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*Metametaphorical Issues**

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A Figure of Thought

For two millenia we were taught a dogma that was largely unquestioned and came to be viewed as definitional. Metaphor was called a figure of *speech.* As such, it was taken to be a matter of special language: poetic or persuasive language. As a matter of *language,* rather than *thought,* it was viewed as dispensible. If you had something to say, you could presumably say it straightforwardly without metaphor; if you chose metaphor it was for some poetic or rhetorical purpose, perhaps for elegance or economy, but not for plain speech and ordinary thought. Metaphor was seen as contrasting with ordinary, everyday *literal* language, language that could be straightforwardly true or false, that could fit the world directly or not.

Teaching Berkeley undergraduates forces one to question traditional values -- even if those values have stood for two thousand years. In 1978, I taught a small undergraduate seminar (there were five students) in which metaphor was one of a number of topics. I had received a pre-publication copy of the Ortony collection on *Metaphor and Thought,* and we were discussing the papers in the volume. One day one of the students came in too upset to function. She announced that she had a metaphor problem, and asked the small assembled group for help. Her boy-friend had just told her that their relationship "had hit a dead-end street".

It being Berkeley in the '70's, the class came to the rescue. The metaphor makes sense, we soon figured out, only if you're traveling toward some destination, and only if love is viewed as a form of travel. If you happen onto a dead-end street when you're traveling toward a destination, then you can't keep going the way you've been going. You have to turn back. "What I really want," the woman said, "is for us to go into another dimension".

There is nothing like a disappointing love-affair for calling a philosophy of long standing into question. Metaphor, on the traditional view, was supposed to be a matter of *speech,* not *thought.* Yet here was not just a way of talking about love as a journey, but a way of thinking about it in that way and of reasoning on the basis of the metaphor. In our culture, there is a full-blown love-as-journey metaphor that is used for comprehending and reasoning about certain aspects of love relationships, especially those having to do with duration, closeness, difficulties, and common purpose.

English is full of expressions that reflect the conceptualization of love as a journey. Some are necessarily about love; others can be understood that way:
Look *how far we've come.* It's been *a long, bumpy road.* We can't *turn back* now. We're at a *crossroads.* We may have to *go our separate ways.* We're *spinning our wheels.* The relationship isn't *going anywhere.* The marriage is *on the rocks.*
These are ordinary, everyday expressions. There is nothing extraordinary about them. They are not poetic, nor are they used for rhetorical effect. The most

important ones are those like *Look how far we've come*, which aren't necessarily about love, but can be so understood. Examples like this show that what is involved is not just conventional language, but a conventional mode of thought. They reflect a way of thinking about love:

> The lovers are travellers on a journey together, with common goals. The relationship is their vehicle, and it allows them to pursue those common goals together. The journey isn't easy. There are impediments, and there are places (crossroads) where a decision has to be made about which direction to go in and whether to keep travelling together.

The mode of travel can be of various types: car (*long bumpy road, spinning our wheels*), train (*off the track*), boat (*on the rocks, foundering*), plane (*just taking off, bailing out*).

The metaphor involves understanding one domain of experience, love, in terms of a very different domain of experience, journeys. The metaphor can be understood as a mapping (in the mathematical sense) from a source domain (in this case, journeys) to a target domain (in this case, love). The mapping is tightly structured. There are ontological correspondences, according to which entities in the domain of love (e.g., the lovers, their common goals, their difficulties, the love relationship, etc.) correspond systematically to entities in the domain of a journey (the travellers, the vehicle, destinations, etc.).

ONTOLOGICAL CORRESPONDENCES

-The lovers correspond to travellers.
-The love relationship corresponds to the vehicle.
-The state of being in the relationship corresponds to travelling in the same vehicle.
-The intimacy of being in the relationship corresponds to the physical closeness of being in the vehicle.
-The lovers' common goals correspond to their common destinations on the journey.
-Difficulties correspond to impediments to travel.

