

Reading Kafka's Mind: Categories, Schemas, Metaphors

by

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Abstract

Reading Kafka's Mind: Categories, Schemas, Metaphors

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This study employs cognitive theory to explain the Kafkaesque. In close readings of four works by Franz Kafka based on cognitive linguistic analysis, I show that Kafka consistently profiles generic or schematic conceptual structure over more specific, detailed concepts. By evoking strikingly unconventional and incomplete conceptual structures, he exploits the deepest aspects of everyday human cognition in ways that were literarily unprecedented and that remain unusual. I argue that this demonstrable characteristic accounts for the eerie, uncomfortable, or frustrating experience of reading Kafka that many readers report. Based on analyses of Kafka criticism, I argue further that this characteristic can also help account for the diverse range of readings Kafka's works have invited over the decades, as it prompts readers to fill in the schematic and incomplete conceptual structure that Kafka provides with more specific details according to their own cognitive preferences and proclivities. This, in turn, can also help explain Kafka's astounding and enduring international success. In conclusion, I argue that Kafka's experience of learning several languages—an underappreciated fact of his biography—may have fostered his cognitive preference for the schematic over the specific.

1

Kafka's Art and the Fundamentals of Human Cognition

Es hört doch jeder nur, was er versteht.
—Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

What makes Kafka Kafkaesque? Why are Kafka's works so compelling and so distancing, so involving and so frustrating? Why are readings of his works so diverse, given his apparently simple language? And what might account for his enduring success with generations of readers?

This study employs cognitive theory to explain the Kafkaesque. In close readings of four works by Franz Kafka based on cognitive linguistic analysis, I show that Kafka consistently profiles generic or schematic conceptual structure over more specific, detailed concepts. By evoking strikingly unconventional and incomplete conceptual structures, he exploits the deepest aspects of everyday human cognition in ways that were literarily unprecedented and that remain unusual. I argue that this demonstrable characteristic accounts for the eerie, uncomfortable, or frustrating experience of reading Kafka that many readers report. Based on analyses of Kafka criticism, I argue further that this characteristic can also help account for the diverse range of readings Kafka's works have invited over the decades, as it prompts readers to fill in the schematic and incomplete conceptual structure that Kafka provides with more specific details according to their own cognitive preferences and proclivities. This, in turn, can also help explain Kafka's astounding and enduring international success. In conclusion, I argue that Kafka's experience of learning several languages—an underappreciated fact of his biography—may have fostered his cognitive preference for the schematic over the specific.

As cognitive approaches to literature are still relatively unfamiliar to most literary scholars, I devote the first chapter of this study to explaining the basic concepts from cognitive science that serve as the analytical tools for my readings of Kafka's texts. Since my main argument is that Kafka consistently foregrounds generic or schematic conceptual structure over more specific, detailed concepts, I first explain the distinction cognitive science makes between generic and specific conceptual structure. Next I summarize the findings of cognitive scientific research on categorization and describe the three main category levels that cognitive science distinguishes among: superordinate, basic, and subordinate. I then explain the term *image schema*, which designates one of the most fundamental types of generic conceptual structure and hence plays a major role in my readings of Kafka's texts. And finally, I describe the cognitive scientific understanding of metaphor, which is not merely a linguistic phenomenon, as the traditional view holds, but rather a conceptual structure that is pervasive in all thought.

Generic versus Specific Conceptual Structure

Cognitive theory classifies conceptual structure along a scale of specificity, with generic or schematic structure at one end of the scale, and specific, detailed structure at the other. This scale of conceptual specificity is often understood—metaphorically, of course—as being vertical, with generic structure metaphorically at a “higher” level and specific structure at a “lower” one. To illustrate the distinction, consider—with a nod to Kafka’s “Kleine Fabel”—a familiar proverb: “When the cat’s away, the mice will play.” This proverb includes rather specific information with its basic-level concepts *cat*, *mouse*, and *play*. Basic- and specific-level concepts evoke rich imagery and detailed information. When the proverb is invoked in a given pragmatic context, however, such specifics play little or no role in our understanding. We know a lot about cats, mice, the behavior of cats with regard to mice, and the behavior of mice with regard to cats, but none of this specific knowledge is recruited in understanding the proverb when we use it in particular situations. Rather, we use the proverb’s generic conceptual structure, which might be paraphrased as follows: When an authority is unable to oversee its subordinates, the subordinates will behave in an unauthorized manner. And precisely because it is the generic information we use, the proverb can apply to a wide range of specific situations with the same generic structure: a parent and children, a boss and workers, a teacher and students, a prison guard and inmates, a government regulator and private businesses, and so on (Turner 6). When we invoke the proverb in any particular context, we conceptualize and understand that situation in terms of the proverb’s generic structure concerning hierarchical power relationships and not in terms of anything specific to cats or mice.

In the case of proverbs, of course, conventions of the genre largely determine our use and our interpretations. George Lakoff and Mark Turner argue that a generic-level conceptual metaphor, *GENERIC IS SPECIFIC*, together with the *GREAT CHAIN METAPHOR* complex, governs our understanding and our use of proverbs (160-213). That is perhaps why proverbs illustrate particularly well the distinction between the generic and the specific. It has recently been argued that *GENERIC IS SPECIFIC* does not qualify as an actual conceptual metaphor but rather represents a cline of conceptual structure (Sullivan and Sweetser). It may even just represent the first half of the path, so to speak, that metaphoric mappings must traverse from a source to a target domain. It may also be argued that similar mechanisms play a role in other literary genres, in literature in general, or indeed, in all conceptual mapping. But such questions are tangential to my present purpose, which is merely to explain the basic distinction between specific and generic conceptual structure in order to make comprehensible to readers unfamiliar with the concepts my claim that Kafka highlights the generic.

Readers familiar with Kafka, especially those intimate with the details of particular stories, may find the assertion that he emphasizes generic conceptual structure over specifics to be incredible and perhaps even untenable. To illustrate my point, therefore, I will briefly discuss a telling example from Kafka’s most well known work, *Die Verwandlung* (*The Metamorphosis*), which is not a text I analyze in this study. The story’s opening line categorizes its protagonist in unmistakably generic terms:

Als Gregor Samsa eines Morgens aus unruhigen Träumen erwachte, fand er sich

in seinem Bett zu einem ungeheueren Ungeziefer verwandelt.¹
As Gregor Samsa awoke one morning from restless dreams, he found himself transformed in his bed into a monstrous vermin.²

Despite the obvious generic nature of the designation “monstrous vermin,” many readers nonetheless conceptualize that information more specifically. Willa and Edwin Muir’s canonical English translation, for example, transforms Kafka’s generic vermin into an insect (89). Though this interpretation may be warranted, given the more detailed description that follows—the armor-like back, the segmented belly, and the many legs—what must be underscored is that Kafka himself, despite such details, rigorously avoids any specific categorization. The word *Insekt* appears nowhere in his story. Many interpreters nevertheless specify Kafka’s generic vermin even further than the Muirs, usually as either a cockroach or a beetle.

Among such interpreters inclining toward specification, Vladimir Nabokov merits special attention, as he explicitly considers the question of how to categorize Kafka’s protagonist and in the process lays bare the interpretive assumptions involved in moving from generic linguistic data to more specific conceptualizations. Given the generic textual evidence that Kafka’s creature has several legs and that these wave or flap as it lies on its back, Nabokov first reasons that these appendages “obviously” must be jointed and accordingly classifies the creature as an arthropod (258), a category that includes insects, arachnids, centipedes, and crustaceans. Although no mention of joints appears in the text, this assumption is reasonable, since most appendages are jointed. The mention of many legs, at any rate, suggests that *arthropod* is certainly an appropriate designation. *Arthropod* is a higher-level, schematic concept, so Nabokov’s classification at this point remains generic. He then immediately assumes, however, that “many” legs must mean six and accordingly determines the creature to be an insect (258). This deduction is not unwarranted, considering other textual evidence, but what must be underscored is that nowhere does Kafka himself specify the number of legs his creature has; instead, he consistently describes them throughout the story generically as *viele* (“many,” “numerous”). Next Nabokov asks what specific kind of insect Kafka’s protagonist is and, despite conflicting information in the text that he himself acknowledges, gives an unequivocal answer: a beetle (259). Nabokov’s argument is persuasive, and the preponderance of textual detail may well be on his side, but what must not be overlooked is that Kafka himself fastidiously refuses precisely such specification, tending instead always toward the generic.

It is also worth noting that despite Nabokov’s insistence that Kafka’s protagonist is a beetle, nothing in his interpretation hinges on that specificity. Though he repeats the word *beetle* throughout his lecture, when he addresses questions of the story’s deeper significance, he consistently uses the less specific term *insect* (269, 270, 280-81). And even then, nothing really specific to insects—as opposed to other types of vermin—

¹ In light of the numerous different editions of Kafka’s works and the brevity of the texts I analyze, I omit page references for quotes from the originals.

² Translations of Kafka throughout this study are my own unless otherwise indicated. Most the passages I cite I translate myself because I wish to provide readers an English rendering as close as possible to the original in order to convey the salient generic qualities that I highlight in my argument. When I use others’ translations it is mainly for convenience’s sake, although in several instances I do discuss details of certain translations to underscore differences from the original texts.

figures into his explication. Interestingly, he rejects the one piece of evidence in the text for the most specific possible classification of the creature, a remark by a peripheral character calling him a dung beetle. This specification Nabokov dismisses out of hand: “He is not, technically, a dung beetle. He is merely a big beetle” (260).

Nabokov’s desire to specify Kafka’s generic, arthropodlike vermin as a beetle is understandable, considering he worked as an entomologist. In the case of other interpreters, I surmise that the impulse derives from more general human cognitive inclinations. Research in cognitive science has shown that we have evolved a level of categorization, called the basic level, that forms an optimal fit with our experience of the world given the kinds of bodies and neural systems we have (Rosch, “Cognitive,” “Human,” “Natural,” “Principles,” “Prototype”; Rosch and Lloyd; Berlin, Breedlove, and Raven; Lakoff). I explain the concept in more detail below, but at this point, the characteristic of basic-level categories most relevant to mention is that they represent the highest level at which we can get a mental image of a category. To stay with *Die Verwandlung*, we can get an image of an insect but not of a vermin. Basic-level concepts are the most conceptually comfortable and comforting for us; we are hard-wired to prefer them. Mental clarity, the degree to which we can get an image of a concept, is a factor in that comfort, part of the conceptual fit. So while the specifying impulse among Kafka’s interpreters may therefore be understandable, it clearly runs counter to the cognitive tendencies of the author himself. Nabokov acknowledges this when he concedes that “Kafka [never] saw that beetle any too clearly” (260).

In the case of *Die Verwandlung* in particular, though, such a specifying impulse, while perhaps understandable in basic human cognitive terms, seems rather absurd when we remember we are dealing with a work of fiction. Nothing requires that Kafka’s fictional generic creature fit within a Linnaean taxonomy, or any version of classifications for genera and species in the real world, for that matter. Yet the history of the story’s reception demonstrates just how predisposed we are and how important it is for us to fit our perceptions of the world into the basic-level categories that are the most comfortable and comforting for us. A more faithful reading, though, I submit, would be one that allows for a constantly shifting, always partial, and never clearly formed image of Kafka’s protagonist. The author’s refusal, in a letter of October 25, 1915, to allow his publisher to illustrate his generic vermin as an insect on the book’s cover (*Briefe* 145) indicates the importance of generic conceptual structure—the unimageable—for his poetic project.

Categories

The work of Eleanor Rosch and her colleagues at Berkeley in the 1970s marked a seminal turning point in the development of contemporary cognitive science (Rosch, “Cognitive,” “Human,” “Natural,” “Principles,” “Prototype”; Rosch and Lloyd; Rosch et al.; Berlin, Breedlove, and Raven; Lakoff). A major discovery of this research was that traditional understandings of categories, those in fact still most commonly held today, are false. Our categories do not just correspond to reality as it supposedly objectively exists independent of human minds. We operate under the impression that we perceive the world passively, and that it really is just as we perceive it, because for the most part our

perceptions are adequate for the kinds of activities we engage in and the kinds of purposes we have. But these depend, in turn, on the kind of bodies we have. It is entirely natural, and even important for our successful everyday functioning, that we experience the world as though our perceptions were “objectively” true. Eyeglasses offer an apt analogy. When wearing glasses, it is important if they are to serve their purpose that you not be consciously aware of them. You can certainly focus, if you choose, on the frame itself, on the border between clarity and fuzziness that the frame creates, or on the lenses themselves, if they are dirty, for instance. But that kind of focus makes it impossible to function successfully using the glasses for their intended purpose. Similarly, you might consider the fact that your particular human perception of, say, a tree might differ radically from a bird’s or an ant’s. But for most everyday human purposes, such awareness would be impractical. The apparent correspondence between human categories and the world as we perceive it is explained by the notion of basic-level categories.

Cognitive theory distinguishes three main levels of categorization: superordinate, basic, and subordinate. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson use the examples *vehicle–car–sports car* and *furniture–chair–rocking chair* to explain the distinctions (*Philosophy* 27-28). The concepts in the middle of these hierarchies—*car* and *chair*—are cognitively basic: they have cognitive priority in our conceptual systems over higher, superordinate concepts such as *vehicle* or *furniture* and lower, subordinate concepts such as *sports car* or *rocking chair*. Four important characteristics distinguish basic concepts from those at the superordinate or subordinate levels. First, as mentioned above, concepts at the basic level evoke a mental image, which is not the case for superordinate concepts. You can get a mental image of a car or a chair, but not of a vehicle or furniture. Second, basic-level concepts have distinct overall shapes, or gestalts, associated with them. You can recognize a basic shape for a car or a chair but not for furniture or a vehicle. Third, basic-level concepts have distinct patterns of human bodily interaction associated with them. You have special motor programs for interacting with cars as opposed to boats or trains and with chairs as opposed to tables or beds, but you do not have motor programs for interacting with vehicles or furniture in general. And fourth, concepts at the basic level are ones humans have rich knowledge of. You know relatively little about vehicles or furniture in general—there is not much you could say about them—but you know a lot about cars, as you do about chairs. One level lower, unless you are a specialist, you probably know a bit more about sports cars or rocking chairs, but that additional knowledge is relatively little compared to all you know about basic cars and chairs. Our basic-level categories allow us to interact optimally with and function successfully in our environments given the kinds of bodies we have. They therefore represent some of the strongest empirical evidence for the fundamental premise of cognitive science that our knowledge of the world is not objectively free or independent of the particular kinds of bodies and nervous systems we have, that our minds, in other words, are ineradicably embodied.

For readers of Kafka, the criterion for distinguishing category levels that probably seems most applicable and relevant is whether you can get a mental image of a concept. To return to the example of *Die Verwandlung*, Kafka’s superordinate-level *vermin* is not imageable, whereas his interpreters’ basic-level *insect* is, and the subordinate-level concepts *beetle* and *cockroach* evoke richer imagery still. Kafka’s fiction abounds with entities similarly difficult to get a clear image of. Examples come readily to mind: the

castle in *Das Schloß* (*The Castle*), the figure Odradek in “Die Sorge des Hausvaters” (“The Cares of a Family Man”), the torture and execution machine of “In der Strafkolonie” (“In the Penal Colony”). The details provided typically permit only partial, incoherent glimpses, so readers must struggle to form clear and cohesive mental images. Many manage to, apparently, despite the author’s concerted effort to keep them from doing so. Applying category levels as an analytical framework, I discover a prevalence of basic-level and superordinate-level concepts in Kafka’s texts. Cognitive theory can thus shed new light on what contributes to the Kafkaesque. Given the cognitive preference we have for concepts we can image, the eerie quality of Kafka’s texts and the uncomfortable feeling we get when reading them may partly result from the inability to form clear images of important conceptual content.

Image Schemas

The term *image schema* was introduced separately in 1987 by George Lakoff in *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things* and Mark Johnson in *The Body in the Mind*. The concept is based on earlier research by Leonard Talmy on force dynamics that demonstrates how our understanding of modal verbs such as *can*, *may*, *should*, or *must* arises from our embodied knowledge of physical forces in the world. Talmy’s insight was that we understand the meaning of such concepts in the social domain, when no literal force is present, via metaphorical projection from our embodied knowledge of physical forces, which we acquire during infancy. The meanings of *can* and *may*, for example, arise from our experience of the force dynamics involved in the removal of a restraint, and the meanings of *should* and *must* arise from our experience of forces compelling us in some direction and the experience of ourselves compelling objects to move. Image schemas are abstract, generic conceptual structures that organize our perceptions and understanding of the world, experiential gestalts that arise from our embodied, physical experience. Given the fundamental premise of cognitive science that all our knowledge is embodied, image schemas help explain how abstract thought and reason emerge from our bodily condition and our embodied ways of knowing. Among our most basic cognitive structures, image schemas arise from recurrent patterns in our direct perceptual experience of the world. The three main kinds of embodied experience we have that form the neurological bases for image schemas and the conceptual metaphors projected from them are our “bodily movements through space, our manipulations of objects, and our perceptual interactions” (Johnson 29). Even more fundamentally than basic-level categories, image schemas enable us to interact with and function successfully in the world, and they allow us to map bodily knowledge of our physical environment onto abstract conceptual structure.

The name may be misleading for those unfamiliar with the concept, so it is important to stress that image schemas are *not* images in the conventional, strictly visual sense of the term. They are best thought of as multimodal sensory generalizations or abstractions. The designation distinguishes these generic conceptual structures from the more specific concept *schema* as used in some subfields of cognitive science, such as artificial intelligence (Schank and Abelson). This sense of the term *schema* designates a kind of familiar scenario that involves a standard script, the famous example being a

restaurant scenario. Cognitive linguistics uses the term *frame* to refer to such packages of more specific knowledge (Fillmore, “Frames,” “Frame Semantics”). As generic-level structure, like superordinate categories, image schemas are not something we can get an image of. In this respect, even the simple diagrams often used to illustrate them may be misleading, for such diagrams are purely visual, whereas image schemas are cross-modal. Johnson notes that Immanuel Kant underscored this very point in his discussion of schematic conceptual structure in the *Critique of Pure Reason*:

[Kant] argued that a schematic structure cannot be identical with an image, since the image or mental picture will always be of some one particular thing, which may not share all the same features with another thing of the same kind. The schema, by contrast, contains structural features common to many different objects, events, activities, and bodily movements. (24)

Johnson cites a passage from the *Critique* where Kant makes this point succinctly using the example of our concept of a triangle:

No image could ever be adequate to the concept of a triangle in general. It would never attain that universality of the concept which renders it valid of all triangles, whether right-angled, obtuse-angled, or acute-angled; it would always be limited to a part only of this sphere. The schema of the triangle can exist nowhere but in thought. (Immanuel Kant qtd. in Johnson 24)

Since vision is our primary informational sense, given the kinds of bodies and neural systems we have, the inclination to think of image schemas as visual phenomena is understandable, but they are patterns that order our perceptions in every sensory mode. Take two of the most pervasive in our experience, CONTAINER and PATH, which I explain in more detail below. Certainly, we use the CONTAINER image schema to order much of our visual experience, as when we see a person *in* a picture, a bird *in* a tree, or the moon *in* the sky. But we also rely on the CONTAINER image schema to structure our aural experience, as when we hear a chord *in* a song or an emphasis *in* someone’s words. Similarly, we can smell or taste a certain spice *in* a meal. We also use the CONTAINER image schema to make sense of our kinesthetic experience, as when we think of ourselves as being *in* a park or *in* the mountains, and we think of our bodies as containers for food we ingest or of pain we feel. As for the PATH image schema, we certainly trace paths visually throughout our experience, in watching objects, animate and inanimate, move through space. But we also use the PATH image schema aurally when we locate the source of a noise, imagining our attention as extending from ourselves to the source as well as the sound itself extending from its source to us, when in fact sound emanates from its source in all directions. We use the PATH image schema when we think about how the taste of wine, for example, changes from our first impressions, called the “forepalate,” through our subsequent impressions, “midpalate” and “endpalate,” leading up to the “finish.” Kinesthetically, we employ the PATH image schema every time we move from one location to another and every time we pick up an object and put it somewhere else. The purpose of these examples is merely to underscore that image schemas are not exclusively visual phenomena. Blind people use image schemas to organize their

experience, too. Below I offer examples of the ways these structures that organize our perceptions and our bodily experience provide the basis for abstract thought. Image schemas are patterns inscribed in our neural systems that structure and give meaning to our experience. It is also important to stress that they are not static, rigid structures, but rather ongoing, dynamic processes (Gibbs, “Prototypes”).

Individual psychological development provides a helpful context in which to elucidate the concept. Before we acquire language and the faculty of conceptual thought, we first come to know our environment perceptually. As infants, long before we have any understanding of, or words for, concepts such as *support*, *contact*, *containment*, or *motion*, we experience these aspects of the world through our senses, with our bodies. When our caregivers pick us up and hold us, or when they place us in chairs or cribs, we experience contact, support, containment, and motion. We experience these when we see food and liquid being taken out of and put into various containers. Before we can move ourselves, we experience motion. In addition to being moved by our caregivers, we perceive motion visually, and we distinguish between self-propelled and caused motion, giving rise to the concepts *animacy* and *inanimacy* (Mandler 141). When we begin to manipulate objects in the world, we experience in a new way contact, support, and motion, and frequently containment, depending on the object. Once we begin to move ourselves, we experience contact, support, and motion with our whole bodies. We begin to gain a more complex understanding of balance. We begin to trace paths with our bodies in moving from one location to another, an action we continue to repeat throughout our lives. Once we begin to stand, verticality becomes an extremely important aspect of our experience, with the distinction between up and down being strongly correlated with our successful functioning. Such preconceptual, prelinguistic experiences become inscribed in our neural systems as we acquire the sensorimotor programs necessary to function in our environment. The neural patterns that arise from our bodily interactions with the world are image schemas. And these cognitive structures provide the foundation for language and conceptual thought.

As we begin to speak, some of our earliest expressions concern motion. In languages with prepositions, before children speak in two-word phrases, they utter monosyllabic prepositions like *in*, *out*, *up*, *down*, *on*, and *off* that express “pure” paths (Mandler 152-3). The examples *in* and *out* suggest that such “pure paths” also frequently entail a notion of containment. The development of concepts such as *transitivity* and *intransitivity*, along with the acquisition of linguistic markers to expression them, builds on our preconceptual experience of agents and patients and motions between them. As our linguistic and conceptual faculties develop, such perceptual experiences of the world remain ubiquitous in our daily lives. But as we continue to get better at manipulating objects, as we improve at balance, verticality, and motion, the neural connections for those abilities are strengthened, and that knowledge becomes automatic and unconscious. Nonetheless, it is knowledge that we constantly use in order to function successfully in our environment, and it is this embodied, largely unconscious, spatial knowledge that is recruited in the higher-order cognitive processes, like language, of which we are more consciously aware.

Lakoff discusses a dozen or so image schemas in *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things*, including CONTAINER, PART-WHOLE, LINK, CENTER-PERIPHERY, SOURCE-PATH-GOAL, UP-DOWN, FRONT-BACK, and FORCE, and he devotes an extensive case study to

OVER. In *The Body in the Mind*, Johnson lists twenty some-odd image schemas that he considers among the most important, such as CONTAINER, BALANCE, COMPULSION, BLOCKAGE, COUNTERFORCE, ENABLEMENT, ATTRACTION, MASS-COUNT, PATH, LINK, CENTER-PERIPHERY, CYCLE, NEAR-FAR, SCALE, PART-WHOLE, MERGING, SPLITTING, FULL-EMPTY, MATCHING, SUPERIMPOSITION, ITERATION, CONTACT, SURFACE, OBJECT, and a few more (126). There has been some debate in cognitive science over the number of image schemas, how to define them, and so forth (Oakley 229), but to my mind such lines of questioning run counter to the spirit of the cognitive enterprise. Johnson would seem to want to forestall such debates when he introduces the concept, writing, “There is clearly nothing sacred about 253 patterns versus 53 or any other number of patterns, but it is certain that we experience our world by means of various image-schematic structures whose relations make up the fabric of our experience, that is, of our understanding” (126). What also seems certain, and what is important to emphasize for my purposes, is that some image schemas are more basic than others. Some, such as the ones I discuss above in the context of psychological development, like CONTACT, SUPPORT, CONTAINER, PATH, BALANCE, and VERTICALITY, are more pervasive in our experience. It is these most basic image schemas that, as my analyses show, Kafka foregrounds in his fiction.

Johnson devotes one chapter of his book to an extended analysis of the BALANCE image schema. He shows how our understanding of balance in abstract domains such as art, social relations, individual psychology, rational argument, morality, law, and mathematics, depends on and arises from metaphorical projections from our embodied experience of balance in the physical world. In a particularly memorable passage, he describes how the CONTAINER schema structures a typical morning routine, indicating the schema’s pervasiveness throughout our experience:

Consider just a small fraction of the orientational feats you perform constantly in your daily activities. Consider, for example, only a few of the many *in-out* orientations that might occur in the first few minutes of an ordinary day. You wake *out* of a deep sleep and peer *out* from beneath the covers *into* your room. You gradually emerge *out* of a stupor, pull yourself *out* from under the covers, climb *into* your robe, stretch *out* your limbs, and walk *in* a daze *out* of the bedroom *into* the bathroom. You look *in* the mirror and see your face staring *out* at you. You reach *into* the medicine cabinet, take *out* the toothpaste, squeeze *out* some toothpaste, put the toothbrush *into* your mouth, brush your teeth *in* a hurry, and rinse *out* your mouth. At breakfast you perform a host of further *in-out* moves—pouring *out* the coffee, setting *out* the dishes, putting the toast *in* the toaster, spreading *out* the jam on the toast, and on and on. Once you are more awake you might even get lost *in* the newspaper, might enter *into* a conversation, which leads to your speaking *out* on some topic. (30-31)

Though Johnson’s focus in this passage is on the CONTAINER schema, as the italics show, his example also makes clear how pervasive the PATH image schema is in our experience, as slightly different italics would indicate (e.g., *out of*, *out from*). It also illustrates how image schemas, in particular PATH and CONTAINER, two of our most basic, are intertwined in our experience. Their “relations,” as Johnson puts it in the quote already cited, “make up the fabric of our experience, that is, of our understanding” (126). The passage is

especially noteworthy, though, for how it highlights the conceptual analogies between our physical experience of obviously literal containers like toothpaste tubes and toasters, our experience of less obvious containers like clothes, furniture, and rooms, and our understanding and experience of more abstract domains like psychological states and communication. Such analogies are possible because image schemas, which arise from our embodied physical experience, are precisely the structures we use through metaphorical projection to make sense of our social and epistemic experience.

We utilize the concept of containment in a multitude of abstract domains, as when we think and talk about relationships, emotions, language, time, and morality, to name but a few. We say that someone is *in* a relationship or *in* a club, for example, that someone is *in* love, or *in* a good or bad mood. We talk and think about linguistic expressions as containers for ideas. We think about periods of time as containers, as when we say *in* the morning, *in* the summer, or *in* the twenty-first century. We say, for example, that someone's dress is *within* the bounds of decency or that someone's actions *crossed* a moral boundary. What is crucial to underscore, however, is that in these and all other cases where we employ the concept of containment, much more than just the way we talk about things is at stake. The examples listed above are more than "just expressions." Rather, the image schematic structure involved imposes constraints on the kinds of inferences we can draw concerning the given topic or domain. The image schemas we use, in other words, determine how we *reason*.

Image schemas are experiential gestalts, which means they have part-whole structure that, while simple, is differentiated enough to entail a certain logic. The structural relationships among the parts and between the parts and the whole can therefore be projected metaphorically and used to reason about abstract domains. The CONTAINER image schema, for example, has a simple structure consisting of a boundary, an interior, and an exterior. Given this structure, a particular kind of logic follows. If something is inside a container, then it cannot be outside it. Conversely, if something is outside a container, it cannot be inside it. This may be so self-evident as to seem trivial, but it is important enough to have a name in classical logic: the law of the excluded middle, which states that either a proposition is true or its negation is. From Aristotle to Bertrand Russell, philosophers have built complex formal systems out of this logic of containment. The properties of containers also yield a logic of transitivity, which states that if a relation holds between A and B and the same relation holds between B and C, then that relation holds between A and C. If an object is in a container, and that container is in another container, then the object is in the other container, too. Again, this appears self-evident in the context of literal containers on account of our pervasive embodied experience of containment and hence our largely unconscious awareness of the kinds of logic it entails. But it is a logic projected metaphorically and used to reason in a host of abstract domains. Lakoff argues that the CONTAINER schema also forms the basis of Boolean logic (*Women* 456-8), on which the operations of all modern digital electronics depend.

The image schema that informs most of my analyses of Kafka's texts is PATH. As indicated above in reference to Johnson's illustration of the CONTAINER schema, the PATH image schema is often implicated in instances of CONTAINER, and it is similarly pervasive in our experience. We trace paths constantly throughout our daily lives, and we use the PATH image schema to structure and give meaning to a wide array of our activities and

experiences, from the mundane to the profound. Johnson's explanation of the PATH image schema is the best I know of, conveying its pervasiveness in our experience, describing its internal structure along with the logic that structure entails, and indicating its range of metaphorical elaboration in abstract domains. I therefore quote his description at length:

Our lives are filled with paths that connect up our spatial world. There is the path from your bed to the bathroom, from the stove to the kitchen table, from your house to the grocery store, from San Francisco to Los Angeles, and from the Earth to the Moon. Some of these paths involve an actual physical surface that you traverse, such as the path from your house to the grocery store. Others involve a projected path, such as the path of a bullet shot into the air. And certain paths exist, at present, only in your imagination, such as the path from the Earth to the nearest star outside our solar system.

In all of these cases there is a single, recurring image-schematic pattern with a definite internal structure. In every case of PATHS there are always the same parts: (1) a source, or starting point; (2) a goal, or endpoint; and (3) a sequence of contiguous locations connecting the source with the goal. Paths are thus routes for moving from one point to another.

As a consequence of these parts and their relations, our image schema for PATH has certain typical characteristics. (a) Because the beginning and end points of a path are connected by a series of contiguous locations, it follows that, if you start at point A and move along a path to a further point B, then you have passed through all the intermediate points in between. (b) We can impose directionality on a path. Paths are not inherently directional—a path connecting point A with point B does not necessarily go in one direction. But human beings have purposes in traversing paths, so they tend to experience them as directional. That is, we move along a path *from* point A *toward* point B. (c) Paths have temporal dimensions mapped onto them. I start at point A (the source) at time T_1 , and move to point B (the goal) at time T_2 . In this way, there is a time line mapped onto the path. It follows that, if point B is further down the path than point A, and I have reached point B is [sic] moving along the path, then I am at a later time than when I began. Such linear spatialization of time gives rise to one important way we understand temporality.

This definite internal structure for our PATH schema provides the basis for a large number of metaphorical mappings from concrete, spatial domains onto more abstract domains. Let us examine the way the PATH image schema grounds the metaphor PURPOSES ARE PHYSICAL GOALS. Here *goals* are understood as end points toward which my various physical actions can be directed. In the metaphor we are thus understanding very abstract *purposes* (such as writing a book, getting a Ph.D., finding happiness) in terms of the performance of physical acts in reaching a spatial goal....

In these cases of abstract purposes, we understand our progress in terms of the metaphorical interpretation of the PATH schema by mapping *states* onto *physical locations*....

[T]he PURPOSES ARE PHYSICAL GOALS metaphor...is but one of several important metaphors constrained by the PATH schema. In our culture, for example,

we have a metaphorical understanding of the passage of time based on movement along a physical path. We understand mental activities or operations that result in some determinate outcome according to the PATH schema. And we understand the course of processes in general metaphorically as movement along a path toward some end point. (113-17)

I have dealt with the concept of image schemas at such length in this introductory chapter because, as the most basic type of generic conceptual structure, image schemas figure most prominently in my readings of Kafka's text, given my main argument that Kafka foregrounds such structure in his fiction. Since image schemas are pervasive in our experience and thus thoroughly inform our understanding and reasoning, it may reasonably be argued that the evidence of such structures in Kafka's texts would be as inevitable as it is in any other linguistic data. My analyses show, however, that Kafka demonstrably highlights these generic conceptual structures, and the way he does so is through striking, unconventional image schema transformations.

As emphasized above, image schemas are not static, rigid structures, but rather ongoing dynamic processes. Lakoff lists several examples of standard, conventional image schema transformations that form a fundamental part of our cognitive makeup. One he identifies is *mass to multiplex*. You perform this transformation when you imagine a group of people or a stand of trees, say, and then "zoom in" to imagine the group of people as separate individuals or the stand as individual trees. You can of course reverse the direction of this transformation by "pulling focus" and imagining the individuals as a crowd or the separate trees as a stand. Another conventional image schema transformation is *superimposition*. Imagine, for example, a square inside a circle, and then expand the square in imagination until it encompasses the circle. You can easily reverse this image schema transformation, too, of course. Another conventional image schema transformation is *trajectory*. You can mentally trace a moving object and imagine the path it has traversed or will traverse. The last conventional image schema transformation Lakoff describes is *path-focus to endpoint-focus*. Imagine a moving object and follow it in imagination until it comes to rest (440-44). The latter two kinds of image schema transformations are obviously related, but the last one, *path-focus to endpoint-focus*, has a conventional structure. It is possible to reverse it, as with the *multiplex to mass* or *superimposition* transformations, but such a mental operation would be more an instance of the *trajectory* transformation. A not unconventional variation on the PATH image schema transformation, one that may be easily reversed, is *segment-focus to path-focus*. But the conventional transformation of the PATH image schema always goes in one direction, from *path-focus to endpoint-focus*. These explanations and examples, although the descriptions provided consistently refer explicitly to mental operations, might perhaps give the impression that these mechanisms are visual phenomena. But that impression results from the fact that vision is our dominant sense. As emphasized above with respect to image schemas, image schema transformations are also multimodal phenomena.

My analyses of Kafka's works show that one of the primary ways he highlights generic conceptual structure is by evoking novel, unconventional transformations of the image schemas he employs. The PATH image schema is one that figures prominently throughout Kafka's fiction. This study analyzes only four short works—the brief text "Von den Gleichnissen," the short story *Das Urteil*, the Zürau aphorisms, and the story

Ein Bericht für eine Akademie—but readers familiar with the longer works, such as the novels *Der Proceß* and *Das Schloß*, need reflect only momentarily to recognize the central place of the PATH image schema in Kafka’s imagination. Consistently throughout his oeuvre, it is the conventional transformation of the PATH image schema from *path-focus to endpoint-focus* that Kafka disrupts, performing an astounding array of striking unconventional transformations. Given the fundamental role that image schemas and their transformations play in our everyday functioning as well as in our abstract reasoning, the consequences for our understanding of Kafka are profound.

Metaphor

The traditional view of metaphor is demonstrably, empirically false. Most people, and perhaps most especially literary scholars, tend to think of metaphor as a primarily linguistic phenomenon, a peripheral, exotic, deviant, poetic use of language. But metaphor is primarily a matter of thought. It is a pervasive feature of the human conceptual system that is *expressed* linguistically, as well as in other modes, such as vision and gesture, and that structures our knowledge of every domain of human social and mental life, from economics and politics to philosophy and mathematics to art and emotion. It is essential for drawing the kinds of inferences that knowledge in such abstract domains consists of, and for rational thought in general.

Lakoff and Johnson’s 1980 *Metaphors We Live By* was the groundbreaking work on metaphor that has since led to three decades of research in a wide variety of disciplines substantiating the authors’ basic claim that metaphor is a fundamental structure of the human mind. The recently published *Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought* provides a state of the art survey of this work, with contributions from scholars in diverse fields such as neurobiology, philosophy, psychology, linguistics, education, literature, cultural anthropology, artificial intelligence, mathematics, legal studies, psychiatry, visual studies, gesture studies, and musicology (Gibbs, *Cambridge Handbook*). In their 1999 collaboration *Philosophy in the Flesh*, Lakoff and Johnson provide a succinct argument dismantling the basic tenets of the traditional view of metaphor (122-27). For the purposes of this introduction, I follow their line of argumentation and supplement their examples with some of my own to illustrate the points they make.

First, if metaphor were a mere matter of language, the demonstrable systematic correspondences that are evident between various linguistic expressions of a given conceptual metaphor would not exist. Expressions such as *This relationship is at a dead end*, *We’re going in different directions*, *Our relationship is at a crossroads*, *We’ve come a long way together*, *This relationship is holding me back*, or *We’ve had a few bumps in the road but we’ve made it this far all right* all represent instances of the same conceptual metaphor by which a relationship (the target domain) is understood and reasoned about in terms of a metaphorical journey (the source domain). The metaphor may be expressed as A RELATIONSHIP IS A JOURNEY. If metaphor were purely a linguistic phenomenon, these expressions and dozens of others like them would be totally unrelated. But metaphor is a conceptual phenomenon, a fundamental and pervasive instrument of the human mind, and metaphorical linguistic expressions reflect that circumstance. “Metaphorical

thought,” write Lakoff and Johnson, “in the form of cross-domain mappings is primary; metaphorical language is secondary” (123).

Second, if metaphor were a peripheral, exotic use of language characteristic of poetry and rhetoric, as the traditional view holds, then ordinary everyday language would not be full of metaphorical expressions like the examples adduced above. Expressions like *We’ve come a long way together* or *This relationship is holding me back* are not unprecedented rhetorical flourishes of the kind supposedly confined to poetry. They are instead utterly conventional, everyday ways of talking about relationships. Indeed, relationships are a good example of something that is very hard to talk about without using metaphor—as is the case with most abstract domains. Furthermore, such expressions represent linguistic examples of one of the most common, ordinary ways we *think* about relationships, which is in terms of journeys. Everyday language abounds with similar such metaphoric expressions, and that is because conceptual metaphor, which such expressions reflect, is a pervasive feature of all human thought, both quotidian and profound.

Third, metaphor is not a deviant, improper, or untrue use of language. The examples of everyday metaphorical expressions cited above provide evidence to the contrary. The false assumption that metaphor is untrue, or an improper use of language, is based on the mistaken idea that language is primarily literal. This view is grounded in an objectivist philosophical tradition that understands language chiefly as a means of referring literally and truthfully to an already existing reality, which language supposedly accurately and objectively reflects. In such a tradition this purportedly literal relationship between words and the world is simply assumed a priori, and the question of how this relationship is established simply ignored. The issue relates to categories, as discussed above, with the objectivist view assuming that our categories just somehow correspond to the world as it supposedly objectively exists, or would exist even without the mediation of a human nervous system. But empirical research has demonstrated that our categories depend ineradicably on the kinds of bodies and brains we have. We cannot know the world except through a human nervous system in a human body, of which metaphor is an essential feature. Metaphors, consequently, are not untrue expressions. We cannot know the world from a God’s-eye view, which would represent a total, absolute truth (Lakoff, *Women* 260-65). But we can know the world from a human perspective, which means understanding it primarily through metaphor. Each metaphor expresses a partial truth about our experience, which is the only kind of realistic human truth we have. But because we typically have a number of different conceptual metaphors to understand a given abstract concept, we can have multiple partial perspectives which allow a realistic, human objectivism.

Fourth, the notion is wrong that common everyday linguistic expressions of conceptual metaphors such as the examples cited above are “dead metaphors.” This assumption is based on the mistaken views already discussed that metaphor is a linguistic phenomenon rather than a conceptual one, and that most language is literal. To be sure, there are cases of dead metaphors in language, but these are exceedingly rare. An example Lakoff and Johnson provide is the English word *pedigree*, which derives from the French *ped de gris* (“foot of a grouse”). The original French expression was a metaphor whereby the image of a grouse’s foot was mapped onto a family tree diagram, a conceptual mapping made possible by the shared image schematic structure of the two

concepts (124). Today, however, we no longer think of family lineages in terms of a grouse's foot, even though we still use the word *pedigree*. This expression represents an example of a truly dead metaphor.

Notably, the concept *family tree* expresses a metaphor that is still very much alive in our conceptual systems, namely, SOCIAL GROUPS ARE PLANTS. We might inquire about someone's ethnic heritage by asking, *What are your roots?* We can refer to producing offspring as being *fruitful*, and we can likewise comment on the similarities in personality between parents and their children by invoking the proverb *The fruit never falls far from the tree*. We might express differences within an extended family by saying something like *Their branch of the clan produced doctors and lawyers, but theirs produced delinquents*. The same source domain of plants is conventionally used to think about social groups more complex than families, such as institutions, as when we refer to the local *branch* of a bank, for instance. And it is precisely because the metaphor expressed in the concept *family tree* is still a living part of our conceptual systems that it can produce novel, creative expressions. One might say something unprecedented like *That branch of the family withered up and died when the only son perished in a tragic boating accident before he could father children*, and one would be effortlessly understood because the term *family tree* is not a dead linguistic metaphor but rather the expression of a conceptual metaphor that is alive and active in our conceptual systems. Similarly, the expressions cited above that reflect the conceptual metaphor A RELATIONSHIP IS A JOURNEY are not dead metaphors, since we can produce any number of novel linguistic expressions based on the live conceptual metaphor. An unconventional statement such as *They took the express lane to marriage* or Aretha Franklin's song lyric *Goin' ridin' on the freeway of love in my pink Cadillac* are comprehensible and indeed only possible in the first place because the metaphor underlying such novel expressions is a living part of our conceptual systems.

The final point that Lakoff and Johnson make in their case against the traditional view of metaphor targets the false assumption that metaphors express preexisting similarities. There are a number of arguments that refute this notion. First, with respect to the examples provided above, there is clearly nothing inherently, literally journey-like in relationships. You may be in a relationship with someone whom you never go on a trip with anywhere. But you can still use any of the expressions listed above, or, since the metaphor A RELATIONSHIP IS A JOURNEY is a living part of our conceptual systems, any number of other related expressions drawing on your knowledge of journeys in order to describe and understand your relationship. Lakoff and Johnson stress that the metaphor does not merely reflect supposedly preexisting similarities, but rather that "the mapping creates the similarities" (126). Second, there are cases in which the source and target domains of a conceptual metaphor do share fundamental aspects. The example invoked is the metaphor KNOWING IS SEEING, which finds linguistic expression in phrases such as *I see what you mean*, *Do I make myself clear?*, or *Let's try and shed some light on the situation*. Because vision is our primary sense, it is one of our chief ways of knowing, and it is often the case that we come to know something by literally seeing it. But in the examples of the metaphor KNOWING IS SEEING cited above, there is nothing that you literally see when you understand what someone means, a person explaining him- or herself does not literally become clear, and a person explaining a situation does not literally cast light anywhere. The fact that the domains of knowing and seeing share some

conceptual structure does not mean that metaphor expresses literal similarity. Third, if metaphors expressed preexisting similarities, then the relation between the two domains involved should be symmetric. We ought to be able to make bidirectional mappings between both domains. But this is not the case. In metaphor there is a source domain that provides the schematic structure for a conceptual mapping and a target domain onto which that structure is mapped. The mapping always goes in one direction. We do not think about literal journeys in terms of relationships; we never use our knowledge of relationships to reason about journeys. There are certainly cases of conceptual metaphors in which the same target and source domains are reversed in the mappings. We can say things, for instance, like *He had trouble getting back into gear after his vacation*, *At this point I'm running on fumes*, or *What you're saying just doesn't compute*, all of which express the conceptual metaphor PEOPLE ARE MACHINES. We can also say things like *My car gets temperamental on cold mornings* or *My computer just did not want to cooperate*, which express the conceptual metaphor MACHINES ARE PEOPLE. But these metaphorical expressions represent quite distinct conceptual mappings, and in each case, the mappings go in one direction only. This evidence provides further proof that metaphor does not express preexisting literal similarity.

The last argument Lakoff and Johnson make against the idea that metaphor reflects objectively preexisting similarity is the fact that for all abstract concepts, which have minimal literal inherent conceptual structure, there are typically a number of different source domains that we conventionally use to be able to reason about them, depending on our particular purposes. In the case of relationships, for example, we often use the domain of journeys to conceptualize the abstract concept, as discussed above. But we sometimes use other source domains for thinking about relationships. The domain of buildings, for example, forms the source of expressions like *Their decision to get married means a solid foundation for their future* or *Our bond has been built up over years of constant compromise*. Sometimes we use the domain of plants to think about relationships, as when we say things like *We've grown together* or *They're like two peas in a pod*. We sometimes think of relationships in terms of a struggle, in which case we might say something like *They're always at each others' throats* or *She's got the upper hand*. There are several other domains from which we can import knowledge to conceptualize relationships, and the fact that we can do so, and do in fact do so, represents further proof that metaphors do not just reflect preexisting, objective similarities but rather structure our understanding of abstract domains in particular ways for particular purposes. "For all these reasons," Lakoff and Johnson state, "the similarity hypothesis is false" (127).

One final feature of conceptual metaphor needs to be mentioned for the purposes of the argument I advance in this study. Like other conceptual structure, metaphors can also be classified along a scale of specificity. Lakoff and Turner emphasize this aspect of conceptual metaphor in *More Than Cool Reason* (80-83). Some conceptual metaphors are generic-level structures, such as EVENTS ARE ACTIONS. This metaphor provides the basis for the common, everyday mental process of personification. When we say something like *The noise gave me a headache*, we conceptualize the auditory experience of noise as an agent, the physiological change of state we experience as an object that we receive, and the causation of that change as the action of giving us an object. An example Lakoff and Turner discuss at length is the event of death, which we might conceptualize, for

example, as an agent that takes someone from us, as a thief that steals time from us, as a pursuer chasing us, as an adversary we have to confront, as a devourer that eats us up, or as a reaper that cuts us down. Each of these conceptualizations of the event of death entails more specific conceptual metaphors, but all are governed by the generic metaphor EVENTS ARE ACTIONS. Precisely because this metaphor is generic, it is used in thinking about a wide range of phenomena, from natural forces to everyday events to abstract concepts. At the opposite end of the spectrum of cognitive specificity are specific-level conceptual metaphors. The metaphor discussed above, A RELATIONSHIP IS A JOURNEY, is an example of such a specific-level metaphor. The particular ways just mentioned by which the generic EVENTS ARE ACTIONS metaphor is specified for the event of death may also be represented as specific-level conceptual metaphors, namely, DEATH IS A TAKER, DEATH IS A THIEF, DEATH IS A PURSUER, DEATH IS AN ADVERSARY, DEATH IS A DEVOURER, and DEATH IS A REAPER, each of which finds expression in a variety of linguistic forms. Another specific-level metaphor extensively treated in the literature is LIFE IS A JOURNEY, with its specific-level metaphorical entailments COUNSELORS ARE GUIDES, DIFFICULTIES ARE IMPEDIMENTS TO TRAVEL, and PROGRESS IS THE DISTANCE TRAVELED. We have other specific-level metaphors that structure our understanding of the abstract concept of life and the event of death, such as LIFE IS A BURDEN, LIFE IS A DAY, LIFE IS A FLAME, LIFE IS A FLUID, LIFE IS A PLAY, LIFE IS A POSSESSION, LIFE IS LIGHT, DEATH IS DEPARTURE, DEATH IS NIGHT, DEATH IS SLEEP, and DEATH IS WINTER. Other specific-level conceptual metaphors include BAD IS BLACK, GOOD IS WHITE, LOVE IS FIRE, PEOPLE ARE PLANTS, and the metaphors mentioned above PEOPLE ARE MACHINES and MACHINES ARE PEOPLE, to name a few.

Between generic-level and specific-level conceptual metaphors there exists a middle, more basic level, analogous to basic-level categories between superordinate and subordinate categories. Since Joseph Grady's groundbreaking 1997 work "Foundations of Meaning: Primary Metaphors and Primary Scenes" it has been customary to refer to such basic-level metaphors as primary metaphors. These metaphors are primary in the sense that they arise during early childhood development from neural connections formed from strong correlations in experience. But the correlations that primary metaphors represent continue to exist throughout a human being's lifetime. Take, for instance, the primary metaphor KNOWING IS SEEING mentioned above. For infants and children, one of the main ways they come to know their environment is through the sense of vision. In typical situations, or "primary scenes," in early childhood, understanding something literally does involve seeing it. As we grow older and develop linguistic and conceptual faculties, we pull apart the two domains of seeing and understanding. We gain knowledge through routes other than the visual, and we recognize that despite the strong correlation in our experience between scenarios of seeing and understanding, either can occur without the other. But these neural connections formed during early childhood between seeing something and understanding it remain active and form the basis of the conceptual metaphor, so that we are able to conceive of and talk about abstract understanding in terms of vision, even when what we understand is not literally visible, as in *I see what you mean* or *His message was clear*.

Another major primary metaphor, one that my analyses in this study identify as central in Kafka's work, is STATES ARE LOCATIONS. When we experience a state of physical or emotional discomfort as infants, for example, and express this by crying, our

caregivers usually pick us up and move us to a different location, which results in a change of our experiential state. We experience a different physiological and emotional state in our cribs from that which we experience in our highchairs or in a car or a stroller, for example. This strong correlation between locations and states establishes the neural connections that give rise to the primary metaphor STATES ARE LOCATIONS, and it is a correlation in human experience that continues throughout our lives. Every day, you experience a different physiological, psychological, and emotional state in bed from that which you experience at the dinner table or in the bathroom. The states you experience at home are different from those you experience at work or somewhere on vacation. A correlate primary metaphor of STATES ARE LOCATIONS is, of course, CHANGE OF STATE IS CHANGE OF LOCATION. There are hundreds of primary metaphors, which are universal in human cultures because of the kinds of bodies and nervous systems we have, but some of the major ones include INTIMACY IS WARMTH, IMPORTANCE IS SIZE, MORE IS UP, CATEGORIES ARE CONTAINERS, SIMILARITY IS PROXIMITY, HELP IS PHYSICAL SUPPORT, TIME IS MOTION, CHANGE IS MOTION, ACTIONS ARE SELF-PROPELLED MOTIONS, PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS, CAUSES ARE PHYSICAL FORCES, CONTROL IS UP, UNDERSTANDING IS OBJECT MANIPULATION, and SEEING IS TOUCHING. Such metaphors structure our experience and understanding of abstract conceptual domains, and all arise from neural connections formed during early childhood through strong correlations in experience, correlations that continue to characterize our experience throughout our lives.

Given my argument that Kafka highlights generic conceptual structure such as image schemas and superordinate categories, the distinction between the different levels of specificity in conceptual metaphor is significant. My analyses of Kafka's works show a tendency to foreground primary metaphors that is consistent with his emphasis on schematic conceptual structure. This strategy can account for the myriad specific interpretations his works have invited over the course of the last century and hence also for their unparalleled popularity and success.

