

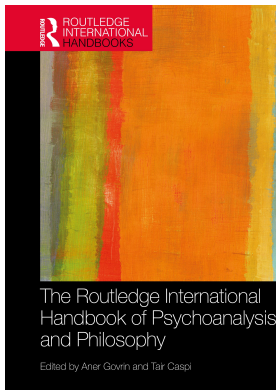
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METAPHORS AND THE QUESTION OF TRUTH IN PSYCHOANALYTIC LANGUAGE

*Tair Caspi*¹

Introduction

Philosophers have been engaged in a prolonged, controversial debate on the nature of scientific language (Bono, 1990; Hoffman, 1980). Leading trends of thought in western philosophy, such as empiricism and logical positivism, maintained that scientific language should be articulated with literal, univocal, precise, objective, factual terms (Hobbes, 1968 [1651]; Carnap, 1959). According to this view, whose roots can be traced back to Plato's ideas, using metaphors in argumentative philosophical discussions might mislead and lead us astray. However, a growing trend in contemporary metaphor research fiercely maintains that metaphors should not be excluded, as they hold an integral, essential function in scientific language and possess an open-ended quality that may actually contribute to the exploration of unknown domains (Boyd, 1993; Kuhn, 1993). Furthermore, it has been suggested that metaphors may even serve an explanatory function (Levy, 2020), which forms one of the main goals of scientific research.

The last decades have seen a growing interest in the status, legitimacy, place, and function of metaphors, as playing out in psychoanalytic language. The founders of psychoanalysis, Freud and later Klein, aspired to establish it as a scientific method and theory. In line with the prevailing positivist philosophy of that period, they conceived psychoanalytic concepts to reflect universal phenomenological facts and did not use the term 'metaphor' since metaphors were seen as mere fiction that might obscure the truth. Later, the founders of the following psychoanalytic theories, like Bion, Winnicott, Kohut, and others, strove to draw up universal truths that describe the human psyche. For them, the terms they coined introduced actual revelations that offered absolute truths rather than metaphors (Govrin, 2016). Many contemporary psychoanalysts, on the other hand, especially across the post-modern relational and intersubjective trends, believe that psychoanalytic concepts are actually alternating metaphors that do not represent ontological entities and objective facts (Ogden, 2001; Mitchel & Black, 1996). And indeed, explicit discussion of the concept of 'metaphor' is all but absent from classical psychoanalytic discourse but has found itself at home in contemporary postmodern psychoanalytic discourse. Contemporary metaphor research sees general agreement that psychoanalytic language tends to be metaphoric by essence but debates its merits and limitations in conceptualizing the human psyche (Borbely, 2011; Caspi, 2018; Enckell, 2002; Hopkins, 2000; Modell, 2003, 2009; Spence, 1987; Wallerstein, 2011; Wurmser, 2011).

This state of affairs raises serious epistemological worries. If psychoanalytic language indeed tends to use metaphors, can we rely on such knowledge that may be articulated in a vague and foggy manner? How can such fluid theoretical knowledge guide us during analytical work? Moreover, if psychoanalytic concepts are no more than alternating metaphors, as may follow from Nietzsche's (1954 [1873]) well-known definition of truth, what kind of stability, objectivity, and authority can be expected of psychoanalytic knowledge? It follows that the question at the heart of the present discussion is whether the metaphoric nature of psychoanalytic language is at odds with its ability to convey truth.

The discussion about metaphors and truth in psychoanalytic language involves three distinct polemics: the linguistic debate about metaphorical meaning and metaphorical truth; the philosophy of science controversy on metaphors' role and legitimacy in scientific language; and the psychoanalytic debate on metaphors' role and status in psychoanalytic language. Much has been written about each of the three, but surprisingly, their reciprocal links were largely overlooked. However, the mutual links between these debates hold immense importance because if psychoanalytic language is fundamentally metaphoric, as many contemporary psychoanalysts contend, and if there is an essential contradiction between metaphor and truth, it may then be inferred that the psychoanalytic body of knowledge lacks objectivity and stability. Such a radical conclusion, in effect, negates psychoanalysis as an investigative method, therapeutic method, and cohesive theory, and in my opinion it cannot be accepted.

I will argue that the view of metaphors in psychoanalytic lexicon as an unwelcome rhetorical configuration rests on a narrow reductionist view that sees metaphor as inevitably obscuring the truth. This earlier dismissive view of metaphors in psychoanalysis conceives truth solely according to the correspondence theory of truth. Contrary to this approach, a wider view that accepts the relevance and usefulness of multiple truth theories, such as correspondence, coherence, pragmatic, and so on, constitutes a much more apt and stable epistemological foundation for psychoanalytic language (Yadlin-Gadot, 2016). This kind of 'post-postmodern' epistemological infrastructure, which leaves room for multiple perspectives on truth while avoiding the relativism pitfall, may allow the innovative use of metaphors beyond clinical psychoanalysis, where it enjoys considerable general agreement. It may also allow the use of metaphors in the conceptual-theoretical dimension provided that we take into consideration their limitations.

