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Metaphor as a Cultural Phenomenon in the Context of Philosophy of Culture

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***Abstract.** Purpose of research. Metaphor is not only a linguistic phenomenon, but also a cultural phenomenon. Based on an analysis of metaphor, this paper explores the relevant cultural and philosophical resources for the study of metaphor and explains the cultural and philosophical significance of metaphor. The paper argues that metaphor builds a bridge between human beings and the world of culture, is a way of being for human beings, embodies human subjectivity and human creativity, and that metaphorical consciousness and thinking lay*

down the basic structure of cultural forms and construct the spiritual home in which human beings live.

Research Questions. Metaphor in cultural philosophy; Metaphors in relation to the human being; Metaphor as a cultural phenomenon.

Research Methods. This paper is based on an inductive analysis.

The Materials. The literature on metaphor in philosophy, philosophy of language and rhetoric.

The Results. This paper argues that metaphor is not only a linguistic phenomenon, but also a cultural phenomenon. Metaphor builds a bridge between human beings and the world of culture, is a way of being for human beings, embodies human subjectivity and human creativity, and metaphorical consciousness and thinking lay down the basic structure of cultural forms, constructing the spiritual home in which human beings live.

Keywords: *Metaphor, Subjectivity, Human thinking, Cultural phenomena, Cultural philosophy, Language, Rhetoric, Symbols*

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Метафора как культурный феномен в аспекте философии культуры

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Аннотация. *Цель исследования: метафора — это не только лингвистический, но и культурный феномен. На основе анализа метафоры в статье рассматриваются соответствующие культурные и философские ресурсы для изучения метафоры и объясняется ее культурное и философское значение. В статье утверждается, что метафора устанавливает мост между человеком и миром культуры, является способом бытия человека, воплощает человеческую субъективность и человеческое творчество, а метафорическое сознание и мышление закладывают базовую структуру культурных форм и строят духовный дом, в котором живет человек.*

Вопросы исследования: метафора в философии культуры; метафоры по отношению к человеку; метафора как феномен культуры.

Методы исследования: данная работа основана на индуктивном анализе.

Материалы: литература по метафоре в философии, философии языка и риторике.

Результаты: утверждается, что метафора — это не только лингвистический, но и культурный феномен. Метафора прокладывает мост между человеком и миром культуры, является способом бытия человека, воплощает человеческую субъективность и человеческое творчество, а метафорическое сознание и мышление закладывают базовую структуру культурных форм, конструируя духовный дом, в котором живет человек.

Ключевые слова: метафора, субъективность, человеческое мышление, феномены культуры, философия культуры, язык, риторика, символы

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1. **Introduction.** Metaphor is not only a linguistic phenomenon, but also a cultural phenomenon, and human mental thinking and cultural activities are related to metaphor, "whatever else we are, we humans are metaphORIZING animals" [Johnson 1995, p. 157–162]. The study of metaphor by humans dates back to the ancient Greek period, when philosophers such as Aristotle conducted a systematic theoretical exploration of the nature and function of metaphor from a rhetorical perspective. "The greatest thing by far is to be the master of metaphor; it is the one thing that cannot be learnt from others; it is also a sign of genius, since a good metaphor implies an intuitive perception of similarity in the dissimilar" [Butcher, & Gassner 1951, P. 22]. Metaphor has become a hot topic in philosophical research because of the "cultural turn" in Western philosophy since the 20th century (including the "linguistic turn", "existential turn", "hermeneutic turn", "postmodern turn", "cultural critical turn", "semiotic turn", "ethical turn", "political turn", "theological turn" and other philosophical trends [Ouyang Qian 2015, P. 11–19]). The object of philosophical research has always been the question of the coherence between thought and reality, the study of 'truth'. According to Nietzsche, so-called 'truth' is nothing more than a golden rule that has been developed through the poetic and rhetorical reinforcement of metaphor, metonymy, or anthropomorphism. He de-

scribed himself as using a hammer to study philosophy in order to destroy the wall between poetry and truth [Hinman 1982, P. 179–199]. Heidegger's metaphorical view, meanwhile, clearly represents his own existentialist view of truth and philosophy [Casenave 1982, P. 140–147]. In Heidegger's existential theory, metaphor also plays an important role in the cultural dimension of human existence and is an important factor in the development of poetic meaning. Metaphor allows for the adaptation of logical space, of language, which does not exist in the objective world, but is a creation of the human imagination. The presence of metaphor allows for a greater degree of openness in the linguistic sphere, and the presence of metaphor allows for a change in beliefs, a change in concepts, rules and thus in beliefs, through a change in the use of words. Cassirer's view of metaphor is presented in a meticulous system of cultural philosophy. He argues that the relationship between man and nature established by metaphor, as the original language of man, has a primordial sameness. Richards states that "metaphor is an omnipresent human principle" [Richards 1936, P. 115–138]. He introduced the idea of metaphorical interaction and began to explore metaphor from the perspective of the philosophy of language. In *The New Science*, Vico points out that the regularity of different national cultures has a great deal to do with the metaphorical thinking that people have developed, which he considers to be the "poetic intelligence" of human beings, and he also notes that the interdisciplinary nature of metaphor studies now allows for greater recognition of the complex ways that metaphor arises from the interaction of brains, bodies, languages, and culture [Vico 1997, P. 98]. According to Habermas, philosophy must confront everyday practices and the world of life, thus pushing human beings to deepen their self-understanding in a cultural dimension. Therefore, the study of metaphor developed in the context of cultural philosophy has certain relevance.

