

„LA IZVOARELE IMAGINAȚIEI CREATOARE”

**Studii și evocări în onoarea
profesorului Mircea Borcilă**

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CUPRINS

CUVÂNT-ÎNAINTE	17
Mircea Borcilă – Un promotor ilustru al științelor culturii.....	21
Mircea Borcilă – Activitate științifică și editorială	41
REVERBERAȚII	63
Iulian Boldea Sub zodia integralismului.....	65
Sanda Cordoș Schiță de portret în mișcare	72
Alin-Mihai Gherman Trei cuvinte rare	75
Ion Istrate Cum l-am cunoscut pe Mircea Borcilă	78
Johannes Kabatek, Cristina Bleorțu Correspondența dintre Mircea Borcilă și Eugeniu Coșeriu	83
TEORIA ȘI FILOSOFIA LIMBAJULUI.....	121
Mircea Flonta Abordarea naturalistă și abordarea istoric-culturală a cercetării limbajului în viziunea lui Eugeniu Coșeriu	123
Jesús Martínez del Castillo La filosofía hecha lingüística	145

CUPRINS

Dumitru-Cornel Vîlcu Sensul celor patru – o conversație imaginară despre poezie (și înțelegerea omului in-actual)	169
Floarea Vîrban Lingvistica [integrală] – știință eidetică?	206
HERMENEUTICĂ ȘI SEMIOTICĂ	227
Lucia Cifor Statutul și identitatea hermeneuticii literare	229
Aurel Codoban Trei întâlniri teoretice cu poeticianul Mircea Borcilă	239
Göran Sonesson On the Borders of Metaphorology: Creativity Beyond and Ahead of Metaphors	247
Jordan Zlatev, Tapani Möttönen Semiotica cognitivă și lingvistica cognitivă	277
LINGVISTICĂ, PRAGMATICĂ ȘI POETICĂ	315
Maria Aldea Termeni de gramatică. O abordare lexicografică	317
Iulia Bobăilă La metáfora científica y la anulación de la incongruencia. Implicaciones traductológicas	333
Oana Boc Poezia lui Gherasim Luca – armonia unei lumi dizarmonice. O abordare funcțional-tipologică	344
Eugenia Bojoga Dezbaterea limbă română sau „moldovenească” în spațiul online rusesc	364

CUPRINS

Pompiliu Crăciunescu O tainică relianță: poetician – poet	396
Daniela Filip La nature sémantique de l'ironie textuelle. Une approche de la perspective de l'intégralisme linguistique	407
Rodica Frențiu Tipologia textuală și discursul hagiografic	423
George Dan Istrate Metafora în terminologia artelor vizuale în română și italiană.....	441
Mariana Istrate Substitute stereotipice ale coronimelor în limbajul publicitar al turismului	454
Victoria Jumbei Configurații semantice cognitive în <i>Povestea lui Harap-Alb</i> de Ion Creangă	469
Mihai Lisei Cuvântul scris și fotografia în reportajul de ziar. Modalități de analiză	480
Rodica Marian Subiectul absolut al artei și alteritatea creatoare	498
Ion Mării Note lexicografice	513
Nicoleta Neșu Câteva observații legate de rolul profesorului-vorbitor de limbă maternă în traducerea pedagogică utilizată în predarea limbilor străine.....	533
Cristian Pașcalău Modul orfic în poezia lui Teofil Răchițeanu. O abordare în lumina poeziei antropologice.....	543

CUPRINS

Iulia Pop Prolog de Nichifor Crainic. O lectură în cheie „semantic-logică” (Revelații la cursul de poetică)	569
Liana Pop Parcours métaphoriques: de l’écrit à l’oral	574
Maria Ștefănescu, Mircea Minică O privire, din perspectiva lingvisticii coșeriene, asupra vocabularului religios reflectat în dicționarele generale de limbă	580
Emma Tămâianu-Morita Beyond the Poetic: Exploring the General Mechanisms of Textual Sense Construction	592
Flavia Teoc The Theory of Discourse Poiesis in <i>Perpetua’s Passion</i>	619
Maria-Alexandrina Tomoiagă Desemnarea metaforică a <i>vieții</i> în limba română	641
Cristina Varga Metaforele conceptuale ale socializării online în limba română	669
Dina Vîlcu The Religious Element and the Language of the 1989 Revolution in Romania. An Integralist Approach	689
INTERFERENȚE CULTURALE	709
Doru Radosav Cărțile sfinte și retorica sentimentului religios	711
Ion Taloș Despre întâlnirile dintre culturi și efectele lor	720

CUPRINS

Rudolf Windisch Mircea Borcilă macht Eugenio Coseriu in Cluj-Napoca bekannt	725
FOTOGRAFII.....	745
LISTA CONTRIBUTORILOR	759
TABULA GRATULATORIA.....	787

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD	17
Mircea Borcilă – An Illustrious Promoter of Cultural Sciences	21
Mircea Borcilă – Scientific and Editorial Activity	41
REVERBERATIONS	63
Iulian Boldea Under the Sign of Integralism	65
Sanda Cordoș A Portrait Sketch in Motion	72
Alin-Mihai Gherman Three Rare Words	75
Ion Istrate How I Met Mircea Borcilă	78
Johannes Kabatek, Cristina Bleorțu Correspondence Between Mircea Borcilă and Eugenio Coseriu	83
THEORY AND PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE	121
Mircea Flonta The Naturalistic Approach and the Historical-Cultural Approach to Language Research According to Eugenio Coseriu	123
Jesús Martínez del Castillo Philosophy Made Linguistics	145

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dumitru-Cornel Vâlcu <i>The Sense of Four – An Imaginary Conversation on Poetry (and the Understanding of the In-actual Man)</i>	169
Floarea Vîrban [Integral] Linguistics – an Eidetic Science?	206
HERMENEUTICS AND SEMIOTICS	227
Lucia Cifor The Status and Identity of Literary Hermeneutics	229
Aurel Codoban Three Theoretical Encounters With the Poetician Mircea Borcilă	239
Göran Sonesson On the Borders of Metaphorology: Creativity Beyond and Ahead of Metaphors	247
Jordan Zlatev, Tapani Möttönen Cognitive Linguistics and Cognitive Semiotics	277
LINGUISTICS, PRAGMATICS, AND POETICS	315
Maria Aldea Grammar Terms. A Lexicographical Approach	317
Iulia Bobăilă The Scientific Metaphor and the Cancellation of Incongruency. Translation Implications	333
Oana Boc The Poetry of Gherasim Luca – The Harmony of a Disharmonious World. A Functional-Typological Approach	344

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Eugenia Bojoga The Romanian vs. "Moldovan" Language Debate in the Russian Online Space	364
Pompiliu Crăciunescu A Mysterious Reliance: Poetician–Poet	396
Daniela Filip On the Semantic Nature of Textual Irony. An Approach in the Light of Linguistic Integralism	407
Rodica Frentiu Textual Typology and the Hagiographic Discourse	423
George Dan Istrate Metaphor in the Terminology of the Visual Arts in Romanian and Italian	441
Mariana Istrate Stereotyped Substitutes of Coronyms in the Language of Tourist Advertising	454
Victoria Jumbei Semantic-Cognitive Configurations in <i>Povestea lui Harap-Alb</i> by Ion Creangă	469
Mihai Lisei The Written Word and the Photo in the Newspaper Report. Possibilities of Analysis	480
Rodica Marian The Absolute Subject of Art and the Creative Alterity	498
Ion Mării Lexicographical Notes	513
Nicoleta Neșu Some Observations Regarding the Role of the Native Speaker Teacher in Pedagogical Translation Used in Foreign Language Teaching	533