UNDERSTANDING IS HEARING

The epigraph chosen for this chapter, Goethe's observation that "Es hört doch jeder nur, was er versteht," has double significance for me. For one, it describes my own experience of learning about cognitive science. As it has not been all that long since I began studying the field, I can still remember when I finally "got it," finally really understood the basic premise that the mind is embodied. I had read major works in the field such as Lakoff and Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By*, Lakoff's *Moral Politics*, Turner's *Literary Mind*, and Lakoff's *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things*, in that order, and had thought I understood them. After all, since these books are all in English, and since the authors all write exceptionally clearly, and since I am an educated speaker of English, I naturally assumed that I understood everything I had read (although I admit I did have problems understanding the section on conceptual blending in *The Literary Mind*, my first exposure to the concept). I read these books during the period from early 2006 to early 2008. But it wasn't until I read Talmy's "Force Dynamics in Language and Thought" in early 2008, just over two years ago, that I had my "Aha!" moment. And even then, it has only been through extensive study in the intervening years that I have gained

a deeper understanding of the field, not only of specific concepts but also of the basic premise of the embodied mind. Such a learning curve is entirely understandable and natural from a cognitive perspective, for it simply takes time and repeated exposure to a new idea for new neural connections to form. If Talmy's article had been the first work in the field I had read, it probably would not have been such a revelation for me. I have been acutely aware of this experience while writing this chapter and at times had the impression that the effort may well be futile. I cannot realistically expect readers unfamiliar with the field to have formed the neural connections that would be necessary for a full understanding in the course of reading thirty some-odd pages of brief introduction to a few basic concepts. Nevertheless, I do feel that explaining the concepts I will be employing throughout this study in my analyses of Kafka's texts, especially the important distinction between generic- and specific-level conceptual structure, has been necessary in order to be able to make my argument by pursuing the kinds of close readings I do. And I hope that with repeated exposure to these concepts in reference to specific examples in Kafka's work, the new neural connections necessary for understanding the radical notion of the embodied mind may begin, at least, to develop for my readers.

The other significance of Goethe's epigram for my study is that it describes, almost in reverse, as it were, the process of understanding Kafka. Goethe implies that typically there is more in what one hears than what one actually understands. This may very well most often be the case, as it was with my own salient experience of studying cognitive science. But with Kafka, as I demonstrate throughout this study, since he consistently highlights generic conceptual structure and avoids the specific, there is less that is actually given in the language, and this circumstance in turn encourages readers to provide more conceptual detail according to their own subjective preferences and proclivities. Nabokov's interpretation of *Die Verwandlung* described above represents a good example of this conceptual process readers engage in with Kafka's work. But more than merely illustrate the tendency of readers to conceptualize at a more specific level the generic language given in Kafka's texts, Nabokov's lecture also demonstrates the affective involvement this process typically entails for readers.

Before he begins his reading proper of Kafka's text, Nabokov offers some observations on the nature of human perception that are consistent with the findings of contemporary cognitive science. Taking issue with the label *fantasy* as applied to Kafka's story, he makes some insightful remarks about "what is commonly called reality":

Let us therefore examine what *reality* is, in order to discover in what manner and to what extent so-called fantasies depart from so-called reality.

Let us take three types of men walking through the same landscape. Number One is a city man on a well-deserved vacation. Number Two is a professional botanist. Number Three is a local farmer. Number One, the city man, is what is called a realistic, commonsensical, matter-of-fact type: he sees trees as *trees* and knows from his map that the road he is following is a nice new road leading to Newton, where there is a nice eating place recommended to him by a friend in his office. The botanist looks around and sees his environment in the very exact terms of plant life, precise biological and classified units such as specific trees and grasses, flowers and ferns, and for him *this* is reality; to him the world of the

stolid tourist (who cannot distinguish an oak from an elm) seems a fantastic, vague, dreamy, never-never world. Finally, the world of the local farmer differs from the two others in that his world is intensely emotional and personal since he has been born and bred there, and knows every trail and individual tree, and every shadow from every tree across every trail, all in warm connection with his everyday work, and his childhood, and a thousand small things and patterns which the other two—the humdrum tourist and the botanical taxonomist—simply cannot know in the given place at the given time. Our farmer will not know the relation of the surrounding vegetation to a botanical conception of the world, and the botanist will know nothing of any importance to him about that barn or that old field or that old house under its cottonwoods, which are afloat, as it were, in a medium of personal memories for one who was born there.

So here we have three different worlds—three men, ordinary men who have different realities—and, of course, we could bring a number of other beings: a blind man with a dog, a hunter with a dog, a dog with his man, a painter cruising in quest of a sunset, a girl out of gas— — In every case it would be a world completely different from the rest since the most objective words *tree, road, flower, sky, barn, thumb, rain* have, in each, totally different subjective connotations. Indeed, this subjective life is so strong that it makes an empty and broken shell of the so-called objective existence. The only way back to reality is the following one: we can take these several individual worlds, mix them thoroughly together, scoop up a drop of that mixture, and call it *objective reality*....

So when we say *reality* we are really thinking of all this—in one drop—an average sample of a mixture of a million individual realities. And it is in this sense (of human reality) that I use the term *reality* when placing it against a backdrop, such as the worlds of “The Carrick,” “Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,” and “The Metamorphosis,” which are specific fantasies. (252-53)

Nabokov makes this point about our experience of our external environment, “reality,” in order to stress the ways that fictional works that depict unreal circumstances, such as a man waking up as an arthropod, can reveal important but hidden, as it were, aspects of reality, and can even become for readers part of their subjective experience of external reality. The widespread currency of the expression *Kafkaesque*—even people who have never read Kafka know the term and know more or less what it means and when to use it—suggests that this has indeed been the case during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries with respect to Kafka’s fiction. This is not a matter of Kafka’s work merely reflecting some supposedly preexisting conditions of modernity, but rather of his work becoming a part of what constitutes the modern condition. However, I cite this passage from Nabokov’s lecture in order to point out what seems to me an ironic inconsistency in his reasoning. He is right that much of our experience of the world is subjective in crucial ways, although cognitive science would stress that as members of the same species we all have basically the same bodies and the same nervous systems, so we can be certain that much of our basic perceptual experience is common to all of us. Of course, this basic human experience is shaped in fundamental ways by our particular culture and the particular social groups we belong to as well as our own individual

histories, as Nabokov correctly observes. But his subsequent reading of Kafka's fictional story strongly suggests, without making the claim explicit, that paradoxically it is somehow possible to have an "objective" view of a fictional story. His insistence that Kafka's protagonist is not a cockroach and not just a generic insect but specifically a beetle, and not more specifically a dung beetle but just a big beetle, shows how personally invested he is in his own subjective reading. He does not even consider the possibility that it might sensibly be considered a fantastical creature with some features of a beetle perhaps, others of a cockroach maybe, and others, such as its size and the fact that it understands human language, that are not characteristic of any genera or species of insect that exists in the real world, including beetles. He can acknowledge that an urban dweller might see trees where a botanist would see oaks and elms and claim that such differences are a normal part of our experience of reality. Yet he apparently cannot accept that a reader who sees Kafka's fictional creature as a cockroach is justified in that subjective experience.

Nabokov's lecture illustrates that Kafka's works do more than just allow for or prompt readers' subjective specifications by highlighting generic conceptual structure. They also evoke strong affective responses in readers regarding the validity of their own subjective readings. By engaging deeply entrenched cognitive structures, such as the pervasive image schemas that we use constantly in order to function successfully in the world and the primary metaphors that organize much of our everyday subjective experience, including the judgments we constantly make about that experience, Kafka pushes deep cognitive buttons. This makes readers feel very strongly about their own personal understandings of his work. It even leads many, like Nabokov, to mistakenly believe that their own subjective interpretation is somehow objective, that the meaning they find in Kafka's works actually exists in the marks of ink on paper rather than in their own minds.

“Von den Gleichnissen”

Alles Vergängliche ist nur ein Gleichnis...
—Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Composed late in Kafka’s career, in 1922, two years before his death at the age of forty, the brief text “Von den Gleichnissen” has been seen by numerous scholars as representative either of particular characteristic aspects of Kafka’s work (Fülleborn; Elm; Emrich 97) or of his work as a whole (Alleman 148-50; Kerkhoff 191; Bezzel 114). And whereas some have gone so far as to take the text as symptomatic of the status of literature and language in the modern era (Arntzen 153; Hasselblatt 93-94; Strohschneider-Kohrs; Walther 80; Turk), others would no doubt take issue with the claim that there even is something such as a Kafkan poetics in general, preferring to emphasize the distinctions in Kafka’s works over different creative periods (Gray; Hiebel 181-89). What is perhaps most striking, though, is that even among those critics who agree that “Von den Gleichnissen” is paradigmatic for Kafka’s work as a whole, or for certain important aspects of it, widespread disagreement reigns over what exactly that means. There are those who maintain that the text illustrates the potential for transcendence (Kloocke 80; Strohschneider-Kohrs; Cooper 125-28) and those who claim that it refutes any such possibility (Phillipi, “Parabolisches” 321, “K. lebte” 271; Walther 80). There are those who say it demonstrates the reconciliation of antitheses (Emrich 97; Arntzen 158-59) and those who insist it shows their absolute irreconcilability (Hasselblatt 93-94; Walther 80; Gray 286).

Are some of these thinkers right and others wrong? Or is rather the assertion that “[i]t is difficult to be wrong about Kafka” (Kudszus 158) perhaps more accurate? Of course, it is always possible to be wrong, even about Kafka. One might argue, for example, that Gregor Samsa in *The Metamorphosis* wakes up to find himself transformed into a poodle or a spider monkey, and one would simply be wrong. The actual textual evidence in this case, as unspecific and schematic as it may be, nevertheless sets up determinate constraints on interpretive possibilities that would make such an assertion untenable. Similarly, one would be wrong if one claimed that Kafka wrote his stories in English, that he wrote *Winnie the Pooh*, or that he lived in Philadelphia in the eighteenth century. These claims are demonstrably, empirically false. The point I wish to stress with these hypotheticals is that the extreme poststructuralist view that all meaning is indeterminate and that there is no reality outside of discourse, as appealing as it may be to some literary critics, particularly when dealing with Kafka, is simply untenable. How, then, can such a divergence of views like that described above—and that concerning one very brief text—be accounted for?

My position is that “Von den Gleichnissen” is indeed representative of Kafka’s work as a whole in key respects, and I aim to show how the text fosters the kind of diverse understandings discussed above. The disparate readings it has invited over the

course of its reception history in fact stand as evidence of the way in which it is representative of Kafka's work in general. Many have argued that the range of meanings a work of art invokes—any work of art—depends to a large degree on its recipients' interests and predispositions (Schank; Bordwell). Some have even held that the potential for multiple significances is constitutive of art in general (Widdowson). I agree with these positions, with the caveat, of course, that not just *any* meaning or interpretation is valid, since the material reality of a given work of art—in the case of a literary work, the linguistic data that comprise the text—inevitably imposes certain constraints on any understanding of it. But what I hope to show in this study is how Kafka takes such potential and makes it a principle of his art, primarily by consistently foregrounding generic or schematic conceptual structure, and additionally by frequently evoking incomplete conceptual structures. It is precisely these related and empirically demonstrable tendencies that allow for the wide range of interpretations Kafka's works have sustained over the decades, including even apparently mutually exclusive ones, for they prompt readers to provide their own conceptual details and to complete the incomplete conceptual structures themselves.

A Generic Concept

As noted above, the text under consideration is brief, so for convenience' sake I reproduce it here in its entirety. The translation that follows is my own, as will be the case throughout this study unless otherwise noted. I deliberately choose not to translate the key term *Gleichnis*, for reasons that will become clear in the course of my discussion.

Viele beklagen sich, daß die Worte der Weisen immer wieder nur Gleichnisse seien, aber unverwendbar im täglichen Leben, und nur dieses allein haben wir. Wenn der Weise sagt: „Gehe hinüber“, so meint er nicht, daß man auf die andere Seite hinübergehen sollte, was man immerhin noch leisten könnte, wenn das Ergebnis des Weges wert wäre, sondern er meint irgendein sagenhaftes Drüben, etwas, das wir nicht kennen, das auch von ihm nicht näher zu bezeichnen ist und das uns also hier gar nichts helfen kann. Alle diese Gleichnisse wollen eigentlich nur sagen, daß das Unfaßbare unfaßbar ist, und das haben wir gewußt. Aber das, womit wir uns jeden Tag abmühen, sind andere Dinge.

Darauf sagte einer: „Warum wehrt ihr euch? Würdet ihr den Gleichnissen folgen, dann wäret ihr selbst Gleichnisse geworden und damit schon der täglichen Mühe frei.“

Ein anderer sagte: „Ich wette, daß auch das ein Gleichnis ist.“

Der erste sagte: „Du hast gewonnen.“

Der zweite sagte: „Aber leider nur im Gleichnis.“

Der erste sagte: „Nein, in Wirklichkeit; im Gleichnis hast du verloren.“

Many complain that the words of the wise are only ever Gleichnisse, but useless in daily life, and that is all we have. When the wise man says, “Cross over,” he doesn't mean that one should cross over to the other side, which one could do easily enough, if the results of the way were worth it; rather, he means some kind

of mystical beyond, something we do not know, something even he himself cannot describe more precisely, and which therefore cannot be of any use to us here. What all these Gleichnisse really only mean to say is that the ungraspable is ungraspable, and we know that already. But the things we have to deal with every day are a different matter.

To which someone said: “Why are you so defensive? If you would only follow the Gleichnisse, you would become Gleichnisse yourselves and with that free of your daily cares.”

Someone else said: “I bet that, too, is a Gleichnis.”

The first said: “You win.”

The second said: “But unfortunately only in Gleichnis.”

The first said: “No, in reality. In Gleichnis, you lose.”

Before addressing the text proper, a few words on the title are in order. Although not Kafka’s—the text was given its title by Max Brod after Kafka’s death—and though seemingly rather uninspired, it is apt, summing up, as is its purpose (Pratt 59-61; Genette 81-85), what the text that follows it is about. What makes it so unremarkable is precisely its formulaic, generic character. It rings of the titles of countless eighteenth- and nineteenth-century treatises, or of the chapter titles in Nietzsche’s *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. So in that respect, as well, it is fitting, for not only does it refer to the theme of the text as befits a proper title, it also reflects the text’s overall generic quality. It is this multifaceted generic quality of Kafka’s text that my analysis will elucidate.

The term *Gleichnis*, which appears first in the title and is repeated seven times in the text, expresses a generic concept. In the case of Kafka’s text, the word is commonly understood and frequently translated more specifically as “parable” (Muir; Gordon; Wood; Bernheimer; Corngold 105; Weiss). There are of course those who avoid or refuse that designation, or its German equivalent, for this particular text (Strohschneider-Kohrs 296-98; Zymner), primarily because they are concerned with drawing clear-cut distinctions among different literary genres. Research in cognitive science has revealed the futility of such endeavors by demonstrating that most of our categories are organized around prototypes and have fuzzy boundaries (Rosch, “Natural,” “Cognitive,” “Human,” “Principles,” “Prototype”; Rosch and Lloyd; Lakoff). And yet a deeply ingrained false belief persists in Western culture, perhaps nowhere more stubbornly than in academia, that it is possible to demarcate precise boundary lines between concepts by means of listing necessary and sufficient defining conditions. Given the evidence of cognitive science, I regard any attempt to define the concept of *Gleichnis* in such Aristotelian fashion as pointless and thus have no intention of doing so. It is possible, however, and consistent with the results of empirical cognitive research, to distinguish broadly between category levels on a scale of specificity, as discussed in Chapter 1. On such a scale *Gleichnis* qualifies, as stated above, as a generic or superordinate-level concept, a classification that can be corroborated with the help of translation. In fact, as I will demonstrate throughout this study, translation often proves useful in deciding where to categorize a concept on a scale of cognitive specificity.

Part of the reason that *Gleichnis* is commonly understood in the case of Kafka’s text as “parable” may be that the term is saliently associated in German with the parables of Christ, the prototypical examples of the genre in the Western cultural heritage. But the

word may also be translated as “image,” “simile,” “metaphor,” “figure of speech,” “allegory,” “riddle” (“*Gleichnis*,” *Cassell’s*), or “analogy” (“*Gleichnis*,” *LEO*). In the case of Goethe’s famous line from *Faust*, which serves as my epigraph, it is frequently translated as “symbol.” With the exception of “figure of speech,” which is itself a superordinate-level, generic expression encompassing many more specific ones, all of these possible translations of *Gleichnis*, including “parable,” refer to rather specific concepts, each with different particular distinguishing characteristics. Certain ones as opposed to others would unambiguously be called for in certain contexts. When referring, for example, to the stories that Christ told explaining the Kingdom of Heaven, “parable” is the correct translation, of course. When referring to conceptual models used in scientific explanations, “analogy” is typically the preferred term. But in the case of Kafka’s text, other possible renderings than “parable” would seem equally if not more appropriate, especially considering that some critics dispute whether the text itself even qualifies as a parable, as noted above (Strohschneider-Kohrs 296-98; Zymner). At least one scholar has suggested “metaphor” (Koelb 169), which I have employed before in my own translation of the text, and the case for other specific translations could doubtless be made. But what is important to underscore for the purposes of my argument is that any viable translation of the work would most likely necessitate the choice of a term that unavoidably evokes a more specific concept than the original German expression.

In an attempt to convey the overarching generality of the German term, the way in which it encompasses the more specific meanings expressed by its several possible English renderings, I have even experimented with translating *Gleichnis* as a changing amalgam of several of those more specific renderings, producing something like the following: “...the words of the wise are only ever metaphors/allegories/images/similes/parables/riddles...”; “all these metaphors/parables/analogs/similes/images/riddles really only mean to say...”; “[i]f you would only follow the metaphors/similes/riddles/parables/analogs, you would become metaphors/images/riddles/allegories/parables yourselves...” (Huffmaster). Some might deny that such an experiment even deserves to be called a translation; they might argue justifiably that it is more of a cop-out, a refusal to translate. But the experiment and such a potential objection underscore the frequent tension between the conceptual processes involved in translation and pragmatic conventions and expectations, especially when a translation is intended to be commercially viable. And when the term to be translated expresses a generic concept, as in the case of *Gleichnis*, that tension becomes particularly salient.

Another way in which translation can be telling from a cognitive perspective is that it often requires attention to etymology, which frequently reveals the schematic conceptual structure underlying the semantics of much of the lexicon. This is a point I shall return to throughout this study, as part of my concluding arguments hinges on it. The image schema underlying the etymology of *Gleichnis* is LINK, and the basic schematic structure the term evokes is that of MATCHING, essentially placing together, or rather, side by side and drawing connections. Recognition of such basic schematic structure informing the meaning of *Gleichnis* illuminates the similar structure informing the senses of many of its possible English translations. The etymology of *parable*, for example, means “to throw beside”; *metaphor* means “to carry over”; and *analogy* is based on *logos*, “speech,” which derives from an Indo-European root meaning “to

collect” (*The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*). And whereas the etymologies of other translations like *riddle*, *image*, *simile*, or *allegory* may not indicate analogous spatial schemas, each of these terms does entail some basic notion of conceptually placing two separate entities side by side in order to make comparisons or, more precisely, to draw inferences about one from the other.

Another related way in which translation and attention to etymology may be relevant to questions about the level of cognitive specificity of a concept is by highlighting the cognates of a given expression in other languages. With *Gleichnis*, consideration of its cognate in English, for example, *likeness*, corroborates its generic status. Although *likeness* is not normally given as a translation of *Gleichnis* in bilingual dictionaries, recognition of the words’ common etymology also serves, as with consideration of underlying schematic structure, to throw into relief the shared generic conceptual structure of all the different, more specific English translations of the German term. Despite the particular distinguishing characteristics of the concepts of *parable*, *metaphor*, *analogy*, *simile*, *allegory*, *image*, and so on, what these all have in common is expressed in the general concept of *likeness*. With this in mind, another experimental translation might be ventured, yielding the following:

Many complain that the words of the wise are only ever likenesses, but useless in daily life, and that is all we have.... What all these likenesses really only mean to say is that the ungraspable is ungraspable, and we know that already....

To which someone said: “Why are you so defensive? If you would only follow the likenesses, you would become likenesses yourselves and with that free of your daily cares.”

Someone else said: “I bet that, too, is a likeness.”

The first said: “You win.”

The second said: “But unfortunately only in likeness.”

The first said: “No, in reality. In likeness, you lose.”

One arguable advantage of this choice is that it echoes the sound of the original German expression, though the overall effect is admittedly strange, as it heightens the vague quality of the text’s central concept and hence of the text as a whole. But in that respect, I would argue, it more faithfully conveys an important quality of the original that gets obscured by translations that employ more conceptually specific renderings. Precisely because *likeness* is generic like *Gleichnis*, it creates in translation what Walter Benjamin describes in his Kafka essay as the kind of “wolkige Stelle” (“cloudy part”; 427) characteristic of Kafka’s prose. This effect forms a crucial element of what is understood by the notion of the Kafkaesque. It does not encompass the concept completely, of course, another essential aspect of which would be, for instance, the rhetorical figure of peripeteia, evident in this case in the text’s final line. But the point to emphasize, which the example of *Gleichnis* illustrates well, is that almost invariably in the reception of Kafka’s work, language that expresses generic conceptual structure gets rendered by translators into language at a more specific conceptual level. And whereas translations of Kafka’s works tend to make this dynamic more readily obvious, the evidence from critical interpretations reveals that analogous cognitive processes regularly come into play.

A Generic Text

Having shown with the aid of translation how the central concept of “Von den Gleichnissen” qualifies as generic or superordinate on a scale of cognitive specificity, I turn now to examine specific details of the text as a whole. What is perhaps most striking about the text is its overall generic quality. This impression results from the prevalence of terms that can individually be classified as generic or schematic by evaluating them according to the criteria for determining basic-level concepts as discussed in the Chapter 1—category members have similarly perceived overall shapes; a single mental image can represent the category; people have distinct sensorimotor programs for interacting with members of the category; and people have rich knowledge about the category. I will analyze the numerous examples of such expressions in the text accordingly below, but even without such explicit cognitive analysis, the text’s overall generic quality becomes especially salient if one simply classifies the text as a parable, which would involve comparison to a prototype. For it is possible to understand the word “Gleichnis” in the title and throughout the text at a more specific level than I am arguing is warranted—in other words, one could read the text as being *about* parables—without necessarily categorizing the text itself as an example of the genre. As noted above, some scholars do refuse this text that classification. If, however, one chooses, as the overwhelming majority of commentators do, to understand the text not only as taking parables as its theme but also as being a parable itself, then the feature that stands out most is its overall lack of specific detail and imagery.

This proposal and its consequence represent one of the most pervasive of everyday cognitive operations, namely, making sense of phenomena using prototypes (Gibbs). As mentioned above, the prototypical examples of parables in the Western cultural tradition are doubtless those of Christ. Therefore, comparison of “Von den Gleichnissen” with the parables of Christ makes the generic quality of Kafka’s text readily apparent. The titles alone of a few of Christ’s well known parables indicate the more specific quality of the concepts conventionally used in texts of the genre: The Prodigal Son, The Sower and the Seeds, The Mustard Seed, The Laborers in the Vineyard, The Wedding Feast, The Lost Coin, The Sheep and the Goats, The Good Samaritan, and so on. As these titles show, parables typically employ basic-level and sometimes more specific, subordinate-level concepts and contain more details and evoke richer imagery than “Von den Gleichnissen” does. Since the basic level is the level at which we interact optimally with our environment, it is unsurprising that parables tend to employ concepts at that level. As parables traditionally have a didactic function, their use of basic-level concepts makes them more cognitively affective and hence more rhetorically effective.

Cognitive analysis of the textual details of “Von den Gleichnissen” confirms the general impression gained by comparing the text to prototypical parables. Superordinate-level concepts dominate in the text, starting from the opening word, *viele* (“many”). Before addressing the standard cognitive criteria that establish this categorization, what is worth noting strictly in terms of language is the grammar: an adjective, functioning as a pronoun, substitutes here for a substantive. The expression “many people” might seem

redundant, as “people” is unambiguously the understood reference, and one could thus reasonably argue that “many” is simply more concise and hence stylistically preferable in terms of word economy. Be that as it may, eliding the substantive makes the reference conceptually less definite in any event, as it is not stated explicitly but only indirectly implied. Investigation from a cognitive viewpoint must take into account the omitted but understood reference, but even so, it corroborates the findings of linguistic analysis. Using the cognitive criteria for determining basic-level concepts, we can establish that *viele* must be categorized at a higher, superordinate level. The notion of *many people* is not something that has a perceptible overall shape, nor is it something one can form a single mental image of. It is not something we have a distinct sensorimotor program for interacting with, either. We certainly have sensorimotor programs for interacting with an individual human being alone, and we have programs for interacting with a couple to several individuals, for example, at a dinner party or group meeting. We furthermore have sensorimotor programs for interacting with various types of crowd situations, as members of a crowd ourselves, or as individuals addressing a large audience, for instance. But these are all very different kinds of situations which require different patterns of interaction and which therefore have different associated sensorimotor programs. Finally, *many people* is not a concept we have detailed knowledge of. It can refer to several individuals or several thousand. The narrator’s use of the term apparently encompasses an even greater number, hundreds of thousands or rather hundreds of millions, as he seems to be referring to humankind in general. But still, whether he means a majority of all people or merely a plurality, or even just a lot, is impossible to say. Note the difference if instead of *many* the text invoked the concept of *most*: in that case we would clearly be dealing with a majority, though whether a simple majority or supermajority would remain open, whereas with *many*, not even that much can be determined for certain.

Other designations of human beings in the text are comparably generic: *einer* and *ein anderer* (“one” and “another,” or “someone” and “someone else,” as my translation renders the expressions). Interestingly, these two generic designations for individual speakers in the text are immediately redesignated with ostensibly more definite expressions, employing definite articles: *der erste* and *der zweite* (“the first” and “the second”). These terms would normally indicate a greater degree of specificity, but as they refer to unspecified, generic concepts, any potential specificity is only apparent. The remarks above concerning the grammar of *viele* (“many”) and the resulting psychological effect of eliding the substantive *Leute*, or *people*, apply here as well, with *person* being the understood reference. Of course, *person* is a more definite concept than *many* (*people*). According to cognitive criteria, it would classify as a basic-level concept. We perceive members of the category as having a similar overall shape; we can get a single mental image for the category; we have sensorimotor programs for interacting with members of the category; and we have a lot of detailed knowledge about the category. And yet, what qualifies as a basic-level concept according to cognitive criteria seems exceedingly generic in this particular text. The “someone” and “someone else” referred to could be practically anyone.

This recognition raises an important point to stress about cognitive approaches to categories, namely, that they are the products of a human mind interacting with its environment and do not just objectively exist in the world independent of that

relationship. Furthermore, if superordinate categories entail generic or schematic concepts, and subordinate categories concern specific concepts, then basic-level categories and concepts exist on a continuum between the two extremes, and the boundaries between category levels are necessarily fuzzy. The interaction of a human mind with its environment is the determining factor, and whereas the one element of that equation is more or less constant, as all humans have essentially the same nervous system, and though the world we live in provides major constants that affect all of us everywhere the same, cultural and individual factors can vary enough to alter the equation of where along a scale of specificity a concept may be located for any individual. For specialists in any field, for example, what might be a basic-level concept for most people would probably be a superordinate concept. For my readers, for example, as discussed in Chapter 1, *car* is most likely a basic-level concept, but for an auto dealer, it is likely a superordinate concept, with and concepts like *sedan*, *sports car*, or *SUV* being more basic. Whereas for most people *insect* is a basic-level concept, for an entomologist, it is most likely superordinate, with concepts such as *beetle*, *roach*, *ant*, *bee*, etc. being more basic. For urban dwellers, *tree* is basic, whereas for a forest ranger, *spruce*, *oak*, *maple*, and *pine* would be basic-level concepts (Berlin, Breedlove, and Raven; Rosch, “Natural”; Rosch et al.). The point is that although *person* may well satisfy all the requirements of a basic-level concept in the abstract, when it comes to specific minds interacting with specific environmental factors, in this case, Kafka’s text, the concept may seem more appropriately situated higher up along the basic part of the continuum, almost shading into or bordering on the superordinate. To hammer the point home, it is telling to compare the concept *person* with counterpart figures in more prototypical parables, such as the ones of Christ mentioned above, where we commonly find concepts like *laborer*, *bridegroom*, *son*, *Samaritan*, etc. And of course, the expressions *one* or *someone*, though the concept of *person* may be understood, still seem less definite than even *a person*.

Of all the designations for humans in Kafka’s text, the term *der Weise* (“sage”) expresses without question the most specific concept, as is readily evident in comparison to *many* or *one* or *another*. Such comparison might lead one to assume that it therefore qualifies as a basic-level or perhaps even a subordinate-level concept. But if we apply the criteria for determining basic-level concepts to the concept of *sage* or *wise man*, the results contradict such an assumption. We perceive members of the category as having a similar overall shape and we can get a single mental image for the category, but as far as these two criteria go, the overall similar shape we perceive wise people as having and the mental image we get of them essentially match those for a generic human being. We do not, I would say, have a lot of detailed knowledge about the category. The only criterion the concept of *sage* might arguably satisfy is that we have sensorimotor programs for interacting with members of the category; however, whether such programs would be all that distinct from those for interacting with any figures of authority is hard to say. The entry for the word *sage* in *The American Heritage Dictionary* corroborates the more generic quality of the concept: “One venerated for experience, judgment, and wisdom” (“Sage”). These considerations lead to the conclusion that the concept *sage* ought to be classified as a superordinate-level category, or if basic-level, then higher up along the continuum, like *person*. It clearly seems to be a more generic-level category, one that subsumes more specific, basic-level concepts such as *poet*, *philosopher*, *guru*, *teacher*, or

rabbi, for example. And indeed, evidence from the text's reception history reveals this to be yet another example where interpreters have felt compelled to specify Kafka's more generic concept.

Several other superordinate concepts populate the text, most of which are abstract. I will not evaluate each one in turn as I have done for the concepts *viele* ("many"), *einer* ("one"), *ein anderer* ("another"), and *der Weise* ("sage"), but if one bears in mind the four criteria for determining basic-level categories—similar perceived overall shape for category members, imageability of the concept, sensorimotor programs for interacting with members of the category, and rich knowledge about the concept—one readily recognizes that most of the main concepts mentioned in the text do not satisfy the criteria at all and are clearly generic. Such concepts include, in order of appearance in the text, *Leben* ("life"), *Ergebnis* ("results"), *das Unfaßbare* ("the ungraspable"), *Dinge* ("things"), *Mühe* ("toils"), and *Wirklichkeit* ("reality"). The occurrence of so many superordinate concepts throughout contributes significantly to the text's overall generic character.

Two expressions occur in the text for concepts that could conceivably, perhaps in other contexts, be considered basic, namely, *Seite* ("side") and *Weg* ("way"). But here they are barely imageable, at most in rudimentary, schematic form. The expressions occur in close proximity, in the text's second sentence, and as the particulars of their immediate linguistic context account for their unconventionally generic quality, it is worth examining them in that context. The German original reads: "Wenn der Weise sagt: 'Gehe hinüber', so meint er nicht, daß man auf die andere Seite hinübergehen solle, was man immerhin noch leisten könnte, wenn das Ergebnis des Weges wert wäre...." An English translation keeping as close to the original as possible in order to preserve the distinctive generic quality might run along these lines: "When the wise man says, 'Go over,' he doesn't mean that one should go over to the other side, which one could accomplish in any event, if the results were worth the way...." The question that immediately suggests itself here is "To the other side of what?" This *Seite* ("side") has no perceptible shape and evokes no coherent image, so I cannot imagine what possible sensorimotor program I could use in interacting with it, except perhaps that for walking to it, and I clearly have no detailed knowledge of it.

The rest of the sentence, which I will address shortly, makes clear that a contrast is intended here between the physical, material world and a spiritual or psychological, immaterial realm. But whatever ostensibly concrete, specifiable place in the physical world that is meant remains conspicuously unspecific. Though, or rather, because the text does not explicitly specify "the other side of what," the reader, understanding the intended contrast, supplies the missing conceptual content, most likely unconsciously. This cognitive operation gets forced to conscious awareness, however, when the text is translated. The Muirs opt against the closest literal rendering of *Seite* as "side" and are thereby able to convey the unspecified quality of Kafka's text while finding phrasing more natural to an English ear: "cross to some actual place." Though this solution preserves the nonspecific feel of the original, it nevertheless represents a clarification of sorts, a kind of specification by filling in what is open to interpretation. And if one chooses to translate *Seite* as closely as possible by using its English cognate as I have done above, the resulting sense of something lacking, of an incomplete conceptual structure, becomes more palpable. In a previous translation, I have attempted to

compensate for this with the following: “cross over to the other side of the street” (Huffmaster). Though the notion of *street* is nowhere made explicit in the original text, the unspecified quality of the place indicated and the sense of an incomplete conceptual structure compelled me to provide the additional detail. This example thus represents in miniature what I am arguing inevitably occurs all the time when reading Kafka: the author provides generic and possibly incomplete conceptual structure, and readers fill in the details according to their own cognitive proclivities and preferences.

The other expression in the text that evokes a basic-level concept—or rather, the *only* expression in the text that does so, since *Seite* is rendered more generic here—is *Weg* (“way”). We can perceive an overall similar shape for members of the category, we can form a single mental image of the concept, and we have sensorimotor programs for interacting with instances of the concept. Whether we have much detailed knowledge about the concept is questionable. However, by satisfying unequivocally three of the four criteria for determining basic-level status, *Weg* stands out as the most specific concept in the text. And yet, as with *Seite*, the particulars of the immediate linguistic context cause the concept in this case to rise toward the schematic, as it were. There is explicitly no real way referred to here that might entail some imageable details, like a sidewalk or a path through a park, for example. Instead, as the mood invoked is the subjunctive (“wenn das Ergebnis des Weges wert wäre,” “if the results were worth the way”), there is merely the indication of a possibility, and a possibility subsequently disavowed at that. In fact, the way indicated here specifies no more than a potential trajectory of human locomotion, part of the sensorimotor program associated with the basic concept. This recognition, that the way referred to here concerns human bodily movement through space as opposed to any concrete path in the fictional world, reveals that we are dealing essentially with the representation of an image schema. This point is paramount for understanding the text as a whole, and I will address it in more detail below.

A Generic Proposition

Before turning to examine the text’s dominant image schemas, I would like to pull focus for a moment away from analyzing the cognitive specificity of separate individual expressions and look instead at a longer stretch of the text. I have in mind the complete grammatical sentence that I have just now been considering elements of, including *Seite* and *Weg*. The sentence is long and grammatically quite complex, and the intricacies of its structure merit careful consideration themselves. For now, however, I am interested in assessing the gist of its propositional content in light of the findings of cognitive analysis that its main concepts tend toward the generic. Propositionally, this one sentence sums up what is at issue in the text as a whole. It juxtaposes the two opposing views of *Gleichnisse* and is therefore of particular significance for any global reading of the text. In its entirety, the sentence reads as follows:

Wenn der Weise sagt: „Gehe hinüber“, so meint er nicht, daß man auf die andere Seite hinübergangen solle, was man immerhin noch leisten könnte, wenn das Ergebnis des Weges wert wäre, sondern er meint irgendein sagenhaftes Drüben, etwas, das wir nicht kennen, das auch von ihm nicht näher zu bezeichnen ist und

das uns also hier gar nichts helfen kann.

When the wise man says, “Cross over,” he doesn’t mean that one should cross over to the other side, which one could accomplish easily enough, if the results of the way were worth it; rather, he means some kind of mystical beyond, something we do not know, something even he himself cannot describe more precisely, and which therefore cannot be of any use to us here.

One important aspect of the passage that must be addressed is the narrator’s point of view. This aspect of the sentence can only fully be appreciated in light of what happens with point of view in the preceding one. In the text’s opening sentence, the narrator very subtly, almost imperceptibly, shifts his point of view from one of distance and skepticism toward the propositional content he is reporting to one of identification with and approval of that content. Such a straightforward description must be qualified, however, since due to the nature of the verb in the final clause, whether that shift toward identification and approval is complete remains ambiguous. The verb in the sentence’s first reported clause, *seien*, is in the subjunctive: “daß die Worte der Weisen immer wieder nur Gleichnisse seien” (“that the words of the wise are only ever Gleichnisse”). This mood is used conventionally in German, most frequently in news reports, to disavow responsibility for or identification with the propositional content of reported statements. As English lacks a formal equivalent, a translation of this sentence must opt for the present indicative, *are*, which inevitably obfuscates the conceptual distance that is salient in the original. This lack of a special equivalent form explains the need for disclaimers at the end of most news broadcasts in English to the effect that the views expressed therein are not necessarily those of the reporters and producers. Because of the subjunctive, German news programs have no need for such disclaimers. In the sentence’s second reported clause, the verb is then elided completely: “aber unverwendbar im täglichen Leben” (“but useless in daily life”). The verb in the sentence’s final reported clause, however, *haben*, presents a special case: “und nur dieses allein haben wir” (“and that is all we have”). It is one of those rare verbs in German that lacks a distinct subjunctive form in the first person plural. That is to say, it does have a conditional form, *hätten*, which is commonly used in colloquial speech to fulfill the same function as the subjunctive. But according to formal prescriptive grammar, the subjunctive and indicative forms of *haben* in the first person plural are identical. Therefore, depending on whether one reads *haben* in the final clause of the text’s first sentence as indicative or subjunctive, a shift in the narrator’s point of view will be perceived or not.

By the second sentence, at any rate, the one I would like to consider in light of its cognitive specificity, there is no longer any ambiguity as to the narrator’s point of view. Though still reporting, apparently, the opinion of the many who complain about the words of the wise being *Gleichnisse*, the narrator now clearly identifies with their point of view. He speaks on their behalf, in their voice, using words they themselves would likely use to make their point. He has taken up their position and defends it. He is on their side, as it were. There is no longer any distance between the narrator-reporter and the content of what he reports. And that propositional content becomes particularly intriguing in light of the question of point of view. What is most interesting about this summary of the problem the many have with the words of the wise is that the wise themselves, I suspect, would not disagree with its substance. They would readily agree that when a

wise person says, “Cross over,” unless he happens to be standing on a curb assisting a blind person, for instance, letting the person know it’s safe to cross, he is most likely not speaking literally, not recommending that anyone actually go anywhere. They would agree that their words are meant to be understood metaphorically and that the wisdom they seek to convey through their teachings is a kind of knowledge that cannot be expressed literally (“nicht näher zu bezeichnen ist,” “cannot be described more precisely”).

The one part of this formulation that the wise might take issue with would be the claim that their words are useless. But even that they would likely concede, as they would recognize that their words and the kind of knowledge they convey do not have immediate utilitarian or practical value in the sense that the many, whose point of view is expressed here, apparently expect of all communicative acts. When Christ, for example, says that people do not light a candle only to put it under a basket or in the cellar but rather they place it on a stand so that everyone in the house can see (Matt. 5.15; Luke 11.33), he is not giving interior decorating advice. Therefore, as there is nothing to contest as far as the propositional content of the complaint goes, the main difference or disagreement here boils down to one of attitude. And these attitudes clearly reflect larger sets of values about what is important in human life. For the many, that means the material exigencies of daily existence. They represent an objectivist ideology that entails an instrumental view of language. They see language primarily as a tool for communicating practically useful information, and they presume that language is mostly literal. Cognitive science, along with speech act theory and other contemporary subfields of linguistics, proves that such a view is false. To be sure, language certainly is used for communicating information, but beyond that particular function, it constitutes social reality in profound and far-reaching ways, and it is furthermore pervasively and ineradicably metaphorical.

Given the evidence from cognitive science, then, that the position of the many in Kafka’s text presupposes a false view of language, it may reasonably be asked whether Kafka shares this false view. In general, readers tend to align their views with those of the narrator unless given good reason not to do so, such as contradictory statements that indicate a narrator’s unreliability, for example, or the use of heavily value-laden language that reveals a disagreeable ideological bias. Since Kafka’s narrator, therefore, has aligned his point of view with that of the many in opposition to the wise, readers are likely to sympathize with his unfavorable depiction of them and their words. It is possible, however, that the author may be using his narrator as a vehicle for irony. Such a reading depends on recognizing the inherent contradiction in the position of the many, which a cognitive analysis helps to point up. The gist of the complaint the many have is that the wise speak in terms that do not refer literally to an immediate pragmatic context. In other words, part of the issue is that the words of the wise are not specific with regard to a particular situation, but rather more general in scope. We have seen that the expression *Gleichnis* is indeed generic, as opposed to more specific terms like *metaphor*, *simile*, *parable*, and so on. But the complaint of the many allows us to recognize that even the concepts represented by the more specific translations of *Gleichnis* still emphasize generic conceptual structure to a degree that literal referential language, rare as it is, would not, and can therefore be more generally applicable. This is because metaphorical mappings from one domain to another inevitably activate the generic conceptual structure shared by the two different domains. Again, the wise would probably agree that their

teachings are more broadly applicable to a range of situations and hence by nature more generic than pragmatic and referential language, but the many, according to the narrator, apparently equate such broad applicability with uselessness.

So how is the narrator's formulation of the complaint about the wise contradictory and therefore possibly a vehicle for authorial irony? While speaking in favor of language that is concrete and that refers in practically useful ways to the here and now, while speaking against the wise and their use of generic language, the narrator himself, as we have seen, uses generic language, doing exactly what he accuses the wise of. Though he propounds an ideology that privileges material reality and dismisses spiritual concerns, he espouses that position in broadly general terms, generalizing about the wise and the kinds of words they use. To be sure, the position is represented using the most specific concepts of the text, namely, *Seite* and *Weg*, but these only seem specific relative to the extreme generic quality of the rest of the text as a whole, including the narrator's speech. One particularly telling example is the ostensible direct quote of a wise man by the narrator: "Gehe hinüber." But before examining this reported clause, it is worthwhile to recall the curious generic nature of the reporting clause. The narrator says, "Wenn der Weise sagt..." ("When the wise man says..."), using the definite article *der*. The definite article prototypically refers to specific, known entities in a given discourse, which is precisely the kind of language use that the narrator, reporting the position of the many, purports to favor. However, he is certainly not using it to refer to any specific wise man, but rather to wise persons in general. This usage of the definite article to make generalizations is certainly conventional enough, albeit less frequent, in both English and German. In fact, I have just employed it myself in referring to "the" definite article. However, given the content of the narrator's complaint here, this less typical usage is significant, for it suggests a conceptual discrepancy in his argument, hinting perhaps at a degree of hypocrisy on his part. He criticizes the wise for being unspecific or indefinite, for speaking in vague and broadly general terms, when he himself is making generalizations. And not only is he making generalizations, he is using a definite pronoun to do so, imparting the appearance of being concrete and specific when in fact he is referring to no specific individual in particular.

The same discrepancy may be seen in the reported clause, "Gehe hinüber." This is the only instance of ostensibly reported speech in the text's opening passage. However, unlike the dialogue that follows the narrator's extended introduction and comprises the second half of the text, this is clearly not a real instance of speech that is being reported directly, despite the quotation marks that would seem to indicate that. It is rather an example of the *kind* of thing a wise person might say, a generic utterance of a generic wise person, or a prototype of a wise utterance, which the many would mistakenly expect to have practical, physical reference. Though it is perhaps highly probable that the exact expression has been uttered by some wise person at some point, it is clearly more of a stereotype or caricature of what a wise person might say than an instance of direct speech. Furthermore, the tone of sarcasm in the quotation is unmistakable, and that tone continues throughout the narrator's explanation of what the expression means. The audible irony attending this instance of quasi reported speech embedded within the opening passage thus lends weight to the sense that the entire passage may also be read as ironic.

Image Schemas and Their Transformations

So far I have examined several key individual expressions throughout Kafka's text and determined that they qualify as superordinate-level concepts. Cumulatively, these expressions help to convey the overall generic quality of the text as a whole. In addition, I have looked at one longer passage within the text that encapsulates its major thematic concerns, and I have shown how generic concepts and the question of cognitive specificity play a role in understanding the propositional content of the passage. I now turn to analyze the main image schemas informing the text.

Generic or schematic by definition, image schemas represent the skeletal structures underlying all conceptual thought, from the mundane, as illustrated by the example of a typical morning routine in chapter 1 (Johnson 30-31), to the profound and abstract, as in mathematics or philosophy. As structures of the cognitive unconscious, image schemas typically operate below a level of conscious awareness. They may, however, be more or less evident in linguistic form depending on the degree to which they are elaborated. My argument that Kafka highlights generic conceptual structure in his fiction refers of course to the prevalence of superordinate- and basic-level concepts, as detailed in the foregoing analysis of "Von den Gleichnissen." But another main aspect of this characteristic feature of Kafka's work is the highly salient image schemas that populate his prose. Such salience is achieved through the minimization of metaphoric elaboration on the one hand and through unconventional transformations of image schemas on the other, a practice that throws the schemas into conceptual relief, a special kind of foregrounding through deviation.

Although, as noted above, image schemas are by definition generic or superordinate-level conceptual structures, some are more basic than others, as they are more pervasive in our experience. These would have to include those representing force dynamics, such as BALANCE, COMPULSION, BLOCKAGE, COUNTERFORCE, ENABLEMENT, and ATTRACTION, in addition to the much discussed CONTAINER and PATH schemas, as well as ones like SURFACE, CONTACT, VERTICALITY, and NEAR-FAR. Less pervasive in our experience are image schemas such as MERGING, SPLITTING, SUPERIMPOSITION, or COLLECTION. These structures are responsible for creating meaning and pattern in our experience so that we can understand and function in the world. They thus inevitably inform all linguistic structure and all texts. Kafka makes these image schemas conceptually salient, as stated, through minimal elaboration and through novel image schema transformations. But what is also noteworthy is that the image schemas Kafka most often chooses to highlight are precisely those that are the most basic and pervasive in our experience, especially the PATH schema and image schemas of force dynamics. As we shall see, this is another particular respect in which "Von den Gleichnissen" is representative of Kafka's work as a whole.

The two main image schemas at work in "Von den Gleichnissen" are NEAR-FAR and PATH. The NEAR-FAR schema is instantiated through proximal deictic markers such as *dieses* ("this"), *näher* (literally "nearer," here meaning "more precisely") and *hier* ("here") along with distal deictic markers such as *hinüber* ("over there"), *die andere Seite* ("the other side"), and *Drüben* ("yonder"). The PATH schema, in turn, is evoked through expressions such as *gehen* ("go"), which occurs twice, *Weg* ("way"), and *folgen*

(“follow”). It bears reiterating, for it is relevant and evident here, that image schemas are often inseparably intertwined in real situated understanding. Certain of the expressions that are involved in the NEAR-FAR schema, for example, especially those that profile the FAR part like *hinüber*, *Drüben*, and *die andere Seite*, also inevitably evoke a PATH schema. It is practically inconceivable to imagine an “over there” without simultaneously imagining a PATH image schema to there from here. This conceptual interconnection of the two image schemas NEAR-FAR and PATH is even made linguistically explicit in the expressions *Gehe hinüber* (“Cross over”) and *auf die andere Seite hinübergehen* (“go over to the other side”). Whereas such basic image schemas, as mentioned above, inform all conceptual thought and language and are hence common in almost any given sample of language, precisely because of the lack of accompanying descriptive details here, because of the lack of rich imagery and metaphoric elaboration, these spatial image schemas themselves are saliently highlighted in Kafka’s text.

It is not only the lack of elaboration and rich imagery that serves to highlight the image schemas at work here, however. The particular way the text evokes image schema transformations also helps to bring the schemas into relief. As described in Chapter 1, image schemas are not static structures but rather ongoing dynamic processes that have conventional associated patterns of transformation. The conventional image schema transformation for the PATH schema is *path-focus to endpoint-focus*. We can perform this transformation by imagining an object moving through space and following the object in our imagination until it comes to rest. It is possible to reverse the transformation in our imagination, to perform a mental rewind of it, as it were, with the object moving backwards from its point of rest, but with this particular image schema, such a reversal is highly unusual and atypical. We would be more likely to turn the object around in our imagination and retrace its trajectory in the opposite direction so that we construe it as moving forward back to its starting point, which would then be the conventional image schema transformation again. Reversals for other image schema transformations are much more conventional, as with *mass to multiplex* or *superimposition*, for example, where either direction is equally plausible. To imagine a group of objects as a collection of separate entities and then to pull focus and imagine them as one collective mass is just as conventional as beginning with the collective mass and then zooming in to imagine it as a group of individual entities. Similarly, imagining a square inside a circle and the square expanding to encompass the circle is just as natural as imagining the square shrinking to fit back inside the circle or the circle expanding to encompass the square again. The other main image schema is Kafka’s text, NEAR-FAR, is not one whose transformation has been described in the literature to my knowledge, but it is clearly susceptible to a similar kind of transformation and reversal as that of *mass to multiplex* or *superimposition*. We can imagine an entity, or for that matter, a scene, that is nearby receding into the distance, and conversely, we can imagine an entity or scene far away coming closer. Kafka’s text exploits these conventional cognitive mechanisms in achieving its rhetorical effect, as the distinction it presents between the opposing views with respect to *Gleichnisse* relies in large part on different conceptions of image schema transformations.

The position of the wise regarding *Gleichnisse* correlates with the conventional image schema transformation of the PATH image schema, *path-focus to endpoint focus*, as is evident in the words attributed to them: “Gehe hinüber” (“cross over”) and “den

Gleichnissen folgen” (“follow the *Gleichnisse*”). This recognition may come as somewhat of a surprise, as we tend to think of the wise and their teachings as *unconventional*. But we are dealing here with two distinct senses of the word *conventional*, one colloquial, and the other technical. In the colloquial sense, *conventional* refers to social custom and commonplace habits of thought and behavior, and to say that the wise profess unconventional teachings recognizes merely that wisdom is rare. But in cognitive theory, the term *conventional* denotes deeply entrenched conceptual structures that arise from constant reiterations in experience. The reason the conventional image schema transformation for the PATH schema is what it is, *path-focus to endpoint-focus*, is precisely because we experience objects, animate and inanimate, that move through space and then come to rest countless times and in various modalities throughout every day of our lives. That the words of the wise express metaphorically this pervasive dimension of human experience is wholly unsurprising from a cognitive perspective. A fundamental premise of cognitive science is that all human language concerning social and psychological domains expresses our embodied experience of the physical world through metaphor. And it is image schemas and their transformations that provide the basic structure for such pervasive metaphorical projections. The assertion that the words of the wise are metaphors seems almost tautological in this light—it is to say basically no more than that they are words in human language. However, the formulation here of the words of the wise in minimally elaborate terms, “Cross over,” which reduces them to one of our most fundamental and pervasive image schema transformations, represents a recognition that they do indeed reveal a deep truth about the nature of human cognition.