The mapping includes epistemic correspondences, in which knowledge about journeys is mapped onto knowledge about love. Such correspondences permit us to reason about love using the knowledge we use to reason about journeys. Let us take an example:

Two travellers are travelling somewhere in a vehicle and it hits some impediment and gets stuck. If they do nothing, they will not reach their destinations. There are a limited number of alternatives for action.

> 1. They can try to get it moving again, either by fixing it or getting it past the impediment that stopped it.

> 2. They can remain in the stuck vehicle, and give up on getting to their destinations in it.

> 3. They can abandon the vehicle.

The alternative of remaining in the stuck vehicle takes the least effort, but does not satisfy the desire to reach their destinations.

The ontological correspondences map this scenario (sometimes called a "knowledge structure" in the cognitive sciences) onto a corresponding love scenario, in which the corresponding alternatives for action are seen. Here is the

corresponding love scenario that results from applying the ontological correspondences to this knowledge structure.

Two people are in love and pursuing their common goals in a love relationship. They encounter some difficulty in the relationship which, if nothing is done, will keep them from pursuing their goals. Here are their alternatives for action:

1. They can try to do something so that the relationship will once more allow them to pursue their goals.

2. They can leave the relationship as it is and give up on pursuing those goals.

3. They can abandon the relationship.

The alternative of remaining in the relationship takes the least effort, but does not satisfy goals external to the relationship.

What constitutes the love-as-journey metaphor is not any particular word or expression. It is the ontological and epistemic mapping across conceptual domains, from the source domain of journeys to the target domain of love. The metaphor is not just a matter of language, but of thought and reason. The language is a reflection of the mapping. The mapping is conventional, one of our conventional ways of understanding love.

If metaphors were just linguistic expressions, we would expect different linguistic expressions to be different metaphors. Thus, "We've hit a dead-end street" would constitute one metaphor. "We can't turn back now" would constitute another, quite different metaphor. "Their marriage is on the rocks" would involve a still different metaphor. And so on for dozens of examples. Yet we don't seem to have dozens of different metaphors here. We have one metaphor, in which love is conceptualized as a journey. It is a unified way of *conceptualizing* love metaphorically that is realized in many different *linguistic* expressions.

Another way to put the question is this: How can a speaker of English know that a relatively neutral journey sentence such as

Look how far we've come.

can be about love (as well as about other activities that are conceptualized as journeys)? A grammar of English and an English dictionary would be of no use. None of the individual words would be listed in an English lexicon as being about love. Not "look" or "far" or "come" (in the sense used here). What we need to know is that we live in a culture in which love is conceptualized as a journey.

But where is this knowledge localized? It is not part of the grammar or lexicon of English, nor is it part of any general concept of metaphor. Rather, it must be part of our conceptual system — part of the way we understand what love is. There is a single metaphor, and it is conceptual in nature: love is understood as a journey. As a result, many expressions about journeys of the appropriate sort — "dead-end street," "crossroads," etc. — can be understood as being about love.

What is particularly interesting is that new and imaginative extensions of the mapping can be understood instantly, given the ontological correspondences and other knowledge about journeys. Take the song lyric,

-We're going riding in the fast lane on the freeway of love.

The travelling knowledge called upon is this: When you drive in the fast lane, you go a long way in a short time and it can be exciting and dangerous. The danger may be to the vehicle (the relationship may not last) or the passengers (the lovers

may be hurt, emotionally). The excitement of the love-journey is sexual. Our understanding of the song lyric depends upon the pre-existing metaphorical correspondences of the love-as-journey metaphor. The song lyric is instantly comprehensible because those metaphorical correspondences are already part of our conceptual system. An understanding of novel metaphor, in most cases, will depend on the understanding of conventional metaphors.

The love-as-journey metaphor was the example that first convinced me that metaphor was not a figure of speech, but a mode of thought, defined by a systematic mapping from a source to a target domain. What convinced me were the three chartacteristics of metaphor that we have just discussed:

1. The systematicity in the linguistic correspondences.

2. The use of metaphor to govern reasoning and behavior based on that reasoning.

3. The possibility for understanding novel extensions in terms of the conventional correspondences.

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One of the virtues of a new theory is that new and interesting issues and puzzles arise that previously could not even be formulated. In the theory that Johnson and I have proposed, the following are among the new questions that arise:

-What determines the details of the ontological correspondences?

