

Latin and Greek Elements in English

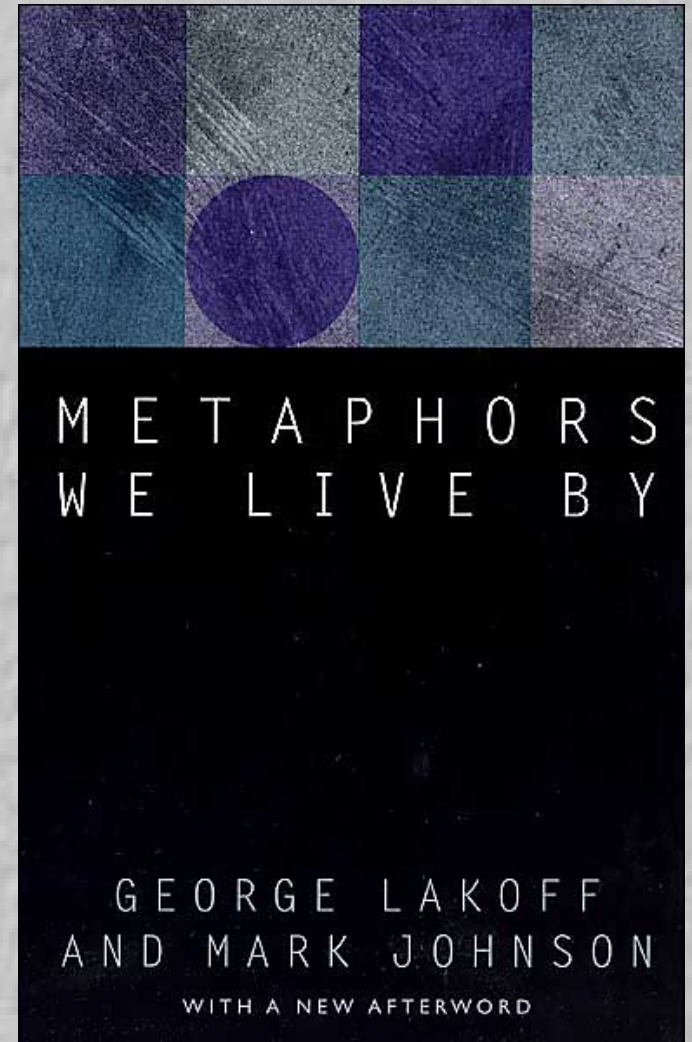
Metaphors I: The Nature of Metaphor

- the purpose of this class is to examine the ways that metaphors permeate our language
 - indeed metaphors give both a means and a shape to our understanding and expression of life
 - of particular interest to us are those metaphors which come from Latin
- the goal of this lecture is to help you make the “metaphorical leap” involved in diagnosing words etymologically

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Metaphors I: The Nature of Metaphor

- much of this lecture is derived from *Metaphors We Live By* by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson
 - a study of how metaphorical systems inform English, in terms of both content and function



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Metaphors I: The Nature of Metaphor

- first, we'll survey metaphorical systems in English, e.g.
 - time is “money”
 - ideas are “plants”
 - and orientational metaphors, e.g. connotations of “up” and “down”
- next we'll discuss how metaphors give shape to the way we understand the world around us
- and finally we'll look at particular Roman metaphors that have been imported into English via Latin derivatives

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Metaphors I: The Nature of Metaphor

“Time is Money”

- You’re wasting my time.
- This device will save you hours.
- How do you spend your time these days?
- That flat tire cost me an hour.
- I don’t have time to spare.
- You need to budget your time.
- You’re living on borrowed time.
- Use your time profitably.

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Metaphors I: The Nature of Metaphor

“Time is Money”

- cf. the measurement of pay in time-units, e.g. \$10/hour
 - this is based on the notion that time expended should be proportional to money earned
- n.b. this metaphor is seen rarely in ancient societies
 - nor in all modern ones
- but it has become pervasive in western cultures, especially since industrialization (early 1800's)

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Metaphors I: The Nature of Metaphor

“Words are Containers”

- He put his ideas into words.
- Try to capture a good idea in words.
- By knowing vocabulary we can encompass more ideas in fewer words.
- The meaning is in the words.
- Your words rang hollow.
- The idea is buried in the paragraph somewhere.