2. Cultural and philosophical analysis of metaphor. *Firstly, metaphorical thinking is a scientific way of thinking, a new way of perceiving the world, building a bridge between humans and the cultural world.* Metaphor has moved from the study of language as a rhetorical device to the study of conceptual and cognitive functions as a

phenomenon of thought, with the aim of drawing on the richness of metaphor in our everyday lives to understand "how people systematically apply one conceptual field to another, and thus how they think and express their patterns of thought". [Lakoff & Johnson 1980, P. 2]. The separation and opposition between man and the world is a result of human progress and an inevitable consequence. But people use metaphors to constantly construct connections between things, thus conceptually constructing a "one" world in which man and nature are united. People take their true nature and society as their physical and spiritual home and become one with it, deriving their support and enjoyment from it. In *Language and Mythology*, Cassirer introduced the concept of 'metaphorical thinking'. He emphasises that the existence of this kind of thinking allows for the smooth representation of linguistic concepts; metaphorical language is the basic orientation of human activity, providing a new direction for human activity, and also influencing the formation and development of culture. Language, as one of the symbolic forms of culture, and myth are two branches that are close relatives or born from the same root, since they are both given to man as a very early and common experience, an experience of social nature rather than physical nature. Metaphors ultimately recognise the essential character of things by comparing and analysing the similarities between two or more things that are not connected in any way. This exemplifies the process of symbolisation of human culture as revealed by Cahill.

The a priori existence of metaphorical thought mediates the production of new meanings for symbols and is an important reason why human culture, of which the world and people are a part, can be symbolised. In this sense, the power of metaphorical thinking exists between the sign's energy and reference, and the presence of the power of metaphorical thinking constitutes this metaphorical world. "We need to draw on known concepts or conceptual systems and project this into the unknown in order to gain new knowledge and understanding" [Wang Yin 2003, P. 7]. Metaphor is therefore an important tool and instrument in the exploration and elaboration of new worlds. The understanding of metaphor depends not only on the comprehension and use of the linguistic perspective, but also on the understanding and percep-

tion of the cultural perspective. It is these vast systems of metaphorical-ly rich symbols that construct and influence human behavioural norms and social perceptions.

Secondly, metaphor is a way of being for people. In 1980, Lakoff and Johnson's book *Metaphors We live by* first introduced the proposition of conceptual metaphors and incorporated metaphors into the study of human behavioural activities, ways of thinking, conceptual categories and cultural symbols. In 1999, they In their book *Philosophy of Experience*, the duo conducted an in-depth inquiry against traditional empiricism and rationalism and presented a critical perspective. They put forward the basic principles that philosophy of experience should follow, namely the experiential nature of the mind, the unconscious nature of cognition, and the metaphorical nature of thought. "Concepts are formed through the body, the brain and the experience of the world. "People form new concepts and construct new semantics based on their ongoing experience. Language and reality, that is, in perception and concepts, are formed on the basis of people's minds. Metaphor is rooted in the bodily constitution, everyday experience and knowledge of human beings, in a series of ontological or cognitive correspondences between the signifier and the signified. The process of perceiving external things in the body is a mapping process from the source domain to the target domain, and a transfer of experience. In general, the world is the world formed by the mapping of the body the objects of human perception are based on bodily perception, which is why the ancient myth of the creation of the "human body as earth" is transmitted in a very similar way by all peoples. "Mythological concepts, however colourful, varied, and untidy they may appear at first glance, have their own internal regularity" [Cassirer 1949, P. 45]. This shows that there is an objective basis for the homogeneity of all things in heaven and earth. Myths, however fantastic and disordered they may seem, can be found in their essence, and they are not just random ideas, but are based on creative thinking. The metaphorical nature of thought is determined by the subjective character of the body, and it can also be said that it is determined by the experiential nature of thought. For example, the ancient Chinese philosopher Xunzi believed that when judging things, people would

"take the body near and take things far". This reflects the ancient Chinese philosophers' perception of metaphorical thinking. The heterogeneous and homogeneous nature of all things in heaven and earth is the objective basis of metaphor, while the experiential nature of thinking is the direct cause of metaphor.

