Metaphor is for most people a device of the poetic imagination and the rhetorical flourish—a matter of extraordinary rather than ordinary language. Moreover, metaphor is typically viewed as characteristic of language alone, a matter of words rather than thought or action. For this reason, most people think they can get along perfectly well without metaphor. We have found, on the contrary, that metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature.

The concepts that govern our thought are not just matters of the intellect. They also govern our everyday functioning, down to the most mundane details. Our concepts structure what we perceive, how we get around in the world, and how we relate to other people. Our conceptual system thus plays a central role in defining our everyday realities. If we are right in suggesting that our conceptual system is largely metaphorical, then the way we think, what we experience, and what we do every day is very much a matter of metaphor.

But our conceptual system is not something we are normally aware of. In most of the little things we do every day, we simply think and act more or less automatically along certain lines. Just what these lines are is by no means obvious. One way to find out is by looking at language. Since communication is based on the same conceptual system that we use in thinking and acting, language is an important source of evidence for what that system is like.
Primarily on the basis of linguistic evidence, we have found that most of our ordinary conceptual system is metaphorical in nature. And we have found a way to begin to identify in detail just what the metaphors are that structure how we perceive, how we think, and what we do.

To give some idea of what it could mean for a concept to be metaphorical and for such a concept to structure an everyday activity, let us start with the concept argument and the conceptual metaphor argument is war. This metaphor is reflected in our everyday language by a wide variety of expressions:

**Argument is War**

Your claims are indefensible.
He attacked every weak point in my argument.
His criticisms were right on target.
I demolished his argument.
I’ve never won an argument with him.
You disagree? Okay, shoot!
If you use that strategy, he’ll wipe you out.
He shot down all of my arguments.

It is important to see that we don’t just talk about arguments in terms of war. We can actually win or lose arguments. We see the person we are arguing with as an opponent. We attack his positions and we defend our own. We gain and lose ground. We plan and use strategies. If we find a position indefensible, we can abandon it and take a new line of attack. Many of the things we do in arguing are partially structured by the concept of war. Though there is no physical battle, there is a verbal battle, and the structure of an argument—attack, defense, counterattack, etc.—reflects this. It is in this sense that the argument is war metaphor is one that we live by in this culture; it structures the actions we perform in arguing.

Try to imagine a culture where arguments are not viewed in terms of war, where no one wins or loses, where there is no sense of attacking or defending, gaining or losing ground. Imagine a culture where an argument is viewed as a dance, the participants are seen as performers, and the goal is to perform in a balanced and aesthetically pleasing way. In such a culture, people would view arguments differently, experience them differently, carry them out differently, and talk about them differently. But we would probably not view them as arguing at all: they would simply be doing something different. It would seem strange even to call what they were doing “arguing.” Perhaps the most neutral way of describing this difference between their culture and ours would be to say that we have a discourse form structured in terms of battle and they have one structured in terms of dance.

This is an example of what it means for a metaphorical concept, namely, argument is war, to structure (at least in part) what we do and how we understand what we are doing when we argue. The essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another. It is not that arguments are a subspecies of war. Arguments and wars are different kinds of things—verbal discourse and armed conflict—and the actions performed are different kinds of actions. But argument is partially structured, understood, performed, and talked about in terms of war. The concept is metaphorically structured, the activity is metaphorically structured, and, consequently, the language is metaphorically structured.

Moreover, this is the ordinary way of having an argument and talking about one. The normal way for us to talk about attacking a position is to use the words “attack a position.” Our conventional ways of talking about arguments presuppose a metaphor we are hardly ever conscious of. The metaphor is not merely in the words we use—it is in our very concept of an argument. The language of argument is not poetic, fanciful, or rhetorical; it is literal. We talk about arguments that way because we conceive of them that way—and we act according to the way we conceive of things.
The most important claim we have made so far is that metaphor is not just a matter of language, that is, of mere words. We shall argue that, on the contrary, human thought processes are largely metaphorical. This is what we mean when we say that the human conceptual system is metaphorically structured and defined. Metaphors as linguistic expressions are possible precisely because there are metaphors in a person’s conceptual system. Therefore, whenever in this book we speak of metaphors, such as ARGUMENT IS WAR, it should be understood that metaphor means metaphorical concept.

Arguments usually follow patterns; that is, there are certain things we typically do and do not do in arguing. The fact that we in part conceptualize arguments in terms of battle systematically influences the shape arguments take and the way we talk about what we do in arguing. Because the metaphorical concept is systematic, the language we use to talk about that aspect of the concept is systematic.