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Metaphors I: The Nature of Metaphor

“Theories and Arguments are Buildings.”

- This is the foundation of their supposition.
- His accusation needs support.
- Our argument is shaky.
- We need to construct a stronger case.
- Our theory collapsed when they exploded our latest proposition.
- Our hypothesis needs a new framework.

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Metaphors I: The Nature of Metaphor

“Ideas are Food.”

- What he said left a bad taste in everyone’s mouth.
- Your paper is full of half-baked ideas.
- I can’t swallow what you’re suggesting.
- I need to stew over it for a while.
- Let the idea percolate before you serve it up.
- It’s food for thought.

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Metaphors I: The Nature of Metaphor

“Ideas are Food.”

- Teachers shouldn’t spoonfeed students.
- Let it simmer on the back burner for a while.
- Here’s the meaty part of the paper.
- Your hypothesis needs more data to make it jell.
- She was a voracious reader.
- That’s a book you can really sink your teeth into.

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“Seeing is Touching.”

- I can't take my eyes off her.
- His eyes were glued to the screen.
- Their eyes met.
- She ran her eyes over his body.
- But her glance lingered on his wallet.
- He, however, never moved his eyes off her face.

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Metaphors I: The Nature of Metaphor

“To Argue is War”

- Your claims are indefensible.
- She attacked the weak points in his case.
- Their criticisms were right on target.
- You disagree? Okay, shoot!
- He tore our arguments to shreds.

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Metaphors I: The Nature of Metaphor

Oriental Metaphors: UP

“Happy”

- I’m feeling up.
- That boosted my spirits.
- Her spirits rose.
- We’re in high spirits.
- Thinking about them always gives me a lift.

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Metaphors I: The Nature of Metaphor

Oriental Metaphors: UP

“Conscious”

- I got up.
- I woke up.
- I’m up.
- Early to bed, early to rise . . .

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Metaphors I: The Nature of Metaphor

Oriental Metaphors: UP

“Healthy”

- Young people are at the peak of health.
- He went to the gym and pumped up.
- Now he’s in top shape.
- Jesus was resurrected.

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Metaphors I: The Nature of Metaphor

Oriental Metaphors: UP

“Having Control”

- I have control over them.
- I’m on top of the situation.
- She’s my superior.
- Caesar was at the height of his powers.
- He ranks above me.

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Metaphors I: The Nature of Metaphor

Oriental Metaphors: UP

“More”

- Use of the web is going up.
- The percentage of people who own computers is high.
- Incomes tend to rise through life.

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Oriental Metaphors: DOWN

“Sad”

- I’m feeling down.
- I’m depressed.
- She’s feeling pretty low.
- I fell into a funk.
- My spirits sank.

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Metaphors I: The Nature of Metaphor

Oriental Metaphors: DOWN

“Unconscious”

- He fell asleep.
- They dropped off to sleep.
- She decided to go under hypnosis.
- The patient sank into a coma.

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Metaphors I: The Nature of Metaphor

Oriental Metaphors: DOWN

“Sickness and Death”

- He fell ill.
- The patient is sinking fast.
- Her health is declining.
- He dropped dead.

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Metaphors I: The Nature of Metaphor

Oriental Metaphors: DOWN

“Being Controlled”

- I’m under someone’s control.
- Caesar fell from power suddenly.
- His power is waning.
- Interest in this is on the decline.
- This caste is socially inferior.
- He’s the low man on the totem pole.
 - in spite of the fact that the lowest figure is actually the most important one on a totem pole according to Inuit tradition

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Metaphors I: The Nature of Metaphor

Oriental Metaphors: DOWN

“Less”

- The graduation rate is going down.
- Our success rate is low.
- They are under age.
- Turn the heat down.

