The Story of Conceptual Metaphor: What Motivates Metaphoric Mappings?

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Abstract   Research into conceptual metaphor has improved our understanding of metaphoric mapping, but because researchers have largely ignored the concrete expressions that constitute metaphoric groupings, little or no heed has been paid to discursive and rhetorical influences that bear upon mapping processes. Because metaphors are always uttered by historically and culturally situated speakers, metaphoric mappings are subordinate to the speakers' political, philosophical, social, and individual commitments. These ideological commitments are often expressed as, and may be constituted as, stories. Presenting evidence from focus groups, this article shows that metaphors and metaphoric mappings are guided by "licensing stories."

Much has been explained about conceptual metaphor since George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980) first introduced the idea. Indeed, research has supplied abundant evidence that most of our metaphors are based on conceptual metaphors such as ARGUMENT IS WAR, HAPPY IS UP, LIFE IS A JOURNEY, and many others (see Gibbs 1994; Johnson 1987, 1993; Lakoff and Turner 1989; Sweetser 1992; Turner 1991). Yet there is good reason to investigate further the ways conceptual metaphors operate in our writing and talk. Currently, conceptual metaphors are described in two main ways. First, they are seen as preexistent structures available to be concretely instantiated. Second, they are seen as underpinnings, even fundamental underpinnings, of culture. While both of these views have merit — we *do* recruit conceptual metaphors to invent concrete discourse; concep-

tual metaphors *do* give coherence to many cultural regularities—there is an important sense in which these views impede our understanding of how conceptual metaphors themselves work. I want to argue (1) that my reexamination of conceptual metaphors reveals complexly operating rhetorical patterns, (2) that these patterns help to constitute conceptual metaphors, and (3) that we can develop a richer account of conceptual metaphor as a cultural phenomenon if we consider the patterned relationships between metaphors and other discursive forms—beginning with what I will call "licensing stories."

In some sense, my argument is rooted in methodology. Studies of conceptual metaphor have usually limited the kind of data admitted as relevant, limited it chiefly to brief, formulaic utterances such as proverbs, idioms, and short quotations, thereby excluding most actually occurring metaphoric utterances and actually occurring responses to metaphoric utterances. Admittedly, limited examples have been sufficient to establish the importance of conceptual metaphors as broadly operating cognitive mechanisms. At the same time, however, the limitation masks important patterns of variation in the actual uses of metaphor, patterns that should lead us to rethink how conceptual metaphors work. Conceptual metaphors are constituted by innumerable concrete instances. And while we may conceptualize these groupings as gestalts, each instance of a conceptual metaphor is inflected—at minimum—by politics, philosophy, social attitudes, and individual construals of the world. When we take these inflections into account, the idea of conceptual metaphor gives us what we need in order to overcome habits of theorizing that have plagued metaphor theory from the start—that is, since Aristotle.

The Aristotelian view has hindered metaphor theory, and can be corrected by the idea of conceptual metaphor, in two main ways.

First, most theorists and researchers have followed Aristotle in treating metaphor as *primarily* a function of feature mapping. That is, although Aristotle did not use the term *mapping*, theorists have persistently treated metaphor as an Aristotelian two-part expression: "A is B." In turn, following Aristotle, they have assumed that we can readily determine the limited ways in which A *is* B. For example, Aristotle offhandedly says that when we say *he rushed as a lion*, the metaphor makes sense because both the lion and the man to whom *lion* refers are *brave* (Aristotle 1991: 3.4.1). Not incorrectly, recent theorists and researchers have problematized this kind of analysis. However, in so doing, they have run the risk of exaggerating rather than correcting Aristotle's approach. They have redefined metaphoric equivalence as a problem of selective mapping and have, in turn, attempted to *predict* what features or relations will be mapped (e.g., Car-

bonell 1982; Gentner 1983; Ortony 1979). But as a tool of prediction, the feature-mapping approach is, by itself, fundamentally inadequate.

Conceptual metaphor, on the other hand, assumes that features and relations will be mapped, but it does not attempt to predict what these features and relations will be. The only constraint identified is "the invariance principle," which states that when image-schemas are mapped, correspondences will not be violated (Lakoff 1993: 215–16; Turner 1992: 727–28). Thus metaphoric mapping is not reduced to, and inadequately described as, a matter of feature correspondences, but rather is understood as one domain abstractly structuring another to the full extent compatibility permits. Moreover, while the names of conceptual metaphors (e.g., LIFE IS A JOURNEY) would seem to preserve Aristotle's two-part model, recent work on blended spaces has shown that the mapping of conceptual metaphors is more multiple and more complex than the Aristotelian model could possibly suggest (Turner and Fauconnier 1995; Turner 1996). What I want to add here is that a reconsidered notion of conceptual metaphor can help to explain the cultural motivation of metaphoric mappings, even the simple mappings that Aristotle noted. The cultural genesis of conceptual metaphors is, of course, generally acknowledged, and theorists have shown the cultural importance of metaphor by identifying conceptual systems, metaphors that combine to structure social thought (e.g., Lakoff 1996). This line of thinking should lead us to examine how conceptual metaphors operate concretely in the communicative world. And this, I argue, is key to describing more fully how conceptual metaphors themselves work.

