Sociological Figures:
Metaphor in the Texts of Classical Sociology

By

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A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
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Abstract

This thesis tries to develop an intersection between theories of metaphor and classical sociology. An examination of the writings of Lakoff and Johnson, Paul Ricoeur, and Jacques Derrida helps to develop and understanding of the relation of metaphor to language, thought, and meaning. The guiding framework is taken from Derrida's argument that the classical oppositions between metaphoric and literal language do not hold. This argument creates an opportunity for fruitful re-readings of Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, and Max Weber that outline ways of locating the literal/metaphorical problematic in classical sociology. All of these writers, not surprisingly, have made effective use of metaphoric language. In this regard, I have largely focused on the ways that each of them have represented their concepts, or their objects of study, as if they were living, organic entities. In Marx, this turns out mainly to be the *commodity*. In Durkheim, it is *society* itself, and in Weber, *ideas* are represented as if alive. For none of them, however, is this perceived strictly as a matter of metaphor. In Marx's analysis, for example, commodities are the real embodiment of labour, and so, in his view, their appearance as social actors is not really metaphorical, but rather a necessary and real consequence of a certain stage in the mode of production.

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General Outline

This is a twofold project. In the first place it is aimed at a specific question about language: What is the place of metaphor in language? In the second place, it is concerned with the relevance of this question to classical sociology, and of classical sociology to this question. In order to establish an initial bearing, I will tentatively suggest that by metaphor I mean to refer to the entire range of linguistic uses in which a transposition of names occurs. That is to say, any situation in which something is called by a name that usually goes with something else. Traditionally understood, this transposition of names would be based upon a principle of resemblance.

My investigation reveals a complication in the naming of metaphor itself, which in turn complicates the second half of the project. The complication is that metaphor occupies something other than a certain clearly demarcated region within language. That is, it only seems to be domesticated and penned-up in a corner, occasionally called upon for use by literal language. To speak of the 'place' of metaphor in language is already to use a metaphor in the definition of metaphor, and therefore to disqualify the definition as a literal one. And this metaphoric character may in fact be endemic to the linguistic system, every concept infected from the moment of definition—which would mean always and already infected—by an equivocation between essence and ornament, the proper and the figurative, and the distinction that will occupy the center of this inquiry, the literal and the metaphorical. Every *placing* in language is then already a *re-placing*.

If the respective linguistic territories of literal and metaphorical meaning are really unstable (which, of course, has not yet been adequately shown, but which will be in the course of the thesis), there are widespread effects to be worked out within language use, including specialized discourses and within specialization (territoriality; genre

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distinction) as such. Sociology is one such field. The second half of the project focuses on how 'transgressions of usage,' (a temporary name for metaphor) are to be identified or read in classical sociological literature. The writers considered are Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, and Max Weber. Here the project revolves around three questions. First, to what degree can some of the basic concepts found in the writings of all three of these writers be understood as elements of a theoretical structure built from metaphorical schema? The most obvious example of such a metaphorical schema is Durkheim's heavy reliance on an organismic model of society. But, I have already alluded to a problem in distinguishing the metaphorical and the literal that goes beyond revealing certain metaphors to be at work at the base of supposedly literal concepts. This means that uncovering and then charting a *catalog* of metaphors as they appear in use in the sociological texts is not the goal of this project. It is not just a matter of showing Marx, Durkheim, and Weber to be indebted to or dependent upon particular metaphors, metaphors that could or should be exchanged with other metaphors from the point of view of cultural sensitivity or scientific objectivity or triangulation or any other empirical improvement. Rather, this exercise draws us into the other questions.

The other two questions are these: Do these writers understand their own theories to be metaphorical? What are their underlying theories of language? The overall project, then, is to explore the relationship of classical sociology to the general debate around the problematic of metaphoric language. This will mean, most significantly, examining the relationship between concepts and metaphors. In the traditionally conceived schema, concepts refer to some real thing existing outside of language, while metaphors are

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completely bound by language, merely a transposition of sign to sign. A transformed view of metaphor thus has potentially serious consequences for the status of the concept.

After giving a general background to theories of metaphor, with special attention to the work of Lakoff and Johnson (1980), I further address the problem of metaphor by following an exchange on the topic that took place between Jacques Derrida and Paul Ricoeur. The crux of the exchange was a disagreement on the ultimate place of metaphor. Although both place the question of metaphor in the midst of the creation of meaning in language, Ricoeur would like to preserve the distinction between metaphoric and literal language, between the metaphor and the concept. Derrida, on the other hand, argues that the borders traditionally separating literal and metaphoric language simply do not hold.

Ricoeur argues that both metaphoric and literal meaning depend on the 'is and is not' that shapes metaphor. Metaphor requires a corresponding literal meaning to establish this distinction between the simultaneous 'is and is not' and to produce its vitality, surprise, and tension. For example, if an athlete were literally on fire during an athletic contest, it is unlikely that the crowd would cheer. The metaphoric usage of the phrase draws its power from the tendency for the literal meaning of 'on fire' to provoke the imagination, and to aid in perceiving and expressing underlying similarities between the performance of an athlete and the act of combustion. Through repeated use, the ability for the metaphor to evoke the surprise and contrast of a really original usage weakens. The metaphor becomes lexicalized as a literal meaning or a metaphorical cliché.

Derrida sometimes agrees with Ricoeur. But the latter, after establishing the importance of metaphor as a language resource more significant than mere ornamentation, reconstructs a relation of subordination between speculative (conceptual) and poetic (figurative, metaphorical) discourse that privileges the former. In other words, in the relation of 'is and is not' that is maintained in the metaphorical usage of a word, it is the 'is not' that must finally prevail. Literal is more important than figurative meaning. Derrida undermines even the pragmatic reasons for sustaining this hierarchical distinction, demonstrating that oppositions like literal/metaphorical remain mutually implicated in the structure they constitute and are constituted by, in a manner that compromises the possibility of an original difference between them which could ever be recaptured. Literal language does not precede and 'ground' metaphorical language in any absolute manner. For instance, the act of 'grounding' would itself be no more literal than metaphorical. One cannot get 'outside' of metaphor in order to give a definitive and strictly literal definition of it any more than one can get outside of language itself to talk about language. Derrida demonstrates how such 'archaic tropes,' thought to ground language in an absolute center, are already caught up in systems of linguistic effects.

Are we still left needing to judge the *place* that we should accord metaphor within a theoretical but practical geography of language? What *part* does it play? How is it *related* to different fields of discourse, such as poetic, scientific, or philosophical? How does it relate these fields? In Ricoeur's view, we must make "A global decision concerning the collective unity of modes of discourse as modes of use, such as poetic discourse, scientific discourse, religious discourse, speculative discourse, and so on"

(1977, p. 257). Instead of an absolute distinction, Ricoeur is willing to settle for differences between genres of discourse based upon their practical usage.

In Derrida's view, there is no absolute ground of difference between genres. Philosophical language is not different in its *essence* from poetic language. Neither is scientific language. All parts of language rely on networks of signs to produce meaning. These networks are in some ways unstable and fluid, and in other ways persistently rigid. The grounding of the literal is never stable enough to halt the pull of the metaphorical, never strong enough to keep its place. There could be no stable, conclusive, geography of language. In what follows I attempt to use this insight, which will come mostly via Derrida, in examining classical sociology.

The transition now required belongs to the hinge between the two halves of this project. The following segment moves the focus to sociology and the place of figurative language in its text. This is done with a view to tracing and understanding sociological theorizing by application of the understanding of metaphor outlined. It is through a discussion of method in Hegel that the transition to sociology is mostly accomplished. From this vantage point, I approach writings by Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, and Max Weber. From Marx, I examine a section from the *Grundrisse*, chapter one of *Capital I*, and the 'Theses on Feuerbach,' as well as selections from the *German Ideology* and the introduction to his critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*. Weber is discussed mainly through sections from *Economy and Society*, 'Science as a Vocation,' and *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Durkheim is assessed for the most part through his study *Suicide*.

All of these writers, not surprisingly, have made effective use of metaphoric language. In this regard, I have focused on the ways each of them has represented his concepts, or his objects of study, as if they are living things. In Marx, this turns out mainly to be the *commodity*. In Durkheim, it is *society* itself, and in Weber, *ideas* are represented as if alive, that is, as living entities. But for none of them, however, is this life perceived strictly as a matter of metaphor. In Marx's analysis, for example, commodities are the real embodiment of labour, and so, in his view, their appearance as social actors is not really metaphorical, but rather a necessary and real consequence of a certain stage in the mode of production. It may be that their social relations are an illusion, but it is not metaphorical for Marx to describe commodities as actors.

By means of gradual probing, I try throughout the thesis, to trace and understand each writer's theory of language. Much of it is implicit, and suggestive, rather than explicit and dogmatic. In the same way, my outlines will be suggestive rather than dogmatic. Overall, it appears that each writer relies on some very traditional views of language, while at the same time producing innovations that transform our ideas of language in ways that are still having their effect in sociology.

Requests of Metaphor

> Metaphor (*metaphora*) consists in giving (*epiphora*) the thing a name (*onomatos*) that belongs to something else (*allotriou*), the transference being either from genus to species (*apo tou genous epi eidos*), or from species to genus (*apo tou eidous epi to genus*), or from species to species (*apo tou eidous epi eidos*), or on the grounds of analogy (*e kata to analogon*). (Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1456b6-9, quoted in Derrida, 1982, p. 231).

Since I began to read about metaphor, I have always supposed that I was asking it to provide me with something, some special tool perhaps. My reading supported and helped

me to further articulate or revise earlier questions I had about language. It also presented possible extensions of these questions into new regions. In particular, and as regards the field of sociology, my reading on metaphor raised basic questions about the foundations of the discipline. To give a pertinent example, I have already proposed the question— one that forces a re-reading of my last statement—of the identity of *foundations* as such. What does it mean if the very *foundations* of sociology are figurative? What has metaphor provided for sociology? What does metaphor provide? What kinds of requests can it grant?

Plato and Aristotle provide the two classic evaluations of the imitative arts. Book X of Plato's *Republic* contains a harsh indictment of imitation coming from the mouth of Socrates: "...all the poetic company from Homer onwards are imitators of images of virtue and whatever they put in their poems, but do not lay hold of the truth" (1984, p. 400). Poets, painters, and other imitators are at the third remove both from the Being of things and the use of things: "The maker of the image, the imitator, as we say, knows nothing of the real thing, but only the appearance" (p. 401). As such, the art of the imitator poses a threat to truth. This point is pressed even to the point of banning the poet and the painter from the ideal city since they would act as corrupting influences.

In Aristotle, imitation (*mimesis*) is linked both to rhetoric and to poetics. In rhetoric it is tied to argumentation and linked closely to philosophy, where it has a position of honour. In poetics, the power of *mimesis*, the imitation and representation of reality, is the uniquely human trait. Metaphor, a kind of *mimesis*, and the resource of both rhetoric and poetics, receives this famous laudation: "the greatest thing by far is to be a master of metaphor. It is the one thing that cannot be learnt from others; and it is

also a sign of genius, since a good metaphor implies an intuitive perception of the similar in dissimilars" (in Ricoeur 1978, p. vii).

Heirs to the Platonic view of imitation would consign it to a status at best ornamental and at worst, capable of corrupting and distorting the true and the real. I consider George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, in their book *Metaphors We Live By* (1980), to be inheritors of the Aristotelian tradition with its more positive evaluation of metaphor. In fact, Lakoff and Johnson are heirs who have invested and increased the capital of their predecessor in extending metaphor to a position foundational to thinking as such:

> 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 (p. 3).

Lakoff and Johnson argue that our thinking and acting are done in terms of a conceptual system that is pervasively metaphorical. Thinking is grounded in 'directly emergent concepts' (such as spatial concepts like up-down, front-back, in-out, near-far) arising out of constant physical—that is spatial and perceptual—experience. These are the most fundamental of our concepts. This is not to say that physical experience is more basic than other kinds of experience, but that "we typically conceptualize the nonphysical *in terms of* the physical" (p. 59). Concepts like *object*, *substance*, and *container* emerge directly from physical experience. Emotional experiences are less directly related to what happens to our bodies in a concrete sense than spatial and perceptual experience, though they are generally *systematically correlated* to the physical (e.g. feeling happy

and standing up straight). Thus we are likely to metaphorically transpose concepts emerging from more direct experience onto aspects of experience more indirectly manifested in perceptual and spatial terms. Lakoff and Johnson's investigations into thinking reveal large systems of complex metaphorical intersections and combinations with concepts, experiences, and other metaphors. These metaphors provide a partial structuring of our actions and thoughts: "They are 'alive' in the most fundamental sense: they are metaphors we live by. The fact that they are conventionally fixed within the lexicon of English makes them no less alive" (p. 55). This claim puts them directly at odds with Paul Ricoeur, for whom a 'live' metaphor is a new and surprising metaphor, while conceptualized metaphors that have been incorporated into common parlance are 'dead' metaphors (clichés). Lakoff and Johnson would characterize Ricoeur's 'live' and 'dead' categories of metaphor as belonging to the *objectivist* tradition, in which semantics would assert the monosemic character of words. This does not, in my view, do justice to Ricoeur's differentiation between the lexicalized usage, the analogical usage and the metaphorical usage of language. Both definitions of 'live metaphor' will find their moment during the later analysis of the sociological texts.

The first example given of a live metaphor in Lakoff and Johnson's sense, is the basic metaphorical proposition that 'argument is war.' As they outline it, the 'argument is war' metaphor serves in our culture to structure our experience and approach to disputation on multiple levels. It leads directly to innumerable extensions and applications of the metaphor as we continually process and attempt to understand experience. This can be seen in everyday language:

> 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. (p. 4)

But even perceptual and spatial experiences do not provide an absolute ground for understanding and thinking about the world. Rather, Lakoff and Johnson argue that the truth of various metaphorical concepts and systems is only a relative truth, based upon physical and cultural factors. Even the basic experience of up-down in spatial orientation is a relative concept. Through Cartesian coordinate systems, we have shown ourselves capable of thinking without such a conceptual opposition though it still seems essential to adequately processing most of our physical perceptions. They propose an experientalist approach to truth based upon the activity of *understanding,* as an alternative to either objectivist or subjectivist traditions.

Though they have thoroughly undermined the naïve view that there is a form of language that is fully independent of metaphor (which would be a proper, literal language) Lakoff and Johnson have not gone on to explicitly outline a critique of the concept of metaphor itself. For them, it seems enough that metaphor be understood as relatively grounded in experience. Here I find little that goes beyond the skeptical position outlined by Hume. Their method seems to consist in relativizing the Kantian categories (quality, quantity, relation, modality; 1966, p. 62) and re-inserting them into experience not as *a priori* or synthetic understanding but as ongoing experiential consistencies. This correlates to Hume's understanding of 'habits' of thinking (1975, pp. 13-25).

In my view, if they have shown that there is no literal, proper language independent of metaphor, Lakoff and Johnson must go some distance more in explicitly outlining what 'metaphor' would continue to mean. They have extensively re-interpreted the traditionally understood meaning of metaphor, but only indirectly given a surviving definition of metaphor via its ongoing experiential function. What *precisely* does metaphor provide for thought or language?

'What is happening today with Metaphor?'

I have chosen to follow the exchange between Jacques Derrida and Paul Ricoeur on the subject of metaphor because of the prominence given to rhetoric and style *within* their dialogue. Their interchange is constantly bringing the name of metaphor itself into question, rather than elaborating a structural extension, elaboration, and sometimes defense of a given non-traditional reading of metaphor in the manner of Lakoff and Johnson.

Beginning with a brief summary of Ricoeur's treatment of metaphor in *The Rule of Metaphor*, I then shift the focus to Derrida's essay entitled 'White Mythology.' The spotlight then returns to Ricoeur, and to his critique of Derrida in the eighth study of his book *The Rule of Metaphor*. This critique elicited an essay by Derrida called 'The Retrait of Metaphor' which shall also be examined. Although this is only an incomplete sample of their exchanges, it is sufficient for my purposes.

Ricoeur's Live Metaphor

While Lakoff and Johnson find the lexicalized 'conceptual metaphor' most interesting, a kind of metaphor usually seeming to do its work without one ever noticing its metaphorical origins, Ricoeur is more interested in the times when one has conscious recourse to figurative language in order to revitalize *and* create language and meaning. Through his reading of Aristotle's writing on metaphor, Ricoeur shows its links to *mimesis*, a form of imitation that is both a depiction of reality and an original creation, a faithful rendering of what is *and* a heroic portrayal (1975: p. 40). Metaphorizing would be a conscious practice of both faithfulness and deviation, linked to the more overarching human processes of *mimesis* and *muthos* (emplotment, narration, myth), the underlying principle being the representation of the real, the representation of what is.

This reality, the *phusis* that we usually translate as *nature*, is not an inert given. For the Greek, "it is because, for him, nature is itself living that *mimesis* can be not enslaving and that compositional and creative imitation of nature can be possible...Metaphor...makes one see *things* because it 'represents things as in a state of activity' (1411 b 24-5)" (p. 42). Opposed to Lakoff and Johnson's vision of live metaphor, as that which has been fully adopted within usage, Ricoeur's metaphor maintains the tension of deviation from the norm in order to both faithfully represent as well as to present things *unusually*: "*Lively* expression is that which expresses existence as *alive*" (p. 43). When Derrida asks about metaphor's relation to philosophy, a different set of problems arise.