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Metaphors I: The Nature of Metaphor

Oriental Metaphors: UP vs. DOWN

- UP is “good,” whereas DOWN is “bad”
 - When things are looking up, it’s no time to be down.
 - Her popularity was at its peak, but then she slid off the radar.
 - She has high standards and would never bow to pressure.
 - Upright people don’t play low tricks.
 - High-minded people don’t get down and dirty.
 - High-level discussions don’t fall to the emotional level.
 - n.b. “up” is rational and “down” is irrational

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Metaphors I: The Nature of Metaphor

Oriental Metaphors: UP vs. DOWN

- but DOWN is also “known,” whereas UP is “unknown”
 - He settled the matter, nailed the answer . . .
 - . . . and didn't leave things up in the air.
 - cf. hanging in the balance

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Metaphors I: The Nature of Metaphor

Oriental Metaphors: UP vs. DOWN

- so, if UP is “unknown” and “good,” is unknown good?
 - metaphors don’t have to be coherent!
 - as long as you don’t call their inherent incoherence to mind by putting them in the same statement!
 - that’s a “mixed” metaphor
 - e.g. he is a high-minded man and would never leave important matters unresolved or up in the air.
 - cf. Goldsmith, *She Stoops to Conquer*

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Multiple Metaphors for the Same Concept

“Ideas are . . .” (besides Food)

– People

- Einstein’s theories gave birth to a new world view.
- His ideas spawned a rash of new theories.
- The theory of humors died a long time ago.
- Some sciences are in their infancy.
- Whose brainchild was that?

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Metaphors I: The Nature of Metaphor

Multiple Metaphors for the Same Concept

“Ideas are . . .” (besides Food)

– Plants

- His research finally came to fruition in a book.
- There are many branches of mathematics. Calculus is only one offshoot.
- You need to trim your more extreme assertions.
- She planted the idea of marriage in his mind.
- But he had a barren mind.

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Metaphors I: The Nature of Metaphor

Multiple Metaphors for the Same Concept

“Life is a . . .”

– Container

- She lived a full life.
- My cup runneth over.
- Live life to the fullest.

Latin and Greek Elements in English

Metaphors I: The Nature of Metaphor

Multiple Metaphors for the Same Concept

“Life is a . . .”

– Gambling Game

- I’ll take my chances.
- The odds are against them.
- She had an ace up her sleeve.
- You’re bluffing.
- The President upped the ante.
- When the chips are down, the brave make guacamole.

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Metaphors I: The Nature of Metaphor

Multiple Metaphors for the Same Concept

“The Mind is a . . .”

– Machine

- Those Washington think-tanks grind out ideas.
- My mind just isn't operating today.
- You can see his wheels turning.
- I'm still a little rusty on my prefixes.
- I can't study any more – I've run out of steam.
- He broke down under cross-examination.

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Metaphors I: The Nature of Metaphor

Multiple Metaphors for the Same Concept

“The Mind is a . . .”

– Fragile Object

- Some people have fragile egos.
- The prosecution broke him.
- It was a shattering experience for us all.
- “I fall to pieces, each time I see you again . . .”
- My mind snapped.

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Metaphors I: The Nature of Metaphor

Multiple Metaphors for the Same Concept

“Love is a . . .”

– Mental Disease

- He’s crazy for the girl .
- She drove him out of his mind.
- He raved about her constantly.
- He’s gone cuckoo over her.
- And she’s just wild about Harry.

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Metaphors I: The Nature of Metaphor

Multiple Metaphors for the Same Concept

“Love is a . . .”

– Physical Force

- You could feel the electricity between them.
- There were sparks in the air.
- They gravitated toward each other.
- His life revolved around her.
- But then they lost momentum.

Latin and Greek Elements in English

Metaphors I: The Nature of Metaphor

Multiple Metaphors for the Same Concept

“Love is a . . .”

– War

- He’s known for his conquests.
- She fled from his advances.
- He overpowered her and gained her hand in marriage.
- Later she had to fight for his affections, but his mistress won.
- So, she loved and lost.

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Metaphors I: The Nature of Metaphor

- Conclusion on English Metaphors
 - our conceptual system is grounded and structured in metaphor
 - we are informed and controlled by the metaphors of our culture
 - cf. Lakoff/Johnson, p.57:

“ . . . every experience takes place within a vast background of cultural presuppositions. . . all experience is cultural through and through, that we experience our “world” in such a way that our culture is already present in the very experience itself.”