The many, according to Kafka’s text, refuse to recognize this truth, however. Whereas the wise and their position with respect to *Gleichnisse* are associated with the conventional transformation for the PATH image schema and with the FAR part of the NEAR-FAR schema through distal deictic expressions such as *hinüber* (“over there”), *die andere Seite* (“the other side”), and *Drüben* (“yonder”)—aspects of the two schemas and their transformations that are inherently connected, as discussed above—the many and their position are associated exclusively with the NEAR part of the NEAR-FAR schema through proximal deictic expressions like *dieses* (“this”), *näher* (“nearer”), and *uns hier* (“us here”). But more than merely being associated with the NEAR part of the NEAR-FAR schema, the position of the many with regard to *Gleichnisse* involves an outright denial of the pervasive, everyday image schema transformation that informs the position of the wise. The many explicitly reject the suggestion to perform such an imaginative transformation, which they inevitably do anyway even if only to understand the expression “Gehe hinüber” (“cross over”) literally. Their insistence on a distinct boundary between a here and a there, which they refuse to traverse in imagination, represents an objectivist philosophical tradition that draws a rigid distinction between the literal and the metaphorical. This rigid distinction allows metaphor to be discounted as untrue. The findings of cognitive science demonstrate that such a position is empirically untenable, yet it carries the weight of over two millennia of a priori philosophizing about language in Western culture and is therefore compelling for many, even most, in our society to this day. Cognitive science upsets the traditional understanding of literal versus metaphorical truth, and Kafka’s text works to that same end. One way it does so is by juxtaposing a proposition based on the conventional PATH image schema transformation

with one representing its negation or rejection, thereby bringing into stark relief one of the bodily-based schematic conceptual structures that ground all meaning and understanding, literal and metaphorical.

What is especially important, finally, to note about the image schemas in “Von den Gleichnissen” is that their salience results not only from the lack of metaphorical elaboration and accompanying detailed imagery, nor from the stark contrast set up between their conventional transformations and the disavowal of those transformations, although these features contribute most to that effect. In addition, the schemas themselves seem actually to be the topic of discussion. Of course, they are not identified as such; none of the speakers in the text, neither the narrator nor the anonymous, generic characters, say explicitly that they are talking about conceptual structure. But as mentioned above in addressing the highly generic quality in Kafka’s text of the typically basic-level concept *Weg* (“way”), what is discussed, essentially, is a pervasive pattern of human locomotion, both with respect to its literal meaning as well as with respect to the metaphorical projections made possible by the neural architecture of the relevant motor program. Consequently, what emerges from the discussion is no less than a description of an image schema. The text thereby presents a compact summary of the operation and functioning of one of the most fundamental concepts in cognitive science, which explains how abstract thought emerges from patterns of our bodily interaction with the environment.

Generic and Primary Metaphors

As discussed in Chapter 1, conceptual metaphors, like individual concepts themselves, can be classified along a scale of specificity. At the bottom of the scale are more specific-level conceptual metaphors like LIFE IS A JOURNEY, A LIFETIME IS A DAY, A LIFETIME IS A YEAR, DEATH IS DEPARTURE, DEATH IS NIGHT, DEATH IS WINTER, DEATH IS SLEEP, BAD IS BLACK, WHITE IS GOOD, MACHINES ARE PEOPLE, PEOPLE ARE MACHINES, PEOPLE ARE PLANTS, TIME IS A DEVOURER, TIME IS A PURSUER, or TIME IS A THIEF. At the middle range of the scale are more basic conceptual metaphors, known as *primary metaphors*. This designation for basic-level conceptual metaphors derives from their emergence in our conceptual structure during what are called *primary scenes*, that is, frequent situations in early childhood in which there is a strong correlation in experience between two different domains. Examples include INTIMACY IS WARMTH, STATES ARE LOCATIONS, CHANGE OF STATE IS CHANGE OF LOCATION, MORE IS UP, KNOWING IS SEEING, SEEING IS TOUCHING, and UNDERSTANDING IS OBJECT MANIPULATION. And finally, at the upper end of the scale of cognitive specificity are generic conceptual metaphors such as EVENTS ARE ACTIONS or GENERIC IS SPECIFIC, which govern a much broader set of phenomena and a wide array of more abstract kinds of reasoning.

In “Von den Gleichnissen” basic- and generic-level conceptual metaphors predominate. More specific conceptual metaphors do occur, to be sure. It would be difficult to imagine any stretch of text without some specific-level metaphors. Local examples here include LIFE IS A POSSESSION (“im täglichen Leben, und nur dieses allein haben wir,” ‘in daily life, and that is all we have’), SPECIFICITY IS PROXIMITY (“näher zu bezeichnen,” ‘to describe more closely’), LINGUISTIC STRUCTURES ARE VOLITIONAL

ACTORS, a form of personification (“diese Gleichnisse wollen eigentlich nur sagen,” ‘these Gleichnisse really only want to say’), PRESCRIBED BEHAVIOR IS GUIDED MOTION (“den Gleichnissen folgen,” ‘follow the Gleichnisse’), and ARGUMENT IS CONFLICT (“Warum wehrt ihr euch?” ‘Why are you so defensive?’; “Du hast gewonnen,” ‘You win’; “hast du verloren,” ‘you lose’). For the most part, though, these instances of more specific-level conceptual metaphors serve particular local purposes at points within the text without impinging on its overall proposition. Considering the prominence of spatial concepts in that overall proposition, however, it might well be argued that the metaphors SPECIFICITY IS PROXIMITY and PRESCRIBED BEHAVIOR IS GUIDED MOTION represent exceptions that do in fact contribute to the text’s broader message. In any event, given the text’s overall topic of the wise and their teachings, one specific-level metaphor that might be identified as being at work globally in the text is KNOWLEDGE IS A JOURNEY, or perhaps, more precisely, WISDOM IS A JOURNEY. This specification presents an immediate problem, however, for the source domain seems inappropriate. It is simply too specific. The concept of *journey* implies a longer distance than what is indicated in Kafka’s text and typically involves additional details, such as a mode of transportation, for example, or a point of departure and a destination, perhaps. The sparse details provided in this case suggest that a more generic formulation of the source domain is called for. Something more nonspecific like GOAL-DIRECTED MOTION or CHANGE OF LOCATION would seem more appropriate. Thus the most specific conceptual metaphor at work here globally might more accurately be formulated as ACQUIRING WISDOM IS MOTION ALONG A PATH. This reformulation, or more to the point, its necessity, illustrates well the generic nature of Kafka’s text and the way it resists conceptual specification.

Given this characteristic, which arises, as described above, mainly on account of the sparse details, it is the text’s less specific conceptual metaphors, that is, the primary metaphors, that seem most salient. And here again, as discussed with the image schematic structure above, these metaphors seem almost to be what the text is talking about. The main primary metaphor at work in Kafka’s text is CHANGE OF STATE IS CHANGE OF LOCATION, and its logical entailments include the additional primary metaphors STATES ARE LOCATIONS, CHANGE IS MOTION, and PURPOSEFUL ACTIVITY IS GOAL-ORIENTED MOTION. What is striking about these primary conceptual metaphors as expressed in Kafka’s text is that the target domain in each case is rather easily specified, whereas the source domain cannot be. That is to say, the source domain in each case, given the lack of elaboration, can only be identified at a basic or generic conceptual level. Thus the expressions of these primary metaphors in Kafka’s text can be specified only as far as follows: WISDOM IS THERE, IGNORANCE IS HERE—or from the point of view of the many, IMPORTANCE IS HERE, UNIMPORTANCE IS THERE—BECOMING WISE IS ARRIVAL THERE, and THE PURSUIT OF WISDOM IS MOTION TOWARD THERE. These specifications with their rather generic source domains (HERE, THERE, MOTION) illustrate quite well my claim that the text seems in a sense to be *about* generic conceptual structures like primary metaphors. In refusing to specify the source domain of its main organizing metaphor beyond the generic notion of deictic motion through space, the text highlights how our understanding of the abstract domain of knowledge or wisdom—and by extension, other abstract domains as well—is grounded in our embodied knowledge of the physical environment in which we live. In this case, that knowledge entails specifically our literal, physical understanding of locations in and motion through space and our embodied experience of strong

correlations between locations and states and between changes in location and changes of state.

A final word is in order regarding the peculiarity of this particular complex of metaphorical constructions, for as we shall see, it is highly unusual for Kafka. In “Von den Gleichnissen” the target domain, WISDOM, is rather specific while the source domain, LOCATION OR MOTION, remains explicitly more generic. Typically with Kafka it is the other way around. The conceptual metaphors structuring his texts usually involve source domains that are more easily specified, if not named explicitly, while the target domains are left unspecified and hence open to interpretation. It is this characteristic configuration that typically allows, and indeed prompts, readers to fill in the missing conceptual content according to their own cognitive preferences.

In addition to the salient primary metaphors informing “Von den Gleichnissen,” generic-level conceptual metaphors are also at work in the text globally, namely, EVENTS ARE ACTIONS and GENERIC IS SPECIFIC. The EVENTS ARE ACTIONS metaphor governs the primary metaphors discussed, with the event of becoming wise understood metaphorically in terms of the action of moving from one location, here, to another, there. And like the primary metaphors identified, the GENERIC IS SPECIFIC metaphor seems to govern the text as a whole as well. “Von den Gleichnissen,” despite its salient generic quality, is, after all, one specific text that speaks to the nature of *Gleichnisse* in general. This is why Max Brod’s title seems appropriate. In addition, the GENERIC IS SPECIFIC metaphor is expressed in the phrase *daß das Unfaßbare unfaßbar ist* (“that the ungraspable is ungraspable”), and this specific phrase itself seems to get at what the text is about overall. It purports to apply to all *Gleichnisse* generally, and it also characterizes this particular text quite appositely as well, for the text conveys the overall impression that its own meaning or message is ungraspable. The widely disparate critical commentary the text has received bears witness to this effect, which I have argued is prompted by its highly generic quality.

The grammar of the phrase is noteworthy, and analysis reveals how it expresses the GENERIC IS SPECIFIC metaphor. To say that the ungraspable is ungraspable would appear to be a tautology, and that appearance is exacerbated in English, but the distinction between the two terms of the proposition is more evident in German on account of the capitalization and the obligatory inflectional *e* at the end of *Unfaßbare*. Metaphor functions by presenting an unfamiliar or abstract concept in terms of a more familiar or concrete one. Typically, the concepts juxtaposed in metaphor come from distinct domains. That is not the case here, hence the tautological impression. However, the terms employed here are from different grammatical categories, which is to say that they represent different conceptualizations of experience. The adjective *unfaßbar* (“ungraspable”) describes a qualitative physical experience that we have of objects or substances in the world, such as water, air, or oil, for example, that we cannot take hold of. The expression *das Unfaßbare* (“the ungraspable”) is an abstract noun, a substantive formed from the adjective *unfaßbar*, and as such encapsulates the very operation of abstraction from more concrete embodied knowledge. *Das Unfaßbare* represents, in other words, a generalization built up over innumerable experiences of specific things in the world that are *unfaßbar*. The formulation “*das Unfaßbare ist unfaßbar*” thus expresses in its grammatical structure the generic-level metaphor GENERIC IS SPECIFIC and also succinctly reveals the functioning and purpose of metaphoric reasoning in general.

Finally, the specific word choice used in this metaphor deserves attention. In defining the adjective *unfaßbar* (“ungraspable”) above, I was of course giving the literal definition, but as used in Kafka’s text the word is clearly intended in its metaphorical sense. When the narrator, reporting the position of the many, says that the ungraspable is ungraspable, he is not talking about physical objects or substances in the world that one would find difficult literally to take hold of. Rather, despite the literalist ideology he espouses and the rejection of metaphor that such an ideology entails, he is himself employing metaphor. The metaphor at work here is another primary metaphor that arises from a pervasive correlation in our experience, namely, UNDERSTANDING IS OBJECT MANIPULATION. Like the primary metaphors already discussed that take as their source domain our embodied experience of space and motion, here another common source domain based on a pervasive aspect of our experience is involved. Because of the particular kinds of bodies we have, our hands are one of the primary ways by which we understand our environment. In infancy, before we acquire language and the capacity for conceptual thought, a basic way we begin to understand the world is through manipulating objects. At this stage of development, learning to manipulate objects is inseparable from learning to control and use our bodies. Later, as we develop, our interaction with our environment through our hands never ceases. It is difficult to overestimate the amount of time we spend each day using our hands to function in the world—from turning back the covers at the start of our day to grooming and dressing ourselves to preparing food and eating to opening and closing doors to turning on and off machines to writing or typing to handling all variety of objects practically without cessation until we go to sleep.

One can imagine that if dogs had metaphors, a primary one for them would be UNDERSTANDING IS MOUTHING. Since it is mainly with their mouths that they manipulate objects, that is one of the primary ways that they understand their environment. For elephants, given the manifold uses they make of their trunks, it would be something like UNDERSTANDING IS TRUNKING. But for us, because of the particular kinds of bodies we have, our physical experience of manipulating objects with our hands forms the source domain we often use in order to think about the abstract target domain of understanding. Hence the many linguistic expressions we have in English based on the conceptual metaphor UNDERSTANDING IS OBJECT MANIPULATION, such as *Now I get it*, *Do you catch my drift?*, *That went right over my head*, *I can’t quite put my finger on it*, *He has an excellent grasp of the subject*, in addition to numerous individual items of the lexicon like *language acquisition*, *comprehend* (etymologically, “to grasp together”), *apprehend* (etymologically, “to seize or grasp toward”), *conceive* (etymologically, “to take together”), *object* (etymologically, from “to throw before”), *subject* (etymologically, from “to throw under”) and many, many more.

It may be worth underscoring that object manipulation is not the only source domain we use for thinking about the domain of understanding or knowledge, of course. It is an axiom in cognitive science that for any given abstract concept or target domain, there will be a number of different source domains that are used in reasoning about it, each of which highlights certain aspects of the concept or domain while its hides others (Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors*, 10-13). In the case of knowledge or understanding, another common source domain in Indo-European cultures is vision, which gives us the widespread primary metaphor KNOWING IS SEEING. This likewise arises from the

particular kinds of bodies we have, as vision is our dominant sense and hence one of the primary ways we understand the world. Thus we can say things in English like *I see what you mean*, *We had an enlightening discussion*, *A light bulb went on in my head*, *Her message was clear*, *lucid prose*, *transparent intentions*, *muddled thought*, *obscure reasoning*, and on and on. To return to Kafka's text and the phrase under consideration, *daß das Unfaßbare unfaßbar ist*, the point to stress is that it is undeniably metaphorical, and it employs not a specific-level metaphor but a more basic, primary one. So this central phrase of the text stands as further evidence of a keen awareness on the part of the author of the metaphorical basis of our abstract knowledge in our embodied experience.

Another point worth stressing is the irony. As noted above, the narrator, speaking for the many, conveys a value judgment that discredits metaphor while employing it. From the point of view of cognitive science, the use of metaphor *per se* is wholly unsurprising, since a major finding of the field is that metaphor is pervasive in all thought and in everyday language. The irony arises by virtue of the fact that a distinction can be made—and narratologists would insist it must be made—between the narrator and the author (Bal 16). Kafka has his narrator contradict himself, and readers keen to the role of metaphor in his assertion cannot fail to notice the irony. Furthermore, when the entire statement is examined, the irony becomes even more pronounced. So far we have only considered the first part of the statement. In whole, it reads, "Alle diese Gleichnisse wollen eigentlich nur sagen, daß das Unfaßbare unfaßbar ist, und das haben wir gewußt" ("All these Gleichnisse really only mean to say that the ungraspable is ungraspable, and we know that already"). Given what we have discussed regarding the metaphorical underpinnings of this assertion and the thoroughly metaphorical nature of all language as demonstrated by cognitive science, the presumption of understanding that concludes the assertion, "und das haben wir gewußt" ("and we know that already"), is questionable at best. The assertion may well be true taken at face value, and the wise themselves, as discussed above, would likely agree with the first part of it, the recognition that *Gleichnisse* serve to express realities that cannot otherwise be known. But that the many actually comprehend the full meaning of their claim is proven false by cognitive analysis.

The term *eigentlich* also deserves special attention in this respect. I have translated it as "really," and it is frequently rendered in English as "actually." As part of the evaluative expression "eigentlich nur" ("really only"), it emphasizes the general negative appraisal of *Gleichnisse* that the many hold. But it can also mean "literally." In fact, in German rhetoric, it is the technical term used to distinguish between literal and figurative speech, *eigentliche Rede* and *uneigentliche Rede*, respectively. Recognition of this additional meaning reveals that the statement attempts the logically impossible. That is, it announces itself as a reformulation in literal terms of what the narrator himself acknowledges in his preceding statement cannot be put and ought not to be taken literally. The many, in the voice of the narrator, thus contradict themselves and expose their error in believing they understand *Gleichnisse*. The fact that *eigentlich* has a sense meaning "literal" but is also used here as an evaluative term crystallizes precisely what is at stake in this text. For what motivates the logically inconsistent attempt to paraphrase or restate *Gleichnisse* in literal terms is an ideology and value system that consider metaphor a mere matter of ornamental or deviant language and an accompanying belief that metaphor obscures the truth. So to conceive of metaphor is fundamentally to misunderstand its role in language and thought and hence to misunderstand the nature of

language and cognition in general. And finally, the narrator's concluding statement appears especially ironic in light of what cognitive science demonstrates about the pervasiveness of metaphor in our everyday language and experience: "Aber das, womit wir uns jeden Tag abmühen, sind andere Dinge" ("But what we have to deal with every day is a different matter"). The statement clearly refers to the exigencies of making a living, but cognitive science demonstrates that our most basic everyday functioning in the world depends ineradicably on metaphor.

Gleichnisse in Literature and Life

"Von den Gleichnissen" reveals the primacy of spatial concepts in our abstract knowledge and understanding and suggests an acute awareness on the part of its author of the extent to which all thought is grounded in bodily experience. Fundamentally the text addresses how abstract thought is based in metaphorical projections of image schematic structures that emerge from our concrete spatial knowledge and experience. Interpreters of the text similarly employ spatial metaphors, not only in referring to or citing Kafka's text but in their own readings as well. Examination of a few canonical interpretations will illustrate the point. Beda Alleman, for example, describes the effect of Kafka's text as the feeling of having the ground removed beneath one's feet or of being in a labyrinth with no way out (140). Citing a diary entry of Kafka's from November 20, 1911, he contrasts the classical model of dialectics as a three-step movement from thesis to antithesis to synthesis with Kafka's own conception of antitheses—which he sees as paradigmatic for Kafka's work as a whole—as a "stehender Sturm" (146, 150), a stationary rush toward an unreachable goal. Reformulating this figure, he characterizes antitheses as a way to "chase thoughts in a circle" (146). Helmut Arntzen refers to the text's "bidirectionality" and describes its opening narrative section as a conceptualization of the words of the wise and everyday life as two distinct locations between which no connection can be established (154). For her part, Ingrid Strohschneider-Kohrs also replicates the spatial architecture given in Kafka's text of two opposing locations or positions. She even places the word *positions* at one point in quotes, acknowledging her own dependence on metaphor (306). Gerhard Buhr concludes his interpretation of Kafka's text with the observation that it "moves in the transitions" between the possibility and the impossibility of transcendence (185). Charles Bernheimer writes that "the words of the wise... suggest... a movement toward a fabulous beyond, toward some unknown and unspecifiable absence" (46) and that "language can only exist as a constant process of crossing between" metonymy and metaphor (50). He claims further that "for Kafka, both the inward, psychological real and the metaphysical world beyond can only be intimated as an always-elsewhere to which one can never cross over and to which no comparative structure can be thrown across" (54).

These few examples represent a mere fraction of all the instances in which interpreters of Kafka's text employ spatial metaphors to make their point. Additional examples could be adduced practically *ad infinitum*. On the one hand, from the perspective of cognitive science, such a circumstance is inevitable and unavoidable, since all our abstract thought is grounded in our embodied experience, in which our understanding of space is primary. Indeed, it is difficult to find any stretch of language,

written or spoken, that does not employ some spatial metaphors. Prepositions, for instance, in those languages that have them, are predominantly used in their non-literal senses, and there is hardly any extended sample of linguistic data in languages with prepositions that does not employ them metaphorically. But especially in the case of Kafka's text, which, as I have shown, highlights generic conceptual structure in a way that makes salient the basis of our conceptual thought in embodied spatial experience, readers naturally rely more explicitly on such spatial metaphors in their attempts to grapple with the text's meaning. Since Kafka pares his message down with a minimum of detail and imagery to the barest of basic spatial concepts, such as LOCATION HERE, LOCATION ELSEWHERE, and a PATH between the two, that is what readers have to go on. Some will be more inclined to elaborate that schematic conceptual structure according to their own individual cognitive preferences, while others will be comfortable with the lack of specific detail. In either case, the generic spatial structure that Kafka himself foregrounds is bound to figure prominently in readers' understanding.

One way the text's schematic structure of generic spatial concepts has been elaborated by a number of critics is as a reflection on language and literature (Arntzen 153; Hasselblatt 93-94; Strohschneider-Kohrs; Walther 80; Turk). It is worth considering what might account for this particular reading. To start with, at the risk of stating the obvious, the individuals who have arrived at this interpretation are specialists in language and literature. That is the subject matter they deal with on a daily basis. It is what they know best, what they do for a living, and what is consequently foremost in their minds. It is therefore understandable that they would be inclined to project the generic spatial story of Kafka's text onto a domain they are intimately familiar with, that of literature and language. Similarly, philosophers would likely understand "the words of the wise: as referring to philosophy. A parallel exists in this respect with categories, which, as we have seen, do not just objectively exist in the world but rather depend crucially on the kinds of bodies we have. But here, too, as we have also seen, individual experience plays a role. For the average person in an industrialized society, the concept *car* is a basic-level category, but for an auto dealer concepts like *sedan*, *truck*, *SUV*, or *cross-over* are likely more basic. For an average urban dweller, *tree* is a basic-level concept, but for someone who lives in a woodland environment, whose successful functioning depends on recognizing important differences between specific genera of trees, concepts like *oak*, *pine*, *maple*, and *spruce* would be basic-level. As a scholar of language and literature myself, I am sympathetic with readings of Kafka's text that see it as a reflection on literature in general. It seems almost self-evident to me that in writing of "the words of the wise" and of acquiring wisdom as "crossing over," Kafka, whose life passion was literature, has in mind literature as a distinct kind of knowledge. As a student of cognitive science, however, I also recognize that literature represents a particular expression of more general, everyday, ubiquitous human cognitive capacities.

In his influential work *The Literary Mind*, Mark Turner in fact argues that the human mind is essentially literary in its everyday functioning. Though we tend to think of literature as an exceptional use of language, and we typically categorize concepts like *story* and *parable* as belonging to literature, Turner explains that story and parable are basic instruments of human thought. They are essential to human cognition, required for all manner of everyday reasoning. Story, or narrative—from a Latin root meaning "to know"—is a cognitive structure that provides us with meaningful, coherent experience

instead of chaos. Imposing narrative order and structure on objects and events in the world, which we do unceasingly and automatically, allows us to understand what we experience at an appropriate human scale and to function successfully as the kind of beings we are. When we explain practically anything, for example, from historical events and circumstances to biological or cosmological processes to developments in politics and world affairs to occurrences in our personal lives, narrative structures our explanations. Parable—from the Greek *paraballein*, “to throw next to”—is the projection of elements and relations from one story onto another. It is a mental capacity that allows us to engage in everyday human behaviors such as planning, predicting, and evaluating. Parable, Turner writes,

begins with narrative imagining—the understanding of a complex of objects, events, and actors as organized by our knowledge of *story*. It then combines story with projection: one story is projected onto another. The essence of parable is its intricate combining of two of our basic forms of knowledge—story and projection. This classic combination produces one of our keenest mental processes for constructing meaning. The evolution of the genre of parable is thus neither accidental nor exclusively literary: it follows inevitably from the nature of our conceptual systems. (5)

In her Nobel lecture, though she likely has in mind specifically literature and fictional stories, Toni Morrison makes essentially the same point as Turner about narrative an instrument of thought: “Narrative has never been merely entertainment for me. It is, I believe, one of the principal ways in which we absorb knowledge” (8). And whereas some literary critics, as we have seen, are invested in delineating parable as a genre of literature distinguishable from other genres like fable, allegory, etc. on the basis of certain defining characteristics, others, such as Louis MacNeice and C. S. Lewis—notably creative writers as well as critics—have similarly understood parable not merely as a literary form but rather as a property of the human mind (Turner 7). “Literary parables,” Turner maintains, “are only one artifact of the mental process of parable” (5). It seems to me that this is what Kafka, too, is getting at in “Von den Gleichnissen.” The cognitive scientific understanding of narrative and narrative projection as fundamental mechanisms of everyday human thought reveals the complaint of the many in Kafka’s text that *Gleichnisse* are irrelevant to daily life to be erroneous. “The human mind,” Turner writes, “is always at work constructing small stories and projecting them.” (12) What are commonly thought of as literary phenomena—story, parable, metaphor—in fact represent fundamental mechanisms of the human mind and make possible what we experience as everyday human life.

Even when we take *story*, *parable*, and *metaphor* in their commonplace, narrow senses as linguistic artifacts of a literary nature, the presumption that literature or fictional storytelling is of peripheral importance for human lives is also quite mistaken. An inordinate amount of our knowledge of the world derives in fact from fiction. Consider, for example, everything you know about prisons. In all likelihood you have never seen the inside of a prison before, but you probably know quite a bit about what they look like and what kinds of things go on there. And though some of that knowledge will have come from news reports or documentaries, the bulk of it by far will have come from

fictional stories. Statistically, chances are you will never need that knowledge to function successfully, but nevertheless, much of what we know about the world consists of such encyclopedic knowledge that we likewise acquire from fictional narratives. Beyond such information that we may never depend on for survival, the complex social relations portrayed in fictional stories do help prepare us for negotiating real situations we encounter in our lives, as Brian Boyd has recently argued persuasively in his study of fiction from a cognitive and evolutionary perspective, *On the Origin of Stories*. The particulars may differ—indeed, they will almost certainly differ, as the fictional stories that get published and command a broad audience are typically those that depict extraordinary circumstances—but what we learn from exposure to exceptional instances of the perennial human realities of social conflict and cooperation provides us with valuable general knowledge about human behavior that we draw on, most often unconsciously, in situations we face on a daily basis.

In addition, the pleasure we derive from fictional narratives needs to be addressed. In his influential book *How the Mind Works*, Stephen Pinker argues that the instructional value of literature is evolutionarily adaptive, whereas the delight we experience when engaged with fiction is probably a by-product of evolution (539). Patrick Hogan's critique of Pinker's argument is particularly relevant for a discussion of Kafka's text: "There seems to be an implicit Puritanism here that is not in keeping with evolutionary theory. After all, in general, pleasure is adaptive. Why is sex pleasurable? Because our ancestors who enjoyed sex tended to engage in it and thus to reproduce" (211). Pinker's position echoes the attitude of the many in "Von den Gleichnissen" who dismiss *Gleichnisse* because they fail to recognize any directly relevant pragmatic value in them. Most evolutionary biologists would concede Hogan's point. Boyd certainly maintains that the pleasure we derive from absorption in fictional stories is a crucial aspect of the adaptive function of narrative.

Apart from these general considerations of the ways fictional narratives and the everyday cognitive structures they depend on are relevant to human life, the individual, highly subjective experience of engagement with stories must also be taken in to account. Just as a description of the physics of sitting in a chair, however accurate it may be at the level of subatomic particles and wave equations, cannot capture the human experience of what it feels like to sit in a chair (Turner 14), so a cognitive analysis of a literary text or an evolutionary explanation of the importance of fiction cannot convey the subjective experience of reading a particular novel or poem. Part of the value of literature and part of what distinguishes it from other fields of knowledge is that it engages precisely this dimension of the human experience of reality (Widdowson; Carroll 104-14). Lakoff and Turner emphasize this point in the foundational document of cognitive poetics, *More than Cool Reason*: "All reading is reading in" (106-10). But parable, it turns out, is also the mechanism by which we as individuals find significance in the literature we read for our own individual lives. Turner notes: "Even stories exceptionally specific in their setting, character, and dialogue submit to projection. Often a short story will contain no overt mark that it stands for anything but what it purports to represent, and yet we will interpret it as projecting to a much larger abstract narrative, one that applies to our own specific lives, however far our lives are removed from the detail of the story. Such an emblematic story, however unyieldingly specific in its references, can seem pregnant with general meaning." (7)

Michael Burke offers a fascinating case study showing how readers understand a text by drawing on their individual experience and then project their understanding of the text back onto their own lives. In a reading of Shakespeare's Sonnet 2, he details how his own knowledge of the poem's historical context along with knowledge of the genre blends with personal thoughts, feelings, and memories in his understanding of the linguistic input represented by the text. He mentions stories about the Crusades from childhood history lessons, the film *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, film-reel footage from World War I, war poetry by canonical English poets like Sassoon and Owen, the BBC television series *Blackadder Goes Forth*, other Shakespeare sonnets and plays, Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*, Jesus' parable of the talents, Plato's parable of the cave, and Ovid's story of Narcissus from *The Metamorphoses* as examples of other stories that are projected onto his understanding of the story narrated in Shakespeare's sonnet. A major point of Burke's argument is that the literary concept of intertextuality is fundamentally a matter of parabolic projection and conceptual blending. And while individuals with a similar cultural heritage may share some of these same input sources, Burke's reading demonstrates that intertextuality is clearly a highly subjective phenomenon. Furthermore, he describes how reminiscences of particular individuals he has known during his lifetime figure into his understanding of Shakespeare's poem and, significantly, how his reading of Shakespeare's poem prompts him to reflect on his own personal experiences. He mentions how his attitude toward the recent birth of a nephew and the awareness of his own childlessness and age—nearing forty like the addressee of the sonnet—are influenced by his reading of this particular literary text. Burke's essay represents a rare discussion in contemporary literary criticism of the ways that individual subjective experience goes into understanding any literary text and, conversely, how reading literary texts contributes to an individual's understanding of his or her experience.

Above all, Kafka's text seems to foreground the schematic structure of the human conceptual system in general. Metaphor, the conceptual mapping of elements from a source domain onto a target domain, implies a PATH image schema, typically multiple paths that set up parallel cross-domain inferences. Parable, the projection of one story onto another, similarly entails a PATH image schema. And narrative, the construal of objects, actors, and events into a coherent whole with cause-effect relations and with a beginning, middle, and end, depends on a PATH image schema as well. *Gleichnis*, as we have seen, is a generic concept that can accommodate these particular specifications of this same basic image schematic structure. To be sure, the human mind comprises other structures that do not inherently depend on a PATH image schema, such as categories, frames, idealized cognitive models, and metonymy, as well as a host of other image schemas like BALANCE, VERTICALITY, SURFACE, CONTACT, MASS-COUNT, or CENTER-PERIPHERY, to name a few. But certainly the PATH image schema and the cognitive mechanisms of metaphor, parable, and narrative that it informs are among our most basic. They are crucial to our successful functioning as the kind of organisms we are. The PATH image schema is one that turns up everywhere in Kafka's prose, made salient, as we shall see, through striking, unconventional transformations. And contrary to the opinion of the many in Kafka's text, *Gleichnisse* and the conceptual structures they imply are not exclusive to the "words of the wise," but rather are the fundamental instruments of

everyday human cognition.

3

Das Urteil

Im Anfang war die Tat!

—Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Written in one sitting on the night of September 22-23, 1912 and often dubbed Kafka's "breakthrough" work, *Das Urteil* (*The Judgment*) culminates in a speech act, the one named in its title: the speech act of issuing a judgment. This circumstance alone suggests that the text might merit consideration in terms of speech act theory. And indeed, analysis employing such a framework reveals Kafka's sustained preoccupation and engagement with some of the very same issues that speech act theoreticians have grappled with over the course of the past half century. As I demonstrate, Kafka's story may profitably be read as an extended meditation on the complex relation between word and deed, with important ethical implications. Of the various aspects of speech act theory that scholars have debated, one main concern emerges as paramount in *Das Urteil*. The text seems almost to obsess over it, in fact, and that is the inherent susceptibility of speech acts to failure. In this respect Kafka's concerns align uncannily with those of the founder of speech act theory, J. L. Austin. Kafka's chief contribution to speech act theory as suggested in *Das Urteil*, I argue, is his insistence on the pivotal role played by metaphor in a theory of language as action.

Speech as Action and Its Consequent Susceptibility to Failure

The opening paragraph of *Das Urteil* introduces at the very outset the problem of the perplexing relation between speech and action. Following the first sentence, which establishes a temporal setting, and the second, which introduces the protagonist and establishes the spatial setting, the third sentence reports the first action in the story: the protagonist has just finished writing a letter, which he has enclosed, slowly and playfully, in an envelope. What seems like a straightforward narrative report of action, however, on closer consideration turns out to be somewhat more complicated. The action reported is that of writing a letter, which is not speech per se, not an oral utterance, but which involves language nonetheless and is hence a linguistic act. Writing seems more like "real" action, like opening a window, say, or cooking a meal, than does speaking, in that it more conspicuously involves bodily motor activity, namely, that of the exterior appendages of arm, hand, and fingers, along with external instruments like a pen and paper or a computer. It also produces direct material effects in the physical world, such as a letter, for example. Speech, too, involves the body, to be sure—the lips and tongue and teeth and palate and vocal chords and lungs and diaphragm—but such bodily involvement is largely interior, largely invisible, and so for the most part escapes our conscious awareness. Furthermore, we perceive the bodily involvement in speech that we

are most aware of, that of the tongue and lips, as too limited or small scale to count as “real” action, as pushing or pulling or walking or jumping are. Furthermore, gesture accompanies speech universally, but this is a fact that we are also typically unconscious of. Speech also produces material effects in the physical world as writing does, in the sound waves that disturb the atmosphere and are sensed by the tympanic membrane. But such effects are ephemeral (unless registered by recording instruments) and also invisible, so we do not accord them the same status as the material effect of an opened window, a meal, or a letter. Writing thus seems more like action than speech does, but since it is inextricably bound up with speech as language, it seems less like action than other more conspicuously physical activity. That *Das Urteil* depicts as its very first action one with such peculiar status, an action the essence of which is language, and which therefore represents a blend of and a blurring of the boundary between speech and action, is significant, for it underscores from the outset a concern with the fluidity of that boundary that remains paramount throughout.

In the second paragraph, following the first report of action in the first, the narrative shifts to presenting the protagonist’s thoughts, thoughts about the addressee of the letter he has just written. He recalls how his friend has complained to him of his failing business venture and told him of his social isolation:

...betrieb er ein Geschäft in Petersburg, das...seit langem...zu stocken schien,
wie der Freund...klagte
...he ran a business in St. Petersburg that...for a long time now...seemed to be
going nowhere, as his friend...complained

and

Wie er erzählte, hatte er keine rechte Verbindung mit...seiner Landsleute, aber
auch fast keinen gesellschaftlichen Verkehr mit einheimischen Familien.
As he told it, he had no real connection to...his compatriots and almost no social
intercourse with local families.

These first reports of speech in indirectly reported thought seem unproblematic enough. The speech reported, in particular the second example of his friend’s account of his social isolation, appears to consist of what Austin called constative language, language that refers to or describes states of affairs in the world and that can be judged according to truth criteria. But were one to evaluate the friend’s speech as performative, every indication is that it has been felicitous: the friend has successfully performed the speech acts of complaining and giving an account of a situation. Already by the next paragraph, however, where an example of more conspicuously performative language occurs, the possibility of felicity seems unattainable.

Continued in indirect thought, the third paragraph comprises essentially an anxious reflection on the susceptibility of speech acts to failure. The specific speech act in question here is that of offering advice. What could one say to a man in his friend’s situation, the protagonist wonders. Were one to offer him advice, he reasons, that would simultaneously mean calling him a failure and treating him like a child, and the more tactfully one were to do so, the more insulting it would be:

Sollte man ihm vielleicht raten, wieder nach Hause zu kommen...? Das bedeutete...nichts anderes, als daß man ihm gleichzeitig, je schonender, desto kränkender, sagte, daß seine bisherigen Versuche mißlungen sei...und daß er ein altes Kind sei.

Should one perhaps advise him to come back home...? That would mean...no more than saying at the same time—and the more gently, the more offensively—that his efforts thus far have failed...and that he's an overgrown child.

This potential susceptibility of speech acts to failure raises crippling doubts about the point of performing the speech act in the first place. Since one cannot control the uptake, to use Austin's term, or be certain of the interpretation of one's speech act, the possibility exists that it could be taken as other than intended and could even inflict pain or cause offense. This concern over the impossibility of knowing or controlling the effects of one's words continues to occupy the protagonist's thoughts for the rest of the paragraph. He might not be able to persuade his friend to follow his advice, he thinks: "Vielleicht gelang es nicht einmal, ihn überhaupt nach Hause zu bringen" ("Perhaps he would not even manage to get him to come home"). In other words, the protagonist worries his words might be ineffective, his speech act infelicitous, and that very possibility seems again to obviate the entire reason for trying. Or then again, he thinks, he might succeed in the act of persuasion with his advice, but then one could never predict the consequences of that outcome, either:

Folgte er aber wirklich dem Rat und würde hier...niedergedrückt, fände sich nicht in seinen Freunden und nicht ohne sie zurecht...war es da nicht viel besser für ihn, er blieb in der Fremde...?

But if he did actually follow the advice and became...depressed here, couldn't get along with his friends nor without them...wouldn't it have been much better for him had he stayed abroad...?

The fact that one cannot know the effects of one's words seems equally debilitating to the protagonist.

Austin's Anxiety about Speech as Action

The way *Das Urteil* opens with this anxious reflection on the susceptibility of speech acts to failure forms a striking parallel with Austin's initial foray into the performative. In *How to Do Things with Words*, the inaugural document of speech act theory originally delivered as the William James lectures at Harvard in 1955, Austin begins by defining, or as he puts it, "isolating" the performative. He argues that, contrary to how most philosophers and linguists had understood language as chiefly a means of referring to or making statements about the world that are either true or false, much language does not consist of such statements that say something true or false about the world but rather consists of utterances that do something in the world, that perform certain actions. They are therefore not subject to evaluation in terms of truth or falsity but

rather, rather, like actions, either successful or unsuccessful. Austin gives several examples of the kinds of performative utterances he has in mind: “I do” uttered in a marriage ceremony; “I name this ship the Queen Elizabeth” said while smashing a bottle against a ship’s bow; “I bequeath my watch to my brother” occurring in a will; or “I bet you it will rain tomorrow.” Clearly, when one says, “I do,” in a marriage ceremony, one is not describing or referring to marriage, one is engaging in it (5-6). With performatives, one is doing something with words as opposed to describing something with them. And whatever it is that one does, Austin stresses, cannot be evaluated adequately in terms of truth or falsity but rather, like other actions, can succeed or fail.

After defining the performative in his first lecture, Austin starts his second lecture by listing a set of conditions, which he calls “felicity conditions,” that must be met if a performative utterance is to be successful. I reproduce these here for convenience’ sake:

- (A.1) There must exist an accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect, that procedure to include the uttering of certain words by certain persons in certain circumstances, and further,
- (A.2) the particular persons and circumstances in a given case must be appropriate for the invocation of the particular procedure invoked.
- (B.1) The procedure must be executed by all participants both correctly and
- (B.2) completely.
- (F.1) Where, as often, the procedure is designed for use by persons having certain thoughts or feelings, or for the inauguration of certain consequential conduct on the part of any participant, then a person participating in and so invoking the procedure must in fact have those thoughts or feelings, and the participants must intend so to conduct themselves, and further
- (F.2) must actually so conduct themselves subsequently. (14-15)

The taxonomic layout conveys the impression that deciding whether a performative utterance is successful or unsuccessful is a rather simple matter. In addition, the fact that these conditions define a successful speech act suggests that these types of utterances are for the most part successful. But then, immediately after introducing these conditions for a successful performative, Austin begins to reflect on all the ways that such utterances are liable to fail. First he distinguishes between different kinds of infelicity. Those arising from a failure to satisfy the first four conditions he terms *misfires*, and those arising from a failure to fulfill the last two he dubs *abuses* (16). He then distinguishes further between the types of infelicity in the cases of the A and B conditions as *misinvocations* and *misexecutions*, respectively (17). He then actually attempts to name the different types of infelicity resulting from the failure to satisfy the separate conditions A.1 and A.2. The former he calls *misapplications*, but for the latter he admits he can find no suitable label (17). Following this attempt at classifying distinct types of infelicities, Austin then proceeds to provide numerous examples of such unsuccessful speech acts, most of which are quite humorous, in order to support his argument: his own hypothetical smashing of a bottle against a ship and proclaiming, “I name this ship Mr. Stalin” when he was not the appropriate person; marrying a monkey; and baptizing penguins (23-24). This preoccupation with the various ways speech acts can fail continues through the third and fourth lectures, similarly with copious humorous examples of particular kinds of

infelicities. Then, significantly, after this extended meditation on all the ways that performatives are subject to failure, Austin concludes his fourth lecture by admitting his own failure to achieve what he set out to do, to “isolate” the performative. Determining that “the total speech situation” must be considered in evaluating the success or failure of a performative, he acknowledges “the parallel between statements and performative utterances,” and he recognizes that rather than isolating the performative he has been “assimilating the supposed constative utterance to the performative” (52).

In his fifth, sixth, and seventh lectures, Austin takes a new tack on the problem. He attempts to elucidate grammatical and lexical criteria to isolate the performative. Without going into the details, what is most noteworthy about this renewed attempt to define the performative is that by the end of these extended considerations he again concedes failure. He concludes that the distinction he set out to draw between constative statements that refer to or describe the world and performative utterances that do things in the world is unsustainable: “we failed to find a grammatical criterion for performatives,” and “it is often not easy to be sure that, even when it is apparently in explicit form, an utterance is performative or that it is not” (91). Recognizing that all ostensibly constative statements have a performative dimension in a given context—the total speech situation—and, conversely, that all performatives do in some sense state something about the world, Austin vows at the end of his seventh lecture “to make a fresh start on the problem” (91).

He abandons the binary performative-constative model and commences in the eighth lecture to propose a trinary model comprising locutionary acts, illocutionary acts, and perlocutionary acts. Many speech act theoreticians have seized on these distinctions of Austin’s as a workable framework, but such enterprises miss what is essential about Austin’s endeavor, which is that this final attempt to define speech acts by necessary and sufficient conditions fails as well. He does not admit that failure as explicitly as he does in the case of his first two attempts. He hedges his concession, saying at the end of the tenth lecture that his “formulas are at best very slippery tests for deciding whether an expression is an illocution as distinct from a perlocution or neither” (131-2), and concluding in the eleventh that “in general the locutionary act as much as the illocutionary act is an abstraction only: every genuine speech act is both” (147). He adds, however, that “we need” such distinctions (146). In his twelfth and final lecture he proposes a taxonomy of five classes of performatives—these, especially, have been seized on by subsequent epigones—but Austin manages to dispose of this model within the space of one lecture. What is especially striking, then, about this founding document of speech act theory is how, after opening with an extended, one might say obsessive, deliberation over the susceptibility of speech acts to failure, it fails itself repeatedly to accomplish what it sets out to do. This is a reading of Austin explored in much greater depth by speech act theorists such as Shoshana Felman, Jacques Derrida, J. Hillis Miller, and Douglas Robinson, among others. Despite this explicitly acknowledged failure, though, Austin did in fact succeed with *How to Do Things with Words* in inaugurating a new field of knowledge, to which all the subsequent work in speech act theory and pragmatics attests. His success, then, paradoxically, is founded on failure. A similar paradox, I argue, animates Kafka’s story.

Failed Speech Acts in Reported Thought

The trajectory of Austin's argument exhibits uncanny parallels to the plot of *Das Urteil*. After the couple of examples of apparently successful speech acts reported at the beginning of the third paragraph—the protagonist's friend's complaint about his failing business venture and his conveyance of his sense of social isolation—the paragraph evolves, as we have seen, into an anxious reflection on the susceptibility of speech acts to failure, specifically in this case, the speech act of giving advice. Given the dilemma the protagonist confronts in his realistic recognition that speech acts are inherently liable to fail, the solution he arrives at is most intriguing. The course of action he decides on, presented at the opening of the fourth paragraph, is not to opt out of communication altogether, but to avoid communicating anything of substance. Because one can never be sure of the efficacy of one's words, since one can never entirely control how they may be taken—because, in other words, meaning does not reside in a speaker's intentions nor in language itself but rather in a hearer's interpretation—Kafka's protagonist reasons that an appropriate response to this situation is not to say anything "real": "Aus diesen Gründen konnte man...keine eigentlichen Mitteilungen machen" ("For these reasons one could not...share any real news").

The obvious implication is that the letter mentioned in the first paragraph, which the protagonist has just written to his friend, contains nothing of substance, but rather just inconsequential small talk. This implication is revealed later to be false, as the reader learns that the letter announces the protagonist is engaged to be married (though it may well be true of previous letters to his friend). The implications of this sentence go beyond the obvious, however. In particular, the word *eigentlich* invites consideration. Translation of the phrase "keine eigentlichen Mitteilungen" as "any real news" preserves the implication of inconsequence, but *eigentlich*, in addition to meaning "real" or "actual," also means "literal." In colloquial usage, the German expressions *wörtlich* and *übertragen* typically represent the distinction between literal and metaphorical language. But in the technical terms of rhetoric, German distinguishes between literal and metaphorical language as *eigentliche Rede* and *uneigentliche Rede*, respectively, literally "real speech" and "unreal speech," or "true speech" and "untrue speech," or "proper speech" and "improper speech." Considering this sense of the term *eigentlich*, one might understand the phrase "keine eigentlichen Mitteilungen" as "no literal news." The implication could then be that the protagonist has decided he must use metaphorical language in response to the dilemma he recognizes that speech acts are subject to failure. The further implication, then, is that the letter mentioned in the first paragraph that he has just written to his friend consists of *uneigentliche Mitteilungen*, or metaphorical messages.

Following this provocative opening—in which the employment of metaphorical language is suggested as an appropriate strategy to deal with the inherent susceptibility of speech acts to failure—the remainder of the fourth paragraph continues with reports of several specific instances of speech acts that have failed. In this respect, Kafka's narrative is reminiscent of the way Austin, after introducing the notion of the performative and establishing the conditions for its felicity, spends his next three lectures providing numerous examples of infelicities. It is reported that the protagonist's friend has explained his extended absence as a result of the political instability in the country where

he operates his business, which demands his constant presence there. But doubt is cast on this purported explanation in the very report of it:

Der Freund war nun schon über drei Jahre nicht in der Heimat gewesen und erklärte dies sehr notdürftig mit der Unsicherheit der politischen Verhältnisse in Rußland, die demnach also auch die kürzeste Abwesenheit eines kleinen Geschäftsmannes nicht zuließen, während hunderttausende Russen ruhig in der Welt herumfahren.

His friend had not been home now for over three years, which he explained with the shoddy excuse of the uncertain political situation in Russia, which apparently would not permit even the briefest absence of a minor businessman, while hundreds of thousands of Russians traveled easily all around the world.

The doubt expressed in the protagonist's interpretation of his friend's explanation represents a judgment that the felicity condition of sincerity (*I.1*) was not fulfilled. The speech act is thus rendered infelicitous in the uptake. This report of a speech act illustrates how the force of a speech act always depends to some degree on the interpretation, so that its nature may in fact be changed, from an explanation to a flimsy excuse, for example. And thus it underscores that the force of a speech act ultimately lies beyond the intentions of the one who performs it.

More instances of failed speech acts follow immediately. The narrative reports that the friend "had of course been informed" of the protagonist's mother's death and had responded in a letter expressing his condolences. The sincerity of the condolences referred to, however, is again called into question, which raises doubts as to their felicity as a speech act, as to whether the act of condolence has successfully been performed:

Von dem Todesfall von Georgs Mutter...hatter der Freund wohl noch erfahren und sein Beileid in einem Brief mit einer Trockenheit ausgedrückt, die ihren Grund nur darin haben konnte, daß die Trauer über ein solches Ereignis in der Fremde ganz unvorstellbar wird.

His friend had of course learned of the death of Georg's mother and had expressed his condolences in a letter with an aridity that could only be explained in that the grief from such an event must be unimaginable in a foreign country.

More than merely raise doubts about the felicity of his friend's condolences, the protagonist's interpretation of the speech act as insincere, as not having fulfilled the sincerity condition, again vitiates the act and is actually what causes it to fail. Hence the protagonist does not feel the emotional comfort and support conventionally expected to follow from such an act.

Thus far analysis has shown an obsessive preoccupation in the text with speech acts. After depicting as its first action the linguistic quasi-action of writing, the narrative moves through an extended, anxious reflection on the susceptibility of speech acts to failure, the specific speech act in question being that of offering advice. The anxiety over the potential of speech acts to fail arises in this case not because of any concern that felicity conditions may not be satisfied—as is the case with Austin's deliberations on various types of infelicities—but rather because of the recognition that the force or effect

of a speech act depends not on a speaker's intentions but on a hearer's uptake, on the interpretation. Following these reflections on the liability of speech acts to fail, two instances of such failure are reported, first in the case of making an excuse and then in that of expressing condolences. In each of these cases, it is the failure to satisfy sincerity conditions that results in the infelicity, but again, it is the interpretation of the hearer that determines that the felicity conditions have not been met. Consistent with this established pattern, the narrative continues with reports of more failed speech acts.

The next failed speech act mentioned, in the second sentence of the next paragraph, is that of persuasion:

Früher...hatte er Georg zur Auswanderung nach Rußland überreden wollen und sich über die Aussichten verbreitet, die gerade für Georgs Geschäftszweig in Petersburg bestanden.

Earlier...he had tried to persuade Georg to emigrate to Russia and had wrote at great length about the prospects for success in St. Petersburg in Georg's line of business.