-In a system of conventional metaphors, how are the metaphors related to one another?

-Are some metaphors possible only because other metaphors are already in the system?

-Does social knowledge play a role in characterizing metaphors?

At present, the theory is so new that relatively few metaphors have been analyzed in sufficient detail to provide answers to such questions. To understand what answers to such questions might be like, let us speculate as to how the love-as-journey metaphor might be viewed as a product of other metaphors. What needs to be shown is how a collection of other metaphors plus certain bits of folk knowledge combine to determine the ontological correspondences of the love-as-journey metaphor.

Suppose we begin with the purposes-as-destinations metaphor, which we will refer to as M1.

M1: PURPOSES-AS-DESTINATIONS
    Source Domain: Space.
    Target Domain: Intention.

Ontological correspondences:

   -A purpose corresponds to a destination.
   -Achievement of the purpose corresponds to movement to the destination.
   -A difficulty corresponds to an impediment to movement (e.g., getting stuck, going up a hill, encountering a barrier).
   -Maintaining the purpose corresponds to keeping the destination in sight.

Examples:-

   We've still got *a long way to go*. We're *almost there*. Our goal is *in sight*. We've *reached our goal*. There's *nothing in our way*. It's been *uphill all the way*. Don't *look back* now.

Now consider the most basic version of the life-as-journey metaphor.

M2: LIFE-AS-JOURNEY
   Source Domain: Journey
   Target Domain: Life

Ontological corrspondences:

   -Birth corresponds to the beginning of the journey.
   -Death corresponds to the end of the journey.

Now let us put M1 and M2 together with two pieces of folk knowledge, namely,

K1: People want to achieve many purposes in their lives.

K2: Achieving purposes in life may be difficult and take a long time.

K3: A journey involves travelling a long way through a number of intermediate
   destinations.

What results is a complex metaphor of life-as-a-long, difficult, purposeful journey.
Let us call this metaphor M3. where M3 = M1+M2+K1+K2+K3. Here is the
structure of M3.

M3: LIFE-AS-PURPOSEFUL-JOURNEY
   Source Domain: Journey.
   Target Domain: Life.

Ontological correspondences:

   -Birth corresponds to begininning of journey.
   -Death corresponds to end of journey.
   -Purposes correspond to intermediate destinations.
   -Achieving a purpose corresponds to reaching an intermediate destination.
   -Difficulties correspond to impediments to movement.

Epistemic Correspondences:

K1: People want to achieve many purposes in their lives.

corresponds to

K1': People want to reach many intermediate destinations on their journeys.

K2: Achieving purposes in life may involve encountering difficulties and may take
   a long time.

corresponds to

K2': Reaching destinations on a journey may involve encountering impediments
   and may take a long time.

This metaphor, when filled out beyond this skeletal characterization, would
account for why we speak of people as being *aimless* or *having direction in their
lives*, why we can understand people as *making progress*, why important achieve-
ments that mark that progress are called *milestones*, and why people can view
things as *standing in their way*.

   The love-as-journey metaphor is intimately related to the metaphor of life as
a purposeful journey. A long-term love relationship is understood as a journey
through life together with the love relationship as vehicle. But let us be somewhat
more specific. Consider the folk belief:

K4: People in a long-term love relationship adopt a commitment to each other's
   major goals; as a result, their major goals are shared goals and they pool
   their resources to achieve them. The love relationship thus facilitates

achieving those goals.

Metaphorically, this puts people in long-term love relationships on the same journey, since common goals correspond to common destinations.

To see why the love relationship is understood as the vehicle in the love-as-journey metaphor, let us look at some very basic metaphors whose source domain is physical space and whose target domain is interpersonal relationships:

M4: Intimacy corresponds to closeness.
Lack of intimacy corresponds to distance.

Examples: We used to be very *close*, but we've drifted *apart* over the years. We're pretty *distant* these days.

