Introduction

Conceptual Metaphor Theory

Although once less studied than Homeric simile,[1] metaphor is a key aspect of Homeric narration and description. What particularly impressed Aristotle (*Rhetoric* 1411b30–1412a9) was the animation of the inanimate: in Homer, a wave could "roar" (ἴαχε, *Iliad* 1.482), arrows could "fly" (ἔπτατο, *Iliad* 13.587), and spears could "be eager" (μαιμώωσα, *Iliad* 15.542). According to Aristotle, such metaphors promote vividness within style. Elsewhere, Aristotle commented on the ability of metaphor to impart information, apparently citing Odysseus' use of the term καλάμη ("straw," "stubble") to refer to his aged appearance (*Rhetoric* 1410b14–15):

> 1. νῦν δ' ἤδη πάντα λέλοιπεν·
> ἀλλ' ἔμπης καλάμην γέ σ' ὀΐομαι εἰσορόωντα
> γινώσκειν
>
> Now all these things [strength, etc.] have departed. But I think that when you look at the stubble you will recognize them (*Odyssey* 14.213–215).

Both stubble and old age belong to the genus of things that have lost their bloom, and so the former may be used to elucidate the latter. Aristotle stands at the head of a long tradition: subsequent readers of Homer have, for example, noted how the earth "groans" (e.g. *Iliad* 2.95), how darkness "enfolds" slain warriors (e.g. *Iliad* 4.503), and how ships are described as "horses of the sea" (*Odyssey* 4.708). Yet metaphor is a far more deeply ingrained feature of Homeric diction than is commonly noted, and can be profitably studied within the framework of conceptual metaphor provided

[1] Cf. Stanford (1936), 118: "Whereas there are books in plenty on the similes of Homer, the Homeric metaphor has received only the most casual attention from scholars."

by Lakoff and Johnson's work *Metaphors We Live By* (1980).[2] While this particular book is almost forty years old, the full ramifications of the field that it inaugurated have only been discussed within the world of Classics for the past twenty or so, and its impact is only beginning to be felt in Homeric studies.[3]

In a nutshell, proponents of conceptual metaphor theory argue that metaphor is not so much a function of language as of thought. Beyond simply serving as a poetic ornament, metaphor provides the conceptual structure that undergirds such everyday expressions as "going through life," "overcoming obstacles," and "coming to the end of the road"; in each of these cases, the metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY motivates the language selected, mapping features of travel along a road onto the target domain LIFE.[4] To give a different example, the metaphor ARGUMENTS ARE STRUGGLES supports phraseology such as "to assail an argument," "to defend one's position," "to destroy an adversary's presuppositions," or (more recently) "to blast the media in a tweet." The details of the concepts JOURNEY and STRUGGLE provide us with a basis for talking about what goes on in lives and arguments. Journeys and struggles are important phenomena within our culture and as such are highly structured: journeys, for example, have a beginning, a middle, and an end, are beset with obstacles, and involve making choices at crossroads. Struggling and fighting, on the other hand, derive from some of our most atavistic human instincts and drives: they involve the urge to gain resources, to protect our own property, and to overcome enemies. Such notions rely on experiences that human beings share.

Further important conceptual metaphors include those for the mental processes, for example KNOWING IS SEEING (e.g. "I see," "I was in the dark," "in my view") and UNDERSTANDING IS GRASPING (e.g. "I get it," "I can't quite grasp your meaning," "she comprehended everything"). This last case (UNDERSTANDING IS GRASPING) well showcases, moreover, one of the key claims made by a number of conceptual metaphor theorists – that more abstract domains, i.e. those whose constituents are not clearly delineated or experientially accessible, will tend to be characterized with reference to more clearly delineated and concrete source domains (physical

[2] Lakoff and Johnson (1980); for an accessible account of Lakoff's prior activity, see Harris (1993); for recent discussions of conceptual metaphor, see Dancygier and Sweetser (2014); Kövecses (2015), 1–15.
[3] For discussion, see the following chapter.
[4] I follow the convention of referring to conceptual metaphors (and their domains) by means of small capital letters.

grasping is more accessible to us than the mental act of understanding).[5] The same in fact applies to the earlier examples: while the metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY involves two non-concrete items, the source domain (JOURNEY) is better delineated and its component pieces (beginning, middle, and end) are familiar to us all from the act of moving along a path: none of us, on the other hand, has completed a life, and we lack experience of all facets of the concept (we have, for example, no personal experience of death). When it comes to the metaphor ARGUMENTS ARE STRUGGLES, we have a deeply ingrained conception of what struggling is: while actual fighting may be something that we experience infrequently, our intimate knowledge of the domain (via an awareness of our own competitive drives, childhood experiences, human history, etc.) allows us to bring the notions of strategy, fortification, and so on into the less structured domain of ARGUMENTS.[6]