The friend's language has clearly been recognized as persuasion, so in terms of locutionary form, at least, it must have been performed correctly. It therefore satisfies the correctness and presumably the completeness conditions (B.1 and B.2). It unquestionably satisfies the existential and appropriateness conditions (A.1 and A.2), since we know the speech act of persuasion exists as a conventional linguistic practice that employs certain standard formulations, and we know that it is an appropriate act to invoke among friends. It apparently also fulfills the sincerity conditions, for unlike the previous two examples reported, no doubt is cast on the speaker's sincerity. The failure of this particular act of persuasion to have the expected illocutionary force and perlocutionary effect thus underscores again the degree to which the uptake of a given speech act impinges on, and indeed is central to, its success. Austin recognizes this feature of performative utterances by stressing that "the total speech situation" must be taken into account in determining whether a speech act succeeds or fails (52).

Rather than explain to his friend the reason his attempt to convince him failed, the protagonist opts not to respond to the unsuccessful attempt at persuasion directly and resolves to limit himself instead to relating meaningless incidents, "bedeutungslose Vorfälle"—an iteration of his earlier decision not to share "any real news." He justifies this decision by again reflecting on the impossibility of controlling the perlocutionary effects of one's speech acts, which is a recognition of their inherent susceptibility to failure. Were the protagonist to tell his friend that he had failed to persuade him, that would be tantamount to calling *him* a failure. If he were to tell him frankly that he was unmoved by his argument, that the numbers with which he had tried to impress to him suggesting the great profit potential in St. Petersburg were pathetic compared to what he was now making ("Die Ziffern waren verschwindend gegenüber dem Umfang, den Georgs Geschäft jetzt angenommen hatte"), it would be unmitigated insult. The narrative says that the protagonist "didn't feel like" mentioning his own phenomenal business success to his friend: "Georg aber hatte keine Lust gehabt, dem Freund von seinen geschäftlichen Erfolgen zu schreiben" ("But Georg had no desire to write to his friend about his business successes"). But it is clearly his anxiety over how such news might be

taken, in other words, his recognition that ultimately one cannot control the uptake of one's speech acts, that motivates the protagonist's decision not to respond to his friend's attempt at persuasion and not to relate news of his own success: "und hätte er es jetzt nachträglich getan, es hätte wirklich einen merkwürdigen Anschein gehabt" ("and were he to do so now after the fact, it would really seem odd"). This particular example concerning the possibility that a report of one's own success—ostensibly a straightforward instance of constative speech, a statement referring to facts in the world—might be taken as an insult—clearly an instance of performative speech—also underscores what Austin himself concedes, that the distinction between the constative and the performative is necessarily a fuzzy one. In light of this circumstance, that the kind of speech act a given utterance is depends to a significant degree on the hearer and the total speech situation, the protagonist apparently feels disinclined to respond to his friend at all. He does, however, decide to respond, only with "meaningless incidents."

The "meaningless incidents" referred to here, as noted above, represent an iteration of the *uneigentlichen Mitteilungen*, the unreal, untrue, or non-literal messages alluded to earlier. After this line of reasoning and consequent course of action is reported, a concrete example is provided of the kinds of "meaningless incidents" the protagonist has purportedly confined himself to in his correspondence with his friend. In three previous letters, he has announced the marriage engagement of some unspecified, inconsequential individuals:

So geschah es Georg, daß er dem Freund die Verlobung eines gleichgültigen Menschen mit einem ebenso gleichgültigen Mädchen dreimal in ziemlich weit auseinanderliegenden Briefen anzeigte.

And so it happened that Georg announced to his friend three times in fairly widely separated letters the engagement of an unimportant man to an equally unimportant girl.

This passage reports the performance of a speech act, that of announcement, which in its performative force and function actually plays a constative role, referring to a state of affairs in the world. It therefore represents another case of language that blurs the distinction between saying and doing. But the state of affairs referred to here is an engagement, a speech act *par excellence*. The passage implies that the information is mentioned casually in passing, as presumably all of the contents of the protagonist's letters to his friend are. However, it is hard to imagine the speech act of making an announcement succeeding as such in the manner implied. The announcement is reported as though it involved no action on the protagonist's part: "So geschah es Georg, daß er...die Verlobung...anzeigte..." ("And so it happened to Georg that...he announced...the engagement..."). It is as though the engagement announcement just "occurred" to the protagonist, without any volition on his part, which insinuates exemption from any responsibility. The presentation of this speech act thus raises thorny questions relating to intention and responsibility that a theory of language as action inevitably involves. A final irony about this report of a speech act is the fact that the supposedly casual mention of some unimportant couple's engagement occurs three times in three separate letters, which undermines the professed insignificance in addition to insinuating intention. And in fact, the repeated casual report of this meaningless incident

has the purportedly unintended perlocutionary effect of piquing his friend's interest: "bis sich dann allerdings der Freund, ganz gegen Georgs Absicht, für diese Merkwürdigkeit zu interessieren begann" ("until indeed the friend, quite contrary to Georg's intentions, began to be interested in this curiosity"). The irony then intensifies in the very next sentence, which reports that the protagonist himself has actually just gotten engaged: "Georg schrieb ihm aber solche Dinge viel lieber, als daß er zugestanden hätte, daß er selbst vor einem Monat mit einem Fräulein...sich verlobt hatte" ("But Georg much preferred to write such things to him rather than confess that he himself had gotten engaged to a girl a month ago").

Failed Speech Acts in Reported Speech

Following this extended meditation in reported thought on the complex relation between speech and action, including consideration of many of the types of failure that speech as action is subject to and the difficult ethical questions that a theory of speech as action raises, the text presents its first instance of directly reported speech in the form of a conversation between the protagonist and his fiancée. The direct presentation implies that one particular exchange is reproduced. This implication is undercut, however, by the inclusion of the frequency adverb "often" that introduces the ostensibly direct report, indicating that it is actually merely exemplary or representative, one of many such similar conversations, and hence not to be taken as having literally taken place word for word: "Oft sprach er mit seiner Braut über diesen Freund und das besondere Korrespondenzverhältnis, in welchem er zu ihm stand" ("He often spoke with his fiancée about this friend of his and the peculiar correspondence relationship he was involved in with him"). The conversation consists, as all exchanges do, of a series of speech acts, some more obvious performatives than others, and some more successful than others. The fiancée complains that the friend most likely will not be coming to their wedding, which upsets her, for she claims the right to get to know all of her fiancé's friends: "Da wird er gar nicht zu unserer Hochzeit kommen...und ich habe doch das Recht, alle deine Freunde kennen zu lernen" ("So he probably won't even come to our wedding, but I have the right to meet all your friends"). The protagonist responds to this complaint with the excuse that he does not want to bother his friend. He then reiterates his general anxiety about speech acts in general, that one can never control their outcome. He says that even a successfully performed speech act of invitation, which would have as its conventional perlocutionary effect the friend's attendance at their wedding, might also have other, negative perlocutionary effects. His friend might feel imposed upon, for instance, or he may be jealous, he says, but in any event, he would be discontent and incapable of ever remedying his disaffection:

"Ich will ihn nicht stören...er würde wahrscheinlich kommen...aber er würde sich gezwungen und geschädigt fühlen, vielleicht mich beneiden, und sicher unzufrieden und unfähig, diese Unzufriedenheit jemals zu beseitigen."
"I don't want to bother him...he would probably come...but he would feel obliged and hurt, might even envy me, and would certainly be dissatisfied and unable ever to get over his dissatisfaction."

The protagonist then poses a direct question to his fiancée: “Allein – weißt du, was das ist?” (“Do you know what it means to be alone?”). But she ignores it, which means that as a performative it has misfired—another example of a speech act failed in the uptake. Instead, she picks up the thread from before and suggests, as a solution to the potential problems and uncertainties that could arise from a direct invitation, that the friend might learn of their wedding in some other way, indirectly: “Ja, kann er denn von unserer Hochzeit nicht auch auf andere Weise erfahren?” (“Well, then, can’t he learn about our wedding in another way?”). The suggestion is itself an indirect speech act, phrased in the locutionary form of a query as to her fiancé’s assessment of a possibility. He, however, takes it at face value, not as an indirect suggestion but as a question whose gist is constative rather than performative. Thus, in his uptake, he renders her indirect performative the next failed speech act in the exchange, merely expressing his judgment that the possibility is slim: “es ist bei deiner Lebensweise unwahrscheinlich” (“considering his lifestyle, it’s unlikely”).

This instance of a failed performative, given its indirectness, underscores the difficulty of identifying grammatical or lexical criteria for determining the felicity and even the illocutionary force of a speech act, what *kind* of speech act it is, which in turn reinforces the relevance of the total speech situation. Even such a simple utterance like *It’s cold in here* can be, depending on the situation and the interlocutors involved, a constative statement regarding the temperature, a suggestion to put on a sweater, an insulting remark on someone’s unfriendly personality, an order to close a window, or any number of other acts. The range of potential effects or responses is all the greater. Following her failed speech act of suggestion, the fiancée then iterates her original complaint, but in a way that ever so slightly insults and threatens the protagonist: “Wenn du solche Freunde hast, Georg, hättest du dich überhaupt nicht verloben sollen” (“With friends like that, Georg, you shouldn’t have gotten engaged at all”). He responds by “blaming” both her and himself equally for the engagement and pronounces that as the optimal situation: “Ja, das ist unser beider Schuld; aber ich wollte es auch jetzt nicht anders haben” (“Well, that is both our fault, but I wouldn’t have it any other way”). Finally, breathing heavily between kisses, she protests again, directly, unmistakably: “Eigentlich kränkt es mich doch” (“But it really offends me”). This time, apparently, her complaint is effective, its felicity perhaps facilitated by the nonverbal act of kissing, part of the total speech situation, for the protagonist decides then and there to announce his engagement to his friend. In what must be taken as a perlocutionary effect of his fiancée’s final complaint, along with the kissing, he loses all the anxiety he has felt over the susceptibility of speech acts to failure and suddenly decides to tell his friend “everything”: “hielt er es wirklich für unverfänglich, dem Freund alles zu schreiben” (“he considered it actually harmless to write his friend everything”).

Immediately following this directly reported exchange of speech acts between the protagonist and his fiancée, several of which fail, except notably, the fiancée’s final one, the first sentence of the next paragraph reports that the protagonist has indeed announced his engagement to his friend. In fact, it turns out, he has done so in the very letter mentioned at the story’s opening, the one just written, which the narrative has twice implied consisted only of inconsequential small talk and “meaningless incidents”: “Und tatsächlich berichtete er seinem Freunde in dem langen Brief, den er an diesem

Sonntagvormittag schrieb, die erfolgte Verlobung mit folgenden Worten” (“And in fact he did inform his friend of his engagement, in the long letter he had been writing that Sunday morning, with the following words”). The relevant passage of his letter is then presented directly, reproduced verbatim in the text. This excerpt from the letter represents the first unambiguous case of a direct report of a speech act in the narrative thus far, and the first speech act reported, his engagement announcement, is itself unambiguously direct: “Ich habe mich mit einem Fräulein Frieda Brandenfeld verlobt” (“I have gotten engaged to a Miss Frieda Brandenfeld”). But the other speech act he performs, an invitation to his wedding, is exceedingly indirect, so much so that it is rather more like a non-invitation:

Ich weiß, es hält Dich vielerlei von einem Besuche bei uns zurück, wäre aber nicht gerade meine Hochzeit die richtige Gelegenheit, einmal alle Hindernisse über den Haufen zu werfen? Aber wie dies auch sein mag, handle ohne alle Rücksicht und nur nach Deiner Wohlmeinung.

I know there are lots of things that keep you from visiting, but wouldn't my wedding be just the right occasion to throw all the obstacles to the wind for once? But whatever may be, act without regard to any but your own best interests.

Does this indicate the protagonist's reversion to his earlier preferred strategy of relating “meaningless incidents” in his correspondence with his friend, of not sharing “any real news”? This strategy, it will be recalled, was chosen in recognition of the predicament that the force of speech acts does not reside in a speaker's intention or in words themselves but to a significant extent in a hearer's understanding and in the total speech situation, and that consequently a speaker cannot completely control the force of an utterance. The protagonist's invitation to his wedding is not meaningless or irrelevant small talk about inconsequential persons and incidents; indeed, it directly concerns the protagonist himself and is as meaningfully relevant as his engagement announcement. But as a speech act it is so indirect that it may easily be taken not as an invitation, as purportedly intended, but as an insult. So what this first concrete, verbatim report of a speech act in Kafka's text shows is that for all the uncertainty inherent in the uptake of a performative utterance, for all its susceptibility to failure on account of the unavoidable fact that in large part the determination of success or failure lies in the total speech situation, which a speaker does not control, the locutionary act itself, the actual formulation of an utterance in language, possesses its own undeniable force.

Neither the success or failure of an utterance nor its illocutionary force, which determines how we classify it as a speech act, whether we understand it is a statement of the obvious, a polite suggestion, a veiled insult, or a command, for instance, depends solely on its uptake, as the considerations of these questions raised in Kafka's text thus far have suggested. This first passage of directly reported speech in the text with a glaring example of an indirect speech act underscores the point that the success or failure of an utterance as well as its illocutionary force also depends on the actual locutionary act, which channels the force to influence and shape its uptake. We have seen that the same utterance, such as *It's cold in here*, can be understood as a variety of different speech acts depending on the context in which it is uttered, including of course the relations between speaker and hearer(s). Similarly, a variety of different utterances may express the same

speech act, which Austin eventually recognizes, and which is why he abandons the attempt to identify grammatical or lexical criteria to distinguish performative utterances from constative statements. To perform the speech act of making an apology, for instance, one might say *I'm sorry, I apologize, My apologies, Please accept my sincere apologies, I never meant to offend you and I hope you'll forgive me, We deeply regret if any offense was taken*, or any number of variations. And while there is a range of utterances that would count as apologies, some better examples of the speech act than others—and we might, and often do, argue over whether a poorer example actually qualifies—there are certain words and phrases that are conventionally used to perform the speech act, and one or some of those words almost certainly must be included for an utterance to count as an apology. *Tough shit!*, for example, would definitely not. Thus the locutionary form of an utterance, which is more under the speaker's control than its uptake and the total speech situation, has a significant impact on its illocutionary force and its success or failure.

In the case of Kafka's protagonist's wedding invitation, it is clearly the locutionary form that accounts for the problematic nature of the speech act. He never uses the word *invite* or *invitation*, nor any other conventional phrasing that would be recognized as an invitation, such as *I would be honored by your presence, We do hereby request your presence*, or even something as simple as *I'd like it if you could come*. Instead, he poses a hypothetical question about the possibility of his friend's coming, and in fact, he even underscores the likelihood of his *not* coming, explicitly giving him an out, offering a pre-approved excuse, as it were: "Ich weiß, es hält Dich vielerlei von einem Besuche bei uns zurück, wäre aber nicht gerade meine Hochzeit die richtige Gelegenheit, einmal alle Hindernisse über den Haufen zu werfen?" ("I know there are lots of things that keep you from visiting, but wouldn't my wedding be just the right occasion to throw all the obstacles to the wind for once?"). Paraphrased, his locutionary act of invitation says basically, "I know you probably won't be able to make it to my wedding, but wouldn't it be something if you could?" The blatant indirectness raises the possibility that this ostensible invitation may have opposite illocutionary force in the uptake, that the addressee, in other words, may understand the speech act as an indirect way of telling him his presence is not really desired.

Following this speech act of highly problematic and indeterminate status, the protagonist's concluding remark is even more peculiar. "Aber wie dies auch sein mag, handle ohne alle Rücksicht und nur nach Deiner Wohlmeinung." ("But whatever may be, act without regard to any but your own best interests"). This comment might be paraphrased as, "So do whatever." Expressed in the imperative mood ("handle"), it is ostensibly, according to its locutionary form, a command. But the status of this speech act is also highly problematic. Does a command that someone do whatever he chooses really qualify as a command? It seems rather contradictory: "I order you to do what you want." Despite the locutionary form, it seems hollow, without any meaningful illocutionary force. On the other hand, it can be seen as singularly efficacious, as a speech act with inviolable force, whose success is guaranteed. Whatever the addressee does will be proof of the speech act's felicity, will cause it to succeed. But this guaranteed felicity, this insusceptibility to infelicity, is part of what seems to make the utterance as a speech act void and hollow. Take an invitation, for example, a proper invitation that would satisfy all the felicity conditions Austin enumerates, that would be appropriate for the

circumstances and individuals involved, executed completely in the correct locutionary form, and extended sincerely. If the addressee could not decline the invitation but were compelled for some reason or other to accept, had no choice but to accept, would such a speech act qualify as an invitation? It seems that circumstance would make it more of a summons. But even a summons is susceptible to failure as a speech act, only the consequences for an addressee of ignoring a summons are typically direr than those of declining an invitation. This third directly reported example of a speech act in Kafka's text, the protagonist's order to his friend to do whatever he wants, thus illuminates what seems to be a paradox inherent in a theory of language as action: that the susceptibility of speech acts to failure is almost a kind of felicity condition itself. Utterances *must* have the potential to fail in order to *be* speech acts.

This first passage of directly reported speech in Kafka's text, containing three separate instances of speech acts—an announcement, an invitation, and a command—thus throws into relief crucial issues raised by a theory of speech as action. The first highlights the fuzzy boundary between constative and performative utterances: in announcing his engagement, the protagonist is undeniably doing something with words, yet he is also referring to a state of affairs in the world. The second underscores the point that the locutionary form of an utterance not only partially determines its success or failure (felicity conditions B.1 and B.2), but also impinges on its illocutionary force and perlocutionary effect and hence blurs the distinctions between these categories, thereby making evident the importance of the total speech situation in evaluating a speech act's felicity. The final speech act in this passage then reveals a seeming paradox about performatives, namely, that in order to succeed, they must have the potential to fail. This first example of directly reported speech in the text, the excerpt from the protagonist's letter reproduced verbatim, also concludes the first main section of the narrative, which chiefly presents reported thought, as the following paragraph shifts to the direct presentation of action and brings the story back to the narrative present.

Failed Speech Acts in Direct Speech

The opening of the next paragraph represents the first major turning point in the narrative, where the “real” action begins. The protagonist sticks the letter he has just composed into his pocket and walks out of his room and across the hall into his father's room. The dialogue that follows, in keeping with the tenor of the narrative so far, begins with a series of infelicities. The father rises, greets his son, and advances toward him: “‘Ah, Georg!’ sagte der Vater und ging ihm gleich entgegen” (“‘Ah, Georg!’ said the father, rising at once to meet him”; Muir 81). This greeting is ignored and left unreciprocated. As a speech act of greeting, it misfires, for the protagonist apparently perceives it as somewhat menacing, more as a mild threat: “‘mein Vater ist immer noch ein Riese,’ sagte sich Georg” (“‘my father is still a giant,’ said Georg to himself”). Instead of greeting his father in return, the protagonist comments on how dark his father's room is: “Hier ist es ja unerträglich dunkel” (“It's unbearably dark in here”). This utterance seems to be a constative statement referring to the world, but with the evaluative term *unerträglich*, “unbearable,” and the accompanying emphatic particle *ja*, this ostensible statement about the world performs a slight insult. By expressing his

disapproval of the situation and implicitly imputing responsibility to his father, the protagonist insinuates that something is wrong with him. The father ignores the insult, taking his son's remark instead as merely a descriptive statement. He confirms the truth value of this mere statement by iterating the propositional content, but without the negative evaluation: "Ja, dunkel ist es schon" ("Yes, it's true it's dark"). It is important to note, however, that the very uptake of the utterance as a mere statement of fact referring to the world itself performs an act: it deflects the insult and so voids its effectiveness as such. The omission of the negative evaluation along with the addition of the intensifier *schon* illustrates how iteration introduces significant difference, if not difference in meaning in a constative sense, certainly difference of force in a performative one.

The protagonist then poses a direct question: "Das Fenster hast du auch geschlossen?" ("You've got the window shut, too?"). Despite the overt locutionary form, however, formulated in the interrogative mood, this utterance is not really a question, for it merely states the obvious. Rather, it is another veiled insult, implying the father is odd or irrational. The father appears to take this utterance as the indirect insult it is and defends himself: "Ich habe es lieber so" ("I prefer it that way"). But the son ignores the explanation and continues his chiding, in the locutionary form of another ostensible statement of the obvious: "Es ist ja ganz warm draußen" ("But it's so warm outside"). As a statement referring to the world, the utterance ought supposedly to be a matter of truth and subject to verification in such terms, but as a speech act—again the addition of the intensifier *ja* lends it performative force—it actually represents an iteration of the protagonist's previous two indirect insults of his father as odd or irrational and is hence not a matter of truth but of felicity. Whether it is felicitous as an insult is difficult to say: the father does not respond. Perhaps this represents an appropriate, desirable perlocutionary effect of a successfully performed insult. Or perhaps the father has totally ignored the implication, a prerogative he enjoys as the addressee of an indirect speech act, one he can use to his advantage. The difficulty posed by this ostensibly constative statement of determining whether or not an utterance is successful as a speech act, and what kind of speech act it is, underscores again the importance of the total speech situation for such questions.

The protagonist's next utterance is highly significant. Having sat down, he retakes the floor and changes topic in an attempt to get to the heart of the matter, to get straight to the purpose of his visit: "Ich wollte dir eigentlich nur sagen... daß ich nun doch nach Petersburg meine Verlobung angezeigt habe" ("I really just wanted to tell you... that I am sending news of my engagement to St. Petersburg after all"). This is the second occurrence of the word *eigentlich* in the text. As discussed above with respect to its first occurrence in the phrase "keine eigentliche Mitteilungen" ("any real news"), it can be translated into English as "real," "actual," "true," or "literal." In everyday conversation the word functions as a reframing device, serving to focus attention on the essential topic, and that is clearly how it is used by the protagonist in this conversation with his father. But we are dealing here not with the transcript of an actual conversation that once took place in the real world but rather with a constructed fictional dialogue in a literary text. And given the occurrence of the expression earlier in the text in reference to the protagonist's strategy to cope with the inherent susceptibility of speech acts to failure, and especially given its occurrence later in the story's central speech act, the father's judgment, its occurrence in this passage seems to invite consideration of it as more than

just a framing device. Bearing in mind the sense of the word as “real” or “true,” and considering what has been depicted in the narrative thus far, the protagonist’s use of the word *eigentlich* here seems inconsistent with the propositional content of his statement that follows: “...daß ich nun doch nach Petersburg meine Verlobung angezeigt habe” (“...that I have announced my engagement to St. Petersburg after all”). He speaks in the past tense, as though the speech act of announcement were completed. It is true that he has written the letter containing his engagement announcement, but he has not posted it yet, so it has not reached its addressee. The locutionary act, therefore, is completed. The same cannot be said unequivocally, however, of the illocutionary act, the doing *in* the saying. Perhaps in merely writing in his letter that he has gotten engaged, the protagonist has indeed done the act of announcement. But this determination seems problematic in light of the fact that the addressee has not yet received the letter. The written nature of this particular instance of a speech act complicates the question, so consideration of some spoken examples of speech acts may shed some light. If a priest in a wedding ceremony mumbles under his breath, “I now pronounce you man and wife,” so that neither the bride nor groom nor any witnesses hear him, is the illocutionary act complete and successful? If I utter the words, “I’ll give you my television when I leave,” but there is no one there to hear the utterance, have I actually made a promise? Is there any illocutionary force in my words? The utterance would be more like a thought. These considerations indicate that an addressee of a speech act must actually hear or receive the locutionary act in order for an illocutionary act to be said to have taken place. In the case of the perlocutionary act, or the perlocutionary effect of a speech act, the reception of a locutionary act by an addressee is obvious. The remark by Kafka’s protagonist that he “has announced” his wedding engagement thus raises important questions for speech act theory. It furthermore highlights the impossibility of drawing distinct boundaries between locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts, as Austin himself acknowledges (131-2), and shows how these categories are properly understood not as separate types of utterances but rather as aspects of every utterance (147). These considerations also call into question the truth of the protagonist’s statement. The gesture that accompanies his words—showing his father the letter by pulling it out of his pocket a bit and letting it fall back in, “Er zog den Brief ein wenig aus der Tasche und ließ ihn wieder zurückfallen”—only shows that he has not mailed the letter, underscoring the incompleteness of the purportedly completed speech act of announcement.

The next phase in the exchange between father and son continues along innocuously enough, without any of the kinds of infelicities that have marked the conversation so far. The sequence is less obviously a series of performatives and more apparently the communication of propositional content, of statements (including statements in the interrogative) that refer to the world and that can therefore be judged according to truth criteria. What this passage illustrates, though, is that more is always being done in any exchange, more subtly, than just what is said. In response to the protagonist’s announcement that he is sending news of his engagement to St. Petersburg, the father asks why St. Petersburg: “Wieso nach Petersburg?” fragte der Vater”. So far so good, nothing infelicitous here, just a request for clarification or contextualization. The protagonist answers, “Meinem Freunde doch” (“To my friend there, you know”). Ostensibly, this response is merely a direct reply to the father’s query and hence no more than a properly executed answer. But with its emphatic particle *doch* that implies the

father is forgetting things and so potentially implies a mild insult, the statement functions as another reminder that even apparent constative statements *do* things, as with the protagonist's earlier statements referring to the lighting conditions in his father's room or the outside temperature. Further, the gentle, caring tone palpable in the phrasing can also be felt as condescending—though, again, this is a potential that readers may or may not perceive.

The father's response is curious: ““Ja. Deinem Freunde’, sagte der Vater mit Betonung” (““Yes, your friend,’ said the father with emphasis.”). This appears to be a confirmation of the son's answer, an acknowledgment of the truth of its propositional content as a statement, but also an indication of its felicity as a speech act of reminding. It also represents an iteration of the son's answer, however, and as such shows how iteration changes the meaning and force of an utterance in subtle but profound and sometimes unspecifiable ways. The narrator's specification that the father emphasizes his utterance through intonation, “mit Betonung,” is striking. What does it mean? There is no indication of meaning, or rather, no specification of meaning, only the indication that meaningful difference has occurred. The Muirs' translation renders the phrase, “with peculiar emphasis” (81), which is reasonable, but the original does not specify that the emphasis was peculiar. This rendering thus represents another example in which Kafka's generic conceptual structure is specified by interpreters and translators. What is undeniably peculiar about the phrase, though, is precisely that its meaning is not specified. And what it underscores is how the meaning and force of any utterance involves more than just its abstract, disembodied, referential sense, and always also includes the body. Emphasis through intonation involves the diaphragm and lungs and the larynx and oral cavity and uniquely encapsulates how the body is intimately bound up with meaning in subtle and profound ways, ways not always amenable to description in language, ways that exceed referential language but that are nevertheless known bodily.

The protagonist responds to his father's iteration of his words by in a sense reiterating his previous remark himself. He does not reiterate it so much in terms of propositional content, making a statement referring to his friend, but rather in terms of performative force, repeating the implication that his father is forgetting things, perhaps losing his mind. An ostensibly gentle reminder—the emphatic particle *doch* is repeated—his words simultaneously condescend and hence indirectly insult: “Du weißt doch, Vater” (“You know, father”). The father's response shows he has been following his son's words carefully and suggests no offense has been taken at the implied insult, meaning its potential performative force as an indirect insult has been deflected and rendered infelicitous in its uptake as a constative statement: “Und jetzt hast du es dir wieder anders überlegt?” (“And now you've changed your mind?”; Muir 82). Notably, the utterance is issued in the locutionary form of a statement but intoned, as the punctuation indicates, with the illocutionary force of a question. Then, much like the father's response above that iterated his son's preceding turn, the son's answer to his father's question confirms the truth value of its propositional content by iterating it: “Ja, jetzt habe ich es mir wieder überlegt” (“Yes, I've been thinking it over again”). However, as this nearly verbatim iteration illustrates, every iteration transforms what it iterates in some way. In this case, omitting the word *anders* (“differently”) changes the meaning significantly, with that change made salient in the difference between the two turns in English translation. Compare the exchange in German:

“Und jetzt hast du es dir wieder anders überlegt?”
“Ja, jetzt habe ich es mir wieder überlegt.”

with a translation into English:

“And now you’ve changed your mind?”
“Yes, I’ve been thinking it over again.”

The protagonist’s response reveals that he has not conclusively changed his mind, as the father’s question asks, only that he has thought about it. This seemingly congenial phase of the conversation thus consists ostensibly merely of statements referring to the world, but as analysis shows, the speakers turn out to be simultaneously doing things with words, albeit subtly.

The tone of the exchange shifts distinctly with the father’s next contribution, an extended turn in which speech acts again become more prominent. He calls his son’s name and orders him to listen: “Georg...hör' einmal!” (“Listen to me, Georg!”). The rest of the father’s speech continues in this unambiguously domineering tone, though it is exceedingly problematic, rife with contradiction and equivocation. He starts by assessing the situation, again making a statement that appears to conform to truth criteria and describe a state of affairs in the world, and then pays his son a compliment: “Du bist wegen dieser Sache zu mir gekommen, um dich mit mir zu beraten. Das ehrt dich ohne Zweifel” (“You have come to me about this matter, to confer with me. That does you honor, no doubt”). But his construal of the state of affairs is not incontrovertibly true. His son has come to him not to confer on the matter, not to seek his advice, since he has already made up his mind and already written his friend announcing his engagement, but rather to inform his father of his decision. As discussed above, though, since he has not actually posted the letter, the completion of his speech act has not yet been accomplished. Its force is held in suspension, as it were. So it is not entirely impossible that the father’s construal is in fact the true depiction of the situation: that the son has come not to inform him of a deed done, but to confer with him on a course of action. Its truth value as a statement about the world, then, remains unverifiable, but what it does undeniably do is construe the present situation, which it ostensibly merely describes, as one in which the father, simply put, has more power over the son. The act of seeking advice, though it is not certain that this accurately describes what is happening here, places the seeker in a subordinate position. So regardless of the truth value of the father’s words, his construal of the situation as his son seeking his advice casts his son’s words and actions as such. In construing it so, it effectively makes it so, if only momentarily. Likewise, the ostensible compliment does more than just describe the son as honorable. Coming from the father who implicitly has the authority to judge his son favorably or otherwise, it instantiates the hierarchical power relations between the two. This kind of force, the way in which apparent statements of fact, descriptions of states of affairs in the world, always subtly and almost imperceptibly do things, most significantly the way they assert and instantiate power, is so pervasive in all language that we are barely conscious of it. But analysis in terms of speech act theory demonstrates that pervasiveness.

Next the father indirectly accuses his son of lying, of not telling the whole truth:

“Aber es ist nichts, es ist ärger als nichts, wenn du mir jetzt nicht die volle Wahrheit sagst” (“But it’s nothing, it’s worse than nothing, if you don’t tell me the whole truth”; Muir 82). Then he utters a statement that does the exact opposite of what it reports: “Ich will nicht Dinge aufrühren, die nicht hierher gehören” (“I don’t want to stir up matters that shouldn’t be mentioned here”; Muir 82). He then indirectly accuses his son of improprieties or transgressions: “Seit dem Tode unserer teuren Mutter sind gewisse unschöne Dinge vorgegangen” (“Since the death of our dear mother certain unseemly things have occurred”). Next he issues a vague threat: “Vielleicht kommt auch für sie die Zeit und vielleicht kommt sie früher, als wir denken” (“The time may come to discuss such things, and it may come sooner than we think”). Then again, he utters a statement that does the exact opposite of what it purports to do, indirectly accusing his son of excluding him from important matters in their business: “Im Geschäft entgeht mir manches, es wird mir vielleicht nicht verborgen - ich will jetzt gar nicht die Annahme machen, daß es mir verborgen wird” (“In the business there’s much that escapes me, it may not be concealed from me—I certainly don’t want to assume it’s being concealed from me”). Returning then to the matter at hand, the protagonist’s letter to his friend, the father reassumes a dominant position. He commands his son not to deceive him, which is an iteration, albeit much more direct, of the earlier indirect accusation of lying: “Georg, täusche mich nicht” (“Georg, don’t deceive me”). And at the same time, once again, he says the opposite of what he is actually doing with his words: “Es ist eine Kleinigkeit, es ist nicht des Atems wert, also täusche mich nicht” (“It’s a trifle, hardly worth mentioning, so don’t deceive me”). Professing the triviality of what he alludes to while iterating and stressing it and then iterating his order not to deceive him, he undermines the truth value of what he professes, that the matter he is referring to is a mere trifle. Given the highly conflicted and contradictory nature of the father’s speech, his final sentence in this extended turn ought not to come as a surprise. Yet it is by far the most surprising utterance in the narrative so far: “Hast du wirklich diesen Freund in Petersburg?” (“Do you really have this friend in St. Petersburg?”).

The protagonist’s reaction—he rises in embarrassment or bewilderment or a combination of the two—can be seen as a perlocutionary effect of the father’s speech act. It as though he has been pushed upward into a standing position by the force of his father’s speech. Such a strong reaction is understandable, as the performative force of the father’s utterance casts everything in the narrative so far, including everything the father himself has said, in an entirely new light. Is anything that has come before true? The protagonist succeeds in deflecting the force of his father’s utterance. His standing up is not only the direct perlocutionary effect of his father’s words, although there is undeniably that element to it. It is also a move, the bodily part of a move, the rest of which involves speech, to gain the upper hand in the situation, which he effectively does. He changes topic with an imperative, though the command is notably mild as it includes himself as addressee. It is more of a pseudo-command: “Lassen wir meine Freunde sein” (“Let’s leave my friends be”). For the remainder of his extended turn, as with the initial order, he performs a series of various speech acts, many of which might not seem by themselves to qualify as explicit speech acts or “pure” performatives, but all of which together function to place his father in a subordinate position to himself. He expresses concern for his father’s health and asserts his intention to take care of him, in essence coddling him. And this strategy appears effective, as by the end of his speech he stands

over his father, who has let his head sink to his chest.

But the next sequence of turns reverses the tables again. The father changes the topic back to what it had been, ignoring his son's command to forget about his friends, ignoring apparently everything his son has said about his concerns for his health and his plans to take better care of him. Evidently acutely aware of not having received an answer to his question, he presses the point. He apparently recognizes his son's changing the topic as a blatant attempt to avoid answering his direct question, which he takes as an indirect answer that confirms his suspicion. He voices this suspicion by answering his own question: "Du hast keinen Freund in Petersburg" ("You have no friend in St. Petersburg"). What is noteworthy about this claim is that it appears to be more a constative statement about the world than a performative speech act, and as such it should theoretically be subject to truth conditions. However, it is precisely the possibility of truth that this statement calls into question. It unmistakably accuses the son of lying and so clearly has a performative dimension and corresponding force, as all apparent statements inevitably do in use. But unlike other examples of statements in the text that, as we have seen, also have a performative dimension, such as the protagonist's earlier statements about his father's dark room, the shut window, or the outside temperature, this statement of the father's regarding the friend in St. Petersburg cannot be verified by direct empirical comparison with the immediate facts of the situation. And, in fact, it remains unverifiable. Having reassumed control, the father baldly insults his son, calling him a clown: "Du bist immer ein Spaßmacher gewesen" ("You have always been a jester"). And he repeats his accusation that his son is being untruthful: "Wie solltest du denn gerade dort einen Freund haben! Das kann ich gar nicht glauben" ("How could you possibly have a friend there! I can't believe that at all").

The protagonist resorts to his strategy of ostensibly gentle reminders as a way to reassert control, beginning with the mild command to remember: "Denk doch noch einmal nach, Vater" ("Just think back a bit, Father"; Muir 83). He then provides numerous details about his friend, invoking vivid imagery in his cause, especially the memorable story told by the friend about his adventures abroad that he claims his father himself has repeated on occasion. These details take the form of constative statements about the world, which thus ought to be subject to evaluation in terms of truth conditions, but as with the father's preceding assertion that the friend does not exist, it is precisely the possibility of knowing the truth that the text from this point on begins to call into question. And despite their superficial form as constative statements, these remarks are intended to add weight to the protagonist's argument and lend his speech force as an act of persuasion, so they clearly have a performative dimension and represent further evidence in the text of the way all utterances have both constative and performative sides. During the course of his extended turn, the son has managed to get his father undressed and into bed, and the scene winds down with the son iterating his gentle, condescending reminder: "Nicht wahr, du erinnerst dich schon an ihn?" ("You remember him, now, don't you?").

The subsequent exchange represents the next major turning point in the story, and significantly, it foregrounds the issue of metaphorical versus literal language. The father appears to be snuggly tucked in and he asks, in an apparent constative use of language in reference to the world, to his concrete present situation: "Bin ich gut zugedeckt?" ("Am I all covered up?"). The next few turns in the exchange are as follows:

“Es gefällt dir also schon im Bett,” sagte Georg und legte das Deckzeug besser um ihn.

“Bin ich gut zugedeckt?” fragte der Vater noch einmal und schien auf die Antwort besonders aufzupassen.

“Sei nur ruhig, du bist gut zugedeckt.”

“Nein!” rief der Vater, daß die Antwort an die Frage stieß, warf die Decke zurück mit einer Kraft, daß sie einen Augenblick im Fluge sich ganz entfaltete, und stand aufrecht im Bett. Nur eine Hand hielt er leicht an den Plafond. “Du wolltest mich zudecken, das weiß ich, mein Früchtchen, aber zugedeckt bin ich noch nicht.”

“So you do like it in bed,” said Georg, and tucked the cover around him better.

“Am I all covered up?” asked the father again, seeming especially intent upon the answer.

“Relax, you’re all covered up.”

“No!” cried the father, his answer butting against the question, as he threw the cover off with such vigor that for a moment it unfolded completely in flight, and stood upright in bed. He held just one hand lightly on the ceiling. “You wanted to cover me up, I know, my little rascal, but I’m not covered up yet.”

What transposes in this stage of the exchange is that the father’s use of language shifts from the literal and referential to the metaphorical. In fact, the dramatic turn suggests that the father had perhaps been speaking metaphorically all along, or perhaps actually speaking both metaphorically and literally at the same time. In other words, his words fit his context and so make perfect sense referentially as “tucked in,” but at the same time there is the possibility, even the likelihood, that he secretly means “covered up” in the metaphorical sense of “done in” or “disposed of” all along. By the end of this passage, at any rate, there is no doubt as to what the father means.

The son tucks his father in tighter while he ignores his direct question and instead simply insinuates that he is snug: “Es gefällt dir also schon im Bett” (“So you do like it in bed”). In the form of a statement ostensibly describing the situation, the son’s remark is also intended as a speech act of persuasion, to get his father’s consent to what he is doing to him, to submit to his authority. The father, as with his earlier direct question about the friend in St. Petersburg, is clearly not satisfied with his son’s evasive response, as it renders his own speech act void—another example of how the success of a speech act depends crucially on its uptake. But the father is not deterred by this failure. He repeats his question verbatim: “Bin ich gut zugedeckt?” (“Am I all covered up?”). The son’s response this time represents a direct answer to the question, but it also entails a command not to worry or to be calm: “Sei nur ruhig, du bist gut zugedeckt” (“Relax, you’re all covered up”). The father’s response to this direct answer then causes his son’s speech act of a command to fail, as he jumps from a lying position into a towering upright one and cries “No!”

One could argue that the son’s command is successful as a speech act. It has the correct locutionary form of a command, issued in the imperative (“Sei nur ruhig,” “Just be calm”), and its illocutionary force as a command is unmistakable—it is clearly not a compliment or a betrothal or a promise, for example. One might claim, therefore, that the son does indeed successfully perform a command. But can a command that is ignored

really be judged successful? The speech act of a promise may serve as an illustrative example. If I utter the words “I promise” in the appropriate circumstances, regardless of my intentions, I have made a promise. However, the felicity conditions *F*.1 and *F*.2, the sincerity conditions, requiring that one have the appropriate thoughts, feelings, and intentions for a given speech act and that one subsequently conduct oneself in the appropriate manner, complicate the matter. Certainly, if I make a promise but then break it, I have nonetheless still made a promise. But if the desired or expected perlocutionary effect does not occur, can it be said to be a successful, felicitous promise? These considerations raised by this passage in Kafka’s text underscore that approaches to speech act theory that attempt to classify certain utterances as illocutionary acts and others as perlocutionary acts are misguided. Every utterance is a locutionary act with illocutionary force that has perlocutionary effects. And judging whether or not a speech act is successful requires taking into consideration all three aspects.

Following this dramatic turn in the story hinging on the difference between literal and metaphorical meaning, the situation becomes even more Kafkaesque—there is no better way to put it. Remaining standing in bed, the father maintains control for nearly the entire rest of the exchange, with the son interjecting briefly only three times. Each time he attempts unsuccessfully to seize control; each time he performs speech acts that fail. He tries to insult his father by calling him a comedian (“Komödiant!”), but the father deflects the force of his son’s direct insult by ostensibly agreeing with him, admitting not that he is a comedian but that he is playing the role of a comedian: “Ja, freilich habe ich Komödie gespielt! Komödie! Gutes Wort!” (“Well, of course I’ve been playing a comedy! A comedy! Good word!”). In his second interjection, the son attempts to ridicule his father: “‘Zehntausendmal!’ sagte Georg, um den Vater zu verlachen” (“‘Ten thousand times!’ said Georg, to ridicule his father”). But the father simply ignores the comment. The son’s final speech act in the exchange is an accusation that his father has been waiting to ambush him: “Du hast mir also aufgelauert!” (“So you’ve been lying in wait for me!”; Muir 87). The father nullifies this accusation almost effortlessly: “Mitleidig sagte der Vater nebenbei: ‘Das wolltest du wahrscheinlich früher sagen. Jetzt paßt es ja gar nicht mehr’” (“The father said pityingly, casually: ‘You probably wanted to say that earlier. Now it’s not even relevant anymore’”). Except for these three brief interruptions, the father holds the floor and maintains control for the rest of the exchange. He performs various speech acts throughout, including threats and commands and insults. What is perhaps most striking about the father’s extended speech in this passage is its blatant and excessive theatricality, accompanied as it is by singing and dancing. Standing up in bed, the father lifts up his nightshirt and kicks his legs, reminiscent of the cancan, while he insults his would-be daughter-in-law and his son in song:

“Weil sie die Röcke gehoben hat,” fing der Vater zu flöten an, “weil sie die Röcke so gehoben hat, die widerliche Gans,” und er hob, um das darzustellen, sein Hemd...hoch...“weil sie die Röcke so und so und so gehoben hat...”

Und er stand vollkommen frei und warf die Beine. Er strahlte vor Einsicht.

“Because she raised her skirts,” the father began to pipe, “because she raised her skirts like this, the sleazy goose,” and to demonstrate he lifted his nightshirt high... “because she raised her skirts like this and this and this...”

And he stood fully exposed and kicked his legs. He beamed with insight.

Significantly, it is in the course of this exaggerated performance, when the father's statements referring to the world become increasingly incredible, irrational, and absurd, that the deeper truths of the story are revealed, metaphorically, of course. When the narrative reaches its climax with the father's final words, the issue of metaphorical versus literal meaning returns once more explicitly, and with a vengeance.

The Father's Judgment

The father's final turn in this exchange consists of three sentences and contains the judgment to which the story's title refers. It represents, therefore, the central speech act of the text, a text that analysis has shown to be obsessed with the susceptibility of speech acts to failure. The judgment pronounced by the father in his final speech, moreover, contains the word *eigentlich*—its third and final occurrence in the text. Unlike in the previous two instances, however, which occur just in passing, as it were—"keine eigentlichen Mitteilungen" ("any real news") and "Ich wollte dir eigentlich nur sagen" ("I really just wanted to tell you")—in this final occurrence, the word *eigentlich* is prominently foregrounded, through repetition and a peculiar inflection. I cite the father's final turn in the exchange in full:

"Jetzt weißt du also, was es noch außer dir gab, bisher wußtest du nur von dir! Ein unschuldiges Kind warst du ja eigentlich, aber noch eigentlicher warst du ein teuflischer Mensch! - Und darum wisse: Ich verurteile dich jetzt zum Tode des Ertrinkens!"

"So now you know what else there was in the world besides yourself, till now you've known only about yourself! An innocent child, yes, that you were, truly, but still more truly you have been a devilish human being!—And therefore take note: I sentence you now to death by drowning!" (Muir 87)

The first sentence entails a reproach for being egocentric and selfish and a claim that the father has taught his son a lesson, that he has imparted knowledge to him. It is therefore a self-assertion of the efficacy of his speech act, a declaration that the speech act has succeeded and had its desired perlocutionary effect. The statement identifies the knowledge purportedly imparted as consisting of a recognition of the world beyond the ego. But much more about knowledge is implicated by the statement, and I return to these implications shortly, asking what role metaphor plays, or is supposed to (have) play(ed), in that purportedly imparted knowledge. The second sentence in the father's final turn is the judgment proper, the verdict or finding, a summary evaluation of the protagonist as a bad person. The third sentence is the sentence in a juridical sense, the speech act that follows from a judgment almost as a perlocutionary effect, as a conventionally necessary consequence, but which at the same time functions as a speech act in its own right with its own particular perlocutionary effects. I return to this final sentence, the juridical sentence, shortly, but first I examine the judgment proper in more detail, in particular its inclusion of the word *eigentlich* as its final occurrence in the story. The judgment is, after all, the central speech act of the narrative, metaphorically speaking, of course. Since it

occurs at the very end of the story, it is not literally, physically central in the text. However, as the second of the three sentences in the father's final turn, it is literally central in that speech, and what is structurally significant is how the statement itself, the judgment, centers on the word *eigentlich*. The statement consists of two independent clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction, so technically it pivots on that word: *aber*. But the word *eigentlich*, occurring as the last element in the first clause, abuts the pivot of the conjunction, so to speak, on the one side and is then repeated, iterated with adverbial emphasis and inflection, as the beginning element of the second clause, abutting the conjunction on the other side: "...eigentlich, aber noch eigentlicher..." These words thus form the joint or hinge on which in a sense the entire story turns.

Let us examine these words, "eigentlich, aber noch eigentlicher," in the wider context of the entire judgment to gain some perspective. The judgment proper consists, as noted, in the statement: "Ein unschuldiges Kind warst du ja eigentlich, aber noch eigentlicher warst du ein teuflischer Mensch!" ("An innocent child, yes, that you were, truly, but still more truly you have been a devilish human being!"; Muir 87). The first half of the statement appears straightforward and unproblematic: the protagonist is judged to have been an innocent child. This use of the word *eigentlich* seems to affirm the truth value of the statement. The second half of the judgment is less straightforward on account of the problematic nature of the expression "noch eigentlicher." The Muirs' translation renders the phrase as "truly, but still more truly," which seems apt, and which does not give pause, at least on a cursory reading. But on closer consideration, the expression—and this is true of the German as well—seems to suggest that truth is a matter of degree, which should be a troubling proposition, at least for objectivist theories of language. Either the cat is on the mat or it isn't, right? Since *eigentlich* may also be translated as "real," "actual," or "literal," substituting these possible renderings makes the strangeness of the expression more palpable in English: "really, but more really," "actually, but more actually," "literally, but more literally."

But perhaps the expression is not so strange after all, considered in the context of the entire statement. The first half of the father's judgment describes his son as having been an innocent child. This may be understood as a literal proposition. The second half of his judgment, however, clearly the more important and consequential part, finds his son a "devilish human being." Can this proposition be understood literally? It states that the protagonist is a human being, which is literally true, but metaphorically it states that the protagonist is a devil. Buried, as it were, in an attributive adjective, the metaphor is nonetheless explicit. So whereas the juxtaposition of the expression *eigentlich* with a literal proposition is unproblematic, the juxtaposition of the comparative expression *noch eigentlicher* with a metaphor suggests that metaphorical meaning is somehow *truer than* literal meaning. Can this be so? Can a statement be literally true but metaphorically truer? That is the implication. And though the proposition does indeed seem strange from the standpoint of an objectivist theory of language, which sees metaphor as essentially false, from the perspective of cognitive science it is entirely unsurprising. Most of what we believe to be true, except for our directly embodied physical knowledge of our environment, is ineradicably metaphorical.

The coordinating conjunction *aber* ("but") joining the two clauses entailed in the father's judgment sets up a contrast between them. But the chiasmic structure of the statement as a whole established by the conjunction simultaneously suggests a

comparison of its constituent parts. This means that as *eigentlich* and *noch eigentlicher* stand in relation, which we may take to be the relation of literal to metaphorical meaning, so do “unschuldiges Kind” (“innocent child”) and “teuflischer Mensch” (“devilish human being”). The protagonist’s being an innocent child and a devilish human being might be thought of, then, not as two separate, consecutive stages in his development, but rather as different conceptualizations of one and the same condition, namely, his immaturity. The use of the same tense in both clauses, the preterit or simple past, strongly supports such a reading. (The Muirs notably render *warst* in the first clause in the simple past as “were” but in the second clause in the present perfect as “have been.”)

This is essentially the protagonist’s transgression, what his father accuses him of and condemns him for: not growing up. And his immaturity consists, the father’s judgment suggests, in failing to understand metaphor, including the metaphorical dimension, which is the “truer” meaning, of his own words and actions and of all words and actions. This shortcoming in his mental development was made especially salient earlier in the narrative in the dramatic turning point revolving around the meaning of the expression *covered up*. Innocence does not mean being good, or not being bad; it means being without knowledge of good and evil. In the protagonist’s case, though, such ignorance and naivety are, paradoxically, precisely wherein his guilt lies. That ignorance or naivety is revealed best in his own account of his astounding business success since his mother’s death when contrasted with that of his father’s account. The protagonist sees his success as the inexplicably fortuitous outcome of happenstance, without any active involvement on his own part:

Vielleicht hatte ihn der Vater bei Lebzeiten der Mutter dadurch, daß er im Geschäft nur seine Ansicht gelten lassen wollte, an einer wirklichen eigenen Tätigkeit gehindert, vielleicht war der Vater seit dem Tode der Mutter, trotzdem er noch immer im Geschäfte arbeitete, zurückhaltender geworden, vielleicht spielten - was sogar sehr wahrscheinlich war - glückliche Zufälle eine weit wichtigere Rolle...

Perhaps during his mother’s lifetime his father’s insistence on having everything his own way in the business had hindered him from developing any real activity of his own, perhaps since her death his father had become less aggressive, although he was still active in the business, perhaps it was mostly due to an accidental run of good fortune—which was very probable indeed.... (Muir 78-9)

The father, needless to say, sees things differently:

“[W]as blieb mir übrig, in meinem Hinterzimmer, verfolgt vom ungetreuen Personal, alt bis in die Knochen? Und mein Sohn ging im Jubel durch die Welt, schloß Geschäfte ab, die ich vorbereitet hatte, überpurzelte sich vor Vergnügen und ging vor seinem Vater mit dem verschlossenen Gesicht eines Ehrenmannes davon!”