M5: An interpersonal relationship corresponds to a container.
The people in the relationship correspond to the contents of the container.

Examples: We *got into* the relationship without thinking. It's a difficult relationship to *get out of.* I'm thinking of *leaving* the relationship.

M6: An interpersonal relationship is a constructed object.

Examples:

It took us a long time to *build* that relationship. We have a *solid* relationship. Their relationship is very *fragile* and it may *fall apart.* We need to *patch up* our relationship.

Suppose we add these metaphors to the ones discussed above and consider a few pieces of folk knowledge about vehicles and love-relationships:

K5: A vehicle is a container.

K6: A vehicle is a constructed object.

K7: People in a vehicle are physically close.

K8: People in love relationship are intimate.

K9: People in the same vehicle are on the same journey.

K10: A vehicle facilitates a journey.

Putting all this together, we can now compare our knowledge about vehicles to our metaphorical knowledge about love relationships:

-A vehicle is a constructed object, which is a container with people in it who are close and are on the same journey and it facilitates the journey.

-A love relationship is a constructed object, which is a container with people in it who are close and are on the same journey, and it facilitates the journey.

Thus the properties that characterize the vehicle on a journey are metaphorical properties that characterize the love relationship in the love-as-journey metaphor.

The love-as-journey metaphor is anything but a fanciful, random, idiosyncratic way of understanding love relationships. It is instead part of the fabric of our culture. Every aspect of the love-as-journey metaphor is motivated by other metaphors in our conceptual system and by various pieces of folk knowledge and belief. The rest of our conceptual system provides all the conceptual resources that are needed to view love as a journey of the kind we discussed above.

But there is a big difference between, on the one hand, having all the equipment and supplies and skills to build a house and, on the other hand, actually doing the building. The rest of our conceptual system provides all of the equipment needed for a love-as-journey metaphor; in addition to this, the metaphor

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actually has to be put together as a conceptual unit. It has be conventionalized. This is one of the major differences between a deductive system in formal logic and a human conceptual system. In a formal deductive system, all the consequences that can be drawn are drawn. This is not necessarily true in a human conceptual system. Everything necessary for a conventional metaphorical mapping may be present, but that does mean that the mapping will be conventionalized and become part of our normal automatic way of understanding experience.

How do we know that the love-as-journey metaphor has actually become an existing conceptual unit of its own? The prima facie evidence is the existence of conventional expressions — idioms, fixed formulas, and cliches that are based on it. Expressions about love relationships like *on the rocks, off the track, this relationship isn't going anywhere*, and cliched expressions that turn up over and over in the wedding speeches of ministers: *As you travel together on the journey of life...* Conventional expressions express conventional ideas. If the expressions exist as a conventional part of the language, then the ideas that they express exist in the conventional conceptual system on which the language is based.

There is a big difference between having a metaphorical mapping exist as a unit in your conceptual system and putting together the same metaphor fresh the first time. Any concept that is part of the conventional conceptual system is used automatically, unconsciously and effortlessly; that goes for metaphorical concepts (e.g., the concept of love-as-journey) as well as for nonmetaphorical concepts. A metaphorical mapping made up anew is going to be used consciously and with effort.

But do all competent speakers of a language have the same conventionalized metaphors? And how do we know, for any given individuals, whether the love-as-journey metaphor is conventionalized *for them?* The analytic methods devised by Johnson and myself are not sufficient to answer such questions. All our methods permit is an analysis of conventional metaphors in the conceptual system underlying the speech of an *idealized* native speaker. Techniques of discourse analysis have been developed by Naomi Quinn that can show, in some cases, which metaphors a particular speaker is using in everyday reasoning. (See Holland, Dorothy and Naomi Quinn (eds.) *Cultural Models in Language and Thought*, Cambridge University Press, 1986.) But Quinn's techniques, though extremely elegant, are difficult to apply and not universally applicable. Like syntactic analysis, metaphorical analysis is not very good at studying individual variation, and works best for idealized speakers.