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Cristian Pașcalău The Orfic Mode in the Poetry of Teofil Răchiteanu. An Approach in the Light of Anthropological Poetics	543
Iulia Pop “Prolog” by Nichifor Crainic. A Key Reading in Logical Semantics (Revelations in the Poetics Course)	569
Liana Pop Metaphorical Pathways: From Writing to Oral	574
Maria Ștefănescu, Mircea Minică Some Remarks on E. Coseriu's Structural Semantics and its Relevance for Lexicographic Definitions	580
Emma Tămâianu-Morita Beyond the Poetic: Exploring the General Mechanisms of Textual Sense Construction	592
Flavia Teoc <small>BCU Cluj / Central University Library Cluj</small> The Theory of Discourse Poiesis in <i>Perpetua's Passion</i>	619
Maria-Alexandrina Tomoiagă The Metaphorical Designation of <i>Life</i> in the Romanian Language	641
Cristina Varga Conceptual Metaphors of Online Socialization in Romanian	669
Dina Vilcu The Religious Element and the Language of the 1989 Revolution in Romania. An Integralist Approach	689

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CULTURAL INTERFERENCES	709
Doru Radosav	
The Holy Books and the Rhetoric of Religious Feeling	711
Ion Talos	
On the Encounters Between Cultures and Their Effects	720
Rudolf Windisch	
Mircea Borcilă Makes Known	
Eugenio Coseriu in Cluj-Napoca	725
PHOTOS	745
THE LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS	759
TABULA GRATULATORIA	787

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GÖRAN SONESSON¹

ON THE BORDERS OF METAPHOROLOGY: CREATIVITY BEYOND AND AHEAD OF METAPHORS

Inspired by both Eugenio Coseriu (1985a) and Lucian Blaga, Mircea Borcilă (1997, 2001, 2008) has argued, in several of his papers, not only that the notion of creativity in language, as understood by Wilhelm Humboldt, and pursued by Coseriu and Blaga, is a much deeper notion than ever fathomed by Noam Chomsky, and his one-time follower, George Lakoff, but also, that there is a kind of creativity which goes beyond language, realized, notably, in poetry and myth, which is of quite a different order. On the basis of a fundamental critique of the so-called “conceptual metaphor theory” due to George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, which in some respects is identical to that of Borcilă and his student, Elena Faur (2009), I have maintained, in several of my earlier papers, that the term metaphor is not an apt designation for the relation posited by these authors, since the very notion of metaphor is based on the idea of overstepping a rule or going against a regularity, whereas Lakoff and Johnson are, on the contrary, formulating the regularities of the Lifeworld (Sonesson 2003, 2005, 2015, 2019). In this sense, I believe that the conception of metaphors which I have developed in my work fits perfectly with Borcilă’s idea of creativity going beyond language. In this respect, I particularly cherish Borcilă’s critical observations on the so-called “invariance principle”. Nevertheless, I will suggest that it should be possible to go beyond anecdotic counterexamples by having recourse to the phenomenological notion of relevancy, first suggested by Alfred Schütz (1974), which could be explicated further by means of Umberto Eco’s (2014) idea of the encyclopaedia as forming a rhizome. Moreover, this combined tradition should allow us to discover that, not only is there a creativity that goes beyond language, but there is also a kind of creativity with antedates it. Thus, we will be able to join Borcilă and Blaga in positing this kind of creativity as an anthropological universal

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or, in Blaga's (1995) terms adopted by Borcilă (2008), as a poetics of culture.

1. ON THE SEMIOSIS OF METAPHORS

At least from Aristotle onwards, the metaphor has been thought of as a source of creativity, the means for discovering, and even creating, similarities never before observed – which is the sense of metaphor that Max Black (1962) and Paul Ricœur (1975), among others, have tried to restore (also see Wolff & Gentner 2011). In the complex classifications of French 17th and 18th century treatises of rhetoric, the metaphor, like the metonymy, is a trope (applying to words, or single signs, rather than to sentences, or sign complexes) and a substitution (involving the exchange of one element for another, rather than the suppression or addition of an element, or the permutation of the order of several elements). What differentiates the metonymy from the metaphor and the synecdoche is the nature of the relationship between the two elements entering into the substitutions. Whereas the tenor and its vehicle are joined by similarity in the metaphor, metonymy connects them by means of contiguity, and they are related as part to the whole in the synecdoche. Thus, in classical semiotic terms, the metaphor is an iconic sign, and the metonymy and the synecdoche are varieties of indexical signs.

All those treatises of rhetoric feature a residue category, which is familiarly known as “dead metaphors”. These books were meant as manuals for rhetors and poets, and thus take a very slight interest in what is already given in language itself. The fundamental claim of Lakoff's and Johnson's “cognitive theory of metaphor” (CMT; which includes some rather marginal uses for the metonymy), however, is that metaphors are not a luxury for poets, but part of the basic machinery of ordinary language, which means that those signs which others call dead metaphors are very much apt to come to life and proliferate. According to CMT, a metaphor consists in a cross-domain conceptual mapping allowing for “understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another” (Lakoff and Johnson 1980a: 5). No doubt Lakoff and his collaborators have found a gold mine for unearthing the kind of similarities that are taken for granted in all human *Lifeworlds*, but in so doing, the sense of the metaphor as a discovery procedure has been lost. Indeed, whatever the advantages of this definition, it amounts to a considerable impoverishment of the classical notion of metaphor, and as it was maintained through more than two thousand years of rhetorical tradition in Europe.

My claim, in earlier papers, which I can only summarize here, is that Lakoff and Johnson have no doubt made a great contribution, not to the theory of metaphors, in any sense approaching the classical meaning of that term, but to the study of what is taken for granted in the human Lifeworld, in the sense characterized by Edmund Husserl, and elaborated by Alfred Schütz and Aron Gurwitsch. In some of my earlier papers (Sonesson 2003, 2005, 2015, 2019), I have investigated whether the sign relation subsisting between the two primary signs making up a metaphor should be understood as being in a kind of tension and/ or forming an overlap of meanings which is interpreted as a union, and whether the latter should be taken to be symmetric or asymmetric. What I there called the overlap model could also be described, in the terms of Lucian Blaga (1995: 302) as a minimum of similarity which is, for the purpose of the figure, transformed into a maximum of similarity. I will not return to these issues in the present paper, except for pointing out, that in any of these conditions, the metaphor is an iconic sign. For the purpose of the present paper, I will employ a minimalistic definition of metaphor as being a sign which substitutes for another sign, on the basis of a (usually remote) similarity between the contents of the two signs.²

Nevertheless, we should retain the fact that, at least since Aristotle, the metaphor has been considered to be an expression of creativity, that is, as a means for allowing us to discover new meanings, and this is clearly not the case with the current approach to metaphorology, CMT, due to Lakoff, Johnson and Turner, nor with any of those who have adapted this paradigm. According to the latter, metaphors are constrained by an invariance principle (see further section 4 below). Not all metaphors according to our minimalistic definition fulfil the Aristotelian requirements. It may be useful to call metaphors fulfilling the Aristotelian requirement *metaphors in the strong sense*, as opposed to *metaphors in the weak sense*. As we will see, CMT does not even yield metaphors in the weak sense.

² The notion of sign should here be understood in the sense in which I have defined it elsewhere (e.g., Sonesson 1989, 2010), to summarize, as consisting of at least two parts, which are subjectively differentiated from each other, while entertaining a double asymmetry, one part being more in focus, and the other part being more directly experienced.

