes poetic thought is the simultaneous use of two or more such metaphors in the same passage, or even in the same sentence. Take a quatrain from the Shakespeare sonnet we discussed in chapter one:

In me thou seest the twilight of such day
As after sunset fadeth in the west;
Which by and by black night doth take away,
Death's second self that seals up all in rest.

As we saw before, there are at least five conventional conceptual metaphors sculpted into the composite metaphorical conception of death we find in this quatrain. They are **LIGHT IS A SUBSTANCE**, **EVENTS ARE ACTIONS**, **LIFE IS A PRECIOUS POSSESSION**, **A LIFETIME IS A DAY**, and **LIFE IS LIGHT**.

Consider the simple clause "black night doth take away

[the twilight]" as it appears in the passage above. We understand this clause to contain a composite of the metaphors that a lifetime is a day and death is night, that light is a substance, that a life is a precious possession, and that events are actions. The metaphors are composed in such a way that night is identified as the agent who takes away the light, which is understood metaphorically as life, and consequently seen as stealing a precious possession. In this line, virtually as many conceptual metaphors as words are used. The formation of the metaphorical composite takes place at the conceptual level, and is very complex. For example, in this case, **LIGHT IS A SUBSTANCE** produces a conception of light which is the kind of thing that could be taken away. A **LIFETIME IS A DAY** identifies life as light, which in turn identifies it as a substance. **LIFE IS A PRECIOUS POSSESSION** identifies life as something we don't want taken away. And **EVENTS ARE ACTIONS** allows the event of death to be seen as caused by an agent, who in turn is identified as the person who takes away the precious possession. The point is that the work here is conceptual, a matter of putting complex metaphorical concepts together rather than merely putting words together.

The mode of metaphorical thought that poets use and invoke in their readers goes beyond ordinary metaphoric thought by including these elements:

- The novel extension of the metaphor to include elements otherwise not mapped, such as extending **DEATH IS SLEEP** to dreaming.
- The imaginative filling in of special cases, such as having the vehicle in **DEATH IS DEPARTURE** be a coach.
- The formation of composite metaphors in which two or more conventional metaphors are joined together in ways that they ordinarily would not be. Its effect is to produce a richer and more complex set of metaphorical connections, which gives inferences beyond those that follow from each of the metaphors alone.
- Explicit commentary on the limitations of conceptual metaphors, and the offering of an alternative.

These extensions are a large part of what makes poetic metaphor more interesting than conventional metaphor.

They allow the use of ordinary conceptual resources in extraordinary ways. It is by these means that poets lead us beyond the bounds of ordinary modes of thought and guide us beyond the automatic and unconscious everyday use of metaphor. What makes poetic metaphor noticeable and memorable is thus the special, nonautomatic use to which ordinary, automatic modes of thought are put.

Personification

Poetic composition is like musical composition. Just as the composer combines the simple elements of tonality—notes and chords and harmonies—into musical phrases and musical movements of great richness and complexity, so the poet combines ordinary concepts, everyday metaphors, and the most mundane knowledge to form conceptual compositions, orchestrations of ideas that we perceive as rich and complex wholes. Complex metaphors are such compositions. Their power derives from the power of the conventional elements of which they are composed as well as from the power that comes from putting those elements together to transcend the simple components.

The power of poetic composition to create complex new ideas from simpler conventional ideas reveals itself in especially clear form in personification—metaphors through which we understand other things as people. As human beings, we can best understand other things in our own terms. Personification permits us to use our knowledge about ourselves to maximal effect, to use insights about ourselves to help us comprehend such things as forces of nature, common events, abstract concepts, and inanimate objects. For example, consider Yehuda Amichai's

The world is awake tonight.
It is lying on its back, with its eyes open.²

Here, the absence of overt events is understood in terms of the inactivity of a person, via EVENTS ARE ACTIONS. Since a person lying on his back at night with his eyes open would

²Yehuda Amichai, *Selected Poetry*, ed. and trans. Chana Block and Stephen Mitchell (New York: Harper and Row, 1986), p. 4

be attentive, so the world is seen as attentive, noticing things it would not normally notice, instead of being a sleeping and therefore indifferent world.

In another passage, Amichai personifies "the coming day":

I'll wake up early and bribe the coming day
to be kind to us.

(Selected Poetry, p. 4)

External events affect us in ways we cannot control, and via EVENTS ARE ACTIONS we can understand those events as actions by a world we cannot control. Through the metonymy of the time period ("the coming day") standing for the state of the world during that period, the coming day is seen as the actor who performs those events. In the logic of this metaphor, maybe one can deal with that actor the way one deals with others who are in control, namely by bribing him. The word "bribe" invokes both the EVENTS ARE ACTIONS metaphor and the accompanying personification metaphor, since the individual bribed is normally required to be human.

Not all metaphors that map from persons in the source domain are personifications. In some metaphors, a person in one schema is understood in terms of a person in another. For example, LIFE IS A JOURNEY maps a traveler who is a person in the source domain onto a person in the target domain. In other metaphors, we understand a person in terms of something that is not a person; for example, PEOPLE ARE PLANTS maps a plant in the source domain onto a person in the target domain. But understanding death as a footman is a personification because though death is not inherently a person, it is being understood as a person through the metaphor of death-as-departure, in which the footman escorts you.

Conceiving of death as a footman is simple, immediate, and natural, like the great variety of personifications that we saw in chapter one: death as a reaper, time as a devourer, and so on. What makes these immediate and natural is that they arise as a consequence of composition from other more basic conceptual resources.

In chapter one we observed, in loose terms, that death

can be personified as a reaper because we have a basic metaphor that people are plants; that time can be a changer because of our commonsense notion that the passage of time plays a causal role in bringing about events, especially changes; that time can be a thief because we have the further metaphor that life is a precious possession, and so on. But we also observed that the personification of death as a reaper does not come solely from understanding people as plants with respect to their life cycle, since the life cycle of plants in nature does not include a reaper. The reaper only enters in the special scenario of planting, cultivation, and harvesting. Similarly, the personification of time as a thief does not come solely from the general metaphor that life is a precious possession, since the most general case of that metaphor has no thieves, but only the loss of life. Again, the thief enters only in the special scenario.

What we saw in chapter one was that all such personifications we discussed there arose in roughly the same way: from a composition of the metaphor EVENTS ARE ACTIONS (which introduced an agent) with some further knowledge that characterized the nature of the event and the nature of that agent. Sometimes this further knowledge came from a basic metaphor like PEOPLE ARE PLANTS, sometimes from the cultural model that THE PASSAGE OF TIME PLAYS A CAUSAL ROLE IN EVENTS OF CHANGE, and sometimes from both, as when this cultural model combines with the metaphor LIFE IS A PRECIOUS POSSESSION to give us the means to understand time as a thief.

To say that such instances of personification arise through composition is to say something remarkable:

We can produce an indefinitely large number of instances of personification from metaphors that do not themselves contain any personifications. All we need to do is to put those metaphors and bits of nonmetaphorical knowledge together in the right way.

How is it possible to get personifications from metaphors that are not personifications? How can we manipulate our conceptual resources in such a way that we can create ways of understanding other things in terms of ourselves? The

answer comes from the basic mechanisms of combination that we discussed in the previous section: forming combinations of existing metaphors and filling in their slots in interesting ways. At the center of the process of composition resulting in personification is the EVENTS ARE ACTIONS metaphor.

This metaphor differs in two respects from the others we have discussed so far. First, the source domain of actions is a subcategory of the target category of events; that is, every action is an event, though the converse is not true. Indeed, it is exactly the events without agents that the EVENTS ARE ACTIONS metaphor applies to. For example, natural death can be seen as being a death at the hand of an agent. Or the natural loss of youthful powers can be seen as caused by some agency, as in "time, the subtle thief of youth."

Second, because actions are events, the mapping from actions to events has a structure somewhat different from other mappings. Each action consists of an event plus the agency which brings that event about. The mapping thus adds structure to the event domain, making the event the result of an action and introducing the agent who brings that action about.

To see how this works in detail, let us consider how we arrive at an understanding of death as a reaper. First, the EVENTS ARE ACTIONS metaphor structures the event of death as the result of an action and adds to the event of death an agent who brings that event about. Second, the PEOPLE ARE PLANTS metaphor can be elaborated via a scenario of cultivation of plants, in which the plants at the end of their life cycle are harvested. The source domain of harvesting may contain a reaper, which, as we saw above, is not inherently part of the mapping from plants onto people. Third, the action of harvesting is identified as the relevant action in the EVENTS ARE ACTIONS metaphor, and the agent of death is identified as the reaper, who is the agent of harvesting in the harvest scenario. It is by this mechanism that the reaper, who is not conventionally mapped by the PEOPLE ARE PLANTS metaphor, gets to be mapped as a result of the composition of PEOPLE ARE PLANTS with EVENTS ARE ACTIONS.

Personifications can result from the interaction of the EVENTS ARE ACTIONS metaphor with cultural models or commonplace knowledge, as well as with other metaphors. Take, for example, the cultural model that THE PASSAGE OF TIME PLAYS A CAUSAL ROLE IN EVENTS OF CHANGE. The schema for an action contains a causal relationship between an event and something else—the agent who is responsible for the event. Suppose the event is a change of some kind. By composing the metaphor with the cultural model in which the passage of time is a cause of change, we can view time metaphorically as an agent who causes change. The result of this process of composition is the TIME IS A CHANGER metaphor, in which time appears personified because it has been identified as the agent in the metaphor EVENTS ARE ACTIONS.

Because TIME IS A CHANGER is so general as to cover all events of change, it invites further specification through further composition. One kind of change is a change of value. The agent of such a change is an evaluator. By specifying the change as a change of value, we make Time the changer into Time the evaluator.

Time itself involves change, since the present changes into the immediate future. By the TIME IS SOMETHING MOVING metaphor, we understand change of time as change of location. By the EVENTS ARE ACTIONS metaphor we can understand an event of change of location as resulting from an action by an agent. If the agent is identical to the thing moving, we get a case of self-propulsion: time can be running, creeping, trotting, and so on. As Shakespeare says in *As You Like It*, act three, scene two:

Time travels in divers paces with divers persons. I'll tell you who Time ambles withal, who Time trots withal, who Time gallops withal. . . .

In each of the cases above, personifications are produced from metaphors which are not personifications by a composition of a metaphor with either another metaphor, some commonplace knowledge, or both. But such compositions do not merely produce personifications of some kind or other; rather, what we know about the event in the target

domain restricts the possibilities for personification. For example, if we conceive of death as going completely out of existence forever, and if we furthermore understand that event as an action, then the action we choose must make something go completely out of existence forever. The actions of a devourer suit this constraint, and thus it is possible to see death as a devourer. Contrast this with a personification that will not work: a magician who makes things disappear for a few moments and then reappear. Eternal death cannot be personified by such a magician. Of course, if we conceive of death as being transformed from one thing into another via reincarnation, a magician who can turn something into something else might be a suitable personification.

This constraint is a natural consequence of the EVENTS ARE ACTIONS metaphor. If an event is to be understood in terms of an action, then the general shape of the action must conform to the general shape of the event. For example, if the event is instantaneous, then so must the action be instantaneous. If the event is repetitive, then the action must be repetitive. If the event preserves objects, then the action must preserve objects. In our standard conception, death does not preserve objects; once they go out of existence, they do not return. But the magician example just cited does preserve objects; the objects that disappear then reappear. The general shape of the magician's action thus does not conform to the general shape of the event of death as we normally understand it. The EVENTS ARE ACTIONS metaphor does not provide specific details of the personification, but it does constrain them. The nature of the mapping explains why certain personifications are appropriate and others are not.

Consider a further example. Part of the general shape of an event is the chain of causality that structures the event. In an action, there is a causal relationship between what the agent does and the result of the action. Events without agents may also have a causal structure. For example, time is seen as playing a causal role in natural healing, because healing occurs with the passage of time. Because the EVENTS ARE ACTIONS metaphor preserves the general shape

of events, it also preserves *causal* shape: the causal chain from agent to event in the source domain of action must be mapped onto a causal chain from something else to the event in the target domain of events. Therefore, because there is a causal link between time and natural healing, we can personify time as the agent who brings about the healing in sentences like "Time heals all wounds." Similarly, if we know that vitamin E plays a causal role in healing, then we can personify vitamin E as a healer. But because there is no causal link between, say, pain or hospital bills and healing, we cannot view them as agents of healing, and therefore it would be strange to personify pain or our hospital bills as a healer. Not every concomitant of an event can be assigned a causal role.

There is another class of cases in which EVENTS ARE ACTIONS preserves a causal chain and thus permits a personification. Take examples like "Death cut him down" or "Death took him from us" or "Death is a reaper." In such cases, we are making use of our knowledge of death: each of us dies because death, as a general phenomenon, is inevitable. The general phenomenon of death is thus seen as playing a causal role in each of our particular deaths. When we compose EVENTS ARE ACTIONS with this commonplace notion, death (the general phenomenon) can be understood as an agent who brings about individual events of death. Thus, relative to this commonplace notion, causal shape is preserved by EVENTS ARE ACTIONS: the causal link between the agent and the event in the action domain (e.g., reaping) corresponds to the causal link between the single general cause, death, and the individual event of death it causes. "Death" in sentences like "Death is a reaper" refers to death-in-general: that is why it is the same reaper who claims all of our lives.

The EVENTS ARE ACTIONS metaphor thus has extraordinary explanatory power. Not only does it allow us to account for all of the personifications that we found in chapter one, but its character of preserving the general shape of events allows us to explain why certain things can serve as personifications while others cannot. At this point, there is only one further general constraint on personifications that

remains to be explained: the appearance and character of the personification. For example, why is the reaper grim? And why must Time the healer be portrayed as looking very different from Time the devourer?