White Mythology

Derrida's main question in 'White Mythology' is this: "How are we to decipher figures of speech, and singularly metaphor, in the philosophic text?" (p. 219). What he immediately suggests, however, is that rather than being able to directly address this question, it is more a matter of an "attempt to recognize in principle the *condition for the impossibility* of such a project" (p. 219). The limit of such a project is that metaphor remains a philosophical concept, and therefore "enveloped in the field that a general metaphorology of philosophy would seek to dominate" (p. 219). It would be impossible, then, to de-cipher. Asking what metaphor is, is already problematic. The concept of metaphor used would be a philosophical one, and therefore already a part of the system a metaphorology would be trying to examine, similar to the way that a participant observer is always implicated in the observed group. Later, he proposes the inversion of this hypothesis. In the proposition of 'archaic' tropes, of 'natural' language and of 'founding' concepts (or original metaphors, as in Lakoff and Johnson) "the signs...from which this proposition is made, beginning with those of *trope* and *arkhe*, already have their own metaphorical charge. They are metaphorical, resisting every meta-metaphorics, the values of concept, foundation, and theory" (p. 224). As an example of this, Derrida shows how every aspect of Aristotle's classic definition of metaphor, can be shown to be itself metaphorical. Derrida concludes that:

> it is impossible to dominate philosophical metaphorics as such, *from* the *exterior*, by using a concept of metaphor which remains a philosophical product...on the other hand...philosophy is deprived of what it provides itself. Its instruments belonging to its field, philosophy is incapable of dominating its general tropology and metaphorics (p. 228).

Whenever philosophy tries to dominate or to excise metaphor, to purify itself, or to fundamentally ground itself—above (meta) and before the metaphorical—at least one metaphor escapes, the one used in the 'domination,' the 'excision,' the 'purification,' or the 'grounding.' It escapes definition, even that which would simply name it 'metaphor.'

This undermines what Derrida suggests may be philosophy's unique thesis, "that the sense aimed at through these figures is an essence rigorously independent of that which transports it" (p. 229). When philosophy claims that the thought or the concept of, for instance, independence itself, possesses a sense rigorously autonomous from any of the poetic or figurative ways in which it is illustrated (such as sovereignty, separateness, self-containment, isolation), it is unable to demonstrate this autonomy without utilizing the very figurative language of which it had thought to purify itself. To put it more generally, it is unable to demonstrate that language can really refer to anything outside of itself. Language refers to other language, sign reflects to sign.

One of the things that Derrida wants to put into question is the hierarchical separation traditionally enforced between philosophy and rhetoric (p. 224). According to this tradition, rhetoric—the art of persuasion—functions according to principles of ornamentation, technique, and artifice. Historical evaluations of rhetoric have varied between Plato's derision for *sophistry* and the esteem granted the imitative and persuasive arts by Aristotle. But Derrida argues that at no time in the history of Western thinking, has the essential difference between rhetoric and philosophy been questioned. The distinction has always been based upon the difference between the concept and the figure, proper and improper names, that which refers to something outside of language, and that which refers only to another word, and is only a transposition of a name. Lakoff

and Johnson criticized this in arguing for the pervasiveness of metaphor even in our everyday concepts. In our examination of classical sociology, we are mostly interested in the various ways that this distinction between the concept (the essential, abstract meaning) and the figure (the non-essential form of illustration) recurs, and in evaluating the success of the distinction. Again, the main distinction made, is that the concept refers to an extra-linguistic reality, while the figure refers from sign to sign.

How, then, do Weber, Marx, and Durkheim make distinctions between *stylistic* elements and essential *content*? When is a metaphor just a metaphor, and when is it transferred to a higher sphere, to a proper meaning, where it will be used as a kind of scientific analogy?

For Lakoff and Johnson, most of our concepts have a metaphorical origin; a name or framework for something that, via transference to another sphere of experience in order to facilitate understanding, has first become metaphorical, and then gradually been lexicalized, the original source usually being forgotten. For Lakoff and Johnson, getting back to this original root metaphor provides a chance to choose better, or more appropriate metaphors. Derrida argues for a more complicated understanding of usage, there being no one, original and traceable source for a metaphor or a meaning.

In French, *usure* means both usury and using up, both profit and loss (TN, p. 209, n. 2). What happens with metaphor as it is used? In the traditionally conceived process, it is erased as a figure and transferred to a higher, idealized sphere, by the gradual wearing away of metaphor through continued use. The metaphor becomes a concept. The remainder would be that which is common both to the original metaphor and the

newly established concept, the mediation of resemblance. The profit, however, is this new concept, one independent of its metaphorical origins.

One small example, a part of the phrase 're-concretized' by one of Anatole France's characters in the *Garden of Epicurus* (pp. 210-214), would find 'spirit' originating in 'breath.' It is lexicalized and becomes the proper name, as it would be found in a dictionary: "the movement of metaphorization (origin and then erasure of the metaphor, transition from the proper sensory meaning to the proper spiritual meaning by means of the detour of figures) is nothing other than a movement of idealization" (p. 226). But this whole 'conceptualized' process requires and puts to work an oppositional framework that opposes thing to idea and thus: sensual/spiritual, sensible/intelligible, sensory/sense (p. 226). These divisions have historically determined the entire space open to metaphysics and consequently the concept of metaphor. They put into play the opposition between sensual, effective metaphors and inactive, effaced metaphors. The two sides of this opposition are well represented by Ricoeur on the one hand and Lakoff and Johnson on the other. Although their definitions of a 'live' metaphor are contrary, they are both committed to the intelligibility of the literal/metaphorical opposition according to some practice of unearthing, revitalizing, or understanding an original or real meaning. For Lakoff and Johnson, the origin of 'spirit' in 'breath' would signify the use of a more physical experience to understand a less physical experience.

Derrida claims that reading within the *concept* a concealed or secret history of *metaphor* is to "invest in the *symbolist* conception of language...no matter how deeply buried...to remain a link of natural necessity...of resemblance" (p. 215). *Breath* and *Spirit* would still remain linked by resemblance. Derrida's goal in his examination of this

narrative of usage, is to deconstruct "the metaphysical and rhetorical schema at work…to reinscribe them otherwise" (p. 215). A schema of metaphor undergirded by resemblance would continue to inscribe a symbolic relation between the figure (breath) and the concept (spirit). Informed by the *continuist presupposition*, metaphor's history appears like a regular and progressive erosion, predictable and linear. According to Derrida, the history of metaphor, as a history of language usage, is most accurately viewed as a history of "displacement with breaks, as reinscriptions in a heterogenous system, mutations, separations without origin" (p. 215).

Only by means of force is meaning traced according to a unified and linear view, along a concealed or effaced but continuous path back to a comprehensible, simple origin. At the root of this critique, is a critique of the assumptions about how communication works, a critique of the possibility of perfect understanding, of a symbolic language that is linked to and refers to some absolute reality outside of language, and in which it is possible to arrive by some intuition, at an original concept independent of language. This is not a matter of confusing the name of the thing and thing itself ('signifier and the signified') in every way. As Derrida remarks in the collection of interviews published as *Positions* (1981): "That this opposition or difference cannot be radical or absolute does not prevent it from functioning, and even from being indispensable within certain limits—very wide limits. For example, no translation would be possible without it" (p. 20). But translation in this case would need to be thought of as *transformation*, a calculation of lost and gained effects which is unable to 'transfer' meaning over without both surplus and loss, as well as a remainder of some kind.

This is the point at which Derrida moves beyond the analysis of Lakoff and Johnson, reflecting metaphoricity onto itself in order to destabilize not only the meaning of literal and proper, but of metaphor as well. To pursue this investigation, Derrida moves to Aristotle and his definition of metaphor. According to Derrida, this is "a philosophical thesis on metaphor. And it is also a philosophical discourse whose entire surface is worked by a metaphorics" (p. 232). Aristotle's treatment of metaphor in the *Rhetoric* and in *Poetics* involves an insertion into *lexis* (language, speech). In Aristotle's conception, thought (*dianoia*) is what is given to language (*lexis*) in order to be *thought through*. To the extent that they are complementary to each other *lexis* and *dianoia* cannot be identical. Thought is not made manifest by itself but requires the making manifest or embodiment provided through enunciation or lexis (p. 232). A symbolic language must be the making manifest of something outside and independent of that language. Thought, here, is what is supposed to be independent of language. But in this manifestation of thought (dianoia) through lexis, "metaphor falls to thought at the moment when meaning attempts to emerge from itself to be stated" (p. 233). In Aristotle's version of rhetoric, the dilemma of thinking's presentation of itself is already troubled by the place of metaphor. In perceiving the way in which metaphor arrives at the same time as the enunciation of thought, Aristotle was led to giving metaphor a high place in language, but not the highest.

In the *Poetics*, Aristotle formulates a definition of mimesis (usually translated as 'imitation') that determines it as the kind of imitation that separates humans from animals. Metaphor, as a uniquely human means of imitation and resemblance, will be a means, though subordinate to philosophical discourse, to knowledge. This is what we

have already noted in the short discussion of Ricoeur. Poetry, then, and along with it, metaphor, are in Aristotle's estimation "more philosophical and more serious than history (Poetics 1415b5-6)...However, it is not so serious as philosophy itself" (p. 238). Figurative language working through resemblance gives a profit of pleasure but is still relegated to resemblance and non-identity. It describes, it illustrates, but it is not the thing. This will be explored in part in the following discussion of the difference between *properties* and *essences*.

What is meant by proper? A late question. It is to be hoped, not too late. But what would be, so to speak, the proper meaning of proper? Several uses have already been marshaled, several terms and occurrences: in use, *literal, proper*, even *metaphysical* have been deployed as one side of the opposition, proper/metaphorical, and without adequate explanation.

Derrida again follows Aristotle in outlining several aspects of properness. First, Aristotle does not, in his writing on metaphor, give a very clear, centralized opposition of literal and figurative meaning. It is certainly possible, for instance, for the metaphor to occur properly, that is, at the appropriate (*prepon*) moment of discourse. Indeed, for Aristotle, metaphor is proper, or appropriate, particularly in the human, and precisely to the degree to which one contains *natural* genius.

But there are also some more 'proper' meanings of proper, recurring as *kurion* and *idion*, which are both generally translated as proper. *Kurion* is more common in both the *Rhetoric* and in *Poetics*, and usually "designates the propriety of a name utilized in its dominant, master, capital sense" (p. 247). By extension, this also includes "the primitive

(as opposed to derivative) sense, and sometimes is used as the equivalent of the usual, literal, familiar sense" (p. 247). *Idion*, the less common name in this context, seems to combine these two meanings of the primitive, capital sense and the usual, familiar sense, when it is used to designate that which allows one to avoid the detour of circumlocution (*periphrasis*).

According to Derrida, it is *idion* that supports, without taking the attention, Aristotle's metaphorology. And this is so in relation to an ideal language, of which metaphor is a key part. The ideal is that language in utilizing and elucidating the difference between essence, the proper, and accident, will "bring to knowledge the thing itself" (p. 247). This requires that language be capable of making clear, hierarchical distinctions between the proper and the improper in order to preserve further distinctions between essences and properties.

Derrida gives 'three reference points' to draw out this claim. This first has to do with plurality of meanings: "A noun is proper when it has but a single sense" (p. 247). By extension, the principle at work is that singularity (univocity) of meaning is the *telos* of language. Not only has this never been contradicted by any philosophy, Derrida claims, "this ideal is philosophy" (p. 247). Multiple meanings (polysemia) are recognized and allowed, but only on condition that they are of finite number, and distinct. For to have an infinite number of meanings would be to have no meaning, would be to make thinking impossible, would be to be outside language and even outside humanity, a mere vegetable.

A second reference point: the proper is inseparable from essence, but not to be confused with it. On the other hand: "The predicate of the essence and the predicate of the proper can be exchanged without the statement becoming false" one may say both that "If Socrates is a man [essence], he has logos [proper]" and "If Socrates has logos, he is a man" (p. 249). *Logos* is proper to man, but it is not the essence of man. This relation of the proper to the essence permits the elaboration of properties, as well as the play of metaphor, within these limits, protracting various properties of various essences, according to resemblance.

The third reference point brings up what Aristotle asks in the *Topics*: "What is proper to the sun?" To explore this, Derrida turns to the times when provision of a proportional resemblance requires that a double substitution of names occur. In this case, as in the poet's evocation of 'sowing around a god-created flame' (p. 243) to describe the casting forth of light from the sun, Aristotle has invoked "the case of a lexis which would be metaphorical in all its aspects. Or at least no proper name is present in it" (p. 243). Both 'sowing' and a 'god-created flame' are substitutions for what would be a proper name or proper verb, a literal meaning. Since no proper name occurs, the figure "is carried off into the adventure...which nothing assures us will lead us back to the proper name...everything begins to function no longer as a sun, but as a star, the punctual source of truth or properness remaining invisible" (p. 243). Both origin and centre, as literal, absolute foundations of knowledge, are threatened by the double metaphors; twice removed by figuration and closer to Derrida's thesis of the "multiple, divided origin of...the 'proper name'" (p. 244).

21

According to Aristotle's own notion of property or attribute, the sun itself actually has no properties or attributes. Aristotle's definition of certain or clear knowledge is that which necessarily and always attends a subject, and not that which is only comprehensible by sensation. For every sensation is contingent upon the conditions. A sensation is closer to an accident than a property. The situation of the sun is singular in two ways. First, since it regularly passes beyond sensation (with each sunset), it cannot be known in what is proper to it. Second, this quality places the sun as "the sensory object par excellence. It is the paradigm of the sensory" (p. 250). It is also, thus, the paradigm of knowledge itself.

Since the sun will itself remain improperly named, so too, any figure (which is in the end, all figures), that turns toward the sun as its movement will be an imperfect one: "Heliotropic metaphors are always imperfect metaphors. They provide us with too little knowledge, because one of the terms...cannot be known in what is proper to it" (p. 250). Since even the best metaphor is not completely good, completely true, then the bad metaphor actually provides the best example. From this view, Derrida believes that in the sun, we find the "paradigm of the sensory and of metaphor" (p. 250). Now the heliotrope, the flower turning toward the sun, the sun which is regularly absent, illustrates as an aspect of the most illustrious example, metaphor: "metaphor means heliotrope, both a movement turned toward the sun and the turning movement of the sun" (p. 251).

The sun provides, in short, the very opposition of presence and absence, and whatever is preserved in philosophical language is guaranteed by the sun. But this most natural and central referent is itself metaphorical, no longer completely natural. The sun

destabilizes the opposition of artificial and natural, in its ability to emerge from itself as an other, to be only a chandelier.

The philosophical categorization of metaphors, of figures, of concepts, around a centralized, dominant figure, (root metaphor, archaic trope, original concept) recurs to this theme of establishing a transcendental signified, an ultimate reference point, a centre. It (the transcendental signified) will be the final goal of every attempt to *properly* organize the system of language in an attempt to guarantee meaning and understanding. This is true of traditional philosophical attempts, but also of Lakoff and Johnson's organization of conceptual metaphors. Every time one seeks metaphor, seeks to establish a metaphorology, one is seeking a transcendental signified, and remains within metaphysics. One remains within the field of infinite attempts to limit the multiplicity of meaning, and to limit the repeated escape of language from all attempts to neutralize and calculate its system of effects. Derrida remains with the metaphor of the sun: "The tenor of the dominant metaphor will return always to this major signified of ontotheology: the circle of the heliotrope…'Natural Light'…is never subjected to the most radical doubt" (p. 267). Even Descartes, in the *Discourse on Method*, draws back from the thought of a trickster god. His doubt begins after the cogito. His doubt is enough. *Natural Light* is the foundation of this stratification of metaphors and their relation to philosophy. This remains the case with the two centuries of skepticism largely initiated by Hume, in which the *book of nature* remains a consistent source of illumination (Becker, 1932). As will be *seen* later, natural light also plays an important role in orienting classical sociology.

Metaphysics (or that which is concerned with the absolute truth, the unconditioned reality beyond sensory experience) is thus subjected to metaphor, its

concepts being caught in metaphorical transposition in their enunciation. Metaphor must be explained by philosophy as a "provisional loss of meaning, an economy of the proper without irreparable damage...This is why the philosophical evaluation of metaphor has always been ambiguous" (p. 269). The mutual implication of metaphor and philosophy, as Derrida has traced it, is enough to collapse the opposition between them. This entangling and interweaving of reflection and reference is an entanglement of the proper and the figurative, of philosophic and poetic discourse, of truth and fiction. All of which brings us to Paul Ricoeur, who is concerned with limiting and stratifying this mixture.

Paul Ricoeur: "Metaphor and Philosophical Discourse"

> The second question, more deeply hidden from us, requires a global decision regarding the collective unity of modes of discourse as modes of use, such as poetic discourse, scientific discourse, religious discourse, speculative discourse, and so on. (Ricoeur, 1975, p. 257)

Ricoeur states early on in the eighth study of The Rule of Metaphor that he would like to "plead for a relative pluralism of forms and levels of discourse" (pp. 257-258). In addition, he states that "it is important to recognize in principle the discontinuity that assures the autonomy of speculative discourse" (p. 258). In the third part of the eighth study, Ricoeur devotes fifteen pages to a critique of 'White Mythology.' He tries to show that "the problematic of the dead metaphor is derivative, and that the required response is to climb back up the slope of this sort of entropy of language by means of a new act of discourse" (p. 259). Of course, by 'dead metaphor' he refers precisely to what Lakoff and Johnson call a 'metaphor we live by.'