2. THE NOTIONS OF IMAGE SCHEMA AND METAPHOR IN CMT

Taking over a term originally coined by Joseph Grady (1997), Lakoff and Johnson (1999: 59) suggest that “primary metaphors”, such as “ACTIONS ARE MOTIONS”, “are a consequence of the nature of our brains, our bodies, and the world we inhabit”. Clearly, there is no basis here for making any human being, however unfledged, discover anything new, because notions such as these are part of our embodiment, of phenomenological givens, and thus prior to any other kind of meaning-making. On the other hand, it is conceivable that small children, who do not yet know how deeply sedimented is the notion of “LIFE IS A JOURNEY” in (their) culture, may experience statements based on this notion as affording some new information. To adults, the journey is a part of life, so it remains unclear in what sense they form different domains, let alone semantic fields whose identification creates a tension, as classical metaphor theory would require, or even a cross-domain mapping.

“Primary metaphors”, in turn, are based on what Lakoff and Johnson terms “image schemas”, which, according to their “neural theory of metaphor / are/ based on the idea of ‘primary experiences’ – which are neurally grounded and stored in the pre-linguistic mental spaces of one’s cognitive unconscious” (Lakoff & Johnson 1999). When reading Lakoff’s (1987) paper with the title “the neural theory of metaphor”, one may easily get the impression that these patterns are innate; in fact, even when they claim that happy is up and sad is down because “dropping posture typically goes along with sadness and depression, erect posture with a positive emotional state” (Lakoff and Johnson 1980b: 462), it is not clear what is the cause and what is the effect. The mention of “primary experiences”, however, suggests that these patterns are the result of behavioural sequences accomplished by the child at an early stage of life. Johnson (1997: 74; 2005) is more explicit about such an influence of the interaction between the human body and the world in which it is situated. Indeed, he goes on to observe that, in learning to stand up, “the baby becomes a little *homo erectus*”, that is, I take it, an incarnation of the human being as being (or becoming) different from other animals, something which is epitomized by the erect posture.³ This sounds very similar to my independent suggestion that, apart from the generalization of actions to the construction of cognitive schemes, as Jean Piaget

³ This interpretation has since then been seriously explored by Jean Mandler and Cristóbal Pagán Cánovas (2014). See further section 3.

describes them, there can also be a generalization of figurativity, which, in Piaget’s work is a residue concept, to the creation of corporal schemes (Sonesson 1989; 2007: 96ff.; and section 3 below). This could be understood as a specification of embodiment as being a part of Lifeworld experience, as originally conceived by Edmund Husserl and then explicated by Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Aron Gurwitsch, and as more recently taken up, on the basis of neurological research, by Thomas Fuchs (2018). These are basic issues of our Lifeworld experience, but they are insufficient to account for the classical notion of metaphor.

Table 1. The hierarchies of meanings, from principles and grounds to signs, as reviewed in Sonesson (2010)

	Firstness	Secondness	Thirdness
Principle (Firstness)	Iconicity	—	—
Ground (Secondness)	Iconic ground	Indexicality = indexical ground	Symbolicity = symbolic ground
Sign (Thirdness)	Iconic sign (icon)	Indexical sign (index)	Symbolic sign (symbol)

The metaphor is an iconic sign, that is, a sign grounded on similarity. At least this is so according to the classical definition. But it is not a straightforward iconic sign, such as the picture. Classical writers on metaphor also maintain that metaphors, and, in fact, rhetorical figures generally, consist in employing one word where another word is expected, which can be generalized to say that figures serve to put signs in the proper place of other signs. If we then interpret signs in the Saussurean way, to be made up of an expression and a content, or equivalently, in this case, following Peirce, as containing a representamen, an object, and an interpretant, figures turn out to be very complex signs, consisting of at least two primary signs which themselves entertain a sign relation between them. I would not venture to take a stand on the thorny question whether this is what Peirce means when he says that metaphors “represent the representative character of a representamen by representing a parallelism in something else, are metaphors.” (CP 2.277).

Not only the term “metaphor”, but also that of “image”, however, carry with them the presupposition that they are founded on similarity

relations. It is, of course, possible that Lakoff and Johnson are out to show that there are no similarity relations, just as Nelson Goodman (1968) claimed, but substituting brain patterns or primordial behaviour sequences instead of convention for what, on the face of it, is similarity. If “image schemas” are innate, or even if they consist in memory traces of “primary experiences”, they may not require any similarity.⁴ In the latter case, they are based on “habit”, in Peirce’s sense, that is, on symbolicity. Indeed, Lakoff (1987:5ff) claims that categories are not necessarily based on “shared properties”. Nevertheless, it remains unclear why we should accept purely hypothetical brain patterns as an explananda of something which, to any phenomenological analysis, appears to be based on similarity, that is, on iconicity (See Fuchs 2018). On the other hand, even if image schemas and so-called primary metaphors are indeed similarity-based, it does not follow that they constitute iconic signs. Indeed, they should most probably be described as iconic grounds (See **Table 1**). Not being signs, they cannot be metaphors. Nevertheless, this is no doubt the primary sense in which Blaga (1995: 291ff) present metaphorical thinking as the anthropological basis of human existence (See Borcilă 2008: 257f.)

Forcé, de par sa propre constitution spirituelle, à exprimer le monde concret par des biais des abstractions – ce qui implique un processus infini – l’homme crée à son usage un organe capable de rendre le concret indirectement, mais instantanément présent : c’est la métaphore.

Or, as Borcilă (2008: 257f.) concludes:

Blaga propone, di fatto, un vero trasferimento della problematica della metafora linguistica dal piano delle condizioni storiche, psicologiche e sociologiche, al piano antropologico, dei fondamenti “costitutivi” dell’esperienza e della significazione umane.

Nonetheless, the anthropological basis of metaphors, which is also the basis of many other kinds of semiosis, is much deeper: it is found in the human Lifeworld.

⁴ As pointed out to me by an anonymous reviewer of an earlier paper of mine.

3. FROM THE INVARIANT *LIFEWORLD* TO THE DIFFERENT SOCIO-CULTURAL LIFEWORLDS

Before going deeper into the specificity of metaphoric creativity, we need to say something about that creativity which makes the human Lifeworld different from the niche (or *Umwelt*, in the terms of von Uexküll and present-day Biosemiotics) of any other animal. Although this is, in my view, exactly what the anthropological basis of human existence amounts to, I am not sure whether Blaga and Borcilă would go along with this interpretation, since this is a creativity which may well have emerged, and which continue to exist, before and independently of language, in fact, before and independently of any kind of indirect semiosis, as manifested, notably, by gesture and depiction. That is, it emerges with the newborn child exploring the world in a Piagetian/Vygotskian fashion, in perception and reaction to the resulting percepts.

These are exactly the features which characterizes the notion of *Umwelt*, according to Jakob von Uexküll (1973). As opposed to an objectively described ambient world, the *Umwelt* is characterized for a given subject, in terms of the features which it perceives (*Merkwelt*) and the features which it impresses on it (*Wirkwelt*), which together form a functional circle (*Funktionskreis*). According to a by now classical example, the tick hangs motionless on a bush branch until it perceives the smell of butyric acid emitted by the skin glands of a mammal (*Merkzeichen*), which sends a message to its legs to let go (*Wirkzeichen*), so that it drops onto the mammal's body. This starts a new cycle, because the tactile cue of hitting the mammal's hair incites the tick to move around in order to find its host's skin. Finally, a third circle is initiated when the heat of the mammal's skin triggers the boring response allowing the tick to drink the blood of its host. Together, the different circles consisting of perceptual and operational cue bearers make up the interdependent wholes of the subject, corresponding to the organism, and the *Umwelt*, which is the world as it is defined for the subject in question.