Besides the postulation that the normal direction of transference is from the well-delineated, empirically accessible, and/or concrete to the less-defined, empirically inaccessible, and/or abstract, a further important point in the study of conceptual metaphor is the notion of embodiment: that all entities with the power of speech, i.e. human beings, experience the world in roughly analogous ways by virtue of possessing similar bodies, and that this plays a role in the metaphors we employ. Some cognitive linguists have suggested that there is a link between the concepts UP and HAPPINESS (HAPPY IS UP): the metaphor is instantiated in expressions such as being "up," "high," "over the moon," and "in seventh heaven," while on the other hand being "down," "in the dumps," "depressed," "crushed," and "low" suggests the contrasting metaphor SAD IS DOWN.[7] These scholars argue that direct human experience provides the ultimate motivation for these associations, in that a position on the ground is linked with sickness, weakness, etc., whereas its opposite involves energetic activity, stretching, and health. This particular example might strike one as daring, in spite of the fact that the metaphor HAPPY IS UP has been located in languages as disparate as English, Hungarian, and Chinese;[8] yet the vocabulary that

[5] This "directionality principle" has been a feature of conceptual metaphor theory since Lakoff and Johnson (1980). Cf. e.g. Sweetser (1990), 32–34; Shen (2007); Dancygier and Sweetser (2014).

[6] On ARGUMENTS ARE WAR, see originally Lakoff and Johnson (1980), 3–6; the cultural grounding of the metaphor is discussed at 61–65. The modification to ARGUMENTS ARE STRUGGLES is advocated in the second edition of *Metaphors We Live By*: Lakoff and Johnson (2003), 264–267.

[7] On the experiential bases of metaphor, see originally Lakoff and Johnson (1980), 14–21, 87–96; cf. Lakoff (1987, 1993); Gibbs (2007b). On the notion of "primary" (experiential) and "complex" (composite) metaphors, see e.g. Grady (1998) and the papers collected in Gibbs (2007a).

[8] See Kövecses (2005), 36–38.

describes our bodily experiences clearly serves as an important basis for terminology for more abstract notions and entities.

On the one hand, these embodied source domains may involve physical actions (e.g. lifting and moving); on the other, they may also involve non-physical functions that are built into the cognitive apparatus of the vast majority of human beings (e.g. seeing and wanting). Most human beings have an idea of what it is like to carry an object or to set one down; most also, whether they like it or not, are aware of what it is like to see or to want things. Such mappings thereby serve a communicative as well as a cognitive role. In order to describe the functioning of abstract entities, which by their very nature are resistant to being defined ostensively (i.e. being pointed to), speakers use ideas that they can assume are familiar to those with whom they are attempting to communicate; the metaphors that arise from our embodied state allow us to speak about how we "feel the weight of expectation" or "understand what the book wants to say." The language that we select to describe the world is thus often ultimately motivated by categorizations and links made on the basis of experience. It is human experience that serves as the common link between different speakers: in order to discuss things, we appeal to items with which we are all familiar in ways that are mutually comprehensible. It is a well-known fact that the word "metaphor," which describes an abstract concept, is itself metaphorical, in that it contains within it a notion of "carrying" (compare the Latin calque *transfero*, which gives us "transference").

The mapping of terms for concrete, public, and empirically verifiable phenomena onto more abstract, private, and empirically non-verifiable ones therefore has communicative advantages, in that the participants in communication can ground their conception of an intangible phenomenon in terms of something that all of the communicative participants understand empirically (e.g. UNDERSTANDING IS GRASPING). Yet besides this practical function, it is important to point out the productivity of conceptual metaphors – that they form a basis on which to build nuanced and subtle variations on a general theme. Beyond the standard repertory for going through life (for example, getting "stuck in a rut," or coming to a "crossroads in our life" where we are forced to choose between different "life paths"), the metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY can create more evocative and context-specific variations such as "she careened into her early twenties" and "he had to put the brakes on his career." From a basic schematic association, a wealth of possibilities emerges.