The bulk of Ricoeur's argument can be summed up in relation to the "Two assertions" that he claims "can be discerned in the tight fabric of Derrida's demonstration. The first has to do with the efficacy of worn-out metaphor in philosophical discourse, and the second with the deep-seated unity of metaphorical and analogical transfer of visible being to intelligible being" (p. 285). In short, Ricoeur claims that while philosophical discourse may draw on metaphor as its resource, metaphor does not retain an invisible effect within discourse through the gradual event of its lexicalization. Nor are analogical and metaphorical tactics fairly reducible to a unified function or project.

According to Ricoeur, Derrida's thesis is "that discourse on metaphor is itself infected by the universal metaphoricity of philosophical discourse...There is no non-metaphorical standpoint from which to perceive the order and the demarcation of the metaphorical field" (p. 286-287). Ricoeur concludes correctly that this result effects the disruption of the essential oppositions of metaphysical construction: figurative and proper language, the sensible and the intelligible (p. 287). In his master stroke, in 'unmasking' "the dominant metaphors of light and home" (p. 289)—the 'at least one' metaphor that escapes the field of proper domination—Derrida shows how "by being images for idealization and appropriation, light and sojourn are a figure for the very process of metaphorizing and thereby ground the return of metaphor upon itself" (p. 289). Philosophical discourse is grounded by the metaphor of home, and [self]-illuminated by the prevailing metaphor of light. Derrida feels he has effectively disturbed this prejudice, this self-privilege, this ethnocentrism, by discerning the work of these metaphors at the very roots of metaphysics, while simultaneously discerning metaphysics at root in these

same basic metaphors. In a final sense, idealization and appropriation—the basic activities of philosophy according to Derrida—are through and through just as metaphorical as they are philosophical.

Ricoeur asserts throughout that Derrida is proposing the effectiveness of worn-out metaphor. That is, a certain hidden, subconscious, remainder that continues to direct thinking according to paths and perceptions based around illumination and return. Ricoeur protests that dead metaphors are no longer metaphors, precisely because they no longer provide any contrast with a literal sense (p. 290). Metaphor requires an *is* and an *is not*. The predicated metaphor develops a transgression of usage that the literal does not because of its lexicalization. To discover a metaphorical history in a word with a lexicalized and therefore literal meaning is not to discover a hidden metaphor, functioning in a secret and subconscious way, but merely to practice etymology. The essence of metaphor, in Ricoeur's mind, is the *conscious* way in which we perceive the 'is and is not.'

Ricoeur does not need a primitive, natural and original proper meaning to be attached to words either. It is sufficient that literal mean 'proper' in the sense of "simply current, 'usual'" (p. 291). There is no need for a special metaphysics to interfere in justifying the difference between literal and figurative, for this difference appears through "use in discourse" (p. 291). In the end, Ricoeur concludes that the influence of 'dead' metaphor on philosophical discourse is much less interesting than the occasions "where philosophical discourse deliberately has recourse to living metaphor in order to draw out new meanings from some semantic impertinence and to bring to light new aspects of reality by means of semantic innovation" (p. 291). For Ricoeur, 'dead metaphor' is most

interesting for its possibility of revival through 'de-lexicalization.' But this process is not at all symmetrical to lexicalization, and does something other than merely to "unmask concepts" (p. 292).

Jacques Derrida responds: "The Retrait of Metaphor"

Derrida responds to Ricoeur with his characteristic mastery of metaphor. He begins by playing with metaphors of transportation. How can I stop the skid? he asks. It is not possible: "I skid and I drift irresistibly"; "I can no longer stop the vehicle or anchor the ship, master completely (sans reste) the drifting or skidding" (Derrida, 1978, p. 7). Metaphor gets along without us, in a certain way, Derrida claims. We cannot master it. It is not at our 'disposal.' On the other hand, Derrida raises what is the possibility of possibility for him: "if it [metaphor] gets by without everything that does not happen without it, maybe in a bizarre sense it does without itself, it no longer has a name, a literal or proper meaning...in its withdrawal (retrait),...metaphor perhaps retires" (p. 8).

Derrida's goal was precisely to discredit or deconstruct the schema of founding philosophy on a continuist and therefore symbolist understanding of worn-out metaphor. Derrida is not trying to uncover an original, metaphorical meaning which functions invisibly, but to demonstrate a continual non-original origin of our language and our meanings. The relation between thought and poetry is one of *neighborliness*, the border being drawn out, in withdrawal. According to Derrida, this gives us a way of speaking about ontological difference that counters the protest that "there is nothing meta-metaphoric because there are only metaphors of metaphors" (p. 27). Rather than the

etymology that tried, by a continuist assumption, to unveil the primitive and 'original' meaning of words, Derrida has coined several neologisms in an attempt to show what is more originary than either thought or poetry. Thought and poetry emerge in difference, in language. Oppositions emerge together, presence gaining its meaning from the polarity of its relation with absence, abstraction determined as the opposite of concretion.

The beginnings of language and meaning cannot be subsumed under 'originality' or 'derivation.' The origins of language, what he has used words like, *differance*, or *trace*, or here, *trait* to describe, occur as "a priori withdrawal, unappearance, and effacement of its mark in its incision" (p. 29). The oppositions upon which metaphysics is based, as for example, that between speculative and figurative discourse, appear only in or through the 'work' of the 'trait' as and in its withdrawal: "The trait is therefore nothing...neither passive nor active...All the oppositions of value have their proper possibility in difference, in the between of its divergence which brings together as much as it demarcates" (p. 32). This provides a way of returning to Derrida's suggestion that metaphor has no name, no literal or proper meaning "in its withdrawal...metaphor perhaps retires" (p. 8).

So the distinction between metaphor and concept cannot be an absolute distinction. This does not prevent us from continuing to use it, as Derrida says, "within certain limits—very wide limits" (1981, p. 20). However, the final validity of the basic distinction, that metaphors refer from sign to sign, while concepts refer to some reality outside language, is belied by the impossibility of ever producing a concept that is independent of metaphoric effects.

28

The Conduit Metaphor

Lakoff and Johnson, in their discussion of the 'conduit metaphor' for communication, provide a helpful framework for stating more clearly some of the consequences of Derrida's analysis for questions of meaning, intention, communication, and authorship. A concept they take from Michael Reddy, the 'conduit metaphor' is a complex metaphor composed of three simple metaphors: ideas (or meanings) are objects; linguistic expressions are containers; communication is sending (1980; p. 10). The conduit metaphor is so dominant in our conventional manner of talking and thinking about language, that we are hard-pressed to see what this metaphor might be hiding or ignoring about the communication process. In 'reality,' however, communication almost never really follows the conduit schema.

Lakoff and Johnson ground the communicative process in a single human motivation, "the concern for understanding" (p. 229). In this pragmatic process, driven by practical, experience-based concerns, ideas and meaning only ever appear as and when they are embodied in activities aimed at understanding. Meaning is not a kernel existing within language that we need merely to 'get across' when we attempt to communicate with others. The broad application of a conduit theory of communication, with a view of meaning as something inherent in the words themselves, abstracted from real and ongoing experience, has dire consequences: "When a society lives by the CONDUIT metaphor on a large scale, misunderstanding, persecution, and much worse are the likely products" (p. 232).

Sociological Figures

To address theory-building in the classical period of sociology initially concerned the place of metaphor in language in general. Now the point is to focus more specifically on the place of metaphor in the texts of classical sociology. The previous discussion of metaphor has developed several faces. Lakoff and Johnson find conceptual metaphors busy everywhere, especially in unexpected places, e.g., everyday thought and activity. Ricoeur is also interested in undermining the 'ornamental' theory of metaphor that would have it operating only in a superficial, regional, decorative manner, but he is more concerned with *conscious* use of metaphor in ways that brings surprise, pleasure and new insight. With Ricoeur, metaphor remains the resource of a stricter and more serious form of discourse, speculative philosophy. The third perspective, Derrida's, makes the very name of metaphor problematic. It is without a face, at least a face that would be distinguishable from a mask.

How then, to proceed? A full taxonomy of metaphors as found in Durkheim, Marx, or Weber, could only be of peripheral interest and would, if pursued, only signal a misunderstanding. It would also be an impossible project. Rather, the work of Lakoff and Johnson will provide practical help in developing examples of 'conceptual metaphors,' while Ricoeur's sense of the 'live metaphor' will also provide assistance. Derrida will be used in outlining explicit and implicit theories of language within these texts that concern the use of metaphor as well as the relations between these authors and the history of the kind of conceptual thinking that has dominated in the West, and that we have been discussing throughout the problematic of the literal/figurative distinction.

So far we have focused on one particular genre distinction; that between speculative and poetic discourse. Science, as technicized empiricism, as thought elaborated and extended in terms of genus and therefore a logic dwelling within its own rigorousness, is what ontotheology wished to transcend in its attempt, through the medieval *analogia entis* (analogy of being), to develop a science of being and of God; to add transcendence to science. What could link back into the language of science? Hasn't empiricism, by so severely cutting itself off from metaphysics and the transcendent, preserved or created for itself an independent sphere, untouched by either poetic or speculative discourse? If it is poetic, it is for the sake of clarity or to popularize it, to make it understandable to the lay person (at the cost of precision, to be sure). If it can be called speculative, it is only in terms of logical systems, mathematical protraction of possibility. It does not make transcendental claims about Platonic ideals. Where, then, is there any clear path from this theoretical discussion of philosophy, metaphor and metaphysics, to scientific discourse, and especially sociological discourse? The goal is to turn to classical sociology, seeking to understand it in such a way that it may become possible in a small way to point "beyond the field of the episteme" (p. 93). For sociology, like all of the social sciences, has significant connections to philosophy, and a similar concern with the difference between a concept and a metaphor. This is already a concern at the level of 'pure empiricism' and not just at the theoretical level.

Karl Marx

The Critique of Political Economy (The Dialectic turned on its Head)

Eighteenth century philosophy provided resources of rapid secularization for thought. Through Rousseau, Voltaire, Hume, and others, thinking seemed to extricate itself from under the weight of church dogma. Science had since Copernicus and Galileo been making strides toward becoming an independent form of discourse and a distinctive way of knowing.

With Marx, method arrived via Kant, Hegel, and also Feuerbach. The re-emergence of dialectics and development of modern dialectics thus occurs at an intersection between science and philosophy; more particularly, the composite discourse mustered/mastered by Hegel as ontotheology. In this section, I will examine Hegel to provide a transition from philosophy to science. His struggle to create a scientific philosophy provided the <u>material</u> for the development of Karl Marx's critique of ideology and of all previous political economy.

But Hegel's science of philosophy was entirely inadequate as a science for Marx. Hegel's dialectic was merely the critical and ultimate incarnation of idealist philosophy. The materialism of Marx, which turned the Hegelian dialectic on its head, (for here ideas are determined by material conditions and by relations of production), thus seems very far from some medieval formulation of the quest for knowledge as structured according to *analogia entis*. The Analogy of Being (*analogia entis*) was a concept developed by the Scholastics (such as Aquinas) in their efforts to develop theology as a science. The analogical linkages were between the horizontal relations of finite, mortal creatures and the vertical relation between the divine and the earthly. Hegel's science was a melding of

theology and philosophy, and the title 'ontotheology' applies to no one else's work as aptly as it does to his. It would seem that these links between science and metaphysics would be severed by an event as overwhelming as Marx's inversion of the dialectic. But as Derrida has suggested, perhaps we remain within precisely what we think we have put an end to. To follow this suggestion, I am interested in examining the effects of the transformations in thinking and method that occur in the transition from Hegel to Marx, as well as the relation between Marx and the broader context of Western philosophizing as such, by examining specific metaphoric aspects of his writing. In these contexts I am occupied with Marx's methodological concern for concretization, his explanation for the two-fold nature of the commodity, and his conception of fetishism of commodities.

Hegel's Science

Using the preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit* as a guide I will try to draw out some of Hegel's insights about science. In the work of thinking, or the progress of an idea "everything turns on grasping and expressing the True, not only as *Substance*, but equally as *Subject*" (1977, p. 10); "Or, what is the same, is in truth actual only in so far as it is the movement of positing itself, or is the mediation of its self-othering with itself" (p. 10). An idea begins as simple negativity, then splits and opposes itself, then restores itself to sameness. This is the True as process, as built into its own spiraling emergence into being. The work of dialectic travels the path from the *in-itself* of abstract, immediate universality toward being *for-itself.*

In Hegel's system, science appears as this self-movement of the subject. What will save an idealism or inert structuralism in which "a so-called basic proposition or

principle of philosophy, if true, is also false, just because it is *only* a principle...is only the beginning" (p. 13)? The refutation of such a principle, if it is thorough, and derived from the principle itself, will "consist in the further development of the principle, and in thus remedying the defectiveness" (p. 13). But the remedy comes only if attention is paid not merely to the negative moment of refutation, but also to the positive side, which also serves the negative attitude "as a demonstration that the *basis* or principle of the system is, in fact, only its beginning" (p. 14).

So the True is actualized only in a systematic manner, in which Substance is also Subject, and *self-moving*. Hegel expresses this in the representation of the "Absolute as *Spirit*" (p. 14). This he calls "the most sublime Notion and the one which belongs to the modern age and its religion" (p. 14). Now he gives a definition of Science, as that which relates itself to itself, as Spirit that **is**. At first it is only being-in-and-for-itself for *us*, that is Spirit as *Substance* and not yet as *Subject*, in which it would have knowledge of itself as Spirit. He explains it this way:

> It must be an *object* to itself, but just as immediately a sublated object, reflected into itself...in so far as it is also for itself for its own <u>self</u>, this self-generation, the pure Notion, is for it the objective element in which it has its existence, and it is in this way, in its existence for itself, an object reflected into itself. The Spirit that, so developed, knows itself as Spirit, is *Science*; Science in its actuality and the realm which it builds for itself in its own element (p. 14).

Scientific understanding, or 'scientific cognition' demands that scientists give themselves over to "the life of the object...confronting and expressing its inner necessity" (p. 32). Logical necessity consists then in "this nature of what is to be in its being its Notion" (p. 34). Hegel calls this speculative philosophy, "this alone is the rational element and the rhythm of the organic whole; it is as much *knowledge* of the content, as the content is the

Notion and essence" (p. 34). Logical form and logical existence is the "self-moving concrete shape [that] makes itself into a simple determinateness" (p. 34). The activity, the self-movement of the Notion as Subject, makes an external formalism made up of abstract, inert propositions unnecessary. The content of its active concreteness develops its formalism innately and not externally. So Hegel says "this nature of Scientific method, which consists partly in not being separate from the content, and partly in spontaneously determining the rhythm of its movement, has, as already remarked, its proper exposition in speculative philosophy" (p. 35). Science requires attention to the Notion in its modes as Being-in-itself, Being-for-self and so forth. This differs from picture-thinking, or material thinking, a kind of consciousness concerned only in material stuff that finds it difficult to rise above this. It also differs from argumentation, "formalistic thinking that argues back and forth in thoughts that have no actuality" (p. 35). Science, on the contrary, "exists solely in the self-movement of the Notion" (p. 44). The scientific mode of thinking requires one to forget oneself, in surrendering to the activity of the Notion as Substance and self-moving Subject.

This has been a brief treatment of Hegel's method. We have, at least, some understanding of the dialectic contained within the Notion as both subject and substance. That is, containing its positive moment and its negative moment, unrestricted by the propositional law of non-contradiction and functioning as self-movement of self-elaboration or system; the dialectic does its own work.

Now what occurs in the transition to a Marxist dialectic? The next section will attempt to reconstruct Marx's methodology with respect to some of the shifts made in

relation to Hegel. This will be followed by tracing the significance of these shifts for the place of metaphor in his texts.

From Hegel to Marx

Hegel's philosophy is often regarded as having two significant characteristics, its dialectics and its idealism. Put simply, one could say that Marx accepted the dialectical Hegel and utterly rejected the idealist Hegel, replacing the latter with materialism. In this way, instead of the Absolute Idea or Notion interacting with itself and producing the movement of dialectic as self-movement of self-elaboration—as thinking producing from abstractions the concrete form of the actual, the system—there are real relations of production, negating their material form through activity by social, human actors and producing objects of use.

And yet great care is needed in discussing Marx's 'materialism,' for it would be very easy to get it wrong. Above all, it does not fit into the kind of material thinking that Hegel called 'picture-thinking' and whose shortcomings he pointed out. One of the densest formulations of Marx's materialism occurs in the first of the 'Theses on Feuerbach.' As Marx formulates it here the **thing** to be understood by critique must be conceived not only as object but also subjectively as 'human sensuous activity' (1964, p. 69). This seems to be a reformulation of Hegel's requirement that the Notion appear as both subject and substance. But of course Marx radically reinterprets the sense of *actual* in his own method. As he said in his famous assessment of Hegel's system: "With him it is standing on its head. It must be turned right side up again, if you would discover the

rational kernel within the mystical shell" (Marx, 1978, p. 29). This, of course, is a mixed metaphor.

The subject and substance to be found—the one that in Hegel appears in the process of thinking as 'the Idea'—is found in, or as, real, human, bodily activity. So Marx's most radical restructuring of the dialectic seems to occur in redirecting attention away from the Ideal and toward the Material, by means of combining substance and subject in the process of human activity. Now substance has been since Aristotle, that aspect of being which serves as the basis, the self-subsistent entity functioning as the source and setting, of manifestations of being, as essences, properties, accidents. Conventional elaboration of truth statements relies on a somewhat undisturbed conception of substance. As was earlier noted with reference to the 'proper,' both the literal and the metaphorical depend upon the stable reference point provided by substance, by a thing's self-identical essence. It is on the basis of a difference between essence and the proper that the activity of metaphor is possible, in which properties that are attached to the essence of different things are related to each other comparatively. So if Marx has redirected the dialectic away from the Idea and towards material, social activity, then what does this do to language, to the language of the proper and the metaphoric? What is Marx's materialism and what are its effects on language, on how he uses language, if substance is social activity?