Second, the Aristotelian view classifies metaphors, in and of themselves, as "apt" or "inapt." Because conceptual metaphor acknowledges the cultural import of metaphors, it permits us to investigate "aptness" productively. To take a well-known example, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) point out that when we speak of argument as war, we reveal not just mental processes but also something of our culture. In other words, speakers of American English, and perhaps other anglophones, regard ARGUMENT IS WAR as apt—not because of the metaphor's formal structure, but because ARGUMENT IS WAR is an entrenched concept in English-speaking societies. Now, while it is correct enough to say that ARGUMENT IS WAR is culturally apt, this observation alone does not tell us anything about the nature of that aptness. What counts as argument? Who gets to count it? Who is arguing, and with whom? If argument is war, what kind of argument, and what kind of war? Once we ask these and a host of other questions, we also have to ask whether or not an apparent cultural endorsement of ARGUMENT IS WAR might be ironic, cunning, ambivalent, fluid, or contested. Answers to these kinds of questions will complicate our understanding of conceptual

metaphor in crucial ways—and they will lead us to see the fundamental interrelation between metaphoric aptness as a cultural phenomenon and mapping as a cognitive phenomenon.

In short, it is correct to say that most metaphors are based on cognitively and culturally rooted conceptual metaphors. But to say as much is only to take the first step. Conceptual metaphors are inseparable from the circumstances in which they are uttered, and thus they are always inflected by discursive conventions and ideological commitments. In this article, I want to begin describing the ways those commitments bear upon the operation of metaphors—how mappings are licensed and how metaphors are, in turn, seen as apt.

A Different Kind of Evidence

I have looked extensively at the conceptual metaphor TRADE IS WAR (Eubanks 1996). TRADE IS WAR is found wherever English speakers (and others) discuss commerce—in news reports, in editorials, in nonfiction books, in novels, in academic journals, in public speeches, in television interviews, in advertising, and in the workplace. We are perhaps most familiar with the standard locution *trade war*, but TRADE IS WAR is expressed with great variety. MIT economist Lester Thurow (1993) uses TRADE IS WAR in the title of his book *Head to Head: The Coming Economic Battle among Japan, Europe, and America*. Patrick Buchanan uses it when as a presidential candidate he declares himself a *trade hawk*. Archer Daniels Midland chairman Dwayne Andreas uses it when he coins an informal company motto: "The competitor is our friend; the customer is our enemy" (Whitacre 1995).

The pervasiveness of TRADE IS WAR may well indicate a cultural consensus of sorts. But the nature of that consensus is not at all obvious. TRADE IS WAR is not just used by concrete speakers, it consists of their uses. In order to understand TRADE IS WAR as a conceptual metaphor, we need to understand the degree to which speakers endorse it, the influence of individual and cultural commitments upon it, and the normative patterns that characterize its use. In this light, even the few instances I have offered present important problems for a view of conceptual metaphor as a preexistent, culturally apt metaphor that is available to be instantiated.

Thurow's book may speak of "economic battle" on its cover, but inside Thurow disavows TRADE IS WAR as "fundamentally incorrect" (Thurow 1993: 31). Asked about this apparent contradiction, Thurow concedes the military metaphor's limited utility but attributes the book title to his editors, rejecting the aptness of TRADE IS WAR in general (personal interview 1996). This defensive attribution is typical of TRADE IS WAR. Serious com-

mentators on international trade seldom utter it without ascribing it to someone else—usually to a trade competitor or to an opponent in the public debate about trade. Buchanan, on the other hand, endorses TRADE IS WAR unreservedly, applying *trade hawk* to himself. His endorsement of TRADE IS WAR violates standard use of the metaphor in discussions of international trade: few want to be seen as fomenting trade friction, and thus most speakers and writers do not ascribe bellicose intentions to themselves. But Buchanan's endorsement is consonant with his truculent political rhetoric and with his political commitments. When Andreas says, "The competitor is our friend; the customer is our enemy," he also endorses TRADE IS WAR. Despite its oddity, his motto does not violate conventional use of the war metaphor. In business, as opposed to international trade, war metaphors are often endorsed when expressing a rough-and-tumble view of competitiveness. At the same time, however, Andreas's way of endorsing the metaphor contradicts the ideological commitments that TRADE IS WAR conventionally entails in business discussions. After all, isn't the *competitor* supposed to be the enemy? In short, it is conventional that Andreas endorses TRADE IS WAR in general, but his variant of the metaphor is anything but routine.

The variation among concrete instances of TRADE IS WAR does not support the idea of a conceptual metaphor that is simply available to be instantiated. If mere instantiation were what we do, speakers would employ TRADE IS WAR for typified purposes, and new uses would not influence the way the metaphor maps. But Thurow, Buchanan, and Andreas do not share the same political, philosophical, and economic commitments, and they do not map TRADE IS WAR the same way.

Thurow favors international cooperation in trade. When he uses TRADE IS WAR, he limits its conventional implications by specifying a variant mapping. In *Head to Head*, he writes, "On one level a prediction that economic warfare will replace military warfare is good news. . . . There is nothing morally wrong with an aggressive invasion of well-made or superbly marketed German or Japanese goods" (Thurow 1993: 31). Thus he remaps "invasion" as positive because the "invaders" are goods (in both senses)—things that should not be met with resistance. As an economic nationalist, Buchanan maps TRADE IS WAR more conventionally. That is, to speak of himself as a *trade hawk* suggests that he favors hostile action between nations. Even so, in conventional discussions of international trade, hostile action is mapped as something to defend against, not something in which to be willingly engaged. Andreas—whose company recently admitted to price fixing—is conventional in mapping outwardly directed, aggressive action. But when he calls the *customer* the enemy, he points that

action in the "wrong" outward direction. In these cases, and in innumerable cases, the speaker makes TRADE IS WAR apt by remapping it to fit his or her ideological commitments. Of course, if unconventional mappings depend upon unconventional ideologies, then conventional mappings must depend upon *conventional* ideologies.