Incidentally, it is to be expected that speakers would vary as to whether a given metaphor has been conventionalized or not. Take, for example, the woman who first brought up the dead-end street example. Why didn't she understand her boyfriend instantly? Why did she need help? The reason is that she did not normally think about love that way. And she didn't want to.

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When Mark Johnson and I wrote *Metaphors We Live By*, we were confronted with a terminological question: Should we adapt the term *metaphor* to describe mappings such as those described above, given that the term had not been used that way in the past? It made sense etymologically, since such mappings across conceptual domains constitute a "carrying across." But that was not our primary reason.

The study of metaphor is defined by a subject matter. For example, the song lyric given above — *We're going riding in the fast lane on the freeway of love* — is the kind of novel, poetic expression that constituted the subject matter of the traditional theory. The job of the traditional theory was to account for its subject matter — novel metaphor used poetically and rhetorically. That is, its job was to explain how we understand such expressions and to show what general principles are involved. Johnson and I maintain that the theory we have outlined, when appropriately filled out, will indeed account for the poetic use of metaphor, and will do it via conceptual mappings of the sort we have described.

But the new theory we have put forth accounts for *more* than the data that old theory was supposed to account for — much more. In the process, we have discovered structure in ordinary everyday language that was not previously known to be there, and we believe that the same principles cover both the new phenomena and the old. In fact, we claim that most poetic metaphors (the old phenomena) can be understood only given an account of already existing conventional metaphorical correspondences (the new phenomena).

It is inevitable that when theories change, word meanings change with them. Motion meant something very different to Aristotle than it does to us. Aristotle took illness and growth as instances of motion, and proposed general laws of motion to cover all cases. Energy did not mean the same thing to Newton as to Einstein. It would have been meaningless to Newton to speak of measuring the mass of particles in terms of energy, as particle physicists do now. In Newtonian physics, mass and energy were different kinds of things; in Einsteinian physics they are not.

Similarly, the claim that metaphors are to be accounted for by a mapping from one conceptual domain to another results in a radical meaning change. "Metaphor" no longer means what it did before. In the theory that Johnson and I have proposed, "metaphor" refers primarily to a principle by which one concept is understood in terms of another. When we use "metaphor" to refer to a linguistic expression, we mean an expression that is an instance of such a conceptual principle. Sometimes we use the terms "conceptual metaphor" and "linguistic metaphor" to mark the distinction. Of course, we would use the term "metaphor" for the same linguistic expressions that the term was originally used for, though in contexts where a confusion might arise, we have taken to calling such expressions "linguistic metaphors" to distinguish them from the corresponding conceptual principles.

Within the traditional theory of metaphor, it would make no sense to speak of there being a love-as-a-journey metaphor that is conceptual in nature, nor would it make sense to speak of expressions used to speak of love (e.g., "dead-end street", "crossroads", "on the rocks", etc.) as instances of a metaphorical conception of love. On the traditional view, each expression would be a different metaphor, since metaphors can only be linguistic, not conceptual, in nature. The traditional theory is so different from the theory we are putting forth that the analysis suggested above of the love-as-a-journey metaphor would not make any sense within the traditional theory and could not even be discussed sensibly within that theory.

What is important to bear in mind is that the term "metaphor", as it was traditionally used in theoretical discussions, was *defined relative to a theory*. That theory went virtually unquestioned for two thousand years. Because the theory

was not even noticed as being a theory, the definition of "metaphor" relative to that theory was taken as THE CORRECT DEFINITION of "metaphor". But the term "metaphor" also referred to a certain range of phenomena, phenomena that we are trying to provide an adequate theory of. We have kept the term "metaphor" because we are trying to provide a theory of the phenomena that the term has always referred to. Einstein, after all, did not abandon the term "energy" when he discovered that energy was not distinct from mass.

The change in the meaning of terminology that necessarily accompanies theory change can be extremely disturbing to those who were brought up with the old theory. One of the old terms whose meaning is changed under the new theory is *literal*; another is *dead metaphor*. The old meanings of these terms was theory-dependent. There is no way to change the theory as we have and keep the old meanings of these terms. I will discuss the reasons why in future columns.