“[W]hat else was left to me, in my back room, plagued by a disloyal staff, old to the marrow of my bones? And my son strutting through the world, finishing off deals that I had prepared for him, bursting with triumphant glee, and stalking away from his father with the closed face of a respectable businessman!” (Muir

Granted, the father's version of events comes in the middle of his conflicted, irrational, and exaggeratedly theatrical performance, which might seem to justify dismissing it, but the discrepancy between the two versions casts doubt on the reliability of the protagonist's account and suggests, or at least raises the possibility, that the father's account might be more accurate, or truer. For it is important to stress that the father condemns his son not so much for pushing him out of the business and taking over his role as for failing to acknowledge that that is what he has been doing. In other words, though the judgment seems to be a rebuke for his behavior, it is actually, properly understood, for his lack of understanding, for his failure to grasp the truer dimension of his own words and actions. Such understanding, precisely the knowledge that the father claims to have imparted to his son, is accessible only through metaphor. If the father is correct in claiming that his speech has been effective, that it has been truly informative in a profound sense, if, in other words, his son now truly knows "what else there was in the world besides [him]self," then the judgment is more than a simple verdict or evaluation. It is transformative. The father's words, if successful, instill the knowledge that effects maturity. That knowledge thus entails the loss of innocence and the recognition of inescapable guilt. Paradoxically, the protagonist's guilt consists in being innocent, in the sense of naïve, while the loss of innocence that means his maturity is nothing other than the understanding, metaphorically afforded, of his guilt in a more profound, existential sense. Maturity means, metaphorically, killing off one's parents in order to assume their role, but true maturity, the text suggests, involves more than that. It involves above all the conscious awareness, enabled through metaphorical reasoning, that that is what one is doing, metaphorically speaking, that that is what one must do. The mutual entailment of knowledge and guilt insinuated by the text thus adds a biblical dimension to the mythical, suggesting a correlation between the biblical story of the fall and the tragedy of King Oedipus.

The Father's Sentence

Following the father's judgment—a speech act that proclaims its own force not only as an evaluation and pronouncement of guilt, but also as a speech act that transforms the addressee, instilling metaphorical knowledge that effects his maturation—comes the sentence: "Und darum wisse: Ich verurteile dich jetzt zum Tode des Ertrinkens!" The Muirs' translation, which I cite above for the purpose of general understanding, renders *wisse* as "take note" and *Tode des Ertrinkens* as "death by drowning." But I would now like to offer the following translation: "And therefore know: I sentence you now to a death of drowning!" Given my observations above concerning the relationship of the father's judgment to his son's knowledge, it seems to me important to render the command *darum wisse* more closely to the original as "therefore know." The significance of my decision to translate *Tode des Ertrinkens* as "a death of drowning" instead of "death by drowning" I explain below. Despite the exaggerated and apparently inexplicable absurdity of the father's speech building up to this point, his sentence condemning his son to death comes as a complete shock. It seems so out of proportion, so

excessive, so incredible—though even more incredible is its seemingly inexorable perlocutionary effect. It is no wonder that the father's death sentence receives disproportionately more attention than his judgment proper in commentary on the text. It is this death sentence that the title of the story, *Das Urteil*, translated into English as *The Judgment*, is typically taken to refer to, though technically his judgment is the evaluation of his son as an innocent child and a devilish human being, while his condemnation of his son to death is his sentence, not an *Urteil* but a *Verurteilung*. That said, *Urteil* can be translated into English as "sentence" or "conviction" in addition to "judgment," "finding," or "verdict." This observation highlights how translation and cross-linguistic comparison often throws into relief the inherently and necessarily fuzzy boundaries between human concepts, which is an issue I explore more in depth in the conclusion to this study.

The crucial question that must be asked from the perspective of speech act theory is whether the father's death sentence is felicitous. It appears to be so. The protagonist rushes from the room, bolts down the stairs and out of the house, runs across the street, and jumps off the bridge into the river. Indeed, the narrative explicitly construes this reaction as the direct perlocutionary effect of the illocutionary force of the father's speech: "Georg fühlte sich aus dem Zimmer gejagt" ("Georg felt himself driven out of the room") and "über die Fahrbahn zum Wasser trieb es ihn" ("it drove him across the street toward the water"). The consensus among Kafka scholars is that the father's death sentence is indeed a felicitous speech act and that the story ends with the protagonist's death (Politzer 59-60; Gray 36; Corngold, *Franz Kafka* 29-34, 44-5; *Lambent Traces* 30-31; Koelb 60-61; Sokel 20, 181, 191, 207-13). The one dissenting voice I know of in this overwhelming consensus is Peter von Matt's. But speech act analysis adds new force to von Matt's suggestion, since it reveals that the father's death sentence has a number of problems—a circumstance that should hardly come as a surprise given the plagued nature of performatives throughout the narrative. It fails, namely, to fulfill crucial felicity conditions.

The most problematic aspect of the father's sentence as a speech act is the reason, as noted above, that it comes as such a shock: its disproportionality. It is often the case in real-world legal cases that disproportional sentences are passed down, and it is the purpose of other juridical speech acts, such as sentencing guidelines, to circumscribe or constrain that possibility. It is further the purpose of other juridical speech act events, such as appeals trials, to rectify such eventual disproportions. The death sentence, where practiced, is typically reserved for cases of murder—though in earlier epochs it was meted out for other transgressions, such as witchcraft and heresy, for example. In recent times the well publicized case of the Ugandan anti-homosexuality bill that proposes the death penalty is a harrowing reminder, though, that the moral accountancy principle of "an eye for an eye" is still considered by some in some circumstances as too lenient. But in the case of Kafka's text, nothing the protagonist has done can be said to equal or even approach the gravity of murder—whether being indirect with his friend in his letters, or perhaps making up the whole story about his friend to his father, or even being more assertive in the family business, and certainly, one would think, not merely failing to comprehend metaphor. If being more assertive in the business and taking over the father's role, "covering him up," is understood metaphorically as disposing of him, killing him off, then the death sentence might seem justified. But the point is that he is

“only” *metaphorically* killing him off, “only” *metaphorically* guilty, and that the father’s sentence ought therefore also to be taken metaphorically.

Related to the disproportionality of the father’s sentence is the distinct possibility that he may not be in his right mind. His behavior and speech are erratic enough to raise the suspicion that he may have gone insane, may have lapsed, if only temporarily, into dementia. If this is so, it would invalidate his speech, for it would mean, for one, that appropriateness conditions have not been met, and possibly that sincerity conditions have not been, either. Just as a person accused of a crime must be sane to stand trial—a condition that highlights the connection between judgment and knowledge—so must the person presiding over a trial and delivering a sentence be in full command of his or her faculties for the procedure to be appropriate and valid. The possibility that sincerity conditions are not met if the person performing a speech act is insane arises because it makes it impossible to say whether the person in fact has the thoughts, feelings, or intentions therein expressed (condition *I.1*). Insanity almost obviates the question of sincerity, makes it inapplicable as a felicity condition.

But there is another way in which the father’s death sentence fails to satisfy important felicity conditions. Clayton Koelb, the only major Kafka scholar to have attempted a systematic application of speech act theory in reading Kafka’s work, notes that the story’s setting in Europe in the modern era precludes the possibility of the father having the patriarchal power of life and death over members of his family, as was the case in ancient Rome, for example (42). In other words, the father is not the appropriate person to pronounce a death sentence in this case, and so appropriateness conditions (A.2) are not met. What Koelb’s observation highlights further is that many other circumstances seem inappropriate for this speech act: it takes place in a private dwelling and not a court of law, for one. Nevertheless, despite Koelb’s astute observation that at least one important felicity condition remains unfulfilled in the case of the father’s death sentence, he neglects, rather inconsequentially, to question the speech act’s felicity or its perlocutionary success. On the contrary, he assumes, along with the majority of Kafka critics, that the father’s sentence is flawlessly executed and entirely successful.

But in addition to evident failures to fulfill appropriateness conditions, as well as the possible failure to fulfill sincerity conditions, the father’s sentence also fails to fulfill the correctness condition (B.1). This is a felicity condition little explored in speech act theory, perhaps because it is almost self-evident as a requirement and the most obviously recognizable when unsatisfied. But it is nonetheless crucial for a speech act to be successful. A recent salient example of how important the correctness condition is to the successful execution of a speech act occurred during President Barack Obama’s inaugural ceremony. Chief Justice Roberts John Roberts misquoted the Constitution in delivering the oath of office. It was his first time performing the ceremony and he was probably nervous, so his blunder was understandable and excusable. The unsatisfied felicity condition received widespread national attention, however. Commentators on the left of the political spectrum downplayed the incident, stressing that the Constitution explicitly stipulates that a newly elected president becomes president automatically at noon on January 20th following his election with or without an inaugural ritual. Pundits on the right, however, seized on the opportunity to claim that because the procedure had been incorrectly executed, Barack Obama was not really President. In response, it was decided out of “an overabundance of caution” to have a do-over, and Chief Justice Roberts was

summoned to the White House to administer the presidential oath of office again, with photographers present to document the occasion, though notably without any live video or audio recording. Austin himself does not elaborate much on the correctness condition, but he does accord it equal importance to the other felicity conditions as its own distinct category. And this contemporary example of a speech act that fulfilled all but the correctness condition underscores how essential that felicity condition is to the successful execution of a speech act.

Joseph Vogl points out that the father's death sentence is flawed or incorrect in its locutionary form (81). The correct and conventional form of a death sentence by drowning is "Tod durch Ertränken" ("death by drowning") rather than "Tode des Ertrinkens" (death of drowning), as the father's sentence has it. The distinction is subtle, which is perhaps why it escapes critics' notice, but it is crucial. English does not have lexical equivalents for the distinction made in German between *ertrinken* and *ertränken*: "drowning" is the only possible translation for the two German expressions. The difference is one of transitivity, as *ertrinken* is intransitive and means to drown by accident, unintentionally, whereas *ertränken* is transitive and means to drown someone actively, and the reflexive form *sich ertränken* means to commit suicide. Aside from the incorrect grammatical formulation, which has the father pronounce a sentence of death of drowning as opposed to the conventional formulation of death *by* drowning, the use of the intransitive *ertrinken* instead of the conventional and correct *ertränken* makes the father's sentence logically impossible to execute or fulfill successfully, as he essentially says, "I sentence you to death by accidental drowning." His sentence thus represents in condensed form the larger double-bind imposed on the protagonist by the oedipal conflict. Given the formally and logically flawed nature of the father's death sentence, therefore, one would expect its efficacy to be vitiated.

Considering all the anxiety expressed at the beginning of the narrative over the susceptibility of speech acts to failure, and considering the numerous reports of failed speech acts throughout, it would seem unwarranted and inconsistent with the thrust of the entire story to assume that this one speech act is actually felicitous, especially since it fails to satisfy every felicity condition except one, the existential condition (A.1). Uttered incorrectly (B.1) in inappropriate circumstances by an inappropriate person (A.2), whose thoughts and feelings it is impossible to determine (I.1), this particular speech act seems destined to fail. To think, as Kafka scholars nearly unanimously do, that this one speech act succeeds preeminently in a story where so many others fail, a story that is largely an account of various failed speech acts, seems presumptuous and illogical. The overwhelming evidence illuminated by speech act analysis leads, on the contrary, to the conclusion that the father's death sentence ought to be infelicitous and therefore that the protagonist ought not to die.

Other textual details provide evidence that supports such a reading based on speech act analysis. First of all, there is reason to doubt that the protagonist would die from his fall considering the scale of the setting. The story's second sentence describes the house where the action takes place as "one of a long row of small, ramshackle houses stretching beside the river" (Muir 77). This means that the setting cannot be in the center of a large urban area, such as Prague or Vienna or any other major European city of the period, where the buildings tend to be five- or six-story affairs, and where the river might be expected to be wide and deep and thus any bridge crossing it a major structure with a

significant distance between it and the water below. The story is set, rather, on the outskirts of a town, possibly even in a village, where rivers are more likely to be narrower and the bridges spanning them more modest in scale and usually not too far above the water they span. Granted, the presence of public transportation and the mention of brisk traffic at story's end indicate a more urban area, though this information is significantly inconsistent with the temporal setting of Sunday established in the text's opening phrase. But even if the setting is imagined as Prague—as good an example as any—a fall into the Vltava from any of its bridges would most likely not be fatal. The city is known after all for its defenestrations, not suicide bridge jumps. The point is that what textual details are given, the specification of the buildings as small, most probably two-story structures, and also the speed with which the protagonist reaches the bridge, suggest a scene of more modest proportions, with a distance between the bridge and river comparable to that between a high dive and pool, say—a significant drop, to be sure, but certainly survivable. Clearly, the bridge in question is nothing on the scale of the Golden Gate.

If the protagonist survives the fall, which is almost certain given the scale of the scene—and which technically he would have to do in order actually to drown, in order, that is, for the father's sentence to be felicitous—it is unlikely that he would then drown. One reason for this is the same reason he would not die from the impact of falling, because of the scale of the setting, with a river whose banks cannot be all that far apart. But the other important factor in his not drowning would have to be the assumption that he can swim. This assumption is pure speculation, of course, a hermeneutic leap, if you will. The text never mentions anything about the protagonist's aquatic skills, but it also does not mention any lack thereof. What it does mention, though, is that the protagonist was an excellent gymnast in his youth: “Er schwang sich über, als der ausgezeichnete Turner, der er in seinen Jugendjahren zum Stolz seiner Eltern gewesen war” (“He swung himself over, like the distinguished gymnast he had once been in his youth, to his parents' pride”; Muir 88). The fact that this information comes right before the protagonist lets himself fall from the bridge is significant. A seemingly superfluous detail, it underscores his physical fitness. Von Matt cites this information to support his hypothesis that the protagonist might be able to swim to shore (103). It is well known that Kafka himself was an avid swimmer and even swam in the Vltava (Stach 31, 83, 328, 373). And though I do not wish to suggest an autobiographical-psychoanalytical reading of the story, this information from the author's biography serves as a reminder that the story's setting is modern, and not medieval or pre-modern, Europe. By this period swimming had become a popular pastime, a sport practiced by many, and not just an ability supposedly possessed by the exotic and marginalized few, such as witches. It is therefore possible, even likely, that the protagonist *can* swim and so would be able to make it back to shore alive. Considering that the story takes place at the “very height of spring” (Muir 77), the river is probably swollen, the current strong, and the water cold, and considering that the protagonist presumably has all his clothes on, which would immediately add significant weight when wet, the swim to shore would no doubt be difficult. But the reference to the protagonist's physical strength just before he falls suggests that he would be able to make it, especially considering the scale of the scene. And even if the bridge and river are construed as larger than the evidence indicates, the speed with which the protagonist reaches the place where he jumps off implies that it is not that far from the riverbank, which would increase the likelihood of his reaching shore.

If, then, for the reasons I have cited, the father's *sentence* is infelicitous, the failure of that speech act may actually be the condition that insures the success of his *judgment*. In other words, if the protagonist comes to his senses, as it were, and decides not to self-execute his father's death sentence completely (felicity conditions B.2 and *I.2*), then that change of mind could be a perlocutionary effect of the father's judgment, which claims a transformative force on his son's consciousness. If the judgment is in fact felicitous and instills knowledge of metaphor as it claims to, then the protagonist will at some point understand, *must* understand for the judgment to be felicitous, that his father's death sentence, along with everything else he has said and done during his exaggeratedly theatrical speech, must be taken metaphorically. The protagonist's rush to the nearest bridge, together with his choice of a jumping off point not far from shore, betrays an insincerity on his part with regard to any intention to execute the sentence faithfully, with the appropriate "thoughts, feelings, or intentions" (*I.1* and *I.2*). This already suggests a glimmer of understanding and the possibility that he may not have taken, or may be beginning by this point no longer to take, his father's sentence literally. Though explicitly driven by the force of his father's speech act toward the water, what if, at the moment he releases the railing of the bridge and allows himself to drop, in the second before he hits the water, the protagonist has an epiphany? If the father's judgment is indeed felicitous and successfully instills metaphorical knowledge in his son, then perhaps this is the moment in the story, after the narrative proper ends, where that perlocutionary force takes effect. Perhaps the son realizes fully in the instant before his plunge that everything his father has said and done in performing his tirade ought not to be taken literally. Perhaps he grasps, in the moment of his release, the more profound significance of his father's speech act performance. If so, that would involve metaphorical understanding. And if he realizes that, he would realize that his father does not literally wish him dead, only that he grow up, that he metaphorically dies as a child and metaphorically be reborn as a man, which means attaining knowledge of the ineradicably metaphorical nature of human speech and action. I suggest that this insight occurs to the protagonist as he falls from the bridge, or perhaps as he plunges into the water.

It is probably essential in order for such an insight to occur that the protagonist also realize, simultaneously, as part of that insight, the significance of the sound of the crash he hears as he rushes from his father's room: "Georg fühlte sich aus dem Zimmer gejagt, den Schlag, mit dem der Vater hinter ihm aufs Bett stürzte, trug er noch in den Ohren davon" ("Georg felt himself driven from the room, the sound behind him of the impact of his father falling in bed still ringing in his ears"). The father has collapsed, has probably suffered a heart attack or a stroke and possibly died. If the son does realize his father has died, it would make no sense to kill himself. If his father has died, he is the only person who can take responsibility for the institutional consequences, all the speech acts that must be performed, following the death of a parent. Moreover, he is the only person who can look after the family business. But apart from the acceptance of such responsibilities, the realization that his father has died may simultaneously entail, paradoxically, his realization of the knowledge his father's judgment was meant to impart: a metaphorical understanding of his own and others' words and actions and hence an understanding of the metaphorical grounding of all speech and human behavior.

There is further the possibility that the protagonist's rushing from the room, which signals his having apparently taken everything his father has said literally, is itself

what gives the father a shock and causes his collapse. The way these two events are represented successively in one grammatical sentence does indicate a causal relationship, suggesting the latter event, the father's collapse, is a direct effect of the former, the son's bolt from the room. If his son has taken his death sentence literally, this would mean that the father's self-declared successful speech act of judgment intended to impart metaphorical knowledge was actually *infelicitous*. The father's reaction to his son's reaction might be characterized thus: "My God! What have I done? I thought I was teaching him to grow up and reason metaphorically, and he has taken my—I thought—obviously metaphorical speech literally! He didn't get it!" The shock of this realization may be what causes the father's heart attack and death. This possibility underscores the fundamental issues emphasized throughout the text regarding the inherent susceptibility of speech acts to failure and the ultimate unpredictability of their effects. But most important is the possibility that the protagonist realizes, in the moment he drops from the bridge, the deeper, metaphorical sense of everything his father has said together with the realization that his own action, his inappropriate reaction to his father's speech from having taken it literally, has perhaps indirectly caused his father's death.

The PATH of Speech Acts

These considerations are pure speculation, of course. They represent my own subjective reading of Kafka's text, although I hope to have made a compelling case for my interpretation. I have demonstrated through the lens of speech act theory that a major concern of the text expressed throughout is the inherent susceptibility of speech acts to failure, which ought logically to carry over to the most important speech act represented in the story, the father's death sentence. I have also shown through speech act analysis that this central speech act fails to satisfy several essential felicity conditions. And I have cited other details in the narrative that suggest the father's final speech act is likely to fail. But the point I most wish to stress is that ultimately we cannot know the answer to this question. There is no linguistic data, no explicit evidence in the text that proves incontrovertibly that the protagonist does actually die or does not. The story leaves him hanging in mid-air, as it were:

Noch hielt er sich mit schwächer werdenden Händen fest, erspähte zwischen den Geländerstangen einen Autoomnibus, der mit Leichtigkeit seinen Fall übertönen würde...und ließ sich hinfallen.

Still holding on with weakening hands, he espied between the rails a bus that would easily drown out the sound of his fall...and let himself drop.

So the assumption by nearly all Kafka scholars, and indeed, I suspect, most readers, that the protagonist does in fact die is every bit as much pure speculation as my interpretation (and von Matt's) that he does not.

In conclusion I wish to offer an explanation, drawing on insights from cognitive science, for why most readers make the assumption that the protagonist dies, despite all the evidence in the text that I have highlighted indicating he would not. The story ends, as noted above, with the protagonist hanging in mid-air: "und ließ sich hinfallen" ("and let

himself drop”). The language evokes only an incomplete PATH image schema. But one of our most basic kinds of knowledge is our understanding of gravity, knowledge that is absolutely essential to our successful functioning and survival. Research in developmental psychology suggests that already by the age of eight months, human infants have acquired a basic “theory of physics,” in which an understanding of gravity is fundamental (Baillargeon). Given this pervasive aspect of our cognition, which is constantly active in our waking experience though most of the time unconscious, it is virtually humanly impossible for readers of Kafka’s story not to complete in their own imagination the incomplete generic conceptual structure evoked by the text and to imagine the protagonist falling into the river, to perform, in other words, the conventional transformation of the PATH image schema *from path-focus to endpoint-focus*. It is entirely natural and represents the only logical conclusion. My reading and von Matt’s also entail this conventional transformation of the PATH image schema, taking as self-evident that the protagonist falls into the river, only we do not assume that he drowns. The point to emphasize, though, again, is that this image schema transformation is an operation of readers’ imagination that is prompted by but not explicitly depicted in the language of the text.

The work done on speech act theory from a cognitive perspective has illuminated how we understand the illocutionary and perlocutionary force of speech metaphorically based on our embodied understanding of force dynamics in the physical world (Johnson 57-61; Sweetser, *From Etymology*). This research is compelling and represents an invaluable enrichment of speech act theory. It also supports my argument that *Das Urteil*, read as a sustained engagement with the questions posed by speech act theory, legitimately emphasizes the central role of metaphor in any understanding of speech as action. What it neglects to make explicit, however—likely because it understands this as self-evident—is that it is the PATH image schema that underlies the very concept of *force*. Mark Johnson’s graphic illustrations of various image schemas of force dynamics, such as COMPULSION, ENABLEMENT, ATTRACTION, BLOCKAGE, DIVERSION, and COUNTERFORCE, make this evident. I would therefore like to complement this work by emphasizing that it is the conventional PATH image schema transformation *from path-focus to endpoint-focus* that informs our understanding of a felicitous or successful speech act. The German expression *Erfolg* (“success”) makes the PATH image schema salient. The prefix *er-* is an aspect marker that signifies a completed action, and the root, from *folgen*, means “to follow.” If one considers words related to *success* in English like *succession* or *successive*, the same underlying PATH image schema becomes more apparent. The very notion of *success*, and hence our understanding of a successful speech act, therefore entails the conventional, completed PATH image schema transformation. In addition, the distinction between illocution and perlocution highlights the PATH image schema. Austin describes the illocutionary act as one in which a deed is done *in* the saying, *in* the utterance of a locutionary act, which entails the CONTAINER image schema. However, the notion of illocutionary force necessarily also entails the PATH image schema, which underlies any idea of force, as discussed above. The perlocutionary act is described by Austin as one *through* which a deed is done. The concept thus more saliently profiles the PATH image schema, with the prefix *per-* from the Latin meaning “through.”

Because of our deeply embodied knowledge of gravity, readers cannot help but complete in imagination the incomplete PATH image schema depicted in Kafka’s text of

the protagonist falling from the bridge. We naturally perform the conventional image schema transformation *from path-focus to endpoint-focus* and imagine him falling into the river, even though the language of the text does not express that transformation explicitly. The fact that the same PATH image schema and its conventional, completed transformation underlie the notion of a successful speech act thus prompts readers to perform a conceptual blend in which the schematic structure evoked by the depiction of the protagonist's fall is mapped onto their understanding of the father's death sentence and consequently to assume that it is successful. In both cases, though, no explicit linguistic evidence exists in the text to corroborate such reasoning conclusively. Both the protagonist's completed fall into the river and his father's successfully completed death sentence occur only in readers' minds. Kafka himself provides the incomplete conceptual structure for these mappings, which his readers complete according to their own personal preferences and proclivities.

The final sentence of *Das Urteil* evokes a strikingly *unconventional* transformation of the PATH image schema: "In diesem Augenblick ging über die Brücke ein geradezu unendlicher Verkehr" ("At this moment an unending stream of traffic was just going over the bridge"; Muir 88). The language evokes not the conventional image schema transformation of *path-focus to endpoint-focus* so saliently prompted by the preceding sentence, but rather two opposing, side-by-side PATH image schemas without beginning or end. This concluding sentence of the text has invited widespread commentary in the secondary literature. I refrain from analyzing the conceptual mappings entailed in these various interpretations. Instead I simply suggest in conclusion that Kafka's juxtaposition of the incomplete generic conceptual structure expressed in the text's penultimate sentence together with the unconventional image schema transformation evoked in its final one allows, and indeed prompts, a wide spectrum of individual inevitably subjective readings. This particular instance of the way Kafka foregrounds generic conceptual structure in his fiction represents one example of a hallmark of his work that helps account for his astounding and enduring worldwide success.

4

The Zürau Aphorisms

Willst du dich am Ganzen erquicken,
so mußt du das Ganze im Kleinsten erblicken.
—Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Between September 1917 and April 1918 Kafka composed a collection of texts that has come to be known as the Zürau aphorisms, after the Bohemian village where most of them were written. Max Brod first published the texts in 1953, giving them the collective title “Betrachtungen über Sünde, Leid, Hoffnung und den wahren Weg” (“Reflections on Sin, Suffering, Hope and the True Way”). This title, like much associated with Brod, has fallen out of favor with Kafka scholars today, but whatever its shortcomings, by characterizing the texts, or at least a significant set of them, as dealing with “the true way,” it correctly recognizes the salience within the collection of the major conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY. Exploring Kafka’s use of this metaphor in the aphorisms, I argue that he goes beyond conventional poetic practices such as elaboration, extension, and compression. Instead, he foregrounds the generic conceptual structure underlying this widespread metaphor, namely, the PATH image schema, by evoking strikingly novel and unconventional image schema transformations. In doing so, he throws such basic conceptual structure into relief, and also offers thereby a critical assessment of the role of conventionalized, habitual metaphors in human cognition.

Image Schemas in the Zürau Aphorisms

Before turning to investigate in detail Kafka’s development of the one particular metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY in this set of texts, it may be helpful to provide a more general overview of the Zürau aphorisms as a whole. To that end, it may be added in further defense of Brod’s title that it aptly suggests the dominant preoccupation of the texts with questions of morality. Of the total one hundred nine aphorisms, ten address the issues of sin, suffering, or hope as indicated in Brod’s title (3, 62, 82, 83, 86, 97, 99, 101, 102, 103); no less than fifteen speak explicitly of the nature of good and evil (7, 10, 19, 28, 29, 30, 39, 51, 54, 55, 85, 86, 95, 100, 105); and another handful specifically invoke Eden, the primary scene in the Judeo-Christian tradition for considering such issues (3, 64/65, 74, 82, 83, 84, 86). But even when they do not employ explicitly theological language, these texts all weigh questions of moral import.

The group that refer to Eden, while perhaps insignificant in terms of sheer number, highlights another important feature of the aphorisms as a whole: most draw on the domain of space to varying degrees. In the case of those referring to Eden, a widely shared cultural model provides the locus. In cognitive terms, the story of the Fall represents an elaboration of the CONTAINER image schema and the primary conceptual metaphor STATES ARE LOCATIONS in which INTERIORITY is the prelapsarian state of grace while EXTERIORITY relative to the CONTAINER is the state of sin. The Fall itself elaborates

the primary conceptual metaphor CHANGES OF STATES ARE CHANGES OF LOCATION, which involves the PATH image schema, in the notion of banishment or exile. Moreover, the story also depends on the pervasive conceptual metaphor GOOD IS UP, as the change of location is conceived as a fall, which is clearly negative. As a widespread cultural model, the story of the Fall entails a rich history of elaboration and interpretation and thus evokes detailed, rich imagery for members of the communities that share it, especially rich imagery of location. But Kafka's aphorisms that invoke the story notably refrain from developing or elaborating any such imagery, emphasizing instead abstract, unimageable concepts like *sin*, *impatience*, *laxity* (3), *banishment*, *eternity*, *process* (64/65), *destruction*, *belief* (74), *purpose* (84), *knowledge*, *good*, *evil*, *advantage*, *appearance*, *strength*, *danger* (86), and so forth. The only imagery evoked at all is prompted by two basic-level concepts, *eating* and *tree*, in reference to the tree of life and the tree of knowledge (82 and 83).

That spatial structure should be used to reason about moral questions is hardly surprising from the vantage point of cognitive science. Given the foundational assumption that conceptual structure arises from our perceptual experience grounded in our particular physical embodiment, space is naturally one of the primary domains that we draw on to reason about all kinds of abstract conceptual domains, including morality. This circumstance partly accounts for the compelling power of the story of the Fall as well as for why Kafka's aphorisms, concerned as they are with questions of morality, would similarly draw on the spatial domain. What is striking about Kafka's texts, though, is how so many represent space in minimalist terms. To be sure, some, such as the ones concerning Eden or the ones referencing Alexander the Great (39, 88), for example, almost inevitably evoke rich traditions of imagery along with shared knowledge of moral implications, even when they themselves do not explicitly contain specific language with rich imagery. And a good many do develop novel imagery of their own. But most avoid elaboration and instead foreground the schematic structure of the images they employ, thereby bringing the schemas themselves into fuller resolution, as it were. With these texts Kafka thus encourages a greater conscious awareness of the basis of human cognition in such schematic structure.

In his seminal work on image schemas, *The Body in the Mind*, Mark Johnson shows how such generic conceptual structures form the basis of all human understanding and how they constrain meaning and rationality. In his next major work, *Moral Imagination*, he focuses on the manifold ways in which such schemas are involved in moral reasoning in particular. In an article published the same year as Johnson's *Moral Imagination*, Tomasz Krzeszowski advances the thesis that image schemas entail an "axiological parameter," whereby they may confer positive or negative associations. Krzeszowski claims, for instance, the notion of balance is positive while imbalance is negative (310). It is such a parameter, according to Krzeszowski, that allows for the formation of moral concepts. This hypothesis may seem to apply to a very limited number of certain image schemas, such as BALANCE and a few others that are most immediately related to our well-being like VERTICALITY and SUPPORT. But I would argue that positive or negative value comes in most cases not from image schemas themselves but rather from the details of the specific conceptual metaphors they entail in a given case. Thus, depending on the specific metaphoric elaboration of, say, the CONTAINER schema, INTERIORITY with respect to the schema may very well be positive, as in the case

of Eden or a cozy room on a cold winter night, but it may just as well be negative, as in the case of a cage or prison cell. And while VERTICALITY almost always, on account of our upright posture, is positive, and loss of VERTICALITY negative, as in the story of the Fall, or indeed almost any kind of fall, one can similarly imagine specific cases where VERTICALITY might not be desirable or positive, as in a state of rest, or where falling might be good, as in falling unemployment. Image schemas, then, form the basis of conceptual metaphor, but it is the particular entailments of the given conceptual metaphors that elaborate the schema in a specific case that ultimately account for any assignment of moral value. The implications for the ethics of Kafka's aphorisms are significant, given the marked tendency of most to avoid elaboration in favor of highlighting schematic structure. By reducing, as it were, the image to the schema and circumscribing metaphor, they reduce the ease with which moral judgments may be made. This key characteristic, I argue, plays an important part in Kafka's critique of conventionalized metaphor.

A few examples will serve to illustrate my claim that Kafka foregrounds the schematic structure of the metaphors he employs. Specifics are minimal and typically involve basic-level concepts as opposed to more detailed, subordinate ones. Moreover, the spatial structure employed is also minimal, often just the barest indication of some spatial schema. Aphorism 22, for instance, instantiates a NEAR-FAR schema:

Du bist die Aufgabe. Kein Schüler weit und breit.
You are the assignment. No student far and wide.

Some, like 52, profile basic image schemas like COUNTERFORCE and RESTRAINT REMOVAL:

Im Kampf zwischen dir und der Welt sekundiere der Welt.
In the struggle between yourself and the world, second the world.

A couple of aphorisms, 24 and 78, evoke CONTACT and SURFACE schemas:

Das Glück begreifen, daß der Boden, auf dem du stehst, nicht größer sein kann,
als die zwei Füße ihn bedecken.
Grasp the good fortune that the ground you stand on cannot be any larger than the
two feet covering it.

Der Geist wird erst frei, wenn er aufhört, Halt zu sein.
The spirit only becomes free when it ceases to be a support.

The MASS-COUNT schema provides the basis for aphorism 41:

Das Mißverhältnis der Welt scheint tröstlicherweise nur ein zahlenmäßiges zu
sein.
The disproportion of the world seems fortunately to be merely numerical.
(Hofmann)

And the PART-WHOLE schema underlies aphorism 80:

Wahrheit ist unteilbar, kann sich also selbst nicht erkennen; wer sie erkennen will, muß Lüge sein.

Truth is indivisible and so cannot recognize itself; whoever wishes to recognize it must be a lie.

Aphorism 31, though linguistically elaborate, does not evoke elaborate, rich imagery that one could easily draw inferences from, as would be the case if the language were more specific. Since it is instead rather abstract and invokes generic language, the aphorism highlights image schematic structure, primarily the MASS-COUNT, CENTER-PERIPHERY, and PATH image schemas:

Nach Selbstbeherrschung strebe ich nicht. Selbstbeherrschung heißt: an einer zufälligen Stelle der unendlichen Ausstrahlungen meiner geistigen Existenz wirken wollen. Muß ich aber solche Kreise um mich ziehen, dann tue ich es besser untätig im bloßen Anstaunen des ungeheuerlichen Komplexes und nehme nur die Stärkung, die *e contrario* dieser Anblick gibt, mit nach Hause.

I do not aspire to self-mastery. Self-mastery is the desire to be effective at an arbitrary point in the endless emanations of my spiritual existence. If I must, however, draw such circles around me, then I had better do so without action, in sheer astonishment at the whole enormous complex, and take home with me only the strength that such a sight, *e contrario*, would give me.

Another one that evokes the CENTER-PERIPHERY image schema, 94, combines it with INTERIOR-EXTERIOR:

Zwei Aufgaben des Lebensanfangs: Deinen Kreis immer mehr einschränken und immer wieder nachprüfen, ob du dich nicht irgendwo außerhalb deines Kreises versteckt hältst.

Two tasks of the beginning of life: to keep reducing your circle, and to keep making sure you're not hiding somewhere outside it. (Hofmann)

As with these last two examples, but often more obviously, several aphorisms employ a CONTAINER schema, such as 79:

Die sinnliche Liebe täuscht über die himmlische hinweg; allein könnte sie es nicht, aber da sie das Element der himmlischen Liebe unbewußt in sich hat, kann sie es.

Sensual love misleads us as to heavenly love; alone it would not be able to, but as it unconsciously has within itself an element of heavenly love, it can.

Frequently, as in 16 and 69, CONTAINER and PATH schemas are used in combination:

Ein Käfig ging einen Vogel suchen.

A cage went in search of a bird. (Hofmann)

Theoretisch gibt es eine vollkommene Glücksmöglichkeit: An das Unzerstörbare in sich glauben und nicht zu ihm streben.

Theoretically, there is one consummate possibility of felicity: to believe in the indestructible in oneself, and then not to go looking for it. (Hofmann)

While the examples cited so far involve mainly one or two salient schemas, many other aphorisms involve more complex interactions between, including transformations of, several image schemas. Take 6, for example, which evokes PROCESS, ITERATION, CYCLE, and NEAR-FAR:

Der entscheidende Augenblick der menschlichen Entwicklung ist immerwährend. Darum sind die revolutionären geistigen Bewegungen, welche alles Frühere für nichtig erklären, im Recht, denn es ist noch nichts geschehen.

The decisive moment of human evolution is everlasting. That is why those movements of revolutionary thought that declare everything preceding to be irrelevant are correct, because as yet nothing has happened.

Or 10, which is based on FULL-EMPTY, ATTRACTION, NEAR-FAR, CONTAINER, PATH and COLLECTION (and perhaps a few more):

A. ist sehr aufgeblasen, er glaubt, im Guten weit vorgeschritten zu sein, da er, offenbar als ein immer verlockender Gegenstand, immer mehr Versuchungen aus ihm bisher ganz unbekanntem Richtungen sich ausgesetzt fühlt. Die richtige Erklärung ist aber die, daß ein großer Teufel in ihm Platz genommen hat und die Unzahl der kleineren herbeikommt, um dem Großen zu dienen.

A. is very puffed-up, he believes himself to be far advanced in goodness, since, as an apparently ever more enticing object, he feels exposed to more and more temptations from quarters previously wholly unknown to him. The true explanation, however, is that a great devil has taken up residence within him, and an endless stream of smaller devils are coming to serve the great one.

Or 23, behind whose apparent simplicity lie at least four distinct image schemas, namely, COUNTERFORCE, ATTRACTION, PATH, and CONTAINER:

Vom wahren Gegner fährt grenzenloser Mut in dich.

From the true opponent, a limitless courage flows into you. (Hofmann)

Much more could certainly be said about all of these aphorisms, especially regarding the particular entailments of the metaphors used in each case. Some do indeed seem more specific, like 22 with the concepts *task* and *student*, 52 with *struggle*, 79 with *sensual love* versus *heavenly love*, 10 with *good*, *temptation*, and *devil*, or 16 with *cage* and *bird*. Aphorism 16 even evokes relatively rich imagery through basic-level concepts. These in particular prompt more inferences than just the identified image schemas would suggest and so also invite more consideration. But I cite them mainly to give a general impression of the way Kafka highlights schematic conceptual structure, primarily through striking image schema transformations, which I am arguing is a salient characteristic of

the texts as a whole. To illustrate this characteristic, let me address the one example cited that evokes the richest imagery, 16. The concepts *cage* and *bird* do seem to prompt rather specific inferences, but they are basic-level concepts as opposed to more specific, subordinate-level ones—the basic-level concept *cage* only *becomes* more specific with the mention of *bird*, which is itself certainly basic-level, at least for urban dwellers. Consider how different not only the imagery would be but also the kinds of inferences the text would prompt if it employed more specific language and read, for example, “A cage went in search of a canary,” or “A cage went in search of a nightingale,” or “A cage went in search of an owl,” or “A cage went in search of a falcon.” As it is, with its basic-level concepts, the inferential possibilities are relatively circumscribed. And what is more striking than such inferential possibilities prompted by its basic-level concepts is the image schema transformation that the aphorism evokes. Typically, when the PATH and CONTAINER image schemas are combined, the PATH goes into or out of the CONTAINER. The PATH represents the trajectory a figure traces and the CONTAINER represents the ground. Here the CONTAINER itself becomes the figure that traces the PATH of a trajectory.

I turn now to focus on occurrences in the aphorisms of the conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY. This particular metaphor is one of the most widespread and conventionalized in our culture—in Kafka’s time and today—and it is one in which the PATH image schema obviously figures prominently. Significantly, it is with instances of this conceptual metaphor in Kafka’s aphorisms that schematic structure really comes to the fore.

The PATH in the Zürau Aphorisms

Aphorism 5, for example, seems to be about nothing but the instantiation of an image schema:

Von einem gewissen Punkt an gibt es keine Rückkehr mehr. Dieser Punkt ist zu erreichen.

From a certain point on, there’s no turning back. This point must be reached.

The aphorism establishes the PATH image schema in the most abstract terms, with the concept of a point filling simultaneously the slots of the SOURCE and the GOAL of the PATH. A FRONT-BACK image schema is also evidently in play here. Initially—“From a certain point on”—the SOURCE of the PATH is imagined ahead, with the PATH continuing to extend forward from there. But then—“there’s no turning back”—that SOURCE becomes the GOAL of an implied prior PATH. In other words, establishing a point ahead as the SOURCE of a PATH continuing onwards requires getting there first, which means the SOURCE first indicated as that of a PATH ahead is at the same time the GOAL of an implied prior PATH. But it is simultaneously the SOURCE of another PATH extending backwards (this in the negative, of course) toward the SOURCE of that implied prior PATH. The conclusion of the aphorism—“This point must be reached”—then re-describes that prior PATH in the conventional schematic way. If the conventional image schema transformation of the PATH image schema proceeds from *path-focus to endpoint-focus* (Lakoff, *Women* 443; Johnson, *The Body* 26), this aphorism transforms that very

transformation.

This instance of the PATH image schema only implicitly evokes the conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY, but several other aphorisms that use the schema make this particular associated metaphor more explicit. Most do so by invoking the word *Weg* (1, 15, 21, 26, 38, 39b, 76b, 104), etymologically related to the English *way*, and which sometimes translates well as “way,” but sometimes works better as “path.” George Lakoff and Mark Turner point out that with conceptual metaphors that are pervasive and conventionalized, like LIFE IS A JOURNEY, it is often sufficient to invoke the source domain alone to activate metaphoric connections with the target domain. Thus, for example, talk of a particular journey might easily lead a person to reflect on the course of his or her life, an effortless metaphoric mapping resulting from the pervasive, conventionalized conceptual metaphor (131). In their discussion of proverbs, Lakoff and Turner emphasize that pragmatic knowledge of genre conventions may similarly allow for the elision of the target domain (Ch.6). Both factors seem to be at work in those aphorisms of Kafka’s that mention *Weg* (“way”) as well as in the aphorisms more generally. I turn now to examine in more detail those that evoke the conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY through explicit use of the word *Weg*, after which I return to the question of conventionality, for it is precisely this issue that figures so prominently in Kafka’s critique of the role of habitualized metaphor in cognition.

One of the very last aphorisms, 104, is actually the only one that explicitly (and repeatedly) expresses the metaphor by mentioning both “way” to evoke the source domain and also “life” to identify the target domain, without eliding the target domain as the others do:

Der Mensch hat freien Willen undzwar dreierlei:

Erstens war er frei, als er dieses Leben wollte; jetzt kann er es allerdings nicht mehr rückgängig machen, denn er ist nicht mehr jener, der es damals wollte, es wäre denn insoweit, als er seinen damaligen Willen ausführt, indem er lebt. Zweitens ist er frei, indem er die Gangart und den Weg dieses Lebens wählen kann.

Drittens ist er frei, indem er als derjenige, der einmal wieder sein wird, den Willen hat, sich unter jeder Bedingung durch das Leben gehen und auf diese Weise zu sich kommen zu lassen, undzwar auf einem zwar wählbaren, aber jedenfalls derartig labyrinthischen Weg, daß er kein Fleckchen dieses Lebens unberührt läßt.

Das ist das Dreierlei des freien Willens, es ist aber auch, da es gleichzeitig ist, ein Einerlei und ist im Grunde so sehr Einerlei, daß es keinen Platz hat für einen Willen, weder für einen freien noch unfreien.

Man has free will, and of three sorts:

First, he was free when he wanted this life; now, however, he cannot go back and retract that, because he is no longer the one who wanted it then, unless and to the extent that he carries out his own will by living.

Second, he is free in that he can choose the pace and the path of this life.

Third, he is free inasmuch as he, as the one who will one day be, has the will to go through life under any condition and in this way allow himself to come to

himself, on a path of his own choosing, but one so labyrinthine that it leaves no little spot of life untouched.

This is the triple nature of free will, but being simultaneous, it is also single; it is in fact so fundamentally single that it has no room for a will, whether free or unfree.

At first glance this aphorism may appear to be a prime example of elaboration, an impression perhaps partially imparted by its length. But on closer inspection, what elaboration there is turns out to be not that elaborate. Typically, elaboration of the metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY involves concrete details and rich imagery, specifying perhaps a mode of transport, such as a carriage ride or a sea voyage, with additional attendant metaphoric entailments that constrain the kinds of reasoning allowed. In the case of this aphorism, however, the only elaboration involves that of the trajectory. It represents, therefore, more a complication of the PATH image schema, or a markedly unconventional image schema transformation, than any standard kind of metaphoric elaboration. The discussion of the first and second kinds of free will evokes the most basic schema of a PATH, which is prototypically straight. This prototypical PATH is then elaborated in the description of the third kind of free will as a labyrinth. This particular metaphoric elaboration does evoke rich imagery that consequently involves more specific metaphoric entailments. One might think, for example, of Theseus and the Minotaur or Chartres Cathedral or, if one lives in the San Francisco Bay area, Grace Cathedral perhaps, and each of these particular instantiations of the concept *labyrinth* would prompt particular associations that would constrain in specific ways the potential inferences one could draw. The instantiation of the concept here, though, through the attributive adjective *labyrinthine*, places emphasis more on the complexity of the abstract pattern itself than on any potential elaborations that the locative substantive *labyrinth* would more readily evoke. The focus, in other words, remains at the schematic level.

Paring down this aphorism to its syntactic and semantic minimum shows how it essentially just reiterates the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor. It says: “Man has free will...he wanted *this life*...now...he cannot *go back*...he can choose...the *path of this life*...he...has the will to *go through life*...and...*come to himself, on a path* of his own choosing...[hence the question is moot]” (emphasis added). The German word *gehen* suggests the notion of walking more strongly than does its English cognate *go*. So this aphorism, like the others, employs the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor in a way that activates the schemas involved in one of our most basic motor skills, one that makes us distinctly human. Though this aphorism ostensibly addresses the issue of free will, it is basically *about* the PATH image schema. In response, as it were, to the question of free will, it says essentially, “There was, or has been, a path; there is a path; there will be a path.” The ostensible propositional content reduces to an image schema, one of the most fundamental in our experience. By conflating past, present, and future, the aphorism makes the image schema all-encompassing. Free will is moot: there is merely this image schema. Straightforward, practical ethical guidelines are wholly absent from such a proposition, except perhaps censure of suicide. Life is the *fait accompli*, the aphorism suggests, and one of the only, perhaps *the* only, thing we can ever know or say about it with certainty and truthfully is that we “go” through it, which is obviously to speak metaphorically. The aphorism states, in other words, that our knowledge of our most

intimate experience, being alive, is fundamentally metaphorical. This is a truism evident to cognitive science since Lakoff and Johnson published one of the field's foundational documents, *Metaphors We Live By*, in 1980. But Kafka develops a unique technique of bringing that insight to light by profiling the basic schematic structure involved in conceptual metaphor against a minimum of metaphoric elaboration.

When conceptual metaphor undergoes poetic elaboration, it typically entails additional metaphors. In the case of LIFE IS A JOURNEY, for example, attendant conceptual metaphors that often come into play include COUNSELORS ARE GUIDES (e.g., *My big brother helped me navigate the maze of high school life*), DEATH IS THE END OF LIFE'S JOURNEY (e.g., *She has passed on to her final resting place*), DIFFICULTIES ARE IMPEDIMENTS TO TRAVEL (e.g., *He ran into many obstacles but finally succeeded in getting his Ph. D.*), PROGRESS IS THE DISTANCE TRAVELED (e.g., *We've come a long way toward peace in Northern Ireland*), and PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS (e.g., *My next goal in life is to find a partner and start a family*). When Kafka employs the metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY, these common corollaries are either notably absent—no GUIDES ever appear to serve as COUNSELORS in any of these aphorisms, for instance—or else backgrounded. Often they are turned on their heads, as it were, implied merely, but in such a way that negates them or inverts their logic. In the aphorism under consideration, for example, the PATH of the image schema is prominently profiled while SOURCE and GOAL are obscured, which itself is nothing unusual. But because this aphorism does not explicitly mention any end, for example, reasoning with the metaphor DEATH IS THE END OF LIFE'S JOURNEY cannot even come into play. Similarly, when the only oblique indication of a destination, “come to himself,” conflates GOAL and SOURCE, or PATH and SOURCE, the metaphor PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS seems not to make any sense. There is no destination, only purpose, the aphorism seems to say, and the purpose is the PATH itself. Further, PROGRESS IS THE DISTANCE TRAVELED cannot apply when distance is absolute. There is no real progress here to speak of, only travel.

As this first aphorism examined in some detail shows, when Kafka uses the widespread and conventional conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY, rather than elaborating it in conformity to more conventional poetic practice, he opts to foreground the generic structure of the PATH image schema on which the metaphor is based, throwing it into relief against a background of barest metaphorical elaboration. This aphorism highlights above all the PATH image schema, which is one that logically gets foregrounded in other aphorisms using the same conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY. But this schema is also often emphasized in the aphorisms in conjunction with other basic image schemas such as BALANCE, VERTICALITY, or FRONT-BACK.

The very first aphorism in the collection, in fact, is one that evokes the conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY, and it foregrounds primarily schemas of BALANCE and VERTICALITY. It is also, significantly, the only aphorism in the entire collection, that speaks explicitly of “the true way”:

Der wahre Weg geht über ein Seil, das nicht in der Höhe gespannt ist, sondern knapp über dem Boden. Es scheint mehr bestimmt stolpern zu machen, als begangen zu werden.

The true way is along a rope, not one suspended high in the air, but rather just above the ground. It seems more designed to make one trip than to be walked.

The first three words of the collection, then, “The true way,” immediately activate the conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY, which remains salient throughout. The possibility of such an automatic mapping results, as discussed above, from the metaphor’s nearly ubiquitous conventionalization, and that mapping is almost guaranteed here through the attribute “true.” We understand effortlessly and unconsciously that the “way” referred to here is a metaphor for life. And though this aphorism is actually quite a nice example of poetic elaboration, as I elucidate below, its essence and force lie more in highlighting the image schemas it connects to the conceptual metaphor, which it accomplishes through novel, unconventional image schema transformations.

The elaboration in this aphorism merits some attention. It appears to be a classic example of poetic elaboration, and indeed can justifiably be understood as such. But at the same time more complex and subtle cognitive operations seem to be at work. Many uses of the metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY emphasize the suffering or struggle involved in life. Common elaborations, each with their own particular entailments, may conceptualize the difficulties of life as obstacles or impediments to travel, including dangerous circumstances along the way, or might otherwise stress the difficulties of life as inherently part of the way itself, its being narrow or steep, for example. One thinks, for instance, of the Bible verse “Because straight is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (King James Version, Matt. 7.14). Mapping the way of life’s journey onto a rope to be walked, as the first aphorism in Kafka’s collection does, is certainly one way of imagining the entire way as inherently difficult. The aphorism may hence be seen as a similar kind of elaboration. But what is noteworthy is how the difficulty here is one that involves primarily a basic image schema, BALANCE, which is crucial to our successful functioning in the world. The conceptual movement of the rope from HIGH to LOW evoked by the language of the text then instantiates a novel image schema transformation, still involving BALANCE presumably. But then the conceptual rotation of the rope, another highly unconventional transformation of the PATH image schema, effects a radical change in the direction of the trajectory of the PATH evoked previously. In fact, the previously evoked PATH is transformed into an obstacle, and an entirely new PATH is evoked that is perpendicular to the previous one. This utterly out of the ordinary transformation of the conventional PATH image schema thereby activates another image schema, VERTICALITY, one that is similarly pervasive in our experience and similarly crucial for our basic everyday functioning.

