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From Cognitive Linguistics to Social Science: Thirty Years after *Metaphors We Live By*

In the thirty years since the appearance of *Metaphors We Live By*, cognitive linguistics has developed into a flourishing autonomous branch of inquiry. Interdisciplinary contacts, however, have largely been restricted to literary studies and the cognitive sciences and hardly extended towards the social sciences. This is the more surprising as, in 1970s anthropology, metaphor was seen as a key notion for the study of symbolism more generally. This contribution explores the cognitive linguistic view of social and cultural factors. Lakoff and Johnson appear ambivalent regarding the relation between culture and cognition; but they share the belief, elaborated in detail by Gibbs and Turner (2002), that cultural factors can be accounted for in terms of cognitive processes. This view runs into both methodological and philosophical difficulties. Methodologically, it assumes that cultural factors can be reduced to cognitive processes; philosophically, it boils down to a Cartesian emphasis on inner experience explaining outer phenomena. There are substantial anti-Cartesian strains both in contemporary philosophy and in a major current of Eighteenth-Century philosophy. The latter, in particular, emphasized the importance of embodiment and metaphor in cognition. As an alternative, I will sketch a more consistently semiotic- and practice-oriented approach that proceeds from linguistic practices to cognitive processes rather than the other way around. It takes practices as irreducibly public and normative; on this approach, so-called linguistic ideologies (Silverstein 1979) play a constitutive role in both linguistic practice and language structure. This alternative builds on recent developments in linguistic anthropology and the work of Peirce and Bakhtin. It suggests a different look at the relation between cognition, language, and social practice from that suggested in cognitive linguistics.

1. INTRODUCTION

The 1980 appearance of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By* (henceforth *MWLB*) marks the beginnings of cognitive linguistics: a research paradigm that has seen tremendous growth over the past three decades. Characteristic of this paradigm is a fruitful interdisciplinary cooperation with – among others – departments of literature and cognitive science. Yet, there is a remarkable one-sidedness to this interdisciplinary blossoming: one sees little if any substantial exchange or collaboration between cognitive linguistics and the social sciences.

This lack of contact is all the more surprising as, in the late 1970s, metaphor appeared to become the master trope of symbolic and cognitive anthropology: thus, in 1974, James Fernandez argued that metaphor is the key figure – or master trope – of symbolic anthropology. However, by the early 1990s – in a volume significantly entitled *Beyond Metaphor* (Fernandez 1991) – he suggests that the study of

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tropes should look beyond this particular figure; and later research in anthropology seems to have shifted even further away from the study of metaphor in particular and tropes in general.

In this paper, I try to explain why this once-promising line of interdisciplinary research was not pursued more ardently, or with more lasting success, in the following decades. I do so, first, by discussing methodological considerations on the relative priority of cultural and cognitive factors in *MWLB* and several of Lakoff and Johnson's later works, as well as more recent studies by Ray Gibbs and Mark Turner. Next, I supplement these methodological considerations with a more strictly philosophical argument that is both systematic and historical in character. The systematic point is that there are serious philosophical challenges to the – ultimately Cartesian – picture assumed by cognitive semanticists. The historical point is that, in Western philosophy, there *is* a tradition that takes both figurative language and the impact of social practices on cognition seriously; strangely, Lakoff and Johnson pass over this tradition in silence.

2. COGNITION AND CULTURE: METHODOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS

Culture does not loom large in *MWLB*. This should be no cause for surprise, given the emphasis on cognitive processes implicitly assumed to be universal. The concept of culture plays no major explanatory role in Lakoff and Johnson's theoretical framework: culture is not a supporting member of the theoretical architecture of cognitive linguistics. Yet, here and elsewhere, Lakoff and Johnson present – or rather, presume – a substantial notion of culture. It is worthwhile to tease out these tacit assumptions and see how they relate to social-scientific discussions.