We saw in the ARGUMENT IS WAR metaphor that expressions from the vocabulary of war, e.g., attack a position, indefensible, strategy, new line of attack, win, gain ground, etc., form a systematic way of talking about the battling aspects of arguing. It is no accident that these expressions mean what they mean when we use them to talk about arguments. A portion of the conceptual network of battle partially characterizes the concept of an argument, and the language follows suit. Since metaphorical expressions in our language are tied to metaphorical concepts in a systematic way, we can use metaphorical linguistic expressions to study the nature of metaphorical concepts and to gain an understanding of the metaphorical nature of our activities.

To get an idea of how metaphorical expressions in everyday language can give us insight into the metaphorical nature of the concepts that structure our everyday activities, let us consider the metaphorical concept TIME IS MONEY as it is reflected in contemporary English.

TIME IS MONEY
You’re wasting my time.
This gadget will save you hours.
I don’t have the time to give you. How do you spend your time these days? That flat tire cost me an hour. I’ve invested a lot of time in her. I don’t have enough time to spare for that. You’re running out of time. You need to budget your time. Put aside some time for ping pong. Is that worth your while? Do you have much time left? He’s living on borrowed time. You don’t use your time profitably. I lost a lot of time when I got sick. Thank you for your time.

Time in our culture is a valuable commodity. It is a limited resource that we use to accomplish our goals. Because of the way that the concept of work has developed in modern Western culture, where work is typically associated with the time it takes and time is precisely quantified, it has become customary to pay people by the hour, week, or year. In our culture time is money in many ways: telephone message units, hourly wages, hotel room rates, yearly budgets, interest on loans, and paying your debt to society by “serving time.” These practices are relatively new in the history of the human race, and by no means do they exist in all cultures. They have arisen in modern industrialized societies and structure our basic everyday activities in a very profound way. Corresponding to the fact that we act as if time is a valuable commodity—a limited resource, even money—we conceive of time that way. Thus we understand and experience time as the kind of thing that can be spent, wasted, budgeted, invested wisely or poorly, saved, or squandered.

Time is money, time is a limited resource, and time is a valuable commodity are all metaphorical concepts. They are metaphorical since we are using our everyday experiences with money, limited resources, and valuable commodities to conceptualize time. This isn’t a necessary way for human beings to conceptualize time; it is tied to our culture. There are cultures where time is none of these things.

The metaphorical concepts time is money, time is a resource, and time is a valuable commodity form a single system based on subcategorization, since in our society money is a limited resource and limited resources are valuable commodities. These subcategorization relationships characterize entailment relationships between the metaphors. Time is money entails that time is a limited resource, which entails that time is a valuable commodity.

We are adopting the practice of using the most specific metaphorical concept, in this case time is money, to characterize the entire system. Of the expressions listed under the time is money metaphor, some refer specifically to money (spend, invest, budget, profitably, cost), others to limited resources (use, use up, have enough of, run out of), and still others to valuable commodities (have, give, lose, thank you for). This is an example of the way in which metaphorical entailments can characterize a coherent system of metaphorical concepts and a corresponding coherent system of metaphorical expressions for those concepts.
Metaphorical Systematicity: Highlighting and Hiding

The very systematicity that allows us to comprehend one aspect of a concept in terms of another (e.g., comprehending an aspect of arguing in terms of battle) will necessarily hide other aspects of the concept. In allowing us to focus on one aspect of a concept (e.g., the battling aspects of arguing), a metaphorical concept can keep us from focusing on other aspects of the concept that are inconsistent with that metaphor. For example, in the midst of a heated argument, when we are intent on attacking our opponent’s position and defending our own, we may lose sight of the cooperative aspects of arguing. Someone who is arguing with you can be viewed as giving you his time, a valuable commodity, in an effort at mutual understanding. But when we are preoccupied with the battle aspects, we often lose sight of the cooperative aspects.

A far more subtle case of how a metaphorical concept can hide an aspect of our experience can be seen in what Michael Reddy has called the “conduit metaphor.” Reddy observes that our language about language is structured roughly by the following complex metaphor:

IDEAS (OF MEANINGS) ARE OBJECTS.
LINGUISTIC EXPRESSIONS ARE CONTAINERS.
COMMUNICATION IS SENDING.

The speaker puts ideas (objects) into words (containers) and sends them (along a conduit) to a hearer who takes the idea/objects out of the word/containers. Reddy documents this with more than a hundred types of expressions in English, which he estimates account for at least 70 percent of

the expressions we use for talking about language. Here are some examples:

The conduit metaphor

It’s hard to get that idea across to him.
I gave you that idea.
Your reasons came through to us.
It’s difficult to put my ideas into words.
When you have a good idea, try to capture it immediately in words.
Try to pack more thought into fewer words.
You can’t simply stuff ideas into a sentence any old way.
The meaning is right there in the words.
Don’t force your meanings into the wrong words.
His words carry little meaning.
The introduction has a great deal of thought content.
Your words seem hollow.
The sentence is without meaning.
The idea is buried in terribly dense paragraphs.