Furthermore, when we take into account the importance of ideology to conceptual metaphor, we have to view any instance of a conceptual metaphor in light of persistently competing ideologies. TRADE IS WAR competes and converses with other ideologically inflected concepts—both literal and metaphoric. Perhaps the most salient foil to TRADE IS WAR is its literal opposite: *trade is peace*. In addition, TRADE IS WAR converses with a variety of trade metaphors such as TRADE IS A GAME, TRADE IS FRIENDSHIP, TRADE IS A JOURNEY, MARKETS ARE CONTAINERS, and others. Indeed, when TRADE IS WAR is viewed as it occurs concretely, it is always bound together with ideologically inflected expressions that either concur with or undermine its aptness.

In what follows, I want to present a particular kind of evidence that reveals the ideologies entailed by TRADE IS WAR and related metaphors of trade and economics. In addition to studying published instances of TRADE IS WAR, I conducted a series of focus groups that explored the ways in which discussants found trade and economic metaphors apt or inapt. Discussants found metaphors apt when they comported with licensing stories, which were skewed ideologically. They came in many forms—as truisms, as anecdotes, as personal stories, as recounted fictional stories, and so on. But in each case, the licensing story expressed the discussant's view of *how the world does work* and *how the world should work*. In other words, the licensing story reflected the discussant's commitments—political, philosophical, social, and personal. Discussants used licensing stories together with various mapping tactics in order to determine a metaphor's aptness. Importantly, not only were licensing stories more prominent and pervasive than mapping strategies, but they also overrode mapping as a way of evaluating a metaphor's truth value and hence its aptness.

The Focus Groups

Focus groups provide a way of examining cognitive and social processes because they allow participants to elaborate upon their views and to interact with other points of view. As Peter Lunt and Sonia Livingstone (1996: 96) observe, "Focus groups can reveal cognitive or ideological premises that structure arguments, the ways in which various discourses rooted in particular contexts and given experiences are brought to bear upon interpretations, the discursive construction of social identities, and so forth."

My purpose in conducting numerous focus groups with varying demographic compositions was to generate a variety of talk about metaphors that would put their social and discursive dimensions on display.

I conducted eight focus groups. The groups had as many as eight discussants and as few as three (thirty-eight participants in all). Each group was composed of people who were roughly similar in age and professional status (see Appendix 1). In order to prompt talk about metaphors, discussants were presented with a questionnaire that asked them to rate the truthfulness of a series of trade and business metaphors. Discussants rated the metaphors on a five-point scale as follows: 1 = not very true, 2 = could be seen as true, 3 = somewhat true, 4 = very true, 5 = absolutely true. (The option "false" was not included in order to avoid a rigid literalness that would deem all of the metaphors untrue. However, in discussion, participants were free to make this observation, and some did.) Discussants took "truthfulness" to be roughly equivalent to "aptness." That is, while occasionally a discussant noted that trade is not *actually* war, by and large discussants assumed that the metaphors were not literally true and discussed their metaphorical aptness. Most of the metaphors drew from conceptual metaphors that permeate the language of business and trade such as TRADE IS WAR, TRADE IS A GAME, MARKETS ARE CONTAINERS, TRADE IS A JOURNEY, COMPANIES ARE PEOPLE, THE ECONOMY IS A MACHINE, COMPANIES ARE ANIMALS, and COMPANIES ARE MACHINES. The questionnaire also included dance metaphors (e.g., *trade is a dance*), which are present, though rarely, in the standard language of trade and economics (see Appendix 2).

The metaphors were selected specifically for these focus groups and were worded both as equation-like metaphors (A is B) and as similes (A is like B). They included conventional metaphors such as *trade is war, business is like football, business is a two-way street, IBM is a giant*, and *the economy is a machine*. They also included whimsical metaphors such as *business is a bombing mission, IBM is Babe Ruth, trade is a voyage of exploration, business is the process of choreography*, and *markets are bubbles*.[1] (Even these relatively fanciful metaphors represent a kind of expression found in standard trade talk. For instance, it is standard to describe the end of a short-lived market boom as the bursting of a bubble.) Although it is not always possible to categorize a metaphor definitively—*markets are fortresses*, for example, can be categorized equally well as a war metaphor and as a container metaphor—the questionnaire presented approximately five metaphors from each category.

After rating the metaphors, discussants wrote brief rationales for four or five metaphors that they found to be most true and four or five meta-

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1. The names of conceptual metaphors are in small caps; specific locutions are in italics.

phors that they found to be least true. Both the numerical ratings and the brief rationales formed the basis of audiotaped discussion. I encouraged discussants to compare answers and to explore areas of agreement and disagreement. Because the focus groups were held in informal settings, the discussions were relaxed in tone. Discussants spoke freely, shared ideas, wandered from the topic, and made jokes both about each others' answers and about the questionnaire task itself. However, in the main, discussants spoke seriously about the metaphors and the issues raised by the metaphors.

How Mappings Are Licensed

The focus groups provided evidence for all of the varieties of mapping that have been mainstays of metaphor theory: feature mapping, systematic mapping, and image-schematic mapping. Briefly, by feature mapping I mean the Aristotelian notion of corresponding features; by systematic mapping I mean the notion that we prefer relational to simple feature mappings; and by image-schematic mapping I mean mappings based on image-schemas such as the verticality image-schema of MORE IS UP or the pathway image-schema of LIFE IS A JOURNEY.

   No variety of mapping operates discretely. Rather, feature mappings always carry a hint of systematic mappings and image-schematic mappings; systematic mappings entail features and image-schemas; and image-schematic mappings readily accommodate feature and systematic mappings. Thus, for focus group discussants, all of the tactics were ready-at-hand all of the time. However, while all of the mapping varieties were possible—indeed, discussants showed considerable facility in generating many mappings—the aptness of any particular mapping depended upon the ideological bent of the discussant. That is, discussants evaluated possible mappings in the light of their political, philosophical, social, and personal commitments. These commitments were at minimum revealed by, and perhaps were constituted by, licensing stories.