As we shall see, contrary to the Platonic and empiricist perception of metaphor as a vibrant, suggestive configuration that diverts us away from the truth, theories that started developing in the latter half of the twentieth century pointed to metaphor's cognitive value and its power to expose truths that literal language cannot reveal (Black, 1962; Boyd, 1993; Hesse, 1966; Kuhn, 1993). Based on these post-positivist theories, my main argument goes that the metaphoric language of psychoanalysis holds the potential power to expose 'metaphorical truths' (as I later explain). Psychoanalysis requires the prolific use of metaphoric language in order to describe interpersonal and intersubjective unconscious and pre-verbal contents and processes. Such contents can often prove ineffable for literal language (Botella & Botella, 2005; Caspi, 2020; Frie, 1999). However, while formulating psychoanalytic theories, unlike in clinical work, the use of metaphors may hold limitations that should be taken into consideration. Theoretical metaphors may be vague and less accurate compared to literal speech; they do not lend themselves to empirical validation and hold potentially misleading persuasive power. Moreover, metaphors may lead to reification, the concretization of abstract concepts, which distorts meaning and causes conceptual blurriness (Wallerstein, 2006).

I will briefly discuss each polemic in the first three sections. In the fourth section, I will analyze the main issue of metaphors' relation to truth in psychoanalytic language. The final section will address the pros and cons of metaphors in theoretical psychoanalytic language. Finally, I

will suggest a possible ‘solution’ to address the shortcomings involved in the use of metaphors in psychoanalytic conceptual language.

Metaphorical Meaning and Metaphorical Truth

‘Metaphor’ derives from Ancient Greek, with *meta* indicating ‘above’, ‘over’, or ‘across’, while *pherein* is ‘to carry’, combining to denote ‘transference’ or ‘carrying over’. The trajectory of this sharing or transfer of meaning runs from a secondary subject – which linguists usually refer to as the vehicle – to a principal or primary subject, commonly referred to as ‘the topic’. The shared ground of the metaphor includes those qualities of the topic and vehicle, which together form the essence of the figurative interpretation (Richards, 1936).

Philosophers of language have traditionally been interested in issues of meaning and truth, but until the mid-twentieth century, their main focus was literal language, while research into figurative language was largely confined to the peripheries of aesthetics and rhetoric (Stern, 2006). Vico (1999 [1725]) described metaphor as “being the most luminous, most necessary and most used” (p. 404). Nevertheless, “until Black’s seminal paper ‘Metaphor’, metaphor had been largely ignored by analytic philosophy, largely due to the dominance of logical positivism during the preceding decades” (Reimer & Camp, 2006: 627). “Thinkers of those periods deemed metaphor cognitively insignificant, assuming as they did that, metaphors lacked the crucial criterion for meaningfulness: verification conditions” (Lycan, 2008: 177). According to Ayer (1946), the verification principle is a criterion of meaning which maintains that a sentence has literal meaning if the proposition it expresses is either analytic or empirically verifiable. Correspondence with reality, fact, or states of affairs is one possible answer – indeed the most plausible and common answer – to the question of how a sentence can be verified.

According to the correspondence theory of truth, “a belief, hypothesis, or idea is true to the extent that it corresponds with reality. The correspondence criterion of truth is a basic premise of common sense as well as of scientific and philosophical empiricism” (Hanly, 2009: 366). It follows, therefore, that logical positivists, too, viewed metaphorical speech as lacking cognitive content altogether because a metaphorical utterance has no reference in reality (Carnap, 1959; Stern, 2006). Metaphor, therefore, was dismissed as trivial to truth and knowledge and seen as a configuration that merely served to inspire feelings and images. However, with the publication of Black’s interaction theory, arguing for metaphor’s irreducible ‘cognitive content’, analytic philosophers began to turn their attention to metaphor. Black (1962) argued that metaphors were cognitively significant in ways that set them apart from the literal. Let us consider Black’s example: “man is a wolf.” He used it to clarify the metaphorical interaction mechanism whereby some features of the concept ‘man’ are transferred to the concept of ‘wolf’ and vice versa. In Black’s words: “the wolf-metaphor suppresses some details, emphasizes others – in short, organizes our view of man” (p. 288). Taken literally, this utterance represents an absurdity because obviously, no man is a wolf. As metaphor cannot denote any real reference in the actual world, it falls short of the verification criterion. Nevertheless, I reckon that when using a metaphor, *one typically says something false in order to draw attention to something true.*

Since the mid-twentieth century, there has been an outpouring of scholarly papers on metaphors’ workings and metaphorical meaning. Four main trends can be inspected in contemporary metaphor research (Reimer & Camp, 2006), but only one of them, represented by Donald Davidson and later by Richard Rorty, rejects the concept of metaphorical meaning and consequently metaphorical truth as well. The concept of ‘metaphorical truth’ means the truth of an utterance under its metaphorical interpretation (Stern, 2000: 351). The concept of

‘metaphorical truth’ does not mean that the truth of the sentence is metaphorical, but rather that the sentence, taken metaphorically, is true (Goodman, 1979).