In examples like these it is far more difficult to see that there is anything hidden by the metaphor or even to see that there is a metaphor here at all. This is so much the conventional way of thinking about language that it is sometimes hard to imagine that it might not fit reality. But if we look at what the conduit metaphor entails, we can see some of the ways in which it masks aspects of the communicative process.

First, the linguistic expressions are containers for meanings aspect of the conduit metaphor entails that words and sentences have meanings in themselves, independent of any context or speaker. The meanings are objects part of the metaphor, for example, entails that meanings have an existence independent of people and contexts. The part of the metaphor that says linguistic expressions are containers for meanings entails that words (and sentences) have meanings, again independent of contexts and speakers. These metaphors are appropriate in many situations—those where context differences don’t
matter and where all the participants in the conversation understand the sentences in the same way. These two entailments are exemplified by sentences like

The meaning is right there in the words, which, according to the conduit metaphor, can correctly be said of any sentence. But there are many cases where context does matter. Here is a celebrated one recorded in actual conversation by Pamela Downing:

Please sit in the apple-juice seat.

In isolation this sentence has no meaning at all, since the expression “apple-juice seat” is not a conventional way of referring to any kind of object. But the sentence makes perfect sense in the context in which it was uttered. An overnight guest came down to breakfast. There were four place settings, three with orange juice and one with apple juice. It was clear what the apple-juice seat was. And even the next morning, when there was no apple juice, it was still clear which seat was the apple-juice seat.

In addition to sentences that have no meaning without context, there are cases where a single sentence will mean different things to different people. Consider:

We need new alternative sources of energy.

This means something very different to the president of Mobil Oil from what it means to the president of Friends of the Earth. The meaning is not right there in the sentence—it matters a lot who is saying or listening to the sentence and what his social and political attitudes are. The conduit metaphor does not fit cases where context is required to determine whether the sentence has any meaning at all and, if so, what meaning it has.

These examples show that the metaphorical concepts we have looked at provide us with a partial understanding of what communication, argument, and time are and that, in doing this, they hide other aspects of these concepts. It is important to see that the metaphorical structuring involved here is partial, not total. If it were total, one concept would actually be the other, not merely be understood in terms of it. For example, time isn’t really money. If you spend your time trying to do something and it doesn’t work, you can’t get your time back. There are no time banks. I can give you a lot of time, but you can’t give me back the same time, though you can give me back the same amount of time. And so on. Thus, part of a metaphorical concept does not and cannot fit.

On the other hand, metaphorical concepts can be extended beyond the range of ordinary literal ways of thinking and talking into the range of what is called figurative, poetic, colorful, or fanciful thought and language. Thus, if ideas are objects, we can dress them up in fancy clothes, juggle them, line them up nice and neat, etc. So when we say that a concept is structured by a metaphor, we mean that it is partially structured and that it can be extended in some ways but not others.
Orientational Metaphors

So far we have examined what we will call *structural metaphors*, cases where one concept is metaphorically structured in terms of another. But there is another kind of metaphorical concept, one that does not structure one concept in terms of another but instead organizes a whole system of concepts with respect to one another. We will call these *orientational metaphors*, since most of them have to do with spatial orientation: up-down, in-out, front-back, on-off, deep-shallow, central-peripheral. These spatial orientations arise from the fact that we have bodies of the sort we have and that they function as they do in our physical environment. Orientational metaphors give a concept a spatial orientation; for example, HAPPY IS UP. The fact that the concept HAPPY is oriented UP leads to English expressions like “I’m feeling up today.”

Such metaphorical orientations are not arbitrary. They have a basis in our physical and cultural experience. Though the polar oppositions up-down, in-out, etc., are physical in nature, the orientational metaphors based on them can vary from culture to culture. For example, in some cultures the future is in front of us, whereas in others it is in back. We will be looking at up-down spatialization metaphors, which have been studied intensively by William Nagy (1974), as an illustration. In each case, we will give a brief hint about how each metaphorical concept might have arisen from our physical and cultural experience. These accounts are meant to be suggestive and plausible, not definitive.

**HAPPY IS UP; SAD IS DOWN**

I’m feeling up. That boosted my spirits. My spirits rose. You’re in high spirits. Thinking about her always gives me a lift. I’m feeling down. I’m depressed. He’s really low these days. I fell into a depression. My spirits sank.

Physical basis: Drooping posture typically goes along with sadness and depression, erect posture with a positive emotional state.

**CONSCIOUS IS UP; UNCONSCIOUS IS DOWN**

Get up. Wake up. I’m up already. He rises early in the morning. He fell asleep. He dropped off to sleep. He’s under hypnosis. He sank into a coma.

Physical basis: Humans and most other mammals sleep lying down and stand up when they awaken.