To further illustrate my claim that Kafka emphasizes schematic conceptual structure over conventional metaphoric elaboration through specific, detailed concepts, comparison of my translation above with that of Michael Hofmann is helpful. Hofmann renders the second sentence of the aphorism as, “It seems more like a tripwire than a tightrope,” whereas my version, perhaps not as elegant but closer to the original, has “It seems more designed to make one trip than to be walked”: (“Es scheint mehr bestimmt stolpern zu machen, als begangen zu werden.”). My purpose in examining these translations is not to criticize Hofmann’s version or praise my own, but to highlight an important feature of the original text. Certainly, Hofmann’s rendering of a rope designed to make one trip (“bestimmt stolpern zu machen”) as a tripwire, and his specification of a rope to be walked (“begangen zu werden”) as a tightrope are entirely valid interpretations

that work compellingly as elaborations of the image schematic structure employed. But Kafka did not write *Stolperdraht* (“tripwire”) and *Drahtseil* (“tightrope”), when, presumably, he could have. He may even very well have had these much richer images in mind when composing the aphorism. But what he actually composed, “bestimmt stolpern zu machen” (“make one trip”) and “begangen zu werden” (“be walked”), does not automatically evoke any of the more detailed frames evoked by the more specific concepts of *tripwire*, such as *military combat*, and *tightrope*, like a *circus performance*. One need only consider these specific frames for a second in order to glean an impression of the kinds of inferences that such specific concepts permit. Kafka’s demonstrably more basic concepts of *walking*, *tripping*, and *rope* certainly allow for such specifications. That is why Hofmann’s translation works. But Kafka’s avoidance of specific-level concepts throws the generic conceptual structure that underlies any potential such specification into stark relief. In this case, that generic structure consists of two of the most basic and pervasive image schemas in our experience, BALANCE and VERTICALITY. Despite, or rather on account of, the elegance of Hofmann’s translation, and despite whatever other strengths it may have, its elaboration obscures in effect the prominent schematic structure of the original aphorism and hence works counter to the effect that I am arguing is a hallmark of Kafka’s poetics and a cornerstone of his ethics.

Similar to the aphorisms discussed above that foreground the PATH image schema by evoking striking, unconventional image schema transformations, this, the very first aphorism in the collection, also highlights generic conceptual structure, especially the image schemas of BALANCE and VERTICALITY, through novel image schema transformations—from one of MATCHING or SUPERIMPOSITION of PATH and TRAJECTORY via an UP-DOWN transition to one of SPLITTING and ROTATION to perpendicular INTERSECTION. This aphorism also profiles only the PATH part of the complete PATH image schema while backgrounding SOURCE and GOAL, with similar implications for the kinds of moral reasoning that are allowed.

If the “way” mentioned in this aphorism is understood automatically as a metaphor for the course of life, it is because, as discussed above, the conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY is so highly conventionalized. This circumstance seems to present a problem, though, the aphorism suggests, which it itself attempts to address. It is crucial to keep in mind that the main function of metaphor is to allow for the understanding of an unfamiliar or abstract concept through the use of and in terms of a more familiar or more concrete concept or domain. That the target domain of the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor may be elided because it is automatically understood is entirely natural. We would not be able to think and reason in a naturally human way if most of our basic cognitive structures, such as conceptual metaphors and image schemas, were not automatic and unconscious. But Kafka’s aphorism, in specifying the “way” in the source domain of the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor as a rope (“The true way goes over a rope”), represents more than conventional metaphoric elaboration. It essentially expresses another metaphor, “the way is a rope,” that establishes a new and contrasting relation between the abstract target and concrete source domains that the conventional conceptual metaphor serves to connect. In other words, elaborating the “way” of the conventional source domain as a rope creates a new metaphor, which implies that the more abstract concept to be understood and reasoned about in this case, the target of this metaphor, is the *way*. The aphorism suggests that the concept of a *way*, which comes from the concrete source

domain of the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor, has itself through pervasive conventionalization become so abstract or meaningless as to require novel metaphoric mapping in order to be meaningful. Elaborating conventionalized conceptual metaphor in a way that profiles the generic structure it depends on, highlighting image schemas through salient novel transformations, Kafka underscores the conventionality of linguistic expressions of conceptual metaphor and warns against that very conventionalization.

The examination of Hofmann's translation with its specifications of Kafka's basic concepts shows that such specification may do something quite different than just elaborate a given conceptual metaphor. Instead of evoking the metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY, Hofmann's translation actually evokes two different conceptual metaphors, namely, LIFE IS A BALANCING ACT and LIFE IS A BATTLE. Though they may imply the PATH image schema in their source domains or in their elaborations of those domains, they in fact represent different metaphors for the same target domain of LIFE that Kafka's aphorism evokes. When understood as a juxtaposition of these two more specific conceptual metaphors, as Hofmann's translation encourages, Kafka's aphorism appears unoriginal. Each more specific metaphor evokes particular culturally specific frames with particular entailments that allow for certain kinds of moral reasoning. What is significant about Kafka's aphorism is that it uses a less specific, more generic and widespread metaphor, LIFE IS A JOURNEY, and focuses on the most basic image schemas involved at the level of embodied experience, such as PATH, BALANCE, and VERTICALITY. In so doing it highlights, warns of, and undercuts the conventionality of the conceptual metaphor involved, or rather, the tendency toward its conventionalization in linguistic expressions. The particular schemas that are evoked here may well entail moral dimensions, as Krzeszowski argues, but invoked as they are devoid of metaphoric elaboration, they can hardly be correlated, if at all, with particular cultural models of moral values as more specific conceptual metaphors for the same target domain, such as LIFE IS A BALANCING ACT or LIFE IS A BATTLE, can.

The specific-level concepts *tripwire* and *tightrope* evoke particular frames that involve rich imagery, and they therefore involve metaphorical entailments with specific implications. These entailments are worth considering to support my case that in general Kafka avoids such specific-level concepts and highlights instead generic conceptual structure. In the first case, if the *Seil* mentioned in the aphorism is not a prototypical rope but a wire, that entails a huge conceptual difference in size. A prototypical wire is much thinner than a prototypical rope and so is inevitably more difficult to see. Given the frame of *military combat* suggested by the even more specific *tripwire*, it is most likely even concealed completely from view. The more basic image of a rope just above the ground, which is all that the language of the aphorism explicitly provides, while certainly allowing for such specification with its particular inferences and associated moral reasoning, also allows for radically different reasoning. When one forgets about any circus or battle scenes and focuses instead on the very basic imagery presented in the aphorism, the rope in question appears in plain view. The language of the aphorism underscores this with the word *scheint* ("seems" or "appears"), which has the senses here of giving an impression, of seeming to one's mind, or of appearing to be evident or true: "scheint...bestimmt stolpern zu machen" ("seems...designed to make one trip"). Like the English *appear*, *scheint* often refers to the mental or epistemic domain, but it draws on the visual domain, and hence expresses the widespread primary metaphor KNOWING IS

SEEING. The word can of course refer literally to the visual domain, as can *appear*, and in fact, since it is used so frequently in German in this sense, as in *Die Sonne scheint* (“The sun is shining”), I would argue that when used metaphorically to refer to the epistemic domain, it evokes the source domain of vision especially saliently. Kafka’s language thus emphasizes the visibility of the rope mentioned in the aphorism in a way that the word *tripwire* deemphasizes.

Significantly, like the English expressions *seem* and *appear*, the German word *scheinen* can also have an almost diametrically opposite meaning from the sense of appearing to be true or evident. A common theme in literature is the opposition between appearance and reality, a reminder that appearances can be deceiving. The phrase “scheint...bestimmt stolpern zu machen” (“seems...designed to make one trip”) may also be understood in light of this tradition, in which case the important inference to draw is that the rope in question only *seems* so designed. My translation renders the phrase “geht über ein Seil” as “*is along* a rope,” which is consistent with the superimposition of a trajectory onto the linear image schematic structure of a rope imaged at the outset of the aphorism. But a more literal translation would be “*goes over* a rope,” which significantly allows for the meaning “go over” with respect to the image schema transformation that occurs in the second sentence. In other words, if “the true way goes over a rope,” as the first sentence of the aphorism establishes, but that rope turns out in the next sentence to be perpendicular to one’s trajectory, then since it is apparently visible just above the ground, one may “go over” it simply by stepping over it, VERTICALITY maintained. Alternatively, if the rope’s appearance gives the impression that it is designed to make one trip, but its appearance is understood precisely and merely as that, appearance and not reality, the implication is that the rope *is* in fact designed to be walked, despite appearances. One could then conceivably walk it, as designed, which would still involve BALANCE but without, on account of its proximity to the ground, any dire consequences. Rather than a tripwire, the rope as invoked in the language of Kafka’s text might be better understood as a piece of playground equipment, designed for children to practice the crucial skill of balance. Clearly, reasoning with the basic-level concepts and salient image schemas evoked by the language of Kafka’s aphorism allows for different, more nuanced moral conclusions that are less automatic than when that basic- and generic-level conceptual structure is specified and elaborated.

The second aphorism of the collection that employs the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor, 14, is one that does not actually contain the word *Weg* (“way”) but that nevertheless strongly evokes a PATH image schema and hence deserves attention. It is one in which the image schemas FRONT-BACK and UP-DOWN also play a prominent role:

Gingest du über eine Ebene, hättest den guten Willen zu gehen und machtest doch Rückschritte, dann wäre es eine verzweifelte Sache; da du aber einen steilen Abhang hinaufkletterst, so steil etwa, wie du selbst von unten gesehen bist, können die Rückschritte auch nur durch die Bodenbeschaffenheit verursacht sein, und du mußt nicht verzweifeln.

If you were walking across a plain, had every good intention of walking and yet found yourself going backward, it would be something to despair over; but as you are scaling a steep precipice, as steep as you are when seen from below, then your backward movement can only be caused by the terrain, and you needn’t despair.

Similar to the aphorisms examined thus far involving novel transformations of the PATH image schema, 14 basically maps a FRONT-BACK schema in conjunction with PATH onto an UP-DOWN one. FRONT-BACK is a schema that, like BALANCE and VERTICALITY, inherently entails a moral dimension, especially in conjunction with PATH. We interact most often with what we perceive to be or what are designed as or what become through the interaction the fronts of objects. We think of the screen of a television as its front, for example; we enter a house through its front door; and we say things like *The ball is in front of the tree*, though trees do not have fronts and backs. A front-front orientation is the ideal model of social interaction as well. When you turn your back on someone, it can be insulting. FRONT is thus valued over BACK. In addition, motion endows otherwise frontless objects with fronts, so that we construe even an abstract concept like a point as having a front when moving, or a checker moving across a board or a glass sliding across a bar as having a front. Forward motion is the default and hence the valued mode. By merely depicting the image schemas it does, then, aphorism 14 necessarily raises moral issues. But despite the fact that the schemas employed here are ones that inherently entail a moral dimension, precisely because the aphorism remains focused at the schematic level, executing image schema transformations that upset conventional expectations while avoiding metaphoric elaboration, the moral sense to be gleaned is far from simple or straightforward. On account of their salient schematicity, Kafka's aphorisms provide no easy answers to the moral questions they invoke.

To illustrate the salient schematicity of this aphorism, translation provides an instructive contrast again. There are only three expressions in the text that represent elaborations of the concept of motion: *gehen* ("walk"), *Rückschritte* ("backward steps"), and *hinaufklettern* ("scale" or "climb"). Since *gehen* is a basic-level concept of human locomotion, it is actually not a very specific elaboration, though the other two expressions certainly do represent more specific-level concepts. Apart from these three words, the other expressions in the aphorism that account for what little elaboration there is refer to the spatial context in which the implied PATH is situated: *Ebene*, *Abhang*, and *Bodenbeschaffenheit*. English has three different terms for the three most common senses of *Ebene*, two of which are etymologically related and homophonous: *level*, *plane*, and *plain*. In German, the word is polysemous; it has all three meanings, and which one is profiled depends typically on the context. In the context of geometry, the sense of "plane" would most likely be meant, whereas in the context of geography, "plain" would probably be understood. This observation reveals that the geographical sense of the expression actually represents an elaboration of the more abstract geometrical concept. In the case of Kafka's aphorism, it is logical for readers to construe the expression in its more specific, elaborate, geographical sense, as we incline to imagine a person walking in a specific place as opposed to an abstract geometric form. But since the text does not elaborate the concept with any detailed imagery, and because the one German expression evokes both concepts expressed by the different English translations, the abstract schema of a flat, horizontal surface is saliently profiled over the rich imagery typically associated with the specific kind of landscape. Either of the English translations inevitably highlights one of the senses of the German expression at the expense of the other. The choice of *plain* works best here, in my judgment, but it is significant that it represents a kind of elaboration that is only potential in the original, and covers over, as it were, the

abstract schema underlying the image. Similarly, the German expression *Abhang* is more abstract than the English translation *precipice*. In other contexts *slope* or *incline* or *decline* might work better. Also, *terrain* seems most apposite for *Bodenbeschaffenheit* here, particularly in conjunction with *plain* and *precipice*. The German expression possesses a slightly more abstract quality, though, as *Boden*, in addition to meaning “earth” and “soil,” also has senses of “floor” and “ground,” whereas *terrain* has a much more circumscribed semantic range. And while it may be argued that these are inherent features of the German language that Kafka could not have avoided, it is conceivable he could have written *Flachland* (“plain,” “lowland,” “flat country”) instead of *Ebene*, or *Klippe* (“cliff,” “crag,” “precipice”) instead of *Abhang*. Such choices would have automatically evoked much richer images, however, as the English translation inevitably does to a degree. Instead, Kafka tends toward the schematic in this as in other aphorisms.

At first glance this aphorism seems to contradict the nearly ubiquitous conceptual metaphor GOOD IS UP or at least to represent a counter-example. Following the initial conventional instantiation of the PATH image schema with a horizontal trajectory, an unexpected, unconventional image schema transformation occurs whereby the trajectory of the PATH evoked obtains a vertical dimension, going up—it is perfectly vertical, in fact. In this case that transformation implies difficulty, impossibility even. It is important to distinguish between *being* up, which is nearly always entirely positive, and *getting* there, which may entail difficulty but which is on the whole also positive and valued. As noted above, difficulties in life are often conceived when the conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY is evoked as impediments to travel. In aphorism 14, however, the precipice scaled is not an obstacle. Rather, it is the very ground of the PATH itself. The entire path, it seems, is one huge obstacle, in a way related to that in the last aphorism discussed. This does not mean, however, that up is not good. The metaphor GOOD IS UP still holds; it must hold for the aphorism to make its point and achieve its effect. Contrary to all our deep-seated assumptions, and in stark contradiction to all our experience of the world, the aphorism says basically that falling is all right. It does not say it is good, but rather, that that’s just the way it is. It does not negate the conceptual metaphor GOOD IS UP in what might be an obvious way by reversing it to imply that down is good or up is bad. Instead, through a kind of striking image schema transformation of the PATH schema involving backward motion, it negates its opposite, in effect, saying down is not bad. Hence moral categories cannot apply in a conventional way. To speak of a positive morality based in hope would be untenable here; at best a negative morality based in the absence of fear might be possible. Dogmatism, in any case, is out of the question. By highlighting generic conceptual structure through striking transformations of some of the most basic image schemas in our experience, Kafka upsets the conventional moral parameters associated with those schemas and thus thwarts any attempt to reason using the habitualized conceptual patterns that moralizing depends on.

The very next aphorism in the collection, 15, is another one that employs the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor. Unlike 14, however, it refers explicitly to a way or path:

Wie ein Weg im Herbst: Kaum ist er rein gekehrt, bedeckt er sich wieder mit den trockenen Blättern.

Like a path in autumn: no sooner is it swept clean than it is covered again with dead leaves.

This is one of the most well known of Kafka's aphorisms. Among the others in the collection employing the metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY it stands out by virtue of its rich imagery. Despite this pronounced difference, however, and the concomitant backgrounding of generic conceptual structure that occurs, analysis of the image schemas that are more opaque but nevertheless at work here reveals consistent moral reasoning. Moreover, the aphorism may even be read, I suggest, as metacommentary on the relation between image schemas and metaphor that is compatible with the thrust of the other aphorisms as well.

That LIFE IS A JOURNEY is conceptually evoked by this aphorism without being explicitly expressed in the language results for the same reasons as discussed above in the cases of the other aphorisms. Here the very fact of that elision is underscored through the syntax: the first phrase of the aphorism is an incomplete simile, consisting solely of the second part of a comparison, the source of the metaphor, while omitting the first, the target. The aphorism seems thereby to signal that part of what it is about is this very circumstance, the potential, often manifest, of elision of the target domain in conventionalized conceptual metaphor. For the metaphor as expressed in this aphorism is very clearly consciously invoking a clichéd poetic image. It is important to note, however, that more than one metaphor is involved. The aphorism is an instance of compression, a poetic practice whereby two compatible conceptual metaphors are blended. The metaphors compressed here are LIFE IS A JOURNEY and A LIFETIME IS A YEAR. Mapping the stages of a human lifetime onto the seasons of the year is a conventional conceptualization: we commonly think of childhood and youth as the spring of life, adulthood as summer, maturity as autumn, and old age as winter. The widespread conventionalization of this mapping is partly what accounts for the kitsch quality of the image depicted in the aphorism's opening phrase. But that very quality, I contend, is mobilized here in service to a critique of conventionality.

Kafka disturbs the underlying assumptions of the conventional mapping, and he does so at the schematic level. In conventional compressions of A LIFETIME IS A YEAR and LIFE IS A JOURNEY, the PATH of the journey of one's life is typically imagined as extending continuously over the course of one year. When one's lifetime is conceived as a year, the implication is that one progresses steadily through the seasons, each being one of a series of consecutive segments that one traverses as inevitably as time passes and the planet winds its way around the sun. In aphorism 15, the images and especially the image schemas disrupt this notion of steady progress. Instead the aphorism offers an image of sweeping—schematically a SIDE TO SIDE repetitive movement—that goes forward and thereby creates a path, or uncovers an already existing path—schematically describing a PATH—but only to a certain point, at which point progress is impeded. The implication is that the same PATH image schema will be retraced, but in reverse, and so on and so on, back and forth indefinitely. Instead of progression through the segment of the PATH corresponding to autumn, there is suspension of forward motion and an endless back and forth iteration of zigzag movement. The German expression for “sweep,” *kehren*, means in its most basic sense “to turn,” so it evokes more of a schema of circular motion than the English expression *sweep* does, and so contributes to the impression of non-progressive, continual forward and backward movement along the same segment of the path. Similar to the other aphorisms examined so far, aphorism 15 reinforces the effect of

non-progress by profiling the PATH alone while backgrounding the SOURCE and GOAL.

There is one feature of this aphorism not touched on yet that is worth attention, an aspect of the original that English cannot sensibly convey. Whereas the English translation has “it is covered,” a passive construction, the German “bedeckt er sich” is an active reflexive form, “it covers itself.” The construction suggests animacy, and hence attributes intentionality to the path. It is a sense more uncanny than the English captures, which sounds as though perhaps the wind were to blame, without any hint of intention. In contrast, the original sounds more as though the path, and hence the world, stood willfully opposed to one’s efforts and indeed continually sabotaged them. It is more reminiscent of the myth of Sisyphus, and resonates with other aphorisms, such as 52, mentioned above, which use the LIFE IS A STRUGGLE metaphor: “In the struggle between yourself and the world, second the world.” But in fact, like 52, the character of the struggle is hardly confrontational. The metaphor LIFE IS A TASK might better describe this aphorism’s essence. And despite the apparent impossibility of accomplishing or finishing the task, there is no suggestion here of any cause for despair, much as in the preceding aphorism. Rather, the aphorism seems to say, that’s just the way it is, it’s what we do.

On another level, aphorism 15 seems to be doing something more than performing unconventional image schema transformations and novel operations between schemas and metaphors. It seems to address the very relation between linguistically expressed, elaborate metaphor and image schemas and generic conceptual structure that I have been highlighting throughout this chapter. Of all the aphorisms in the collection evoking the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor, including all those that explicitly mention a path or way, this one stands out on account of its rich imagery, as mentioned above. It evokes by far the richest imagery of them all, and it does so merely through three specific details: autumn, the sweeping, and the dead leaves. But because of these few details, the path itself becomes more concrete than in the other aphorisms of the collection. One imagines a path in the woods, or in a park, or perhaps a tree-lined sidewalk. As noted above, the schematic structure underlying the details invoked is thereby backgrounded or hidden by such elaboration. The rich imagery of dead leaves covering the path depicted in the aphorism thus symbolizes, while it more profoundly actually enacts, the way metaphoric elaboration “covers over,” as it were, image schematic structure. The dead leaves as part of the rich imagery obscure the path, the schematic structure of which would otherwise be more salient.

Five more aphorisms in the collection evoke the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor through explicit mention of the word *Weg* (“way” or “path”). I refrain from discussing each one in as much detail as I have the last four or five. But I cite them all nonetheless in order to provide as complete a picture as possible of the particular way that the collection as a whole in its employment of conceptual metaphor—in this case, one of its most salient and frequently recurring—foregrounds generic conceptual structure over specific detailed concepts. The foregoing explorations into the ways these aphorisms profile image schemas through striking, unconventional transformations will help, I hope, make that same characteristic feature more evident in the following examples. The next aphorism in the collection to evoke the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor, 21, exhibits a striking parallel with the one just examined, 15, in its inception with an incomplete simile:

So fest wie die Hand den Stein hält. Sie hält ihn aber fest, nur um ihn desto weiter zu verwerfen. Aber auch in jene Weite führt der Weg.

As firmly as the hand holds the stone. It holds it so firmly, though, just so it can throw it that much farther away. But even that far there is a way.

Again, the source domain of the conceptual metaphor is given explicitly with the word *Weg* (“way”), and again the target domain is elided. The form of the phrase, therefore, as in the previous aphorism, makes structurally explicit a key principle in Kafka’s poetics. What is noteworthy about this case is that the opening incomplete simile forms an adverbial phrase, describing the quality of an action—the degree of firmness involved in holding a stone—as opposed to a thing—a path in autumn. This circumstance may partly account for its more elusive feel. Another reason the target concept or domain may be more difficult to grasp here is that the source domain of stone-holding or stone-throwing does not evoke any widespread, conventional conceptual metaphors the way going somewhere does, although it may be part of a number of specific frames. The elision of the intended target domain thus cannot be automatically and unconsciously compensated as with pervasive, conventionalized metaphors like LIFE IS A JOURNEY, which needs merely the mention of a path or way to be activated.

Aphorism 21 also bears some resemblance to 15 in the relatively rich imagery of its first phrase, not in the particular details of the imagery, but in the fact of relative richness as compared to other aphorisms in the collection. It is noteworthy, however, that the rich imagery is evoked through basic-level concepts: *hand*, *holding*, *stone*. Underlying this relatively rich imagery is a hidden metaphor, the metaphor that accounts for the meanings of *grasp*: UNDERSTANDING IS OBJECT MANIPULATION. Although the word used here is not *greifen* (“grasp”), the metaphor is nonetheless evoked. This recognition suggests that the elided target domain in this aphorism may not be life, as is a more reasonable assumption in the case of aphorism 15 and the others that mention the word *Weg* (“way”), but rather knowledge, understanding, or belief. If this is a valid target domain for the aphorism, then the implication may be that one must let go of or throw away one’s current beliefs, those that one “holds,” in order to find knowledge or wisdom. The imagery of the second, syntactically complete sentence of the aphorism instantiates the PATH image schema, but not conventionally as a straight, linear path but as a parabola, that of a thrown object’s trajectory. The last sentence of the aphorism then iterates the PATH image schema, with the same SOURCE and GOAL as evoked in the previous sentence, but it performs a novel image schema transformation by superimposing the same PATH of an imaginary parabola in the air onto a straight line on the ground. Even saying “air” and “ground,” though, already suggests richer detail than is warranted by the aphorism, and so is “going too far,” one might say. The more schematic terms *above* and *below* might be more felicitous, highlighting the UP-DOWN movement of the transformation and recalling aphorism 1.

As a final comment on this aphorism, it may be pointed out that the apparent profiling here of the GOAL is misleading. Without being mentioned explicitly, the GOAL is evoked through the conventional image schema transformation of *path-focus to endpoint-focus* as the trajectory of the stone is followed to its conclusion. It is then evoked again in the final sentence, but conspicuously through a very vague expression, “in jene Weite” (“that far” or “that distance”), which profiles the PATH itself as much as, if not more than,

the GOAL. Compare aphorism 5, in which the GOAL seems (and again, as always with Kafka, *seems* is the operative word) comparatively much more precise: “Von einem gewissen Punkt an gibt es keine Rückkehr mehr. Dieser Punkt ist zu erreichen” (“From a certain point on, there’s no turning back. This point must be reached”). Hence, as with the other aphorisms examined so far, the main emphasis here is really more on the PATH alone while the other conventional parts of the schema are backgrounded, with similar corresponding moral inferences.

Aphorism 26 is another that appears to profile the GOAL over against SOURCE and PATH, even mentioning the word *Ziel*, (“goal” or “destination”) explicitly, the only aphorism of all those that evoke the PATH image schema to do so. But as with the last aphorism, appearances here are deceiving:

Es gibt ein Ziel, aber keinen Weg; was wir Weg nennen, ist Zögern.
There is a destination, but no way there; what we call way, is hesitation.

The first half of the aphorism evokes a conventional image schema transformation from *path focus to endpoint-focus* (though linguistically invoked negatively). The second half, however, basically conflates the PATH and the SOURCE in another saliently unconventional image schema transformation. If the way does not exist, and there is only hesitation, which is mistaken for the way, one remains in effect at SOURCE, apparently with an unbridgeable gulf between SOURCE and GOAL. But as PATH and SOURCE are conflated, the aphorism suggests that the PATH is the SOURCE and the SOURCE is the PATH, a circumstance that negates any notion of GOAL.

This aphorism exhibits pronounced chiasmic structure, a feature more readily evident when its two halves are lined:

Es gibt ein Ziel, aber keinen Weg;
was wir Weg nennen, ist Zögern.

The chiasmus is reinforced through alliteration, with the initial sound of the word *Ziel* (“goal”) echoed in *Zögern* (“hesitation”). One line of the chiasmus connects the two occurrences of the identical word, *Weg* (“way”). The identity is only superficial, however, as the aphorism states explicitly that the one concept expressly does not exist (“Es gibt...keinen Weg”; “There is no way”), whereas the other exists merely in the expression (“was wir Weg nennen”; “what we call way”). This relation established by half of the chiastic structure of the text suggests difference in equivalence. The chiasmus then sets up a complementary relation between the two poles of its other line, *Ziel* (“goal”) and *Zögern* (“hesitation”). Instead of difference in equivalence, though—difference of meaning in equivalence of form—this other half of the figure establishes a relation of equivalence in difference—equivalence of meaning in difference of form. The different expressions *Ziel* and *Zögern*, though affiliated in this chiastic structure through assonance, as noted above, have clearly distinct and, in conventional contexts, totally unrelated meanings. But the chiasmus of this aphorism suggests an equivalence of meaning between the concepts of *goal* and *hesitation*. If such a relation is granted, the conventional understanding of GOAL as part of the PATH image schema—the endpoint of the conventional PATH image schema transformation—loses force and in effect conflates

with the SOURCE. Given the conflation of PATH and SOURCE evoked by the second half of the text, as described above (“was wir Weg nennen, ist Zögern”; “what we call way is hesitation”), the relations established by the aphorism’s chiasmic structure serve to conflate all three of the conventionally distinct parts of the PATH image schema.

Given further the explicit repetition of the word *Weg*, this aphorism seems consistent with the other ones that profile the PATH while backgrounding SOURCE and GOAL. It might also be noted that the concept of *Zögern* (“hesitation”), evokes notions of vacillation reminiscent of the basic back and forth image schema schematic structure underlying the concept of *sweeping* and so suggests parallels with aphorism 15. Significantly, only one other aphorism out of all one hundred nine in the collection mentions the word *Ziel* explicitly, aphorism 86. It is one of the several that invoke the scene of Eden, and it deals with issues such as original sin and the knowledge of good and evil. The aphorism equates the attempt to make an end or goal of knowledge with the falsification of the very fact of knowledge: “Ein Versuch, die Tatsache der Erkenntnis zu fälschen, die Erkenntnis erst zum Ziel zu machen.” It thereby disavows the validity of the concept of GOAL in a way consistent with the other aphorisms that profile the PATH.

Aphorism 38 forms a corollary, as it were, to 14, where, it is recalled, a FRONT-BACK image schema in conjunction with the PATH schema gets mapped onto an UP-DOWN one. Here, though, FRONT-BACK maps onto DOWN-UP:

Einer staunte darüber, wie leicht er den Weg der Ewigkeit ging; er raste ihn nämlich abwärts.

A man was astounded at how easily he went the path of eternity; it’s because he was running downhill.

Again, an unconventional transformation profiles the PATH part of the conventionally three-part image schema while SOURCE and GOAL are backgrounded, and again, the moral implications to be drawn are far from self-evident.

The very next aphorism in the collection, 39, explicitly mentions the word *Weg* (‘way’) and evokes the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor in a way consistent with the others that do.

Der Weg ist unendlich, da ist nichts abzuziehen, nichts zuzugeben und doch hält jeder noch seine eigene kindliche Eile daran. “Gewiß, auch diese Elle Wegs mußt du noch gehen, es wird dir nicht vergessen werden.”

The way is endless, there are no shortcuts, no detours, and yet everyone comes to it with his own childish haste. “You must walk this ell of ground, too, you won’t be spared it.”

The most intriguing thing about this aphorism is the unacknowledged citation, included without reference to a source. It might be a quote from another text, elided because assumed to be widely known and automatically recognizable. Or it might perhaps be the citation of a proverb, whose source is hence unspecifiable. It might also conceivably be understood as something once told the author of the aphorism, whose source is intentionally omitted for some reason or other. Or it may simply be imagined as fictive discourse, something that the world, as it were, says to each person. A notable feature of

the aphorism is its image schema transformation from *path-focus* to *segment-focus*. Not entirely unconventional, this transformation is less common than the transformation from *path-focus* to *endpoint-focus*. The PATH part of the conventional image schema is again foregrounded here while SOURCE and GOAL are backgrounded, since the PATH evoked is explicitly depicted as endless. In this respect the aphorism is reminiscent of others in the collection that evoke the same image schema. Significantly, the segment of the PATH focused on here is expressly at a human scale, measured in terms of the human body—*ell* comes from *elbow*—which together with the proximal deictic marker *this* underscores the immediacy of the quotation’s imperative mood.

The last aphorism that contains the word *Weg* (“way”), 76b, much less obviously involves the metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY:

Ein Umschwung. Lauernd, ängstlich, hoffend umschleicht die Antwort die Frage, sucht verzweifelt in ihrem unzugänglichen Gesicht, folgt ihr auf den sinnlosesten, das heißt von der Antwort möglichst wegstrebenden Wegen.

A turnaround. Crouching, timid, hoping, the answer creeps around the question, despairingly searches its inaccessible face, follows it on the most senseless paths, namely, ones that stray as far as possible from the answer.

I wish only to point out here a feature common to quite a few of the aphorisms, one that I have neglected to address so far, but which seems especially salient in this case, namely, iconicity. The extended adjectival phrase embedded in the text’s final prepositional phrase masterfully enacts at the level of syntactic structure the aphorism’s propositional content: “auf den sinnlosesten, das heißt von der Antwort möglichst wegstrebenden Wegen.” A word-for-word English translation preserving the iconic grammatical structure might read “on the most senseless, that is, from the answer as far away as possible straying paths.” The distance between the substantive “Wegen” (“paths”) and its primary modifier “sinnlosesten” (“most senseless”) with all the intervening constituents instantiates on a formal level the meandering “path” the mind takes in attempting to make sense of the aphorism. Analysis and discussion of this and the other cases of iconicity, a not infrequent quality of Kafka’s aphorisms—among those examined here, 1 and 104 stand out as nice examples—while undoubtedly fascinating and even potentially relevant to my argument, would represent too much of diversion.

Highlighting Generic Structure to Critique Conventional Thinking

Throughout this chapter I have argued that an underlying principle informing the Zürau aphorisms is the tendency to highlight generic conceptual structure over more specific concepts through novel and striking image schema transformations. The consistent use of language expressing basic-level or superordinate-level concepts avoids elaboration of the conceptual metaphors evoked that would constrain reasoning in more specific ways. Instead, by foregrounding generic conceptual structure, Kafka allows for a wider range of inferential possibilities that admittedly makes reasoning about his aphorisms more difficult but that consequently also precludes any facile conclusions based on conventional, habitualized patterns of thought. I have identified the principle at

work in a good many of the aphorisms and evaluated it in detail in a handful that employ the widespread conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY. Among all one hundred nine aphorisms, there are, to be sure, some that stand out as obvious counter examples where rich imagery is evoked through more specific language. Aphorism 8/9 is one that comes first to mind:

Eine stinkende Hündin, reichliche Kindergebärerin, stellenweise schon faulend, die aber in meiner Kindheit mir alles war, die in Treue unaufhörlich mir folgt, die ich zu schlagen mich nicht überwinden kann, vor der ich aber, selbst ihren Atem scheuend, schrittweise nach rückwärts weiche und die mich doch, wenn ich mich nicht anders entscheide, in den schon sichtbaren Mauerwinkel drängen wird, um dort auf mir und mit mir gänzlich zu verwesen, bis zum Ende – ehrt es mich? – das Eiter- und Wurm-Fleisch ihrer Zunge an meiner Hand.

A smelly bitch that has brought forth plenty of young, already rotting in places, but that to me in my childhood meant everything, who continue [sic] to follow me faithfully everywhere, whom I am quite incapable of disciplining, but before whom I shrink back, step by step, shying away from her breath, and who will end up—unless I decide otherwise—forcing me into a corner that I can already see, there to decompose fully and utterly on me and with me until finally—is it a distinction?—the pus- and worm-ravaged flesh of her tongue laps at my hand.
(Hofmann)

Such richly detailed examples are the exception, however. Another one that evokes rather rich imagery, the second complete aphorism under the number 99, seems in fact simultaneously to comment on the undesirability of metaphoric elaboration:

Manche nehmen an, daß neben dem großen Urbetrug noch in jedem Fall eigens für sie ein kleiner besonderer Betrug veranstaltet wird, daß also wenn ein Liebesspiel auf der Bühne aufgeführt wird, die Schauspielerin außer dem verlogenen Lächeln für ihren Geliebten auch noch ein besonders hinterhältiges Lächeln für den ganz bestimmten Zuschauer auf der letzten Gallerie hat. Das heißt zu weit gehen.

Many assume that aside from the great original deception, another, smaller deception has been put on especially for them, as though, when a romantic comedy is performed on stage, the actress, apart from the lying smile for her beloved, has another especially cunning smile for a certain specific spectator in the very last row. That is going too far.

Though it does not employ the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor and does not use the word *Weg* (“way”), this aphorism instantiates the PATH image schema in a couple of places and in interesting ways. Most saliently, we trace a path in imagination from the actress on stage to the audience member in the back of the theater, along which she metaphorically sends her smile. At the same time, though less saliently, we imagine a complementary path in the opposite direction from the audience member to the actress, which metaphorically represents the direction of the spectator’s attention. The final sentence evokes the PATH image schema together with the NEAR-FAR schema to express a

complementary pair of conceptual metaphors that might be formulated as REALITY/TRUTH IS HERE and FANTASY/FALSE BELIEF IS ELSEWHERE: “Das heißt zu weit gehen” (“That is going too far”). The aphorism implies not only that the spectator’s belief that the actress’s smile is meant just for him is delusional, but also that the extended metaphoric elaboration it itself entails is “going too far.”

Such a reading is consistent with the argument I have made that Kafka highlights generic conceptual structure, in particular image schemas, as a way to critique habitualized conventional metaphor in cognition. The conventionalization of the conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY accounts for its pervasiveness in thought and hence for the near ubiquity of expressed metaphors invoking a path or way for the course of one’s life. It will be recalled that of all the aphorisms I have identified as employing the metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY, only one, 104, names the target domain of life explicitly. The others evoke the source domain merely through explicit mention of the word *Weg* (“way”). Reading these aphorisms as being about life is certainly a valid mapping, but what is important to stress is that, since with only one exception none make their target domain explicit, such interpretations are only possible precisely because the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor is so entrenched in our conceptual systems and pervasive in our thought. Kafka’s rigorous avoidance of any explicit mention of a target domain represents another characteristic facet of his strategy of highlighting the generic structure involved in conceptual mappings. It is this same practice that allows Max Brod, for instance, to read the castle in *Das Schloß* as a symbol for the divine and Hannah Arendt to understand it as an allegory for Austrian bureaucracy.

Because the target domain is consistently elided in these aphorisms that mention *Weg* (“way”), other mappings than LIFE IS A JOURNEY are also possible and valid. Given the thrust of a couple of the aphorisms, in particular 21, which evokes the metaphor UNDERSTANDING IS OBJECT MANIPULATION with its depiction of a hand holding a stone, and 76b, which speaks of the relation between questions and answers, the target domain of knowledge or understanding might work as well or better. Regardless of what the target domain is understood to be, though, it is the conventionalization of the source domain as expressed in the almost cliché metaphor of a path or way that seems to be of concern. In line with other thinkers preoccupied with the conventionalization of metaphor in cognition, Kafka, through his avoidance of linguistic elaboration and emphasis of generic conceptual structure, similarly warns of such conventionalization. Lao-Tzu, for example, uses the same PATH image schema to make the same point. The first verse of the *Tao Te Ching* begins, “The way that can be walked is not the true way.” Similarly, in a well-known Zen koan, the master says to his dying disciple, “Let me show you the way without coming and going.” Kafka’s aphorisms, I suggest, may be read in the context of such a tradition.

An evident paradox emerges, though, in cases where such a position is taken. While warning of the deceptive potential of conventionalized metaphor, such critiques must inevitably make use of metaphor to make that very point. The realization that human reasoning and understanding exist only through metaphor demands such inevitability. It also means that these aphorisms, regardless of their propositional content, are all on some fundamental level about metaphor and its role in cognition. Friedrich Nietzsche sought a way out of this impasse with his agenda of creative nihilism. When one recognizes the ineradicably metaphoric nature of all human language and cognition,

the only appropriate response, Nietzsche maintains, is the conscious deployment of metaphor aimed at exposing the conventionality of widely held reasoning and values. For his part, Kafka chooses to address this paradox by emphasizing image schemas and other generic conceptual structures that inform cognition at a more basic level of experience, and he does so by performing novel, unconventional operations at that generic level. In doing so, he thwarts the habitualized patterns of thought that rely on conventionalized metaphor.

Writers and poets frequently question or critique the dominant conventionalized metaphors of their culture (Lakoff and Turner 69-70). One way they may do so is by proposing an alternative, novel elaboration of a pervasive conceptual metaphor (Freeman). For his part, Kafka actually evokes the widespread conventional metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY. But rather than critique its conventionality by substituting it with a novel conceptual metaphor—a practice that essentially leaves the basic mechanism of conventional metaphorical mapping undisturbed and unquestioned—Kafka employs a strategy that makes precisely this conventional cognitive operation more difficult. By evoking unconventional transformations of the more fundamental schematic structure on which such mechanisms depend, he disrupts the effortless ease of conceptual mappings based on conventional metaphors. He thereby both highlights generic conceptual structure and simultaneously warns of the potential pitfalls that follow from the conventionalization of conceptual metaphor.

In his commentary to a unique edition of the Zürau aphorisms in which each one is printed on a separate page, Roberto Calasso makes the following claim: “If there is a theology in Kafka, this is the only place where he himself comes close to declaring it. But even in these aphorisms, abstraction is rarely permitted to break free of the image to live its own life, as if it has to serve time for having been autonomous and capricious for too long, in that remote and reckless age when philosophers and theologians still existed” (“Veiled Splendor” 119). My exploration of the Zürau aphorisms has shown, if anything, on the contrary, that the true emphasis here is precisely on the abstract schemas and generic conceptual structures underlying the images. Consequently, as Calasso recognizes, there is no worked-out theology here, no elaborated doctrine, but there is a morality nonetheless. Kafka’s morality is a difficult one that requires more abstract and unconventional reasoning, including greater awareness of the generic conceptual structures involved in such reasoning, indeed in all reasoning, than is typically the case at the level of habitualized, conventional metaphor.

The PATH of the Zürau Aphorisms

Throughout this chapter I have consistently referred to the Zürau aphorisms as a collection of texts. A distinct image schema underlies the concept of *collection*, namely, COLLECTION. It qualifies as an image schema because there is an embodied sensorimotor program that gives rise to the concept. My discussion of several representative examples of aphorisms that foreground different image schemas reinforces a conceptualization of the texts as a random collection, without any other organizing structural principle. The order in which I discuss them is as follows: 22, 52, 24, 78, 41, 80, 31, 94, 79, 16, 69, 6, 10, and 23. Following this general introduction to the collection as a whole, I turn to

examine in more detail those aphorisms that evoke LIFE IS A JOURNEY and that highlight in their language the generic conceptual structure of the PATH image schema underlying the metaphor. The aphorisms I identify as evoking this conceptual metaphor I discuss in the following order: 5, 104, 1, 14, 15, 21, 26, 38, 39, and 76b. After my first two analyses, which are inconsistent with the order of the texts themselves, the rest of my analyses do admittedly follow the sequential order in which the aphorisms are arranged in the collection. A PATH image schema therefore informs the basic organization of this section of the chapter focusing on the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor, although, given my initial discussion of two aphorisms out of sequence, as it were, it might be said that my presentation in this section represents a kind of unconventional transformation of the PATH image schema. My overall presentation, however, together with my constant use of the term *collection* to describe the aphorisms, saliently evokes the COLLECTION schema and reinforces the notion that the texts are merely a loosely connected assemblage. But the fact that each aphorism is numbered, with the collection arranged in an ordered sequence, evokes the PATH image schema. This suggests that the PATH schema might offer an appropriate model for thinking about the aphorisms as a whole. Anders Engberg-Pedersen claims that with the arrangement of the aphorisms in sequential order, Kafka created a new literary form.

Calasso explains his motivation to publish the Zürau aphorisms in the format he does, with each one printed on a separate page, by relating his experience of coming across them while studying the manuscript of *Das Schloß* at the Bodleian Library at Oxford (“Marginalia”). Kafka wrote these aphorisms, as noted above, between September 1917 and April 1918 while he convalesced in the Bohemian countryside. But in 1920 he revisited the texts, selecting just over a hundred of them, which he copied out, each on a separate small piece of paper—quartered sheets of stationery—numbered, and ordered sequentially. Though not the *only* time Kafka ever imposed an order on his works, his selection of these texts from the notebooks he kept in Zürau along with his decision to assign each a number represents a rare occurrence in his writing practice. The publication history of the several editions of *Der Proceß* and the debates surrounding them reflect the challenges that arise for editors from Kafka’s typical approach. With the publication of the Stroemfeld facsimile edition of Kafka’s manuscripts begun in 1995 (Reuss and Staengle), however, such challenges for editors may be seen as opportunities for readers. The separate publication of each notebook encourages them to order the sixteen sections of the novel in a way that they themselves deem appropriate (Durrani 209-14). In the case of the Zürau aphorisms, Kafka himself imposed his own order on his texts by numbering them sequentially. This act depends on the conscious employment of the PATH image schema and means that this schema is evoked for readers who encounter the aphorisms together as a collection. Several individual aphorisms disrupt the prototypical schema of a conventional, straightforward PATH, however, such as the ones that are assigned two numbers (8/9, 11/12, 64/65, and 70/71), those that are appended with the letter *a* or *b* (39a and 76b), and those that assign one number to two separate aphorisms divided by a line (26, 29, 39, 54, 76, 99, 106, and 109). (Different editions vary in their details of this phenomenon, but all contain examples.) These relatively minor disruptions of the PATH of the aphorisms taken as a whole instantiate a kind of unconventional image schema transformation. Not nearly as striking, to be sure, as the kinds of novel transformations evoked by the individual aphorisms in the collection that

employ the PATH image schema, these deviations from a straightforward sequence form another instance of Kafka's strategy of highlighting generic conceptual structure by resisting its conventional representation.

If the PATH image schema is understood as informing the Zürau aphorisms as a whole, given their explicit sequential order, then aphorism 1 corresponds to the starting point or SOURCE of the PATH, and aphorism 109, the last in the collection, corresponds to its endpoint or GOAL. Despite the minor disruptions represented by occasional deviations in the numbering of the aphorisms as discussed above, one can easily recognize on account of the sequential order of the texts the conventional PATH image schema transformation of *path-focus to endpoint-focus*. The final aphorism of the collection, however, which should represent the GOAL or endpoint of the conventional schema transformation, complicates any such easy understanding based on conventional patterns of thought. Though it does not contain the word *Weg* ("way"), aphorism 109 does evoke the PATH image schema, in the negative, in its opening sentence: "Es ist nicht notwendig, daß Du aus dem Haus gehst" ("It is not necessary that you leave home"). It then negates the very idea of motion, and the PATH image schema that underlies it, by emphasizing rest and stillness, evoking a schema of STASIS. The aphorism then ends with the notion of non-linear, stationary movement, depicted in an image of WRITHING, which arguably qualifies as an image schema though not identified as one in the literature. The progression of this particular aphorism from beginning to end thus evokes its own unconventional image schema transformation. But when this final text of the collection is understood as an endpoint, its conclusion, not in any conventional notion of rest but rather in a schematic image of writhing, effects a striking, unconventional global image schema transformation of the PATH of the aphorisms as a whole:

Es ist nicht notwendig, daß Du aus dem Haus gehst. Bleib bei deinem Tisch und horche. Horche nicht einmal, warte nur. Warte nicht einmal, sei völlig still und allein. Anbieten wird sich Dir die Welt zur Entlarvung, sie kann nicht anders, verzückt wird sie sich vor Dir winden.

You do not need to leave home. Stay at your desk and listen. Do not even listen, just wait. Do not even wait, be completely still and alone. The world will offer itself to you to be unmasked, it cannot do otherwise, it will writhe ecstatically before you.

5

Ein Bericht für eine Akademie

Zur Resignation gehört Charakter.

—Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Der Charakter ruht auf der Persönlichkeit, nicht auf den Talenten.

—Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Written in April 1917 and published later that same year in November, Kafka's celebrated story *Ein Bericht für eine Akademie* (*A Report to an Academy*) has invited an array of different interpretations throughout its reception history. The plot is fairly straightforward: it tells the story of the narrator-protagonist's transformation from an ape into a human. Such a simple summary hardly does justice to the experience of reading the story, of course. But it highlights that understanding the story at its most basic level involves the image schemas of PATH and CONTAINER, with the states of being an ape and being a human conceived metaphorically as containers, or bounded regions in space, and the change of state from ape to human conceived as movement from the one container or region to the other: "*trans*-formation *from* an ape *into* a human." My analysis will focus on the PATH image schema, as it is this schema that dominates the story's conceptual structure. Unlike the other texts I have examined in this study, however, in which novel, unconventional image schema transformations and incomplete image schemas thwart conventional inferential patterns and thereby throw the schemas and associated generic conceptual structure into relief, *Ein Bericht* for the most part employs the *conventional* transformation of the PATH image schema, *from path-focus to endpoint-focus*. Like the other texts discussed, *Ein Bericht* also highlights generic conceptual structure such as image schemas and primary metaphors, only it does so by repeatedly reiterating the conventional transformation of the PATH image schema throughout and by reframing the PATH schema through a variety of different metaphorical elaborations. As a result, a productive dynamic emerges in reading the story that encourages parabolic projection of the text's generic conceptual structure onto a wide variety of potential target domains, producing new conceptual blends. It is this dynamic, I argue, that can account for many of the interpretations put forward of the story since its appearance nearly a century ago.

The PATH of Rotpeter's Transformation

Salient instantiations of the PATH image schema occur in *Ein Bericht* on both the global and local levels. The most obvious one on the global level is the physical path traversed over the Earth's surface by the narrator, Rotpeter, on his journey from Africa, his original habitat, to Europe, where he lives in the narrative present. This journey represents a literal change of location in the text world that largely coincides with the discourse structure of the narrative as a whole. Mention of the starting point of Rotpeter's

journey, the Gold Coast—in image schematic terms, the SOURCE of the PATH—occurs in the fourth paragraph, after three paragraphs of introductory remarks that establish the narrative situation. Mention of the endpoint of his journey, Hamburg—the GOAL of the PATH—comes in the fifth paragraph from the end, with the last four paragraphs devoted to summing up the five years of Rotpeter’s experience between his arrival in Europe and the narrative present. The intervening eighteen paragraphs depict events that take place during Rotpeter’s voyage and so correspond roughly to points along the way. This correspondence between the story of Rotpeter’s journey and the text’s narrative architecture has important consequences for my argument that I will return to later. At this point, I wish primarily to underscore how the PATH image schema in its conventional transformation *from path-focus to endpoint-focus* underlies the basic storyline of the narrative as a whole.

The other global instantiation of the PATH image schema in *Ein Bericht* structures and makes understandable the main event of the story, what makes it a story worth telling in the first place, namely, Rotpeter’s transformation from an ape into a human. As noted above, the PATH image schema underlies and gives conceptual shape to this event. Strictly speaking, of course, nothing about that transformation in and of itself involves literal motion along a path. Indeed, during the period in which Rotpeter undergoes the initial critical stages of his transformation—learning to mimic human behavior and learning to speak—he is confined in a cage that severely restricts his movement, although the ship he is traveling on is of course in motion the whole time. Later, once he arrives in Hamburg, his transformation continues. He acquires a human education and is acculturated into human society, but he presumably remains in Hamburg for the duration of this process. The point is, as cognitive science shows, our understanding of abstract phenomena typically involves conceiving of them metaphorically in concrete spatial terms. The abstract event at issue here, becoming a different species, is naturally, almost inevitably, understood as a movement from one location to another. Although the spatial metaphor may be more evident in the description of Rotpeter’s change as one *from* an ape *into* a human, even in the reformulation of that event that I offer in the preceding sentence, “becoming a different species,” the spatial metaphor of a change of location informs the very notion of *becoming*, with its root *come*. Inseparable from this inevitability is our conventional, practically unavoidable conceptualization of states or conditions of being as locations. Lakoff and Johnson bring the point home in *Philosophy in the Flesh*:

Try to imagine conceptualizing a state without its being a bounded region in space. Can you conceptualize a state without an interior and an exterior? Without a boundary—either sharp or gradual? Without interior locations far from the boundary? We have tried to conceptualize a state without these features of bounded regions in space, but we simply cannot do it. In short, the conceptual metaphor States Are Locations (bounded regions in space) seems to be central to the concept of state. (180)

Consideration of the word *state* is illuminating in this respect. We use it of course in thinking about conditions of being, such as psychological or emotional states, which is the sense Lakoff and Johnson have in mind. But we use the same word to refer to abstract

political entities that are metonymically associated with certain locations of the Earth's geography, as in *the state of California*, or *member states of the United Nations*, or *the United States*. Unsurprisingly from a cognitive perspective, as our abstract knowledge is based in metaphorical projections from our embodied experience, the word *state* derives from the same root as the word *stand*, which denotes being in a given location. The conceptual connection is perhaps most evident in the English words *station* and *stationary*. Lest readers think this is something peculiar to English, similar conceptual relationships obtain in other Indo-European languages, at least the ones I know and the ones Kafka himself knew. In German, the word for a condition or state of being is *Zustand*, literally a "standing to" or "standing at." The word *Stand* is used in German to denote social or professional rank and also social class. And in the Slavic languages, the morpheme *stan* has the basic meaning "to stand" and can similarly refer to a range of physical, social, and psychological states. It appears in the names of nation states like Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Polish expression for martial law is *stan wojenny*, literally "state of war." And if one wants to express an inability to do something in Polish, one can say, *Nie jestem w stanie*, literally, "I'm not in a state," or more naturally in English, "I'm not in a position."