To illustrate this problem, I will return again to the example of the sun. Now if we are sure of the substance of and what is proper to the sun (as we are not, if we follow Derrida's reading of Aristotle), it is unproblematic to use the sun both properly and figuratively and to know the difference between these two kinds of uses. But Derrida has

demonstrated that a proper name does not arrive without baggage. Even a simple name like 'sun' does not come to us without a history of uses, and our willingness to accept one meaning as the proper meaning is not due to its natural self-recommendation, but to the history of its uses. A main question of interest here concerns the degree to which we structure knowledge itself according to illumination, as a function of the revelation of 'natural light.' Later, this will be one of the main questions addressed to Marx's work. What are the conditions, in Marx, under which knowledge is structured according to natural light, and elaborated according to a standard view of substance, essence, property? The question to be resolved is whether Marx successfully makes language, concepts, philosophy, the "necessary sublimates" (1964, p. 74) of man's material, empirically pre-conditioned life-process (Marx mirrors Lakoff and Johnson's view of conceptual language here, the language for more abstract experiences emerging from more basic physical processes).

Marx wrote about types of materialism through many of his works. It is likely that his treatment shifted to some degree, making it difficult—particularly as it is already a difficult concept to grasp—to be sure one has 'mastered the difference' that makes Marx's materialism unique. *The German Ideology* dates from about the same time as the *Theses on Feuerbach* (1845-1846) and presents a similar version of his inversion of the Subject of *critique*...of scientific method.

> In direct opposition to German philosophy, which comes down from heaven to earth, here there is ascension from earth to heaven. That means that we proceed not from what men say, fancy or imagine, nor from men as they are spoken of, thought, fancied, imagined in order to arrive from them at men of flesh and blood; we proceed from the really active men and see the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of their real life-processes as proceeding from that life-process. Even the

nebulous images in the brains of men are necessary sublimates of their material, empirically preconditioned, life process. (p. 74).

Here, method is solidified and concretized. From what Hegel called the 'actual,' Marx moves in the *Grundrisse*, to "the real and the concrete" (Marx, 1973, p. 100). The method of political economy, in Marx's view, must begin with "the real precondition." This may seem to be the *population*, but this proves false: "on closer examination...the population is an abstraction if I leave out, for example, the classes of which it is composed. These classes in turn are an empty phrase if I am not familiar with the elements on which they rest...these latter in turn presuppose..." (1973, p. 100).

To speak in terms of population may be a useful way of formulating the object of political economy abstractly, but in Marx's terms "if I were to begin with the population, this would be a chaotic conception [*Vorstellung*] of the whole, and I would then, by means of further determinations, move analytically towards ever more simple concepts [*Begriff*], from the imagined concrete towards ever thinner abstractions until I had arrived at the simplest determinations" (p. 100). This journey is one historically made by other economists. By contrast, Marx dialectically proceeds (necessarily) back down the trail "until I had finally arrived at the population again, but this time not as the chaotic conception of a whole, but as a rich totality of many determinations and relations" (p. 100). For Marx, this is the authentically scientific method.

The procedure of thinking is formulated in terms of a particular relation between the abstract and the concrete: "the concrete is concrete because it is the concentration of many determinations, hence unity of the diverse" (p. 101). The abstract, on the other hand, supplements the concrete: "the abstract determinations lead toward a reproduction of the concrete by way of thought" (p. 101). Thinking itself contains both abstract and

concrete elements. In reality, the concrete, as appropriated by observation and conception, forms the *point of departure*. But thinking, traveling both ways on the path, first evaporating the full conception to yield the abstract and then re-tracing the path, reproducing the concrete from abstract determinations, is prone to misunderstanding itself. This is how Marx describes Hegel's folly:

> In this way Hegel fell into the illusion of conceiving the real as the product of thought concentrating itself, probing its own depths, and unfolding itself out of itself, whereas the method of rising from the abstract to the concrete is only the way in which thought appropriates the concrete, reproduces it as the concrete in the mind (p. 101).

Conceptual thinking, or the philosophical, speculative consciousness, produces a concrete totality as "a totality of thoughts, concrete in thought, in fact a product of thinking and comprehending; but not in any way a product of the concept which thinks and generates itself outside or above observation and conception" (p. 101). This is a direct contradiction of Hegel, and another demarcation of the proper methods of science from Hegel's system.

For Marx, speculative philosophy itself becomes the discourse correctly functioning as a subordinate resource for the real activity of scientific method. Its justification for being incorporated at all is that its sum, or substantive body, as "a totality of thoughts, is a product of a thinking head, which appropriates the world in the only way it can, a way different from the artistic, religious, practical and mental appropriation of this world. The real subject retains its autonomous existence outside the head just as before" (p. 101). That is, again, that subjectivity is produced, not by thinking reflected on itself, but by real, active, human relations.

Concrete relations determine categories, although they do not develop in the same order. Historically the development of concrete relations may not appear as entirely one of simple to complex. Abstract categories, on the other hand, do find their development into unified wholes as a process originally from simple to complex, as has already been outlined. This may raise confusion in analysis that continues to look for an identical teleology or linear process in both the abstract and the concrete. In a way Marx is formulating a version of the saying that 'life is lived forward, but understood backward.' He writes: "As a rule, the most general abstractions arise only in the midst of the richest possible concrete development, where one thing appears as common to many, to all. Then it ceases to be thinkable in a particular form alone" (p. 104). Marx here, as elsewhere, indicates a necessity of thinking...compelled by concrete relations, and in another sense restricted, silenced—as thoughts—until such a time as material labour conditions make space available for them. To be able to conceive, for example, of labour in its most general abstractions "presupposes a very developed totality of real kinds of labour, of which no single one is any longer predominant" (p. 104). It is not only this concrete totality which enables the thought of abstract labour, it is also the general indifference toward specific forms of labour: "society in which individuals can with ease transfer from one labour to another, and where the specific kind is a matter of chance for them, hence of indifference" (p. 104). Abstract labour in such a society becomes true *in practice*. The abstract categories are "a product of historic relations, and possess their full validity only for and with these relations" (p. 105).

Concretization

We have gone some distance into a discussion of Marx without making much mention of the metaphoric/literal problematic. But we have never really left the discussion. From the perspective of conceptual metaphor analysis, Marx's entire project of 'solidifying' thought looks metaphorical. The activity of the 'concretization' of abstractions, the 'movement' that Marx initiates, lies precisely within the contested region. Is it metaphorical when Marx writes that "In direct opposition to German philosophy, which comes down from heaven to earth, here there is ascension from earth to heaven" (1964, p. 74)? The framework of *"a reversed world"* (p. 41) is supported by Marx's evaluation of philosophy. His evaluation of philosophy is supported by his theory of language as the practical consciousness of human actors. The confusion of philosophy is that a result (an abstract concept) has been mistaken for an origin, language itself has become reified, ideas reflecting other ideas, and creating an illusion, sometimes religious, of another world, always deflecting attention from the real state of affairs. Thinking has become 'disoriented.' Where is the place for metaphor here when such a critique of language has already been mounted?

Did Marx understand his own theory to be metaphorically structured? Is the concretization of thought a metaphorical movement, an illustration, a transposition of names? On the contrary, the illusion is that there is a transposition of names, that it is possible to use the imagery of concretization in an abstract sense, as an abstract concept. Concretization, Marx would say, is only a conceptual activity on the basis of first being a product of real activity, for *"man* is no abstract being squatting outside the world. Man is *the world of man,* the state, society. This state, this society, produce religion, *a reversed*

world-consciousness, because they are *a reversed world*" (p. 41). Abstract concepts become true in practice, social activity producing the real concrete forms that make these concepts valid while the social activities persist.

On the other hand, since Marx has never argued that the concepts were independent of the form of physical, social activity, perhaps he has an already built-in mechanism that undermines the distinction between the literal and the metaphorical. The literal/metaphorical distinction would be an abstract, theoretical concept, a distinction that would collapse at the revolutionary moment: "The real, practical dissolution of these phrases, the removal of these notions from the consciousness of men, will, as we have already said, be effected by altered circumstances, not by theoretical deductions" (1972, p. 130). If this is so, still, Marx himself continued to use the phrases. His concrete/abstract distinction follows too many traditional lines to ignore: (physical/spiritual; sensible/intelligible).

So Marx does not get off so easily. His entanglement in the issue of metaphor is more complicated than his argument about the abstract and the concrete, or else the abstract and the concrete are already implicated in a deeper issue. Is his concretization of thought metaphorical? The issue is still undecided. The abstract productions of man are real *expressions* of the state of affairs, though their own *content*, understood literally, is illusory. Then perhaps metaphor rests outside of Marx's theory at the same time as it structures his theory. The illusory world, the narcissistic world of language reflected on itself and disorienting real people, must be abolished in order that real emancipation, real happiness, and the real world may come into view. The famous passage on religion presents this view in dense fashion, but uses powerful metaphors in doing so. In fact, the

'opium of the people' phrase is probably the most well-known phrase in his entire oeuvre: "*Religious* distress is at the same time the *expression* of real distress and the *protest* against real distress. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of a spiritless situation. It is the *opium* of the people" (p. 42). What is he really saying here? Is religion really an opiate? Is this an analogy? Is it a metaphor?

Does Marx still follow the laws of the *analogia entis*? Is the elaboration of his theory **not** a tracing of concrete activity, but still an attempt at the logical working out of concepts that have reference to an extra-linguistic reality? What does he have to say about language? And what does this mean for the traditional opposition he has sometimes seemed to be following in which one thing 'is' and another thing 'is not,' one is real and one is an illusion (being and nothingness)? Is it not metaphorical for Marx to, to use his own phrase against him, try to 'squat outside the world' of language and divide up what is real and what is illusion? In addition, does Marx invert or collapse the traditional mind/body, soul/body dualism, when he seems to assert that thought and language should be subsumed under the rubric of material activity, rather than understood in opposition to it (as abstract concepts, Ideas)? He asserts that consciousness is not pure, inherent, 'spirit' but:

> From the start the 'spirit' is afflicted with the curse of being 'burdened' with matter, which here makes its appearance in the form of agitated layers of air, sound, in short, of language. Language is as old as consciousness, language *is* practical consciousness that exists also for other men, and for that reason alone it really exists for me personally as well; language, like consciousness only arises from the need, the necessity, of intercourse with other men. (G.I. 1972, p. 122)

So 'spirit' does not exist on some other plane than matter, it has no 'other' reality. Its reality is as a part of practical consciousness, as a part of language, appearing in air. Here Marx appears to do two things. First, he asserts that the abstract concept of spirit is caught up with language as soon as it is enunciated (reminiscent of Aristotle's dilemma with *lexis* and *dianoia*). Second, however, he equates 'spirit' with 'breath.' He unmasks a metaphorical concept by showing its literal meaning (or origin). This is the principle of materialism. As we have seen from our earlier discussion of Anatole France, however, he is not the first to discover this material basis to an abstract concept. The question that remains is whether unmasking this concept really overcomes a mind/body or a natural/cultural or a literal/metaphorical dualism, or whether the opposition continues to live on in some other form, in some other functioning of language, in some other structuring of the text, even Marx's.

Language is practical consciousness. Thinking appropriates the concrete as the 'concrete in the mind.' If this is so, then perhaps we must reverse the claim made earlier. Concretization, real concretization, is not metaphorical. But 'the concrete in the mind,' the linguistic appropriation of the concrete for thought is a transposition, everything being removed from its original time and space and placed in language. Then everything in language is a transposition and all language is in a state of mootness with regard to its metaphoric character.

The Emergence of the Commodity

I want to pursue a couple of brief lines of similarity between the definition of metaphor as exemplified by Aristotle, and the outline of the commodity in chapter one of

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Capital, in order to continue to inquire about Marx's theory of language. Here, the leading suggestion is that Marx's equations for the forms of value parallel the traditionally conceived process of the lexicalization of metaphor. Just as metaphor moves (according to usage) from a singular (accidental) comparison, to the more elaborated stage of analogy, and completes the process in the *minting* of a new concept, so Marx's forms of value move from accidental, to relative and equivalent form, and finally to the universal equivalent, which becomes the Money-form of value. This similarity of form is more than a mere accident. Marx here demonstrates a partial acceptance of a traditional theory of language, in which meaning is determined according to usage, the original moment of metaphoric creativity or intuition (perceiving the similar in dissimilars—in this case, perceiving the identical substance of abstract labour embodied in two things with qualitatively different use-values) being erased with the gradual emergence of the concept.

To review, in Aristotle's discussion of language, thought (*dianoia*) is what is given to language/diction/enunciation (*lexis*) in order to become manifest—thought is the cause or effect or content of language, without being the language or the act of language itself. Language will be called in, to service (a metaphor) a thought that on its own remains invisible. And yet, Derrida says—and it can already be seen in the figure of emergence or revelation that we have been caught in a metaphor before we meant to make use of one—"thought stumbles upon metaphor, or metaphor falls to thought at the moment when meaning attempts to emerge from itself in order to be stated" (1982, p. 233).

Derrida goes on to characterize both the *Rhetoric* and *Poetics* as claiming that "the difference between *dianoia* (thought) and *lexis* (language, expression) is due to the fact that the first is not made manifest by itself" (p. 233). This is mirrored by Marx, for the same need for expression is seen in the elementary form of exchange value of a commodity: "The value of the linen can therefore be expressed only relatively—i.e. in some other commodity...the commodity that figures as the equivalent" (1978, p. 55).

Now this process, whereby the commodity's exchange value is given expression, stems from Marx's theory of the commodity. Marx claimed that his real insight into economics was the recognition of the two-fold nature of the commodity. A commodity, he said, was a product of labour that had both a use-value and an exchange value. The real source of value, of course, is labour: "A use-value, or useful article, therefore has value only because human labour in the abstract has been embodied or materialized in it" (p. 46). Labour is embodied in a useful article, as a use-value, and expressed in the form of exchange-value, in the body of another commodity functioning as an equivalent.

The embodiment of value refers to the labour that 'goes into' creating a product with a use-value. This shows Marx's inversion of the Hegelian dialectic at work. Materialization of *labour* in the subject and substance of an object produced as a use-value contrasts with Hegel's Idea realizing itself as substance and subject.

The manifestation or expression of exchange-value is left to the relative form of value. Simple naming (20 yards of linen = 20 yards of linen) is a mere tautology, and cannot contribute to the manifestation or expression of exchange-value even though value has already been embodied in the object as a congelation of abstract human labour. The

expression of value requires some other commodity to play the role of equivalent (e.g. 20 yards of linen = 2 coats).

At first, the difference between embodiment and expression of value is exploited to show the appearance of <u>value</u> as different from use-value, as the second part of the two-fold nature of a commodity: a physical form, with a use-value ("their plain, homely, bodily form," p. 54) and a value-form. But then, expression and embodiment are conflated: The value-form is a purely social reality "acquired only in so far as they are *expressions or embodiments* of one identical social substance, viz., human labour...value can only manifest itself in the social relation of commodity to commodity" (p. 54).

Here I think there is a problem of substantiality that Marx will approach now in one way, now in another. Language itself will seem to force him to draw on the same resources to describe both a natural reality and a social reality (the two-fold form of value). In Marx's view, the material reality determines the social reality. The material reality is straightforward, but the social reality is not clear and straightforward. It is the supplement that allows the expression of value, but it is also the thing vulnerable to reification and mystification, it is a dangerous supplement, but also a necessary one. Is this supplement, this two-fold nature of value, only required in the modern capitalist mode of production, or is the problem of enunciation or expression always and already an aspect of social reality? Marx claims that in other systems, such as the feudal one, "the social relations between individuals in the performance of their labour, appear at all events as their own mutual personal relations, and are not disguised under the shape of social relations between the products of labour" (p. 82).

As we see again, "The progress of our investigation will show that exchange-value is the only form in which the value of commodities can manifest itself or be expressed" (p. 46). But Marx immediately claims that "for the present, however, we have to consider the nature of value independent of this, its form" (p. 46). This is like saying that we need to consider the origin of meaning, apart from the words in which meaning appears. Still, the question to be answered, is whether the nature of value is something inherent in existence, something real existing outside of language, that has been intuited, at the fortuitous moment of the real development of relations of production, or whether it is always caught up in the language problematic.

Put yet another way, when Marx examines value, exchange-value turns out to be a measurement of the abstract human labour that is embodied in a particular commodity. That is, again, to be based upon social activity itself producing an abstraction functioning as substance. Marx discovers this substance first by seeing that the valid exchange-values of a given commodity express something equal. Secondly, exchange-value, generally, is "only the mode of expression, the phenomenal form, of something contained in it, yet distinguishable from it" (pp. 44-45).

Proportions may be represented by the equation x commodity A = y commodity B. To re-state the analogy, we are tracing the accidental form of value as if it is a metaphor, as if the expanded form of value were a proportional analogy (A is to B as C is to D), and as if the General or Money form demonstrates the lexicalization of an abstract concept, the production of an abstract concept, fit for universal exchange at fixed rates: univocal. The basic similarity, according to the argument, is that apart from other ways in which Marx's analysis of a commodity may not mirror Aristotle's analysis of

language, Marx is still marshaling the resource of *resemblance* in producing his equation. This is not resemblance based on shared, static essences, of course, not a natural property, but a purely social characteristic, labour in its general form, produced as an abstract concept by the real development of labour in general.