**HEALTH AND LIFE ARE UP; SICKNESS AND DEATH ARE DOWN**

He’s at the peak of health. Lazarus rose from the dead. He’s in top shape. As to his health, he’s way up there. He fell ill. He’s sinking fast. He came down with the flu. His health is declining. He dropped dead.

Physical basis: Serious illness forces us to lie down physically. When you’re dead, you are physically down.

**HAVING CONTROL OF FORCE IS UP; BEING SUBJECT TO CONTROL OF FORCE IS DOWN**

I have control over her. I am on top of the situation. He’s in a superior position. He’s at the height of his power. He’s in the high command. He’s in the upper echelon. His power rose. He ranks above me in strength. He is under my control. He fell from power. His power is on the decline. He is my social inferior. He is low man on the totem pole.

Physical basis: Physical size typically correlates with physical strength, and the victor in a fight is typically on top.

**MORE IS UP; LESS IS DOWN**

The number of books printed each year keeps going up. His
draft number is *high*. My income *rose* last year. The amount of artistic activity in this state has gone *down* in the past year. The number of errors he made is incredibly *low*. His income *fell* last year. He is *underage*. If you’re too hot, turn the heat *down*.

Physical basis: If you add more of a substance or of physical objects to a container or pile, the level goes up.

**FORESEEABLE FUTURE EVENTS ARE UP (and ahead)**
All *up* coming events are listed in the paper. What’s coming *up* this week? I’m afraid of what’s *up ahead* of us. What’s *up*?

Physical basis: Normally our eyes look in the direction in which we typically move (ahead, forward). As an object approaches a person (or the person approaches the object), the object appears larger. Since the ground is perceived as being fixed, the top of the object appears to be moving upward in the person’s field of vision.

**HIGH STATUS IS UP; LOW STATUS IS DOWN**
He has a *lofty* position. She’ll *rise* to the *top*. He’s at the *peak* of his career. He’s *climbing* the ladder. He has little *upward* mobility. He’s at the *bottom* of the social hierarchy. She *fell* in status.

Social and physical basis: Status is correlated with (social) power and (physical) power is *up*.

**GOOD IS UP; BAD IS DOWN**
Things are looking *up*. We hit a *peak* last year, but it’s been *downhill* ever since. Things are at an all-time *low*. He does *high-quality* work.

Physical basis for personal well-being: Happiness, health, life, and control—the things that principally characterize what is good for a person—are all *up*.

**VIRTUE IS UP; DEPRAVITY IS DOWN**
He is *high-minded*. She has *high* standards. She is *upright*. She is an *upstanding* citizen. That was a *low* trick. Don’t be *underhanded*. I wouldn’t *stoop* to that. That would be *beneath* me. He *fell* into the *abyss* of depravity. That was a *low-down* thing to do.

Physical and social basis: *GOOD IS UP* for a person (physical basis), together with a metaphor that we will discuss below, *SOCIETY IS A PERSON* (in the version where you are *not* identifying with your society). To be virtuous is to act in accordance with the standards set by the society/person to maintain its well-being. *VIRTUE IS UP* because virtuous actions correlate with social well-being from the society/person’s point of view. Since socially based metaphors are part of the culture, it’s the society/person’s point of view that counts.

**RATIONAL IS UP; EMOTIONAL IS DOWN**
The discussion *fell to the emotional* level, but I *raised* it back *up to the rational* plane. We put our *feelings* aside and had a *high-level intellectual* discussion of the matter. He couldn’t *rise above* his *emotions*.

Physical and cultural basis: In our culture people view themselves as being in control over animals, plants, and their physical environment, and it is their unique ability to reason that places human beings above other animals and gives them this control. CONTROL IS UP thus provides a basis for MAN IS UP and therefore for RATIONAL IS UP.

**Conclusions**

On the basis of these examples, we suggest the following conclusions about the experiential grounding, the coherence, and the systematicity of metaphorical concepts:

—Most of our fundamental concepts are organized in terms of one or more spatialization metaphors.

—There is an internal systematicity to each spatialization metaphor. For example, HAPPY IS UP defines a coherent system rather than a number of isolated and random cases. (An example of an incoherent system would be one where, say, ”I’m
feeling up” meant “I'm feeling happy,” but “My spirits rose” meant “I became sadder.”

There is an overall external systematicity among the various spatiialization metaphors, which defines coherence among them. Thus, good is up gives an up orientation to general well-being, and this orientation is coherent with special cases like happy is up, health is up, alive is up, control is up. Status is up is coherent with control is up.

Spatialization metaphors are rooted in physical and cultural experience; they are not randomly assigned. A metaphor can serve as a vehicle for understanding a concept only by virtue of its experiential basis. (Some of the complexities of the experiential basis of metaphor are discussed in the following section.)