First, they tend to relegate cultural variation to the status of a mere surface phenomenon that has no important influence on cognitive processes. In their brief remarks on metaphor and cultural coherence (*MWLB* Ch. 5), they appear to argue that, despite the different values attached to MORE–LESS, UP–DOWN, and other orientations, both the experiential base and the metaphorical processes involved are cross-culturally identical: 'the major orientations up-down, in-out 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' (1980: 24). Although the experiential base is the same, these different orientations may be evaluated differently; but all the metaphorical projections are based on the same cognitive processes. Put differently: although the *content* of particular orientational metaphors and valuations of up-down, left-right etc., may vary across cultures, the *structure* of the metaphorical mappings with which spatial experience maps onto more abstract domains is universal.

Second, Lakoff and Johnson assume that cultures operate in terms of shared conceptualizations and shared norms and values. They speak repeatedly of the conceptual metaphors of 'our culture' and 'our society' (e.g., 1980: 22) without specifying how either is delimited: American, Anglosaxon, Western, or what? Are they bounded by language or by other factors?

These conceptions do not change in later writings. Thus, in *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things* (1987; henceforth *WFDT*), Lakoff does not develop or qualify his conception of culture as shared. Neither does he clearly analyze, distinguish, or contrast the cultural and natural aspects of the world within which individual organisms function. As a result, his chapter on relativism displays a profound ambivalence between seeing culture as merely expressing – ultimately universal – deeper cognitive realities and seeing it as actually shaping or even constituting thought. Likewise, in (2001), he mostly talks about culture in terms of romantic and organicist notions of shared traditions, norms, and values: thus, he sweepingly characterizes 'Islamic culture' as involving 'values' radically different from 'our' culture. This claim is not only factually wrong, but conceptually problematic: here and elsewhere in his writings, Lakoff uncritically reproduces a romantic and ahistorical notion of culture as timeless and anonymous, involving shared norms and values. His 'culture' concept can be called communitarian, insofar as it presumes cultural communities as given. The question for social scientists to answer, however, is precisely how such communities are created, and how they either sustain themselves or are transformed? A related question is, who can legitimately claim to represent a culture or determine which conceptions and values are shared by – or even constitutive of – that community? In his discussions of conceptual and cultural relativism, Lakoff appears to presume the domains of language, thought, and culture as three distinct entities. The separation of these domains, however, requires a substantial process of purification that is relatively recent and by no means uncontested (Bauman & Briggs 2003: Ch. 8). The very conception of culture presumed by Lakoff and Johnson as self-evident or unproblematic is surprisingly recent: the term *culture* did not get its currently widespread meaning until around 1800.

Thus, the 'culture concept' assumed in cognitive linguistics appears to be thoroughly romantic and communitarian. However, perhaps one should not belabour the problems with and shortcomings in Lakoff and Johnson's views; but rather, more constructively, ask how cognitive-linguistic approaches could be extended or modified to accommodate a more sophisticated view of the complexities of human culture and society: more specifically, to accommodate the findings of social sciences. Gibbs (1999) offers a brief, programmatic attempt and Turner (2002) a more detailed argument in this direction. Let us consider both in turn.

Gibbs acknowledges that cognition arises from interaction between embodied mind and a cultural – not just physical – world. He argues that cognitive linguistics should be extended to accommodate these cultural aspects; but he stops short of drawing the more radical conclusion that cultural factors, interacting with embodied cognition, may be at least partly *constitutive* of the latter. Of course, such a view would lead to radical questioning of the idea of 'basic-level concepts' as not only a non-metaphorical foundation for cognition, but directly meaningful and intrinsically intentional (*cf*. Lakoff 1987: 267). This view runs afoul of the crucial – probably irreducible – cultural component in such allegedly basic-level concepts as CHAIR and MOTHER. Chairs are obviously cultural artefacts, and mothers are not simply biologically given, but – to an important extent – socially constituted.

Motherhood, like kinship relations more generally, involves a distinct social role and a distinct social status that may vary widely across cultures. Like all kinship relations, it is cultural as much as biological. The assumption that these biological dimensions are prior is both theory-driven and debateable, not self-evidently true.