The way we feel about the appearance and character of the personification must correspond to the way we feel about the event. For example, if we feel that the event of healing is benign and comforting, then Time the healer cannot appear terrifying and malicious to us. Time the devourer may be portrayed as a monster, but Time the healer had better not be. This is not a separate constraint but a consequence of the way we reason about the source and target domains with respect to each other. The EVENTS ARE ACTIONS metaphor links the EVENT in the EVENT domain to the corresponding EVENT in the ACTION domain, and consequently to the action that caused that event. Thus, our feelings about the event must correspond to our feelings about the action.

There is also a common tendency for people to project their feelings about events onto the actors who cause them. If we get angry at the breaking of a window, we typically get angry at the person who broke it. Correspondingly, since healing is benign, in "Time is healer" we see the agent of healing, time, as benign. Thus, constraints on the appearance and character of a personified agent follow from the nature of the personification process.

A more complicated example of the same constraint arises with personifications like DEATH IS A REAPER, which arises from a composition of EVENTS ARE ACTIONS with PEOPLE ARE PLANTS. As we observed in chapter one, there is a reason why the reaper must be grim: our feelings about the reaper must conform to our feelings about death. This should be an instance of the same constraint, that our attitude about the event is projected onto our attitude about the agent who caused the event. But here the addition of the PEOPLE ARE PLANTS metaphor makes things slightly more complex. In the case cited above, our feelings about the healer conformed to our feelings about healing; healing and the healer are in the same conceptual domain. But here, our feelings about the reaper conform to our feelings about death, and

death and the reaper are in different conceptual domains—**LIFE** and **PLANTS**—and are related only by the metaphor. The **PEOPLE ARE PLANTS** metaphor is thus the crucial link in the explanation: our feelings of death are projected onto the agent of death, which via the metaphor is identified as the reaper.

The process of personification illustrates what is perhaps the most impressive of the powers of metaphorical thought: the power to create, with naturalness and ease. In all the cases we have discussed, personifications are created by composition, and the process of creation uses only the commonest of materials and operations: the **EVENTS ARE ACTIONS** metaphor, commonplace knowledge, cognitive models, other conventional metaphors, and the process of composition. The materials are so ready to hand that we hardly notice they are there, and the process of composition is so automatic, so natural and so common, that it takes an act of analysis to tease apart the composite elements. Yet they allow for an explanation of all of the basic properties of such personifications, including their very existence.

Generic-level metaphors

We have used the term “basic metaphor” to refer to any conceptual metaphor whose use is conventional, unconscious, automatic, and typically unnoticed. So far we have talked about basic metaphors as if they were all of one type. But, as we just saw in our discussion of personification, the **EVENTS ARE ACTIONS** metaphor is unlike other metaphors. In a metaphor like **LIFE IS A JOURNEY**, there is a designated ontological mapping: a certain list of slots in the **JOURNEY** schema maps in exactly one way onto a corresponding list of slots in the **LIFE** schema (e.g., **DESTINATIONS** correspond to **LIFE GOALS**). But in the **EVENTS ARE ACTIONS** metaphor, the mapping consists not in a list of fixed correspondences but rather in higher-order constraints on what is an appropriate mapping and what is not. Though the metaphor doesn’t tell, for a given event, exactly what slot in the **EVENT** schema will correspond to the actor in the **ACTION** schema, it does impose constraints.

The difference between metaphors like **EVENTS ARE AC-**

TIONS and those like **LIFE IS A JOURNEY** is analogous to the difference between a genus and a species in biology. In a biological taxonomy, each species must have all the characteristics of the genus. Because a genus is defined by a small number of properties at a very high level, it leaves unspecified a great many properties that define a species. A distinction of this sort is needed in the theory of metaphor. We will refer to metaphors like **EVENTS ARE ACTIONS** as “generic-level metaphors” since they lack specificity in two respects: they do not have fixed source and target domains, and they do not have fixed lists of entities specified in the mapping. We will refer to metaphors like **LIFE IS A JOURNEY** as “specific-level metaphors,” since they are specified in these two ways. We will continue to refer to conventionalized specific-level metaphors as “basic metaphors” when we are not interested in contrasting them with generic-level metaphors.

We can think of this distinction as induced by a corresponding distinction between kinds of schemas. **ACTIONS** and **EVENTS** are generic-level schemas, having very little detail filled in, but with a skeletal structure, unlike **JOURNEYS** and **REAPING** which have more specific detail. Generic-level metaphors relate generic-level schemas.

There are many possible kinds of information structures which are parameters in generic-level schemas and are therefore available for instantiation by specific-level schemas. Some of the parameters of generic-level structure are these:

- Basic ontological categories: entity, state, event, action, situation, and so on.
- Aspects of beings: attributes, behavior, and so on.
- Event shape: instantaneous or extended; single or repeated; completed or open-ended; preserving, creating, or destroying entities; cyclic or not, that is, with or without fixed stages that end where they begin.
- Causal relations: enabling, resulting in, bringing about, creating, destroying, and so on.
- Image-schemas: bounded regions, paths, forces, links, and so on.
- Modalities: ability, necessity, possibility, obligation, and so on.

Each specific-level schema has such generic-level structure, as well as structure at the lower, specific level. Specific-level detail is, therefore, of two types: first, there is the detail that comes from specifying the generic-level parameters; second, there is lower-level detail. For example, DEATH is a specific-level schema instance of the generic-level schema EVENT. As such, it includes the generic-level structure of EVENT and fills out that structure further by specifying the values of generic-level parameters. For example, in the DEATH schema, the event shape is one in which an entity, over time, reaches a final state, after which it no longer exists. The causal structure of the schema indicates that the passage of time will eventually result in that final state being reached.

To see how this works, consider some examples already discussed in chapter one in which the event of death is understood in terms of a variety of actions. In each case, the source-domain action preserves the general shape and causal structure of the DEATH schema. Death can, thus, be understood metaphorically in terms of reaping, devouring, and departing, which have the right generic-level structure, but not so easily in terms of running, making dinner, or filling the bathtub, which do not.

Though EVENTS ARE ACTIONS permits an open-ended range of metaphors for a given event such as death, that range is constrained by the principle of preserving generic-level structure in the mapping. More specifically, this principle can be stated as follows:

- Preserve the generic level of the target except for what the metaphor exists explicitly to change.
- Import as much of the generic-level structure of the source as is consistent with the first condition.

EVENTS ARE ACTIONS exists explicitly to change events to actions, often by making nonagents into agents, as in “Vitamin E is a great healer” or “Time is a devourer.” Here, general causal structure is preserved, though agency is explicitly changed.

Indeed, we believe that this principle also constrains all basic metaphors. Though a serious defense of this claim is well beyond the scope of this book, the idea is important

enough to be worth mentioning. In every basic metaphor, the mapping preserves generic-level structure. In particular, if one takes the portion of the source domain that is mapped and the portion of the target domain it maps onto, they will have the same generic-level structure. For example, in A LIFETIME IS A YEAR, the generic-level structure of the year is a sequence of stages that ends where it began; the same is true of a lifetime. The idea that metaphors preserve generic-level structure is an extremely important idea that we will discuss in chapter four. The preservation of generic-level structure is, we believe, at the heart of metaphorical imagination, whether poetic or ordinary.

The Ordinary Metaphorical Imagination

We have just seen that conventional metaphors can differ in level: metaphors at the specific level have fixed ontological mappings, while metaphors at the generic level guide but do not precisely specify the ontological mappings. In fact, conventional metaphors can differ along a number of other dimensions as well. One of these is the degree to which a given metaphor is founded on our everyday experience and commonplace knowledge. For example, in our everyday experience we constantly encounter cases where an increase in substance (e.g., pouring more water in a glass) increases the height of the substance (e.g., the level of the water in the glass). This provides us with a strong experiential basis for the basic metaphor MORE IS UP, which we use in expressions like “Prices went up,” “Turn the radio up,” “The market hit bottom,” and many others. The strength of the experiential basis for this metaphor explains many things: why the source domain of verticality is paired in a metaphor with the target domain of quantity; why MORE is paired with UP and not with DOWN; and why this metaphor can be learned spontaneously, without being taught.

PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS has almost as strong a grounding in everyday experience. Regularly, throughout each day, the achievement of certain purposes requires going to a certain location, as in going to get a glass of water. Here, as in MORE IS UP, we regularly experience the source and the target domains together, with correspondences in

our experience which parallel those in the metaphor. When we have many purposes, planning the achievement of those purposes often requires that they be mapped onto a time line. And as we move toward destinations in space we move toward purposes in time.

Metaphors may be grounded not only in recurrent direct experience but also in knowledge. Sexually active people may find that the **LUST IS HEAT** metaphor, which underlies phrases like "Their lovemaking reached a feverish pitch," coheres with their daily experience. But others may find that this metaphor coheres with their knowledge of sex, which is communicated to them by their cultures. That knowledge is that sex involves physical exertion, and that physical exertion produces heat. For such individuals, the metaphor has no grounding in their experience but has a strong grounding in their commonplace knowledge.

On the other hand, there are basic metaphors with a very different kind of grounding in experience and commonplace knowledge. An example is **PEOPLE ARE PLANTS**. Youthful vigor and the blossoming of plants do not occur in one-to-one correspondence. Rather, they are both instances of the same process that occurs in all higher-level organisms: flourishing and maturation prior to reproduction. Thus, it is not the case for **PEOPLE ARE PLANTS** that we have direct experience that connects the source and target domains as we do for **MORE IS UP** or **PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS**. Nor is it the case that we have strong commonplace knowledge connecting the stages of a plant life and a human life. Nonetheless, this basic metaphor is powerful for us in making sense of our lives, and consequently it is used unconsciously and automatically at the conceptual level and is conventionalized in everyday expressions such as "He withered away."

Thus, basic metaphors vary in the degree to which they have a grounding in experience or cohere with commonplace knowledge. To the extent that a basic metaphor used in poetry is experientially grounded, it draws power from the fundamental nature of those experiences.

Another dimension along which basic metaphors may

differ is their degree of cognitive indispensability. For example, so much of our cognition involves the basic metaphor **STATES ARE LOCATIONS** that it is difficult to imagine what our cognition would be like without it. For example, consider a state like depression. We speak very naturally of "getting through a depression" or having "sunk into a depression" or "getting out of a depression" or of "going from one depression to the next."

Another basic metaphor indispensable to the way we think about ourselves and our lives is **PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS**. What would it mean to think without conceiving of goals as things we "aim for" and want to "reach" or of difficulties as things "standing in our way" that we have to "get through" or "get around"? It is hard to imagine.

On the opposite end of this dimension of cognitive indispensability, consider **LIFE IS BONDAGE**(as in "When we have shuffled off this mortal coil . . .") or **DEATH IS SLEEP** (as in "For in this sleep of death what dreams may come?"). For most of us, not having these metaphors as part of our conceptual apparatus would not alter our daily behavior or our daily way of construing the events of our lives.

A perhaps less obvious dimension along which basic metaphors can differ is their degree of structural elaboration at the conceptual level. In the opening of chapter one, we presented a long list of structural connections between the domain of life and the schema for a journey. Among them are **DIFFICULTIES IN LIFE ARE IMPEDIMENTS TO TRAVEL**, **COUNSELORS ARE GUIDES**, and **PROGRESS IS THE DISTANCE TRAVELED**. If we were to include further optional elements (e.g., a vehicle at your disposal corresponds to a life-resource), then the list would have been much longer. At the other end of the scale is the small degree of structural elaboration we find in **LIFE IS A FLUID**. Here, the person corresponds to the container, life corresponds to the fluid in the container, and the way the fluid leaves the container corresponds to the way life leaves the person. That is the extent of the conventional structural elaboration, though of course an inventive poet might find ways to extend the metaphor.

Coherence among Metaphors

The passages cited in chapter one contain a large number of personifications of time: Time the reaper, Time the devourer, Time the destroyer, Time the runner, and so on. As we saw, these apparently disparate metaphors are structurally similar: all of them involve a change over time. We showed earlier in this chapter that this commonality could be characterized adequately by analyzing all of the personifications as special cases of **TIME IS A CHANGER**, where the differences arise from additional information in the form of other basic metaphors and commonplace knowledge. Moreover, we saw that **TIME IS A CHANGER** arises by composition of **EVENTS ARE ACTIONS** with our commonplace knowledge that things change over time. By virtue of such analyses we can see more precisely how metaphors are related to one another.

Because metaphors can be formed by composition, the relationships among metaphors can be extremely complex. Let us now consider some relationships among metaphors where there is no single basic metaphor that is common to them all. Let us ask what relationships there are among the metaphors **A LIFETIME IS A DAY**, **A LIFETIME IS A YEAR**, **LIFE IS A FLAME**, **LIFE IS A FIRE**, **LIFE IS A PRECIOUS POSSESSION**, **LIFE IS PRESENCE HERE**, and **LIFE IS A FLUID**.

These are all related to one another through a commonplace theory that the source domain of life is structured in a particular way. This commonplace theory can be factored into two parts, a very general part and an elaboration of it. Let us consider the general part first, that life is a cycle, which ends where it began. It has a structure of three stages: first, we're not alive; second, we are alive; and third, we are dead. Because the target domain of **LIFE** is structured in this way, it is natural to conceive of it in terms of metaphors whose source domains can have the same three-part structure. First, **LIFE IS PRESENCE HERE**: before birth, we are absent; during life we are present; and after death we are absent again. Second, **LIFE IS A PRECIOUS POSSESSION**: first we don't have it; then we have it; then we lose it. Third,

LIFE IS A FLAME: first, a candle is not lit; then it is lit; then it goes out. These metaphors are related in the sense that each source domain—presence, possession, and flame—can be mapped onto this tripartite structure in the target domain. The tripartite structure is not a necessary part of any of the source domains. For example, one might have a precious possession all one's life and never lose it. Nevertheless, such a tripartite version of the source domain can be chosen as a coherent basis for a mapping onto the domain of life. In such cases, the structure of the target domain constrains the choice of source domain-structure.