Simile theories are the oldest, having their roots in the teachings of Aristotle. These theories hold that metaphor is an elliptically stated, figurative comparison or a simile. Aristotle suggested that metaphors were abbreviated similes of sorts. Accordingly, the truth of the metaphor is reduced to that of the simile (Fogelin, 2011). This theory attracted criticism, citing the fact that not all metaphors were translatable into simile form.

Following Black’s interaction theory, the *semantic metaphor theories* trend (Beardsley, 1962; Boyd, 1993; Kittay, 1987; Kuhn, 1993; Richards, 1936) holds that metaphor results from the interaction of words brought together and acting on each other in the settings provided by particular utterances on particular concrete occasions. Accordingly, a metaphorical statement is an utterance in which some kind of tension is at play between the relevant ordinary meanings of its constituent words and phrases, a tension that is only relieved if one or more of these meanings change so as to be brought into harmony with the rest. The emergence of the cognitive sciences has led to the development of fertile theory within the semantic trend, referred to as conceptual metaphor theory (CMT). Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 1999), founders of CMT, argued that our conceptual world is mostly metaphoric because we operate, understand, think, and indeed live by metaphors. They posited that more than a mere speech configuration or linguistic ornament, metaphor is fundamental to language, thinking, and human experience. This theory holds metaphor to be the key to deep truths about the human conceptual system.

According to the semantic metaphor theories, the metaphorical truth involves the assignment of distinctively *metaphorical truth conditions* to sentences and distinctively metaphorical semantic values to some of the words and phrases that figure in these sentences. Therefore, metaphorical truth can be rehabilitated in the form of metaphorical propositional content (Hills, 2004). Further developments suggest a semantic metaphor theory that considers both its context dependence and literal dependence (Stern, 2008). According to Lakoff and Johnson (1999), metaphorical truth is embodied, as the mind is inherently embodied, rather than ‘objectivist’. However, embodied truth, too, is not a purely subjective truth. We all hold pretty much the same embodied basic-level and spatial relations concepts, and therefore there will be an enormous range of shared ‘truths’. Thus, the metaphorical concept ‘containment’ rests on the scheme of THE MIND IS A CONTAINER, which we universally perceive through embodied sensual knowledge.²

The *pragmatic theories* maintain that metaphors are a type of speaker meaning, in which a speaker says one thing in order to mean something else (Grice, 1975; Searle, 1993). Accordingly, metaphor’s truth value is reduced to that of the proposition that the speaker intends to communicate. The pragmatic theories, unlike the semantic ones, place the context of use at the heart of metaphor’s deciphering. Pragmatic criteria of truth differ from semantic truth conditions. Camp (2009) suggested that metaphor fosters insight by highlighting or foregrounding previously unconsidered meanings, a metaphorical quality that has great significance for the psychoanalytic endeavor. Concerning the present discussion, it is safe to conclude that all three metaphor research trends accept the concept of metaphorical truth, albeit defining it differently.³

The fourth trend of metaphor research – *the non-cognitivist theories* – posits that metaphors have no distinctive ‘meaning’ at all but simply cause certain distinctive effects among their hearers (Rorty, 1989). Donald Davidson (1978), the most prominent proponent of this perspective, has raised a very radical argument, whereby “metaphors mean what the words, in their most literal interpretation, mean, and nothing more” (p. 32). This argument can be seen as a direct extension of logical positivism’s dismissive approach to metaphor. Davidson and Rorty agree that metaphors’ effects are non-propositional but go on to conclude that metaphors have no

distinctive meaning at all (other than literal meaning), on the grounds that the only genuine candidates for ‘meaning’ are truth-conditional, propositional contents. Put differently, Davidson denies metaphor a semantic dimension other than the one based on literal meanings. Davidson and Rorty do not question metaphor’s effectiveness but deny its cognitive value, that metaphors can be understood or misunderstood, true or false.⁴ This metaphor trend has been criticized on various grounds and is inconsistent with the intuition that metaphors are cognitively significant, understood or misunderstood; that metaphors figure in our reasoning and thought and can be true or false (Reimer & Camp, 2006).

I believe that metaphors run a gamut of roles in human thought and conceptualization and serve as powerful cognitive tools that allow us to enrich our communications and venture into new domains. This notion will be applied to the understanding of metaphors’ workings in psychoanalysis in the following sections.

Metaphors in Science

Metaphors are used across scientific disciplines to formulate hypotheses, interpret scientific results, and propose new avenues of research. Metaphors provide scientists with ways to interpret, present, and manipulate data within particular scientific disciplines in interdisciplinary or extra-scientific contexts. Many contemporary philosophers of science and linguistics believe that metaphorical reasoning is an essential ingredient of doing science because the conceptual power of metaphors provides scientists with efficient, productive ways to interpret and explore natural phenomena and processes.