   Because licensing stories exerted a controlling influence over mappings, I want to propose something akin to Lakoff and Turner's (1989) invariance principle. As I have said, the invariance principle asserts in part that metaphoric mappings will not violate image-schematic correspondences. Similarly, for us to regard any mapping as apt, it must comport with our licensing stories—our repertoire of ideologically inflected narratives, short and long, individual and cultural, that organize our sense of how the world works and how the world should work. That is to say, our world-making stories give us the license—provide the requisite justification—needed to

regard possible metaphoric mappings as sound. Below I will offer evidence of how licensing stories guided discussants' feature-based, systematic, and image-schematic mappings.

Feature Mapping and Licensing Stories

Feature mapping is usually seen as the simplest way of understanding and evaluating metaphors because it sometimes involves only physical corre- spondences between source and target. For example, in the cliché *as skinny as a rail*, we map primarily, although not exclusively, the physical feature *slenderness*. In her discussion of children and metaphor, Ellen Winner calls these kinds of feature mappings "primitive metaphors" (Winner 1988: 39– 40). However, feature mapping is seldom so rudimentary—at least, not among adults. As Winner points out, we often ascribe psychological quali- ties to physical characteristics in metaphors, as in *she's a rock* when uttered to mean roughly *she's dependable*. When we map psychological qualities, feature mappings are licensed by both individual and standard cultural stories. When *she's a rock* means *she's dependable*, the feature *dependability* in- dexes a standard repertoire of stories that constitute dependability. This repertoire would, no doubt, include stories of people who help in times of crisis, people who always arrive on time, people who maintain an emo- tional equilibrium in the face of trouble, and so on. Indeed, the utterer of *she's a rock* would probably have in mind a set of dependability stories spe- cifically about the person to whom the metaphor refers.

   In focus groups, discussants frequently explained their metaphor pref- erences on the basis of one or more shared characteristics. For example, explaining his high truth rating for *business is combat*, Peter, a college junior, noted the feature *competitiveness* in both business and combat:

> I think that one is absolutely true because in business you're *competing* against people. People inside of a business are *competing* against each other, and it's basi- cally a fierce battle. That's what I get from the word combat, is a battle. So it's a struggle between people—you know, in business to succeed and get higher in the business. Or, also in the business world it's a struggle between companies. So those are my reasons behind that.[2]

   Although Peter's explanation centered ostensibly on a single, shared fea- ture, it entailed broader cultural understandings that were evidenced by key words, words that referenced standard stories. He equated "combat" with "battle," a word commonly used to describe business activity. With

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2. For ease of reading, I have eliminated from the focus group quotations distracting verbal habits, repairs, and redundancies.

this shift toward the commonplace business parlance that associates com-
petition with success and speaks of the process of succeeding as a "battle"
or a Darwinian "struggle," Peter evoked in just a few words the most stan-
dard of business stories, found in popular business books, in earnest busi-
ness theory, and in the satiric plot of *How to Succeed in Business without Really
Trying*. Moreover, the story was deployed with multiple orientations. At
first, he framed business competition as personal combat, worker against
worker. Toward the end of his comment, he noted that the competition
between businesses is also fierce, adding, "Or, also in the business world
it's a struggle between companies." It was not a single story that licensed
Peter's mapping, but two related stories—or more likely a larger set of
stories, some of which were tacit.

Moreover, Peter's story embedded a number of tacit metaphors and
concomitant image-schematic mappings. He spoke of a "struggle between
people—you know, in business to succeed and get higher in the business."
Thus he invoked a blend of the standard conceptual metaphors MORE IS
UP, HAPPY IS UP, and SUCCESS IS UP. These metaphors, familiar to all En-
glish speakers, are part and parcel of everyday business discourse. Unless
we remain at the *bottom of the totem pole*, we *climb the corporate ladder* or *rise
through the ranks* in order to become *upper management*. And when we reach
the *pinnacle* of success, we may find the verticality metaphors literalized by
a *penthouse office*. These verticality metaphors blend readily with war meta-
phors because, while war and battle usually operate on a horizontal plane,
victory is vertical. We *come out on top* or become *king of the hill*. And our ene-
mies are *flattened*, *laid low*, and *beaten down*, where they will *never rise again*.

Now, although Peter's specific comprehension of *business is combat* de-
pended on a global comprehension of common metaphors, the aptness
of *business is combat*—its capacity to convey a truthful representation of
circumstances—depended not on the standard conceptual blend of meta-
phors alone, but rather on Peter's assessment of how the world works, an
assessment that was expressed in brief narrative phrases and in key words
that indexed standard business stories. He found *business is combat* true be-
cause "in business you're *competing* against people," "people inside of a
business are *competing* against each other," and it is a "struggle between
people—you know, in business to succeed and get higher in the business."
In short, Peter's licensing stories encompassed a view of external circum-
stances that, to him, were not merely comprehended but known—known,
in Peter's case, in the form of narratively structured truisms.

Not all licensing stories are drawn from truisms. Often they are histori-
cally specific, learned from the press or crafted from personal experience.
Jim, a software entrepreneur, invoked competition-success narratives in

mapping survival behavior from animals onto companies. He explained his endorsement of *companies are animals* as a simple, isomorphic correspondence: *survival behavior* is a salient feature of animals; likewise it is a salient feature of companies. But he used this simple mapping as the focal point for a complex of licensing stories. Jim's first story was nonspecific, like Peter's truisms: "A company, I think, is an entity quite above and apart from the people who run the company because the company is an entity. It's an economic entity, and its goal is survival. And it survives no matter what." The company's need for survival meant, "It doesn't matter who gets fired or laid off or what it has to do."