To clarify a word used in the previous sentence, an important aspect of such metaphors is the way in which they reflect relationships, and the

abstract form of such a relationship has been termed an "image-schema" (i.e. the skeletal framework of a source domain).[9] When it comes to the aforementioned metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY, the source domain JOURNEY can be essentially reduced to the following: (a) a source of movement, (b) an end/goal, and (c) a trajectory between the two. These items correspond to the basic PATH schema – a mental structure containing a minimal number of parts that has been abstracted from the accumulated experience of numerous movements away from a point of origin and towards a goal. At times, the relationships of the parts within such schemata can be very basic; for instance, prepositions can reflect relationships within the PATH schema that can be transferred for a multitude of different ends. The English preposition "from" can be depicted visually thus (see Fig. 1.):

Fig. 1. Diagram of FROM

Here, a "trajector" (the focus of the relationship) is conceived of as moving away from a "landmark" (the reference point).[10] Crucially, such schemata can be used to structure relationships beyond the spatial one; they help to express, for example, the movement of a trajector through time in phrases such as "from that time" and "from that day on" (as we shall see in Chapter 2).[11] In descriptions of time, we see things approach us, and we look back on the past – hence the conceit of the song title "Objects in the Rearview Mirror May Appear Closer than They Are," whereby the rearview mirror represents the memory and the objects within it represent past events.

The PATH schema is highly productive in contemporary speech and literature, and we shall return to it throughout this book. Besides its function in reasoning about lives and time, it is, for instance, manifest in expressions of intention such as "aim," "goal," "train of thought," "drift," and even "intention" itself (Lat. *intentio*). The goal-oriented aspects of moving down a path are mapped in order to yield vocabulary for a mental action. Further schematic relationships are also prominent, however, for

[9] In what follows, I shall simply use the terms "schema" and "schemata." On schemata, see Johnson (1987), 18–40; Lakoff and Turner (1989), 61–65. On the CONTAINER (or IN-OUT) and PATH (or SOURCE-PATH-GOAL) schemata, see Johnson (1987), 30–37, 113–117; Lakoff (1993), and Lakoff and Johnson (1999), 30–34.

[10] The terminology of "trajector" and "landmark" is that used by e.g. Langacker (1987).

[11] For a discussion of the Latin prepositions *de* and *ex* in terms of image schemata, see Short (2013a).

example the CONTAINER schema linked with the prepositions "in" and "out," which is similarly abstracted from direct experience and reflected in concrete spatial expressions such as "I have a cat in my box." It can be noted in such different expressions as "he is in pain," "she is in trouble," and "I have an idea in mind": the idea of a trajector located inside a landmark (i.e. CONTAINER) is thereby associated with full-blown metaphors such as PAIN/TROUBLE/MIND IS A CONTAINER or STATES ARE LOCATIONS. From the idea, ultimately derived from direct experience, of a physical object located in a hollow entity, a schema that can be metaphorically applied to non-concrete entities has emerged.[12]

In addition to the notion that metaphor may consist of relationships between different entities, Lakoff and Johnson point out that abstract entities themselves can take on form metaphorically: for instance, we "toss an idea around," "take back an insult," and "fight confusion," all of which suggest the reification of an item that does not in itself possess boundaries. In these examples, ideas and insults are figured as things that can be manipulated, whereas confusion is described as an adversary. These metaphors impose a fictive three-dimensional shape onto otherwise non-physical phenomena (ideas, insults, and confusion): this helps us to reason with them, in that they take on conceptual form and can be fitted into grammatical slots (direct object, etc.). The vocabulary of mental activity in particular is replete with these expressions (as we shall see in Chapter 4). Lakoff and Johnson use the term "ontological metaphor" for this group, since such instances confer a different ontology on the items under discussion (an idea, for example, becomes an object).[13] This type of metaphor is frequently used in conjunction with the schemata described in the previous paragraphs; for example, when we say "I have an idea in mind," we are conceptualizing the idea as an object located in the container of the mind (a trajector-landmark relationship). The metaphor is extended in different ways in English, in that we can "juggle" ideas, "ditch" an idea, or "forget" it.

Sometimes, however, it is difficult to mark the functioning of a conceptual metaphor. While the metaphor is transparent in the case of "juggling" and "ditching," it is not immediately clear whether "forget" participates in the same ontological characterization of ideas. In this last case, the metaphor can only be determined by historically tracing the word

[12] In Lakoff and Johnson (1980), 56–60, this is termed an "emergent metaphor."
[13] Lakoff and Johnson (1980), 25–32.

back to *for-* ("abstain") + **getan* ("get");[14] "forgetting" something is motivated by the idea of "losing" it, which is based on the ontological metaphor of thoughts as objects. The etymology may be lost to us, but the expression is ultimately determined by a systematic and conventional metaphor (compare UNDERSTANDING IS GRASPING). Given the example of "forget," it should be clear that in many cases conceptual metaphor must be analyzed diachronically as well as synchronically; indeed, scholars have pointed out that conceptual metaphors serve as pathways for historical transferences across different languages and cultures.[15] If we only consider metaphors in contemporary discourse, we miss out on the importance of conceptual metaphor in the creation of our established vocabulary.