Nevertheless, as outlined before, metaphor was considered for centuries as no less than an enemy of truth exploration and was therefore excluded from philosophical and scientific discussions. Plato believed that figurative language could be used to distract from the truth due to its persuasive rhetorical power. Images were seen as inferior to truth and reality, as a precarious ground for argumentation and a mere secondary method of exploration. Therefore, one could not rely on metaphor when drawing inferences. Aristotle believed metaphors were appropriate for poetry but not as a reliable source of information (Johnson, 1981; Lloyd, 1996). Later, empiricists viewed metaphors as words employed not in their proper sense; their charm is likely to mislead. They believed that metaphors created an illusion and that relying on them led to absurd inferences. Therefore, metaphors were considered unsuitable for scientific deduction and the inquiry into truth (Hobbes, 1968 [1651]). During the scientific revolution, metaphors were perceived to “introduce inappropriate, not-literary meanings into science, contaminating [. . .] precise and stable meanings” (Bono, 1990: 62). As we have already seen, logical positivism and early analytic philosophy objected to the use of metaphoric language in scientific discourse and saw metaphors’ role as an illustration, emphasis, or ornament.

Recent decades saw philosophers of science develop theories that elaborated on metaphor’s unique contribution to scientific inquiry. Mary Hesse (1966) applied Black’s theory to the philosophy of science, arguing that models, analogies, and metaphors were vital for scientific explanation and theorization. Metaphors and analogies are not appendices to theory, but rather essential to its development and expansion into new domains of phenomena. Metaphors could be used as means to drive scientific development of its previous course and onto a new one, using a combination of new terms in the language of a given theory or scientific discipline. The incorporation of metaphors into a theoretical system leads to a reorganization and results in a change to the present terms. Consequently, the models and analogies derived from these terms also undergo transformation. Hesse took a pioneering role in contributing to metaphor’s renaissance against her predecessors.

Richard Boyd (1993) looked into the role played by metaphors in formulating scientific theories. He observed two types of metaphors: ‘exegetical metaphors’, which serve to teach and explain the theory and can be expressed with non-metaphorical means; and ‘theory-constitutive metaphors’, which create an “irreplaceable part of linguistic machinery of a scientific theory” and are essential in formulating new scientific theories (p. 486). These metaphors express insights that defy literal formulation, meaning that “their cognitive content cannot be made explicit” (p. 487). Constitutive metaphors allow to formulate a new terminology where no terms existed before. According to Boyd, theory-constitutive metaphors have an innovative potential power. They may contribute to science by allowing to develop new conceptual systems in an emerging field with no such system in place, an aspect that literal language cannot always provide.

Thomas Kuhn (1993) argued that scientific theories arranged the world at any given time by the period’s state of knowledge. The ‘world’ is a set of congruencies shared by experience and language. The relations between language and the world are not defined once and for all; rather, they experience change. Our planet did not change its shape when they started referring to it as a ‘sphere’ or ‘earth’ in antiquity and medieval times; it was the scientific language that changed and shall continue to change. In this process, “metaphor plays an essential role in establishing links between scientific language and the world” (ibid., pp. 415–416). Kuhn suggested that a change of metaphor is also a change of worldviews. I believe that these theories can be usefully applied in the psychoanalytic discourse and help to establish the epistemological basis for metaphors’ use in the psychoanalytic lexicon.

Metaphors in Psychoanalytic Language

The debate on metaphors’ position in psychoanalytic language dates back to Freud, but it was only in the 1960s that it matured into a full-blown polemic. Freud and later on Klein insisted that the quest for truth was an inherent human tendency and a fundamental aim of the analytic treatment. Moreover, the quest for truth, according to the Kleinian perspective, is fundamental to human relatedness, especially deep intimate relationships (Roth, 2018). Freudian and Kleinian psychoanalysts are committed to a realist ontology and epistemology and accordingly, perceive truth in objective terms, separately from the observer’s subjectivity (Bell, 2009). Accordingly, Freud, who found psychoanalysis’ scientific status immensely important, believed that metaphors were replaceable and that scientific assumptions should be tentatively formulated (Freud, 1914: 77). He made ample use of metaphors and analogies such as ‘the unconscious’, ‘repression’, ‘transference’, and many other metaphoric concepts borrowed from a variety of semantic fields, including hydraulics, biology, mechanics, legal proceedings, archaeology, anthropology, mythology, history, classical, and popular literature (Brunner, 1995; Edelson, 1983; Hopkins, 2000; Wallerstein, 2011). Metaphors that draw on the fields of space and energy stand out, but Freud’s repertoire of images spans an enormous range (Petrella, 2007). Many of these metaphors have entered common usage and come to constitute the terminology of psychoanalytic theory. According to Freud,

In psychology, we can only describe things by the help of analogies. There is nothing peculiar in this; it is the case elsewhere as well. But we have constantly to keep changing these analogies, for none of them lasts long enough.