Subsequently, perhaps because of his long business experience, Jim's repertoire of business survival stories included a thumbnail history of U.S. business, its electronics industry in particular. He explained, "Well, animals survive. They adapt because of their environment, and businesses do, too. I mean, American business has adapted a lot in the last fifteen, twenty years. And that wasn't their choice. [Laughs.] They've paid no small price in order to retool their electronics industry. It's something they had to do because if they didn't do it, they wouldn't survive." Jim saw the story of the U.S. industry as pervasive, empirical, and generalizable. Because most of us are at least loosely familiar with the changes that have come about in U.S. electronics, we can easily imagine the many subsidiary stories that are indexed by Jim's brief narrative—stories of large corporations challenged by new, low-price foreign competitors who attain market share, forcing American corporations to streamline manufacturing operations, often laying off workers as they do so. So familiar are these stories, we can readily appreciate Jim's darkly humorous comment, "And that wasn't their choice."

But it isn't just our familiarity with American industry over the "last fifteen, twenty years" that makes the abbreviated story accessible; it is the long-standing master narrative of economic Darwinism that is attached to the word "survival," especially when it is invoked with respect to both animals and economics: economic Darwinism is one of our standard cultural allegories, and it licenses any number of metaphoric clichés such as *it's a jungle out there, dog-eat-dog,* and commerce's *food chain.* We can easily fill in the richly detailed stories that are indexed by such features as *survival behavior*—and, in turn, for these standard stories to license a metaphor.

Systematic Mapping and Licensing Stories

It has long been recognized that metaphor often involves more than simple feature correspondences, that the correspondences between target and

source can be systematic. Notably, Max Black refers to a "system of asso-
ciated commonplaces" (1962) or an "implicative complex" (1993). In a more
codified way, Dedre Gentner (1983) observes that we usually prefer meta-
phors (or metaphoric analogies) that map multiple features and preserve
the relations between those features, as in analogies of the hydrogen atom
and the solar system. According to Gentner, when the hydrogen atom is
likened to the solar system, not only do we map the surface similarity of
the two systems, but also the relation between its parts: If the central object
(the sun or the nucleus) were less massive, the attraction between it and its
satellites would decrease, and the distance between them would thereby
increase. In addition to this physical systematicity, Catherine Clement and
Gentner (1991) have explored systematic mappings in analogies between
stories. Clement and Gentner found that when people are asked to find
analogic correspondences between brief stories, they map features whose
"causal antecedents" are similar from story to story.

    Like Clement and Gentner's subjects, focus group discussants often
mapped one story onto another, finding correspondences between both
features and causal structures. The relation between two stories, however,
always went beyond formal, systematic correspondences. Where corre-
spondences between stories were noted, discussants also asserted that their
licensing stories were either especially accurate or ethically defensible. In
other words, the stories represented the individual's ideologically inflected
perception of the "true" nature of target and source.

    Typical of this pairing of formal correspondence and story-based li-
censing were narrative mappings of machine functioning onto economic
behavior. One discussant found *the economy is a machine* apt because, like
machine parts, workers necessarily wear down over time and are callously
replaced because of larger exigencies. Another discussant rejected (as not
particularly true) *the economy is a machine*, since the economy seemed to
her unmanageable. Yet she endorsed *companies are machines* because workers
who function badly can, like machine parts, be replaced. On one level,
these two mappings were the same: economic activity corresponded with
machine-like operation; workers corresponded with machine parts. How-
ever, the causal sequences varied. One discussant focused upon workers
who lacked agency to control impersonal causes, the other focused upon
managerial agency that effected positive change. The aptness of the meta-
phors *the economy is a machine* and *companies are machines* depended not upon
the possibility of corresponding causal sequences but instead upon the per-
ceived truth-value of the discussant's narrative construction of the world.

    So far, I have presented instances of conventional metaphors that were
licensed by stories. But licensing stories can also support novel metaphors

such as *trade is a dance*. Constructing a systematic correspondence between trade stories and dance stories, one focus group, composed of female professionals, coconstructed an interpretation of *trade is a dance*. Together, they explained that the physical moves of dancers are similar to the commercial and marketing moves of businesses. In a sense, their interpretation could be seen as single feature mapping because they identified *motion* as a common feature shared by business and dance. However, their mapping of dancing motion onto business maneuvers also incorporated a story-based systematicity. Dance and business were understood in light of stories in which one motion prompts another. Importantly, the motions described were not mechanical actions and reactions but conscious responses made by participants in a story—protagonists and antagonists.

After the group explicitly agreed that *trade is a dance* would make the most sense if it referred to the dance of a couple, rather than a solo or ensemble dance performance, they improvised:

> Lynn: Competitors make different moves and you have to respond.
> Rikki: Uh huh. Yeah.
> Me: What kind of moves?
> Lynn: They may decide to copy your product, and you have to react or—
> Rikki: Sue the shit out of them.
> Lynn: Or change yours, whatever.
> Zoey: Or they get in the market, and you decide you have to move to a different market or expand your market.
> Lynn: Right.
> All: Price-cutting moves.

No discussant mentioned familiar attributive qualities of dance such as grace, rhythm, or expressiveness. Instead, they stressed awareness of another's motion and the decision to move in response. Like dancers, business people "have to respond," "decide to copy," decide to "sue the shit out of," "decide to move to a different market," or counter with "price-cutting moves."

Offering a different story-based systematic mapping of *trade is a dance*, Tony, a marketing executive, ignored the possible correspondence between specific dance moves and specific business moves altogether. He emphasized that dancelike motion depends upon the consent of both dance partners and trade partners:

> My notion is that a dance is a shared symmetry of motion between two entities. You are agreeing on what you're doing, even if the girl doesn't really know where you're leading her. And if you don't dance smoothly together, well, you'll step on each other, and you'll stop dancing—you'll stop trading. In other words,

if you exceed the rules of engagement, either with trade or with a dance, you'll stop doing it, and it'll no longer exist. So to me, that's why trade is a dance.