The equation tells us "the two things must be equal to a third thing which is neither one nor the other. Each of them, so far as it is exchange-value, must be reducible to this third thing. This common 'something' cannot be either a geometrical, a chemical, or any other natural property of commodities...a total abstraction from use-value" (p. 45). But the only common property then is "that of being products of labour" (p. 45) and one and the same sort of labour, that is, "human labour in the abstract" (p. 46)—which is an unsubstantial reality "a mere congelation of homogeneous human labour" (p. 46) become semi-solid. Human labour is embodied. Exchange-value shows this embodiment as "crystals of the social substance" (p. 46).

In the same way, Aristotle calls on *lexis* "in the extent to which thought is not made manifest by itself" (Derrida, 1982, p. 233). Tautology is still not enough. In Derrida's phrase, "the meaning of what is said or thought is not a phenomenon of itself" (p. 233). And repeating again, "the value of the linen can therefore be expressed only relatively—i.e., in some other commodity" (Marx, 1978, p. 55). The active relative value is expressed in the passive equivalent value: "there is metaphor only in the extent to which someone is supposed to make manifest by means of a statement, [verbal transaction, exchange] a given thought that of itself remains inapparent, hidden, or latent" (Derrida, 1982, p. 233).

Value, manifested in the relative form through the equivalent, is the enunciation of the product of social activity (labour), an object with a use-value. In Hegel it would be the thought. Realized as substance in the enunciation—the exchange in which the commodity appears—value appears as the congelation of human labour in the abstract. And this is where it seems as if an unresolved aspect of the Hegelian inversion re-emerges, the relation of *substance* to the products of human labour: the essence of the social product (abstract labour). Here, then, the final parallel with the traditionally conceived process of the lexicalization of metaphor, is that in the embodiment of the substance of abstract human labour in exchange-value, the commodity remains linked to its concrete source by a now invisible chain still based upon resemblance. This resemblance has been erased, however, and must be reconstituted by critique.

The Fetishism of Commodities: Reification and Revolution

To conclude the discussion of Marx, I would like to investigate the conception of reification as it appears within the first chapter of *Capital*. The word itself does not appear. Its appearance is in relation to the 'fetishism of commodities.' Although the commodity is a real thing, in that it is a legitimate social product at a certain historical point of the development of modes of production, the commodity remains dangerous in one way, that it is universally fetishized and reified in the capitalist mode of production. The process becomes mystified, appearing in reverse, presenting, and in reality maintaining, "material relations between persons and social relations between things" (p. 78).

At this point Marx finds his illustration, his most illustrious illustration, in the play of light: "A commodity *appears*, at first sight, a very trivial thing," "analysis *shows*," "So far as it is value in use, there is nothing mysterious about it...It is *as clear as noon-day* that man, by his industry, changes the form of the materials furnished by Nature, in such a way as to make them useful to him" (p. 76); "The life-process of society, which is based on the process of material production, does not *strip off its mystical veil* until it is treated as production by freely associated men" (p. 84, italics added). The risk (a guaranteed risk) is that in the commodity, the sum total of productive labour is presented to producers "as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labour" (p. 77). This is a recurrence of the 'reversed world' imagery seen earlier:

> In order, therefore, to find an analogy, we must have recourse to the mist-enveloped regions of the religious world. In that world the productions of the human brain appear as independent beings endowed with life, and entering into relation both with one another and the human race. So it is in the world of commodities with the products of men's hands. This I call the Fetishism which attaches itself to the products of labour, so soon as they are produced as commodities, and which is therefore inseparable from the production of commodities (p. 77).

The reversed character of the modern capitalist system, is that commodities relate to each other socially, while people have merely material relations: "The linen, by virtue of the form of its value, now stands in a social relation, no longer with only one other kind of commodity, but with the whole world of commodities. As a commodity, it is a citizen of that world" (pp. 68-69).

There are two main figurative movements here. First is the imagery of a reversed world, with commodities taking on social roles and social characteristics. Second, is the play of light, of revelation and illusion, clarity and obscurity. Combined, as the fetishism

of commodities, they serve Marx as ways of conceptualizing the state of affairs in modern capitalism. The parallels with the lexicalized metaphor continue, for just as the concepts of Hegelian idealism reverse and obscure reality, misunderstanding the relation of the concrete and the abstract, so there is "this ultimate money-form of the world of commodities that actually conceals, instead of disclosing, the social character of private labour, and the social relations between the individual producers" (p. 80). Indeed, Marx himself gives us the combined form of these two processes, in which the categories of thought and the commodity merge at the specific historic moment of modern capitalism. However, though they have validity for the time of a certain mode of production, their own reality disappears with the disappearance of this mode:

> The categories of bourgeois economy...are forms of thought expressing with social validity the conditions and relations of a definite, historically determined mode of production, viz., the production of commodities. The whole mystery of commodities, all the magic and necromancy that surrounds the products of labour as long as they take the form of commodities, vanishes, therefore, so soon as we come to other forms of production. (p. 81)

Marx imagines that with a revolution in the mode of production, the alienation of labour from its own social relations will disappear. This is Marx in his mode of imagining an utopian mode of production. But is the supplement, this two-fold nature of value, only a feature of the modern capitalist mode of production, or is the problem of enunciation or expression always and already an aspect of social reality? When Marx tries to 'picture' a different way of organizing a community, isn't he putting himself at risk of reifying his own concepts? Let us see how he puts it:

> Let us now picture to ourselves, by way of change, a community of free individuals, carrying on their work with the means of production in common, in which the labour-power of all the different individuals is consciously applied as the combined labour-power of the

community…The total product of our community is a social product…the social relations of the individual producers, with regard to both their labour and to its products, are in this case perfectly simple and intelligible, and that with regard not only to production but also to distribution. (p. 82-83)

The process of commodification, the flux of activity, determines meaning according to usage, according to social activity. What is not guaranteed, however, is a return. A revolution, or revelation of the fetishistic character of commodities within the social world, particularly without the coincidental loss of the high-level of productive activity maintained by the capitalistic mode of production, remains unarticulated. He could not have considered value independently of its form, as he claimed it was necessary to do, and he could not guarantee the return of the use-value to itself, to its own meaning, guaranteed in embodiment, in the material, in the empirical. This is so because he has not shown how the enunciation of value is no longer required.

To refer once more to the parallel, metaphor falls to thought at the very moment it tries to emerge from itself to be stated. In the same way, the social relations of producers are never guaranteed to be perfectly simple and intelligible, as long as they remain distinctively other, and as long as the enunciation of their identity is still left to social exchange. As long, that is, as the manifestation of who I am remains a matter of social relations: as long as the *dianoia* requires *lexis* there will be *metaphora*.

Emile Durkheim

Materialism to Functionalism

> There is no question of placing at the foundation of the science of religions an idea elaborated after the Cartesian manner, that is to say, a logical concept, a pure possibility, constructed simply by force of thought. What we must find is a concrete reality, and historical and ethnological observation alone can reveal that to us. (Durkheim, 1915, p. 4)

I begin with a quote from Durkheim's *Elementary Forms* that seems to me to show some of the overlap between his approach to science and Marx's. The influence of politics on interpretation has historically placed a wedge between Durkheim and Marx—as a distinction between revolutionary and conservative science, left and right, Lenin and Parsons—of an unreasonable thickness.

This ignores the fact that Marx and Durkheim were both concerned with concreteness in study, in the object constituted by the active relations pursued between humans as social creatures. According to both these thinkers, the abstractions produced by philosophical work, unconcerned with grounding itself in the real as *observed*, are incapable of producing real knowledge or progress in understanding the social world. This is borne out by Durkheim's belief that sociology should be dedicated to the discovery of social facts, which are constituted by "the beliefs, tendencies and practices of the group taken collectively" (1982, p. 54). As well, in arguing that social facts should be treated as *things*, Durkheim counters the idea that by means of common sense and introspection, anything meaningful can be discovered about society: "A thing is any object of knowledge which is not naturally penetrable by the understanding. It is all that which we cannot conceptualize adequately as an idea by the simple process of intellectual analysis" (pp. 35-36).

In addition, Darwin's theory of evolution appealed to both of them as a powerful means of understanding the historical development of social relations, and as a way of categorizing periods, segments, types, and forms of society. But the way in which evolutionary thinking appeared in Durkheim was quite different from that of Marx. It is with this difference that I shall begin to examine the shape of Durkheim's theorizing.

For Marx, abstract thinking generally proceeds in a linear fashion, while concrete developments of social relations do not necessarily follow this path. In addition, it is not from the simplest or the original, primitive forms that we can understand the more complex social systems. Rather, the categories of modern, bourgeois society allow us to understand earlier, simpler societies. This diverges from Durkheim's view. By the universality of *function*, different social forms—for instance, of religion—are connected: in the case of religion "all answer, though in different ways, to the given conditions of human existence" (1915, p. 3). Methodologically, Durkheim turns not to modern society, as Marx does, but to primitive society: "we cannot arrive at an understanding of the most recent religions except by following the manner in which they have been progressively composed in history" (p. 3).

Historical analysis then, is a way of resolving social institutions into their basic elements by discovering the earliest and simplest moments of society: "for it shows them to us as they are born in time, one after another" (p. 3). This reference to birth is but one among a variety of metaphorical uses Durkheim employs. Biological references deeply inform Durkheim's theory of the social throughout its *development*.

This is clearly seen in his definition of the concept of function in *The Division of Labor in Society*. This he calls the relationship between a system of living movements

and the needs of an organism: "Thus we speak of the digestive or respiratory functions, etc...Thus to ask what is the function of the division of labour is to investigate the need to which it corresponds" (1984, p. 11). The predominance of the concept of function and the organismic model of society are obvious in Durkheim. They have been noted many times before in examinations of his work. By his overwhelming reliance on biology, manifested in his most basic assumptions—that society is an entity, *sui generis*, that social facts should be treated as things—Durkheim transforms a metaphor, as resource, into *analogia entis* through the functions that undergird society (existing *sui generis*) and the real bonds of society. The universality of function allows the movement of analogical extension based upon function's ability to ground thinking. The apparent stability of the structure allows a claim like this:

> At the foundation of all systems of beliefs and cults there ought necessarily to be a certain number of fundamental representations or conceptions and of ritual attitudes which, in spite of the diversity of forms which they have taken, have the same objective significance and fulfil the same functions everywhere (1915, p. 5).

In this way, Durkheim's method elaborates itself analytically rather than dialectically. It is possible, therefore, to interpret his work in terms of its static forms, its 'structural-functionalism.' This has been the story of its implementation in the United States in particular. It is inadequate, however, merely to claim that Durkheim is narrow and biological, and that function is a limited theoretical resource. The meaning of function itself is never completely governed, or domesticated. Metaphors are never fully domesticated, and even domestication does not imply absolute control.

Suicide

For now, I shall turn to Durkheim's *Suicide* to continue the discussion. The introduction begins, as many of Durkheim's writings do, with a question of meaning. His persistence in seeking definitional clarity of a certain kind is directed by his underlying assumptions about what *properly* belongs to sociology. What, for a sociological study, asks Durkheim, shall be defined as suicide? In tracing the careful way that Durkheim determines the exact degree of precision necessary to an adequately defined terminology, we can see the degree to which he is trying to extend his biological framework analogically, according to a given structure, rather than unsystematically or metaphorically.

Common usage shall not be sufficient for two reasons. First, everyday language always admits of multiple meanings, and is thus vulnerable to confusion, ambiguity, and misunderstanding. Secondly, because "the classification from which they derive is not analytic, but merely translates the confused impressions of the crowd, categories of different sorts of fact are indistinctly combined under the same heading, or similar realities are differently named" (1951, p. 41). The only option for a truly scientific investigation is to pursue comparison.

The reasonable organization of compared entities requires a set of prepared and well-defined words, with "the homogeneity and the specific meaning necessary for them to be susceptible of scientific treatment" (p. 41). This technically sound, calculated and, controlled language is the only way that 'natural affinities' can be clearly shown.

The clarification of definitional boundaries ought to proceed according to sociological—that is, a view dominated by the social—processes. In defining 'suicide' the situation lies thus:

> Accordingly, we must inquire whether, among the different varieties of death, some have common qualities objective enough to be recognizable by all honest observers, specific enough not to be found elsewhere and also sufficiently kin to those commonly called suicide for us to retain the same term without breaking with common usage (p. 42).

The definition of suicide is the starting point because it will form the way in which the basic unit of analysis is determined. A clear and well-reasoned definition is the basis on which sociological inquiry can proceed.

His first formulation of a definition is that "the term suicide is applied to any death which is the direct or indirect result of a positive or negative act accomplished by the victim himself" (p. 42). However, this formula would not exclude accidental death resulting from the performance of an act certain to cause death but whose consequences are for some reason unknown to the individual performing it.

Durkheim then suggests the criterion of intent: "Shall only he be thought truly to slay himself who has wished to do so, and suicide be intentional self-homicide?" (p. 43). Here we are confronted with something like the requirement demanded by Max Weber for sociological understanding; that the actor's self-understanding be taken into account. According to Durkheim, however, this is a kind of knowledge too difficult to establish or determine. As he says it, "Intent is too intimate a thing to be more than approximately interpreted by another. It even escapes self observation" (p. 43).

Besides the difficulty of determining intent, Durkheim is concerned that this would still be too narrow a definition, for some people go to certain death, and

voluntarily, though without desiring death for its own sake. They may sacrifice their own life for something they value more highly, such as their community as a whole: "life is none the less abandoned because one desires it at the moment of renouncing it; and there are common traits clearly essential to all acts by which a living being thus renounces the possession presumably most precious to all" (p. 44). According to Durkheim, variety in motives could only be a secondary difference. The quality common to all that he would call suicide is that the act is performed knowingly.

> We may then say conclusively: the term *suicide is applied to all cases of death resulting directly or indirectly from a positive or negative act of the victim himself, which he knows will produce this result* (p. 44).

Why does this definition satisfy Durkheim? A proper definition is essential to establishing the borders of the social entity one is trying to describe. For Durkheim, this means an object that is unique, and of its own kind--a social fact that must be treated as a thing. In the definition given, the requirement of self-consciousness is demonstrated, but not by the extravagant and disjointed explanations of individual psychologies. Suicide is thus shown to be a <u>social</u> phenomenon, related to other social practices that are a part of moral life, and only different in degree, rather than qualitatively cut off from them as "an isolated class of monstrous phenomena" (p. 45).

This continuity, this solid placing within other social practices, combined with taking the bulk product, suicides as a whole, gives Durkheim his "new fact *sui generis*" (p. 46). In this case the social fact is a *suicide rate*. <u>Society</u> as such is the most basic of these *sui generis* entities for Durkheim; an object that is greater than the sum of its parts.

Durkheim's overall method proceeds according to this strict practice of delineating the properly social aspects of existence, and determining their sources and

existence in social life. Moral life, for instance, must be examined in this manner by asserting its status as an entity both socially produced and existing *sui generis*. It is in this way removed both from its theologically absolute status (naïve religiousity) and from moral relativism (cult of individual, atomism). The source of moral order is the collective, and this is so not as any kind of social contract, made up of the sum total of individual psychologies, but as the naturally occurring product of a social organism, a unity greater than the sum of its parts.

Durkheim's starting-point for beginning sociological examination of any area of social life is the proper insertion of the object of study into *functionality* by demarcating the borders of that object according to the rule of its essence as an object *sui generis* and factual. The properly sociological perspective must see each <u>object</u> within the web of social relations and simultaneously produced and viewed as a social fact. The social fact functions, it answers to some need or explains some state of the social organism. It is no abstract particle, nor is it a natural fact. Suicide is not due to storms or infection. And yet, here a kind of ambivalence is evident. For suicide, particularly certain types of it, is a kind of sickness. This is so if society is a kind of organism. Does the analogical character of this relation preserve the autonomy of both society and the biological organism? Durkheim seems to imply this. Biology and sociology are merely collegial specialties bound by the common ground of science. But the case is more complicated if society, sociology's object, is constituted entirely on the basis of a biological framework. Sociology then exists only as a relative form of knowledge.

On the basis of function, Durkheim collects altruistic, egoistic, and anomic acts of self-destruction as the main types within the phenomenon of suicide. Each type of

suicide constitutes a type of reasoned response to a set of social relations in a certain state. Each type may be understood within a web of connections. Function is the common ground. For one hundred pages, he outlines the reasons that extra-social factors are inadequate as explanations for suicide rates. The basic weakness of these extra-social explanations lies in their failure to establish analogical bases tied to the object of sociology: society. That is, they do not begin by assuming the active, creative reality of the social, of society.

Now the analogical status of Durkheim's argument is not merely a consequence of strictness. It is not merely a matter of the proper object being observed with the proper methods. It is also something transcendent, namely, society experiencing itself. This is found in the assertion of an ineffable something more, in Durkheim's willingness to admit that there is something true in what religions imagine. Sociology is the means by which society might self-consciously understand/experience itself.