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Metaphors I: The Nature of Metaphor

- What if arguments were seen as dances, not battles?
 - and the participants in an argument were partners, not opponents
 - the goal of an argument would then be to create a pleasing, esthetic, collaborative experience
 - if this were true, arguments would be very different, wouldn't they?
 - in fact, they wouldn't be “arguments” at all, certainly not in the conventional sense of the word!

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Metaphors I: The Nature of Metaphor

- What if drugs were not an “enemy” but a “disease”?
 - we would not fight a “war on drugs” but seek a cure
 - Charlotte Lind: “People in power get to impose their metaphors.”
- What is the truth? Are drugs something to fight or to cure?
 - Is it possible to express reality without metaphor?
 - since metaphors are culturally prescribed through language and thus necessarily biased by the views of that culture, they are subjective by definition
- So, can “objective truth” be communicated in language?

Latin and Greek Elements in English

Metaphors I: The Nature of Metaphor

- Lakoff/Johnson, p.160:

“In a culture where the myth of objectivism is very much alive and truth is always absolute truth, the people who get to impose their metaphors on the culture get to define what we consider to be true – absolutely and objectively true.”
- thus, metaphors control and inform not only our language but how we perceive, communicate, evaluate and direct our lives
 - which means, in order to understand our lives, we have to understand the metaphors underlying our language
 - and that means understanding Roman metaphors, too, since there are so many Latin words in English

Latin and Greek Elements in English

Metaphors II: Latin Metaphors

- we have discussed some in class already
 - **PEND-**/**POND-**: “hang, be heavy” [*impend*, *ponderous*]
 - “hang in a balance” > weigh, pay [*compensate*]
 - a metaphor based on the widespread use of scales as a way of measuring things in antiquity
 - giving us words like *pensive* and *ponder*
 - **COG-** : “think, reflect, consider” [*cogitate*]
 - originally, “force”: con- + AG-, “drive together” [*cogent*]
 - thus to Romans, thinking = “collecting”
 - cf. Eng. “to *collect* one’s thoughts”

Latin and Greek Elements in English

Metaphors II: Latin Metaphors

- **sub-**: “under” [*submarine*]
 - but also “sneakily,” cf. Eng. “*under the carpet*”
 - *subterfuge, surreptitious, subvert, suborn* (i.e. bribe)
 - and yet also “helpfully,” cf. Eng. “*underpinnings*”
 - *support, subvention, succor*
- **in-**: “in, into” [*impress*]
 - but also “against,” cf. Eng. “*lay into someone*”
 - *incursion, invade, impugn*

Latin and Greek Elements in English

Metaphors II: Latin Metaphors

- **REG-**: “straight” [*direct*]
 - but also “right, just” [*regulate, rectitude*]
 - originally, from the idea of “straight” justice in resolving disputes about land ownership and boundaries
- **LEG-**: “choose” [*delegate*]
 - but also “read” [*legible*]
 - this sense derives from the Roman attitude that “to read” is “to choose a work of literature”

Latin and Greek Elements in English

Metaphors II: Latin Metaphors

- an important set of Latin metaphors: cutting = knowing
 - **CERN-**/**CRET-** /**CERT-**: “separate, distinguish”
 - mentally, “to separate apart” = to discern
 - cf. discrete
 - “to separate very much (as important)” = to show concern
 - **SCI-**: originally, “cut”; later, “know”
 - e.g. science: lit. “the state of cutting”; later, “knowledge”
 - **PUT-**: originally, “prune”; later, “think”
 - n.b. agricultural metaphor!
 - “to prune thoroughly,” i.e. “think through” = to compute

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Metaphors II: Latin Metaphors

What metaphors pertaining to mental processes can be applied to the following BASES?