Although Tony did not note the correspondence between dance moves and business maneuvers that many other discussants saw, he did map some specific features (or characters) and link them systematically: for him, dance partners equated with trading partners, and one partner's motion was the cause of the other's cooperative motion—until, as he projected in his story, the mutual agreement breaks down and the symmetrical motion ends.

Once again, although story-based systematic mapping was clearly occurring, it is not all that was occurring. Tony's stories of dance and trade were shot through with ideological commitments. Certainly, some feminists might disapprove of Tony's patriarchal characterization of dancing ("you kind of are agreeing on what you're doing, even if the girl doesn't really know where you're leading her"). No Marxist would agree that trade occurs among equals, always by mutual consent. But, for Tony, these stories represented the way the world works, even if—or especially if—his view might be challenged.

Image-Schematic Mapping and Licensing Stories

More than any other variety of mapping, image-schematic mapping operated tacitly. Yet its operation was easy to infer. Most striking were occasions when discussants grouped similarly structured metaphors together, readily transferring underlying image-schemas from domain to domain. Tony, who described dance and trade as a "shared symmetry of motion between two entities," preceded his schematization of dance and trade with a tacit acknowledgment of the image-schematic similarity between *business is a joint excursion*, *business is a two-way street*, and *trade is a dance*. Responding to another discussant's high rating of *business is a joint excursion*, he began, "Yeah, like *business is a two-way street*, it's a joint excursion. And then, *trade is a dance*, I gave it a five because I believe once you make contact with [customers], then that's all you do, for the rest of your relationship—is you're dancing with the person you're bartering with." After several exchanges, in which discussants agreed with Tony's point, and Tony expanded his approval of *business is a two-way street* to include all travel metaphors, Tony specified what it was he saw in common among these metaphors: *exchange*. "But each encounter is a dance of exchanges, continuously. What we're doing here today is an exchange of things. Since I didn't know what this was, I was doing it as an exchange of friendship with my friend Dave." It might be the case that exchange amounts to a feature shared by target

and source in *business is a joint excursion*, *business is a two-way street*, and *trade is a dance*; thus Tony's explanation could be seen as simple feature mapping in related metaphors. However, he soon linked *exchange* to "shared symmetry of motion between entities"—a description that does not evoke strong attributive associations but rather divorces the image-schema from attributive elements.

Moreover, the ease with which he associated several metaphors suggests that it was not an equation between types of exchange with their concomitant features that facilitated Tony's explanation: that is, it did not seem that *exchanged money* equaled *exchanged dance steps* equaled *exchanged motion on two-way streets*, but rather that the shape of the exchange event—cooperative, symmetrical motion—was transferred from one domain to another, allowing Tony to fill in specific varieties of exchange in keeping with conversational or situational prompts. The specifics cited by Tony ranged from money to dance steps to friendship—which was not part of the metaphors being discussed at all.

Also striking were image-schematic mappings linked together in conceptual systems, where conceptual metaphors' image-schemas were mutually entailed. Milo defended *trade is war* not by discussing trade and war, but rather by illustrating his notion of a market as a pie, a common instance of the conceptual metaphor MARKETS ARE CONTAINERS. That is, for Milo, markets were discrete, bounded entities that, like nations, must be defended: "I thought that I was very original when I sat down with my bosses years and years ago, and I said to them, 'The market is a pie.' [He drew a simple bird's-eye view of a pie and divided it into segments.] The market is a pie. Now, if you're going to divide it four ways, or six, or eight, or sixteen, or twenty, thirty-two—it doesn't make any difference. It is the same pie. . . . So who's going to buy my product is a question of my ability to sell my product better than anybody else. It's war."

By asserting the aptness of *trade is war* and the conceptually entailed container metaphors *markets are containers* and *markets are walled-in spaces*, Milo prompted a debate among discussants who also grouped war and container metaphors together but disagreed with Milo's endorsement of them.

What ensued was a debate between licensing stories. Opposing *markets are containers* and *markets are walled-in spaces*, Joan offered a personal-experience story: "I maybe took [container metaphors] from our side of the business, for what we do. We work in a very select, narrow field. And it's one of the things that was probably wrong about how we started out. We should have been broader. I think you always have to keep looking to figure out where your goods and services can be used. And where you can expand. And where you can grow." Milo responded with a news-based story:

"I'll give you a good example. Philip Morris. Fifty percent of their business is not cigarette-related business because they discovered that their market can no longer expand. And they are trying to get away from the businesses that are more lean, probably. So they are trying to get away from it. You will find many, many companies who are expanding into other areas—I don't know, hundreds of them." After this exchange of stories, Joan acknowledged that Milo had identified a situation that can arise in marketing. Jim, her business partner, agreed, adding, "I think markets do have limits, and some companies manage to saturate a market, like the cigarette companies." The possible image-schematic mappings were comprehended by all. At issue was the relative correctness of the stories licensing a cluster of trade metaphors that shared or entailed the container image-schema.

Tacit Mappings and Licensing Stories

Explicit explanations of mappings were, of course, an artifact of the focus group task itself. In natural conversation, metaphoric mappings are usually assumed. From time to time, however, a focus group became relaxed enough to permit what seemed to be authentic conversation about trade and business metaphors. In these relatively unguarded moments, stories dominated the talk, stories that both licensed and embedded metaphoric mappings.

Once, after the formal focus group task had been completed, I informed a group that my study centered specifically on war metaphors in trade and business. I asked for some general comments about war metaphors that they encounter in their work lives. The discussion that followed was wide-ranging, covering cultural attitudes toward war, careers, world markets, specific industries, metaphors in entertainment, attitudes toward language, and so on. Instead of weighing the merits of specific mappings, they explored and debated whether any mapping of war onto trade and business was compatible with both their generational and individual notions about war and business. And they illustrated their points with licensing stories.