The newborn child is, of course, already a much more complex animal, with an immensely more multiform *Umwelt* than that of the tick. But the original human creativity starts from this point. As described by Piaget and Vygotsky, their followers, and their critics, the child, from this humble beginning, starts creating a world, in which there are alternatives and thus, a degree of freedom. This is, of course, not

creativity in the specific sense of von Humboldt, nor in the senses attributed to this term by Croce, Chomsky, or Vygotsky (See De Mauro 1986: 54 ff.). It is creativity in the more general sense of “libre arbitre” (free will). This is also true of many other animals, and one could actually create a novel version of “the great chain of being” by adding further levels of freedom, and thus, creativity, to the evolutionary record. Nevertheless, the human Lifeworld is also singled out by being social from the start, that is, it is always already shared by other human beings. As Michael Tomasello (2009) aptly put it, human beings are “born and bred into collaboration”. This is how the *Umwelt* is turned into a *Lebenswelt*.

The lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*) is a term first used by Edmund Husserl to describe the invariants of the ambient world of all human beings. In other terms, this is what is taken for granted by all human beings. Husserl described it as the world of our experienced, as opposed to that of physics, in which the earth doesn't move, and the sun goes up every morning. James Gibson (1982) added more specific “laws of ecological physics”, according to which, for instance, substantial objects tend to persist, that major surfaces are nearly permanent with respect to layout, but that animate objects change as they grow or move; that some objects, like the bud and the pupa transform, but that no object is converted into an object that we would call entirely different, as a frog into a prince; etc. It is this level that I think it would appropriate to place the “image schemas” and perhaps some of the “primary metaphors” as understood by Lakoff and Johnson.⁵ Thus, they are not metaphors, already because they are not signs.

As Aron Gurwitsch (1974) has pointed out, apart from the invariants of the common human Lifeworld, there are also the invariants of particular socio-cultural lifeworlds. They are made up of things taken for granted, not in any conceivable world inhabited by human beings, but in different varieties of such a common Lifeworld. There is also a creativity at this level, which starts out from the child being born into this world: a creativity which is certainly “born” into human beings, but which is “bred” in the child growing up in this particular socio-cultural lifeworld.

⁵ According to Wikipedia (2021), “Image schemas have also been proposed to be descriptors of Gibsonian affordances”, which is a proposal which partly overlaps with mine. This proposal is not attributed to any particular source.

Table 2. The elementary bodily experiences, as suggested by Sonesson (1989, 2013)

position	permeability/ direction	ego inside	alter inside
adjacent to <i>adessive</i>	adjacent to > somewhere else <i>ablative</i>		
	somewhere else > adjacent to <i>allative</i>		
inside <i>inessive</i>	inside > outwards <i>elative</i>	ego opposed <i>inhibition</i>	
		ego in favour <i>expulsion</i>	
	outside > inwards <i>illative</i>	ego opposed <i>alter resistance</i>	alter opposed <i>ego resistance</i>
		ego in favour <i>incorporation</i>	alter in favour <i>intrusion</i>

Elsewhere, I have suggested that the *Umwelt* can be seen as an organized network of filters, which the maturing child has to break out of, thus going on to another, broader one, until reaching the human *Lifeworld*, where filters are transformed into a network of relevancies (Sonesson 2007a). Between each *Umwelt* and the next, which encompasses it, there is, to borrow a famous expression from Lev Vygotsky (1978), a “zone of proximal development”. In this sense, ontogenesis itself forces us to go through a series of “finite provinces of meaning”, in the sense of Alfred Schütz. A temporal dimension is thus added. This idea goes back to a suggestion I already made in my book *Pictorial concepts* (Sonesson 1989: 102ff.), where I criticized the Freudian conception, according to which bodily zones are defined by being sexually invested, suggesting that more elementary experiences of one’s own body exist well before any of them received any sexual investment. Extending this framework with the aid of the localist cases of grammar, I proposed a model according to which such elementary experiences consisted in feelings of alien objects entering or exiting with or without resistance, the body entering into alien objects, or alien objects staying on the border of the body (See **Table 2** and Sonesson 1989, 2007, 2013).

Although I did not formulate this model explicitly in terms of containers, it would seem to correspond fairly well to the claim made by Mandler and Pagán Cánovas (2014), according to which a few months old child experiences its own body as a container. In their interesting paper, where they refer to a few studies of small children, but which, as they announce from the start, is a theoretical paper, Mandler and Pagán Cánovas suggest that what is known in CMT as should be distinguished into three categories: *spatial primitives*, such as PATH, CONTAINER, THING, CONTACT, etc.; *image schemas*, which are representations of simple spatial events using the primitives, such as PATH TO THING, THING INTO CONTAINER, etc.; and, finally, *schematic integrations*, which add, notably, FORCE, as well as different emotions, to the spatial movements. That “force dynamics”, to use the term of the linguist Leonard Talmy, is added at a later stage is motivated by this being a relatively late experience in children. It is, however, difficult to understand why the spatial primitives are placed before the image schemas in their narrower sense of the term, since they also maintain that “the static, abstract definition of a container as a bounded region in space, commonly accepted in cognitive linguistics, does not correspond to the image schemas formed by infants, who primarily attend to motion into and out of containers, rather than worrying about regions and boundaries.” (Mandler and Pagán Cánovas 2014): 516). This would rather suggest that it is the movements out of or into the container, that is, the body, which are primary in experience.

4. THE FIRST LIMIT OF THE “INVARIANCE PRINCIPLE”

The crux of the matter, as Mircea Borcilă (1997, 2001) has pointed out, is the validity of the “invariance principle”, which states, according to Mark Turner (1992: 728) that, “when we map one image metaphorically to another, we are constrained not to violate the schematic structure of the target image”. If this principle applies, we will be ever limited to a few archetypical schemes, which, if not innate, are based on primary experiences which any human child is likely to go through, and there would be no real creativity in metaphors, and, by implication, in any other rhetorical figures.

Lakoff and Turner (1989: 67ff.) submit that all “poetic metaphors” (which, *a priori*, seems to correspond to that which above was called the classical notion of metaphor) can be derived from image schemas, via primary metaphors, by means of four simple operations, which they characterize by the terms extending, elaborating, composing, and questioning (Cf. Faur 2012). Their example of *extending* is Hamlet’s

soliloquy, where he muses that death, as being a kind of sleep, may also contain dreams. Why, one may wonder, is this described as an extension “of the ordinary conventional metaphor of death as sleep”? If it is only a question of mapping one domain to another, it is not clear why this feature should not be included from the start. In the case of the second operation of *elaboration*, described as “filling in slots in unusual ways”, Lakoff and Turner mention Horace’s reference to death as the “eternal exile of the raft.” Considered as an elaboration of “DEATH IS DEPARTURE”, both exile and the raft add further details. There is thus some kind of creativity here, however limited. *Questioning*, according to Lakoff and Turner, consists in using a conventional metaphor, while at the same time disputing some of the ordinary implications from the resulting mapping between the domains. The example given is a poem by Catullus where he contrasts the setting and the raising of the sun to death which does not allow for any revival. Finally, there is *composing*, which consists in “the simultaneous use of two or more such metaphors in the same passage, or even in the same sentence.” The example given is one of Shakespeare’s sonnets, which, we are told, realize, at the same time, the metaphors “LIGHT IS A SUBSTANCE”, “EVENTS ARE ACTIONS”, “LIFE IS A PRECIOUS POSSESSION”, “A LIFETIME IS A DAY”, and “LIFE IS LIGHT”.