Imitation

> Exactly how the combinations occur resulting in the collective state, what are its constituent elements, how the dominant state is produced are questions too complex to be solved solely by introspection. Manifold experiments and observations would be required and have not been made. We know little as yet how and according to what laws mental states of even the single individual combine; much less do we know of the mechanism of the far more complicated combinations produced by group-existence. Our explanations are often mere metaphors. Our words are therefore not meant as an exact expression of the phenomenon; we have tried only to show that there is something else here than imitation. (p. 130)

This lengthy excerpt provides both an implicit definition of metaphor, and a more explicit outline of the primary object of sociological study, namely, the workings of the collective state. While metaphor may provide an initial starting point, as the sociologist reaches for

clues to the laws of the collective state in other regions of knowledge or experience, true scientific progress would mean leaving this figurative moment behind, in favour of increasingly more exact descriptions and terminology achieved through experimentation and observation, the hallmarks of a scientific approach. The metaphor may help us to imagine new possibilities, or to state things poetically, but it is not exact, and is not adequate for the rigorous standards of science. Metaphor, like imitation, which Durkheim discusses at length as one of the extra-social factors sometime purported to explain suicide, is essentially inadequate as a source of explanation or as the language of science. 'Mere metaphors' are not rigorous enough conceptually or empirically to adequately witness to the social fact.[1]

The chapter on imitation is suggestive first because imitation was an important part of the theories of language of both Plato and Aristotle. Of course, they did not mean exactly the same thing by it, neither the same as each other, or the same as Durkheim. Plato considered the imitative arts (such as the work of poets and painters) to be a threat

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[1] It is possible that he is referring to his reliance on biology here, but if so, he does not reinforce this by consistent assertions in this vein. For the most part, biology appears in Durkheim's work without any explanation or excuse. It is simply assumed. So far, I have only a few clear examples in which Durkheim differentiates between an organism and society. The first is in relation to the forced division of labour, the civil or class war:

> No similar phenomenon is to be observed in the organism...a cell or an organ never attempts to usurp any role other than that which is rightfully its own...The same does not hold good for societies. Here the chance factor is greater...The field is open to trial and error and discussion, as well as being open to the free play of a host of causes that may make the individual nature deviate from its normal path, thus creating a pathological state (1984, p. 310)

Even here, however, one can detect, if anything, not a sense of the inadequacy of the biological metaphor, but of the inadequacy of society to measure up to the standards of an organism. In short, the society appears here merely as a defective organism, more vulnerable to 'pathological states.' A better example occurs in the 'Rules for the Demonstration of Sociological Proof': "The changes which take place in an organism in the course of its existence are not very numerous and are very limited...Social life, by contrast, is an uninterrupted series of transformations in the conditions of collective existence" (1982, p. 154). Still, the proofs, or generalizations or laws to be extracted from these transformations remain subject to principles derived from biological theory: "the variations of a phenomenon only allow a law to be induced if they express clearly the way the law develops in any given circumstances. For this to happen there must

to truth, knowing only the appearance of things and not the things themselves, dangerous in their ability to confuse and lead astray.

Aristotle gave *mimesis*, one of the forms of imitation, a place of honour, as that which distinguished men from animals; our ability to imitate and represent reality. Durkheim, on the other hand, wanted to place imitation with the lower forms, on the other side of the line, a purely animal-like behaviour. In this way, Durkheim agrees with Plato, that imitation offers no real knowledge about reality, only about appearances, which may be deceptive.

In Durkheim's discussion of imitation, parallels may be seen with the ornamental theory of metaphor. These parallels are certainly limited, but they are worth pointing out. First of all, both imitation in Durkheim's sense, and metaphor viewed as mere ornament, have no real impact on the state of things: "imitation all by itself has no effect on suicide" (p. 140); "the imitative function when exercised has in itself no power to form a bond between them" (p. 123). They have no power of explanation, they are unnecessary, and they may even be dangerous, in obscuring or twisting appearances. The main thrust of this section, however, is to outline Durkheim's definitional strategy as based primarily around the extension of the biological analogy, working under the assumption that society is an entity or organism.

He begins his chapter on imitation in the same way he begins the book, with an attempt to outline an adequate definition of the term. Why? For precisely the same reasons that metaphoric understandings of the social world could only be preliminary and pre-scientific: because sociology needs sufficiently exact terminology in order to avoid

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exist between the variations the same succession as exists between the various stages in a similar natural evolution" (p. 155).

confusion, and to properly direct observation and attention. An improperly or inadequately defined concept would lead to the acceptance of extra-social explanations, or explanations that really make no progress into the problem because they are too broad. Such would be the case if *imitation* were too loosely used, and took in too much territory.

Durkheim gives several versions of this reasoning, each of which provides a neat paraphrase of Aristotle's stipulation regarding meaning, that the ideal for language is that each word ought to have only one meaning:

> Sociologists so commonly use terms without defining them...the idea finally becomes too ambiguous to permit discussion (p. 124)

> True, all definitions of words are permissible. But this, it must be recognized, would be extremely arbitrary and could thus be only a source of confusion, since it leaves the word none of its customary meaning (p. 126)

> To be sure, everything not original invention is sometimes called imitation....But the term imitation then has no definite meaning, just because it means almost everything. Such terminology can only breed confusion (p. 128, fn. 6)

On the other hand, we have already heard from Durkheim that he is not interested in developing a system of logical concepts merely by force of thought, but in investigating a concrete reality. Terminology must be restricted in meaning in order to avoid misinterpretation and confusion of the concrete reality. But what of this concrete reality? Is its very perception not determined by choice of terminology, by categorization of data, by restriction or expansion of meaning? Undoubtedly this is so, and Durkheim acknowledges this by the care he devotes to defining his terms in a certain way, a way that is sure to contribute to an increasing focus on what he considers to be the properly social factors contributing to variations in suicide rates.

Imitation is the 'final psychological factor' that Durkheim eliminates as a possible explanation for the variation in suicide rates between countries. But the key to effectively eliminating imitation as an explanation is in how imitation is to be defined. First, he discusses three different groups of facts, all of which imitation is sometimes used to mean. There are those group situations in which the members of a group come to share a common feeling, another type in which an individual will yield in his or her behaviour to the authority of social opinion, and there are situations in which one repeats automatically and unthinkingly what others have done. Durkheim wants to use *imitation* to describe only the third kind of situation.

In the first kind of situation, Durkheim claims, there is really no reproduction going on, each member of a group being similarly affected by the same occurrence, then perceiving this common feeling in the expression of others. He goes on to describe this phenomenon in semi-mystical terms:

> What happens then? Once aroused in my consciousness, these various representations combine with one another and with my own feeling. A new state is thus formed, less my own than its predecessor, less tainted with individuality and more and more freed, by a series of repeated elaborations analogous to the foregoing, from all excessive particularity
>
> ...two or more similar states of consciousness appeal to one another by their likeness, then blend and fuse in a compound absorbing them but different from them...
>
> Actually, there are here neither models nor copies. There is a penetration, a fusion of a number of states within another, distinct from them: that is the collective state. (pp. 125-126)

In the second type of facts, when we conform to public opinion, our behaviour occurs not because of imitation, but because of choices made so as to avoid hurting the feelings of others, or "to act through respect or fear of opinion" (p. 127). As Durkheim sees it

> Our way of conforming to the morals or manners of our country has
> nothing in common, therefore, with the mechanical, ape-like repetition
> causing us to reproduce motions which we witness. Between the two
> ways of acting, is all the difference between reasonable, deliberate
> behaviour and automatic reflex. The former has motives even when not
> expressed as explicit judgments. The latter has not; it results directly from
> the mere sight of an act, with no other mental intermediary. (pp. 127-128)

Durkheim claims that, for sociological purposes, only the third type of fact, the 'ape-like repetition' of something witnessed, ought to be called imitation. The partition he makes is between a social act, and a merely instinctive act, involving no social bond.

To further clarify what he means by imitation, Durkheim has recourse, of course, to biological terminology: "when we speak of imitation, the phenomenon of contagion is implicitly understood" (p. 128). His understanding of contagion is used to support his argument that only the third type of fact, the 'ape-like repetition' of something witnessed, ought to be called imitation.

> In pathological biology, a disease is called contagious when it rises wholly
> or mainly from the development of a germ introduced into the organism
> from outside. Inversely, in so far as this germ has been able to develop
> thanks only to the active cooperation of the field in which it has taken
> root, the term 'contagion' becomes inexact. Likewise, for an act to be
> attributed to a moral contagion it is not enough that the idea be inspired by
> a similar act...it must automatically and of itself have become active. (p.
> 128)

So, if an act is prompted in us by a combination of external impressions and internal consent and participation, then neither imitation nor contagion is the literally correct word. In this case "contagion is only figuratively present and the figure is inexact" (p. 128). Durkheim does not use biology merely as a convenient source of 'lively' metaphors. Rather, he carefully translates the vocabulary and theoretical framework into sociology, in order to elaborate and extend the framework into the social world by means of analogy. One more example should suffice to demonstrate this:

it would perhaps be interesting, to make the terminology precise, to distinguish moral epidemics from moral contagions; these two words used carelessly for one another actually denote two very different sorts of things. An epidemic is a social fact, produced by social causes; contagion consists only in more or less repeated repercussions of individual phenomena. (p. 132)

There is no need to belabor the point here, it is enough to have shown that Durkheim is not satisfied with merely figurative language. Rather, Durkheim wants exact language (concepts and analogies rather than metaphors), and he believes that he finds that exact language in biology. Because of this, he is willing to base his social theory on the conceptual metaphor that society is an organism. Underlying this is an overall generalization of evolutionary theory.

Figures as Figures: the Use of Statistics in Sociology

From the point of view of Lakoff and Johnson, Durkheim's reliance on biology, and on the basic presupposition that 'society is an organism' (based on the more general conceptual metaphor, 'society is an entity'), renders his sociology a metaphorical project through and through. They would say that biological frameworks highlight some aspects of experience, while ignoring or even hiding other aspects. But choosing a different root metaphor would ignore, or make invisible some aspects of social life that are front and centre in a biological model. What kind of social statistics, for instance, could exist without the idea of society as an entity?

Without the conception of certain entities as 'wholes' we are left without the necessary objects with which to perform statistical analysis. But having to assume the existence of certain social 'bodies' throughout our investigation has an interesting result, that our statistics, as figures, are thus also figurative. And yet, as these methods and

results of statistics become generally affirmed, it becomes impossible still to see them as figurative. This is the inevitable reification of scientific knowledge, the way in which scientific knowledge, as at every recent point in history the leading paradigm for truth, at every moment defends itself against a non-literal interpretation:

> In fact statistics demonstrates the existence of these general and impersonal forces by measuring them. As soon as it was established that every people has its own birth-rate, marriage-rate, crime-rate, etc., which can be computed numerically, and which remain constant so long as the circumstances are unchanged, but which vary from one people to another, it became apparent that these different categories of acts...express permanent and well-defined social states. (1982, p. 202)

It may be that eventually, such statistics will be seen as even more purely figurative than any of the numbers found in the Bible are generally seen today. Instead of reflecting a concept, with an extra-linguistic reality, a social statistic would reflect from sign to sign, the numerical figure referring to an entity (determined as class, or age, or gender, or vocation, or sexual orientation) constructed according to an historically constituted system of linguistic effects.

In Durkheim's case, the interpretation of statistics remains informed by physical, biological structures. In terms of the suicide rate, Durkheim is confident enough in his functional (function, which is not only a biological concept, but also a mathematical one) outlook that he describes the historical progression of suicide as "composed of undulating movements, distinct and successive, which occur spasmodically, develop for a time, and then stop only to begin again" (p. 47).

A glance back at Marx will help to put this claim in the context of a competing framework, and possibly relieve some misgivings that this is just a tendentious rant against quantitative approaches as such. Marx would see Durkheim's assertion that the

sociological unit of analysis must be the 'social fact,' as placing the sociologist outside of the movements and activities that go into *creating* the so-called 'social fact.' Durkheim will always arrive on the scene 'after the fact.' In brief, Durkheim assumes and proceeds from different material 'givens' than Marx does. Thus, what he does can be seen as a method of proceeding from reification to reification. In this way, imagining that he is beginning with a concrete category, Durkheim may in fact be still dealing (from Marx's perspective) with an abstraction. As Marx considers how one may approach economics:

> It seems to be correct...to begin...with the population...However, this proves false...the population is an abstraction if I leave out, for example, the classes of which it is composed. These classes in turn are an empty phrase if I am not familiar with the elements on which they rest...these latter in turn presuppose...(Marx, 1973, p. 100)

The point here is not an overly radical one. *Suicide* was a groundbreaking use of statistics in sociology. Perhaps more than any other single innovation in the social sciences, the use of statistics provided proof of the reality of the social:

> The stuff of social life, in what seemed to be its most fluctuating aspect, thus took on a consistency and stability which naturally called for scientific investigation. Where for a long time there had been perceived only isolated actions, lacking any links, there was found to be a system of definite laws. (1982, p. 202)

The point does not change, however, that this proof, this magical appearance of objectivity, is founded within language, and as such, dallies ceaselessly with the metaphoric/literal knot.

Collective Language and Durkheim's Quasi-Transcendent

Now we have already seen the work that Durkheim went through in order to establish imitation within the non-social sphere of individual activity, that which requires

no social bond. But why is this so important? It is important because Durkheim's theory of language, truth, and meaning, requires it. Language, truth, meaning, morality, are all grounded (relatively, to be sure) in collective, social experience. Collective language is quasi-transcendent.

This comes through clearly in the language he used to describe the first two kinds of social facts that are sometimes called imitation, the ones he argued should not be referred this way, because of their social aspects. In the first situation, " A new state is formed, less my own than its predecessor, less *tainted* with individuality and more and more *freed*...from all *excessive particularity*" (1951, p. 126, Italics added). The individual blends and fuses with other consciousnesses, "there are here neither models nor copies. There is a penetration, a fusion of a number of states within another, distinct from them: that is the collective state" (p. 126).

In Durkheim's view, this is not metaphorical language, this was his real belief about the collective state. His sociology, in fact, is linguistically structured so as to preserve the lopsided opposition, (in the sense that Kierkegaard uses it) between the universal and the particular. In fact Kierkegaard provides a helpful foil in this regard, for whom "faith is this paradox, that the particular is higher than the universal"(1968, p. 65). While Durkheim avoided the problematic of linguistic relativity by means of a theory of collective language, Kierkegaard inserts into this structure the paradoxical experience that the individual may yet experience the absolute unmediated by the universal.[2]

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[2] "It is easy enough to level down the whole of existence to the idea of the state or the idea of society. If one does this, one can also mediate easily enough, for then one does not encounter at all the paradox that the individual as the individual is higher than the universal" (1968, pp. 72-73).
"He knows that it is refreshing to become intelligible to oneself in the universal so that he understands it and so that every individual who understands him understands through him in turn the universal, and both rejoice in the security of the universal....he knows that it is terrible to be born outside the universal, to...walk without meeting a single traveler"(p. 86)

Kierkegaard, provides an example of someone who chose linguistic configurations that dismiss or relativize sociological approaches, and the absolute nature of the *social*, almost entirely.

Max Weber

Transcending Functionalism

What is the relation between the work of Emile Durkheim and that of Max Weber? It is not a simple one. Above all, it would be impossible to simply extend by analogy what I have, in my own way, determined about the 'place' of metaphor in Durkheim's texts.

First of all, Weber clearly does not admit to any equivalence between his work and functional analysis. Of course, it is easy to miss the brief section on "the method of the so-called 'organic' school of sociology" (Weber, 1978, p. 14). In a page, Weber gives his summing up of functional analysis, drawing it into the role of the elementary stages of sociology: "this functional frame of reference is convenient for purposes of practical illustration and for provisional orientation...But this is only the beginning of sociological analysis as here understood" (p. 15). For Weber, sociology is unique as a science because of the difference between social collectivities and biological organisms.

In Weber's view, someone like Durkheim, with his theoretical structure so heavily freighted with biological metaphors, constantly puts himself in danger of overestimating the use of these metaphors for thought and of reifying his concepts. Rather than be caught up in function and uniformity, Weber suggests that sociologists "can accomplish something never attainable in the natural sciences, namely a subjective

understanding of the action of the component individuals" (p. 15). This comes at the expense of some experimental testability and grand unified explanations, but it remains the characteristic unique to sociological knowledge.

So Durkheim establishes only a kind of pre-sociology. The task of sociology is not, in the end, to determine the causes and effects of unthinking, instinctive activity (e.g. see Weber's definition of activity). Of course, neither is Durkheim interested in the merely instinctual, as evidenced in the discussion of imitation with regard to its effect on suicide. Durkheim is also interested in social action, but measured or examined in a different way. His measurements are of wholes, statistics, and collective language output. Weber begins with subjective meanings. This appears contrary to Durkheim's view that an actor's intentions are both too difficult to discover and irrelevant to the discovery or understanding of social facts. At this level, Weber seems to proceed in his methodology in a direction utterly contrary to Durkheim's.

Comparison and Subjectively Intended Meaning

Subjective understanding of action requires an understanding of *motive*; the meaning an actor attaches to an act. This, Weber will call the *"actually intended meaning"* (p. 9). Verification of an interpretation of actually intended meaning—an interpretation which "cannot...claim to be the causally valid interpretation...only a peculiarly plausible hypothesis...only a relative value" (p. 9)—should, when possible, proceed by comparison with the actual, concrete course of events: "For the rest there remains only the possibility of comparing the largest possible number of historical or contemporary processes which, while otherwise similar, differ in the one decisive point

of their relation to the particular motive or factor the role of which is being investigated" (p. 10). In this dense formulation of the project of comparative sociology, all the seeds of a science proceeding according to a conceptual framework given its leading cues by the principle of analogy have already been planted. Of course, in Weber's view, this is merely the application of a rationalized system of thought to empirical questions. Later on, however, we will investigate Weber's own partial intellectual history of Western rationalism as it appears in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1958a).