Mike, a fortyish business executive, opened the general discussion by theorizing that war metaphors make more sense to an older generation who fought in World War II and Korea and who brought a military mentality into the workplace. Soon Mike began to express his own attitudes toward work and war in the form of a licensing story that described a basic change in how businesses operate: "If you take the structure of companies, if you look at the military organizational chart, and how that worked through the fifties, and the whole concept of if you were a good cog, a good wheel, you stayed with the company, you did your job, you did what you

were told, you'd retire from that company with a nice package. That whole thing's been turned upside down. It just doesn't exist anymore." Mike's notion of how business works today was incompatible with military metaphors. It rejected a conceptual blend of metaphors: companies compete in a warlike manner (TRADE IS WAR), companies therefore need to be structured in an orderly way, like armies and machines (ARMIES ARE MACHINES; BUSINESSES ARE MACHINES); machinelike organizations are organized hierarchically (VERTICALITY IMAGE-SCHEMA). In rejecting this conceptual blend, he also rejected some feature mappings: workers correspond with cogs or wheels in the machine.

But his *story* was about human agency. That is, according to Mike's licensing story, when the World War II generation began to retire, the structure of business changed. Consequently, businesspeople began to behave differently, especially younger businesspeople: "But the military—I see it in our company all the time—the older guys are terrified of conflict with people in positions of power that are higher than theirs. The other guys [younger guys]—they'll have conflict all the time. But they expect a more fluid life in the first place." It is significant that Mike generalized his view of *how business works* to *how the world works*. He rejected military-like orderliness in business and in life overall—and this story of *how the world works* inflected his understanding of TRADE IS WAR in its many venues and variations.

Later in the conversation, he told a story of international trade that he saw as incompatible with TRADE IS WAR and its entailed container metaphors: "Look, I love this whole concept of buying an American car. Define that for me. I mean, you see that ad for Honda. Honda says, 'Here's our car.' And it's all our bumpers from Lexington. And by the time you get done with it, the only thing that isn't American is the name. And that's absolutely intentional on the Japanese part." Again, Mike implicitly rejected a conceptual blend that was not licensed by his story. For Mike, international trade did not have the clearly delineable structure of the military sphere, where container-like sides act aggressively toward each other (TRADE IS WAR, MARKETS ARE CONTAINERS). This, of course, might invite us to infer that Mike rejected TRADE IS WAR simply because of an incompatibility of image-schemas. At root, though, it was not image-schemas that drove his assessment of metaphoric aptness. He was perfectly capable of comprehending business and trade as belligerent, competitive activity between discrete sides, as his ascription of this view to an older generation shows. But his narratively expressed (probably narratively constituted) construals of external circumstances belied the metaphors—and thus made them inapt.

Mike's licensing stories were challenged by Brian, who saw parts of trade

and business as adversarial. For example, he commented, "I look at some-
thing more like the apparel market, even international finance, where it
is war, where somebody's got to lose. If you win, somebody's got to lose."
Brian's rebuttal not only comported with an oppositional image-schema,
it acted as a brief *how all business works* story. That is, Brian did not offer his
observation in order to cite a possible exception to Mike's way of seeing
things but rather offered it as a representative story of how business gener-
ally works. It was in keeping with his remarks throughout the focus group,
just as when he challenged Mike's generational theory, saying, "Our gen-
eration is just as combative. We just don't put it in the same terms is what
I think."

The discussion of TRADE IS WAR did not remain within the boundaries
of the metaphor long before it became a discussion of not just business
but life, of the history of mankind, of personal experiences, and so on.
(Indeed, narrative licensing often expands beyond the metaphor at hand.)
As Keith explained both his understanding and rejection of TRADE IS WAR,
he gathered into his explanation language-use issues paired with personal,
life-experience stories: "The reason that I don't agree that it's like war,
and all that thing, is because it's not like war. War, people die. I think that
you can keep that spirit, that aggressive spirit, harness it and use it to an
end in business, and not necessarily go out and maim people. We used to
come off the stage in the band, and we'd say, 'Oh, we killed 'em tonight.'
Well, we didn't actually kill anybody. We didn't want to. But we made
them like us. and we said we killed them." Disagreeing, Brian pointed out
that, after all, TRADE IS WAR is *just* the language of trade, in the same sense
that "we killed them" is *just* the language of entertainment. Keith was not
satisfied. For him, TRADE IS WAR had resonances that—although he clearly
understood the metaphor and could generate plausible mappings of it—
made the metaphor neither true nor apt: "But I'm saying, to take it to
today's terms, in modern terms, that business is where we're doing that
battle now. So to take that language and bring it to business—I don't think
we have to have the actual feeling of gutting an opponent to say things like
that. So that's why I think likening trade to war is bad, but. . . ." Keith's
story of *how business works* might be characterized equally well as *how busi-
ness should work.* He is an entrepreneur in his late thirties, once a musician
and an artist, who has built a successful company that markets products
throughout the United States and internationally. But because he chafed at
his work experience in companies whose style was adversarial, he rejected
the language of war: it was the totality of his thought and experience that
combined to create his licensing stories, stories that licensed *trade is a voy-
age of exploration* but not *trade is war*, and which were distilled in his rejection

of TRADE IS WAR generally. Struggling, perhaps, with the clash between his culturally intuitive comprehension of TRADE IS WAR and his personal opposition to war and conflict, he summed up his view, saying simply, "Well, we can aspire to something better."