Another kind of coherence among metaphors can be seen in **LIFE IS A FLAME**, which is a composite of **LIFE IS LIGHT** and **LIFE IS HEAT**. The **LIFE IS LIGHT** metaphor views death as darkness, and the **LIFE IS HEAT** metaphor views death as cold. Each of these has a strong experiential grounding. People who are alive are warm, and people who are dead are cold. People who are alive are typically active during daylight and inactive during darkness. Plants derive life from sunlight and die in sustained darkness. Also, there is a common correlation between light and heat, because in our daily experience, light sources almost always emit heat as well.

These two metaphors are extremely basic and extremely general. Though each is fairly simple in itself, they form composites with an elaborated version of the commonplace theory of life as a cycle: at birth, we are relatively powerless; we grow to our greatest power at maturity, then decline to powerlessness again at extreme old age. Schematically, this provides a concept of a life cycle that not only ends where it begins but also has stages of waxing and then waning power. **LIFE IS LIGHT** and **LIFE IS HEAT** metaphorically fill out this elaborated cognitive model of the life cycle by using existing knowledge about the patterns of light and heat to characterize the nature of that power, metaphorically. The result is the composite metaphor, **LIFE IS A CYCLE OF THE WAXING AND WANING OF LIGHT AND HEAT**.

This extremely general composite metaphor gets filled out with specific instances in which the source domain in-

cludes a cycle of the waxing and waning of light and heat which ends where it began. What results is a number of much more specific metaphors:

A LIFETIME IS A YEAR: The year, beginning at the end of winter, grows in intensity of light and heat until full summer, and then the intensity of light and heat declines through fall and winter, to end where it began.

A LIFETIME IS A DAY: The day, beginning at dawn, has ever stronger light and heat until midday, at which point the intensity of light and heat declines through afternoon, dusk, and night, to end where it began.

LIFE IS A FIRE: A fire begins slowly, then blazes up, burns steadily, then burns down to embers among the ashes, and finally goes out.

Given this analysis, the relationship among these metaphors becomes clear. They are all instances of the more general composite metaphor of life as a waxing and waning cycle of heat and light. As such they share both **LIFE IS LIGHT** and **LIFE IS HEAT**. Given the structure of their source domains, a year, a day, and a fire map naturally onto the structure of life as conceived of as an analogously structured cycle.

The case is rather different with **LIFE IS A FLUID**, which shows up in expressions like “she’s bursting with life,” “he’s brimming with vim and vigor,” and “the life seems to have drained out of him.” The portion of the target domain that this metaphor maps onto is not the lifespan but rather the power or vitality evident in the living person. In the metaphor, the fluid maps onto life, the body maps onto the container, and the extent of one’s vital powers corresponds to the amount of fluid in the body. At full maturity, we are brimming, and as we reach old age, the life drains out until we dry up. This fits the second half of the conception of life as a waxing-waning cycle: it covers only the waning from full power gradually to death.

Sometimes metaphors are related to one another not because they are special cases of some more general metaphor, or because they map onto the same target structure, but because they have the same grounding in everyday experi-

ence or commonplace knowledge. For example, consider the metaphors **DEATH IS NIGHT** (from **A LIFETIME IS A DAY**), **DEATH IS COLD** (from **LIFE IS HEAT**), **DEATH IS DARKNESS** (from **LIFE IS LIGHT**), **DEATH IS SLEEP**, and **DEATH IS REST**. They are related by virtue of commonplace knowledge that links their source and target domains: typically, night is cold and dark, people sleep at night, and sleep is rest. Furthermore, dead people are cold, as is night, and are immobile, as if at rest. Thus, night, dark, cold, sleep, and rest are correlated with one another in our commonplace knowledge. It is this correlation that makes the metaphors coherent with one another and accounts for the relationship we sense between them.

The coherence among metaphors is a major source of the power of poetry. By forming a composition of several basic metaphors, a poet draws upon the grounding of those metaphors in common experience and knowledge. When that experience and knowledge cohere, the metaphors seem all the more natural and compelling. Complex metaphors grip us partly because they awake in us the experience and knowledge that form the grounding of those metaphors, partly because they make the coherence of that experience and knowledge resonate, and partly because they lead us to form new coherences in what we know and experience.

Image Metaphors

Not all metaphors map conceptual structures onto other conceptual structures. In addition to the metaphors that unconsciously and automatically organize our ordinary comprehension of the world by mapping concepts onto other concepts, there are also more fleeting metaphors which involve not the mapping of concepts but rather the mapping of images. Consider, for example, this poem from the Indian tradition:

Now women-rivers
belted with silver fish
move unhurried as women in love
at dawn after a night with their lovers
(*The Peacock's Egg*, p. 71)

Here the the image of the slow, sinuous walk of an Indian woman is mapped onto the image of the slow, sinuous, shimmering flow of a river. The shimmering of a school of fish is imagined as the shimmering of the belt.

Metaphoric image-mappings work in just the same way as all other metaphoric mappings—by mapping the structure of one domain onto the structure of another. But here the domains are mental images. Image structure includes both part-whole structure and attribute structure. In images, part-whole relations are relations such as those between a roof and a house, or between a tombstone and a grave as a whole. Attribute structure includes such things as color, intensity of light, physical shape, curvature, and, for events, aspects of the overall shape, such as continuous versus discrete, open-ended versus completed, repetitive versus not repetitive, brief versus extended. It is the existence of such structure within our conceptual images that permits one image to be mapped onto another by virtue of their common structure.

For example, consider:

My wife . . . whose waist is an hourglass.

This is a superimposition of the image of an hourglass onto the image of a woman's waist by virtue of their common shape. As before, the metaphor is conceptual; it is not in the words themselves. In these cases, the locus of the metaphor is the mental image. Here, we have a mental image of an hourglass and of a woman, and we map the middle of the hourglass onto the waist of the woman. Note that the words do not tell us which part of the hourglass to map onto the waist, or even that it only part of the hourglass shape that corresponds to the waist. The words are prompts for us to perform mapping from one conventional image to another at the conceptual level. Similarly, consider:

His toes were like the keyboard of a spinet.
(Rabelais, "The Descriptions of King Lent," trans.
J. M. Cohen)

Here too, the words do not tell us that an individual toe corresponds to an individual key on the keyboard. Again,

the words are prompts for us to perform a conceptual mapping between conventional mental images. In particular, we map aspects of the part-whole structure of one image onto aspects of the part-whole structure of another. Just as individual keys are parts of the whole keyboard, so individual toes are parts of the whole foot.

Image-mapping can involve more than mapping physical part-whole relationships. For example, the water line of a river may drop slowly and that slowness is part of the dynamic image, which may be mapped onto the removal of clothing:

Slowly slowly rivers in autumn show
sand banks
bashful in first love woman
showing thighs
(*The Peacock's Egg*, p. 69)

Other attributes are also mapped: the color of the sand bank onto the color of flesh, the quality of light on a wet sand bank onto the reflectiveness of skin, the light grazing of the water's touch receding down the bank onto the light grazing of the clothing along the skin. Notice that the words do not tell us that any clothing is involved. We get that from conventional mental images. Part-whole structure is also mapped in this example. The water covers the hidden part of the bank just as the clothing covers the hidden part of the body.

The proliferation of detail in the images limits image-mappings to highly specific cases. That is why we refer to them as "one-shot." We will contrast these below with image-schema mappings, where there is no rich imagistic detail. They also contrast with robust conceptual mappings such as LIFE IS A JOURNEY, where rich knowledge and rich inferential structure are mapped from the domain of journeys onto life. One-shot image-mappings characteristically do not involve the mapping of such rich knowledge and inferential structure. Moreover, LIFE IS A JOURNEY is used unconsciously and automatically over and over again in reasoning about our lives. But one-shot image-mappings are not involved in daily reasoning.

Image-metaphors can trigger and reinforce metaphors that map conceptual knowledge and inferential structure. For example, in chapter one we saw image-mappings of a choir loft onto a tree and a tree onto a man. Mapping a tree onto a man can trigger the PEOPLE ARE PLANTS metaphor, which, as we saw, maps knowledge and inferences from the domain of plants onto the domain of people.

Such mapping of one image onto another can lead us to map knowledge about the first image onto knowledge about the second. Consider this example from the Navaho:

My horse with a mane made of short rainbows.³

The structure of a rainbow, its band of curved lines, for example, is mapped onto an arc of curved hair, and many rainbows onto many such arcs on the horse's mane. Such image-mapping prompts us to map our evaluation of the source domain onto the target. We know that rainbows are beautiful, special, inspiring, larger than life, almost mystic, and that seeing them makes us happy and awestruck. This knowledge is mapped onto what we know of the horse: it too is awe-inspiring, beautiful, larger than life, almost mystic. This line comes from a poem containing a series of such image-mappings:

My horse with a hoof like a striped agate,
with his fetlock like a fine eagle plume:
my horse whose legs are like quick lightning
whose body is an eagle-plumed arrow:
my horse whose tail is like a trailing black cloud.

The image-mappings we have considered so far lead us to map conventional knowledge about the source-domain image onto the target domain in ways that extend but do not disturb what we know of the target domain. A poet may, however, wish to break our expectations about the image correspondence and disturb what we think we know about the target domain. For example, a surrealist poem might

³Tell Kia ahni, "War God's Horse Song I," interpreted by Louis Watchman, in Jerome Rothenberg, ed., *Technicians of the Sacred* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985), p. 40.

begin with a conventional image-mapping and then, in subsequent image-mappings, depart from our ordinary techniques for mapping structure onto structure, with the purpose of making us explore afresh the ways we see and think. Consider, for example, David Antin's translation of the beginning of André Breton's "Free Union."

My wife whose hair is a brush fire
Whose thoughts are summer lightning
Whose waist is an hourglass
Whose waist is the waist of an otter caught in the
teeth of a tiger
Whose mouth is a bright cockade with the fragrance
of a star of the first magnitude
Whose teeth leave prints like the tracks of white mice
over snow
Whose tongue is made out of amber and polished
glass
Whose tongue is a stabbed wafer

As before, these words are prompts for us to perform mappings at the conceptual level between mental images. Since these mappings are not conventional, different readers commonly achieve different readings of surrealist poetry. Consider the mapping between hair and a brush fire. How might we accomplish a mapping when we are given merely the source image and the target image and none of the details of the mapping? We might for example see the general physical outline of hair with tendrils as corresponding to flickering peaks and wisps of flame. Or we might see the dancing play of sunlight glistening off the hair as corresponding to the skittering of flame through the brush and, furthermore, the actual strands of hair as corresponding to plant shoots ablaze in the brush. We might map the color of a fire onto the wife's hair, making her a redhead. Such possible mappings of image-structure onto image-structure might lead us to explore possible knowledge mappings. For example, brush fires are notoriously difficult to control and therefore dangerous. They break out without warning and flare up quickly. How might we map this knowledge onto the wife's hair? We might, for instance, construe the volatile

image of her hair as an outward manifestation of her mind—its uncontrollability, spontaneity, and volatility. This might make her not only dangerous but also exciting. Why the speaker (or reader) sees the wife this way is an open question. The answers we have heard range from love to awe to misogyny.

So far, we have discussed cases where a source image is mapped onto a target domain which *contains* an image. A source image might also be mapped onto a target domain in order to *create* an image in the target domain. For example, the phrase “thoughts are summer lightning” maps our image of summer lightning onto the domain of thought, which is abstract and therefore does not inherently contain an image. This mapping creates for us an image of a thought as a particularly powerful lightning bolt. If this mapping creates an image for us, why should it seem so natural? Why should it seem appropriate in some intuitive sense that thought could be lightning? The explanation lies in knowledge we have of the source and target domains. For example, we know that lightning illuminates and, metaphorically, through the metaphor that insight is illumination, that thoughts illuminate. We know that insights illuminate by virtue of the basic UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING metaphor: what enables you to see is metaphorically what enables you to understand. But not just any thought can be lightning. Lightning is instantaneous, and thoughts that are instantaneous do not occur as part of a logical progression. They are flashes of intuition which may seem to come from nowhere. And just as lightning can have a force, so ideas can be forceful.

Part of the point of surrealist poetry is to make readers go through the process of an imaginative construction in ways that tax our conventional expectations. Take the line “whose tongue is a stabbed wafer.” How might we go through the process of constructing a mapping, given merely the source image of a stabbed wafer and the target image of the wife’s tongue? Here readings are likely to be highly idiosyncratic, which is part of the point of the poem. Is the tongue a wafer stabbed by something else, per-

haps another tongue during kissing? Is the wafer both the tongue and the body of Christ? Is the stabbing an act of love, lust, cruelty, or all three?

We said above that a surrealist poem might take a conventional image-mapping and depart from it. Here, the poet takes the conventional, easy image-mapping of an hourglass onto the waist of a woman and instantly follows it with the mapping between the waist of the wife and the waist of an otter caught in the teeth of a tiger. How might we construct a mapping here? First, an otter’s waist, which is smooth, will be made thinner and tighter by the clenching teeth of the tiger, and will be in writhing motion. We might map this image structure onto the image of the wife’s waist. We also know something about the situation of the otter. It is struggling in a life-and-death situation. We might also map this aspect of struggle and immediacy onto our knowledge of the wife.

On the basis of these various image-mappings, we might ultimately come to think of the wife as dangerous, uncontrollable, unpredictable, exciting, erotic, smooth, struggling, endangered, and intense.