There are many possible physical and social bases for metaphor. Coherence within the overall system seems to be part of the reason why one is chosen and not another. For example, happiness also tends to correlate physically with a smile and a general feeling of expansiveness. This could in principle form the basis for a metaphor happy is wide; sad is narrow. And in fact there are minor metaphorical expressions, like “I'm feeling expansive,” that pick out a different aspect of happiness than “I'm feeling up” does. But the major metaphor in our culture is happy is up; there is a reason why we speak of the height of ecstasy rather than the breadth of ecstasy. Happy is up is maximally coherent with good is up, healthy is up, etc.

In some cases spatialization is so essential a part of a concept that it is difficult for us to imagine any alternative metaphor that might structure the concept. In our society “high status” is such a concept. Other cases, like happiness, are less clear. Is the concept of happiness independent of the happy is up metaphor, or is the up-down spatialization of happiness a part of the concept? We believe that it is a part of the concept within a given conceptual system. The happy is up metaphor places happiness within a coherent metaphorical system, and part of its meaning comes from its role in that system.

So-called purely intellectual concepts, e.g., the concepts in a scientific theory, are often—perhaps always—based on metaphors that have a physical and/or cultural basis. The high in “high-energy particles” is based on more is up. The high in “high-level functions,” as in physiological psychology, is based on rational is up. The low in “low-level phonology” (which refers to detailed phonetic aspects of the sound systems of languages) is based on mundane reality is down (as in “down to earth”). The intuitive appeal of a scientific theory has to do with how well its metaphors fit one’s experience.

Our physical and cultural experience provides many possible bases for spatialization metaphors. Which ones are chosen, and which ones are major, may vary from culture to culture.

It is hard to distinguish the physical from the cultural basis of a metaphor, since the choice of one physical basis from among many possible ones has to do with cultural coherence.

Experiential Bases of Metaphors

We do not know very much about the experiential bases of metaphors. Because of our ignorance in this matter, we have described the metaphors separately, only later adding speculative notes on their possible experiential bases. We are adopting this practice out of ignorance, not out of principle. In actuality we feel that no metaphor can ever be comprehended or even adequately represented independently of its experiential basis. For example, more is up has a very different kind of experiential basis than happy is up or rational is up. Though the concept up is the same in all these metaphors, the experiences on which these up metaphors are based are very different. It is not that there are many different ups; rather, verticality enters our experience in many different ways and so gives rise to many different metaphors.

One way of emphasizing the inseparability of metaphors from their experiential bases would be to build the experiential basis into the representations themselves. Thus, instead of writing more is up and rational is up, we might have the more complex relationship shown in the diagram.
Such a representation would emphasize that the two parts of each metaphor are linked only via an experiential basis and that it is only by means of these experiential bases that the metaphor can serve the purpose of understanding.

We will not use such representations, but only because we know so little about experiential bases of metaphors. We will continue to use the word "is" in stating metaphors like MORE IS UP, but the IS should be viewed as a shorthand for some set of experiences on which the metaphor is based and in terms of which we understand it.

The role of the experiential basis is important in understanding the workings of metaphors that do not fit together because they are based on different kinds of experience. Take, for example, a metaphor like UNKNOWN IS UP; KNOWN IS DOWN. Examples are "That's up in the air" and "The matter is settled." This metaphor has an experiential basis very much like that of UNDERSTANDING IS GRASPING, as in "I couldn't grasp his explanation." With physical objects, if you can grasp something and hold it in your hands, you can look it over carefully and get a reasonably good understanding of it. It's easier to grasp something and look at it carefully if it's on the ground in a fixed location than if it's floating through the air (like a leaf or a piece of paper). Thus UNKNOWN IS UP; KNOWN IS DOWN is coherent with UNDERSTANDING IS GRASPING.

But UNKNOWN IS UP is not coherent with metaphors like GOOD IS UP and FINISHED IS UP (as in "I'm finishing up"). One would expect FINISHED to be paired with KNOWN and UNFINISHED to be paired with UNKNOWN. But, so far as verticality metaphors are concerned, this is not the case. The reason is that UNKNOWN IS UP has a very different experiential basis than FINISHED IS UP.
Metaphor and Cultural Coherence

The most fundamental values in a culture will be coherent with the metaphorical structure of the most fundamental concepts in the culture. As an example, let us consider some cultural values in our society that are coherent with our up-down spatialization metaphors and whose opposites would not be.

"More is better" is coherent with MORE IS UP and GOOD IS UP. "Less is better" is not coherent with them.

"Bigger is better" is coherent with MORE IS UP and GOOD IS UP. "Smaller is better" is not coherent with them.

"The future will be better" is coherent with THE FUTURE IS UP and GOOD IS UP. "The future will be worse" is not.

"There will be more in the future" is coherent with MORE IS UP and THE FUTURE IS UP.

"Your status should be higher in the future" is coherent with HIGH STATUS IS UP and THE FUTURE IS UP.