In my earlier papers, I have been concerned to show that, like well-known examples of “dead metaphors”, which might be better termed “dormant metaphors” (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1971: 405)⁶, primary metaphors, in the sense of Lakoff and his collaborators, may be brought to life (Cf. Coseriu 1985a: 81ff.). One such example is the foot of a mountain. We are concerned with something that occupies the same position on a mountain as the feet do in relation to the human body, that is, the part that is closest to the ground. Now suppose there is a small band of forest close to the top of the mountain, or perhaps close the very foot of the mountain. In the first case, I could talk about “the beard of the mountain”. In the second case, it would be possible to use the phrase “the stockings of the mountain”. None of these expressions may be particularly enlightening, but they certainly serve to bring the “dead metaphor” to life. That is, they transform an iconic ground into a real sign.⁷

⁶ Or “sleeping metaphors”, as Cornelia Müller (2008) has more recently termed them, embracing the same insight as Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca.

⁷ But, as should be clear from the description, the iconicity which remains is largely diagrammatic, that is, it concerns relative positions within the surface of an object. As pictorial metaphors, however, the examples mentioned would also share some abstract visual property. See further Sonesson (2019).

It is a well-known fact that expressions like “the foot of the mountain”, unlike normal rhetorical figures, do not correspond to any literal expression, at least not in English and not in any other Germanic or Romance language. In this sense, they are not even metaphors in the weak sense, for they are not signs substituting for other signs. Admittedly, it is possible to substitute other definite descriptions for terms such as “the foot of the mountains”, but these are not obviously more literal. I will argue below that the same thing is true of the conceptual metaphors of CMT.

Indeed, so-called conceptual metaphors such as “LIFE IS A JOURNEY”, favoured by CMT, can be brought to life, in a similar fashion. For instance, you might say: “Starting school is like unpacking the travel bag of life”. Once again, I am not claiming that this is a great metaphor, but it is certainly a metaphor in the classical sense, because it offers a new perspective on what it means to go to school. In other words, it introduces a slight element of tension, which serves to highlight properties of the domain of going to school, which are not immediately obvious in that domain, but which are more familiar in the domain of travelling. Although I formulated these examples for a different purpose, it bears asking whether they exemplify what is termed, in the Lakoff and Turner taxonomy, extension or elaboration. This clearly has to do with the limits between domains (to which we will turn in section 7 below).

Now, just as I said above about “the foot of the mountain”, in “LIFE IS A JOURNEY”, and in all expressions which build on it, there is really no metaphor, even in the wide sense characterized above, because “journey” does not substitute for any other existing sign in the description of “life”. It is, of course, possible to use other paraphrases to describe the properties or the journey here ascribed to life, but it is not clear that any of these paraphrases will be exhaustive, and there is no reason to claim that they are more literal. In fact, just as in the case of “the foot of the mountain”, expressions presupposing “LIFE IS A JOURNEY” only become metaphors, that is, they project properties of the journey onto life which are not so attributed as a matter of course, when they are “brought to life”, that is, in the terms of Lakoff and Turner (1989: 67ff.), they include extensions and/ or elaborations.

5. THE SECOND LIMIT OF THE “INVARIANCE PRINCIPLE”

As Borcilă (1997: 101ff.) points out, in the case of the example of elaboration,

“as the authors themselves observe, the ‘eternal exile’ can mean that we are forever out on the raft and, in that case, the raft does not even have a destination. But if this is the case, the raft is not a vehicle in a journey anymore! And if this is the case, can we still consider, this poetic metaphor as a mere (no matter how ‘interesting’) elaboration (or a ‘special use’) of the conventional metaphor DEATH AS DEPARTURE?”

With reference to a second example given by Lakoff and Turner, which I did not mention above, the poem by Emily Dickinson, which contains the line in which death is presented as “the porter of my father’s lodge”, Borcilă goes on to say:

“Can we say that this metaphor elaborates the DEATH AS DEPARTURE schema, since it ‘includes the destination, and fills in the Destination as home (‘my father’s lodge’)’ (68)? But if ‘the destination is home’, how can this be compatible with the generic parameter of conceiving of death as ‘departure away from here’? ‘The specific details of this final location’ (67) leaves no doubt that death is conceived here not as a departure to a strange place, but as returning home from the strange ‘exile’ of life (to use the previously mentioned image)”.

It is easy to add further complications to this metaphor. Why doesn’t Dickinson simply refer to the home of my father (and mother). Why the lodge? Why the porter? This suggests a much more indirect approach to “the destination as home”. Nevertheless, both the remarks by Borcilă quoted above, and my additional observations, can no doubt be accounted for in terms of extension or elaboration, as can Dickinson’s presentation of “Death as a ‘pleasant’ gentleman” (See Faur 2012: 112).⁸ The real problem, I will suggest, is that none of this makes sense, without there being any criteria for delimiting the domains involved.

Let us start, nonetheless, by considering some examples which present more of a challenge to the Lakoff and Turner taxonomy. In earlier papers, I have referred to the famous passage from Shakespeare’s sonnets, “Shall I compare thee to a Summer’s Day”, where you have to

⁸ As Faur (2012: 111) observes, “the four ‘transformations’ of cognitive poetics are still of real help in understanding the process of the textual sense’s articulation (and, implicitly, of ‘metaphorical Worlds’) in literary texts”.

search the metaphorical space offered for the possible coincidences between the properties of tenor and vehicle. However suggestive, it is not clear what properties the subject addressed in this sonnet has in common with “a summer’s day”. But, since we have experienced that fabled “summer’s day”, which is rarely epitomized in the real world, and if we have had the experience (or, at least, have lived it through vicariously in the movies) of being totally in love, we understand more or less in what part of the metaphorical space we have to locate the meaning intended, but it is still not obvious which property a summer’s day may share with the loved one.

Borcilă (1997: 99f.) offers another case worthy of consideration, already mentioned by Blaga (1995: 294), when the Romanian ballad “Miorița” present death as a wedding. And Borcilă goes on to observe that

“the ‘event shape’ of a wedding or a marriage ceremony is certainly *not* compatible with (or exactly the opposite to) ‘one in which an entity, over time, *reaches a final state, after which it no longer exists*’. The causal structure of the wedding schema cannot, again, accommodate and preserve the death schema in which ‘the passage of time will eventually result in that final state being reached’. Despite any possible attempt to redefine in different ways the schematic structures of these two terms, it is absolutely clear that, according to this theory, a metaphor like ‘death is a wedding’ could not *exist* – or could *not make sense*, since the ‘*source*’ (*wedding*) does not have ‘the right generic structure’ to be mapped onto the target (death)”.

This is, if I understand correctly, what Blaga (1995: 290ff., 329ff. Cf. Borcilă 2008: 255) calls a *revelatory metaphor*, which he contrasts to *plastifying metaphors*, exemplified by such an expression as “the chicory of her eyes”. The former, according to Blaga (1995: 292), serve to reveal some hidden property of the phenomenon addressed, while the latter, common in modernist poetry, are comparable to riddles. One senses that, to Blaga, the true metaphors are the revelatory ones. And yet, to the extent that the plastifying metaphors are structured as riddles, they clearly retain some of that tension between vehicle and target which is absent from “primary metaphors”.