Mark Turner (2002) attempts to present cognitive linguistics as a foundational auxiliary science for the social sciences, giving a cognitive twist to Clifford Geertz's interpretive approach to anthropology – which already heavily employs concepts and methods from literary theory and philosophy, in particular semiotics and hermeneutics. Echoing Max Weber, Geertz argues that human behaviour is a form of symbolic action; the anthropologist's or sociologist's task is to explicate the social meanings of the symbols involved. To mention one famous example, the Balinese cockfights explored by Geertz (1973) tell something deep about Balinese culture. The violent cockfight functions as a peaceful – indeed playful – enactment of rivalries or hostilities between kin groups and villages or even, on a broader stage, between the islands of Bali and Java.

Turner argues that these cultural meanings are generated by the basic cognitive operation of what he calls *blending*. Social science 'looks at meanings all the time, but not at the problem of meaning' (2002: 10): that is, it presumes the existence of meaning as an explanatory entity, rather than exploring how it comes about as a feature – or result – of people's biological, cultural, and social makeup. It is here that cognitive linguistics can help, he claims, as it sets out to account for meanings as the result of basic mental – hence, biologically endowed – operations. He identifies blending, rather than the earlier notions of conceptual metaphor and conceptual mapping, as the central and universal process generating the meanings involved in social action.

Much of Turner's book reads like a cognitivist gloss on Geertz's interpretive approach to social science. It attempts to account for the social-scientific preoccupation with questions of meaning and culture in terms of a cognitive-scientific preoccupation with mind and brain, and meaning in terms of conceptual metaphors, idealized cognitive models, mappings, and blendings. It explains cultural particularity and historical specificity in terms of a 'mental ability that is permanent, indispensable, and apparently universal to human beings' (2002: 20). In doing so, however, Turner risks wholly *reducing* social action to underlying biological and mental processes. As I will show, there are good philosophical as well as methodological reasons to resist this reduction. Apart from the question how much these allegedly universal operations and basic-level concepts are, in part, culturally shaped or constituted, this reduction leaves unanswered the question whether and how cultural practices – inherently public and normative – can be explained by, and reduced to, mental processes that are purely causal and private. The problems with reducing public to private and normative to causal are of both a philosophical and logical nature.

One can take such a practice-theoretical perspective as no more than a methodological choice that may, or may not, lead to new insights. It need not be read as making any substantive claim about human cognition. So the question is whether this perspective leads merely to new insights, or to

empirically more plausible incorporation of cultural factors into a cognitive account. As I noted above, authors within a cognitive paradigm start with the 'inner', from which they try to extend or extrapolate to the outer, cultural world (see e.g. Gibbs 1999). One might just as well proceed in the opposite direction, taking linguistic and other public practices as constitutive of mental structures, not the other way around. In taking such a 'practice turn' concerning language use, one need not commit oneself to any substantial philosophical or psychological claims about the character of human thought. Viewing the line of inquiry as no more than a methodological choice, one may explore the questions and insights it leads to. The idea that linguistic practices may be constitutive of cognitive processes should be distinguished, of course, from the 'objectivist' view that metaphor is a purely linguistic phenomenon with no cognitive import – even though the latter claim, like the former, seems to elevate the level of linguistic expression above that of cognitive processes. A practice-theoretical approach can well accommodate the idea that social practices – and, hence, cognitive processes – are embodied.[1] Likewise – perhaps most importantly – the practice turn in the social sciences rejects the idea of cultures as scripts to be enacted. This leads to a more realistic and empirically informed view of how culture functions.

More substantial arguments may be raised against Gibbs and Turner, however. Both – indeed, cognitive linguistics in general – appear to share the presumption that meanings are primarily private mental entities and only secondarily – or derivatively – social or public phenomena. This presumption has come under increasing attack from Twentieth Century philosophers; it is surprising, to say the least, that Lakoff and Johnson nowhere address such lines of criticism.