Here we have seen how mappings of image-structures can compose with basic metaphors and result in the mapping of knowledge. One of the most spectacular compositions of image-mapping is with the processes of personification we discussed earlier in this chapter and at various points throughout chapter one. Until now, we have discussed only personifications of abstract concepts like death and time, which do not themselves contain image-structures. However, in personifying something concrete which already contains an image, we may superimpose the image of a person on the image of that thing. Consider Blake’s personification of a sunflower:

Ah Sun-flower! weary of time,
Who countest the steps of the Sun,
Seeking after that sweet golden clime
Where the traveller’s journey is done:
Where the Youth pined away with desire,
And the pale Virgin shrouded in snow

Arise from their graves and aspire,
Where my Sun-flower wishes to go.
(“Ah! Sun-flower”)

The by-now familiar processes of personification are at work here. First, the sun's crossing the sky is a natural event, and the sunflower's phototropic tracking of the sun is also a natural event. Through EVENTS ARE ACTIONS, these are conceived of metaphorically as actions with agents. The sun is an agent whose action is walking. The sunflower is an agent whose action is to count, and hence to follow, the steps of the sun. The sunflower further acts by seeking the west. Through the metaphor A LIFETIME IS A DAY, the west is metaphorically conceived of as associated with death. And therefore the sunflower is seeking, metaphorically, death and its afterlife. Such metaphoric processes we have seen many times by now.

But here, because the sunflower is a concrete physical entity, we have an image of it. Therefore, personifying the sunflower composes with mapping the image of a person onto the image of the sunflower: the face of the person corresponds to the “face” of the sunflower; the orientation of the face of a person looking at the sun corresponds the orientation of the sunflower's face; the body of the person corresponds to the stem of the sunflower; the place where the person is standing corresponds to the place where the sunflower is planted.

Similarly, because we have an image of the sun, the personification of the sun composes with mapping the image of a person onto the image of the sun. The face of the person corresponds to the circle of the sun. One might extend this image-mapping, to give the sun legs to walk with along the path of his ecliptic.

The apparent simplicity of the Blake poem, a simplicity almost innocent, naive, and childlike, involves at the conceptual level a highly elaborate composition of metaphoric processes. Thus, we are led again to consider how things apparently obvious to us involve highly imaginative conceptual connections, extensions, and compositions.

Image Schemas

It seems obvious that someone unconscious or asleep is “out”; that a machine or computer that is not working is “down”; that communication is “across.” It may be hard ever to notice that any metaphoric work is done in these cases at all. When we discussed Shakespeare's “Out, out, brief candle” and “Put out the light, and then put out the light” as references to death, we explained them as deriving from the metaphor LIFE IS A FLAME. But we did not discuss why, independent of this metaphor, death is widely and generally understood as being “out.”

What do we know about “out”? We know that the basic meaning of “out” is being exterior to a bounded space which is regarded as having an interior. If a house is the bounded region, one may go *out* of the house and into the garage. If land is taken as the bounded region, one may go *out* to sea. If wakefulness is seen as a bounded region (through the metaphor STATES ARE LOCATIONS), one may metaphorically pass *out*. If alertness is the bounded region, one may space *out*, zone *out*, tune *out*, or veg *out*. Since life is regarded as presence here, bounded by birth and death, one may be metaphorically snuffed *out*, rubbed *out*, taken *out*, and so on.

A bounded space with an interior and an exterior is an image, but an extremely skeletal and schematic image. Sometimes we map this image-schema onto other images, such as our relatively rich image of a house, a garage, or the outline of a country on a map. But we can also map this image-schema onto abstract target domains that themselves do not inherently contain images, such as wakefulness, alertness, and living.

We have many such image-schemas that we use in just the same ways. In addition to the schema of a bounded space, we have image-schemas of a path, of contact, and of human orientations like up-down, front-back, and center-periphery. When we understand a scene, we naturally structure it in terms of such elementary image-schemas. Prepositions are the means English has for expressing these schematic spatial

relations. Because of the many metaphors that allow abstract concepts to be understood in terms of physical objects and spatial relations, we can use these elementary image-schemas to structure abstract domains, as we do in “in love,” “out of power,” and so on.

We are almost in a position to explain the occurrence of “out” in “Out, out, brief candle.” Two elements of the explanation are in place. First, the LIFE IS LIGHT and LIFE IS HEAT metaphors link the flame of the candle with life and the lack of it with death. Second, the LIFE IS PRESENCE HERE metaphor takes life as a bounded region that living beings are in. As Twain said, he “came in” with Halley’s comet and would “go out” with it. Death is therefore “out.”

Finally, we need to explain why, when a light source becomes nonfunctional, the light is conceptualized as “going out.” This is not special to light sources. Nonfunctionality, in general, is conceptualized as being *out* (of the center of functional interaction). Thus, people who are nonfunctional are said to “zone out,” be “zonked out,” or be “out of it”; and when a machine ceases functioning, it is said to be “out of order” or “out of commission” or to have “conked out.” Thus, it is not just candles that are “out,” but also generators, telephone service, and so on. Thus, “Out, out, brief candle” is metaphorically coherent in two ways: not only do the LIFE IS LIGHT and LIFE IS HEAT metaphors link the lack of flame with death, but moreover both the nonfunctionality of a light source and death are oriented *out*. The “going” of “going out” is straightforward: since STATES ARE LOCATIONS, changes of state are changes of location, that is, motions. Motion away from where “we” normally are is expressed as “going.”

Because image-schemas can be used to structure both physical scenes and abstract domains, Auden can use one image-schema to connect the image of a leaking teacup with the domain of life and death:

The glacier knocks in the cupboard,
The desert sighs in the bed,
And the crack in the tea-cup opens
A lane to the land of the dead.
("As I Walked Out One Evening")

The teacup is understood in terms of the bounded-space schema, with the fluid in the bounded-space within the teacup. Life is also understood in terms of the bounded space schema, with the vital fluids of life inside the body, which is a bounded space. In terms of this schema, the crack in the teacup lets the fluid run out, forming a stream, which is an instance of the PATH image-schema. Correspondingly, in the LIFE IS A FLUID metaphor, the metaphoric fluid drains out, forming a path.

The DEATH IS DEPARTURE metaphor is also structured by this complex image-schema: a departure originates at the edge of a bounded space and proceeds along a path, and metaphorically death as departure originates at the edge of the bounded space of life and proceeds along a metaphoric path to a final destination, the land of the dead. Thus, Auden connects LIFE IS A FLUID with DEATH IS DEPARTURE via the overlapping image-schemas: the stream of the fluid overlaps with the lane to the land of the dead, since both are paths originating in bounded spaces.

It is important to distinguish image-metaphors from image-schema metaphors. Image-metaphors map rich mental images onto other rich mental images. They are one-shot metaphors, relating one rich image with one other rich image. Image-schemas, as their name suggests, are not rich mental images; they are instead very general structures, like bounded regions, paths, centers (as opposed to peripheries), and so on. The spatial senses of prepositions tend to be defined in terms of image-schemas (e.g., *in*, *out*, *to*, *from*, *along*, and so on).

In physical domains, image-schemas have two roles. First, they provide structure for rich mental images. It is by virtue of such structure that one rich mental image can be mapped onto another: for instance, the stream of fluid coming from the cup can map onto the lane to the land of the dead because they share the image-schema structure of a path emanating from a bounded space. Second, image-schemas have an internal logic that permits spatial reasoning. For example, if an item x is in a bounded space A, and A is in a bounded space B, then x is in B.

When metaphors map spatial domains onto nonspatial,

abstract domains, the image-schemas and their attendant logic are preserved by the mappings. Thus, bounded regions map onto bounded regions, paths map onto paths, and so on. Correspondingly, the spatial logic of the image-schemas is preserved by metaphorical mappings and becomes abstract logic in the nonspatial target domains. For example, conceptual categories are metaphorically understood as bounded spaces, and so the logic of bounded spaces applies to conceptual categories: if item x is in category A and A is in category B, then x is in B. Moreover, many of the nonspatial uses of prepositions arise by such metaphors. Thus, the proposition “in” is used for categories as well as bounded spaces, and, as we saw, “out” is used both for nonfunctionality and nonexistence. Let us now consider the implications of these properties of image-schemas.

Metonymy

Let us now turn to another aspect of the use of the word “lane” in the Auden poem. A lane is part of a schema for traveling. The use of “lane” and “to” evokes not only the concept of a lane but also the entire schema for motion toward a destination. Such an evocation of an entire schema via the mention of a part of that schema is one kind of *metonymy*.

Yeats uses this form of metonymy in “That The Night Come”:

She lived in storm and strife,
Her soul had such desire
For what proud death may bring
That it could not endure
The common good of life,
But lived as 'twere a king
That packed his marriage day
With banneret and pennon,
Trumpet and kettledrum,
And the outrageous cannon,
To bundle time away
That the night come.

Banneret and pennon, trumpet and kettledrum, and the outrageous cannon—these are props of an aristocratic state

ceremony, and they are also props of war. On the most obvious reading, the props evoke the state ceremony as a whole. Since the props also evoke a schema for war, the metonymy provides an extended reading wherein the props of war at a marriage indicate such a consuming concern with war that it pervades even the domestic sphere. Here, using a metonymy does important poetic work since it can evoke more than one schema.

There is a second variety of metonymy in which one element of a schema stands not for the whole schema but for some other element of the schema. Consider this passage from Yeats’s “The Second Coming”:

. . . but now I know
That twenty centuries of stony sleep
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle . . .

Here, the rocking cradle stands for the baby it contains, namely Christ. Such a metonymy is referential in nature; by referring to the cradle, the poet can refer to Christ.

But why use a metonymy at all? Why not just say “Christ”? One reason is that the passage occurs in a poem about historical cycles, focusing on the Second Coming. The poem contains many images of cycles, from “Turning and turning in the widening gyre / The falcon cannot hear the falconer,” to tides, to “the darkness drops again,” to “what rough beast, its hour come round at last.” Even the title, “The Second Coming,” suggests images of cyclic return. Thus the mention of the repetitive rocking of the cradle does more than simply refer to Christ—it connects the coming of Christ with the cyclic nature of events. The rocking cradle also can evoke some agent doing the rocking, and we may connect this agent with the cosmic force or forces that bring about the historical cycles. Thus, there is an important poetic effect, above and beyond reference, arising from the use of metonymy in this passage.

Sometimes two referential metonymies can occur in the same clause and produce a complex interaction. Let us look again to Yeats, this time to a passage from “The Tower”:

It seems that I must bid the Muse go pack,
Choose Plato and Plotinus for a friend

Until imagination, ear and eye,
Can be content with argument . . .

Here we have four metonymies in four lines. First take “bid the Muse go pack.” Given the cultural model in which poets can only write with the inspiration of a Muse, telling the Muse to pack evokes a scenario in which the Muse is made to leave and as a result the poet can no longer write. Bidding the Muse go pack thus stands metonymically for giving up writing poetry. Second, “ear and eye” stand for the faculties of hearing and vision. The third and fourth cases are in the phrase “choose Plato and Plotinus for a friend.” The commonly assumed scenario for friendship includes friends spending time together. Thus, choosing Plato and Plotinus for a friend stands for spending time with them. Of course, since they are long dead, one cannot literally do that. Here a common metonymy—**AUTHOR FOR WORKS**—comes into play; the poet is to spend time with their works, not with them in person.

Metonymy can operate either on whole clauses or on individual noun phrases within a clause. Sometimes the reading one gets depends on the metonymy one selects. Consider:

The monk stares at
her navel
and she at the moon his face
the crows steal
both their
spoon and their bowl
(*The Peacock's Egg*, p. 41)

The poem is rich in sexual imagery. It evokes four image-metaphors: the image of the moon maps on the face of the monk; the image of the woman’s navel maps onto female genitalia; and the spoon and bowl map onto male and female genitalia. These image-metaphors make possible various metonymies, and the choice of metonymies leads to two quite different readings.

On the first reading, there is an instance of the **EFFECT FOR CAUSE** metonymy, in which the theft of the spoon and the bowl stands for its cause, the total obliviousness of the

monk and the woman to anything but each other. This reading stresses the overwhelmingly strong sensual nature of the encounter and leaves us with the suggestion that the monk’s vows of celibacy may be forgotten as well.

On the second reading, there is a complex interaction of metaphor and metonymy. First, the crow symbolizes death. It does so in two ways. By metonymy alone, the crow (a scavenger that feeds on dead animals) evokes, and stands for, death. And by the **DEATH IS DARKNESS** metaphor, together with the **PART FOR WHOLE** metonymy, the blackness of the crow stands for death in another way. Next, the spoon and bowl, mapped by image-metaphors onto male and female genitalia, stand metonymically for sexual vitality. Finally, by **EVENTS ARE ACTIONS** and **LIFE IS A PRECIOUS POSSESSION**, death steals their sexual vitality. The suggestion is that the meditative life has robbed the monk of his sexuality.

Metonymy and metaphor are sometimes confused because each is a connection between two things. But the connections are very different:

- In *metaphor*, there are two conceptual domains, and one is understood in terms of the other.
 - In *metaphor*, a whole schematic structure (with two or more entities) is mapped onto another whole schematic structure.
 - In *metaphor*, the logic of the source-domain structure is mapped onto the logic of the target-domain structure.
- None of this is true in metonymy.
- *Metonymy* involves only one conceptual domain. A metonymic mapping occurs within a single domain, not across domains.
 - *Metonymy* is used primarily for reference: via metonymy, one can refer to one entity in a schema by referring to another entity in the same schema.
 - In *metonymy*, one entity in a schema is taken as standing for one other entity in the same schema, or for the schema as a whole.

Metaphor and metonymy do have some things in common.

- Both are conceptual in nature.
- Both are mappings.

- Both can be conventionalized, that is, made part of our everyday conceptual system, and thus used automatically, effortlessly, and without conscious awareness.
- In both, linguistic expressions that name source elements of the mapping typically also name target elements. That is, both are means of extending the linguistic resources of a language.

Because of these similarities, they are often confused. For this reason, it is important to keep all the differences in mind.

Interactions of Metonymy with Metaphor

One of the reasons that metaphor and metonymy are sometimes confused is that they can interact in complex ways to yield composites. Consider Old Norse kennings, which are typically composites of metonymies and image-metaphors. Here is an example:

The winter passer of the current
waded firmly through the snowdrifts of the fjord-snake.

The bear of the masthead knobs
leapt over the peaks of the whale house.

The bear of the high sea
went forward on old tracks of sea skis.