These are values deeply embedded in our culture. "The future will be better" is a statement of the concept of progress. "There will be more in the future" has as special cases the accumulation of goods and wage inflation. "Your status should be higher in the future" is a statement of careerism. These are coherent with our present spatialization metaphors; their opposites would not be. So it seems that our values are not independent but must form a coherent system with the metaphorical concepts we live by. We are not claiming that all cultural values coherent with a metaphorical system actually exist, only that those that do exist and are deeply entrenched are consistent with the metaphorical system.

The values listed above hold in our culture generally—all things being equal. But because things are usually not equal, there are often conflicts among these values and hence conflicts among the metaphors associated with them. To explain such conflicts among values (and their metaphors), we must find the different priorities given to these values and metaphors by the subculture that uses them. For instance, MORE IS UP seems always to have the highest priority since it has the clearest physical basis. The priority of MORE IS UP over GOOD IS UP can be seen in examples like "Inflation is rising" and "The crime rate is going up." Assuming that inflation and the crime rate are bad, these sentences mean what they do because MORE IS UP always has top priority.

In general, which values are given priority is partly a matter of the subculture one lives in and partly a matter of personal values. The various subcultures of a mainstream culture share basic values but give them different priorities. For example, BIGGER IS BETTER may be in conflict with THERE WILL BE MORE IN THE FUTURE when it comes to the question of whether to buy a big car now, with large time payments that will eat up future salary, or whether to buy a smaller, cheaper car. There are American subcultures where you buy the big car and don't worry about the future, and there are others where the future comes first and you buy the small car. There was a time (before inflation and the energy crisis) when owning a small car had a high status within the subculture where VIRTUE IS UP and SAVING RESOURCES IS VIRTUOUS took priority over BIGGER IS BETTER. Nowadays the number of small-car owners has gone up drastically because there is a large subculture where SAVING MONEY IS BETTER has priority over BIGGER IS BETTER.

In addition to subcultures, there are groups whose defining characteristic is that they share certain important values
that conflict with those of the mainstream culture. But in less obvious ways they preserve other mainstream values. Take monastic orders like the Trappists. There LESS IS BETTER and SMALLER IS BETTER are true with respect to material possessions, which are viewed as hindering what is important, namely, serving God. The Trappists share the mainstream value VIRTUE IS UP, though they give it the highest priority and a very different definition. MORE is still BETTER, though it applies to virtue; and status is still UP, though it is not of this world but of a higher one, the Kingdom of God. Moreover, THE FUTURE WILL BE BETTER is true in terms of spiritual growth (UP) and, ultimately, salvation (really UP). This is typical of groups that are out of the mainstream culture. Virtue, goodness, and status may be radically redefined, but they are still UP. It is still better to have more of what is important, THE FUTURE WILL BE BETTER with respect to what is important, and so on. Relative to what is important for a monastic group, the value system is both internally coherent and, with respect to what is important for the group, coherent with the major orientational metaphors of the mainstream culture.

Individuals, like groups, vary in their priorities and in the ways they define what is good or virtuous to them. In this sense, they are subgroups of one. Relative to what is important for them, their individual value systems are coherent with the major orientational metaphors of the mainstream culture.

Not all cultures give the priorities we do to up-down orientation. There are cultures where balance or centrality plays a much more important role than it does in our culture. Or consider the nonspatial orientation active-passive. For us ACTIVE IS UP and PASSIVE IS DOWN in most matters. But there are cultures where passivity is valued more than activity. In general the major orientations up-down, in-out, central-peripheral, active-passive, etc., seem to cut across all cultures, but which concepts are oriented which way and which orientations are most important vary from culture to culture.

Ontological Metaphors

Entity and Substance Metaphors

Spatial orientations like up-down, front-back, on-off, center-periphery, and near-far provide an extraordinarily rich basis for understanding concepts in orientational terms. But one can do only so much with orientation. Our experience of physical objects and substances provides a further basis for understanding—one that goes beyond mere orientation. Understanding our experiences in terms of objects and substances allows us to pick out parts of our experience and treat them as discrete entities or substances of a uniform kind. Once we can identify our experiences as entities or substances, we can refer to them, categorize them, group them, and quantify them—and, by this means, reason about them.

When things are not clearly discrete or bounded, we still categorize them as such, e.g., mountains, street corners, hedges, etc. Such ways of viewing physical phenomena are needed to satisfy certain purposes that we have: locating mountains, meeting at street corners, trimming hedges. Human purposes typically require us to impose artificial boundaries that make physical phenomena discrete just as we are: entities bounded by a surface.

Just as the basic experiences of human spatial orientations give rise to orientational metaphors, so our experiences with physical objects (especially our own bodies) provide the basis for an extraordinarily wide variety of ontological metaphors, that is, ways of viewing events, activities, emotions, ideas, etc., as entities and substances.