3. LAKOFF AND JOHNSON'S CARTESIAN FOUNDATIONALISM

I propose having a closer look at some of the systematic philosophical considerations concerning a cognitive account of metaphor. Previous authors have objected to the way Lakoff repeatedly resorts to straw-man arguments in discussing earlier philosophical theories of metaphor; but that is not my main concern. Neither am I concerned with the overly sweeping opposition that Lakoff and Johnson create between an 'objectivism' that allegedly believes in an objective reality and objectively given meanings – meanings that can be characterized without appeal to embodied human cognition or conceptual metaphor – and a romantic 'subjectivism' that allegedly treats inner embodied experience as purely individual, subjective, and unconstrained (*MWLB* chapters 25-28). My focus will rather be on the relationship between Lakoff and Johnson's approach and some of the most forceful anti-Cartesian arguments in Twentieth-Century philosophy.

Despite the so-called 'linguistic turn' in Twentieth-Century analytic – and, in a rather different way, Continental – philosophy, for a long time Anglo-Saxon philosophers had little to say about

[1] Although the point is not made very emphatically in *Philosophical Investigations*, one can construe the later Wittgenstein as arguing that language games are not only public but also embodied practices.

metaphor. It was not until the 1960s that analytically trained philosophers like Max Black, Monroe Beardsley, and H.P. Grice started taking metaphor seriously. Analytic or 'objectivist' philosophy tended to reject metaphor as mere stylistic embellishment with no cognitive import. At least as problematic is the analytic tendency to relegate metaphor to the domain of language use rather than linguistic meaning – as was done by Searle, Grice, and Davidson in particular.[2] In *MWLB* and later works, Lakoff and Johnson focus on the formalist strain in analytic philosophy and its offshoots in formal semantics, as represented by e.g. Quine, David Lewis, Saul Kripke, and Richard Montague. Despite their often one-sided and exaggerated depictions – on occasion, downright caricatures – of these authors, Lakoff and Johnson's criticism of what they call 'objectivist' semantics – in particular, the tacit assumption among many analytical philosophers that literal meaning is unproblematically given – is largely justified.

However, another strain in analytic philosophy is both more relevant and more threatening to the entire cognitive-linguistic undertaking. This is the more informal, anti-Cartesian current that explains language and knowledge in terms of public or social practices, represented by e.g. the later Wittgenstein and by 'ordinary language' philosophy. It rejects the classical empiricist claim that abstract conceptual knowledge rests on – and can be reduced to – purely non-conceptual, direct causal interaction with the world through the organs of perception, but also attacks the rationalist, Cartesian form of 'foundationalism'. Consideration of Lakoff and Johnson's arguments suggests that their cognitive paradigm remains bound to the main tenets of – and so runs into the same problems as – Cartesian foundationalist epistemology.

The question is less whether cognitive linguistics is more Cartesian rationalist or Locke-style empiricist in character and more how far Lakoff and Johnson reproduce the foundationalist assumptions inherent in both approaches: foundationalism in both its rationalist and empiricist guise has come under increasing attack in Twentieth-Century philosophy. Of course, the most famous attack on any Cartesian reduction of public language use to private mental states is Ludwig Wittgenstein's discussion of mental states as explanations for linguistic meanings: in particular, the private-language argument in *Philosophical Investigations* (1953: §139-202). Meanwhile, the empiricist assumption that conceptualized knowledge states – inherently normative, because they involve correct or incorrect beliefs, propositions, and states – can be reduced to purely causal interaction with the world finds forceful criticism in (Sellars 1956). Taken together, Wittgenstein's and Sellars' claims amount to the suggestion that linguistic practice is irreducibly public and normative; it cannot be explained by, or reduced to, mental states, which are inherently mental, private, and causal. Instead, the order of explanation should be reversed.

Discussion of the private language argument – along with other philosophical challenges to Cartesian epistemology – is strangely absent not only from *MWLB* but also from later works like

[2] See (Leezenberg 2001), especially sections 2.2 and 2.3, for an extensive criticism of this attempt.