As shown earlier in the definition of suicide, it was precisely on the question of motive or intention that Durkheim drew the boundaries of the properly sociological approach. In fact, this was largely done from concern to differentiate sociology as a discipline from psychology. Weber did not seem to share this concern, particularly around subjective intention, convinced as he was of two things: that the causally valid interpretation was really unreachable, but that interpretation of subjective motive was reachable, and in fact the only thing worth reaching, though giving us only the 'peculiarly plausible hypothesis.' The distinction between sociology and psychology had to rest on other grounds than intention, without which sociology remains only preliminary and descriptive.

These are the two main characteristics of Weber's approach: the comparative approach and the search for subjectively intended meaning. Is comparison, as a building block of theorizing, a literal or figurative activity? In a comparison, both names, both objects, are brought from elsewhere to refer to a deferred name, a deferred object, which has no *space* or *name* of its own (constructed then as the midpoint, the ideal type, their point of contact, which does not, in reality, exist). As in the doubly replaced description

of the sun's rays: sowing around a god-created flame. Every time a comparison of any kind is made, the question of the figure is raised.

How does Weber's pursuit of subjectively intended meaning emerge within his texts? His seminal work *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* provides a fecund source of responses to this question. As the first of his major studies of religion, *The Protestant Ethic* is a good example of his method in its earlier, more self-conscious stage. It is also brimful of suggestive concepts living on the borderlines between metaphorical and literal language. One needs to look no further than the title page to find a wonderfully suggestive phrase, 'the *Spirit* of Capitalism.' I will be asking questions about this 'Spirit' in undertaking an elucidation of the 'activity' of Weberian concepts. As a preliminary suggestion, it may become evident that in Weber's work, concepts 'behave' toward one another *as if they were alive*. This anthropomorphism lines up precisely with the Aristotelian notion that the metaphorical is concerned with representing things as if in activity (see Ricoeur). It is also related to Hegel's notion of the activity of thinking as I outlined it earlier. In Hegel the thoughts themselves are in the process of becoming. By privileging subjectively intended meaning, Weber seemingly embarks on an enactment of Hegel's system of scientific thinking. Weber enacts a Ricoeurian view of language, representing things as if in act...but in his case, it is a representation of *ideas* as if they are acting—in the tradition of Hegel.

Science as a Vocation

Just what is the relation of Weber's science to the history of science? His well-known essay, 'Science as a Vocation' (1958b) is a rich source of his own commentary on

the practices, possibilities, progress and meaning of science. It is his relation with Plato, that first writer of science in the West, with which we are interested. It will be seen that as with Marx, it comes down to a question of illumination.

Plato appears as the first example Weber gives of views of the value of science that have been surpassed. Plato, Weber says, realized the significance of the discovery of the *concept* made by his teacher Socrates: "In Greece, for the first time, appeared a handy means by which one could put the logical screws on somebody so that he could not come out without admitting either that he knew nothing or that this and nothing else was truth" (p. 141). Plato fell into illusion, however, when he became enamoured of his own metaphor of the cave, in which the philosopher is the one who has shattered his chains and turned from the shadows to the light, the sun. At first blinded, he gradually learns to understand what he sees, and gains the task of teaching others: "He is the philosopher; the sun, however, is the truth of science, which alone seizes not upon illusions and shadows but upon the true being" (p. 141). Plato thought that if one could find the proper conception of the true, the beautiful and the good, one could grasp at true being, and in turn learn how one should conduct one's life.

After giving other examples of misplaced hopes that science would show the way to 'true art' or 'true nature' or 'true God' or 'true happiness,' Weber reiterates his initial question: "What is the meaning of science as a vocation, now after all these former illusions...have been dispelled?" (p. 143). What are we to make of the fact that in the very moment of dismissing Plato's quest for the truth of being in the concept, the Idea *revealed* to the philosopher by the sun, the truth of science, Weber refers to the work of *dispelling illusions*, precisely what Plato defined as the work of the philosopher?

Particularly, what are we to make of the route Weber then takes in elaborating what it is that science still offers to us?

One of the main problems of finding meaning in the work of science, Weber says, is that it is, in a way, the very 'meaning' of scientific work that it will be surpassed, antiquated: "And with this we come to inquire into the *meaning* of science. For after all, it is not self-evident that something subordinate to such a law is sensible and meaningful in itself. Why does one engage in doing something that in reality never comes, and never can come, to an end?" (p. 138). Weber concludes that it is impossible to prove that the results of scientific work are 'worth being known,' but it is possible to interpret this presupposition "with reference to its ultimate meaning, which we must reject or accept according to our ultimate position towards life" (p. 141).

With regard to this task of interpreting the results of scientific work in relation with and according to the basic attitudes one assumes towards existence, Weber sees the teacher of science as having a singular task. The primary goal of the useful teacher is to accustom students to the recognition and acceptance of facts that are inconvenient—and perhaps essentially and eternally so—to their particular viewpoint (p. 147). Indeed, Weber sees this as a task more than merely intellectual, but even quasi-moral.

Weber goes on to describe three things that science itself may contribute, apart from the teacher of science. First, science contributes to our ability to control life, by the provision of technological advances based on the calculation of external objects and human activities. Secondly, and on a related theme, science can supply methods, tools, and training for thinking. Both of these contributions, however, remain fully within the realm of pragmatic, practical concerns, not much different, he says, from the kind of

thing we can learn from the green grocer: "no more than the means for procuring vegetables" (p. 151).

But there is a third objective towards which science may give some help: "We are in a position to help you to...gain *clarity*" (p. 151). The clarity gained is in regard to determining the *means* that may be used for the practical application of a personal conviction, means that must then be accepted or rejected. Weber goes on to state that the competent teacher can direct the student to be able to "give himself an *account of the ultimate meaning of his own conduct*...bringing about self-clarification and a sense of responsibility" (p. 153).

In making these claims, marking out these particular boundaries and limits around *clarity of meaning* Weber aligns himself with the general hermeneutic principle of interpretation as one of the major tasks of 'becoming human' so to speak. He also aligns himself, however, with the tradition of Western thinking that he has just undermined in reference to Plato. In calling the clarification of meaning the highest offering from science, Weber, it seems, has failed to take a single step away from Plato's metaphor of the cave. The identity or meaning of clarity itself is never brought into question, because it remains a concept originating in natural light, natural illumination and determined in its meaning in its relation to its opposite, illusion.

It is not surprising, then, that Weber turns 'figuratively' to the supernatural world to describe the relation of the individual to the meaning of the ultimate stance one takes toward life: "Figuratively speaking, you serve this god and you offend the other god when you decide to adhere to this position [and not another]" (p. 153). Without recourse to transcendent, miraculous, revelatory categories, the fundamental fact of life is that it

"knows only of an unceasing struggle of these gods with one another. Or speaking directly, the ultimately possible attitudes toward life are irreconcilable, and hence their struggle can never be brought to a final conclusion" (p. 153).

In 'translating' his metaphor of gods struggling with one another to 'direct' terms, Weber suggests that various attitudes toward life are what really struggle with one another, their struggle being an endless one. But our experience thus far should teach us to be wary of such an easy crossing-out of the metaphor in favour of the direct or proper. In fact, it is not hard to see that he is being quite consistent here, in representing ideas as in action, as living things, intent on certain goals, and inexorable in their pursuit of these goals.

The concept of the 'presupposition,' according to which Weber is able to draw clear lines of before and after, reproduces the problematic opposition of inside and outside. The subject has presuppositions, given these presuppositions, we are able to establish *from this point onward* what are the rational means by which to actualize these presuppositions. But even this is already infected. The assumption of presuppositions does not re-establish a degree zero.

One of Weber's basic presuppositions is that, for the scientist, even more than the average person, "the world is disenchanted" (p. 139). Who, then, or what continues to haunt Weber? It seems that ideas themselves are working on us, occurring to us when they please (p. 136). But this is not at all what we would like to have happen, when we try to work out the ultimate meaning of our own conduct and attitudes toward existence. Why is Weber sometimes haunted, sometimes possessed by ideas?

Or what about the 'devil of intellectualism' that Weber claims to hate? This devil must be faced and followed to the end before he can be overcome: "if one wishes to settle with this devil, one must not take flight before him as so many like to do nowadays. First of all, one has to see the devil's ways to the end in order to realize his power and his limitations" (p. 152).

There are hints of Heidegger's famously repeated phrase, 'only a god can save us' in this repeated invocation of gods, when speaking of ideas and attitudes toward life: "'Which of the warring gods should we serve? Or should we serve perhaps an entirely different god, and who is he?' then one can say that only a prophet or savior can give the answers." (p. 153). What kind of inexplicable, irreducible 'otherness' exists within the self, within the subject, that prompts Weber to link self-interpretation to gods outside and demons inside? Weber advises that facing these warring gods, to meet the everyday challenges and demands of human relations, is best done if each "finds and obeys the demon who controls the fibers of his very life" (p. 156). This problem will be drawn out slowly in an examination of several concepts that appear in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.

Living Ideas in *The Protestant Ethic*

In this section, I try to demonstrate that the various key concepts that Weber uses in formulating his analysis, are often represented as if they are alive. The main ideas or concepts (e.g. *calling* and *predestination* are the central ideas or dogmas he finds in Reformation thinking, while *the spirit of capitalism* and *worldly asceticism* are concepts that he uses to describe social attitudes) are shown sometimes as personal and sometimes

impersonal forces. They have volition and needs. They can be weaker or stronger, they can be born, they can grow, and they can direct the course of social activity.

Ideas are often personified, but in Weber, the process by which ideas themselves relate to social life, and affect people, seems to be systematic and of overall significance to an understanding of his theory of social change and innovation. Specifically, the manner in which he represents the history of an idea as first linked to an historical moment (and generally a specific person), and then developing and changing into something very different from its original form or meaning, is structured in a way similar to some postmodern conceptions of the death of the author. This pattern is repeated with each of the major concepts that Weber introduces, and seems to be his contribution "to the understanding of the manner in which ideas become effective forces in history" (*Protestant Ethic*, 1958a, p. 90). A first demonstration of this kind of treatment is given in the following two quotes about modern capitalism. Here all of the basic themes appear: first the personification of a socioeconomic system; second its apparent independence from human authors; third its social interaction or struggle with other ideas or other social institutions also personified and acting independently.

> The capitalistic system so needs this devotion to the calling of making money, it is an attitude toward material goods which is so well suited to that system, so intimately bound up with the conditions of survival in the economic struggle for existence…it no longer needs the support of any religious forces, and feels the attempts of religion to influence economic life, in so far as they can still be felt at all, to be as much an unjustified interference as its regulation by the State. (1958, p. 72)

> …modern capitalism has become dominant and has become emancipated from its old supports. But as it could at one time destroy the old forms of mediaeval regulation of economic life only in alliance with the growing power of the modern State, the same, we may say provisionally, may have been the case in its relations with religious forces. (pp. 72-73)

Now Weber's personification goes in a different direction than Durkheim's theoretical framework, not so much viewing society as an organism, as viewing modern social institutions as the living offspring produced by the marriage of certain religious ideas with rationalism. The fact that Weber would like to explain historically here, is the moral, ethical, and even aesthetic change in the acceptability of activity directed toward profit alone. In other words, how, out of medieval Europe, did the modern capitalist system emerge, with a population fully committed to the idea, to the spirit, of capitalism? His explanation rests upon the power of religious ideas, worked out within increasingly rationalized systems. Specifically, he sees in the Reformation development of the idea of a *calling* (a Christian vocation in the world), the antecedent to the spirit of capitalism.

Rather than through a mechanistic refinement and application of rationalism, however, Weber shows the spirit of capitalism developing by means of more than one metaphor. There is, of course, the already mentioned process exhibiting characteristics of organic reproduction, i.e., the spirit of capitalism as the offspring of social conditions and religious ideas wedded by rationalism. But there are also, in the implicit theme of secularization running throughout the work, strong hints of the classic theory of metaphor, in which through a gradual wearing away, concrete and living religious thoughts are transformed into abstract concepts, the surface of their former vitality erased, but still functioning invisibly within the system of linguistic effects. In other words, to come to accept the goal of money-making as acceptable, desirable, supreme, required an evolutionary wearing of idea upon idea, and the gradual erosion of religious ideas and their transformation into their secular equivalent. This suggestion will be elaborated and defended later on. For now I will return to the suggestion that people

author religious ideas, that then in turn grow and develop, eventually these ideas producing in the context of rationalism, their own kind of offspring, that are largely independent of their origins.

This way of seeing the problematic of the spirit of capitalism was not painfully reconstructed from vague and questionable hints in Weber's text. It jumps out at you. First, Weber concludes that the spirit of capitalism certainly did not develop according to the pure application of principles of practical rationalism, directed to the ends of human happiness and well-being: "this is by no means the soil in which that relationship of a man to his calling as a task, which is necessary to capitalism, has pre-eminently grown" (p. 77). Second, from a gardening metaphor, Weber moves to an even more explicit metaphor of reproduction:

> Rationalism is an historical concept which covers a whole world of different things. It will be our task to find out whose intellectual child the particular concrete form of rational thought was, from which the idea of a calling and the devotion to labour in the calling has grown. (p. 78)

The Calling

The idea of a calling emerged with the Reformation, both as a word and as a meaning. Specifically, Weber points to its origin in Luther's translation of the Bible into German: "after that it speedily took on its present meaning in the everyday speech of all Protestant peoples" (p. 79). Again, although people develop ideas, these ideas can take on a life of their own. This is represented by making these ideas the subjects, rather than the objects of action: "the calling grew in importance" (p. 81).

In Weber's view, Luther's conception of the calling basically amounted to the idea that "the fulfillment of worldly duties is under all circumstances the only way to live

acceptably to God" (p. 82). Now this was already a revolutionary thought, since it contradicted monasticism, based as it is on withdrawal from and renunciation of the world. Compared with the Catholic attitude, then, "the moral emphasis on and the religious sanction of, organized worldly labour in a calling was mightily increased" (p. 83). But there is no simple way to move from Luther's sense of a religious calling, of the acceptance of a divine ordinance dictating the direction of one's activity in the world, to the modern sense of a calling to pursue economic gain. Luther continued to be, in Weber's words, "dominated by an attitude" (p. 84) that was economically still very traditionalistic. This kept him from working out any radically new links between worldly activity and religious principles. So as Weber says, Luther cannot be claimed as the *father* of the spirit of capitalism that is exemplified so well in the attitude of Benjamin Franklin ('time is money'): "Luther himself would, without doubt, have sharply repudiated any connection with a point of view like that of Franklin" (p. 82). The connections drawn will have to be more indirect:

> We shall thus have to admit that the cultural consequences of the Reformation were to a great extent, perhaps in the particular aspects with which we are dealing predominantly, unforeseen and even unwished-for results of the labours of the reforms. They were often far removed from or even in contradiction to all that they themselves thought to attain. (p. 90)

However, it is already clear that Weber expects to find that religious ideas and forces have played some significant part "in forming the developing web of our specifically worldly modern culture" (p. 90). Without meaning to suggest that somehow capitalism is a direct creation of the Reformation, he contradicts the view of crude materialism, that the Reformation itself, is the historically necessary result of changes in economic conditions. Rather than embracing either of these extremes, Weber suggests that there is

a "tremendous confusion of interdependent influences between the material basis, the forms of social and political organization, and the ideas current in the time of the Reformation" (p. 91). In this study, however, ideas are given the most attention, their effectiveness in history is brought to our attention as they are represented as alive, shown in interaction with practical ethics and with other ideas. Such is the case with the religious idea of *calling*, as it develops and transforms in different historical moments. Weber outlines these developments by an examination of the way Calvin's sense of calling differed from Luther's, in his elaboration of the doctrine of predestination and its effects on moral practice, specifically, asceticism.

Worldly Asceticism and Predestination

While Luther's economic traditionalism limited his ability to generate continually more radical applications of the sense of divine calling to attention to worldly duties, later Reformers such as John Calvin elaborated doctrines related to calling that eventually had widespread consequences for Protestant conduct in everyday life. Weber links the worldly asceticism that developed, to "the idea of the afterlife which absolutely dominated the most spiritual men of that time. Without its power, overshadowing everything else, no moral awakening which seriously influenced practical life came into being during that period" (p. 97). Although the dogmatic roots of moral practice would eventually die out "after terrible struggles" (p. 97), the original connection left behind important effects.

And yet, Weber is not interested in what was theoretically and officially taught, but with that which, originating in religious belief and practice, gave 'psychological

sanction' to certain kinds of practical conduct. Here the idea, animated by faith, provides

an endorsement of certain ways of acting. In Calvinism, this religious idea was the

doctrine of predestination. Again, the idea lives and acts, creating consequences,

shattering movements, serving, causing schisms (p. 99). Weber suggests that Calvin's

doctrine arose out of the sense of religious grace combined with the feeling that this grace

comes not through any worth of the individual, but from an objective power, and

continued to develop, "from the logical necessity of his thought; therefore its importance

increases with every increase in the logical consistency of that religious thought" (p.