Thirdly, metaphors embody human subjectivity and human creativity. Metaphors are the product of human creativity, and their meaning is embodied in the process of use. The human being is the subject of creating metaphors and is also the subject of using metaphors to highlight meaning. In the construction of a metaphor, the choice of language by the metaphorizer needs to be well integrated with the specific cultural context and the overall context, and this principle must be well followed, while the recipient of the metaphor also has to play an important role. The correct interpretation of metaphors is also linked to the ability of the recipient to understand the metaphor, which emerges gradually in the process of communication and is not inherent. The meaning of a metaphor lies in the recipient's interpretation of the language, and this meaning does not remain constant, but changes as the recipient's ability and understanding increases. The metaphorical ability of the human being lies in his or her ability to understand the metaphorical content and to express the concept in a more original way. Rorty's view of metaphor emphasises the awakening of human subjectivity, believing that through the dialogue of metaphor, the metaphorist and the metaphoree interact, discovering the possibility of new life forms, promoting understanding between the metaphorist and the metaphoree, achieving a fusion of visions, and building a pluralistic, tolerant and liberal culture. We now know enough to feel confident in asserting that metaphor is a major player in human cognition, communication, and culture. [Gibbs, & Ortony 2008, P. 3]. Aristotle saw metaphor as a faculty that geniuses possessed, the ability to detect similarities between otherwise unrelated things, and as a gift, since it could not be developed through acquired learning. Metaphor, the basis of human thinking, the gene of culture, is present in everyone, but at different levels, in different forms and at different levels. The root cause of these differences is the user. The meaning of metaphors does not lie in the con-

struction of the metaphor but in the interpretation of the metaphor by the recipient, and only then can the meaning be brought out. The successful interpretation of a metaphor is also a cognitive act in which the subject plays a more important role.

Fourthly, metaphorical consciousness and thinking lay down the basic structure of cultural forms and construct the spiritual home in which human beings live. The psychological basis of metaphor is abstract cultural meaning. The conceptual metaphor based on cultural imagery in the process of formation is a kind of psychological feeling similarity, which refers to the similarity of the speaker or listener's thinking response to the feeling of something based on their own culture, living environment, social habits or other psychological factors. Each individual may have different versions of conceptual metaphors given their respective culturally contextualized experiences and interactions [Cameron 2008, P. 197–211]. When cultures have common understanding and make the same interpretation, constrained by common bodily experiences, they are likely to share conceptual metaphors, and vice versa [Yu 2008, P. 247–261]. There is a certain variability in the way different cognitive subjects of the category identify things, and there are many different reasons for this variation. Subjects are different and have different lifestyles, different ways of thinking and different cultural literacy, and this creates a variety of differences. Influenced by these differences, it makes them adopt different perspectives when looking at the same metaphor and answer different meanings. This means that they choose different target domains for mapping, which naturally leads to different results. This is mainly due to the different personality factors of people. In particular, when people encounter things that they do not have experience of or experiences that they cannot express in words, they use metaphors to clarify them, and people operate differently, so the construction of metaphors will also vary. The construction and use of metaphors is made possible by the fact that the person who applies them has developed a greater knowledge of the objective world and is able to have a comprehensive understanding of the characteristics of the things that exist in it, so that he or she can make associations with things that are unknown to him or

her and find a way to represent them from his or her own experience base. Of course, this grasp of the characteristics of things is related to personal interest, the perception of things that interest people in their daily lives. It is the existence of difference that allows new metaphors to be created, to be noticed and to stimulate curiosity. The uniqueness of the individual is also reflected in the way people think, and this unique thinking determines the different perspectives they adopt when looking at something, forming different perceptions and constructing metaphors in different ways, using different similarities to describe them and give them different characteristics and meanings. Metaphors are therefore both cross-culturally convergent or universal, while at the same time exhibiting cross-cultural differences and relativities. Conceptual metaphor is a system of thinking developed in the cognitive process of reasoning about specific cultural imagery in the context of a conventionally shared culture and is a powerful cognitive tool for humans to conceptualise abstract categories. The trend to seek out language–culture interactions in metaphor studies offers the best hope for understanding the prominence of metaphor in human understanding, yet one that appreciates the subtleties of human meaning making practices shaped by a variety of linguistic and nonlinguistic sources[Gibbs 2008, P. 3].

To sum up, metaphors help people discover and grasp the similarities between all things, through which they construct and experience everything in the world, realising the unity of humans with nature and the world. It is rooted in the world of life, a practical experience of human existence, a bridge to transform the world, and a way for human beings to know themselves. It reflects the light of human poetic wisdom and reveals the philosophical wisdom of human beings in understanding and transforming the world.

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