WFDT and *Philosophy in the Flesh* (1999; henceforth *PIF*). Even Lakoff and Johnson's discussion of analytic philosophy in *PIF* (Ch. 21) focuses on Quine's alleged belief in a 'world made up, objectively, of entities, including the natural kinds' (1999: 451), along with Kripke's causal theory of reference and Montague grammar. Quite apart from whether they represent these approaches adequately, their neglect of Wittgenstein's discussion of language games and rule-following as public practice, and their neglect of his private-language argument – highly relevant to their Cartesian project – is startling. This is all the more surprising given that Wittgenstein's private language argument, especially as interpreted by Saul Kripke, became one of the most hotly debated topics in analytical philosophy of the 1980s and '90s.

Equally surprising is Lakoff's one-sided reading of (Putnam 1981): Lakoff uses Putnam's famous model-theoretic argument in Chapter Two as a stick to beat all forms of model-theoretic semantics (*WFDT*, Ch. 15), but he completely ignores Putnam's (1981: 17-21) summary dismissal of human intentionality as a means of fixing reference – even though that is precisely what Lakoff's assumption of 'directly meaningful embodied experience' amounts to. In other words, the very line of epistemological argument that Lakoff employs against 'objectivist' semantics threatens his own embodied realism. The underlying reason is not hard to find. Lakoff and Johnson's experientialism – what they later call 'embodied realism' – accounts for matters of knowledge in terms of an individual mind confronting the outside world, based on a residual Cartesianism that runs into all kinds of sceptical problems. Although they give a phenomenological twist to their Cartesian program – one that supplements or replaces Descartes' emphasis on the faculty of reason with an inquiry into embodied non- or pre-rational experience (what more daring French philosophers have called 'the unthought') – they remain within a Cartesian framework insofar as they account for cognition in terms of individual, inner mental processes rather than public and normative linguistic practices.

Criticism of this Cartesian 'objectivism' – if that is the right term – is not new. Indeed, the general thrust of recent analytical philosophy has been to treat language use as holistic, public, and irreducibly normative practice: that is where things stood by the late 1970s, and where they still stand today. Of course, Cartesian rationalism has also been criticized by the phenomenological tradition. In *MWLB* and again in *PIF*, Lakoff and Johnson acknowledge Merleau-Ponty and – to a lesser extent – John Dewey as precursors to their own embodied realism; but they do not explicate this ancestry in any detail. Meanwhile, the subsequent practical turn goes beyond the phenomenological project, which – at least in Merleau-Ponty's formulation – remains within broadly Cartesian confines.

In short, Lakoff and Johnson's ultimately Cartesian approach to metaphor and embodied cognition places them much more in an outdated European philosophical tradition than they realize. Despite their wholesale rejection of the 'Western philosophical tradition' for being objectivist, they take insufficient distance from it: their position and its subsequent elaborations are recognizably Cartesian, treating cognition as a confrontation between individual mind/brain and outside world – a world, moreover, that is primarily physical and natural and only secondarily social and cultural. In

attempting to reduce all conceptual and normative questions of knowledge and its justification to a level of non-conceptual, embodied experience of one's causal interaction with the outside world, cognitive linguistics appears to rely on what has been called a foundationalist epistemology.[3]

I will argue that an alternative account emphasizing the embodied and originally figurative character of human language usage was already available in the Eighteenth Century. The Western philosophical tradition is not so monolithically objectivist as Lakoff and Johnson's sweeping – dare I say Heideggerian? – characterization suggests.

4. METAPHOR IN THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY: EMBODIMENT IN THE ENLIGHTENMENT

Lakoff and Johnson's line of argument is very much shaped by romantic oppositions such as those between reasoned and felt, subjective and objective, inner and outer. In *MWLB* chapters 25-29, they claim to transcend the distinction between an objectivism informed by Enlightenment rationalism, scientificity, and objective validity on the one hand and an unconstrained Romantic subjectivism that rejects objective science in favour of purely individual, subjective, irrational experience on the other. They present experientialism – what they elsewhere call 'embodied realism' – as a means of going beyond both; yet their positive valuation of metaphor and their rejection of scientific objectivism remain very much in the tradition of a Romantic reaction against Enlightenment rationalism.