The storm-upright bear of the prop
broke through the crashing fetter of low-lying rocks.
(Markús Skeggjason)

This a passage about a sea voyage. Each couplet describes a stage of the voyage, and each consists of a simple sentence describing the ship, how it sailed, and what the seas were like at that stage of the voyage. In each couplet, the sturdy Norse ship, lumbering through icy northern seas, is described via an image-metaphor as a bear moving over a wintry terrain.

In the first couplet, “winter passer” refers metaphorically to a bear who has hibernated through at least one winter, that is, a mature bear. “Current” metonymically evokes the sea. Thus, “the winter passer of the current,” via two occurrences of metonymy, yields “the bear of the sea.” This gives rise to an image-metaphor, in which the sea is the

target domain and the image of a mature bear is mapped onto the image of a sturdy, lumbering ship. Correspondingly, our salient knowledge of northern bears is metaphorically mapped onto knowledge about the ship: it is strong, aggressive, and undaunted by the weather. “The snowdrifts of the fjord-snake” is understood via two image-metaphors: snowdrifts on land map onto ice floes in the fjord, which is shaped like a snake. A further image-metaphor maps the wading of the bear onto the careful rowing of the ship through the snaky, floe-filled fjord, with the bear’s steps into the drifts mapping onto the dipping of the oars into the water.

In the second couplet, “masthead knobs” refers directly to the knobs on the mastheads of such ships. By metonymy, the masthead knobs evoke the ship’s masts, and hence the ship with sails flying. The “of” in “the bear of the masthead knobs” is an approximate English translation of an Old Norse grammatical form, the genitive case, which can be used “appositively” in a way that English “of” is not widely used today. The result has a meaning like “the bear, which is something having masthead knobs.” The result again is an image-metaphor mapping the bear onto the ship, this time the ship under sail. “The peaks of the whale house” is also interpreted via an image-metaphor: the whale house is the open sea, where the whales live, and the image of roof peaks of a house are mapped onto the peaks of the waves. In addition, the image of a bear jumping over peaks is mapped onto an image of the ship under sail riding over the peaks of the waves on the open sea.

In the third couplet, “the bear of the high sea” again refers to the ship. “Old tracks of sea skis” evokes both an image of well-worn cross-country skiing trails, mapping them onto the domain of the sea, to yield well-traveled sea lanes. Here the ship is on the open sea, traveling the common sea lanes.

In the last couplet, “the prop” refers to the scaffolding holding a ship upright in dry dock, and that image is mapped onto the image of the ship “storm-upright” in rough seas. The “fetter of the low-lying rocks” refers to the chain of rocks surrounding the coast of Norway, the desti-

nation of the ship. Again there is an image-mapping of a chain onto the the chain of rocks. “Crashing” metonymically evokes the image and sound of waves against the rocks. The resulting image of “The storm-upright bear of the prop / broke through the crashing fetter of low-lying rocks” is one in which the ship, upright in the crashing waves, passes through the chain of rocks off the Norwegian coast.

Kennings are an extreme example of how metaphor and metonymy can interact to form a unified interpretation. What makes kennings special, from our point of view, is the complexity of composition that they show—the sheer density of image-metaphor and metonymy.

All Reading Is Reading In

Words, as we have seen, evoke schemas. Just how does a word evoke a schema? Consider the words “bloom,” “traveler,” and “ashes.” The word “bloom” is meaningful only as defined relative to plants; “traveler” is meaningful only as defined relative to journeys; and “ashes” is meaningful only as defined relative to a fire. Our knowledge about plants, journeys, and fires is organized schematically in such a way that blooms, travelers, and ashes are elements of that knowledge organization; and therefore the words “bloom,” “traveler,” and “ashes,” which denote those elements, evoke the full schemas for plants, journeys, and fires.

Because words can evoke schemas, and metaphors map schemas into other schemas, words can prompt a metaphorical understanding. Take the word “flame,” in a sentence like “The flame finally went out.” It evokes the schema for fire, and thus we can take it merely to mean that the fire, say in the stove or fireplace, went out. But since the schema for fire is also the source domain for two ordinary conceptual metaphors, LIFE IS FIRE and LOVE IS FIRE, it can evoke the application of either of those metaphors. Thus, we can understand “The flame finally went out” metaphorically as meaning either that someone died or that the emotion that sustained a love affair has disappeared.

In many cases, the ability of a word to evoke a conceptual metaphor is conventionalized in the language. Take the ex-

pression “old flame,” which evokes the LOVE IS FIRE metaphor in a conventional way. It is part of the lexicon of English. It uses the word “flame,” which belongs to the source domain of fire; when conventionally combined with “old,” it only denotes a former lover, that is, an element of the target domain of love. There are other cases, where a single word can conventionally evoke either a source-domain element or a target-domain element. Take a word like “withered,” which can refer either to a plant or to a person, since it conventionally picks out elements of both the source and target domains of PEOPLE ARE PLANTS. The sense of “withered” that applies to people is commonly called a *metaphoric extension* of the central sense of “withered,” which applies to plants. This metaphoric extension of “withered” is fully conventional in our language, by which we mean that it is routine and unconscious.

A poet can use words to evoke a conceptual metaphor, even though they are not automatically and routinely used for that purpose. For example, when Dickinson says, “Because I could not stop for Death / He kindly stopped for me,” she is evoking with unusual words the same DEATH IS DEPARTURE metaphor we routinely evoke with the conventional words “pass away.”

It is common to hear a phrase like “I could not stop for Death” called a “metaphor,” with the words themselves seen as constituting the metaphor. As common as it is to do so, it can be misleading to speak of a sequence of words as being a metaphor. Linguistic expressions—mere sequences of words—are not metaphors in themselves. Metaphors are conceptual mappings. They are a matter of thought, not merely language. Part of the confusion arises because the words that conventionally express a source-domain concept can, in the typical case, also be used to express the corresponding target-domain concept, as when “withered” is applied both to plants and to people.

Throughout this book we have been careful to keep separate linguistic expressions and the concepts that they express. By noting which words, or sequences of words, conventionally express source-domain concepts, we have been

able to chart the regularities by which source-domain concepts are mapped onto target-domain concepts, and hence to characterize the structure of metaphorical mappings.

Having discussed the nature of metonymy, we are now in a position to discuss the major source of the confusion over the use of the term “metaphor.” There is a general metonymy whereby WORDS STAND FOR THE CONCEPTS THEY EXPRESS. It is as general and automatic a metonymy as there is, since in the use of language, words *do* stand for the concepts they express. However, this fact about the use of language is distinct from the metonymy itself. The metonymy can be seen in expressions such as “That is a self-contradictory utterance.” Strictly speaking, what one utters are sequences of sounds. Sequences of sounds, in themselves, do not have logical properties and so cannot be self-contradictory. But, by metonymy, we understand “utterance” in “That is a self-contradictory utterance” as referring to the conceptual content expressed by the utterance, and it is that conceptual content that is being claimed to be self-contradictory. Similarly, in a sentence like “Those are foolish words,” the words are taken as referring, via metonymy, to the concept expressed by the words, which are being called foolish.

The word “metaphor” itself is subject to the metonymy that WORDS STAND FOR THE CONCEPTS THEY EXPRESS. That is, because of the existence of this metonymy in our conceptual system, “metaphor” can refer both to a conceptual mapping across domains and to the words expressing such a mapping. When the distinction between the words and their conceptual content is clear, there is no harm in using this metonymy, which is after all part of the structure of our language, and using the term “metaphor” to denote the words that express a conceptual metaphor.

The confusion arises when the metonymy goes unnoticed and no distinction is made between the words in themselves and concepts they express. This is especially pernicious in the case of metaphor, because there, words can express not one concept but two or more—the source-domain concept and any metaphorical concepts that it maps onto.

A related confusion arises in literary studies. It is the idea that the meaning of a poem or other literary work resides in the words themselves. Words are sound sequences that conventionally express concepts that are within conceptual schemas. Consequently, words typically evoke conceptual schemas beyond the part of the schema that the word designates. Thus, “reaper” evokes the entire schema for plant cultivation. That is, words evoke in the mind much more than they strictly designate. What is meaningful are not the words, the mere sound sequences spoken or letter sequences on a page, but the conceptual content that the words evoke. Meanings are thus in people’s minds, not in the words on the page.

In the case of metaphor, this distinction is all the more important because people have, as part of their normal conceptual systems, a wealth of conceptual metaphors that they use to make sense of their experience. These metaphors, like other conceptual content, reside in people’s minds, not on any pages or in any sounds. Many meanings are conventional and shared, and these limit what a literary work can mean to someone. Literary works, for this reason, can’t mean just anything. But, because what is meaningful is in the mind, not in the words, there is an enormous range of possibilities open for reasonable interpretation of a literary work.

When a reader gives a highly unusual or idiosyncratic construal of a poem, he is sometimes accused of “reading meanings into” the poem that are not “really there.” But, because of the nature of language, all reading is reading in. Even if one sticks to the conventional, shared meanings of the words, one will necessarily be evoking all of the knowledge in the schemas in which those words are defined. And in using one’s natural capacity for metaphorical understanding, one will necessarily be engaging in an activity of construal. All reading involves construal.

Linguists have discovered that no two speakers speak exactly the same language. Each speaker of a language differs from all others in details of grammar, of word meaning, and of conceptual structure.

Literary works, and poems in particular, are open to

widely varying construals. For any given person, some construals will seem more natural than others, and those are the ones that are often ascribed to the intention of the poet. But if we actually talk to contemporary poets about their poems, we find that the poet's most natural construals may not be our own. That is normal, inevitable, and part of what makes poetry valuable and of lasting interest. Poems stand on their own. They evoke our construals and those construals are of value, whether they coincide with the author's or not. That is not to say that literary scholars should not engage in historical study that attempts to home in on the author's intended construals, to the extent that they can be pinned down. But that is a separate enterprise from what readers normally do when they encounter works of literature.

Given that all reading involves construal, the question arises as to what principles govern the nature of construal. This book attempts to provide such principles in the area of metaphor.

Traditional Views

To comprehend the power of metaphor, one must understand its nature. We have devoted this chapter to characterizing the nature of metaphor to the best of our abilities. But our account of the nature of metaphor is by no means the only one. There are traditional views that conflict with ours, views that, on the basis of our best evidence, we believe are mistaken. Indeed, one of the main reasons that we have bothered to write this book is that we believe that such traditional views are in error. We will devote the remainder of this chapter to outlining those views and to explaining where we think they go wrong.

As we see it, there are six fundamental positions that we consider mistaken. The first, and biggest, mistake concerns what has been called "literal meaning." The second is to fail to seek general principles and to focus instead on individual metaphorical expressions as if each were unique. The third is a confusion between presently existing conventional metaphors and metaphors that once existed but no longer do, the so-called "dead" metaphors. The fourth mistake is the

claim that metaphors do not have a source and a target domain, but are merely bidirectional linkages across domains. The fifth mistake is the claim that metaphor resides in linguistic expressions alone and not in conceptual structure. Finally, the sixth mistake is the claim that everything in language and thought is metaphorical, that there are no aspects of language or thought that are not metaphorical.

SEMANTIC AUTONOMY

The theoretical concept of literal meaning depends on the prior notion of semantic autonomy. An expression in a language is semantically autonomous if it is meaningful completely on its own terms. It follows that any expression that is semantically autonomous does not derive any of its meaning from metaphor. Nor does it derive its meaning through other conceptual relationships that stand outside of classical logic, such as metonymy, irony, conversational principles, and so on.

Conceptual autonomy. There are two variants of the notion of semantic autonomy. The first, conceptual autonomy, assumes that there are concepts and that words and phrases in a language express concepts. Concepts are cognitive in nature; that is, they are part of human cognition. On this view, it is concepts, not words and phrases, that have meaning. Words and phrases are meaningful only via the concepts they express. Concepts are semantically autonomous if they are meaningful completely on their own terms. The meaning of semantically autonomous concepts is, hence, independent of metaphor, metonymy, conversational principles, and so on. On this view, an expression of a language is semantically autonomous if the concept it expresses is semantically autonomous.

Nonconceptual autonomy. This variant assumes either that there are no such things as concepts, or that concepts play no role in characterizing meaning. It assumes that words and phrases in a language get their meaning via what they designate in the world, not via human cognition. Hence, the meaning of a semantically autonomous linguistic ex-

pression is independent of metaphor, metonymy, principles of conversation, and so on. On this view, meaning resides in the relation between words and the world and is independent of human cognition. This variant of the idea of semantic autonomy will become important below when we discuss the No Concepts Position on metaphor. Until then, the distinction between these variants will not matter. The general theory of literal meaning is neutral between them.

GROUNDING

We have argued throughout this book that metaphor is conceptual in nature and that metaphors are mappings from one conceptual domain to another. We have also argued that there are a considerable number of *conventional* metaphors, that is, cross-domain conceptual mappings that are automatic, unconscious, and effortless. Conventional metaphors map conventional concepts in one domain (e.g., journey, night) onto conventional concepts in a completely different domain (e.g., life, death). Thus, at least some aspects of many conventional concepts are understood via metaphor. Among these are our conceptions of life, death, and time.

We began this chapter by asking what is not metaphorical. We considered the concept of a dog and observed that some aspects of that concept are understood without metaphor; for example, physical traits like a dog's legs, nose, and tail are conventionally understood without metaphor, that is, without reference to a completely different conceptual domain. Thus, a dog's tail is conventionally understood nonmetaphorically, although we could understand it via a novel image-metaphor as a flag the dog waves. On the other hand, at least one aspect of the conventional concept of a dog is understood via metaphor, namely, a dog's loyalty, which is understood in terms of a human character trait.

The moral is that we cannot always speak of *all* of a given conventional concept as being understood either via conventional metaphor or without conventional metaphor. When a concept has a complex internal structure we must ask which *aspects* of the concept are or are not understood via metaphor.

We can now turn to the Grounding Hypothesis. This hypothesis addresses the question of how metaphorical understanding is possible at all. Generally, it states that metaphorical understanding is grounded in nonmetaphorical understanding. But, because of the complexity of metaphorical understanding, it must be stated more precisely than that.