Ontological metaphors serve various purposes, and the
Some Further Examples

We have been claiming that metaphors partially structure our everyday concepts and that this structure is reflected in our literal language. Before we can get an overall picture of the philosophical implications of these claims, we need a few more examples. In each of the ones that follow we give a metaphor and a list of ordinary expressions that are special cases of the metaphor. The English expressions are of two sorts: simple literal expressions and idioms that fit the metaphor and are part of the normal everyday way of talking about the subject.

THEORIES (and ARGUMENTS) ARE BUILDINGS
Is that the foundation for your theory? The theory needs more support. The argument is shaky. We need some more facts or the argument will fall apart. We need to construct a strong argument for that. I haven't figured out yet what the form of the argument will be. Here are some more facts to shore up the theory. We need to buttress the theory with solid arguments. The theory will stand or fall on the strength of that argument. The argument collapsed. They exploded his latest theory. We will show that theory to be without foundation. So far we have put together only the framework of the theory.

IDEAS ARE FOOD
What he said left a bad taste in my mouth. All this paper has in it are raw facts, half-baked ideas, and warmed-over theories. There are too many facts here for me to digest them all. I just can't swallow that claim. That argument smells fishy. Let me stew over that for a while. Now there's a theory you can really sink your teeth into. We need to let that idea percolate for a while. That's food for thought. He's a voracious reader. We don't need to spoon-feed our students. He devoured the book. Let's let that idea simmer on the back burner for a while. This is the meaty part of the paper. Let that idea jell for a while. That idea has been fermenting for years.

With respect to life and death IDEAS ARE ORGANISMS, either PEOPLE or PLANTS.

IDEAS ARE PEOPLE
The theory of relativity gave birth to an enormous number of ideas in physics. He is the father of modern biology. Whose brainchild was that? Look at what his ideas have spawned. Those ideas died off in the Middle Ages. His ideas will live on forever. Cognitive psychology is still in its infancy. That's an idea that ought to be resurrected. Where'd you dig up that idea? He breathed new life into that idea.

IDEAS ARE PLANTS
His ideas have finally come to fruition. That idea died on the vine. That's a budding theory. It will take years for that idea to come to full flower. He views chemistry as a mere offshoot of physics. Mathematics has many branches. The seeds of his great ideas were planted in his youth. She has a fertile imagination. Here's an idea that I'd like to plant in your mind. He has a barren mind.

IDEAS ARE PRODUCTS
We're really turning (churning, cranking, grinding) out new ideas. We've generated a lot of ideas this week. He produces new ideas at an astounding rate. His intellectual productivity has decreased in recent years. We need to take the rough edges off that idea, hone it down, smooth it out. It's a rough idea; it needs to be refined.

IDEAS ARE COMMODITIES
It's important how you package your ideas. He won't buy that. That idea just won't sell. There is always a market for good ideas. That's a worthless idea. He's been a source of...
valuable ideas. I wouldn't give a plugged nickel for that idea. Your ideas don't have a chance in the intellectual marketplace.

IDEAS ARE RESOURCES
He ran out of ideas. Don't waste your thoughts on small projects. Let's pool our ideas. He's a resourceful man. We've used up all our ideas. That's a useless idea. That idea will go a long way.

IDEAS ARE MONEY
Let me put in my two cents' worth. He's rich in ideas. That book is a treasure trove of ideas. He has a wealth of ideas.

IDEAS ARE CUTTING INSTRUMENTS
That's an incisive idea. That cuts right to the heart of the matter. That was a cutting remark. He's sharp. He has a razor wit. He has a keen mind. She cut his argument to ribbons.

IDEAS ARE FASHIONS
That idea went out of style years ago. I hear sociobiology is in these days. Marxism is currently fashionable in western Europe. That idea is old hat! That's an outdated idea. What are the new trends in English criticism? Old-fashioned notions have no place in today's society. He keeps up-to-date by reading the New York Review of Books. Berkeley is a center of avant-garde thought. Semiotics has become quite chic. The idea of revolution is no longer in vogue in the United States. The transformational grammar craze hit the United States in the mid-sixties and has just made it to Europe.

UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING; IDEAS ARE LIGHT-SOURCES; DISCOURSE IS A LIGHT-MEDIUM
I see what you're saying. It looks different from my point of view. What is your outlook on that? I view it differently. Now I've got the whole picture. Let me point something out to you. That's an insightful idea. That was a brilliant remark. The argument is clear. It was a murky discussion. Could you elucidate your remarks? It's a transparent argument. The discussion was opaque.

SOME FURTHER EXAMPLES

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LOVE IS A PHYSICAL FORCE (ELECTROMAGNETIC, GRAVITATIONAL, etc.)
I could feel the electricity between us. There were sparks. I was magnetically drawn to her. They are uncontrollably attracted to each other. They gravitated to each other immediately. His whole life revolves around her. The atmosphere around them is always charged. There is incredible energy in their relationship. They lost their momentum.