However, an anti-Cartesian view emerged within later Enlightenment thought that emphasized the importance of public language, metaphor, and embodiment – against a widely held stereotype, Enlightenment thought is neither uniformly rationalist nor objectivist. This tradition was eclipsed by later philosophical developments: most notably, the emergence of Kant, Hegel, and German idealism; but, in its time, it enjoyed widespread influence and popularity. Most importantly for my purposes, it rejected Descartes' individualist and mentalist rationalism and Locke's view of human languages as at best an imperfect approximation to or expression of pure, correct thought. Locke rejects figurative language for the same reason he rejects rhetoric more generally: both work on the passions rather than reason. He famously concludes his discussion of what he calls the rhetorical abuse of words thus: 'eloquence, like the fair Sex, has too prevailing Beauties in it, to suffer it self ever to be spoken against. And 'tis in vain to find fault with those Arts of Deceiving, wherein Men find pleasure to be Deceived' (1975 [1689]: 508).

In the early Eighteenth Century, an alternative view emerged of both language in general and tropes in particular. It saw poetry as the original, or primitive, form of language; emphasized the embodied character of this primitive poetic language; and hence made metaphor, along with other

[3] Undoubtedly, the first systematic critique of foundationalism was (Sellars 1956), with its unrelenting attack on the so-called 'Myth of the Given'. It was restated and elaborated forcefully by the likes of Donald Davidson (1984 [1973]) and Richard Rorty (1979). As formulated by Lakoff, cognitive linguistics appears vulnerable to criticism along the lines of Davidson's famous rejection of conceptual schemes.

poetic figures, crucial to the development of language and thought. Its most famous representative is Giambattista Vico who, in his *Scienza nuova* (1744), famously argues that primitive nations speak and think fundamentally differently from advanced, literate societies; they speak and think in terms of what he calls 'poetic characters'. To the modern mind, these are poetic metaphors and other figures of speech; but, for the most ancient nations, they were the natural – indeed, the only possible – way to express themselves. This poetic speech reflects qualitatively different ways of thought: ancient nations, Vico argues, think in terms of imaginative universals rather than abstract concepts.

In the literature, Vico is usually – but mistakenly – pictured as a lone genius standing outside the Cartesian mainstream of Western European philosophy or Enlightenment thought. In fact, anti-Cartesianism was widespread across Europe. Thus, Hans Aarsleff argues (2006: 451) that ' the tenor of eighteenth-century philosophy was anti-Cartesian, and the primary vehicle of this reaction was the philosophy of language'. Surprisingly, he does not discuss Vico's rejection of Cartesianism; but, in truth, this omission shows that, during this period, the critique of Cartesian mentalism and of the rejection of language as mere distraction from or distortion of adequate knowledge was widespread indeed. Historically, the most widely influential of the anti-Cartesian critics was undoubtedly Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who briefly describes (1755) the origin of language in quasi-poetic expression involving metaphorical projections. That said, probably the more important author spreading – if not initiating – this conception of 'primitive' language as poetic was Étienne Bonnot de Condillac, whose 1746 *Essai sur l' origine des connaissances humaines* – though largely forgotten today – exercised tremendous influence in the Eighteenth Century. Thus, it shaped the ideas of Johann Gottfried Herder – most importantly his early essay on the origin of language and his later works on the oral poetical traditions of primitive, generally illiterate peoples. It is impossible, Condillac argues, to separate music and poetry from the most ancient forms of language (2001 [1746]: 139), adding that 'if prosody at the origin of languages was close to chant, then… the style was a virtual painting, adopting all sorts of metaphors' (2001: 150). Only at a later stage in the development of language does eloquence turn into ornament and poetry into art. All abstract terms are figurative in origin (2001: 164-165): a line of thinking close to – but probably developed independently from – Vico's.