(Freud, 1926: 195)

Thus, for example, the relations shared by ego and id were described as those shared by a horse and its rider. Later, this metaphor was replaced to describe the ego as ‘poor’ because “it serves

three severe masters” (Freud, 1933: 77). Freud made liberal use of metaphors, as evidently emerges from his writings (Nash, 1962). In Freud’s words:

I see no necessity to apologize for the imperfections of this or of any similar imagery.
[. . .] We are justified, in my view in giving free reign to our speculations so long as
we retain the coolness of our judgment, and *do not mistake the scaffolding for the building.*
(Freud, 1900: 536; *emphasis added*)

However, Freud’s liberal use of metaphoric language in his theoretical conceptualizations, particularly in formulating the meta-psychology of his theory, attracted scathing criticism (Shafer, 1976; Spence, 1987). According to Nash (1962), Freud not only illustrated by metaphor; he also conceived in metaphor. He cited the anthropomorphic metaphors of Freud’s later structural model as leading to confusion.⁵ Hartmann (1959) posited that an occasional lack of caution in Freud’s formulation of its propositions, coupled with his tendency to use striking metaphors, precipitated the accusation that psychoanalysis was anthropomorphizing its concepts. According to Hartmann, it is important to replace metaphors, as the use of metaphors may interfere with meaning. Hartmann further argued that the value of the metaphors employed by Freud should be weighed on the merit of each metaphor in itself by checking the analogy’s compatibility with reviewable knowledge.⁶

Most of the commentators that have criticized metaphor’s use in psychoanalytic language did not advocate the exclusion of metaphor per se but were critical of what may be described in cognitive metaphor theory terms as reckless metaphorical shifts, that is, the metaphorical mapping from the source domain into the target domain. For instance, Nagel (1959), an American philosopher of science, invested metaphors and analogies with great heuristic values. Nevertheless, he stressed that “in Freudian theory, metaphors are employed without even half-way *definite rules* for expanding them,” and accordingly admitted metaphors such as “energy” or “level of excitation” had no specific content and could be filled in to suit one’s fancy (p. 41; *emphasis added*). This may mislead and blur concepts’ lines.

Indeed, the metaphorical shift may lead to concretization and reification, as evident in a literal reading of Klein’s colorful descriptions of unconscious phantasy. In other psychoanalytic concepts, the metaphorical mapping may draw redundant features, which results in distortion of meaning. Thus, for instance, Freud’s hydraulic and electrical metaphors created a misguided impression of scientific precision. I believe the criticism reviewed here can be addressed by the implementation of clear mapping criteria developed by cognitive sciences. The application of these criteria is intended to chart the proper metaphorical use as a possible ‘solution’ to the limitations inherent in metaphoric conceptualization. I will elaborate on this point in the final section.

From the 1970s onwards, the so-called metaphorical turn gradually gained traction in psychoanalytic discourse, while the voices of authors who endorsed the use of metaphors in psychoanalytic jargon became prominent. Accordingly, Wurmser (1977) fiercely contended in metaphors’ defense, believing they should not be banished from psychoanalytic theory, as they were crucial in formulating and constituting it. According to him, “All science is the systematic use of metaphor. Its critical, self-conscious use as symbolic, not concrete, reality is an inevitable necessity of the scientific process” (p. 477). Wurmser argued that the criticism leveled at the use of metaphors in psychoanalysis drew on a radical empiricism philosophy, which erred to psychoanalysis. In the same vein, Wallerstein (1988) argued that metaphors were not problematic in clinical theory, as he found that they could be validated just like clinical facts; he was skeptical about the prospect of replacing metaphors from meta-theory. According to Wallerstein, the

rhetorical voice was an essential part of psychoanalytic theory. He contended for the centrality of metaphors in it yet stressed the importance of making flexible use of metaphors and cautioned against conceptual blunders (Wallerstein, 2011).

The so-called metaphorical turn in psychoanalysis can be seen as part of the gradual epistemological transition. This process took place while psychoanalytic thought was gradually moving from a realistic epistemology, characteristic of Freud and Klein, to a subjective epistemology. Postmodern psychoanalysis stresses experiential, subjective, and pluralistic aspects of the self-concept rather than absolute objective truth. Postmodern psychoanalysis is largely predicated on a relativist epistemology, which posits pluralism and multiplicity of truths and language games, instead of the perception of a single, one-of-its-kind, objective truth (Mitchell, 1993; Ogden, 2016; Orange, 2003). Ogden (2001) argued that psychoanalytic concepts, including his own, constituted metaphors rather than absolute truths. He further argued that metaphors allowed access to the analysand's unconscious (Ogden, 1997).

I believe that metaphors are indispensable, both in clinical psychoanalysis and in theory formation, as we conceive and experience the world and ourselves through a complex system of conceptual metaphors. The dismissive attitude towards metaphors in psychoanalytic theory rests on a misguided assumption of an inevitable contradiction between metaphor and truth. In fact, metaphors in psychoanalytic conceptual language are by no means enemies of truth. Metaphors may reflect deep objective psychoanalytical facts and reveal unconscious truths, provided that their use is not reckless or reified and concretized.

Merits and Shortcomings of Metaphors in Psychoanalytic Language

In light of the three polemics outlined above, how can we understand metaphor's place and function in psychoanalytic language? From its inception, many of psychoanalysis' innovative concepts were constructed as metaphors. 'Transference', 'unconscious', 'superego', 'projection', and 'containment' are but some examples from the full gamut of psychoanalytical metaphors (Leary, 1990). In all of these examples, a metaphorical shift from the source domain into the target domain can be inspected. For example, the containment metaphor sees borrowed features originating in a concrete container (which may be strong, stable, little, etc.) into the mental sphere, where it describes the analyst's success or failure in tolerating the analysand powerful feelings, depending on the features of the analyst's mental container.