6. SEDIMENTATION AND THE SYSTEMS OF RELEVANCIES

To illustrate what he means by systems of relevancies, the phenomenologist Alfred Schütz (1970:4ff.) tells a story about Carneades, the ancient Greek philosopher directing the Platonic Academy at the time when it had converted to Scepticism. In this story, Carneades enters a room which is badly lighted, not being sure whether what he sees in the corner is a pile of rope or a coiled snake. Initially, he has a roughly equally weighted motivation for believing the object to be the one or the other (see Schütz 1970:16ff.). Carneades' point at the time, obviously, was that no truth is readily available, but only verisimilitude. According to the anecdote, Carneades then realizes that the object is not moving, which offers him some elementary evidence for taking it to be merely a coil of rope. Continuing the inspection of the object, however, Carneades is reminded that it is currently winter, and that snakes are torpid at this time of year. The original evidence is counter-evidenced, possibly convincing Carneades that extreme caution is called for. Finally, he picks up a stick, strikes the object in question, and observes that it still does not move, thereby corroborating the interpretation of it as a coil of rope. Instead of contravening evidence to the first verisimilitude, he now has confirmation of it. He has, therefore, not contented himself with gaining evidence at one level, but has sought out additional indications and counter-indications which could pertain to the situation. Thus, Schütz turns a sceptic's argument to a narrative of our progressive search for truth – which we can approach though not definitively attaining it, as both Husserl and Peirce have observed (See further Sonesson 2018).

Reflecting on this experience, we may expect Carneades to employ the word “snake” as a metaphor for a rope, or vice versa, and this would not be a very exciting metaphor, perhaps not even a plastifying one. In any case, after this experience, if not before, Carneades had the knowledge sufficient for understanding snakes in terms of rope and vice versa. But this was not the motivation for Schütz' interest in the anecdote. Schütz (1970) listed a series of principles, or more exactly “systems of relevancies”, all broadly speaking social in nature, and having the function of guiding our interest in given situations as they occur in the *Lifeworld* (see Sonesson 2012).⁹ While Schütz (1970: 25ff, 30ff.) did not

⁹ The notion of pertinentization, as abundantly discussed by de Mauro (1986), with which I was unfamiliar when writing my papers of the systems of relevancies, seems to fit better with my way of understanding Schütz, because it

forget about the contingencies of the present situation, the main thrust of his argument consists in imputing relevancies to the typicalities of the Lifeworld, in Husserl's sense of the term. In his main work in German, before he had to emigrate, Schütz (1974) abundantly referred to the notion of schemes of interpretation, which he presented as the result of earlier sedimented acts of experience, which formed the framework on the basis of which present acts acquired their meaning. In his later work in the US, Schütz never explained in what way what is now called systems of relevancies relates to his earlier notion of scheme.¹⁰ Might not the system of relevancies be conceived as made up of schemes, or being equivalent to schemes, in which case we have a least something more of an account of the passive synthesis behind it, in other words, of the processes of sedimentation? We will no doubt never know what Schütz thought about this, but this idea could still be taken as a cue for developing his idea of relevance systems.

The notion of sedimentation invoked by Schütz stems from the late work of Edmund Husserl. According to Husserl (1954), any present act of experiencing an object or state of affairs is embedded in patterns of understanding which modify these experiences, resulting from the process of sedimentation. This is the process in which previous experiences come to shape and condition more recent ones.¹¹ Husserl's

is more dynamical than the approach of Luis Prieto (1975b, 1975a), to which I have often referred. The most well-known proponent of a theory of relevance is no doubt nowadays Dan Sperber (1996; 2005; & Wilson (1995 [1986])). While there are certainly things to be learnt from this approach, it is, as I have tried to show elsewhere (see Sonesson 2018), basically misguided. In the present context, it is sufficient to point out that, according to Sperber & Wilson (1995 [1986]), there is only one principle of relevance, which is – relevance. Thus, meaning comes out as something completely contingent, resulting from the task of making the best of the situation at hand.

¹⁰ In his *Reflections*, admittedly, Schütz (1970: 2, 36, 39, 43, 170) mentions “schemes” and “schemes of interpretation” several times, and, at least on two occasions, he talks about “schemes of interpretational relevancies” (106f), which sounds as a hybrid between schemes and relevance systems. Curiously, the term scheme seems to be absent from Schütz' most important posthumous work, which abounds on the theme of relevancies, in terms of both structures and systems (Schütz and Luckmann 1979, 1984).

¹¹ As used by Husserl, sedimentation is, of course, a metaphor derived from archaeology, or rather a scientific model. It is certainly meant to reveal properties not formerly discovered about the workings of memory, but if it at all realizes the overlap model, it can only apply asymmetrically, and it does

idea is that such an accumulated product of experience can be reanimated in the phenomenological process, thus illuminating its validity, in the sense of its foundation. A phenomenology geared to sedimentations should “inquire after how historical and intersubjective structures themselves become meaningful at all, how these structures are and can be generated” (Steinbock 2003: 300). In posthumous texts, Husserl distinguished between the genetic and generative dimensions of experience (Husserl 1973a, 1973b, 1973c; Welton 2000; Steinbock 1995). To these different kinds of experience should correspond different kinds of sedimentation. Every object in our experience has a genetic dimension: it results from the layering, or sedimentation, of the different acts that connect it with its origin in our personal experience, which gives it its validity. The genetic method enables us to plunge into layers of human existence that are pre-reflective, passive, and anonymous, though nonetheless active. The term genetic is meant to evoke the idea of the life of an individual from the cradle to the grave.

There is also the further dimension of generativity, which pertains to all objects, and which results from the layering, or sedimentation, of the different acts in which they have become known, which may be acts of perception, memory, anticipation, imagination, and so on. Generative phenomenology studies how meaning, as found in our experience, is generated in historical processes of collective experience over time. The term generativity is meant to evoke the idea of generations following each other: “In distinction to genetic analysis, which is restricted to the becoming of individual subjectivity, a synchronic field of contemporary individuals, and intersubjectivity founded in an egology, generative phenomenology treats phenomena that are geo-historical, cultural, intersubjective, and normative” (Steinbock 2003: 292).

In his seminal paper on “The Origin of Geometry”, Husserl (1954: 378 ff.) elucidates the way in which geometry derives from the praxis of land surveying. Although, in this paper, Husserl did not make this distinction, such an origin would only be genetic for people living at the time, but it must be considered the result of generative sedimentation for all subsequent generations. Taking all this into account, the return to the origin cannot amount to a reduction of geometry to land surveying, in which case non-Euclidean geometry would not only be impossible, but so would all of the “discoveries” of mathematics after the formalization of

certainly not qualify as “revelatory” in the sense of Błaga. There is clearly a need to look closer into the different nature of diverse metaphors and/or models.

the practice of land surveying. As Husserl goes on to mention, though he fails to bring it into focus, geometry, as well as any other system of ideal structures, clearly has an existence beyond all the practice which is sedimented into them, because they are already present outside of time and space – or rather, in all times and spaces (after the foundational moment, or more precisely, the sequence of foundational moments; Husserl 1954: 371; see Sonesson 2015).