At first blush, all this might well seem to anticipate the main tenets of cognitive linguistics. However, Condillac's argument differs on two crucial points: not only does he argue that figurative names of complex ideas are created before those of simple ideas (2001: 167), he also argues that the social practice of language use shapes mental operations, rather than the other way around. 'Social intercourse gives occasion to change the natural cries into signs… and these signs are the first principles of the development and progress of the operations of the mind' (quoted by Aarsleff 2006: 463). Public language use is, itself, constitutive of thought. Condillac's *Essai* is often seen as little more than a French-language abbreviation of Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. In

fact, it expresses quite different doctrines concerning the role of language in thought and of metaphor and other figures in communication.[4]

The arguments pursued by Condillac, Vico, and others make it possible to see cognition as mediated – if not constituted – by the use of symbols; metaphor plays a crucial role in this process of linguistically mediated and practically constituted cognition. They represent a historically significant philosophical tradition suggesting that public use of language is constitutive of inner mental thought rather than *vice versa*.

5. COGNITIVE MODELS AND LINGUISTIC IDEOLOGIES

Of course, this leaves open what a practice-based or -oriented account of metaphorical mappings and cognitive models emphasizing public practice over private representation would look like. I have no space to provide such an account in any detail, but I will venture a few initial remarks. First, it must treat categorization and literal meaning as variably linked to particular literate and oral practices. It identifies writing as one factor significantly contributing to the stabilization of literal word meanings through a process of codification in dictionaries and works of grammar. It focuses on education as a crucial variable in cognition, suggesting that specific kinds of learning – e.g., modern education as opposed to oral transmission of knowledge or more traditional forms of education based on rote learning – will have differential cognitive effects.

Second, it should open up cognitive analyses for questions of social authority and power. The successful fixing of literal word meanings in dictionaries – along with the reproduction of linguistic practices in and through education – presupposes a legitimate linguistic and cognitive authority. At present, this entire thematic of power in the literal-figurative distinction is virtually unexplored.

Third, it should give central place to linguistic ideologies: i.e., folk models about what words are and how they function in the social world – much like what Lakoff calls *cognitive models*. However, there is an important analytical difference: linguistic ideologies are public rather than private representations; they are primarily linguistic rather than cognitive entities; they are not only culturally specific but generally indicative of class, status, and power. They have also an important – if not irreducible – indexical dimension.[5]

The crucial insight is that metaphor does not generally involve decontextualized conceptual mapping but is context dependent. In recent years, more attention has come to be devoted to metaphor as a discourse phenomenon – argued for, along rather different lines, in both philosophy (Leezenberg 2001: 217-239) and applied linguistics (Cameron & Deigman 2006).[6] The Romantic reappraisal of

[4] For more details, see Aarsleff's introduction to his translation of the *Essai*, especially pages xv-xvii.
[5] For more detailed discussion of linguistic ideologies and their importance to explanation of linguistic practice, see e.g. (Bauman & Briggs 2003: Ch. 1, Hanks 1996: Ch. 10).
[6] I make a few preliminary explorations of the role of linguistic ideologies in metaphor – and, more generally, the role of metalinguistics – in (Leezenberg 2008), especially pages 18-21.

metaphor presupposes a separation, or *purification*, of the domain of literal language as fact: a purification not achieved until the Seventeenth Century (Bauman & Briggs 2003: Ch. 2).