102). The basic content of the doctrine, is that a part of humanity will be saved, and the

rest damned. Who will be saved and who will be damned is already known and

determined by God. Weber directly attributes a particular psychological effect to the

doctrine of predestination:

> In its extreme inhumanity, this doctrine must above all have had one
> consequence for the life of a generation which surrendered to its
> magnificent consistency. That was a feeling of unprecedented inner
> loneliness of the single individual. (p. 104)

The inheritors of the doctrine of predestination were haunted by the question of whether

they were one of the elect of God, whether they were chosen for heaven or for hell. They

were driven to find some way of determining or proving their election. Worldly activity

became the means by which this was attempted. As a consequence of the widespread

acceptance of the doctrine of predestination, conduct in the world became increasingly

rationalized, but in a certain way:

> this doctrine in its magnificent consistency...prevented a premature
> collapse into a purely utilitarian doctrine of good works in this world
> which would never have been capable of motivating such tremendous
> sacrifices for non-rational ideal ends. (p. 125-126)

Focus on this world was intent, but it was organized according to other-worldly goals. This was so in each of the four forms of Protestant worldly asceticism that Weber discusses (Calvinist, Pietist, Methodist, and Mennonite) and it was "the consequence of the concept of calling of ascetic Protestantism" (p. 154). At the end of the chapter on worldly asceticism, Weber sums up, and here the idea really comes to life:

> Christian asceticism, at first fleeing from the world into solitude, had already ruled the world which it had renounced from the monastery and through the Church. But it had, on the whole, left the naturally spontaneous character of daily life in the world untouched. Now it strode into the market-place of life, slammed the door of the monastery behind it, and undertook to penetrate just that daily routine of life with its methodicalness, to fashion it into a life in the world, but neither of nor for this world. (p. 154)

In other places too, Weber represents asceticism as moving and acting, feeling and perceiving. Under the Puritans, for instance, "asceticism descended like a frost" (p. 168). Elsewhere, "asceticism condemned both dishonesty and compulsiveness" (p. 172), and as well, "asceticism looked upon the pursuit of wealth as an end in itself as highly reprehensible" (p. 172). On the other hand, the idea that faithful labour, at any wage, is pleasing to God was strongly affected by asceticism. Protestant Asceticism "not only deepened this idea decisively, it also created the force which was alone decisive for its effectiveness" (p. 178). Here we have one idea working on another. Finally, there is another reference to birth: "One of the fundamental elements of the spirit of modern capitalism, and not only of that but of all modern culture: rational conduct on the basis of the idea of the calling, was born...from the spirit of Christian asceticism" (p. 180).

Secularization

In tracing the shift from the original religious convictions and concepts that drove early Protestant worldly asceticism, to the later, secularized notions making up the spirit of capitalism, Weber uses a variety of figurative images. There are plant references: "the religious roots died out slowly, giving way to utilitarian worldliness" (p. 176). There are also some more complicated combinations. From Calvin's idea that only when the people were poor did they remain obedient to God, came the secularized Dutch maxim that "the mass of men only labor when necessity forces them to do so...Here also, with the *dying out* of the religious root, the utilitarian interpretation *crept in* unnoticed" (p. 177, italics added). By the time of Benjamin Franklin, we have the spirit of capitalism "without the religious base, which by Franklin's time had died away" (p. 180).

The force of worldly asceticism has driven and transformed the economic order: "...when asceticism was carried out of monastic cells into everyday life, and began to dominate worldly morality, it did its part in building the tremendous cosmos of the modern economic order" (p. 181). Material goods, however, were a major force in transforming, secularizing, and eventually dominating the system. Early Reformers did not value external goods highly, believing they should "lie on the shoulders of the saint like a light cloak, which can be thrown aside at any moment. But fate decreed that the cloak should become an iron cage" (p. 181). In his overview of the present time, Weber offers a complex series of images, bringing ideas, concepts, and material goods into interaction on the same plane:

> Since asceticism undertook to remodel the world and to work out its ideals in the world, material goods have gained an increasing and finally an inexorable power over the lives of men as at no previous period in history. To-day the spirit of religious asceticism--whether finally, who knows?--

has escaped from the cage. But victorious capitalism, since it rests on mechanical foundations, needs its support no longer. (pp. 181-182)

In this scenario, religious ideas, that once lived, that once were effective forces in the world, have been overthrown by the power of material goods, and ironically so, as a consequence of the worldly asceticism, which, in turning attention to everyday duties, was intended as a means of 'storing up treasures in heaven.' Now, says Weber, "the idea of duty in one's calling prowls about in our lives like the ghost of dead religious beliefs" (p. 182). This suggestive image signals that the moment has come to return to the question of spirits and demons raised in the discussion of 'Science as a Vocation.'

Ghosts and Demons

Weber implies that there must be something irrational in his presentation of science as a vocation, when he writes in *The Protestant Ethic* that there is an irrational element in every conception of a calling: "We are here particularly interested in the origin of precisely the irrational element which lies in this, as in every conception of a calling" (p. 78). The irrational element in the conception of a calling as it developed through Luther and Calvin, was the backwardness of the approach as regards "purely eudaemonistic self-interest" (p. 78). The idea of a calling for this world, that focuses entirely on what this life will mean for an other world, a 'next world,' is not a rational approach to finding happiness in this world. At every turn the Protestant, under the influence of worldly asceticism and the doctrine of predestination, is restricted from enjoying the fruits of his labour, every aspect of life having no direct, here and now meaning and consummation, but being directed toward another world, and into the context of eternal judgment.

But it is precisely this kind of thing that appears in Weber's essay 'Science as a Vocation.' There is an irrational element at the root of science as a vocation, and it is also found in the concept of a calling. This irrational element, the secularized root of the religious origin of calling, animates Weber from the inside—demonically—and plays itself out in ideological battles seen as battles between gods on the outside. Science itself is a social practice motivated by the ghosts of dead religious beliefs. The comparative approach, and the search for subjectively intended meaning, then, have quasi-religious motivations, resting in the soul-searching of post-Reformation individuals looking for signs of their eternal fate in their inward motivations and in how they compare with others.

There is a threefold understanding of the role of metaphor in Weber's work developing here. First, ideas are represented as if, in fact, they are alive. This is a conceptual metaphor, a simple thesis, and has been demonstrated extensively. Second, the 'life-cycle' of the idea parallels the classic 'gradual wearing-away' of an active meaning into an abstract meaning. This is Weber's theory of secularization seen as a theory of language. Third, science's search for clarity is structured out of metaphors of light and illumination. Clarity—of subjectively intended meaning, for instance—could never be a strictly literal possibility. This hinges directly on the undecidability of the metaphoricity/literalness of language.

With regard to metaphor and secularization, the situation is complex, for there is a double movement occurring. At this point, both *spirit* and *calling* are usefully referenced. Seen from the present, in the double movement occurring historically, both spirit and calling are transformed in two directions: from a literal to a metaphorical usage

(from concrete to abstract); from a religious to a secular meaning. In this way the metaphor actually *is* the abstraction, rather than becoming an abstraction. That is to say, that spirit and calling were originally understood literally. Their secular meaning now could only be metaphorical, a real spirit and a real call no longer being believed in. Thus calling is worn away into its abstract meaning, where there is no longer a concrete answer to the question: Who calls? The only answers that Weber can give to this question seem to be metaphors: ideas call, demons call, gods call. This is the irrational root of science, as a vocation, embodied in the idea of a calling.

But are they only metaphors for Weber? It seems that he is not presenting us with a linear secularization thesis. After all, the ideas have been shown as independent of their authors. The irrational calling, the spirit which animates, the demon that controls one's being, is something, an idea or whatever, that is more powerful than Weber's own will. He must find the will of this thing and do it, he says. This seems like more than a matter of metaphor. Irrational, yes, but metaphorical? In the *Sociology of Religion* (1991), Weber suggests that even in the most primitive cases of religious behaviour, a process of abstraction has already been carried out: "Already crystallized is the notion that certain beings are concealed 'behind' and responsible for the activity of the charismatically endowed natural objects, artifacts, animals, or persons. This is the belief in spirits" (p. 3). In this way the process of abstraction is itself the projection of spirit into an object, and so this autonomy of the idea, that can rebel against or haunt its author, may be a universal characteristic of existence, and not metaphorical at all. Of course the spirit at work now is the spirit of capitalism, concealed behind and responsible for the activity of a rationalized, bureaucratic economic system, a cage.

So the conclusion about these spirits, gods, and demons, is that they are the secularized ghosts of Reformation concepts, finding some of their earlier antecedents in German passive mysticism. Weber, and along with Weber, sociology, and science in general, is haunted by the Reformation ideas of calling, predestination, worldly asceticism, and others. This haunting is carried out and organized by the spirit of modern capitalism. In Weber, this haunting exists on the borders between the literal and the metaphorical. As a consequence, it is also impossible to decide about the literal nature of science and scientific knowledge.

Weber's Method

We began by suggesting that the two main aspects of Weber's methodology were his insistence on discovering the 'actually intended meaning' and his comparative approach. His standard for science is very high. I would suggest that Weber's insistence on discovering the 'actually intended meaning' of subjective activity reinstates the priority of analogy (literalness) over metaphor, and the logic of *extension* over the gift of seeing resemblance. Ideal types, for instance, though no longer packed with Platonic, metaphysical baggage, remain metaphysical and analogical: they require the idea of the perfect; the never-existent being 'between' real, asymmetrical things—their midpoint.

Working out subjectively intended meaning, then, coincides with the work of logical extension as such. Attention to intention reinstates both the aspects of pragmatism and of calculability. The pursuit of subjectively intended meaning occurs as an attempt to limit the asymmetry of thought with itself, to reduce the 'reflective loss' of presence always already established within language, whose transformations cannot be

halted. The pursuit of subjectively intended meaning then becomes the pursuit of literal meaning. Weber makes the goal of sociology an analogical dwelling place that positions itself above all vis-à-vis Being. Thus his call for 'value free' sociology, and his existentialist manifesto concerning the *vocation* of science.

What is the source of this drive, this 'will to truth' to use Nietzsche's phrase? Perhaps it is the haunting we have been discussing. Weber suggested that in the Reformed Protestant view of being in the world, "Only a life guided by constant thought could achieve conquest over the state of nature" (1958a, p. 118). Weber seems to argue the same thing in 'Science as a Vocation,' with the implication that the scientist is now the one bound to obey the demon let loose by language, language which always calls one into interpretation, an interminable exercise, impossible to complete.

Conclusions

The original questions addressed to classical sociology were these: To what extent can some of the basic concepts found in the writings of Marx, Durkheim, and Weber be understood as elements of a theoretical structure built from metaphorical schema? Do these writers understand their own theories to be metaphorical? What are their underlying ideas about language? These questions have been approached and responded to in a variety of ways throughout the thesis. I would like to use the conclusion to make some general comments that may help to unify and organize what has been, overall, a methodologically mixed and implicit approach.

These comments are organized around a thematic of the *animation* of ideas, concepts, dogmas, and thoughts—all of that which could be cautiously designated as

'social products'—as this occurs in the writings of Marx, Durkheim, and Weber. This is followed by a brief discussion of how the life/death dichotomy that this thematic evokes could be pursued in an attempt at more adequately working out the Derridean analysis of metaphor.

Marx, Durkheim and Weber all use metaphor effectively, both conceptual metaphors ('live metaphors' in Lakoff and Johnson's sense: those found in everyday use), and 'live metaphors' (in Ricoeur's sense: the unusual and surprising metaphor). In fact, it may be that in any really important, ground-breaking work, the difference between these two kinds of 'live metaphor' disappears. In the hands of these three writers, often even conventional metaphors appear reinvigorated, carrying out Ricoeur's suggestion that the required response to the lexicalization of metaphors is to "climb back up the slope of this sort of entropy of language by means of a new act of discourse" (1981, p. 259). And in general, it seems as if the main metaphorical move they make to 'reinvigorate' or 'revitalize' language is precisely that: to represent key aspects of theory as if they are *living, organic entities*. The example given for Marx was the *commodity*, for Durkheim, *Society*, for Weber, *ideas* themselves. The major point of difference lies in the attitudes they took toward this *animation* of thought and idea, concept and belief—appearing as an idea's self-will, or fecundity, or domination—traced in the difference negotiated between human products and found objects, authorial control and the extra-personal force of texts (imagined variously as Economy, Society, God, the Idea as such) and understood in turn by other concepts, such as *reification*, the *social fact*, or *understanding*.

The main proposal here is that with each of the three, Marx, Durkheim, and Weber, there is a presentation of some aspect of their system as if it is alive, as if it were

an organic, living thing. This occurs with respect to major concepts or ideas. But there is a difference, for each, in the way in which this 'liveliness' occurs. One helpful way to conceptualize this is to view each as taking up some kind of position, both physical and evaluative, regarding the vitality of their object. Thus, when Marx reflects upon the *commodity*, that which, in the state of modern capitalism, is embedded in a system of social relations, while people themselves are involved in a system of merely material relations, he views it as *alienation* of natural social relations and as an inversion of the world. This evaluation comes from a place outside of, independent of, the sway or influence of the commodity: *he* is not held in thrall to it, at least not intellectually. Marx tries to write from outside the commodity, this living, social thing that is really the inversion of natural social relations, which is really, for humanity, a body of death.

Durkheim is very different. In Durkheim, it is *society*, the social itself, which is represented as an organic, living, entity. In fact, the social becomes the source and goal of all *real* life. Individuals are seen as parts of the social whole, incapable of real life in isolation. For Durkheim, *society* really is alive. In fact, the individual has his full being in the social and nowhere else. Durkheim embraces the life of *society*, as authentic life, as the living whole. Integration, life itself, embodiment of the fullness of human being comes through the *animation* of the social world. Decay of the sense of life in the social world will also spell decay for individuals. He writes from *within* this grand organism, as if he were a kind of blood cell, seeking out, diagnosing, and attempting to destroy infection and disease within the social body.

In Weber, the activation of ideas is even broader. Here, ideas and concepts in general are represented as if they are active, living things, with desires, motivations, and

possessed of a seemingly relentless will, which may be frustrated, or transformed or may gain ascendancy. Weber, like Durkheim, also writes from within, but his evaluation of this is very different. He writes as if from within a cage, in a web spun by ideas, by rationalism, asceticism, dogmatism, the doctrine of predestination, forces set loose on the social world by authors that cannot control or foresee the life their ideas will lead.

But this independence of ideas is an inescapable aspect of language and thinking itself, according to what one finds in Weber. This seems to oppose the Marxian notion that these ideas are merely reflexes of material conditions. It would seem, from Marx's view, that Weber has succumbed to the fetishism of ideas, partially coming to see *them* as the real actors in history.

For none of them was this 'liveliness' strictly a matter of metaphor. Like Weber's 'live ideas,' Marx's commodities behave toward one another as if they were involved in a system of social relations. But in Marx's analysis, commodities were the real embodiment of labour, the necessary consequence of a certain stage in the mode of production, thus not metaphorical at all, but rather an effect of a basic transposition of value, expressed in the universal equivalent. And yet, in another sense, for Marx, all language is a transposition, an abstraction, the way thought appropriates the concrete as the 'concrete in the mind' (1973, p. 101).

Each also anticipates the postmodern critique of reified concepts by what they accept as given. In Marx, the givenness of social activity continually undermines any abstract and static system of oppositions (a fact not noticed by a considerable number of Marxists). His discussion of the 'fetishism of commodities' also undermines these oppositions, rendering even his own distinctions between the abstract and the concrete as

only relative values, resting in their neighborliness, their origin in social activity, rather than as intuited concepts with a reality independent of this oppositional framework.

In general, though, for Marx, language rests in a subordinate position. As practical consciousness, language is a tool, a 'dangerous supplement' which he foresees as being, in a mode of production beyond the capitalist mode, resolved in perfect simplicity and intelligibility.

Durkheim, as well, with his disdain for individual intent, prefigures the 'death of the author,' by bringing into consideration the structure of the collective, social text. By de-reifying the concepts of *society* and the *social fact*, contemporary approaches to a form of functionalism such as that of Michel Foucault, have moved into a new, non-positivist phase, one in which the metaphor/concept configuration undergoes continual transformation, remaining undecidable. Thus biological references need not be merely 'abstracted' into a pure concept of structure, but remain in play, neither fully metaphorical nor literal.

Weber too, even with his express goal of discovering subjective intention, provides prefigurations of recent approaches to text in the way that he shows ideas developing, transforming, and being reinscribed, beyond the control of their author.

While I have attempted to demonstrate the necessity of moving beyond an analysis of metaphor in the style of Lakoff and Johnson, there is still some distance to go in producing a truly Derridean reading of metaphor in these texts. My conclusions continue to demonstrate the lack of a full outworking of Derrida's deconstruction of the opposition of the metaphorical and the literal. In the end, including Derrida in the theoretical foundations of this thesis provided one significant instrument; the method of

destabilizing any final decision on 'metaphoricity' or 'literalness' as such. This developed out of the question: What remains, after we have acknowledged metaphor at work in unexpected places (e.g., both everyday thought and activity, and our most abstract philosophical concepts), of the difference between the metaphor and the proper name? How do we negotiate this difference?

I think that Marx, Durkheim, and Weber all exhibit sophisticated strategies for dealing with this problematic. Each already leaves the final literal/metaphoric status of concepts and ideas somewhat open-ended, if not by intent, then simply by the structuring of their texts. To move further in these texts, however, I would suggest that an investigation and discussion of the opposition of life and death would be useful. What are the consequences of the underlying structuring of sociological texts around the opposition of life and death? What does it mean to arrange sociological, empirical analysis around contrasts between *real* and *false* life; *full, unmediated* life, and *alienated* life? Such an investigation would likely include questions of gender, of writing in general, and the other in general (the representation of the other as death, trap, chaos, etc.,). This would be a step in the direction of a more fully Derridean reading.

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