As we have seen, metaphors are not at all unique to psychoanalytic language, and in fact, scientific rhetoric is replete with metaphors even in hard sciences, with instances like 'light is a wave', 'electricity is a fluid', and many others. Hoffman (1980) shows that the best metaphors in science are those that spawn theoretical ponderings over many years, such as the metaphor of light as a 'wave' or a 'particle'. "In science," he writes, "one can latch upon a metaphor or intuitively appealing vision (e.g., waves) and ride the vision for years, or generations, trying to unpack its implications (e.g., Bohr equations, wave-particle dualities, etc.)" (p. 415).

However, within psychoanalytic language, metaphors stand out. Since psychoanalysis is concerned with the exploration of abstract psychical and intersubjective unconscious processes that are inaccessible to direct examination, psychoanalysis must rely on a wide range of metaphors and imagery in order to think, conceptualize and formulate the psychoanalytic glossary. Thus, metaphors in psychoanalysis are used to express deep, ineffable emotional truth and can serve to reveal the truth (Caspi, 2018; Frie, 1999).

Metaphor may serve as important cognitive tool that holds the potential power to explore uncharted domains. These tropes have an embodied, bodily experiential basis (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999), and therefore they may function as an important source of unconscious knowledge.

Metaphor may bridge between different aspects of the mind: Emotions and intellect, bodily physical sensations and 'high' cognitive properties, unconscious preverbal sensations and rational reasoning, primary processes, and secondary ones (Modell, 2003).

Metaphors hold profound merits not only in clinical psychoanalysis (Arlow, 1979; Ogden, 1997) but in theoretical conceptualization as well. The pictorial nature of many metaphors encourages imagining and enables the formulation of ineffable unconscious contents. The power of metaphor, according to Black (1993), lies in the prospect of reorganizing categories that concern the world. Thus, metaphors may innovatively reveal ideas and emotions. An apt and generative metaphor enables us to introduce questions that were unthinkable before this metaphor was formulated. And indeed, many psychoanalytic metaphorical concepts allow us to reveal pioneering contributions and facilitate the exploration of new psychoanalytic domains. For instance, the 'transitional space' metaphor, coined by Winnicott, allows to explore a previously uncharted human experience. In this sense, metaphors are associated with the recognition of new epistemic phenomena (see, Black, 1993). Other metaphorical concepts in psychoanalytic language are not brand new, and yet they manage to rearrange our knowledge afresh and thus may acquire a new fundamental and creative meaning. The 'unconscious' concept, for example, is no Freudian invention, since many philosophers were ahead of him in employing it; however, he instilled it with new, innovative meanings, which came to underpin his psychoanalysis.

Metaphors promote conceptual reasoning and even enable scientific explanations. Figurative language serves a significant role when it comes to expressing affects, especially deep unconscious contents that we deal with in psychoanalysis.

Psychoanalysis has developed a remarkably rich language, made of a complex network of theories and concepts that serve to describe the human mind. The extensive psychoanalytic lexicon comprises sub-lexicons that originated across different psychoanalytic schools: Freudian lexicon, Kleinian lexicon, Winnicottian lexicon, and so on (Govrin, 2016). I believe that the different psychoanalytic sub-lexicons rely on different epistemology and meta-psychology, which involve different conceptions of truth. The different epistemes of each sub-lexicon offer a changing array of metaphors. Nevertheless, variant epistemes may coexist rather than exclude one another during analysis, in a manner that leaves room for exploration and self-understanding.

Yadlin-Gadot (2016) defined six paradigmatic notions of truth: correspondence, ideal, subjective, intersubjective, coherence, and pragmatic. Each of the specified truths is embedded in certain epistemic premises. Thus, the correspondent truth reflects a realistic epistemology that allows the comparison of statements and facts. The ideal truth is embedded in an objective-idealistic epistemology that posits the existence of ideal, mind-independent forms. Subjective idealistic epistemology is based on subjective and intersubjective truths. Coherent truth exists in both objective and subjective idealistic epistemologies. The pragmatic truth exists within the experiential realm and the confines of perceived external reality.

It follows that metaphors in psychoanalytic lexicon reflect the multiple truths conceptions cohabiting our inner world and are apt for describing the dynamic nature of the world. Psychoanalytic discourse is based on multiple epistemologies within which each epistemology may allow us to determine whether a statement or belief is true or false (Yadlin-Gadot, 2017). This multiplicity encompasses the anchor of objective truth concept, which is essential in constituting meaning and establishing clear and sound psychoanalytic knowledge (Mills, 2014). The correspondence theory of truth is vital to assess metaphors that deal with the connection between internal and external reality. Thus, in order to evaluate the truthfulness of the metaphor of 'projection' in a specific clinical context, the analyst has to take into consideration the relation between the emotion expressed by the analysand and the reality 'out there'. On other occasions, the analyst may wonder whether what the analysand had just told him really occurred or did

they hallucinate it. Or else, the analyst must take into his clinical consideration the question of whether a child has really been abused at home and whether it should be reported or are we dealing with a frightening unconscious phantasy. Without considering the objective reality, the analyst is unable to locate himself in the right position toward his patient's discourse, and in fact, the analyst may make serious mistakes.