The Grounding Hypothesis

- Many conventional concepts are semantically autonomous or have aspects that are semantically autonomous.
- Semantically autonomous concepts (or aspects of concepts) are grounded in the habitual and routine bodily and social patterns we experience, and in what we learn of the experience of others.
- Semantically autonomous concepts (or aspects of concepts) are not mind-free. They are not somehow given to us directly by the objective world. They are instead grounded in the patterns of experience that we routinely live.
- The source domain of a metaphor is characterized in terms of concepts (or aspects of concepts) that are semantically autonomous.
- In this sense, metaphorical understanding is grounded in semantically autonomous conceptual structure.

For the sake of further clarification, let us consider some examples. When we understand death as night, we are drawing on a semantically autonomous conventional understanding of the source domain, night. That understanding is grounded in what we experience night to be, namely, dark, cold, foreboding, and so on. And what we experience night to be depends upon both our sensory apparatus and what we have learned about night from our culture. Of course, a scientific understanding of night in terms of the rotation of the earth away from the sun is completely irrelevant here. It is only the commonplace experience of night as we ordinarily take it to be that matters.

Similarly, when we comprehend life as a journey, we are drawing upon a semantically autonomous conventional understanding of what a journey is: it has a starting point,

endpoint, path, places we want to reach along the way, and, commonly, companions, difficulties, provisions, and so on. This semantically autonomous understanding of journeys is grounded in what we experience of journeys and in what we learn of journeys through our culture.

For the sake of the present discussion, it is important to bear in mind that the Grounding Hypothesis is about concepts, not about language. Moreover, it concerns only some concepts, or aspects of them—those that are semantically autonomous. Conventional concepts or aspects of concepts that are primarily grasped through metaphor (such as purpose, love, thought, time, and so on) are not semantically autonomous and so do not serve as the ultimate grounding for other metaphorical concepts.

Moreover, the Grounding Hypothesis concerns our experience rather than some objective, external, “mind-free” reality. It is important to bear all this in mind as we discuss the Literal Meaning Theory, which is about language and which does concern an objective, “mind-free” reality. The difference between the Grounding Hypothesis and the Literal Meaning Theory is all-important. We believe that the Grounding Hypothesis is correct and that the Literal Meaning Theory not only is incorrect but also leads to many other fallacies.

LITERAL MEANING

The Literal Meaning Theory is about language, not concepts. In particular, it is about ordinary, conventional language. The general thrust of the theory is to claim that *all* ordinary, conventional language (called “literal language”) is semantically autonomous, that it forms the basis for metaphor, and that metaphor stands outside of it. But the theory is somewhat subtler than that and needs to be stated with more precision.

The Literal Meaning Theory

- If an expression of a language is (1) conventional and ordinary, then it is also (2) semantically autonomous and (3) capable of making reference to objective reality.

— Such a linguistic expression is called “literal.”

— No metaphors are literal.

Objective reality is taken to have an existence independent of any human understanding; that is, it is taken to be “mind-free.” Consequently, statements made in ordinary, conventional language are capable of being objectively true or false. The notion of “literal meaning” presupposes the truth of the Literal Meaning Theory, and *within that theory* the term “literal” is taken to apply to those expressions of a language that meet all of conditions 1, 2, and 3. Given this theory, all ordinary, conventional language is called “literal language” and is assumed to meet conditions 2 and 3.

The Literal Meaning Theory has certain immediate consequences. First, no ordinary conventional language can be metaphorical in any way. Second, all concepts expressed by ordinary conventional language must be semantically autonomous and hence not metaphorical. This is in accord with the common philosophical view that all concepts are reflections of objective reality, and hence cannot be metaphorical. What we will argue is that the Literal Meaning Theory, in terms of which the concept “literal” is defined, is incorrect on empirical grounds. Then we will show that the traditional concept of literal meaning is not appropriate for discussions of real language.

There are two empirically testable claims implicit in the characterization of the concept “literal meaning”: the Autonomy Claim that all expressions meeting condition 1 also meet condition 2, and the Objectivist Claim that all expressions that meet condition 1 also meet condition 3. The very concept of literal meaning makes sense only if these two implicit claims are true. If either the Autonomy Claim or the Objectivist Claim is empirically incorrect, then the concept of literal meaning is not applicable to real natural language because the background conditions needed to make sense of the concept do not hold.

The evidence discussed in chapter one, together with the evidence discussed in the metaphor literature (see Bibliography), shows that both of these implicit claims are empirically false, and therefore that the Literal Meaning Theory is

false. As a result, we maintain that the concept of “literal meaning” as it has traditionally been used is not appropriate to the discussion of real natural language. To see why, let us consider these two implicit claims, one by one.

The Autonomy Claim. The Autonomy Claim is that ordinary, conventional language is semantically autonomous and that therefore it is not metaphoric. But we have argued throughout this book that conventional language and our conventional conceptual system are fundamentally and ineradicably metaphoric. The argument that we have made again and again is that there are general mappings across conceptual domains that account for the understanding of both poetic and everyday conventional language. If the Autonomy Claim were true, this would be impossible.

For example, if the Autonomy Claim were true, then everything we have said about there being, say, a conventional LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor would be false. But to give up such metaphorical mappings would be to give up both true linguistic generalizations as well as explanations in two areas: explanations for use of the same words across conceptual domains and explanations for the use of the same inference patterns across conceptual domains.

First, without such a conceptual metaphor as LIFE IS A JOURNEY, there would be no conceptual unity to such ordinary conventional expressions as “making one’s way in life,” “giving one’s life some direction,” “getting somewhere with one’s life,” and so on. And there would be no explanation for the use of the same expressions like “making one’s way,” “direction,” and “getting somewhere” in the domains of both traveling and living.

Second, without a LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor, there would be no explanation for how we can understand such poetic expressions as Frost’s “Two roads diverged in a wood, and I— / I took the one less traveled by . . .” That is, there would be no way to explain either why we understand this passage to be about life or why we reason about it as we do.

Third, there would be no way to characterize the unity

between such poetic expressions and the corresponding everyday expressions.

The theory of conventional metaphor explains a number of phenomena: how everyday expressions are related by general principles; why the same expressions are used in different conceptual domains and why they mean what they do; how those general principles can explain the way that poetic metaphor is understood; and how those principles account for inferences both in ordinary everyday expressions and in the novel expressions used by poets. If the Autonomy Claim were true, no such explanations would be possible. Because those general principles and the explanations they afford seem to us to be fundamentally correct, we find more than sufficient reason to reject the Autonomy Claim.

The Objectivist Claim. The Objectivist Claim depends on a background assumption:

“Objective reality” consists of states of affairs in the world independent of any human conceptualization or understanding. To be more precise, the world comes structured in a way that is objective—*independent of any minds*. The world as objectively structured includes objects, properties of those objects, relations holding among those objects, and categories of those objects, properties and relations.

The Objectivist Claim takes this for granted; the claim is:

Conventional expressions in a language designate aspects of an objective, mind-free reality. Therefore, a statement must objectively be either true or false, depending on whether the objective world accords with the statement.

It is a consequence of the Objectivist Claim that all conventional expressions in a language are semantically autonomous and no expression can be understood, in whole or in part, by metaphor. On this view, there could be no such things as conceptual metaphors, which are mappings across conceptual domains, because such mappings could not exist

in the objective, mind-free world. If expressions of a language are defined only in terms of a mind-free objective reality, then metaphors cannot enter into the characterization of the meanings of linguistic expressions, since metaphors are not mind-free.

The major fallacy behind the Objectivist Claim is that it does not recognize that truth and falsity are relative to conceptual frameworks. Thus, it fails to recognize that a statement can be meaningful only relative to its defining framework, and it can be true or false only relative to the way we understand reality given that framework. Since conceptual frameworks are products of the human mind, the structure of reality as it is reflected in human language is not objective in the technical sense, that is, not mind-free.

Many of our conceptual frameworks are metaphorical in nature. When we conceptualize life as a journey or birth as arrival, then our statements about life or birth can be true or false relative to those metaphorical conceptualizations. For example, it can be true of someone that he has no direction in life or that he has taken a slow, hard path or that he had a head start in life. But these things can be true only if one conceptualizes life via the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor. Or if birth is conceptualized metaphorically as arrival here, then it is *false* that a newborn has just gone out of our life. It is *true* that the infant has just come into our life.

According to the Objectivist Claim, none of this makes any sense. Truth and falsity are absolutes and cannot be characterized relative to any metaphorical understanding. Moreover, the Objectivist Claim entails that, if we understand reality in terms of concepts within our conceptual system, then all such concepts can only be semantically autonomous and none are defined in terms of metaphor. Thus, the very idea that the concept of LIFE is understood metaphorically as a JOURNEY violates the Objectivist Claim, as does the idea that true or false statements might be relative to such an understanding.

Thus, if the arguments and analyses we have given so far in this book are correct, then the Autonomy and Objectivist Claims must both be false. If these are false, then the Literal Meaning Theory is false. And if the Literal Meaning Theory

is false, the concept “literal meaning,” which is defined relative to that theory, is not appropriate to the analysis of real natural language.

However, the term “literal” does exist and is not likely to disappear. We would like to suggest that it be defined so as to free it from the Literal Meaning Theory and give it a useful function. We suggest that the term “literal” be used as a handy, nontechnical term either for a source domain of a metaphor or to contrast with such terms as “ironic,” “exaggerated,” “understated,” “arrived at by principles of conversation,” and so on.

LITERAL MEANING VERSUS GROUNDING

It is important to see all the ways in which the Grounding Hypothesis differs from the Literal Meaning Theory.

First, the Grounding Hypothesis says that only *some* concepts are semantically autonomous. It is compatible with our view that *most* concepts are not semantically autonomous. This is very different from the Autonomy Claim of the Literal Meaning Theory, which says that *all* the concepts conventionally expressed by the words and phrases in a language are semantically autonomous.

Second, the Grounding Hypothesis is independent of the Objectivist Claim, which entails that the meanings of all concepts are characterized via reference to an objective, mind-free reality. We strongly deny that and claim rather that what semantically autonomous concepts there are are grounded in our patterns of bodily and social experience. The Grounding Hypothesis does not require that the semantically autonomous concepts be a direct mirror of a mind-free external reality, as the Literal Meaning Theory does.

Third, the Grounding Hypothesis is about *concepts*, not about *language*. The Grounding Hypothesis thus says nothing whatever about whether any *linguistic expressions* are semantically autonomous. On the Grounding Hypothesis, it could be the case that every word or phrase in a language is defined at least in part metaphorically, though semantically autonomous concepts would play a crucial role and would ground all conventionalized conceptual metaphors. We take this to be an open empirical question, to be determined by

future study. The answer to this question has no bearing, one way or the other, on the theory of metaphor we have proposed. We have arrived at that theory on the basis of evidence, evidence concerning generalizations that govern the use of words and of inference patterns, and we feel that the theory is overwhelmingly supported by such evidence. Correspondingly, we feel that such evidence overwhelmingly disconfirms the Literal Meaning Theory.

SPINOFFS OF THE LITERAL MEANING THEORY

The Literal Meaning Theory has had a widespread effect and has led to a variety of other positions about metaphor, most of which arise quite often in the metaphor literature. Since these positions are consequences of the Literal Meaning Theory, we maintain that they too are false, for the same reasons. We will take these positions up one at a time.

The Paraphrase Position. According to the Literal Meaning Theory, a sentence can be meaningful only if it expresses a proposition that can be true or false, that is, that can characterize a state of affairs in “the objective, mind-free world.” On this view, a metaphorical expression can be meaningful only if it can be paraphrased in language that is nonmetaphorical, that is, “literal language.”

The Paraphrase Position fails to account for both the inferential and conceptualizing capacity of metaphor. Let us begin with the inferential capacity of metaphor. Consider the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor. This way of conceptualizing life brings with it a complex structure of inferences which do not exist independent of the metaphor. Compare, for example, the difference in conceptualization between taking a given path in life and merely making a choice about one's life. When we understand making a choice as taking a path, there are immediate inferences that follow as a consequence of the metaphor: just as people on different paths are not together, so people making different choices are metaphorically not together; just as pursuing one path would require us to backtrack in order to take the other path, so proceeding along one path in life entails that if we want to take the other path we have to get back to the ori-

gin first; just as taking a path means facing what is coming up in the future, so making a choice is metaphorically facing what is coming up as a consequence of that choice.

None of this inferential work is immediately entailed merely by the nonmetaphoric concept of making a choice. Therefore, the metaphoric concept is not replaceable by the nonmetaphoric concept, and so a paraphrase eliminating the metaphor does not do the same job. Consider, for example, Frost's lines:

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

A paraphrase might say that there were two options to choose between, and that the speaker made the choice less frequently made. But this paraphrase fails to include all the inferences of the metaphor: that the speaker was making a choice to go forward to something he had not been to before, rather than backward to a previous state; that the speaker parted company upon making this choice with those who made other choices; that the speaker came upon this moment of decision by being confronted with alternative but mutually exclusive choices; and so on.

The case is exactly the same with the metaphor that BIRTH IS ARRIVAL HERE. We can think nonmetaphorically of life in this sense: first we are not alive, then we are born, then we live for a while, and then we are dead. But these nonmetaphoric concepts cannot replace BIRTH IS ARRIVAL HERE. For example, these concepts do not contain the metaphoric notion that being alive, which is a state, is also, metaphorically, a location; that a change of state is a change of location and therefore an arrival at that new location. The nonmetaphoric conceptualization of life does not capture the concept that being alive is metaphorically *here*. Why should being alive not be metaphorically *there*? In the metaphoric conceptualization, the image-schema of a bounded space is mapped onto the domain of life, making life here, and what is exterior to life not here. This spatial understanding comes only with the metaphor. Consequently, no nonmetaphoric paraphrase can replace a poetic

metaphor about birth as arrival here. We cannot accurately paraphrase Shakespeare's "Thou must have patience; we came crying hither," as "You must be patient. When we were first born, we cried."