- **ERR-**: “wander” = be mistaken ?
 - English derivatives? err, error, erroneous
- **MOV-/ MOT-**: “move” = affect one’s mood ?
 - English derivatives? emotion, motivation
- **JAC-**: “throw” = take a guess ?
 - English derivatives? conjecture

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Metaphors II: Latin Metaphors

- also, Latin words evolved new metaphorical senses over time just as English words have (and still are evolving!)
- **prae-**: originally, “before, forward, forth”
 - “before” > “in advance, with forethought”
 - *premise* (something taken “in advance”)
 - “with forethought” > “in a studied manner, carefully”
 - *precise* (“cut carefully”), *prescribe* (“written out precisely”)
 - “carefully” > “thoroughly, extremely”
 - *precipitous* (“headlong”), *predominate*, *preoccupy*, *preponderance*, *prevail*, *pretense*

Latin and Greek Elements in English

Metaphors II: Latin Metaphors

- other Latin forms that evolved new metaphorical meanings
 - **pro-**: “forward” > “good”
 - e.g. *profit* (“make forward”), *progress* (“step forward”)
 - also *promote*, *prosper*, *provide* / *providence*
 - **re-**: “backward” > “bad”
 - e.g. *refuse* (“pour back”), *remorse* (“bite back”)
 - also *reprobate*, *rescind*, *reduce*, *repudiate*, *renege*, *reluctant*, *retard*, *repent*, *recluse*, *reticent*

Latin and Greek Elements in English

Metaphors II: Latin Metaphors

- n.b. the last three re-'s mentioned above (*repent*, *recluse*, *reticent*) are not necessarily bad
 - also *redeem*, *retain*, *resurrect*, *respect*
- nor are all pro's necessarily good: *profligate*, *prohibit*, *protest*, *proscribe*, *prostitute*
- ultimately, there are no firm rules — only tendencies
 - in other words, if pro- (“forward”) is attached to a base meaning “sexual abandon” (and your culture sees “promiscuity” as bad), then pro- is “bad”!

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Metaphors II: Latin Metaphors

- other metaphors involving Latin bases
 - **CANT-**: “sing” > “lure into a trap”
 - cf. the Sirens in *The Odyssey*
 - e.g. *enchant, incantation, incentive, recant*
 - **FERV-**: “bubble” > “boil, be hot” > “become excited”
 - e.g. *fervent, fervidity*
 - **CAD- / CID- / CAS-**: “fall” > “chance”
 - e.g. *accident, casual*

Latin and Greek Elements in English

Metaphors II: Latin Metaphors

- other metaphors involving Latin bases
 - SAL-/SULT-: “jump,” e.g. *insult*, *assail*, *exult*
 - “jump” > “stand out”: *salient*
 - “stand out” > “what’s left behind”: *result*
 - “what’s left behind” > “what persists,” i.e. won’t die: *resilient*

Latin and Greek Elements in English

Metaphors II: Latin Metaphors

- CONCLUSION: the metaphors associated with **ROG-**
 - ROG-: originally “ask”
 - in a legal sense, “pursue one’s right in a court or legislature”
 - one of many examples of Roman legal metaphors in English
 - inter- (“between”) + ROG-: *interrogate* (“cross-examine in court”)
 - “question back and forth,” i.e. a witness on the stand
 - *interrogative* (“related to asking”): originally “associated with the words typical of such questioning”

Latin and Greek Elements in English

Metaphors II: Latin Metaphors

- CONCLUSION: the metaphors associated with **ROG-**
 - + **de-** (“down, bad”) + **ROG-**: : *derogatory* (“insulting, belittling”)
 - originally “deprecating something by calling it into doubt through a legal challenge of some sort”
 - cf. “We questioned its existence.”
 - + **sub-** (“under, assist”) + **ROG-**: *surrogate* (“a replacement”)
 - originally “a deputy requested to assist in some formal proceeding instead of an official”

Latin and Greek Elements in English

Metaphors II: Latin Metaphors

- CONCLUSION: the metaphors associated with **ROG-**
 - + **pre-** (“down, bad”) + **ROG-**: *prerogative*
 - “prior legal claim, precedence, right of first choice”
 - + **ad-** (“toward”) + **ROG-**: *arrogate*
 - “claim unduly for oneself”
 - cf. arrogant
 - + **ab-** (“away from”) + **ROG-**: *abrogate*
 - “repeal”
- Latin metaphor clearly permeates English legal idiom!