This feature of metaphor – that it plays a role on the diachronic axis as well as on the synchronic one – has incidentally long been noted in traditional investigations of language change within the field of historical semantics. To take one well-known example, in the early seventeenth century the noun "surf" was used to describe the swell of the sea as it breaks on the shore; by the late nineteenth century, a derivative verb ("to surf") came to be used of the action of "surfing a wave" by metonymy,[16] and in the late twentieth it was metaphorically transferred to the realm of computing ("surf the internet"). In other cases, as in the example of the loan-word "pedigree" (from Anglo-Norman *pé de grue*, "crane's foot"), the origin of the phrase is similarly metaphorical, although the metaphor is no longer transparent for modern language users and the metaphor is generally considered "dead."[17] Such instances, however, where lexicographers have pointed to the role of metaphor in the creation of vocabulary, often remain focused on language rather than thought: these prior examples are not reliant on systematic conceptual metaphors, and the transference is limited to the words "surf" and "pedigree" (compare the "one-shot" image

[14] See the etymological section of the *Oxford English Dictionary* s.v. "forget."

[15] Compare Sweetser (1990), who discusses a number of common conceptual metaphors (e.g. KNOWING IS SEEING) from an Indo-European perspective. On the "career of metaphor" – novel metaphor > conventional metaphor > $dead_1$ metaphor (e.g. temporal "on," "at") > $dead_2$ metaphor, (e.g "blockbuster," originally a bomb for destroying entire city blocks) – see compactly Gentner and Bowdle (2007), 115–119. For some interesting fMRI results comparing the mental processing of "dead" metaphors lodged in idioms with that of more "live" metaphors, see Desai, Conant, Binder, Park, and Seidenberg (2013).

[16] The *Oxford English Dictionary* cites the following example from 1891, where the new expression is set in scare quotes: "Many of the latter were old sailors who had 'surfed it' on almost every coast of the world where the surf beats and breaks."

[17] The metaphor is based on the way in which a genealogical table looks like a crane's foot (compare "family tree"); see Lakoff and Turner (1989), 129, who state that the "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"; cf. Lakoff and Johnson (1999), 124–126.

metaphors discussed below). When it comes to diachrony, investigators of conceptual metaphor focus instead on cases such as "forget," where the underlying metaphor structures a variety of different terms and expressions.

In line with this historical consideration, we may note that there is a cultural component to conceptual metaphor that interacts with and filters the experiential bases discussed earlier; metaphors are not necessarily universal (although in some cases they appear to be), but may be dependent on our context and cultural horizons. While love is conceptualized as a JOURNEY, UNITY, HUNTING, etc. in English, the Chinese metaphor LOVE IS FLYING A KITE rarely (if ever) manifests itself in anglophone discourse;[18] to give an alternate example, Japanese culture gives rise to different metaphors for talking about gender relationships than English.[19] The precise nature of this aspect of conceptual metaphor is still being ironed out,[20] but contextual/cultural specificity is clearly on display when it comes to discussions of conceptual metaphor in antiquity. First, because every culture develops its own metaphors based on the environment in which it finds itself, old metaphors disappear as new ones arise. While Vergil's Jupiter talks of "unrolling" fate (a scroll metaphor), later artists depicted the book of fate as a codex. On the other hand, metaphors within a given culture will tend to be reinforced by the culture as a whole; Lakoff and Johnson show that the Western metaphor of TIME IS MONEY (e.g. "save time," "spend time"), which is not present in every culture (the metaphor was unavailable to Homer, for example, for the simple fact that currency had not been invented), is tightly aligned with the conditions of life in a sophisticated, organized, and bureaucratic society. The idea of spending "two months of salary" (or in French *deux mois de salaire*), "wasting time," or "accounting for lost time" does not spring out of nowhere. Metaphors are aligned with (and partly motivated by) the culture and modes of thought in which they are lodged.