Of course, we might attempt to *describe*, as opposed to *paraphrase*, a conceptual metaphor, which we have been doing throughout this book. We might even attempt to do a partial description without using conventional metaphoric language, which would be hard. But in no case would our supposedly nonmetaphoric description replace the metaphor.

This is especially clear in the case of poems whose point is to present an image-mapping, as, for example, in the following poem translated from the Sanskrit:

Earth with new grass
and color of young ladybugs
shines
parrot
woman lying under green blanket
after red sun shower
(*The Peacock's Egg*, p. 59)

The poem presents two image-metaphors. First the image of the green grass and reddish ladybugs is mapped on the parrot's green plumage with reddish spots, and then it is further mapped onto the image of a woman under a green blanket sprinkled with raindrops reflecting the red of the sun. Such image-metaphors cannot be eliminated in favor of a paraphrase.

The Decoding Position. This is a special case of the Paraphrase Position. It claims that a metaphor is merely part of a code to be broken, in order to reveal the nonmetaphoric concepts that the author is trying indirectly to express. The decoding mistake underlies the common misleading phrase that "x is a metaphor for y," as when we say "in this line, wind is a metaphor for change." The mistaken conception underlying these statements is that the source domain merely gives a set of words that are a kind of symbolic code for referring to

concepts in the target domain that are understood independently of the metaphor.

The Similarity Position. According to the Literal Meaning Theory, all of our concepts are "literal"; that is, they do not make use of any metaphoric *mappings* across conceptual domains or any *understanding* of one concept in terms of another. This leads to the view that noticing a metaphoric connection between two concepts is no more than noticing that the two concepts share some "literal," nonmetaphoric properties. Metaphor, on this view, is merely a spotlight, bringing to our attention the details of the similarity between two nonmetaphoric concepts but having no effect on the structure of those concepts or on the understanding of them. On this view, the sole conceptual power metaphor might have is to highlight similarities that are already there. We have shown that, on the contrary, metaphor can provide structure and attributes not inherent in the target domain, as, for example, when dying is understood as departure to a final destination or death is understood as a reaper. The phenomenon of death is not objectively similar to a reaper.

To deny the traditional Similarity Position is not to deny that similarity *of some kind* is involved in metaphor, even if it is not a similarity of objective, nonmetaphoric properties. The hypothesis that metaphors preserve image-schema structure has as a conclusion that when a target domain is understood metaphorically, it will share some image-schematic structure with the source domain, structure that may have been in part introduced by the metaphor. In short, on our view, metaphor always results in a similarity of image-schema structure between the source and target domains. This is by no means the traditional Similarity Position. But it is a theory in which similarity of a limited special kind does play a role.

The Reason-versus-Imagination Position. The Literal Meaning Theory entails another position, the assumption that reason and imagination are mutually exclusive. Reason is taken to be the rational linking up of concepts, which are nonmeta-

phoric, so as to lead from true premises to true conclusions. Thus, there is nothing metaphoric about reason, neither its operations nor the concepts it operates on. Metaphoric reasoning, on this view, cannot exist. Since metaphor is excluded from the domain of reason, it is left for the domain of imagination, which is assumed to be fanciful and irrational.

This view is, as we have seen repeatedly, erroneous. Many of our inferences are metaphoric: we often reason *metaphorically*, as when we conclude that if John has lost direction, then he has not yet reached his goal. Our reasoning that time changes things is metaphoric and deeply indispensable to how we think about events in the physical, social, and biological worlds. Indeed, so much of our reason is metaphoric that if we view metaphor as part of the faculty of the imagination, then reason is mostly if not entirely imaginative in character.

The Naming Position. The Literal Meaning Theory comes with a notion of the “proper” use of words: in their “proper” use, words designate literal concepts, concepts that are autonomous and can characterize states of affairs in the real world. The Naming Position says that a metaphor is the use of a word to mean something it doesn’t “properly” mean. Metaphor would, thus, be no more than a use of words, and an improper one at that. This position has the false consequence that metaphor has no conceptual role; in other words, it cannot be used in reasoning, conceptualizing, and understanding.

The Deviance Position. According to the Literal Meaning Theory, all concepts and conventional language are non-metaphoric, and we make metaphors only by deviating from normal conventional usage. To assume the Deviance Position is to see all metaphorical language as deviant. But as we have seen, our ordinary everyday language is ineradicably metaphoric. We speak constantly of people passing away, being drawn to someone emotionally, feeling up or down, and so on. Conventional metaphorical thought and language are normal, not deviant.

The Fallback Position. The Literal Meaning Theory assumes that the normal use of language is nonmetaphoric, and therefore we look *first* for the literal meaning of a sentence (a composition of the literal meanings of the words in that sentence), and seek a metaphorical meaning (that is, a paraphrase) only as a fallback, if we are not content with the primary literal meaning. But, as we have seen, our concepts in certain domains are often *primarily metaphorical*, as when we understand death as departure, loss, sleep, and so on.

The Pragmatics Position. Under the Literal Meaning Theory, the use of metaphor lies outside of normal, conventional language that can be true or false. This places it outside of the traditional characterization of “semantics.” Though we would use the term to refer to meaning of any kind, metaphorical or not, “semantics” has a traditional sense taken from philosophical logic that includes under its purview only conventional language that can be true or false. Other aspects of interpretation are assumed to arise from language use and are lumped under the rubric of “pragmatics.” Metaphor is traditionally assumed to fall under the pragmatic rubric. On this account, no conventional metaphor is considered metaphor at all; only novel metaphorical expressions count.

The Pragmatics Position, as usually articulated, incorporates many of the positions cited above: the Literal Meaning Theory, the Deviance Position, the Paraphrase Position, and the Fallback Position. It assumes (1) that metaphorical expressions are not literal; (2) that they are deviant; (3) that the meanings of metaphorical expressions are paraphrases, that is, they are meanings of other literal expressions; and (4) that one first tries to understand them literally and resorts to a metaphorical reading only if a literal reading is impossible. Given all these assumptions, the Pragmatics Position claims that the meaning of a metaphor is arrived at by taking its (semantically ill-formed) literal meaning and applying to it pragmatic principles of conversation that yield the meaning of the metaphor as a result.

The Pragmatics Position has all of the flaws of the Literal Meaning, Deviance, Paraphrase, and Fallback Positions.

But the central mistake is in the characterization of “semantics” in terms of the Literal Meaning Theory, and the use of the Literal Meaning Theory in drawing the traditional semantics-pragmatics distinction. Once that distinction is drawn, metaphor *must* be a matter of pragmatics, that is, purely a matter of language use rather than conceptual structure. Our reply is that the traditional semantics-pragmatics distinction that lies behind this theory is false, because the Literal Meaning Theory is false.

Incidentally, our claim that metaphor is not purely a matter of pragmatics does not mean that principles of conversation never enter into metaphorical understanding. On the contrary, we will show in chapter four that such principles often combine with conceptual metaphors in the understanding of poetry.

The No Concepts Position. This position arises from the popular philosophical theory that views the meaning of expressions in a language as independent of human cognition. “Semantics,” on this view, is a matter of the relation of words to the world. Expressions of a language are seen as getting their meaning by directly designating aspects of objective reality, without the intervention of a human conceptual system. Because language, on this view, is not based on any conceptual system, there is no distinction to be drawn between the meanings of words and the meanings of concepts.

On this position, the Literal Meaning Theory must be true. Conventional expressions of a language must be semantically autonomous since they get their meaning only by designating aspects of objective reality. Consequently, sentences must be either objectively true (if they accord with reality) or false (if they do not).

Since meaning resides only in the relation between words and the world, independent of human cognition and conceptual systems, several things follow. (1) Conventional expressions cannot be metaphorical; there can be no such thing as conventional metaphor. (2) Metaphor cannot be a matter of mappings in the human conceptual system, since there is no conceptual system on which language is based. (3) The meaning of a metaphorical expression can only be

the literal meaning of the expression, since that is the only kind of meaning there is. There is no such thing as metaphorical meaning. On the whole, the metaphors are trivially false, though they may on occasion be trivially true. (4) Since there are no concepts, language is neither a matter of representation (of the external world in terms of mental concepts) nor a means of expression for such concepts. (5) Metaphors are properly seen as being outside of conventional language. For a metaphor to have a nontrivial meaning is for it to enter the literal language and cease to be a metaphor (thus, to become a “dead metaphor”).

Since the No Concepts Position includes the Literal Meaning Theory and the Deviance Position, it has all the drawbacks that those positions have. In addition, it has the drawback of incorporating the Dead Metaphor Theory, which we discuss in detail below.

Sources of the Literal Meaning Theory. Two common oversights are behind the popularity of the Literal Meaning Theory. Both have to do with the Autonomy Claim. Conventional language and thought have two aspects that are often overlooked: conventional language works by general principles and it has an automatic, unconscious character. Because the general principles governing metaphor exist at the conceptual level, they are commonly overlooked by approaches to the study of language that ignore cognition. If one fails to look for such general principles, then one will overlook all of the conventional metaphors we have discussed, and it may appear as though conventional language and thought have no metaphor.

A second common oversight is to miss the automatic and unconscious character of conventional thought and language. *The conventional aspects of language are the ones that are most alive*, in the sense that they are embodied in our minds, are constantly used, and affect the way we think and talk every day. The fact that linguistic mechanisms are conventional means that they are fixed, that they are not made up anew each time we use them; conventional metaphorical expressions that are part of a live system are also fixed. Because they are fixed, they are sometimes mistaken for dead.

If one makes this mistake, then one might think that conventional language has no live metaphors.

These two oversights have contributed to the popularity of the Literal Meaning Theory and are therefore worth discussing in some detail.

THE FAILURE-TO-GENERALIZE METHODOLOGY

As we have seen, the generalizations about metaphor can be stated in terms of systematic mappings at the conceptual level. Such mappings have great explanatory power. Not surprisingly, if one fails to seek such general conceptual mappings, one will not find them. There are two common sources of such failings. The first, which we will call the Case-by-case Methodology, consists simply in ignoring the existence of the systematic principles relating individual metaphorical expressions. Consequently, one analyzes each individual metaphorical expression as if it were unrelated to any other.

The second, which we will call the Source-domain-only Error, is to fail to look at the mapping from source to target, and instead to consider only the source domain. For example, consider “old flame” and “fiery youth.” In both, the source domain is fire, and so it is an easy mistake to lump them together as “fire metaphors” and to assume that they work by the same process. But in fact, “old flame” is based on the LOVE IS FIRE metaphor, and “fiery youth” on the LIFE IS FIRE metaphor. While source domain is the same, the target domains, and therefore the mappings, are different. The moral is that a metaphor is a systematic conceptual mapping involving *two* domains; it is not just an expression from a source domain.

THE DEAD METAPHOR THEORY

One reason that some theorists have not come to grips with the fact that ordinary everyday language is inescapably metaphoric is that they hold the belief that all metaphors that are conventional are “dead”—they are not metaphors any longer, though they once might have been. This position, which fails to distinguish between conventional metaphors, which are part of our live conceptual system, and

historical metaphors that have long since died out, constitutes the Dead Metaphor Theory.

Suppose we encounter a word like “gone” in an expression like “He’s almost gone,” used of a dying person. The Dead Metaphor Theory would claim that “gone” isn’t really metaphoric now, though it once may have been. “Gone” has simply come to have “dead” as one of its meanings.

The mistake derives from a basic confusion: it assumes that those things in our cognition that are most alive and most active are those that are conscious. On the contrary, those that are most alive and most deeply entrenched, efficient, and powerful are those that are so automatic as to be unconscious and effortless. Our understanding of life as a journey is active and widespread, but effortless and unconscious. Part of the evidence that conventional metaphors exist as live aspects of cognition is their occurrence in novel poetic creations, like those we have discussed throughout this book. If those metaphors did not exist at all in our conceptual systems, then we could not understand novel, unconventional poetic language that makes use of them.

What makes the Dead Metaphor Theory believable to some people is that there are indeed expressions that were once metaphoric and now no longer are. The word “pedigree,” for example, came from the Old French “pied de grue,” which meant “foot of a crane.” It was based on an image-metaphor which mapped the shape of a crane’s foot onto a family tree diagram. That image-metaphor no longer exists at the conceptual level, and at the linguistic level we do not use “pedigree” to mean “crane’s foot.” This is a truly dead metaphor—at both levels.

Other metaphors can be dead at just one level. Compare, for example, the words “comprehend” and “grasp.” Today, there is a live conceptual metaphor in which UNDERSTANDING IS GRASPING, and we use the word “grasp” to mean understand. The same conceptual metaphor existed in Latin, where the word “comprehendere” meant basically to grasp, and, by metaphoric extension, to understand. Now we use it only in its metaphoric sense; its former central sense is dead for us. But the old conceptual metaphor is still alive, though it is not used in this word.

Determining whether a given metaphor is dead or just unconsciously conventional is not always an easy matter. It might require, among other things, a search for its systematic manifestation in the language as a whole and in our everyday reasoning patterns. However, there are plenty of clear cases of basic conventional metaphors that are alive,—hundreds of them—certainly enough to show that what is conventional and fixed need not be dead.

At this point we can see why the Dead Metaphor Theory has been so popular. It is a consequence of the Literal Meaning Theory. On the Literal Meaning Theory, ordinary conventional expressions cannot be metaphoric. Thus, if an expression looks like a metaphor but is part of the ordinary conventional language, then it cannot really be a metaphor, since ordinary conventional language is all literal. But that does not rule out the possibility that it once was a metaphor and became literal. On the Literal Meaning Theory, this is the only possible explanation why something that is literal can look like a metaphor. If one accepts the Literal Meaning Theory, one must accept the Dead Metaphor Theory as a consequence.