Nevertheless, the correspondence theory of truth cannot in itself provide the sole appropriate epistemological basis for all psychoanalytic metaphors because many metaphorical concepts cannot be validated by this theory. For instance, in order to evaluate the truthfulness of a common metaphoric conceptualization such as 'the patient suffers from a lacuna in his superego', it is appropriate to use the coherence conception of truth. This truth notion determines truth-values by examining the compatibility of a given belief with a whole system of beliefs. Accordingly, there may be more than one true description of the world. The application of this truth conception to the above-mentioned example allows us to examine how the different parts of the superego of that patient relate one to another and whether they constitute a coherent and integrated system. When a patient talks about his obsessive ritual system, the main question is not whether it corresponds to reality. Obviously, the patient is very much aware of the fact that those rituals do not serve any kind of realistic defense against whatever frightens or bothers him. Actually, the practice of these rituals may cause the patient deep suffering. So, the relevant questions may be, what is the emotional defensive function of the rituals, is it effective in anxiety reduction, and if so, how does it enable this effect? Moreover, the analyst may wonder what place this symptom takes in relation to his introjected object relations and so forth. In order to consider these aspects, the coherence notion of truth is much more apt and effective.

To evaluate the metaphorical conceptualization of the 'subjugating third' – Thomas Ogden's term – one needs to resort to what Yadlin-Gadot has called the "intersubjective notion of truth." The 'subjugating third' is a specific form of projective identification in which "the individual subjectivities of analyst and analysand [. . .] are subsumed in (subjugated by) the newly created analytic third" (Ogden, 1994: 9). So, in order to assess whether the intersubjective analytical space has indeed collapsed, we need the intersubjective notion of truth. The subjective notion of truth is needed to assess the truthfulness of a patient's metaphor describing for example, "holes in his 'self' sense." In this example, what Spence (1982) has termed 'historical truth' is not appropriate. Rather, what he called 'narrative truth' can provide the relevant frame of reference to appreciate the patient's self-sense. The pragmatic notion of truth concerns the utility and practicality of an idea in the context of the believer's life. Thus, theory-constitutive metaphors are productive and useful (Bono, 1990; Boyd, 1993). For example, the metaphor 'transference' transcends paradigms, endures over time, and allows the steady creation and emanation of creative theoretical and clinical thought. This concept remains soundly in place despite the turnover of paradigms over more than a century since Freud first coined it.

I believe that metaphorically constructed psychoanalytical concepts may reflect deep unconscious metaphorical truths. Many metaphors of psychoanalytic theory, like 'unconscious', 'transitional space', 'projective identification', 'containment', and others, play a constitutive theoretical function (Boyd, 1993). They cannot be verified, but they may convey metaphorical truth that pertains to the deep unconscious contents and processes of the mind, contents that may be beyond the reach of literal language. Metaphorical truth is not about the language-world compatibility (correspondence of truth); rather, it should be understood in deeper, broader intersubjective terms. The metaphorical truth is not delivered once and for all. Rather, the truthfulness of metaphorical concepts is judged based on their coherence within the paradigm limits (Kuhn, 1993). Metaphorical truth, in my opinion, is a truth concept that is dependent

on context and on the circumstances under which a metaphor is being used as can be inspected from the very brief clinical examples appearing above.

Nevertheless, we must also take into consideration the shortcomings of metaphor's use. Theoretical metaphors in psychoanalysis may be vague and less accurate compared with literal speech; they are inaccessible to empirical validation and possess a potentially misleading persuasive power. Metaphors may carry redundant borrowed features that are likely to give a wrong impression; that is, Freud's energetic and physiochemical metaphors that produce the illusion of scientific precision. Moreover, metaphors may lead to reification, concretization of abstract concepts (Wallerstein, 2006). Wittgenstein (1953) believed that words might bewitch our thoughts and that the picture held in a word could lead to concretization and essentialist thinking. This may hinder our understanding of the emotional truth during therapy. In Wittgenstein's words: "A picture held us captive. And we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably" (Wittgenstein, 1953: § 115).

I would like to suggest a framework for a possible 'solution' to the shortcomings of metaphors in the psychoanalytic lexicon by implementing several mapping principles. Gentner and Jeziorski (1993) have identified the mapping principles that informed analogies in contemporary western science. They argued that a scientific analogy demonstrates a specific manner of knowledge mapping from the source domain into the target domain. Accordingly, ideal contemporary scientific reasoning includes several mapping principles: (1) structural consistency in interpreting an analogy, that is, people seek to put the objects of the source domain in one-to-one correspondence with the objects of the target so as to obtain the maximal structural match; (2) relational focus, in which relational systems are preserved and object descriptions are disregarded; (3) systematicity of mapping; (4) no extraneous associations; only commonalities strengthen an analogy; (5) no mixed analogies; the relational network to be mapped should be contained within one base domain; when two bases are used, they each convey a coherent system; and (6) An analogy is not causation (*ibid.*, pp. 448–451).