Lakoff has claimed (1993) that Michael Reddy anticipated cognitive science. Reddy himself believes that what he calls the 'conduit' metaphor – the idea of language as a vehicle for expressing and transporting thought – is not a mental model but a public ideology: a linguistic feature of English in its function as its own metalanguage, commenting on its own status and functioning (1993 [1979]: 165-166); he argues against mentalist-cognitive approaches to language like Lakoff and Johnson's. The conduit metaphor should be seen as linguistic ideology rather than cognitive model. Reddy emphasizes its public and contested character: witness his raising the 'question to what extent language can influence thought processes' (1993: 175). Reddy argues for virtually the opposite of what Lakoff takes him to say: he discusses the formative influence of language on cognition rather than the linguistic realization of conceptual structures assumed to be universal and explanatory. His is a normative approach; he argues that the view of language as a vehicle for the expression and transmission of thoughts is misleading. Strangely, Lakoff and Johnson nowhere address how far their cognitive approach – which, at the very least, appears to presume aspects of the conduit metaphor – rests on a potentially misleading framing of language as merely derivative of thought.

One final question to raise is why the study of metaphor – and, perhaps, tropes more generally – disappeared so suddenly from anthropology. I have no good answer; but this disappearance seems to have happened in conjunction with the gradual eclipse of cognitive and symbolic approaches. Like symbolic anthropology, the cognitive linguistic paradigm takes cultures as systems of knowledge or as scripts or texts to be executed or implemented. In recent years, cognitive and symbolic approaches in anthropology have largely been sidelined by what one might call a 'practical turn'. Nowadays, anthropologists study embodied public practices rather than embodied private mental processes.

The key development may have been the gradual emergence of linguistic anthropology during the 1980s and '90s. This sub-discipline, distinguishing itself both from social and cultural anthropology and from linguistics, is of a semiotic rather than cognitive orientation, inspired less by Weber's interpretive social science, which crucially informed Geertz's approach to anthropology, than by early, non-structuralist authors like C.S. Peirce and Mikhail Bakhtin writing on signs and linguistic practice. Within this framework, more attention tends to be given to societal questions of language use, power relations, and public ideologies rather than linguistic structure, conceptual relations, and mental models. Questions of linguistic and conceptual structure fade into the background in favour of questions of what language users do – and believe – in qualifying linguistic items or speech genres as e.g. poetical or metaphorical. These questions point to the considerable – historically and culturally variable – amount of work that must be done to construe, or *purify*, such apparently self-evident domains and categories as those of language, culture, 'the literal', 'the poetical', etc.

6. CONCLUSION

Despite cognitive linguistics' unmistakeable successes, its cognitive conception of culture remains unsatisfactory, resting on implicit, outdated Romantic assumptions rather than any empirically informed, theoretically sophisticated account of how culture is produced, sustained, and contested. One way to begin to remedy this might be to extend cognitive linguistic conceptions to the sphere of cultural practices, as Gibbs and Turner have attempted; but this does not resolve the underlying conceptual problems. It also rests on a kind of anthropology that is largely outdated. In many respects, Lakoff and Johnson have a thoroughly Romantic conception of metaphor. In other respects, however, their account of cognition as embodied and experiential rests on an assumed Cartesian picture, which still takes cognitive processes to be explainable in terms of individual – ultimately private – bodily experience, rather than public – and possibly embodied – practice.

Another solution is to explore the relation between cognition and culture the other way around: i.e., to explore questions of cognitive processes and conceptual mappings via a more properly semiotic approach that takes human cognition as mediated – if not partly constituted – by use of symbols. Such an approach that focuses on linguistic practices understood as inherently public, normative, and power-saturated, can be taken either as a substantial philosophical claim or as no more than a methodological choice. Its claim that public language use is constitutive of private mental states rather than the other way around should not be mistaken for the 'objectivist' view that metaphor is merely a linguistic device without cognitive import. It has a venerable philosophical pedigree, traceable not only to Twentieth-Century philosophers like Wittgenstein and social theorists like Bourdieu and Foucault, but also to earlier thinkers like Vico, Condillac, and Herder.

Of course, the big open question is whether – and, if so, to what extent – metaphor remains relevant for linguistic anthropology and other social sciences; and, conversely, whether the social sciences after the practical turn still have anything interesting to say about metaphor or conceptual organization in general. One would hope for an answer in the affirmative; but, if so, at this stage it would express a wish rather than a conviction.

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