7. RELEVANCE, RHIZOME, AND SEMANTIC FIELD

In an earlier paper, I have suggested that Schutz's notion of relevancies, in turn, could be identified, approximately, with Umberto Eco's idea of the *Encyclopaedia* as opposed to the *Dictionary* (Sonesson 2021). In his late papers, Eco (2014, 2017) described the *Encyclopaedia* as a rhizome, which, from the point of view of graph theory, is an unordered, or perhaps better, a diversely organized, network. The notion of rhizome, no doubt inspired by the use to which this turn was put by Gilles Deleuze, harks back to the idea of the Q-model, named after a computer theorist, which figures in Eco's (1971) earlier semiotic treatises, in opposition to the dictionary. Thanks to the "world-wide web" (the by now largely forgotten origin of "www" in Internet addresses), we are familiar nowadays this notion of links leading on to further links, without there being any definite limit.

Eco's critique of the dictionary must be seen in the context of the theories of semantics current at the time.¹² We can distinguish two such approaches, which, in some cases, overlapped although they were very different purport: on the one hand, we had the kind of feature analysis, which might have been pioneered by Louis Hjelmslev, though its most famous incarnation, at mid-century, was the semantic component of generative grammar proposed by Jerrold Katz and Jerry Fodor; on the other hand, there was the notion of lexical, or semantic, fields, imagined by Leo Weisgerber and Jost Trier on the basis of an idea by Wilhelm von Humboldt and with some influence from de Saussure (see Diodato 2018;

¹² As is suggested already by the title of Eco (1971), a translation for which Eco furnished a manuscript intermediary between *La struttura assente* and *A theory of semiotics*, Eco thought that structures, including semantic fields, were only analytical scaffolds employed the linguist/semiotician without any psychological reality. In this respect, he was following the Carnap-Hjelmslev-Greimas consensus current at the time. Whether or not this still was an issue in Eco's late writings, this is not what will be discussed here.

and, more in general, Coseriu 1981; Geckeler 1971; Geeraerts 2010). Even the semantic field may at first appear to be a simple repertory of words (or notions), unlike Schütz's relevancies and Eco's Q-model/rhizome. As was suggested already by the pioneers of the semantic field, and made abundantly clear by John Lyons (1977: 230ff), the field can also be seen as a series of different sense relations which happen to obtain between words (or notions). Arthur Koestler (1969), on whose work I relied already in *Pictorial concepts*, distinguished the *holarchy* (the relation of part to whole corresponding to Eco's Porphyrian tree) and *reticulation* (sideways connections). Lyons adds many more sense relations, such as opposition, contrast, and hyponymy, to which should no doubt be added (near-)synonymy and, more important for our purpose, partial overlaps, such as the kind of relations which are called image schema in CTM (See also Lehrer and Kittay 1992a).

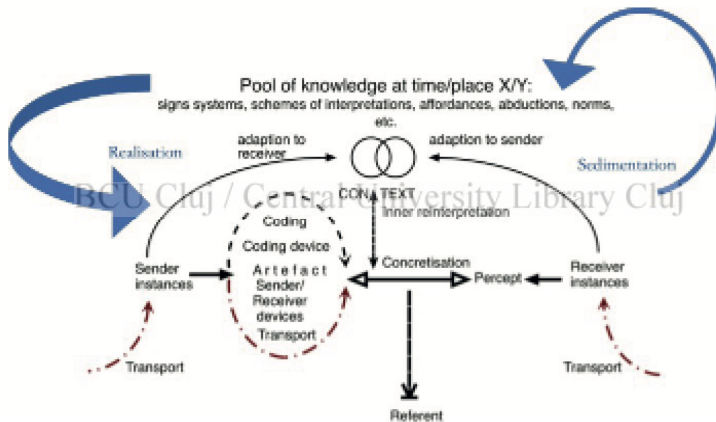


Figure 1. The act of communication, as construed in Sonesson (1999), with the addition of the process of sedimentation, which is the accumulated memory of historicized acts, and the process of realization, which recovers the structure of the act from the pool of knowledge which is sedimented.

Like Eco's rhizome, Schütz's systems of relevancies and the semantic fields, Lakoff and Johnson's domains do not seem to sport any clear limits. The eminent Romanian linguist Eugenio Coseriu (1990) has heavily criticized the prototype theory formulated by Eleanor Rosch, arguing that, to take a classical example, the robin can only serve as a prototype for the bird category, once the semantic domain of birds has already been defined. Indeed, the former has to do with reference, not semantics:

„que imprecisos y borrosos son (o suelen ser) los límites entre las categorías objetivas (clases de cosas o hechos designados), no los límites entre las categorías mentales (conceptos y significados), y que esa 'borrosidad' objetiva puede comprobarse como tal precisamente porque los conceptos y significados se conocen (intuitivamente) como 'discretos' y delimitados" (Coseriu 1990: 258).¹³

But, as far as I am aware, the only attempt within CMT to define the categories, and thus the semantic domains, is that offered by George Lakoff (1987) precisely in terms of Rosch's prototype theory.¹⁴ While accepting the importance of prototypes for making sense of categories, I argued (in Sonesson 1989: 330 ff.) that it cannot be true that there are only fuzzy limits between categories, since then metaphors would be impossible. Whether or not this is the same argument formulated by Coseriu is not easy to determine, but the consequences are at least partly the same.¹⁵ When I used the existence of metaphors as a fundament for my argument, I was, of course, referring to the classical notion of metaphor, which supposes there to be a tension between the domains put into contact by the metaphor. Nevertheless, it seems clear that, although Lakoff and Johnson are dispensing with the tension between domains required by classical metaphor theory, they still need the domains to be clearly distinct, in order to define metaphors as cross-domain mappings. To return to the example of "LIFE IS A JOURNEY", one may ask in what sense the journey is different from life. After all, if we ever go on a journey, this will be part of our life. It could be objected that this is only true in an extensional sense of the terms. But that only means that we need a clear intensional delimitation of the respective domains. In the latter sense, life would then only consist of the interlude of conscious existence between birth and death, and travel would amount to a movement in (geographical) space. But then where would you find the slots and the material for extension and elaboration?

¹³ Elena Faur (2009: 114f.) refers to a lecture delivered in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, in 1999, which makes the same points.

¹⁴ Curiously, Coseriu (1990: 280) claims that, in the end Lakoff agrees with him that the definition of categories must precede the creation of prototypes, but if you look up the reference in the notes to Georges Kleiber (1990: 41ff.), the latter simply observes that Lakoff is contradicting himself on the nature of categories.

¹⁵ Partly, for I do not think "the world" is a continuum that is only divided up by language. There are too many other semiotic systems working on "the world" for that to be true. But this difference is not relevant here.

It is important to note that the approach in terms of geneticity and generativity supposes accumulation/ sedimentation to be as much a result of communication as vice versa. This does not only apply to semiotic acts, but to all acts accomplished by situated subjects. In other terms, each act of communication (and of meaning generally) adds to the sedimentation resulting in the pool of knowledge, and each act is also a realization of such a pool of knowledge (see **Figure 1**). If we admit that each act of meaning must somehow be realized in experience, we can apply the term enunciation in a broader sense, also to include relatively speaking more passive experiences such as perception. The situation of enunciation is thus where types are turned into tokens, and tokens into types, as a result of the sedimentation, the passive (and sometimes active) synthesis of earlier acts (tokens) which, throughout history, form Schutzian schemes of interpretation/ systems of relevancies when applied to specific situations. Something similar is suggested by Lehrer and Kittay (1992b) in terms of a relation between fields and frames, if we suppose this process to be continuous and reciprocal.