This brief excursion into Indo-European etymology is intended to underscore Lakoff and Johnson's point that it is inevitable that we think of physiological, social, and psychological states metaphorically in terms of physical locations. In reading *Ein Bericht* this means that we cannot but conceive of Rotpeter's condition of being an ape and his subsequent human condition as two distinct locations and his transformation from the one condition to the other as a change of location. The primary conceptual metaphors we employ in this understanding are, at the risk of redundancy, STATES ARE LOCATIONS and CHANGE OF STATE IS CHANGE OF LOCATION. The generic conceptual structure informing the second of these metaphors is of course the PATH image schema. As I will show, it is precisely this image schema and these attendant primary metaphors that recur repeatedly throughout the story in reformulations of the event in question. What is important to underscore, however, is that although Rotpeter's transformation, or at least its crucial initial stages, *coincides* with his journey from Africa to Europe in the narrative, his change of condition is in fact *not* understood metaphorically in terms of that journey. Both changes are represented as distinct and literal events in the story. It seems, therefore, that on the global level of his narrative, Kafka essentially decouples the primary conceptual mapping CHANGE OF STATE IS CHANGE OF LOCATION into its separate source and target domains in order to represent them as distinct but contemporaneous parallel narratives. This decoupling thus sets up a tension between the two events that serves to highlight their shared generic conceptual structure, that is, the PATH image schema.

The Beginning of Rotpeter's PATH

On a local level, instances of the PATH image schema proliferate throughout the narrative. To an extent, this circumstance results from the near impossibility of describing or referring to the main event of the story, a profound change of condition, as anything other than a change of location, as discussed above. It thereby simultaneously illustrates

the primacy and the ubiquity of conceptual metaphor, especially the metaphor CHANGE OF STATE IS CHANGE OF LOCATION, in human thought in general. But the particular way Kafka invokes this conceptual mapping at the very beginning of his story, reiterating it in a series of differently elaborated linguistic metaphors that all refer to the same conceptual PATH, is significant, for it serves to foreground the same generic structure involved in each case. The first local instance of the conceptual metaphor CHANGE OF STATE IS CHANGE OF LOCATION along with its underlying PATH image schema occurs right at the beginning, in the text's third sentence (not counting the opening salutation). A highly stylized, elaborate linguistic metaphor expresses Rotpeter's transformation in terms of a spectacular horse race:

Nahezu fünf Jahre trennen mich vom Affentum, eine Zeit, kurz vielleicht am Kalendar gemessen, unendlich lang aber durchzugallopieren, so wie ich es getan habe, streckenweise begleitet von vortrefflichen Menschen, Ratschlägen, Beifall und Orchestermusik, aber im Grunde allein, denn alle Begleitung hielt sich, um im Bilde zu bleiben, weit vor der Barriere.

Nearly five years separate me from my former life as an ape, a short time measured by the calendar perhaps, but endlessly long to gallop through, as I have done, accompanied at stretches by admirable humans, good advice, applause, and orchestra music, but basically alone, since all my companions, to stay with the metaphor, kept way behind the racetrack barrier.

The opening clause of this sentence, “Nahezu fünf Jahre trennen mich vom Affentum” (“Nearly five years separate me from my former life as an ape”), expresses a pervasive conceptual metaphor, TIME IS SPACE. We like to think that we have direct, unmediated, literal knowledge of time, but time is in fact an abstract concept that we necessarily use metaphor to understand, and the chief source domain for the target domain of time in cultures all around the world is space. The metaphor is so deeply entrenched in our conceptual systems, such an automatic, unconscious way that we understand time, that most people do not even notice it, do not recognize that it is in fact a metaphor. But to talk about an amount of time as *separating* one from an earlier condition is to employ the metaphor TIME IS SPACE (Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy* 139-61; Núñez and Sweetser). This becomes perhaps more salient subsequently in the use of the adjectives *short* and *long* in their temporal sense—“eine Zeit, kurz vielleicht” (“a short time perhaps”) and “unendlich lang” (“endlessly long”)—although, again, since this metaphor is so deeply entrenched, many are likely not to notice it in these cases either. However, Kafka's vividly spatial elaboration of the metaphor, “unendlich lang aber durchzugallopieren” (“but endlessly long to gallop through”), does help to highlight the spatial nature of the terms in which time is being discussed here.

The conceptual metaphor TIME IS SPACE is combined here, of course, with STATES ARE LOCATIONS and CHANGE OF STATE IS CHANGE OF LOCATION. The narrator's current condition is understood metaphorically as his current location and his prior condition of being an ape is understood as a distant location: a more literal translation of the first clause of this passage might read something like, “Nearly five years separate me from apedom (or apeness).” The time involved in that change of condition is understood, as we have seen, as the distance between the two separate locations. The change of condition

itself is then understood naturally as movement from the one location to the other. And all this generic conceptual structure Kafka elaborates as a horse race with excessive fanfare. It is important to note that this is the first description the narrator offers of his change of condition. At this early point in the narrative, he has not yet begun to tell the story of his journey from Africa to Europe, so the movement through space represented here is entirely metaphorical, even self-consciously so—“um im Bilde zu bleiben” (“to stay with the metaphor”)—and bears no connection with the literal change of location that he describes later. Nonetheless, the same generic conceptual structure, the PATH image schema, underlies both events. It is also worth noting that the particular elaboration of the primary metaphor CHANGE OF STATE IS CHANGE OF LOCATION as a horse race produces an astounding conceptual blend. “Talking animals,” Mark Turner writes, “are so common in stories as to seem natural. . . . Conceptual blending—in this case, the blending of talking people with mute animals to produce talking animals—is a basic process of thought” (11). The entire story of *Ein Bericht* depends on this process, and as Turner underscores, a talking ape in and of itself would not be so out of the ordinary in a fictional text as to be incomprehensible. But at this early point in the narrative, before the reader has fully comprehended that the narrator actually is an ape, or was an ape, the metaphor employed to describe the process of his development into a human casts him as a horse. Right from the beginning, then, a rather disorienting, almost chimera-like, fantastical blend emerges with multiple input spaces of the narrator-protagonist as a human-ape-horse. The potential Kafka’s story has to prompt additional novel blends is a feature I will return to address.

Four sentences later, still in the text’s opening paragraph, the narrator abandons his explicit horse racing metaphor in order to reiterate the change of condition he has undergone, but this time more generically in terms of spatial movement along a path. The passage, which I cite in its entirety, consists of one extended grammatical sentence with several semicolons separating individual clauses. Relevant expressions are italicized:

War mir zuerst die *Rückkehr*, wenn die Menschen gewollt hätten, freigestellt *durch* das ganze Tor, das der Himmel über der Erde bildet, würde es gleichzeitig mit meiner *vorwärts* gepeitschten Entwicklung immer niedriger und enger; wohler und eingeschlossener fühlte ich mich in der Menschenwelt; der Sturm, der mir *aus* meiner Vergangenheit *nachblies*, sänftigte sich; heute ist es nur ein Luftzug, der mir die Fersen kühlt; und das Loch in der Ferne, *durch* das er *kommt* und *durch* das ich einstmals *kam*, ist so klein geworden, daß ich, wenn überhaupt die Kräfte und der Wille hinreichen würden, um *bis dorthin zurückzulaufen*, das Fell vom Leib mir schinden müßte, um *durchzukommen*.

At first my *return* was possible, had humans wanted it, *through* the wide gate that the sky forms over the earth, but with my *forward* driven development it became smaller and narrower; I felt more comfortable and more included in the human world; the gale that blew *after* me *out of* my past began to relent; today it is merely a breeze that cools my heels; and the gap in the distance, *through* which it *comes* and *through* which I once *came* myself, has become so small that, even if my strength and will power sufficed to *get back to* it, I would have to scrape the hide from my body in order to *get through*.

Despite the relatively rich imagery of a gate formed by the sky over the earth or of a shrinking hole, what this passage throws into especially prominent relief is the forward movement along a path as the terms in which Rotpeter conceives of and describes his change of state. This description iterates the conceptual metaphors STATES ARE LOCATIONS and CHANGE OF STATE IS CHANGE OF LOCATION that inform the horse racing metaphor describing the same event. Rotpeter's former condition of being an ape is described metaphorically as a location behind him, with a boundary metaphorically expressed first as a gate and then as a hole, while his present state is understood metaphorically as the location he currently occupies, and his change of condition is represented as forward motion to his present location. But this second description of his development, involving a more prototypical, abstract, or generic path as opposed to a horse racing track, makes the generic structure of the PATH image schema that both descriptions share more salient. In addition, embedded within the metaphorical depiction of Rotpeter's transformation as his own forward movement to his present location, the image of a wind blowing toward him from the location from which he himself came is invoked to represent metaphorically the influences of his former condition on his current one. Clearly, the same PATH image schema informs this metaphor. Indeed, Rotpeter's metaphorical path and the path followed by the wind are explicitly described as one and the same.

Finally, after describing his own transformation in terms of motion along a path, Rotpeter compares his condition to that of his human audience:

Offen gesprochen, so gerne ich auch Bilder wähle für diese Dinge, offen gesprochen: Ihr Affentum, meine Herren, soferne Sie etwas Derartiges *hinter* sich haben, kann Ihnen nicht *ferner* sein als mir das meine.

To be frank, as much as I like using metaphors for these things, to be frank: your ape natures, gentlemen, insofar as something of that kind *lies behind* you, cannot be *further* from you than mine is from me.

In this remark, the narrator clearly alludes to human evolution. Darwin published *On the Origin of Species* in 1859, so by the time Kafka wrote *Ein Bericht* nearly sixty years later, the theory of evolution was widely known. Nevertheless, there was still widespread reluctance to accept the idea—as indeed there still is in some quarters today—so Rotpeter's allusion may rightly be understood as affront to his audience's self conception. But it may also be understood as an appeal to his audience's forward-thinking, scientific disposition. Whichever way one takes the allusion, for the purposes of my argument what is important to underscore is that the same PATH image schema used to describe his own development also informs the reference to human evolution. Of course there is nothing literally linear about biological evolution, but it is entirely natural that we think about such complex abstract change in terms of motion. The etymology of the word *evolution* means “to unroll” or “to roll out,” so a PATH image schema is implied in the prefix *e-*, meaning “out,” but the concept entails another common conceptual metaphor that we use to conceptualize change, namely, CHANGE IS TURNING. This is perhaps more evident in the etymologically related words *revolution* and *revolve* and in expressions like, *The frog turned into a handsome prince*. This metaphor also involves motion, just not linear motion resulting in a change of location. But since one of the most prevalent types of

motion in our experience is that resulting in a change of location, that type of motion is synthesized in our imagination schematically as linear motion along a path, which then provides the generic conceptual structure we commonly use for thinking about change. And although, as noted above, evolutionary change is not literally linear or progressive, we nevertheless naturally conceive of evolution using a PATH image schema, as in the iconic “ascent of man” image, for example, or when we talk about the “lineage” of a species. It is therefore unsurprising that Kafka’s narrator employs this same pervasive conceptual structure in his allusion to human evolution.

What is most intriguing about this remark, though, is the narrator’s self-conscious, explicit reference to his use of metaphor, the second such reference in the narrative’s opening passage. The first occurs in reference to the elaborate linguistic metaphor of a horse race that he uses to describe his transformation: “um im Bilde zu bleiben” (“to keep with the metaphor”). This second instance, apparently, refers to the less elaborate metaphor he uses of motion from a location behind across a boundary that was once an enormous opening but that has since narrowed to a small gap. I say “apparently,” because his remark “offen gesprochen” (“to speak frankly”), which he repeats for emphasis, is clearly intended to contrast such explicit use of linguistic metaphor with the assertion it prefaces. In other words, he essentially says, “Although I enjoy using metaphors as I have been doing to discuss my transformation, let me now speak plainly, literally.” He presumably wishes to underscore thereby the factuality or literal truth of the theory of evolution. But though he may have in mind the scientific truth of the theory, it is nearly impossible for us, as we have seen, to conceive of such abstract, complex processes without relying on metaphor. It is only natural that we do so. That is precisely the evolutionary advantage of the mental capacity of metaphor, to be able to reason about abstract domains using more familiar knowledge, such as the understanding we have through our bodies of our physical environment. And indeed, despite his announced intention to speak literally, he inevitably employs metaphor to make his claim about the abstract, complex idea of human evolution. He uses the same spatial metaphor, in fact, involving the same PATH image schema that he uses more consciously in describing his own transformation. Humans’ ape natures, he asserts, “lie behind” them and are no “further” from them than his own ape nature is from him. In light of these considerations, the ostensibly minor phrase “für diese Dinge” (“for these things”) appears quite ironic. He says, “so gerne ich auch Bilder wähle für diese Dinge” (“as much as I like using metaphors for these things”), by which he means the task of describing his own transformation. As we have seen, however, the use of metaphor in talking and thinking about such complex abstract phenomena, including any kind of change, is hardly a matter of preference. It is rather an ineradicable feature of human understanding. It is a wonderful capacity we have evolved that makes it possible for us to have the kind of human experience of the world that we do.

Right from the start, then, *Ein Bericht* evokes four salient instantiations of the PATH image schema in quick succession. The first two refer to the narrator’s transformation from an ape into a human; the third refers to the influences of his former condition on his current state; and the fourth refers to human evolution. The first two instances along with the fourth one structure the same primary conceptual metaphor, CHANGE OF STATE IS CHANGE OF LOCATION, which is key to understanding the central event of the narrative. Each of these successive employments of the same image schema

becomes increasingly less elaborate, from the rich imagery of a horse race to the more basic description of the narrator's motion along a path to the movement of wind to the abstract notion of human evolution. This pattern combined with the sheer accumulation of several instances of the same image schema functions to throw the shared generic structure of the different instantiations into stark conceptual relief. That Kafka starts his text off this way is significant, for it highlights from the very beginning the important role the PATH image schema plays in structuring the story as a whole.

The PATH through Rotpeter's Story

Throughout Kafka's narrative, the same PATH image schema so saliently profiled at its beginning is continually reiterated in different local contexts. In each of these cases that image schematic structure is used to reformulate in different specific terms the same event described at the story's beginning, namely, the narrator-protagonist's transformation from an ape into a human. Each specific elaboration of the PATH image schema and the primary metaphor CHANGE OF STATE IS CHANGE OF LOCATION serves to highlight different aspects of Rotpeter's situation, and each accordingly involves slightly different metaphorical entailments. And significantly, each of these instances also represents the *conventional* image schema transformation associated with the PATH image schema, *path-focus to endpoint-focus*, or else simply *trajectory*.

The first instance of this image schema comes after the narrator has described the circumstances of his capture, his gradual realization of his state of captivity, and his intention to do whatever necessary to change his situation: "Weiterkommen, weiterkommen!" The Muirs render this passage as "To get out somewhere, to get out!" (254) and thereby invoke a CONTAINER image schema that is not entailed in this particular expression in the German original. To be sure, given Rotpeter's circumstances, this translation is entirely logical, and other alternatives that I have considered all seem awkward in English. "To get out" certainly evokes a PATH schema in combination with CONTAINER, but a more literal translation of *weiterkommen* would be "to come farther," or "to get farther on," or "to advance," all of which express a PATH schema alone. This single, simple expression, however, implies a number of additional metaphorical entailments that give a rich sense of Rotpeter's experience and his state of mind. Among these entailments are PROGRESS IS FORWARD MOTION, PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS, PURPOSEFUL ACTION IS GOAL-ORIENTED MOTION, and perhaps most saliently here, DIFFICULTIES ARE OBSTACLES, the relevant obstacle in this case being Rotpeter's cage, and LACK OF FREEDOM IS IMPEDIMENT TO MOVEMENT. All of these more specific-level conceptual metaphors enable readers to draw important, more detailed inferences about Rotpeter's situation, and all depend on the same generic structure of the PATH image schema.

Subsequently Rotpeter explains that, having made the decision to change his situation, his extended observations of the humans on board the ship with him during his voyage are what gave him the idea of how to achieve his goal: "die angehäuften Beobachtungen drängten mich erst in die bestimmte Richtung" ("the accumulated observations first impelled me in the right direction"). The primary metaphor CAUSATION IS MOTION underlies the sense of the word *drängten* ("impelled") here. Causation is a

complex, abstract phenomenon, especially in social and psychological domains, but the prototypical kind of causation that we know from our embodied experience is when an agent moves an object. It is this simple type of causation that informs the meaning of the passage under consideration. And though caused motion does not necessarily involve a change of location—one may cause an object to rotate in place, for example, which is the physical experience that underlies the conceptual metaphor CHANGE IS TURNING examined above—it is such prototypical causation effecting a change of location that is evoked here. The change of location that is indicated, “in die bestimmte Richtung” (“in the right direction”), refers of course to the main event of the story, Rotpeter’s transformation, and represents yet another reiteration of the PATH image schema.

Building on his observations of human behavior, Rotpeter begins to imitate the humans around him. First he learns to spit, then to smoke a pipe. Eventually, after considerable inner resistance but much determination, he learns to drink alcohol. This new skill is apparently fundamental to the really critical step in his development, the acquisition of language. Crowning his first successful attempt to down a bottle of schnapps, he utters his first human word. It is this seminal event that marks his entry into humanity: “kurz und gut Hallo! ausrief, in Menschenlaut ausbrach, mit diesem Ruf in die Menschengemeinschaft sprang” (“briefly and well-spoken, I called out ‘Hello!’ in human speech, and with this cry I leapt into the human community”). In this formulation the state of being human is metaphorically conceived as a location, the boundary of which is language. The passage employs the PATH image schema and profiles the GOAL of the PATH, which underscores the conventional image schema transformation of *path-focus to endpoint-focus*. This brief phrase informed by the PATH image schema, “in die Menschengemeinschaft sprang” (“leapt into the human community”), thus represents in miniature an iteration of the narrative as a whole.

For months following this unprecedented achievement, Rotpeter makes little or no progress toward his goal, but he claims that his fate was by this point determined: “meine Richtung allerdings war mir ein für allemal gegeben” (“but my direction had been decided once and for all”). The metaphor he uses to express this sentiment and to conceive of his fate, “meine Richtung” (“my direction”), is yet another elaboration of the PATH image schema that concisely recapitulates the main event of the story, his transmutation. Later, after arriving in Europe and undertaking a standard course of educational training, he makes astounding, rapid advances. Entirely justifiably, he gloats over his success, exclaiming, “Diese Fortschritte!” (“What progress!”). The word *progress* expresses a conceptual metaphor revealed in its etymology, meaning “to go forward.” That metaphorical sense is especially salient in the German expression, at least for a non-native speaker, as it translates literally as “steps forward.” Underlying this metaphor, of course, is the PATH image schema. And although Rotpeter is referring here specifically to the progress he makes toward becoming human through his formal education, this experience represents a segment of his larger trajectory that stands metonymically for the whole.

Nearing the end of his narrative, Rotpeter momentarily strikes a modest tone in evaluating his story: “Überblicke ich meine Entwicklung und ihr bisheriges Ziel, so klage ich weder, noch bin ich zufrieden” (“When I look back over my development and its goal up to this point, I can neither complain, nor am I satisfied”). His evaluation recapitulates again the PATH of his whole trajectory and explicitly profiles the GOAL of the PATH,

expressing the conventional image schema transformation of *path-focus to endpoint-focus*. In conclusion, he remarks, “Im Ganzen habe ich jedenfalls erreicht, was ich erreichen wollte” (“On the whole, at any rate, I have attained what I wanted to attain”), reiterating a final time the PATH image schema in reference to his story as a whole. Though the etymology of the English word *attain*, meaning “to touch toward,” entails this schema, again the German expression *erreichen* makes the metaphorical basis of the word’s semantics more salient, at least for a non-native speaker: *er-* is a prefix indicating completion, and *reichen* means “to reach.” Though the source domain of the metaphor here is object manipulation as opposed to locomotion, the same PATH image schema is involved. When you reach out to touch or grasp an object, you execute a PATH image schema. And we often use the expression in referring to locomotion, as in *They reached the summit at dusk*, or *We reached our destination on time*. The use of this same expression to talk about abstract domains, as Rotpeter employs it, is of course conventional and widespread.

To sum up, after evoking the PATH image schema in four salient instantiations at the outset of his text, Kafka proceeds to reiterate this same conceptual structure throughout. Each of these local instances represents in condensed form the same PATH schema that gives conceptual shape and meaning to the central event of the story, Rotpeter’s transformation. Together with the PATH represented by the protagonist’s literal journey, these repeated employments of the same generic conceptual structure serve to highlight that structure. Accordingly, readers inevitably rely on the PATH image schema in making sense of the story, as I describe below in a survey of some canonical interpretations from the text’s reception history. And unlike the other texts examined in this study, which foreground that same generic structure through unconventional image schema transformations—with paths that become convoluted or labyrinthine, that double back on themselves, that become vertical or sideways, or that begin but do not end—*Ein Bericht* throws the PATH image schema into relief through an accumulation of instances that entail the conventional image schema transformation of *path-focus to endpoint-focus*. This circumstance has important implications for the potential range of readings the text makes possible, as I discuss below.

The PATH and CONTAINER of Rotpeter’s *Ausweg*

Since the concept *Ausweg* (“way out”) figures so prominently in Kafka’s text, and since the concept also entails a PATH image schema, it merits attention from a cognitive perspective for the purposes of my argument. Rotpeter invokes the expression ten times in his narrative, underscoring the disorientation and desperation he feels in his new, unfamiliar situation. He confesses, for instance: “Ich war zum erstenmal in meinem Leben ohne Ausweg” (“For the first time in my life I had no way out”), and “In alledem aber doch nur das eine Gefühl: kein Ausweg” (“But in all of this, only one feeling: no way out”). The concept *out* entails a combination of both the PATH and the CONTAINER image schemas. Conventionally the structure of the PATH image schema includes a SOURCE and a GOAL, and particular instantiations typically profile certain parts of the structure over others. As we have seen, in most of its uses of this schema, *Ein Bericht* profiles either the PATH or the GOAL in order to highlight the conventional image schema

transformation of *path-focus to endpoint-focus*. But the concept *Ausweg* that occurs so frequently throughout the text profiles the SOURCE of the PATH. The SOURCE of a PATH image schema may well be conceived as a point in space or an unbounded region, but Rotpeter's consistent use of the term *Ausweg* profiles the SOURCE of *his* PATH as a CONTAINER, a bounded region in space, effectively emphasizing his confinement and his sense of despair.

The concept *out* by itself entails both PATH and CONTAINER image schemas, and prototypically involves one unidirectional PATH starting in the *interior* of a CONTAINER, traversing the CONTAINER's *boundary*, and continuing to the *exterior* of the CONTAINER. It is this most common, prototypical variation of the *out* schema that we use in expressions referring to physical events, such as *She went out of the room*, *The water dripped out of the bucket*, or *Get out of bed this instant!* We use the same combination of image schemas metaphorically when referring to social or psychological phenomena, as in *My parents always help me out when I'm in trouble*, *The sensitive information leaked out*, *He backed out of the contract*, or *She's out of her mind*. But the concept *out* can also be used in construing events and phenomena that do not entail one unidirectional PATH but rather motion in multiple directions, as in *The oil slick spread out for miles*, *The search party spread out through the town*, or *They really went all out on the wedding* (Lakoff, *Women* 430-32). Rotpeter makes an explicit point of rejecting this latter schematic understanding of what he means by *Ausweg*:

Ich habe Angst, daß man nicht genau versteht, was ich unter *Ausweg* verstehe. Ich gebrauche das Wort in seinem gewöhnlichsten und vollsten Sinn. Ich sage absichtlich nicht Freiheit. Ich meine nicht dieses große Gefühl der Freiheit nach allen Seiten.

I am afraid you may not understand exactly what I mean by "way out." I use the word in its most ordinary and fullest sense. I intentionally do not say "freedom." I do not mean the expansive feeling of freedom on all sides.

Though this comment inevitably evokes the latter conceptualization of *out* involving movement in several directions in order to negate it, the intention to stress the more prototypical sense involving one unidirectional PATH is made effective through the contrast. This observation also points up that the expression *Ausweg* used so frequently throughout the narrative is more specific than the concept represented by the prepositions (or prefixes) *aus* or *out* alone. Although the word profiles in its prefix the SOURCE of the PATH schema as a CONTAINER, its root, *Weg* ("way"), highlights the prototypical PATH. Rotpeter emphasizes that it this conception he has in mind when he iterates his point a few lines later: "Nein, Freiheit wollte ich nicht. Nur einen *Ausweg*; rechts, links, wohin immer" ("No, it was not freedom I wanted. Only a way out; right, left, in some direction").

In his repeated use of the term *Ausweg*, Rotpeter initially seems to be referring literally to the cage he is confined in during his journey, but his subsequent usage of the expression is clearly metaphorical, referring in an abstract sense to his situation and his possibilities of changing it. He speaks with reservation of the "way out" that becoming human would represent, as he recognizes in the expressions of the people around him the constraints this option involves: "Wäre ich ein Anhänger jener erwähnten Freiheit, ich

hätte gewiß das Weltmeer dem Ausweg vorgezogen, der sich mir im trüben Blick dieser Menschen zeigte” (“Had I been a stalwart of the kind of freedom I mentioned before, I would certainly have preferred jumping overboard to the way out indicated in the dull look of these humans”). And a bit later, he makes clear that the “way out” he means refers to imitating human behavior: “Ich wiederhole: es verlockte mich nicht, die Menschen nachzuahmen; ich ahmte nach, weil ich einen Ausweg suchte” (“I repeat: it was not appealing to me to imitate humans; I imitated them because I wanted a way out”).

The concept *Ausweg*, as described above, profiles the SOURCE of the PATH image schema, as opposed to the GOAL that is profiled in the frequent conventional transformations of the PATH image schema throughout Kafka’s text. Nevertheless, with its root *Weg* (“way”), it serves through salient iteration to underscore the PATH image schema as a whole that is so central to any understanding of the story. The PATH evoked by *Ausweg* throughout the text is after all the same PATH evoked in the other instances of the schema examined above, all of which refer to Rotpeter’s transformation.

The PATH of Rotpeter’s Story

The many evocations of the PATH image schema occurring throughout Kafka’s text, including the several repetitions of *Ausweg*, that we have examined so far all refer to the main event of the story, the protagonist’s change of state. But a number of instances of the PATH schema occur in reference not to the event itself but to the telling of it, to the narrative discourse. On the one hand, this is entirely logical and natural. The PATH image schema underlies our conception of narrative as a sequence of events with a beginning, middle, and end, as discussed in Chapter 1. But in the case of *Ein Bericht*, where this image schema figures so prominently in understanding the events of the story, the fact that the same PATH image schema is used explicitly in reference to the story itself is significant. For it is this co-occurrence that can help account for the parabolic projections the story prompts onto a wide range of different target domains, as is evident in its reception history, which I discuss below.

Immediately following the four salient instantiations of the PATH image schema in the text’s opening passage, all of which refer to Rotpeter’s transformation either directly or indirectly (in mentioning the influences his former condition has on his current one, or in comparing his transformation to the evolution of humans), the next three occurrences of this image schema come in the very next paragraph and represent the kind of compression of the two types of uses—in reference to the main event of the story *and* to the story itself—that I am arguing encourages parabolic projection. The compression results in part by virtue of the fact that all three instances occur in the same grammatical sentence. But in one instance, at least, both uses of the PATH image schema seem fused into the same expression. After effectively orienting the reader to the narrative situation—an academy of sciences has invited him to give an address about his former life as an ape—and before embarking on his narrative proper, the narrator seeks to lower his audience’s expectations:

Es wird für die Akademie nichts wesentlich Neues beibringen und *weit hinter dem*

zurückbleiben, was man von mir verlangt hat und was ich beim besten Willen nicht sagen kann – immerhin es soll *die Richtlinie zeigen*, auf welcher ein gewesener Affe *in die Menschenwelt eingedrungen* ist und sich dort festgesetzt hat.

It will produce nothing significantly new for the Academy and will *fall far short* of what you have requested of me and what with all the will in the world I cannot put into words—but all the same, it should *indicate the line* a former ape has taken in *entering the human world* and establishing himself there.

The last instance of the PATH schema in this passage, “in die Menschenwelt eingedrungen” (“entered into the human world”) clearly refers again to the main event of the story, Rotpeter’s transformation. But the first instance, “weit hinter dem zurückbleiben,” refers to the narrative discourse. My translation, “fall far short of,” obscures somewhat the PATH image schema that is more salient in the German original, or at least it shifts the horizontal orientation, which is thrown into relief in the original through subsequent reiteration, to a vertical one, which mitigates the salience. I opted for this expression, though, simply because I feel that this rendering sounds more natural in English. But a more literal translation would read “remain far behind.” With this use of the PATH image schema Rotpeter stresses the impossibility of conveying in human language his former experience of being an ape, which is what the Academy has asked of him. Conceptually, he construes that request as a location and the events he has been invited to relate, or the story that he will tell, as a separate, distant location behind. The metaphorical entailments of this use of the PATH schema are SUFFICIENT IS HERE and INSUFFICIENT IS BEHIND by understanding the GOAL of the PATH as the deictic center HERE and earlier points on the PATH as behind.

By far the most interesting employment of the PATH image schema in this passage is the second one: “die Richtlinie zeigen” (“indicate the line” or “indicate the direction”). In this instance both uses of the schema, referring to the event of Rotpeter’s transformation and to the telling of that event, are blended in one expression. The word *Richtlinie* evokes the PATH image schema to refer to Rotpeter’s change of state: it is the line he has followed to enter the human world. But the word *zeigen* (“to point to”) evokes the PATH image schema to refer to the narration of that event: it is what he has to tell the Academy that will show the line he has followed. This blend highlights the role of the imagination in human understanding. As cognitive science insists, the imagination is not a chaotic realm of human psychology characterized by unconstrained, free-floating fantasy, as it is typically thought to be in common conceptions. Rather, it is a fundamental aspect of human cognition essential to reasoning that is structured and constrained by our bodily-based image schemas, hence the terms *image* schema and *imagination* (Johnson, *The Body*). When someone points to something, we understand their intention to direct our attention to that thing. We do this by following a PATH in imagination from the person’s index finger, the SOURCE of the PATH, to the thing to be attended to, the GOAL. Significantly for a reading of Kafka’s text, this is something that other primates appear unable to do. Chimpanzee subjects will offer assistance when a human experimenter is reaching out to grasp an object that is out of reach. But they cannot understand pointing as an instruction to share attention. Dogs, though, apparently can, possibly the result of their millennia-long development in cohabitation with humans.

Brian Boyd argues that the capacity for shared attention is crucial to human social life and helps explain the ubiquity of art in human cultures (99-112).

After Rotpeter has begun to relay the events of his capture and his initial experiences on board the ship transporting him to Europe, he reiterates his reservations about the possibility of accurately conveying his experience of being an ape in human language. And again he employs a PATH image schema to make his point:

Ich kann natürlich das damals affenmäßig Gefühlte heute nur mit Menschenworten nachzeichnen und verzeichne es in folgedessen, aber wenn ich auch die alte Affenwahrheit nicht mehr *erreichen* kann, wenigstens *in der Richtung meiner Schilderung liegt sie...*

Of course I can only outline in human words what I felt then as an ape, and I misrepresent it as a consequence, but even though I can no longer *reach* the truth of my old ape experience, at least it *lies in the direction of my depiction...*

The phrase “die alte Affenwahrheit nicht mehr erreichen” (“no longer reach the truth of my old ape experience”) refers in one sense to Rotpeter’s former condition, but it also clearly references his inability to express fully in human language what that experience was like. It therefore represents another instance of conceptual blending in which the PATH image schema is employed simultaneously to refer to both the event of Rotpeter’s transformation and his narration of it. The phrase “in der Richtung meiner Schilderung” (“in the direction of my depiction”) refers in contrast unambiguously to the narration.

Rotpeter concludes his speech to the Academy with the following provocative remark:

Im übrigen will ich keines Menschen Urteil, ich will nur Kenntnisse verbreiten, ich *berichte* nur, auch Ihnen, hohe Herren von der Akademie, habe ich nur *berichtet*.

In any case, I do not care about any human’s judgment, I only wish to promulgate knowledge. I am only giving a *report*. To you, too, honored gentlemen of the Academy, I have only given a *report*.

The expression *berichten* (“to report”) refers here of course to the act of narration and to the narrative as a whole, as reflected in the story’s title, *Ein Bericht für eine Akademie* (*A Report to an Academy*). To a native English-speaker, at least a monolingual, there is likely nothing inherently path-like in the meaning of the word *report*, and I suspect the same is true for native speakers of German, at least monolinguals, when it comes to the word *Bericht*. The PATH image schema underlying the semantics of both expressions, however, becomes evident when their etymologies are examined. In the case of the German word, the image schema is more salient in expressions such as those discussed above, *Richtlinie* (“guideline”) and *Richtung* (“direction”). In English the root of the word *report* means “to carry,” which is more evident perhaps in expressions like *transport* and *porter* (Sweetser, “English Metaphors,” “Metaphorical Models”). Though the PATH image schema is not as salient in the expression *Bericht* as it is in the words *Richtung* and *Richtlinie*, for a multilingual sensitive to word etymologies like myself, and like Kafka, the bodily-based image schemas underlying the abstract meanings of such

linguistic expressions is likely to be more conceptually salient than for the average monolingual. And that Kafka chooses to end his story and to title it with an expression which entails the same PATH image schema evoked repeatedly throughout underscores the central role that that generic conceptual structure inevitably plays in any understanding of the text.

Finally, there is one more salient occurrence of the PATH image schema that merits attention, for it represents a curious reversal of the PATH that is profiled repeatedly in various elaborations throughout *Ein Bericht*. Nearing the end of his speech, Rotpeter summarizes his achievement with the following striking image:

Es gibt eine ausgezeichnete deutsche Redensart: sich in die Büsche schlagen; das habe ich getan, ich habe mich in die Büsche geschlagen. Ich hatte keinen anderen Weg, immer vorausgesetzt, daß nicht die Freiheit zu wählen war.

There is an excellent German expression: to beat a path through the bush. That is what I have done: I have beaten a path through the bush. I had no other way, given that freedom was not an option.

This instantiation of the PATH image schema is so striking because, on the one hand, it reiterates the same PATH represented in all the other instances examined in that it also refers to Rotpeter's transformation, but on the other hand, it reverses the direction of that PATH by virtue of its radically different metonymic structure. As we have seen, Rotpeter's change of state is repeatedly characterized metaphorically throughout the text as a change of location. His former condition of being an ape is conceived as a location behind him, his current human condition as the new location he presently occupies, and his transformation as the movement from that former location to his present one. But there is also the literal path depicted in the story of Rotpeter's journey from his former habitat in Africa to his current location in Europe. The symmetry between these two instantiations of the PATH image schema establishes salient frame metonymy. His former ape condition is metonymically associated with his earlier location in Africa, and his current human condition is metonymically associated with his present location in Europe. And though the enormous strides he makes in his transformation occur once he has arrived in Europe, the critical stages of that process happen during his journey to Europe from Africa, so that that process and the journey are metonymically associated as well. But the phrase Rotpeter uses to characterize his transformation in this passage, "sich in die Büsche schlagen" ("to beat a path through the bush"), involves a different type of metonymy that produces a clash of direction in the PATH image schemas entailed. The Muirs translate this expression as "to fight one's way through the thick of things" (258), which adequately conveys the metaphorical sense of the German phrase but which effaces the important metonymy evoked by the original. The concept *Büsch*e ("bush") is associated through category metonymy with the concept *jungle*, both concepts representing specific kinds of the more generic category *wilderness*. Therefore, when Rotpeter uses the phrase "to beat a path through the bush" to describe his transformation, he evokes images of jungle exploration, such as the Hagenbeck expedition leading to his capture, that are oddly inconsistent in the direction of their PATH, from Europe to Africa, with that of his. The ironic comparison of his own achievement with the "heroic" efforts of European explorers is obvious, but the resulting clash of direction in the PATH image schemas

representing the same event, Rotpeter's transformation, contributes significantly to the overall salience of that structure in the text. It consequently also plays an important role in encouraging the parabolic projection of that generic structure onto a wide array of other specific stories that entail the same PATH image schema, as the story's reception history demonstrates.

Finally, the explicit use of linguistic metaphor here is significant. Rotpeter draws attention to the fact that he is invoking a German idiomatic expression. The self-conscious employment of metaphor has precedent in the text, as when the narrator acknowledges at the beginning of his speech that the elaborate image of him as a race horse and the more schematic image of him moving along a path are metaphorical: "um im Bilde zu bleiben" ("to stick with the metaphor") and "so gerne ich auch Bilder wähle für diese Dinge" ("as much as I like using metaphors for these things"). Like these earlier metaphors referring to his transformation, the image of his beating a path through the bush is meant to characterize the astounding change he has undergone, and it therefore employs the same PATH image schema in reiterating the main event of the story. But the explicit reference here to metaphorical language, "eine ausgezeichnete deutsche Redensart" ("an excellent German idiom"), like the previous ones, highlights the necessary role metaphor plays in the telling of that event. The passage thus represents another case of conceptual blending involving the text's two main instantiations of the PATH schema, the one referring to Rotpeter's transformation, the other to the narrative discourse. Together such blends do extra work in throwing into especially prominent relief the generic conceptual structure of the PATH image schema shared by the two different elaborations. They also serve to indicate the ubiquity of this structure in the human mind, a structure we use practically without cessation throughout our waking experience: in order to function successfully in our physical environment, in moving ourselves through space, for instance, in reaching out and grasping objects, and in perceiving other moving objects, animate and inanimate, and responding to them appropriately, as well as in order to function successfully in our social and psychological context, in executing and understanding the conceptual mappings involved in the basic, everyday mental processes of metaphor, parable, and narrative. But most important for our immediate purposes, by making especially salient the PATH structure that occurs throughout Kafka's text on different levels, these blends help to prompt the parabolic projection of that structure onto other stories in individual acts of interpretation.

The PATH in and of *Ein Bericht*'s Reception History

It is commonly claimed that Kafka's stories encourage allegorical readings but simultaneously thwart any successful, satisfying attempts to do so. In my judgment this assessment is correct for most of Kafka's work, and I have sought to account for this circumstance by employing the tools of cognitive science to demonstrate that Kafka consistently evokes generic conceptual structure that is either incomplete or that entails unconventional image schema transformations. In the case of *Ein Bericht*, however, with its conventional, complete transformation of the PATH image schema *from path-focus to endpoint-focus* so saliently iterated throughout, such allegorical readings are not only encouraged, they are practically unavoidable. And the completed, conventional image

schema transformation, moreover, assures that most such readings will be more or less successful. The varied and rich reception history of the text stands as evidence of this phenomenon. There is nothing overt in Kafka's text—except perhaps, to my mind, the narrator's remark that his human audience's ape nature cannot be further removed from them than his is from him—to indicate that the story is about anything else than what it depicts. Yet that is how we read literature, and the conventional PATH image schema transformation highlighted in this literary text makes such parabolic projection irresistible.

Most famous among Kafka's allegorists is, of course, Max Brod. In a piece published in the Zionist journal *Selbstwehr* in January 1918, Brod reports on an event hosted by the Jewish Women's Club at which *Ein Bericht* was read by his wife, Elsa. In his understanding, Kafka's story is an allegory—he calls it a “satire”—of Jewish assimilation. He does not provide the particular metaphorical sub-mappings entailed in his projection—unsurprisingly, as such work operates largely unconsciously—but the elements are easy enough to specify. Rotpeter's former ape condition maps onto the situation of Western European Jews prior to assimilation, with the metonymical associations of his habitat in Africa mapping onto the Jewish homeland in Palestine before the Diaspora and, perhaps more saliently, his confinement in a cage during his journey to Europe mapping onto the confinement of Jews in ghettos. His human condition maps onto the situation of assimilated Jews, with the specific detail of his not being fully human mapping onto assimilated Jews' precarious social status. And his change of condition maps onto the process of assimilation. Each of these specific stories involves the same image schematic structure with the individual elements of SOURCE, PATH, and GOAL mapping elegantly from the target domain, Kafka's text, onto the source domain, Brod's interpretation. Given the historical and social context, the venue of publication, and the author's personal priorities, this specific reading is entirely understandable. Indeed, Brod makes the agenda underlying his interpretation explicit at the outset of his article. He claims that Zionism will only become a reality when Jews incorporate everything human, every aspect of life, into the sphere of their specific Jewish perception and sensibility (“der Zionismus erst eine Lebensform werden kann, wenn wir alles Menschliche, alles Lebensvolle in den Kreis unseres jüdischen Empfindens einbeziehen”). What is significant about this comment is that it explicitly acknowledges the generic structure, the human, that the conceptual mapping of his specific interpretation must cross.

Brod's piece in *Selbstwehr* represents the first document in the reception history of Kafka's story, and it has proven seminal for subsequent readings of the text, as Hans-Gerd Koch observes in his review of the secondary literature, notably employing the PATH image schema himself: “Die von Brod vorgegebene *Richtung* wurde 1934 von Hans [sic] Politzer *weiterverfolgt*” (“The *direction* given by Brod was *followed* in 1934 by Heinz Politzer”; 179). Politzer reads Kafka's story as an allegory of the moral decline of humankind in modern society, in the tradition of Rousseau. In this reading, Rotpeter's ape condition, in his “natural context with his tribe,” maps onto pre-civilized humanity in a state of nature; his human condition maps onto humanity in modern, civilized society; and his transformation maps onto humankind's moral decline in the process of civilization (78). The PATH of Rotpeter's change of state is significantly elaborated in this interpretation as a decline, entailing the conceptual metaphor BAD IS DOWN. Though

Politzer does not make the connection explicit, Koch recognizes a blend in this interpretation of Brod's story of Jewish assimilation and Rousseau's story of humanity's moral decline, signaled in the phrases "the entire spiritual—including the religious—decline of civilized mankind" and "succumbed to conformance (or assimilation)" (78). Koch's observation that Politzer does not explicitly refer to Jews highlights the work of parabolic projection and conceptual blending not only in the isolated act of interpreting a given literary text but in a text's reception history as well.

Herbert Tauber's 1941 interpretation blends elements of Rousseau's story of humankind's development with elements of the story of an individual human life, treating *Ein Bericht* as an allegory for the psychological and social development of the average individual. This is a decidedly negative development in Tauber's judgment: "So ist er eigentlich ein Bild des in der Oberflächlichkeit aufgehenden Alltagsmenschen, der sein Wesen nicht in Freiheit erfüllen und verwirklichen kann, sondern dessen oberstes Gesetz die Anpassung ist" ("Thus he is actually a symbol for the average person who loses himself in superficiality, who cannot freely fulfill and realize his true essence but whose highest commandment is fitting in"; 73). In this reading, Rotpeter's ape condition maps onto the essence of a supposedly free and autonomous human individual; his human condition maps onto the situation of an average human being who conforms to social norms; and his transformation maps onto the process of socialization, which Tauber sees as a superficial kind of development in the case of the average individual. This interpretation involves an idealization of childhood or infancy parallel to Rousseau's idealization of mankind in a state of nature. The Enlightenment myth of the individual as an autonomous, sovereign ego and Nietzsche's notion of the *Übermensch* contribute to Tauber's blend, as well.

In his 1952 essay, William C. Rubinstein, though he does not reference Brod's interpretation in *Selbstwehr*, arrives at the same conclusion that Kafka's story is an allegory of Jewish assimilation. The main difference is that he sees it as the story of an individual Jew who converts to Christianity as opposed to Western European Jewry in general. In his reading, Rotpeter's ape condition similarly maps onto being a Jew, his human state maps onto being an assimilated Jew, and his transformation maps onto the process of conversion to Christianity. But Rubinstein provides explicit mappings of many of the specific details of the story that Brod's commentary leaves unstated. Rotpeter's drinking of schnapps maps onto the sacrament of communion; his reliance on the information of others to be able to recount the events of his personal history maps onto the reliance of European Jews on the Old Testament for knowledge of their history; his time in a cage maps onto Jewish life in the ghetto; a theoretical attempt to escape to freedom maps onto Zionism; and his five teachers in contiguous rooms map onto the four apostles and Paul, though Rubinstein admits that "this is only a desperate guess" (374-75). The metaphor underlying the concept *conversion*, which is central in Rubinstein's reading, is CHANGE IS TURNING, so it does not inherently imply a PATH image schema as a concept like *transformation* does. But the different types of motion that serve as source domains for the concept of *change*, that involving a change of location and that involving a change of direction or orientation, are readily interchangeable. The salience of the PATH image schema throughout Kafka's text and its generic and hence widely applicable nature make mapping it onto a schema of ROTATION relatively effortless. That Rubinstein uses the expression *conversion* more or less synonymously with *assimilation* (375), which

does imply a PATH image schema with its prefix from the Latin *ad-*, meaning “to,” illustrates this point.

Robert Kauf engages Rubinstein in direct dialogue with his essay on Kafka’s story, which appeared two years later. On the whole he agrees with Rubinstein’s reading, so his interpretation entails the same basic metaphorical mappings. He does emphasize, though, that Rotpeter should be seen not just as any Jew who converts to Christianity and assimilates to Western European culture, but as the Jew who does so motivated by materialistic opportunism rather than true conviction. Kauf offers several more specific sub-mappings of narrative details that this basic global mapping entails in addition to those Rubinstein offers. He maps, for instance, Rotpeter’s gunshot wound in the hip region onto the biblical patriarch Jacob’s wound from wrestling with the angel (362-63), and Rotpeter’s urination (or defecation) on himself in his impatience at wanting to emulate his human instructor’s drinking ritual onto the state of uncleanness signified in the Jewish tradition with breaking ritual observance (364). Interestingly, in order to make these mappings work, as Kauf himself explicitly acknowledges, he must actually reject the specificity of one of Rubinstein’s mappings, that of Rotpeter’s drinking schnapps onto the Christian sacrament of communion. He argues instead for a mapping of the schnapps drinking onto the adoption of non-Jewish customs and values more generally, notably evoking a PATH image schema to make his case: “we consider the schnapps drinking as indicative of a new attitude, a new *course*” (361; emphasis in the original). To Kauf’s mind, this more generic mapping overcomes some difficulties caused by the specificity of Rubinstein’s, details of the narrative that do not fit within the logic of communion as the metaphorical target domain, such as the fact that the schnapps bottle is inadvertently left in front of Rotpeter’s cage, and that he seizes it while no one is looking. This recognition of the tension sometimes produced by interpretations that foreground specific-level conceptual structure raises an important point about literary interpretation in general, and even more generally about the way all conceptual mapping works. I address this issue immediately below, as the next interpreter of Kafka’s story, who also engages Rubinstein in direct dialogue, raises it explicitly himself.

About a decade after Rubinstein’s and Kauf’s articles, in 1963, George Schulz-Behrend published a response that rejects the specific focus on ethnic and religious questions and argues instead for a more generic reading of Kafka’s text, identifying its theme as human freedom. The mappings entailed in this interpretation are basically the same as in Politzer’s and Tauber’s readings and similarly depend on the PATH image schema, so I will not rehearse them. Though on the whole I am sympathetic to his more generic approach, Schulz-Behrend makes a number of misguided claims about the nature of literature that relate to my argument and that therefore deserve attention. He points out, like Kauf, the difficulties raised by mapping Rotpeter’s schnapps drinking onto the sacrament of communion, which are legitimate critiques. But this objection, along with similar ones to other particular details of Rubinstein’s interpretation, leads him to a false generalization about any specific-level reading of a literary text like that offered by Rubinstein and Kauf. He claims mistakenly that every element must map: “we are constrained to make every episode, every event mean something *with reference to assimilation*” (3; emphasis in the original). This comment reveals a fundamental misunderstanding of the conceptual processes involved in the act of literary interpretation and of conceptual mapping in general. All conceptual mapping, whether of the structure

of one narrative onto another in parabolic projection, which is precisely what literary interpretation is, or of the structure of a source domain onto a target domain in everyday conceptual metaphoric thought, is *always* partial. That is how it functions and why it is useful in reasoning, setting up parallel cross-domain inferences. An absolutely complete mapping would not even be a mapping in any meaningful sense; it would be a tautology. To take a simple example, when you refer to someone as a pig, you will only be using part of what you know about pigs in the conceptual mapping that such a linguistic metaphor prompts. A pig's rotund body shape—a schema of a pig—may map onto the person's body shape, but not its four legs and tail. A pig's eating habits may map onto the person's perceived gluttony, or a pig's proclivity to spend time in the mud may map onto the person's hygiene or the person's living quarters. But you will almost certainly not map the large size of a pig's litter of offspring, a pig's sociability and general intelligence, or its keen sense of smell (which makes it so well suited to finding truffles). The same general principle of conceptual mapping holds in literary interpretation as well. Conceptually mapping every single detail of a story would essentially mean retelling the same story, which would hardly qualify as an interpretation.