LOVE IS A PATIENT
This is a sick relationship. They have a strong, healthy marriage. The marriage is dead—it can't be revived. Their marriage is on the mend. We're getting back on our feet. Their relationship is in really good shape. They've got a listless marriage. Their marriage is on its last legs. It's a tired affair.

LOVE IS MADNESS
I'm crazy about her. She drives me out of my mind. He constantly raves about her. He's gone mad over her. I'm just wild about Harry. I'm insane about her.

LOVE IS MAGIC
She cast her spell over me. The magic is gone. I was spellbound. She had me hypnotized. He has me in a trance. I was entranced by him. I'm charmed by her. She is bewitching.

LOVE IS WAR
He is known for his many rapid conquests. She fought for him, but his mistress won out. He fled from her advances. She pursued him relentlessly. He is slowly gaining ground with her. He won her hand in marriage. He overpowered her. She is besieged by suitors. He has to fend them off. He enlisted the aid of her friends. He made an ally of her mother. Theirs is a misalliance if I've ever seen one.

WEALTH IS A HIDDEN OBJECT
He's seeking his fortune. He's flaunting his new-found wealth. He's a fortune-hunter. She's a gold-digger. He lost his fortune. He's searching for wealth.
SIGNIFICANT IS BIG
He’s a big man in the garment industry. He’s a giant among writers. That’s the biggest idea to hit advertising in years. He’s head and shoulders above everyone in the industry. It was only a small crime. That was only a little white lie. I was astounded at the enormity of the crime. That was one of the greatest moments in World Series history. His accomplishments tower over those of lesser men.

SEEING IS TOUCHING; EYES ARE LIMBS
I can’t take my eyes off her. He sits with his eyes glued to the TV. Her eyes picked out every detail of the pattern. Their eyes met. She never moves her eyes from his face. She ran her eyes over everything in the room. He wants everything within reach of his eyes.

THE EYES ARE CONTAINERS FOR THE EMOTIONS
I could see the fear in his eyes. His eyes were filled with anger. There was passion in her eyes. His eyes displayed his compassion. She couldn’t get the fear out of her eyes. Love showed in his eyes. Her eyes welled with emotion.

EMOTIONAL EFFECT IS PHYSICAL CONTACT
His mother’s death hit him hard. That idea bowled me over. She’s a knockout. I was struck by his sincerity. That really made an impression on me. He made his mark on the world. I was touched by his remark. That blew me away.

PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL STATES ARE ENTITIES WITHIN A PERSON
He has a pain in his shoulder. Don’t give me the flu. My cold has gone from my head to my chest. His pains went away. His depression returned. Hot tea and honey will get rid of your cough. He could barely contain his joy. The smile left his face. Wipe that sneer off your face, private! His fears keep coming back. I’ve got to shake off this depression—it keeps hanging on. If you’ve got a cold, drinking lots of tea will flush it out of your system. There isn’t a trace of cowardice in him. He hasn’t got an honest bone in his body.

SOME FURTHER EXAMPLES

VITALITY IS A SUBSTANCE
She’s brimming with vim and vigor. She’s overflowing with vitality. He’s devoid of energy. I don’t have any energy left at the end of the day. I’m drained. That took a lot out of me.

LIFE IS A CONTAINER
I’ve had a full life. Life is empty for him. There’s not much left for him in life. Her life is crammed with activities. Get the most out of life. His life contained a great deal of sorrow. Live your life to the fullest.

LIFE IS A GAMBLING GAME
I’ll take my chances. The odds are against me. I’ve got an ace up my sleeve. He’s holding all the aces. It’s a toss-up. If you play your cards right, you can do it. He won big. He’s a real loser. Where is he when the chips are down? That’s my ace in the hole. He’s bluffing. The president is playing it close to his vest. Let’s up the ante. Maybe we need to sweeten the pot. I think we should stand pat. That’s the luck of the draw. Those are high stakes.

In this last group of examples we have a collection of what are called “speech formulas,” or “fixed-form expressions,” or “phrasal lexical items.” These function in many ways like single words, and the language has thousands of them. In the examples given, a set of such phrasal lexical items is coherently structured by a single metaphorical concept. Although each of them is an instance of the LIFE IS A GAMBLING GAME metaphor, they are typically used to speak of life, not of gambling situations. They are normal ways of talking about life situations, just as using the word “construct” is a normal way of talking about theories. It is in this sense that we include them in what we have called literal expressions structured by metaphorical concepts. If you say “The odds are against us” or “We’ll have to take our chances,” you would not be viewed as speaking metaphorically but as using the normal everyday language appropriate to the situation. Nevertheless, your way of talking about, conceiving, and even experiencing your situation would be metaphorically structured.