Eco went on to claim that, in the situation of enunciation, the rhizome is transformed into a Porphyrian tree (a hierarchy of concepts, that is, Koestler's holarchy). Patrizia Violi (2017: 234ff) takes Eco to task for claiming that, at the local level, that is, in our terms, at the specific moment that the act of enunciation takes place, the encyclopaedia is flattened out into a dictionary entry. I think both Eco's point and that of Violi are well taken. Violi is right, I think, in claiming that the encyclopaedia will rarely be transformed into a Porphyrian tree; but I think Eco is right in maintaining that, at the moment of enunciation, the rhizome turns into a network with defined paths, though these may only occasionally be the one predicted by the Porphyrian tree. Rather, the rhizome will be divided up according to several different principles of organization, or "sense relations", in the wide sense of the term used by Lyons. Such a change may then be concurrent with a shift of part of the rhizome to form the thematic field of consciousness, in Aron Gurwitsch's (1964) sense, while moving the rest of the network to the margin. In fact, this may be even more exactly characterized by having recourse to the notion of dominant, as defined by Roman Jakobson (1971: 81), as "the focusing component of a work of art: it rules, determines, and transforms the remaining components. It is the dominant which guarantees the integrity of the structure" – except that the restriction to the work of art is no longer valid. This is, of course, eminently true of the metaphor, which has to fix the relations between the two signs involved (See **Figure 2**).

Eco and Violi talk about the situation of enunciation, and the model I have developed for the dialectics of communication and sedimentation is also concerned with communicative acts (in **Figure 1**), but we must now think of such a dialectics as pertaining to all kinds of acts, also those which are not specifically communicative. Just as this model supposes the way in which the rhizome is coming to rest to be at least partially different for the addresser and the addressee, we must admit that such a difference exists for all subjects experiencing the sedimentation of an act and its reanimation. Still, each such temporary stage of sedimentation and activation of the sediments must posit what is, for the purpose of the act, fixed borders between the domains of experience involved. If these are different for addresser and addressee, this is exactly what has to be negotiated in the act of communication.

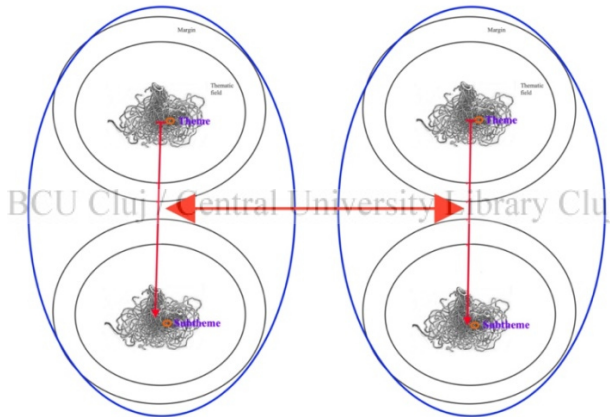


Figure 2. The metaphor as a complex relevance system in the shape of rhizomes

Such a dialectic between the sediments and the schemes of interpretation certainly seems to relativize distinctions such as those of *langue* and *parole*, let alone more elaborate designs such as that of Coseriu (1962; 1985b; 1988; 1992) separating activity (*energeia*), knowledge (*dynamis*) and product (*ergon*), all of which are cross-classified as pertaining universally to speaking, historically to a particular language, and individually to discourse, and so on for the other slots. Nevertheless, these distinctions do make sense as applied to a specific moment of enunciation, in which some sediments are directly in use (*energeia*), some others are part of the knowledge held in reserve (*dynamis*), and still others already transformed to artefacts (*ergon*). Clearly, generative sediments are more likely to form part of *ergon* than

genetic ones, although even the former may be revised in the situation of enunciation. Such a distribution of sedimented parts makes even more sense if we follow the so-called Motivation and Sedimentation Model (MSM) (see Blomberg and Zlatev 2021; Stampoulidis, Bolognesi, and Zlatev 2019), at least in attributing to the universal level a pan-semiotic purport, that is, in allowing for contributions from all kinds of semiosis, including perception, even in the sense of kinaesthesia.¹⁶

In the particular case of the metaphor, this implies that, in each situation of enunciation, or *energeia*, the limits between the domains involved are frozen in place, but there is always a potentiality to delve deeper into the *dynamis* of the rhizome, to the point of going beyond, in some cases, any given *ergon*, else that at the level of the semiotic system.

8. CONCLUSIONS

Even if we apply the weak definition of metaphor, in which case there must be a substitution of one entire sign for another sign which is expected to occur, CMT fails to account for it, since the so-called “image schemas”, as well as the “primary metaphors”, do not substitute for any other more literal expression, just as is the case of more familiar examples of so-called dead metaphors, such as “foot of the mountain”. It is only because of what CMT calls extensions and elaborations that metaphor in the weak sense can be produced, sometimes also attaining the status of metaphors in the strong sense, in which case there is tension or overlap between the domains associated, or some other kind of creativity. Image schemas should really be seen as parts of the invariants of the human Lifeworld. I also follow Blaga and Borcilă in showing that there can be metaphors which contradict the so-called invariance principle set up by the image schemas. To make sense of cross-mapping between different domains, the latter have to be clearly distinct, but this is clearly not the case with many image schemas. Employing Schütz notion of relevancies/ schemes of interpretation, I suggest that limits between such domains are created by sedimentation, in the Husserlean sense, which may be both generative, which the sediments are produced by history and tradition, and genetic, when they are created on the spot by the subjects intervening in the semiotic act.

¹⁶ As presented in the two articles quoted above, MSM has evolved to further diverge from the model proposed by Coseriu, in ways which there is no place to comment on in the present paper.

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**ON THE BORDERS OF METAPHOROLOGY:
CREATIVITY BEYOND AND AHEAD OF METAPHORS
(Abstract)**

Mircea Borcilă and I share a common preoccupation with building a theory of metaphor which is congruent with the classical notion of metaphor, and thus we have addressed parallel pieces of criticism to the reigning theory in the domain in the contemporary world, the so-called cognitive theory of metaphor (CMT) due to George Lakoff, Mark Johnson and, originally, Mark Turner. In this paper, I am trying to bring our consonant endeavours together. For both of us, the notion of creativity has a much deeper sense than it has been given in generative grammar and its outgrowths, such as CMT, because it derives from the tradition initiated by Wilhelm von Humboldt and more recently taken care of by Karl Bühler, Ernest Cassirer, and Eugenio Coseriu. While I agree with these scholars in claiming that the creativity of metaphors goes well beyond that of language, though it is based on it, I differ from them in two respects: first, I think it can be shown that there is a kind of creativity of depiction, which is similarly exacerbated by pictorial metaphors, and so on for other semiotic systems. And second, there is also a kind of creativity anterior to any semiotic system, that of the *Lifeworld*, in the sense of Edmund Husserl, which is distinguished from the different animal *Umwelten* precisely in this respect. Taking a cue from Borcilă, as well as Elena Faur, I next criticize the “invariance principle” defined by Lakoff and Turner, first as it applies to metaphors which can be traced back to the “image schemas”, arguing that it is only because of the extensions and elaborations that metaphors are produced, and then taking up some metaphors which contradict the principle of invariance. A further issue concerns the limits between the domains which are taken for granted in CMT. Thus, I introduce the notion of systems of relevancies, as characterized by Alfred Schütz on the basis of Husserl’s notion of sedimentation, which I then relate to Umberto Eco’s idea of the rhizome. In the final section, I use these notions to discuss the dialects of sedimentation as setting the provisional limits of the domains figuring in our Lifeworld experience.

Key words: Metaphor, creativity, Lifeworld, relevance, invariance.