In recent years, historical study of how words change their meanings has shown that the Dead Metaphor Theory is false. Sweetser⁴ has shown that the same kinds of meaning change recur over and over through the history of the Indo-European languages. For example, words meaning “see” regularly acquire the meaning of “know” at widely scattered times and places. The theory of conceptual metaphor that we have advanced explains why this is so: there is a widespread and ancient conceptual metaphor that KNOWING IS SEEING. (“Wit” and “vision” have the same Indo-European root.) Because that metaphor exists in the conceptual systems of Indo-European speakers, the conceptual mapping between seeing and knowing defines what Sweetser calls a “pathway” for semantic change, so that as new words for seeing develop they eventually extend their

⁴See Eve Sweetser, *From Etymology to Pragmatics: The Mind-as-Body Metaphor in Semantic Structure and Semantic Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, in press).

meanings to knowing. Without such a theory of conceptual metaphor, there is no reason why the same changes should occur over and over.

The various positions on metaphor that we have considered so far are really aspects of one multifaceted theory—the Literal Meaning Theory. It begins with two basic misunderstandings of the nature of conventional language and thought and then extends them methodically to produce additional mistaken views. Almost all of what we take to be incorrect accounts of metaphor flow from this one fundamental mistake. To our knowledge, there is only one basic mistake in the various theories of metaphor that is independent of the Literal Meaning Theory. Let us turn to it now.

THE INTERACTION THEORY

The Interaction Theory arises from a correct observation. Suppose a source and target domain are linked by a conventional metaphor. Speaking about the source domain alone may bring to mind the target domain. For example, an extensive discussion of a journey may lead one to reflect on the course of one’s life. Given the theory we have advanced, this is not at all surprising: when metaphoric connections are conventionalized, they may become activated by discussion of the source domain alone. Discussing a particular journey may activate the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor, resulting in an effortless and virtually unconscious mapping of aspects of the journey under discussion onto aspects of one’s life.

Unfortunately, this very real phenomenon has been analyzed incorrectly as follows: the target domain is described as “suffusing” the source domain, and it is claimed that the metaphor is bidirectional—from target to source as well as from source to target. Indeed, according to this theory, there is no source or target. There is only a connection across domains, with one concept seen through the filter of the other. Here’s what is wrong with such an analysis.

When we understand that life is a journey we structure life in terms of a journey, and map onto the domain of life the inferential structure associated with journeys. But we do not map onto the domain of journeys the inferential struc-

ture associated with the domain of life. For example, we do not understand thereby that journeys have waking and sleeping parts, as lives do. We do not infer that, just as we can lead only one life, so a traveler can take only one journey. We map one way only, from the source domain of journey onto the target domain of life.

The Interaction Theory assumes that in saying that life is a journey, we are merely comparing the two domains in both directions and picking out the similarities. If this were true, then our language should go both ways as well. We should speak of journeys conventionally in the language of life, perhaps calling embargos “births” and departures “deaths.” When someone takes a trip, one would expect to be able to say something like “He was born,” and mean, conventionally, “He started his trip.” Since metaphorical mapping is always partial, we would not necessarily expect all of these, but we would expect some.

Of course, two different metaphors might share two domains but differ in which is source and which is target, and also differ in what gets mapped onto what. We can have cases like **PEOPLE ARE MACHINES**, as in

At the violet hour, when the eyes and back
Turn upward from the desk, when the human engine
waits
Like a taxi throbbing waiting
(Eliot, *The Waste Land*)

and also the different metaphor **MACHINES ARE PEOPLE**, as when we say, “The computer is punishing me by wiping out my buffer.” But these are two different metaphors, because the mappings go in opposite directions, *and different things get mapped*. In **MACHINES ARE PEOPLE**, the will and desire of a person are attributed to machines, but in the **PEOPLE ARE MACHINES** metaphor, there is no mention of will and desire. What is mapped instead is the fact that machines have parts that function in certain ways, such as idling steadily or accelerating, that they break down and may need to be fixed, and so on.

Of course, a poet might use these two separate and apparently converse metaphors adjacently, and bring them

into play with each other. We can easily imagine, for example, a poem about the relationship between a human and his computer, in which the human is metaphorically presented in terms of his machine, and the machine is metaphorically presented in terms of its human user. But this would be a use of two different conceptual metaphors performing different mappings.

In short, there is no evidence for the Interaction Theory. The phenomenon that gave rise to it can be accounted for in terms of the theory we have advanced. The predictions made by the claim of bidirectionality are not borne out, since neither the logic nor the language of the target domain is mapped onto the source domain. And finally, where there are domains A and B with mappings both from A to B and from B to A, they turn out to be different mappings rather than a single bidirectional mapping.

The Linguistic-expressions-only Position. It is extremely common to see metaphor as a matter of linguistic expressions alone and not of conceptual structure. This is the assumption behind the grammar-school distinction between metaphor and simile: given that A is not literally B, a metaphor is a statement of the form “A is B,” while a simile is a statement of the form “A is like B.”

This attempt to define metaphor in terms of syntactic form misses entirely what metaphor is about: the understanding of one concept in terms of another. Statements of both forms can employ conceptual metaphor. The kind called a simile simply makes a weaker claim. To say “An atom is like a small solar system” uses essentially the same conceptual metaphor as “An atom is a small solar system,” only the simile hedges its bets—it makes a weaker claim. But in both cases, one concept (atom) is being understood in terms of another (solar system). On the whole, the syntactic form of an utterance has little, if anything, to do with whether metaphor is involved in comprehending it.

The It's All Metaphor Position. We began this chapter by discussing this position, and so it is fitting to close with it. Actually, there are two importantly different positions to be

isolated: a strong position and a weak position. The strong position is:

Every aspect of every concept is completely understood via metaphor.

From this it follows that:

Every linguistic expression is completely understood via metaphor.

The weak position is:

Every linguistic expression expresses a concept that is, at least in some aspect, understood via metaphor.

The weak position is the less interesting of the two, and it may be correct. For example, we saw above that in understanding dogs as loyal and lions as courageous, we are metaphorically attributing to them human characteristics and thus comprehending them, *in some small part*, in metaphorical terms. The bulk of our understanding of these concepts is, of course, not metaphorical at all. In addition, we understand states as locations (more precisely, bounded regions) in space and changes as movements into or out of such regions. There are a great many concepts of state and change. Take *hot* and *heat up*. It is perfectly sensible to say that *hot*, in that it is a state, is understood metaphorically as a region in space. Of course, it is only one aspect of *hot* that is so understood—the aspect that it shares with *cold*, *tall*, and all other stative predicates. To say that this aspect of *hot* is metaphorical is consistent with the view that the bulk of the concept is not metaphorically understood.

The weak position is thus rather tame, hardly in the spirit of the strong It's All Metaphor Position, since it is consistent with the claim that most aspects of most concepts are not metaphorical. What is particularly interesting about the weak position is that it shows how important it is to distinguish concepts from expressions in a language when discussing metaphor. On the weak position, it could be true that a very large number of *concepts* are not understood via metaphor, and at the same time it could also be true that *every linguistic expression* of every language is understood via metaphor, at least in part. The reason is that an ex-

pression of a language can designate a complex concept, which can be metaphorical in some aspects but not others. If the distinction between concepts and linguistic expressions is not made—if only expressions in a language are considered—then the weak and the strong positions cannot be distinguished.

We take no stand on the weak position. On empirical grounds, all that we are in a position to maintain on this issue is that at least some aspects of a great many concepts and conventional linguistic expressions are metaphorical.

The strong position is another matter. It seems false. Metaphors allow us to understand one domain of experience in terms of another. To serve this function, there must be some grounding, some concepts that are not completely understood via metaphor to serve as source domains. There seems to be no shortage of such concepts. A brief survey of the source domains mentioned in this book yields many concepts that are at least partly, if not totally, understood on their own terms: plants, departures, fire, sleep, locations, seeing, and so on.

Of course, we do not mean that it is not possible to construct metaphors in which these concepts are the targets. Consider, for example, Emerson's lines, "Though her parting dims the day, / Stealing grace from all alive." Here, a certain departure is a target domain, and it is understood both in terms of a diminishing of the intensity of light and in terms of the actions of a thief. In saying that these concepts like plants and departures are at least partly understood on their own terms and not metaphorically, we mean exactly that we have no evidence that any of them is conventionally, automatically, and unconsciously understood in terms of some completely different conceptual domain. We do not, for example, automatically understand *departure* in terms of *sunset*; we do not conventionally understand *absence* in terms of *winter*—even though Shakespeare can write, "How like a winter hath my absence been."

CONCLUSION

Metaphor has been studied and theorized about for over two millenia. Unfortunately, most scholars have been led

astray by the Literal Meaning Theory and related doctrines. And they have not, for the most part, looked for generalizations at the conceptual level that govern many different linguistic expressions of metaphorical ideas. These are the two major sources of failure in the traditional theories.

A guide to further reading. We have done our best to survey the principal traditional theories of metaphor and where our views differ from them. Our survey differs from most other such surveys in two respects: First, we have not tried to say who claims what, to associate particular authors with positions. Our main interest has been in simply stating what the positions are. Second, we have tried to make the background assumptions of these positions clear. For example, no author comes out and states that he believes the Literal Meaning Theory; it is just taken for granted. No one overtly states the Autonomy Claim. It is part of the background. But in order to provide evidence against them, one must make the implicit claims explicit.

For those readers who are interested in following up on traditional theories, we include a section called “More on Traditional Views” in the bibliography.

Metaphor Research as an Empirical Enterprise

On various traditional views, metaphor is a matter of unusual language, typically novel and poetic language, that strikes us as deviant, imaginative, and fanciful. We and other researchers have argued instead that metaphor is a conceptual matter, often unconscious, and that conceptual metaphors underlie everyday language as well as poetic language. We have arrived at these claims empirically, by studying many cases of both ordinary and poetic language and showing general principles underlying them. The claims we put forward are open to empirical corroboration or invalidation. Consider, for example, our claim in the analysis of EVENTS ARE ACTIONS that personifications arising from that metaphor must meet certain requirements before speakers of English will regard them as natural—for instance, the requirements that event structure and causal structure must be preserved by the metaphor. It is open to

any researcher anywhere to demonstrate that we are wrong by coming up with a counterexample, namely, a personification that arises from that metaphor but that does not meet the requirements and that is still generally regarded as unexceptionable.

The empirical nature of the enterprise of analyzing metaphor is sometimes misunderstood. Sometimes, researchers have viewed metaphor not as a matter for empirical investigation but rather as a purely definitional matter. Such a view might lead to the criticism that in this book all we have done is to redefine metaphor: whereas metaphor is traditionally defined as a species of innovative language, we, so the claim would go, have simply redefined it as a species of conceptual mapping. We think that such a criticism reflects a profound misunderstanding of the enterprise of metaphor research, and we would like to dispel that misunderstanding.

There is, of course, a grain of truth behind the criticism: the term *metaphor* has traditionally been used to refer to a class of linguistic expressions of the sort commonly found in poetry. This book is filled with such examples. It is an empirical question as to whether each such poetic metaphor is completely unique and fully original, or whether there are general principles that lie behind individual metaphorical expressions.

For instance, we saw above that there was a metaphorical conception of a lifetime as a day in various poetic expressions, such as “In me thou seest the twilight of such day / As after darkness fadeth in the west,” “Do not go gentle into that good night,” “Alice . . . / Declines upon her lost and twilight age,” and “but when our brief light goes out / there’s one perpetual night to be slept through.” It is an empirical observation that we understand all these expressions in terms of a single conceptual metaphor, namely, A LIFETIME IS A DAY. All these poetic expressions use different words. If a metaphor were no more than a linguistic expression, we could not say that these expressions are all instances of *the same metaphor*; they would simply be different expressions with nothing in common. Indeed, if a metaphor were no more than a linguistic expression, we could

not speak at all of a *metaphorical conception* of a lifetime as a day, since there could be no such thing as a metaphorical conception.

It is a matter not of definitions but rather of theoretical arguments, supported by evidence and open to empirical corroboration or invalidation by other such evidence, that such general metaphors as A LIFETIME IS A DAY exist, that they are conceptual, not linguistic, in nature, and that they have the form of structural mappings across conceptual domains. It is only through hypothesizing conceptual mappings of this sort that we can reveal the general conceptual metaphors at work in particular poems.

We have used the term *metaphor* to refer to such conceptual mappings because they are what is responsible for the phenomenon traditionally called metaphor. It is the conceptual work that lies behind the language that makes metaphor what it is. Metaphorical language is not something special. It is the language that conventionally expresses the source-domain concept of a conceptual metaphor. Thus, in the lines above, "twilight" conventionally denotes twilight and "night" conventionally denotes night. It is the conceptual metaphor A LIFETIME IS A DAY that maps twilight onto old age and night onto death. The metaphorical work is being done at the conceptual level. For this reason we have used the term *metaphor* to characterize the conceptual mapping that does that work.

Finally, it is also a theoretical argument, based on empirical evidence, not a matter of definition, that conceptual metaphor lies behind much of ordinary everyday language. Conventional metaphorical language is simply a consequence of the existence of conventional metaphorical thought.

It is true that we are using the word "metaphor" in a nontraditional way. The reason we use the word this way is that we want the word to reflect our claims about the nature of all those poetic expressions that have traditionally been called metaphors. To accept the traditional use of the term would be to accept the traditional theories that guided that use of the term. As our understanding of the nature of metaphor changes, so the use of the term must change to accommodate what we have learned.

In the next chapter we will explore a major consequence of the conceptual nature of metaphor. So far, we have discussed metaphorical understanding expression by expression within a poem. But given a reading of a poem that makes use of the metaphorical understanding of the expressions in the poem one by one, it is often possible to derive a further, second-order metaphorical reading of the poem as a whole. Such global readings are based not on any particular expressions but rather on the overall meaning of the first-order reading. Second-order metaphorical readings, being free of particular linguistic expressions, make manifest the conceptual nature of metaphor. If metaphor were only a matter of words, such global second-order readings would not be possible.