One crucial feature of conceptual metaphors is that (like all metaphors) the mapping is partial: metaphors in which one domain is entirely mapped onto the other would no longer be metaphors, since the domains would be identical. On the one hand, not all features of the source domain are projected onto the target; on the other, only those source-domain structures that can "fit" the structure of the target domain are mapped (a feature

[18] Kövecses (2005), 3; for further discussion of the interaction between embodied experience and culture in the creation of metaphor, focusing on English and Chinese terms for "face," see Yu (2007).
[19] Kövecses (2005), 90–91. [20] On this, see in particular Kövecses (2005, 2015).

that Lakoff has termed the "Invariance Principle").[21] As a result, metaphors can focus on or hide different aspects of the target domain. Lakoff and Johnson make this point about the metaphor TIME IS MONEY mentioned in the previous paragraph: time is in actual fact *not* the same thing as money, in that it cannot be "put in a bank," "hoarded," or "refunded."[22] As Seneca (*Epistles* 1) noted, if one believes that one can "possess" time in perpetuity, one is sadly deluded. Similarly, the following comment of Catullus lays out the problem of the metaphor A LIFETIME IS A DAY, used to describe the expanse of a lifetime within the more comprehensible package of a day:[23]

> 2. soles occidere et redire possunt:
> nobis cum semel occidit breuis lux,
> nox est perpetua una dormienda
>
> Suns can set and rise again; for us, when once the short light has died, one single never-ending night is to be slept through (Catullus 5.4–6).

Suns do not stay down forever once they set ("die"), but human beings do. Catullus shows the link between suns and human beings in the metaphor A LIFETIME IS A DAY to be questionable: the conceptual metaphor is misleading in that it does not accurately capture the finality of human death.

This is what makes conceptual metaphor theory an important ancillary tool to the project of philosophy in general;[24] it in fact represents a continuation of a certain tradition of philosophy that goes back to the later work of Wittgenstein, according to which the study of metaphor within thought and language can serve as a therapy for (and perhaps entirely dissolve) philosophical problems. Before attempting to study the question "what is time?", a standard issue in philosophy from Plato, Aristotle, and Augustine onwards, it is important to understand the ways in which we describe and think about it: our metaphors, as the product of human physiology and culture, may not in fact cohere with the nature of the item they describe and therefore have the potential to mislead us. By better understanding our conceptual system for structuring time (above and beyond the actual physics of the

[21] Lakoff (1993), 215, defines the Invariance Principle as follows: "Metaphorical mappings preserve the cognitive topology (that is, the image-schema structure) of the source domain, in a way consistent with the inherent structure of the target domain." Cf. Lakoff (1993), 245: "Metaphorical mappings obey the Invariance Principle: the image-schema structure of the source domain is projected onto the target domain in a way that is consistent with the inherent target domain structure."
[22] Lakoff and Johnson (1980), 12–13. [23] The example is used by Lakoff and Turner (1989), 12.
[24] See e.g. Johnson (1987); Lakoff and Johnson (1999); Johnson (2007).

phenomenon) such questions can potentially be made more tractable. We cannot reason about time without metaphor, but the study of the metaphors we use can give clarity and form to our understanding of the questions that we pose.[25] This is particularly important, in that conceptual metaphors become routinized within their linguistic manifestations to the point where they seem commonsensical to us.

The Relationship between Conceptual Metaphor and Poetic Metaphor

How does the theory of metaphor just outlined compare with standard conceptions of poetic metaphor? Poetic metaphor is generally viewed as an intentional feature of language, i.e. a fitting of two things together in order to create a specific effect; conceptual metaphors, on the other hand, exist on the level of thought, and structure speech in non-poetic contexts. Their application is not necessarily intentional. If metaphors occur in almost every sentence that I write, as conceptual metaphor theory would have it, how are we to categorize poetic metaphor? In *More than Cool Reason*, Lakoff and his collaborator Mark Turner address this question, demonstrating how conceptual metaphors of the type described in *Metaphors We Live By* structure the poetic metaphors of Catullus, Shakespeare, and Emily Dickinson.[26] On the one hand, (a) there are certainly instances where poetic metaphors do not appear to be based on systematic conceptual metaphors but rather on images; Lakoff and Turner address this issue in reference to David Antin's translation of André Breton's surrealist poem *Free Union*:[27]

> 3. 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. . .

[25] Lakoff and Johnson (1999), 135–136.
[26] Lakoff and Turner (1989); cf. Lakoff (1993). Turner had previously worked on kinship metaphors (e.g. "necessity is the mother of reason") in literature; see Turner (1987). For a balanced discussion of Lakoff and Turner (1989), as well as of the contrasting views that focus on the discontinuity and continuity between the use of metaphor in literary and non-literary language, see Semino and Steen (2007).
[27] Lakoff and Turner (1989), 89–96; for discussion, see Evans (2013), 173–176.