Conclusion

I began by criticizing the Aristotelian view, but Aristotle does get one thing right. He claims that the very best metaphors are those that accomplish "bringing-before-the-eyes" (247). No doubt, bringing-before-the-eyes —making sequential, motivated human action visible—is an important function of stories. But the specific way stories are intertwined with metaphors goes far beyond what Aristotle suggests. Aristotle and others have noted that most metaphors can be made into mininarrations. This is not the same as licensing. Licensing stories are narratively structured representations of an individual's ideologically inflected construal of the world. Metaphoric aptness—which is to say, the aptness of possible mappings— depends crucially upon this construal.

The importance of licensing stories to the understanding and evaluation of metaphor is, I would suggest, supported by work in cognitive science. Increasingly, researchers have noted the cognitive significance of stories. For some time, Jerome Bruner (1986, 1987, 1990) has explored the role stories play in constructing notions of self. Yet bolder, Roger Schank and Robert Abelson have offered a strong hypothesis about stories as cognitive structures, asserting, "1. Virtually all human knowledge is based on stories constructed around past experiences, 2. New experiences are interpreted in terms of old stories, 3. The content of story memories depends on whether and how they are told to others, and these reconstituted memories form the basis of the individual's remembered self" (Schank and Abelson 1995: 5). And, in a related observation, Mark Turner (1996) has examined the ways narrative image-schemas guide our understanding of everything from small physical events to complex literature. In short, serious students of the mind are confirming what many have long intuited: We construct the world, at least in part, through stories.

My findings support the idea that stories are central to comprehension. At the same time, I want to emphasize that both metaphor and stories are necessarily more than cognitive mechanisms. No metaphor comes without ideological freight. No story licenses a metaphor simply because the metaphor's image-schematic correspondences are possible. Nor do we find a metaphor apt simply because we can narrativize the target and source domains, coherently mapping causal sequences. Instead, we endorse and

reject—and sometimes negotiate—metaphors based on stories that are saturated with political, philosophical, social, and personal commitments. When these commitments change, our endorsements of ideologically inflected expressions change. And so does our sense of what things in our constructed worlds correspond with other things.

It may be, of course, that TRADE IS WAR is a more ideologically resonant metaphor than others. I would argue, however, that no metaphor with the staying power to become conceptually entrenched can be free of ideology. Even seemingly "neutral" metaphors have ideological ramifications. Take, for example, *she is a giraffe* to mean *she is tall*. (Gentner once used this metaphor to exemplify the mapping of a single feature.) The expression seems simple enough—except that to be tall, and to be a woman, and to be a tall woman all have implications that are bound to the culture of a specific time and place. Moreover, there are many tall things to which a woman may be compared, but none seem to have the same effect as *giraffe*. *She is a tree. She is a flagpole. She is the Empire State Building.* I suspect that none of these metaphors can be functionally separated from a historically situated, narratively structured construction of womanhood—stories of *what women do* and *what women should do*.

From the start, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) pointed out that cognitively entrenched metaphors have a social genesis and are cultural indicators. But what metaphors indicate is something even more complex than we might have thought. The problem, then, is to describe this complexity. There is a describable structure in the ways conceptual metaphors blend, in the ways they are rhetorically formed and deployed, and in their inter-animated relationship with discursive forms such as stories. One of the key relationships between metaphors and stories is the licensing relationship, the guiding force exerted by world-representing stories over metaphoric aptness and the selection of metaphoric mappings.

Appendix 1

The composition of the focus groups was as follows:

Group 1: Seven discussants. All undergraduate business and technical writing students at a large state university. Three women. Four men.

Group 2: Five discussants. All undergraduate business and technical writing students at a large state university. Two women. Three men.

Group 3: Four discussants. All undergraduate business and technical writing students at a large state university. Two women. Two men.

Group 4: Six discussants. Owner of large insurance brokerage (male), registered nurse (female), greeting card entrepreneur (male), homemaker (female), trade magazine editor (male), support manager (female).

Group 5: Three discussants. Marketing consultant (male), small business attorney (male), furniture executive (male).

Group 6: Four discussants. Manager of newspaper (male), journalist (female), software entrepreneur (male), software entrepreneur (female).

Group 7: Four discussants. Bank vice president (female), human resources director (female), academic special librarian (female), instructional designer with background in computer marketing (female).

Group 8: Four discussants. Music teacher (female), voice teacher (female), manager of temporary personnel agency (male), production supervisor in high-tech manufacturing (male).

Appendix 2

The questionnaire instructions and examples were as follows:

Each of the following may seem true to you in some sense. Rate how true each seems according to the following scale: 1 = not very true; 2 = could be seen as true; 3 = somewhat true; 4 = very true; 5 = absolutely true.

1. Companies are like animals.
2. Trade is all about keeping score.
3. The economy is a machine.
4. Trade is like traveling.
5. Business is combat.
6. Trade is like a ballet.
7. The economy is a locomotive.
8. Business is a two-way street.
9. Business is a game.
10. Business is IBM.
11. Trade is war.
12. Markets are walled-in spaces.
13. Companies are heroes and villains.
14. The economy is a conveyer belt.
15. Business is a bombing mission.
16. Markets are fortresses.

17. Businesses are mammals.
18. Business is like football.
19. Trade is a dance.
20. Trade is a journey.
21. Companies are like people.
22. Trade is like a war.
23. IBM is a giant.
24. Markets are containers.
25. Business is a ballet.
26. Business is peace negotiations.
27. Businesses are hungry tigers.
28. Business is a joint excursion.
29. The economy is a computer.
30. Business is a production at the Bolshoi.
31. Businesses are dogs.
32. Markets are bubbles.
33. Business is the process of choreography.
34. IBM is Babe Ruth.
35. Companies are animals.
36. Business is like a machine.
37. Trade is a voyage of exploration.
38. Trade is a game.
39. Companies are people.
40. Markets are like countries.

Please list four or five statements you rated the truest and explain very briefly why they seemed true to you.

Please list four or five statements you rated the most false and explain very briefly why they seemed false to you.

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