Let us now examine how one of the most fundamental metaphorical concepts of psychoanalysis – the unconscious – meets Gentner and Jeziorski's criteria. Freud's (1915) topographical model conceptualizes the parts of the mind in terms of a spatial metaphor, where the unconscious is the 'lower' part, with the preconscious placed 'above' it, while the conscious is 'placed' at the 'top', dwelling in daylight. Using an eye-opening metaphor, Freud poses a groundbreaking idea, whereby unconscious, wild, primeval ideas play a dominant role in managing the individual's mental life, to a large degree dictating their feelings and conscious, manifest behavior. The spatial metaphor allows Freud to offer a new understanding of mental processes in a palpable, experiential manner.

This well-known metaphor compares the structure of the psyche to an iceberg, demonstrating that just as it is only the tip that is visible, while the bulk lies hidden under the ocean surface, so do consciousness and the contents accessible to it constitute only a small part of man's inner world, while the unconscious contains the bulk of it.⁷

In Lakoff and Johnson's terms (1980), the spatial metaphor of the topographical model sees a twofold mapping. First, the spatial source domain 'up–down' maps the target domain of 'consciousness' based on the KNOWN IS UP; UNKNOWN IS DOWN scheme. The higher the psychic part is 'located' metaphorically, the higher the level of consciousness it signifies. At the same time, this conceptual metaphor maps the 'consciousness' concept with the concept of 'light'. The more lit (and higher) the psychic part, the more conscious it is based on the CONSCIOUSNESS IS ILLUMINATION scheme. The scheme that ties light and consciousness or reason runs deep into culture, and Freud employs it to clarify the map of the psyche.

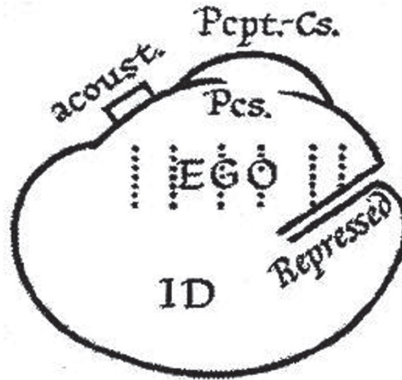


Figure 19.1 Freud's structural model of the mind (Freud, 1923: 24)

The unconscious concept relies on a clear, systematic, organized, and coherent mapping between the source domain 'up-down' and the target domain 'consciousness', in a manner that fits the perception of scientific analogy and meets Gentner and Jeziorski's criteria. This analogy carries no extraneous associations and does not inform causality between source and target domain. The same applies to the mapping between source domain 'light-dark' and target domain 'consciousness'.⁸ The application of these principles may help to address the criticism leveled at metaphors' use in psychoanalytic lexicon, allowing them to offer a possible 'solution'.

Freud's concept of the unconscious works as a theory-constitutive metaphor (Boyd, 1993). It remained a fundamental concept to psychoanalytic thinking across different schools and therapeutic methods that were developed following Freud. Even after psychoanalysis had grown into a mature discipline, the unconscious concept remained in intensive, productive use.

I believe that the more successfully a metaphor meets the criteria of consistent systematic and coherent metaphorical mapping, the higher its chances of becoming a meaningful, useful, and stable concept that carries a sound metaphorical truth in psychoanalysis. Metaphors are no scaffolding that can be easily removed from the psychoanalytic language, as Freud believed (1900: 536). Rather, many metaphors form vital milestones in the constitution of psychoanalytic language. Furthermore, the psychoanalytic language in theory and practice rests on multiple truth conceptions embedded in the wide range of truth theories. It emerges from the present discussion that a seventh truth axis can be suggested as an addition to the paradigms outlined above (Yadlin-Gadot), that is, the metaphorical truth axis. As I have shown, metaphorical truth has unique qualities and is essential for deep analytical unconscious work. The metaphorical truth axis can compatibly co-exist with other truth axes. The rich psychoanalytic lexicon encompasses many metaphors, reflecting multiple truths perspectives, which are vital for the psychoanalytic endeavor.

Notes

- 1 I would like to thank Tamas Pataki for his illuminating comments and valuable suggestions.
- 2 Lakoff and Johnson (1980) write conceptual metaphors with capital letters to distinguish them from other kinds of metaphoric expressions. This term denotes the understanding of one idea, or conceptual domain, in terms of another.
- 3 Importantly, some pragmatic theories do not accept the concept of metaphorical truth, for example, the Relevant Theory of Deirdre Wilson and Dan Sperber.

- 4 Although Davidson (1978) denies the very motivation for other theories of metaphor and the problem of metaphorical truth of sentences, he nevertheless allows some kind of metaphorical truth (p. 39).
- 5 Anthropomorphization is a form of figurative language. It means to ascribe human form or attributes to an animal, plant, material object, etc.
- 6 According to Aristotle, analogies are metaphors of a kind; see *Poetics*, 1457b (in Aristotle, 1987).
- 7 Freud borrowed the iceberg metaphor from Gustav Fechner, professor of physics, philosophy, and medicine, who introduced an experimental approach to the study of the unconscious (Auchincloss, 2015: 43).
- 8 For further discussion on the analysis of the unconscious concepts with CMT principles, see Hopkins (2000).

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