Another claim Schulz-Behrend makes needs to be addressed. He judges the existence of two contradictory interpretations of a literary text as unacceptable, and maintains that if one is correct, the other must be abandoned. In support of this assertion he cites an article by E. D. Hirsch Jr. titled "Objective Interpretation," which he claims "has shown" that the possibility of multiple meanings of a single text creates "confusion" (1). At the same time, however, two pages later, he inadvertently acknowledges the subjective nature of literary readings in arguing against a Zionist interpretation. He refers to a remark by Martin Buber, who edited the Zionist publication *Der Jude*, in which *Ein Bericht* first appeared. Buber is quoted as saying that in selecting literary texts for publication in his journal, Jewish content or theme was not the criterion he used, but rather whether they seemed important for his readers to know. Given that the readership of a Zionist journal would most likely be Jews, this answer to the question seems like a polite hedge. But it is Schulz-Behrend's comment on Buber's response that acknowledges the inherently subjective aspect of literary readings, even though he has claimed two pages earlier that readings must be objective: "If Buber did not see the Jewish implications, can the less practiced non-Jewish reader be expected to see them?" (3). All reading, as Lakoff and Turner emphasize, is reading *in* (106-10; my emphasis). Meaning resides not in marks on a page, but in human minds.

Finally, another claim Schulz-Behrend makes regarding not literature in general but rather Kafka's work relates to my argument and so merits attention. He asserts that Kafka is concerned not with Jews or Czechs or Austrians, nor with "juvenile delinquents, bank clerks, and surveyors." "Kafka," according to Schulz-Behrend, "writes about Man. If it were different, his stature would not be what it is today" (3). Given the premise of cognitive science discussed above that meaning resides in human minds and not in words on a page, the issue is not what Kafka writes about in any objective sense. Indeed, he does "objectively" write about businessmen, traveling salesmen, and surveyors. The issue is how his stories with even such specific-level conceptual content are understood by readers, such as Schulz-Behrend, as having more general significance. This may likely be a feature of literary reading in general (Eagleton), but as I argue throughout this study, it is Kafka's demonstrable tendency to highlight generic conceptual structures that

encourages readers to fill in the details according to their own personal concerns and proclivities. Some, like Rubinstein and Kauf, prefer to specify Kafka's generic structure in their readings of his texts, while others, like Schulz-Behrend and Politzer, are more comfortable with interpreting his texts in basic-level or generic-level terms. But I agree in principle with Schulz-Behrend's comment regarding Kafka's literary success. That he foregrounds generic or schematic conceptual structure allows readers to specify that structure according to their own preferences, whether they tend toward the specific or generic, and that is what accounts for his astounding, enduring popularity.

Walter Sokel's 1964 study of Kafka's works, *Tragik und Ironie*, enjoys canonical status in Kafka scholarship. In his chapter on *Ein Bericht*, one of the first extensive treatments of the story, Sokel argues that Rotpeter represents Kafka's one and only positive protagonist. This positive evaluation is evident in the chapter's opening passage, where Sokel employs the PATH image schema to describe Rotpeter's transformation and ascribes to it a vertical dimension, in contrast to the salient horizontal quality of the image schema as evoked in the text itself: "Diese Verwandlung verläuft...in entgegengesetzter Richtung wie die Gregor Samsas, nicht vom Menschlichen hinab ins Tierische, sondern vom Tierischen hinauf ins Menschliche" ("This metamorphosis runs in the opposite direction of Gregor Samsa's, not from the human down into the animal, but from the animal up into the human"; 369, my emphasis). The positive appraisal is understood, of course, via the conceptual metaphor GOOD IS UP and its corollary, BAD IS DOWN, recognition of which recalls Heinz Politzer's use of the same metaphor to make the opposite value judgment. But at any rate, the same basic schematic structure is involved here, with Rotpeter's ape condition conceived as a location, his human condition conceived as another location, and his transformation conceived as movement from the one to the other.

The gist of Sokel's reading is grounded in Freudian psychology—though it blends this structure with structure from Nietzschean philosophy, specifically the concepts of the Dionysian and the Apollonian, as well as with structure from classical rhetoric, especially the concepts *tragedy* and *irony*. Thus image schemas more conventionally associated with that domain tend to dominate in the essay. The image schema of SPLITTING, for example, is evoked in the central and often repeated Freudian idea of a *divided ego*, and other central psychological concepts are frequently discussed in terms of metaphors that have as their source domain object manipulation. In the opening passage of his chapter, for instance, Sokel writes:

Die Metamorphose des Affens *in den* Menschen ist jedoch ein Prozeß nicht der *Spaltung* des Ichs, sondern der totalen *Ausscheidung* eines alten Ichs und der *Erwerbung* eines neuen. Der Affe hat, indem er sein altes Ich endgültig *verloren* hat, ein neues Selbst *gewonnen*. (369-70)

The metamorphosis of the ape *into* the human is, however, not a process of the *division* of the ego, but rather of the complete *expulsion* of an old ego and the *acquisition* of a new one. The ape, in finally *losing* his old ego, *gains* a new self. (my emphasis)

Many metaphors based on object manipulation involve the PATH image schema, to be sure. When you reach out to pick up a cup, you execute a PATH image schema, when you

bring it to your mouth to drink, you execute a PATH image schema, and when you place it back on the table, you execute a PATH image schema. This is true of the metaphors of object manipulation employed in this passage as well, but the PATH schema is not as salient, in my judgment, as when the source domain is locomotion.

Notably, two more passages stand out in Sokel's essay in which he strikingly evokes the PATH image schema in order to summarize the plot of Kafka's story as a whole. The first of these comes about midway through his arguments:

Der "Bericht" is die Demonstration eines Sublimierungsprozesses. Die äffische Natur ist wörtlich *aus dem Affen herausgefahren* und sogar zeitweilig *in seinen Lehrer übergegangen*. (386-87)

The "Report" is the demonstration of a process of sublimation. The apish nature is literally *driven out of the ape* and even temporarily *passes over into his teacher*. (my emphasis)

And the second passage comes at the conclusion:

Er ist der Bericht einer Erziehung, die *von der Tragik und dem reinen Ich fort zum Realismus führt*. *An die Stelle des Lust- und Todeswillens tritt das Prinzip des Überlebens und der Beschränkung*. (398)

It is the report of an education that *leads from* tragedy and the pure ego *onwards to* realism. The principle of survival and restraint *takes the place of* (literally, "*steps into the location of*") the will to pleasure and death. (my emphasis)

With this conceptual architecture, Sokel is able to account for a vast array of textual details, which all map elegantly in his reading.

There is one claim Sokel makes in his essay, however, that relates directly to the argument I have advanced throughout this study and that I therefore feel compelled to address. Arguing against allegorical readings in the vein of Brod, Rubinstein, and Kauf, or even Politzer and Tauber, Sokel writes:

Der "Bericht," wörtlich genommen, und nur wörtlich kann Kafka verstanden und gewürdigt werden, ist also weder Satire auf die Menschheit noch Allegorie eines getauften Juden, sondern Bericht einer Sublimierung und Erziehung, wobei ein Leidender, um zu überleben, Künstler wird. (389)

The "Report," taken literally, and Kafka can only be understood and appreciated literally, is thus neither a satire of humanity nor an allegory of a baptized Jew, but rather the report of a sublimation and education whereby a suffering individual becomes an artist in order to survive.

The claim that Kafka literalizes metaphor was first proposed by Günther Anders in the 1930s (40-44). Subsequently others have insisted, as Sokel does here, that Kafka must be read literally (Robbe-Grillet 164-65; Adorno; Miles). In light of what contemporary cognitive science has demonstrated regarding the pervasive role of metaphor in all language and thought, the very notion seems preposterous. Let us simply examine Sokel's statement. First of all, the expression *to take something literally* is metaphorical.

Certainly, one can literally take a book, say, a collection of Kafka stories, from a shelf, but that is clearly not what is meant here. One cannot, however, literally “take” a story or any instance of language, for they are not objects that one can literally grasp with the hand. The conceptual metaphor underlying this expression is the widespread UNDERSTANDING IS OBJECT MANIPULATION discussed above, for understanding is what is at issue. This exact same source domain informs the conceptual metaphors underlying the etymologies of the expressions *sublimation* (“to lift up”) and *education* (“to draw out” or “to bring up”), of which it is claimed *Ein Bericht* is a literal representation. These observations serve as reminders that all our abstract language and thought is ineradicably metaphorical. Additional examples could thus be adduced ad infinitum: *report* (“to carry back”) and *representation* (“to give back”), to give just two more examples, involve the same metaphor (Sweetser, “English Metaphors,” “Metaphorical Models”). But even when we consider the proposition of Sokel’s claim as a whole, it seems delusional. He is correct in characterizing readings in the vein of Rubinstein and Politzer as allegorical, but to think that his own reading is literal, while it explicitly maps Rotpeter’s story onto Freudian and Nietzschean models of human psychological and social development, reveals a fundamental misunderstanding of the pervasively metaphorical nature of language and thought and an ignorance of the metaphor-like conceptual mappings of parable and blending involved in all literary interpretation.

Around the same time that Sokel’s monumental study of Kafka’s oeuvre appeared, Klaus-Peter Philippi published his 1966 monograph devoted to Kafka’s last novel, *Das Schloß*, which includes an extended treatment of *Ein Bericht*. Philippi reads Rotpeter’s story in Nietzschean terms, as dealing with the problem of human consciousness and conscience. Accordingly, he echoes much of Sokel’s argument, though in its general negative evaluation of the problem, his take on the story is perhaps more reminiscent of that of Politzer and Tauber. Unsurprisingly, he also evokes the PATH image schema frequently throughout his reading. Rotpeter’s ape condition maps onto a hypothetical state of individual human freedom outside of society, or prior to a process of socialization; his human condition maps onto the situation of an individual acculturated to, or constrained by, the norms of a social group; and his transformation maps onto the loss of the individual’s purported earlier freedom. In one particularly striking formulation, Philippi evokes the PATH image schema both to summarize this complex, abstract process and to refer to readers’ understanding of it: “Wir folgen also der Perspektive des Affen, der im Vorgang der Einpassung seine Welt erfährt” (“We thus follow the perspective of the ape, who experiences his world in the process of integration (or, more literally, “fitting in”); 127). He also makes some remarks concerning metaphor in Kafka that recall Sokel’s, claiming that Kafka “eliminates the distance between the animal and the human domains”—in cognitive terms, the metaphorical source and target domains—and concluding incomprehensibly that “Der Affe ist so keine Metapher des Menschen, sondern selbst das, was menschlich ist” (“The ape is thus not a metaphor for a human, but rather itself that which is human”; 120, note 17). This observation is basically subject to the same critique as Sokel’s is, but moreover, it seems contradicted by Philippi’s entire argument, since he reads the story, as noted above, in Nietzschean terms as dealing with the problem of human consciousness. If that is not an allegorical reading, then I do not know what is.

Two other prominent Kafka scholars offered readings of *Ein Bericht*, the first in

the late fifties and the second in the mid-seventies, that reach quite similar conclusions and that stand out in the story's reception history in that they represent rare instances in which the *completed* PATH image schema so saliently foregrounded throughout the narrative, with its conventional transformation *from path-focus to endpoint-focus*, is *not* projected. In his canonical study titled simply *Franz Kafka*, first published in 1958 and in its seventh edition by 1970, Wilhelm Emrich emphasizes that Rotpeter's transformation is only partial. Despite Rotpeter's own boasts about the success of his achievement and the contrast he stresses between the path he has chosen, becoming a variety show artist, and the other option open to him, the zoo, which he says would only have been another cage, Emrich focuses on the constraints entailed in Rotpeter's *Ausweg*, claiming he lives "in einer Zwitterwelt, die weder volle Freiheit noch volle Gefangenschaft darstellt" ("in a hybrid existence that represents neither complete freedom nor complete captivity"; 128). The mappings in Emrich's reading are essentially the same as those in Philippi's: Rotpeter's ape condition maps onto a state of freedom, his human condition maps onto a state of constraint within human social norms, and his transformation maps onto the process of socialization. Only Emrich resists the indications that Rotpeter's PATH represents an instantiation of the conventional image schema transformation *from path-focus to endpoint-focus*. He is able to do so, interestingly, by mapping the cage Rotpeter is confined in during his journey onto the constraints he is subject to in his new situation, so that the supposed GOAL of his PATH represents merely the PATH's extension.

Similarly, in his 1975 article on *Ein Bericht*, Gerhard Neumann stresses the incompleteness of Rotpeter's transformation, his situation in a space *in between* the animal and the human: "Der *Rückkehr* in die Naturordnung scheint ihm ebenso verwehrt wie die befreiende *Eingliederung* in die Menschenordnung" ("The *return back* into a natural order seems equally precluded to him as the liberating *integration* into the human order"; 167). Neumann reads the story as an allegory of and commentary on the human social and psychological process of *Wirklichkeitsbewältigung*, "learning to cope with reality." And while acknowledging that the process is completed in a sense, in that Rotpeter learns successfully to imitate his surrounding reality, human society, and to adapt and fit into a human world, Neumann regards this transformation as an ambivalent one, calling it a cunning ruse and a fraud. Twice he describes Kafka's text by evoking a striking instance of an unconventional, that is, incomplete, PATH image schema transformation. *Ein Bericht*, he writes, is "das deprimierende Zeugnis, zugleich aber die scharfe Diagnose einer *steckengebliebene* Weltbewältigung, einer gewaltsam *verzögerten* Mimesis" ("the depressing report but at the same time the keen diagnosis of a *stalled* process of coping with the world, of a forcibly *delayed* mimesis"; 175, my emphasis). Neumann underscores here, as elsewhere, that it is violent force or power (*Gewalt*) that is responsible for this stalled development. And at another place, making the allegorical character of his reading explicit and saliently highlighting the PATH image schema, he paraphrases the text as a whole by saying it "shows reality in its concrete complexity, as a human being who *gets stalled on the way to* himself" (178). The generic structure of the metaphorical mappings involved in Neumann's understanding is the same as that in other readings we have examined, with the different states in question conceived as separate locations, and the change of state conceived as motion from one toward the other. The chief difference is in its image schema transformation with *path-focus* that never leads to *endpoint-focus*.

Most of the notable work done on *Ein Bericht* during the 1980s was devoted to identifying sources that scholars sought to demonstrate may have inspired or influenced the story. Hartmut Binder initiated this trend as early as 1966 in his book *Motiv und Gestaltung bei Franz Kafka* and continued this line of research in later works such as his 1975 *Kafka-Kommentar zu sämtlichen Erzählungen* and his 1983 *Kafka: Der Schaffensprozeß*. Binder mentions possible models for Kafka's story and documents sources such as Carl Hagenbeck's autobiography as well as numerous newspaper reports of apes performing in variety shows that Kafka either demonstrably read or would likely have read. In this same vein, Walter Bauer-Wabnegg in 1986 cited as possible sources for Kafka's story reports of Edison's demonstration of his phonograph at the Parisian Academy of Sciences, which was described as giving a speech to the gentlemen of the Academy, as well as an article about an ape performing in a variety show that appeared in the *Prager Tagblatt* the week before *Ein Bericht* was composed. In 1989 Paul Heller suggested that *Brehms Tierleben* as well as contemporary reports of scientific experiments attempting to teach apes to speak may have influenced Kafka's story (Koch 189-91). These contributions to *Ein Bericht's* reception history do not represent interpretations in any conventional sense. They are not parabolic projections of elements of Kafka's narrative onto another story, be it one of Jewish assimilation or of human psychological and social development, in the way that the interpretations discussed above are. But in suggesting that other stories influenced Kafka's, whether Hagenbeck's autobiography or reports of performing apes or scientific experiments, they represent the phenomenon of intertextuality that demonstrates the mental processes of conceptual blending and parabolic projection at work in literary reading (Burke).

One notable contribution to *Ein Bericht's* reception history from the 1980s does represent more of a literary interpretation in the traditional sense, although in its specifics it is unprecedented, even unorthodox, in Kafka criticism. In 1982 Günter Mecke advanced the thesis that Rotpeter's story is that of the homosexual rape of a young teenage boy and his subsequent attempts to process and cope with this traumatic experience. Mecke's reading is firmly rooted within the tradition of psychoanalytic criticism, which sees fictional texts rather like dreams, as expressions of the authors' unconscious, typically their repressed sexual drives and traumatic childhood experiences. Hence in this case, the young teenage boy that Rotpeter represents is Kafka himself, whom Mecke supposes was raped around age fourteen or fifteen. Leaving aside for the moment questions about Kafka's biography, it is worth examining the conceptual mappings involved in this reading. Rotpeter's ape condition maps onto a state of childhood innocence; his human condition maps onto a tormented homosexual identity; and his transformation maps onto a process of psychological struggle in dealing with his sexuality. Within the broad outlines of these general mappings, Mecke is able to account for an astounding amount of textual detail with specific sub-mappings, much like Kauf does in his reading of the text as an allegory of a Jew's conversion to Christianity. The humans in the story, *homo sapiens*, map onto homosexuals, and Rotpeter's being shot and captured map onto the rape and violent seduction of a young teenager. Other details that map in this reading include the pipe that Rotpeter learns to smoke, the schnapps bottle that initially disgusts him but that he eventually learns to handle and empty like a pro, and the bars of his cage that cut into the flesh of his backside—all of which are phallic symbols. Though these mappings may seem far-fetched to some, what is important to

note for the purposes of my argument is that they ultimately rely on the generic spatial structure so saliently foregrounded in Kafka's text. The state of childhood innocence is conceived as a location behind, and the condition of homosexuality, or the community of homosexuals, is conceived as a location ahead into which the protagonist moves: "[d]ie *Rückkehr zur Affenfreiheit*, das heißt *zur kindlichen Unschuld*" ("the *return back to ape freedom*, that is, *to childlike innocence*"; 115, my emphasis) and "Rotpeter...berichtet hier von seiner *Einübung und Eindrilling in die 'Menschengemeinschaft'* und schließlich von seinem unabwendbaren *Sprung in sie hinein*" ("Rotpeter...reports here on his exercises and drills [the German expressions with their prefix *ein-* highlight the notion of forward motion] *into* the 'community of man' and finally on his irreversible *leap into it*"; 115, my emphasis). Mecke focuses on the struggle involved in Rotpeter's transition, however, so like Neumann and Emrich, he downplays the salient conventional PATH image schema transformation *from path-focus to endpoint focus* repeated throughout the text and instead emphasizes an incomplete PATH. By projecting the events depicted in *Ein Bericht* onto a Freudian story of "abnormal" psychosexual development and simultaneously onto the story of Kafka's own life, Mecke's reading represents yet another instance of conceptual blending at work in literary interpretation, a process encouraged in the case of Kafka's text by its salient schematic conceptual structure. It also stands as evidence, despite the compelling logic and the mass of textual details along with the numerous passages from Kafka's diaries and letters marshaled to support the argument, the inherently subjective nature of literary readings.

Throughout the 1990s and into the twenty-first century, historicist approaches came to dominate the field of literary studies. Understandably, this trend was reflected in Kafka scholarship, as researchers sought to situate their readings of Kafka's works within the social, political, and historical context(s) in which they appeared. In his 2002 book, *The Myth of Power and the Self*, Walter Sokel revisits *Ein Bericht*, and his essay serves as a representative example of this line of work. Influenced, apparently, by the advent of post-colonial studies, Sokel essentially updates his earlier reading of Kafka's story as one of the psychological and social development of an individual in the abstract to one of the psychological and social development of an individual in a twentieth-century Western liberal democracy. In keeping with his earlier positive assessment of Rotpeter's development, and in contrast to most work in the post-colonial vein, Sokel emphasizes the possibilities for individual self-realization afforded by the development of liberal democracy, which he acknowledges was inseparable from the enterprise of colonialism. In this reading, Rotpeter's ape condition maps onto the situation of individuals in pre-democratic societies whose identity is determined by their social group; his human condition maps onto the status of individuals in Western liberal democracies who have the possibility of self-realization; and his transformation maps onto the process of individualization that democracy makes possible. Clearly, the PATH image schema underlies both the notion of individual psychological and social development and the conception of the historical development of democracy described in Sokel's essay. Notably, Sokel mentions America—and not German South West Africa or Tanzania—as an example of a colony, and he refers to the American ideal of the self-made man that attracted so many immigrants to the United States in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries as historical evidence to support his argument (281-83). Considering his own life story as an American immigrant, this detail of his essay provides another

example of the way the generic conceptual structure Kafka provides prompts readers to fill in such schematic structure with specific details drawn from their own subjective experience.

Most recently, in a 2009 article, Claire Kramersch proposed a reading of Kafka's story that represents a modern-day twist on the Brod-Rubinstein take. Since assimilation into German society entailed for Jews not only the adoption of new social rituals and customs but also the acquisition of a foreign language—a fact overlooked in the literature on *Ein Bericht*, but exemplified by Kafka's own father's biography—Kramersch argues that Rotpeter's story can be seen as the evolution of a bilingual. In this reading, Rotpeter's ape condition maps onto a state of monolingualism; his human condition maps onto a state of bilingualism; and his transformation maps onto the process of second language acquisition. The PATH image schema, of course, structures this understanding: "We follow the narrator's subsequent *paths* of action: the ape learns the language of his captors" and "the foreign language was both *a way out of* bondage...and *a way into* the opportunities and constraints of a speech community" (892; my emphasis). In light of recent scholarship that has demonstrated incontrovertibly that Kafka himself was multilingual (Nekula), and considering the theatrical adaptations of *Ein Bericht* that have been produced in Germany and Austria since the 1990s, in which the character Rotpeter typically speaks German with a Turkish or Kurdish accent, Kramersch makes a compelling case. But in this reading, too, given the author's own status as a multilingual and a scholar of bilingualism and second language acquisition, the tendency of readers of Kafka to fill in his generic conceptual structure with specific details from their own subjective experience is evident. Kafka's basic concepts of *learning* and *teacher*, for example ("Und ich lernte, meine Herren," "And so I learned, gentlemen"; "ich verbrauchte viele Lehrer," "I exhausted many teachers") are specified by Kramersch: "He takes *German* lessons and wears out many *language* teachers" (891; my emphasis).

What I hope to have shown in this extended examination of some of the major moments in the reception history of Kafka's story—even with the occasional tangential discussions regarding the nature of literature, metaphor, and conceptual mapping—is how the salience of the PATH image schema in the text, and especially its reiterated conventional transformation, helps to prompt a wide variety of readings that themselves inevitably employ the very same generic structure that gets specified differently in each case. Mark Turner emphasizes in *The Literary Mind* that not just any element in a source story can be projected onto a target story. As discussed above with the example of referring to a person metaphorically as a pig, only some structure will map from a source to a target in any conceptual mapping. What guides and constrains conceptual mapping, whether in metaphor or in the parabolic projection of one story onto another, is image schemas. Turner introduces the notion of "the invariance principle" to describe the constraints on parabolic projection: in general, only structure from a source story that avoids an image-schematic clash in the target story will be mapped (28-30). Since *Ein Bericht* employs the PATH and CONTAINER image schemas to structure the main event of the story—Rotpeter's transformation as movement from one bounded region in space to another—and since these two schemas are among our most basic, being pervasive in our experience, there is a wide range of potential domains that can be understood with the same structure and that therefore lend themselves as suitable targets for the story's parabolic projection. Moreover, the conceptual metaphors that Kafka uses to elaborate

these basic schemas, STATES ARE LOCATIONS and CHANGE OF STATE IS CHANGE OF LOCATION, are primary metaphors that are pervasive across a wide range of cultures.

Rotpeter's Story and the Evolution of Narrative

Since I have stressed throughout the previous section, and indeed throughout this study, the inherently subjective nature of literary reading, it is only appropriate that I offer in conclusion my own interpretation of Kafka's story. When I first read *Ein Bericht* years ago, before any exposure to the secondary literature, I understood it as an allegory for the story of human evolution. Peter Crisp has argued that a distinction should be drawn between allegory and extended metaphor, with the difference being that in allegory continual cross-domain mapping is activated without any explicit reference to a target domain, whereas in extended metaphor cross-domain conceptual mapping is activated by explicit mentioned of the target domain. This argument, despite the cognitive approach, seems inconsistent to me with the general premise of cognitive science that concepts cannot be defined by necessary and sufficient conditions but rather are organized around prototypes, or best examples of a category. That said, according to this distinction, my original reading of Rotpeter's story would not be as an allegory but as an extended metaphor, since the narrator explicitly refers to human evolution at the outset of his speech: "Ihr Affentum, meine Herren, soferne Sie etwas Derartiges hinter sich haben, kann Ihnen nicht ferner sein als mir das meine" ("your ape natures, gentlemen, insofar as something of that kind lies behind you, cannot be further from you than mine is from me"). At the same time, however, I also understood the story as an allegory for the psychological development and socialization of an individual human being, a reading broadly consistent with those of Tauber, Schulz-Behrend, Sokel, Philippi, Emrich, and Neumann discussed above. And since there is no explicit mention of individual human psychological development in Kafka's text, such a reading is clearly allegorical. But because I understood the story as being about both of these two distinct processes at the same time, my interpretation represented a conceptual blend. Underlying this blend is a common conceptual metaphor, PHYLOGENY IS ONTOGENY, by which the development of an individual organism is understood as a model for the evolution of a species as a whole. This metaphor is taken as a premise of contemporary evolutionary biology, but whether or not it is scientifically true is irrelevant for my purposes. It explains the conceptual blend of my original interpretation of Kafka's story, and the same PATH image schema informs both concepts, which makes such a blend possible (Fauconnier and Turner 107-10).

More recently, influenced by readings in cognitive science, in particular Turner's *Literary Mind*, which argues that narrative is a fundamental instrument of human cognition, and Boyd's *On the Origin of Stories*, which shows how fictional storytelling was adaptive in the evolution of the human species, I have come to understand *Ein Bericht* also as an allegory of the evolution of narrative. The passages in the text where the PATH image schema is employed simultaneously to refer both to the event of Rotpeter's transformation, the content of the story, as well as to the telling of that event, its narration, support such an interpretation. The narrator emphasizes repeatedly that the experience he intends to relate, by necessity in human language entailing the human

conceptual structures of metaphor and narrative, cannot fully convey a pre-human or non-human experience:

Es wird für die Akademie nichts wesentlich Neues beibringen und weit hinter dem zurückbleiben, was man von mir verlangt hat und was ich beim besten Willen nicht sagen kann – immerhin, es soll die Richtlinie zeigen, auf welcher ein gewesener Affe in die Menschenwelt eingedrungen ist und sich dort festgesetzt hat.

It will produce nothing significantly new for the Academy and will fall far short of what you have requested of me and what with all the will in the world I cannot put into words—but all the same, it should indicate the line a former ape has taken in entering the human world and establishing himself there.

and

Ich kann natürlich das damals affenmäßig Gefühlte heute nur mit Menschenworten nachzeichnen und verzeichne es in folgedessen, aber wenn ich auch die alte Affenwahrheit nicht mehr erreichen kann, wenigstens in der Richtung meiner Schilderung liegt sie...

Of course I can only outline in human words what I felt then as an ape, and I misrepresent it as a consequence, but even though I can no longer reach the truth of my old ape experience, at least it lies in the direction of my depiction...

Yet ironically, but at the same time inevitably, he employs the human conceptual structure of the PATH image schema to make his point. These comments underscore that his present human condition, having acquired the faculty of language and having developed a human consciousness, is inseparable from the human conceptual structures of metaphor and narrative.

Furthermore, the narrative seems to foreground the act of storytelling. The passages quoted above along with others, including the narrator's orientation explaining the occasion of his narrative, that he has been invited to the Academy to give an account of his life, and his concluding remarks, that he has "only made a report," indicate a very self-conscious reflection on the act of storytelling. It may be these overt references to the narrative act itself that leads Neumann to see *Ein Bericht* as emblematic of literature in general: "der Bericht des Affen, als Fiktion in der Fiction, *ist* Literatur" ("the ape's report, as a fiction in fiction, *is* literature"; 176, emphasis in the original). In addition, the significant overlap between the PATH represented by the text's narrative discourse and the two global instantiations of the PATH image schema in the story of Rotpeter's journey from Africa to Europe and of his transformation—with the beginning of his journey and transformation coming at the beginning of the text, the end of his journey and transformation coming at the end of the text, and the events of his journey and the process of transformation depicted in chronological order in the intervening text—may also contribute to this impression. Moreover, this salient coincidence in Kafka's text of three different expressions of the PATH image schema together with the fact that it is this very same image schema that structures the concept of narrative motivates the interpretation I am proposing. It is, after all, the PATH image schema entailed in the

concept of narrative that allows us to understand the complex, abstract processes of human evolution and individual psychological development as stories. As Turner insists, narrative is a fundamental, pervasive instrument of human thought which makes a human experience of the world possible. And as Boyd points out, storytelling is a universal feature of human cultures and is a mental capacity that all human children acquire without explicit instruction—as opposed to, say, the ability to write—around the age of five. To understand Rotpeter’s story as an allegory (or extended metaphor) for human evolution and for the psychological and social development of a human individual, as I originally did, is therefore consistent with understanding it as an allegory for the co-evolution of narrative and the emergence of the human species. It is, of course, the pervasive human conceptual structure of the PATH image schema that allows for this blend.

6

Epilogue: Kafka's Multilingual Imagination

Das schönste Glück des denkenden Menschen ist, das Erforschliche erforscht zu haben und das Unerforschliche zu verehren.

—Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Throughout this study I have argued that Kafka consistently highlights generic or schematic conceptual structure in his fiction over more specific, detailed concepts. In conclusion, I wish to suggest some possible reasons for this demonstrable cognitive proclivity. My deliberations center on the fact that Kafka was multilingual, an aspect of his biography that, when not ignored altogether, has been either downplayed or dismissed outright as irrelevant in most Kafka scholarship. Julian Preece, for example, describes Kafka as “the most cosmopolitan of all German-language writers,” and to support this claim he notes that Kafka spoke “French and Italian in addition to his native German, Czech, and Yiddish, which he learnt as an adult” (1). But he later remarks that such “prodigious... linguistic accomplishments... were not unusual” and points out that even Kafka’s “supposedly uncultivated father was more or less trilingual” (2). The tacit implication is that, although Kafka’s classical education and his travels throughout Europe formed him into a quintessential European cosmopolitan, which Preece sees as the dominant factor in his broad appeal, the fact that he was multilingual is itself unimportant. Stanley Corngold dismisses consideration of Kafka’s multilingualism by relating a question posed by an uninformed audience member at one of his talks on Kafka, who asked, “Well then, can you tell us what Kafka is like in the original Czech?” (“Dialect” 153).

Since everything Kafka wrote was in German, except for some formulaic letters written in Czech in the context of his work as a lawyer for the Workers’ Accident Insurance Institute and the occasional Czech phrase in his personal correspondence—and this is not counting as writing the notebooks he kept in the course of his language learning (Sudaka-Bénazéraf)—such presumptions may be understandable. But they are based in a nationalist, essentialist, monolingualist ideology that assumes one language per person as the norm and that conceives of learning a foreign language as basically like putting on an accessory or simply acquiring a new tool. Kafka scholars in the field of German studies who assume he was essentially monolingual, a native speaker of German, are as guilty of succumbing to such an ideology as Czechs who have sought in recent years to appropriate him as one of their own (Preece 1). Even Preece, who, in wishing to emphasize Kafka’s cosmopolitanism, rejects any assignment to him of a particular national identity, and who explicitly acknowledges Kafka’s multilingualism, nevertheless betrays the influence of the essentialist ideology that nationalism relies on precisely when describing the different languages Kafka knew: “a speaker of French and Italian in addition to his native German, Czech, and Yiddish, which he learnt as an adult” (1). The designation of Kafka’s “native” language as German reinforces the notion that each

individual has one language that is an essential part of who they are and that other languages they may learn throughout their lifetimes are mere accouterments. I argue in opposition to this ideology that Kafka's multilingualism had a profound effect on his imagination and hence his art.

The terms *native speaker* and *native language* may perhaps make sense when dealing with monolinguals or when referring to someone who just took a year or two of a foreign language in high school or college. But with respect to Kafka they are totally inappropriate. Recent work in Kafka biography (Nekula) has documented in painstaking detail Kafka's history of learning several languages and has demonstrated beyond a doubt that he was multilingual in the fullest sense of the word. He had a classic bilingual upbringing, speaking German at home with his family in a predominantly Czech-speaking social environment while learning Czech directly from interaction with domestic servants. When he started attending school, he went to a German school, where he of course had formal instruction in German language and literature throughout his primary and secondary education, but he also had formal instruction in Czech language and literature the whole time (except for one semester), which was comparable to the curriculum in Czech schools. As an adult he read Czech newspapers and literary journals on a regular basis, and living in predominantly Czech-speaking Prague, he inevitably had interactions in Czech on a daily basis. As a standard part of the school curriculum at the time, he also learned Latin and Greek, though apparently he was not all that enthusiastic about it. And during his final years of school he elected to study French as a modern foreign language. As an adult, he studied first Yiddish and later Hebrew. To consider Kafka a "native speaker" of German, therefore, given the facts of his life experience, seems a blatant misnomer.

Research in foreign language education (Kramsch, *Multilingual Subject*), sociolinguistics (Pavlenko; Pavlenko and Lantolf), and cognitive psychology (Boroditsky) has demonstrated that learning a new language fundamentally changes the mind—your conception of who you are, your bodily awareness, and your way of understanding everyday concepts. Building on such insights, I argue in the epilogue to this study that learning foreign languages has the potential to heighten conscious awareness precisely of the cognitive structures I have employed as tools in my analyses of Kafka's texts: categories, image schemas, and metaphors. An increased awareness of such generic conceptual structures that form the basis of all human cognition may be fostered by foreign language learning generally, as I seek to demonstrate. But I also explain how the particular social and historical context that produced Kafka's multilingual mind may have further encouraged his predilection for highlighting the schematic in his fiction.

Categories

Foreign language learning can foster an awareness of the true nature of human categories as demonstrated through decades of empirical research in cognitive psychology (Rosch; Rosch and Lloyd) and cognitive linguistics (Berlin, Breedlove, and Raven; Lakoff, *Women*). Most people tend to think of categories as containers, as the traditional Aristotelian view also conceives of them. Such a conception entails a specific

logic that implies that something is either *in* a category or it isn't and that our categories have rigid boundaries as actual containers do. Research in cognitive science shows that this metaphor for thinking about categories is misleading. Our categories are more accurately characterized as radial structures organized around prototypes, or best examples, with good examples of a given concept being central to the category and less good examples being peripheral. Furthermore, they have fuzzy boundaries, which, far from being a drawback or weakness as might be assumed under the traditional view, is indispensable and essential for us to be able to function successfully in a constantly changing world.

Take, for example, the concept *fruit*. If you are an average North American, invocation of the word immediately evokes central examples of the category like apples, oranges, and bananas. If you continue to consider the concept, you will think of other perfectly good examples like peaches or pineapples or watermelons or kiwis, but you will recognize that these examples are not as good, not as central to the concept *fruit* as apples and oranges are. Indeed, in empirical studies of categorization, test subjects' response times provides some of the strongest evidence that our categories are radial structures. If categories were like containers and membership in a category were a matter of satisfying necessary and sufficient conditions, as the traditional view holds, then experiments should reflect response times for watermelon as an example of the concept *fruit* equivalent to those for apples, but this is not the case. At the periphery of categories are the interesting cases, which reveal that their boundaries are fuzzy. For the concept *fruit*, consider the examples of tomatoes, or avocados, or olives. Botanists would classify these unequivocally as fruits, but most people would hesitate to do so. This shows not only that human categories have inherently fuzzy boundaries, but also that they depend crucially on human purposes and do not just reflect the world as it supposedly objectively exists independent of human beings with human nervous systems interacting with it. The example of fruit represents a natural category, so I will offer one more example of a concept, this time a man-made object, to illustrate this important feature of our categories. If you think of the concept *chair*, you probably immediately get a mental image of something like the chair at your desk or a chair at your kitchen table. These are good, prototypical examples of the concept. Somewhat further from the center of the category are examples like armchair or recliner, still perfectly good examples of chairs but not the best examples, not what the concept immediately evokes. Then consider examples like a stool, a beanbag chair, or an electric chair, which are clearly peripheral members of the category. I suggest that learning a foreign language has the potential to bring into more conscious awareness this aspect of the nature of human cognition, the fact that our categories are organized around good examples and have fuzzy boundaries.

One very simple way this can happen is through the use of a bilingual dictionary, an everyday practice for language learners. When you look up a word in a bilingual dictionary, unless the word you are looking up designates a basic-level concept for a natural object like *tree* or *horse*, most of the time you will find an array of possible translations. Take, for example, a very simple word like *large*. In an English-German dictionary you will probably find *groß* listed as the first translation. This would likely be the first translation to come to mind for bilinguals, too, and that is because the prototypical sense of the English word *large* largely corresponds to the prototypical sense of the German word *groß*, which is a literal meaning referring to the size of a physical

object in the real world and a judgment based on the physical perception of it. But in addition to this translation you might find German translations for *large* such as *beträchtlich* (“considerable,” “notable”), *bedeutend* (“significant,” “important,” “meaningful”), *ausgedehnt* (“expanded,” “vast,” “spacious”), *umfassend* (“comprehensive,” “capacious,”), *umfangreich* (“comprehensive,” “extensive” “voluminous”), *weitgehend* (“extensive,” “vast,” “wide”), *erheblich* (“sizable,” “heavy”), *reichlich* (“rich,” “abundant,” “plentiful”), or *weit* (“wide,” “broad”). These are in fact the translations I found in *Cassell’s* and on *LEO*, and the English translations that I have provided of these German translations of *large* represent of course only a few of several possibilities, ones that to my mind convey the prototypical senses of the words. When you look up a word such as *large* like this and read its different possible renderings in a foreign language, unless you are familiar with prototype theory, you will most likely not get an image of a radial structure. This is probably discouraged by the linear graphic layout of dictionary entries. But you will certainly have a sense that one or two translations, in this case *groß*, best exemplify the most basic, central meaning of the word you are looking up and that the others are secondary, derivative, or peripheral. In this way, one of the most common activities learners of a foreign language engage in can help foster an intuitive, if not fully conscious, awareness of the true nature of human concepts and categories.

In addition to potentially making the radial structure of concepts and categories more cognitively salient, the simple act of looking up a word in a bilingual dictionary can also increase awareness of how such structures are formed through metonymic and metaphoric connections. To stay with the example of *large*, the central sense of the concept, to which the German word *groß* most closely corresponds, is literal, referring to the perception of an object in the physical world and the evaluation of its size as greater than average. But the other possible translations one finds in a bilingual dictionary are either metonymically or metaphorically based on the literal, physical sense. The translations *ausgedehnt*, *umfassend*, *umfangreich*, *weitgehend*, and *weit*, which have prototypical senses meaning “expanded,” “extensive,” “broad,” “vast,” or “wide,” are metonymically related to this literal sense of our immediately embodied perception of the size of objects we interact with as above average. We may talk of a *vast plain* or a *broad vista*, for example, when referring to things we do not have direct embodied knowledge of the way we do of physical objects in our immediate environment that we can touch and see such as someone’s broad shoulders or a wide entryway, which is the literal, physical experience that these metonymic senses of *large* are based on. All of these concepts can of course be used metaphorically as well, as when we say things like *She has a vast knowledge of the subject*, *I have done extensive research*, *He takes a broad-minded approach*, or *There is a wide range of possibilities*. Other translations of *large* that one finds in a bilingual dictionary such as *beträchtlich*, *bedeutend*, or *erheblich* are unmistakably metaphorical, with senses like “significant,” “important,” “meaningful,” “considerable,” or “serious.” The conceptual metaphor underlying these senses of the words *large* and *groß* is the primary metaphor IMPORTANCE IS SIZE. Although foreign language learners unfamiliar with cognitive theory may not identify the relationships between the various senses of a given concept as metonymic and metaphoric when looking up a word in a bilingual dictionary, they will certainly sense, if only unconsciously, the distinct differences between such levels of meaning.

Since I am arguing that foreign language learning has a unique potential to heighten awareness of the radial structure of our categories and concepts, my focus has been on bilingual dictionaries. But most monolingual dictionaries also reflect this structure, with the central sense of a word typically given first and metonymically or metaphorically derived, peripheral senses following. To stay with the example of *large*, its definition in the *American Heritage Dictionary* exhibits this conventional order: “1. Of greater than average size, extent, quantity, or amount; big. 2. Of greater than average scope, breadth, or capacity; comprehensive. 3. Important; significant. 4a. Understanding and tolerant; liberal: *a large and generous spirit*. b. Of great magnitude or intensity; grand. 5a. Pretentious; boastful. Used of speech or manners. b. *Obsolete* Gross; coarse. Used of speech or language. 6. *Nautical* Favorable. Used of a wind.” Again, the linear layout may work to obscure any potential intuitive sense that some meanings are more central while others are peripheral and hence may obstruct a full awareness of the radial structure of a given concept. It might make us more disposed instead to think of these relations as primary and secondary, using the PATH image schema rather than CENTER-PERIPHERY. Furthermore, the dominant ideology of mind in our culture, which conceives of categories as containers, tends to discourage a full realization of the radial structure of concepts. The compact graphic form of dictionary entries, too, along with their alphabetical layout in columns on a page may serve to reinforce the false notion that words and concepts are containers. Occasionally one may get the sense when using a monolingual dictionary that the boundaries of concepts are not rigid like container boundaries but rather fuzzy. When one reads the definition of *large*, for example, and finds words like *big*, *comprehensive*, *important*, and *grand*, one can sense that the concepts these words express do not belong within the category-container *large* but rather overlap with it to a greater or lesser extent, and that their boundaries bleed into one another. One senses this perhaps most palpably when one looks up a word one does not know and finds in the definition another word one does not know and then has to look that word up, too.

But foreign language learning and the use of a bilingual dictionary much more saliently highlights the fuzzy nature of concept boundaries and the fact that they never overlap exactly. Take the German expression for the prototypical, literal, central sense of *large*, which is *groß*. When you look up this German word in a German-English dictionary, you will find a variety of English expressions. The entry in *Cassell's*, for example, reads “tall, high; large, big, vast, huge, great, extensive, enormous, immense, spacious; large-scale, grand, major, important; (*fig.*) great, eminent; grown-up.” This order follows the conventional practice of listing the central senses of a concept first followed by more peripheral, metonymic and metaphoric ones. Interestingly, only the senses “great,” “eminent,” and “grown-up” are explicitly identified as figurative, which erroneously implies that senses such as “major” and “important” are literal. As preposterous as the implication is, it shows the overwhelming influence of an objectivist, literalist ideology in our culture with its concomitant prejudice against metaphor. It becomes readily apparent when reading this entry in a bilingual dictionary that in addition to the close correspondence between the central, literal senses of the English word *large* and the German word *groß*, there is also considerable overlap between the metonymic and metaphorical senses of the expressions. One of the English translations for *groß*, however, “tall,” which is a central sense for Germans as indicated in its

placement in the entry, reveals a major slippage between the two concepts and thus makes especially palpable the fuzziness of category and concept boundaries. When referring to objects, or vistas, or ideas, the concepts that the two words express are largely compatible, but when referring to persons, that compatibility breaks down. If, as an English speaker learning German, you were to say something like *Arnold Schwarzenegger ist groß* and you had in mind the English sense of the word *big* meaning “muscular,” you would have inadvertently referred not to his well developed physique but merely to his height. If you wanted to express such a judgment of his physical fitness in the conventional way in German, you would use the word *muskulös*, which, significantly, is not listed among the many other translations of *big* in either *Cassell’s* or on *LEO*. I recall an incident involving my own use of the word *groß* in which the slippage between and the fuzzy boundaries of concepts became palpable. Wanting to express my desire to “bulk up” or “put on” more muscle, I said to a friend in Austria, “Ich möchte größer werden” (in my mind: “I want to get bigger”). The consternation in his response is still vivid in my memory: “Aber du bist schon groß genug!” (“But you’re tall enough already!”). This brief exchange made salient to me the way concepts like *large*, *big*, and *muscular* do not have rigid boundaries but rather blend into one another. Learning a foreign language thus constantly presents opportunities to experience the inadequacy of the container metaphor for human concepts and categories and the true reality of their fuzzy boundaries. The anecdote related from my own personal experience furthermore underscores that most people do not learn foreign languages in isolation with a bilingual dictionary but rather (or also) through social interaction, which provides ample occasions to realize this fact about the nature of our minds. As a learner of several languages, Kafka cannot but have had countless such experiences himself.

Generic Conceptual Structure

In addition to making salient the true nature of human categories and concepts, foreign language learning may also foster an awareness of the distinction between generic and specific conceptual structure by creating new neural connections in the brain. Evidence from neurobiology supports such a hypothesis. Take a word you may learn in a foreign language to express a very basic concept, like *bread*. The English word of course has a metaphorical or possibly frame-metonymic sense meaning “money,” as in *She’s the breadwinner of the family*, with the metonymically related word *dough* having the same metaphorical meaning. But leaving aside any metaphorical senses, consider the word *bread* as it literally designates a basic concept, as a label for a common everyday manmade object. The translation for this word would likely be one of the first you learn in studying any foreign language. In German it is *Brot*, in French *pain*, and in Polish *chleb*, for example. These are the translations you will find in a bilingual dictionary, and unlike with a word such as *large*—which is the more typical case—you will not find several other possible translations, since the word expresses a basic-level concept for an everyday object. This circumstance may encourage an assumption that contradicts what I have argued above about the potential of language learning to increase awareness of the fluid or fuzzy nature of concept boundaries. It may, in other words, reinforce the misconceptions that words are simply labels for things in the world as it objectively

exists, that our categories and concepts just reflect the world as it really is, that they have discrete boundaries like containers, and that translations are all basically different labels in different code for the same thing. This impression may be especially strong at the beginning stages of learning a foreign language, when most of the vocabulary you acquire designates basic-level objects and concepts. But if you continue to study the language for any extended length of time, you will inevitably learn more about the culture, including that German bread, for example, or French bread, or Polish bread, is something quite different from American bread. Particularly if you spend any time in the country or countries where the language you are learning is spoken and ever eat bread there, you will understand this difference in a profoundly new, embodied way, through all your senses. Extended language learning, therefore, dispels the false assumption that translations merely represent different labels for the same thing. With translations of expressions that designate everyday objects, however, it may still be possible to maintain the illusion that words are just labels, since the German word *Brot* may be understood as merely the label for the dark, round, heavy baked good with a dark, thick crust that is dense and moist inside, the French word *pain* as the label for the long, thin baked good with a golden-colored crunchy crust that is white, dry, and fluffy inside, and the (American) English word *bread* as the label for the rectangular baked good with a soft, thin, golden-colored crust that is soft and white inside and that comes pre-sliced in a plastic bag. But such an illusion becomes more difficult to sustain with abstract concepts such as *freedom*, for example, particularly with advanced study when a language learner acquires a more complex understanding of the culture and more extensive knowledge of the history of a given linguistic community. Though the same central, prototypical sense may be shared, *freedom* means something very different for an American from what *liberté* means for a Frenchman, *Freiheit* for a German or Austrian (which may themselves be quite different), and *wolność* for a Pole.

This kind of knowledge of the nature of human concepts that language learning can foster is something monolinguals find difficult to grasp. For the average monolingual the concept and the word seem identical. Roman Jakobson relates an incident that illustrates this. In a series of lectures given in 1942 at the École libre des hautes études in New York, he remarks that “from the point of view of her native language, a peasant woman from Francophone Switzerland was right to be astonished: how can cheese be called *Käse* since *fromage* is its only natural name” (*Six Lectures* 112). Later, in his widely anthologized essay “Quest for the Essence of Language,” originally published in *Diogenes* in 1965, he mentions “The Swiss-German peasant woman who allegedly asked why cheese is called *fromage* by her French countrymen—‘Käse ist doch viel natürlicher!’” (“But *Käse* is much more natural!”; 17). The phenomenon Jakobson describes with the example of this (French- or German-speaking?) monolingual Swiss woman might be expressed in Sausurrean terms as an inability to recognize the distinction between the signifier and the signified. That Jakobson recalls this incident on one occasion, when lecturing in French, as having taken place in French, and on another as having taken place in German shows that for him, as a multilingual, the concept or signified is indeed readily detachable from its signifiers in various languages.

In a similar vein, Yoko Tawada, the Japanese-German writer now living in Berlin, uses the metaphor of a staple remover to convey her own experience while learning German of the way foreign language learning can unhinge the concept from the word, or

the signified from the signifier:

Was mir...besonders gut gefiel, war der Heftklammerentferner. Sein wunderbarer Name verkörperte meine Sehnsucht nach einer fremden Sprache. Dieser kleine Gegenstand, der an einen Schlangenkopf mit vier Fangzähnen erinnerte, war Analphabet.... Er konnte nur Heftklammer entfernen. Aber ich hatte eine Vorliebe für ihn, weil es wie ein Zauber aussah, wenn er die zusammengehefteten Papiere auseinandernahm.

In der Muttersprache sind die Worte den Menschen angeheftet.... Dort klammern sich die Gedanken so fest an die Worte, daß weder die ersteren noch die letzteren frei fliegen können. In einer Fremdsprache hat man aber so etwas wie einen Heftklammerentferner: Er entfernt alles, was sich aneinanderheftet und sich festklammert. (14-15)

[The word I liked particularly] was *Heftklammerentferner* [staple remover]. Its wonderful name embodied my desire for a foreign language. This small object, that reminded me of a serpent's head with four fangs, was illiterate... It could only remove staples. But I favored it because the way he [sic] separated the stapled pages worked like magic... In the mother tongue, words are stapled... Thoughts are stapled to words to such an extent that neither can fly freely. In a foreign language, you have something like a staple remover: it removes everything that is stapled together and sticks together. (Kramersch, *Multilingual Subject* 29)

This kind of understanding is in and of itself a valuable learning experience that can provide language learners unique insight into the nature of language and the human mind. But I submit that something more profound than understanding the difference between concepts and words may underlie this kind of experience described by Tawada that is so familiar to language learners. To stick with the simple example of learning vocabulary, when new words in a foreign language are learned, new neural connections are formed in the brain. This happens with all kinds of learning, from learning the formula for the area of a triangle to learning a new word for an unfamiliar concept in political philosophy in one's native language to learning how to ski to learning someone's name. Indeed, it is what learning means. So in that respect, in terms of the mere formation of new neural connections, learning a new word in a foreign language is nothing exceptional. However, the neural connections formed in learning a new word like the German *Brot* are also further connected to the neural connections that represent knowledge of the English word *bread*, since the two different expressions nominally represent the same thing. As discussed above, German bread is of course something quite different from American bread, and the neural connections that represent knowledge of each of the different things are distinct. But learning the German word forms new neural connections of a special kind to those that represent the English word. And I submit that the kind of neural connections formed between those that represent the concepts for nominally equivalent words in different languages themselves represent generic conceptual structure. Learning foreign languages, in other words, builds new neural connections at the generic or schematic level. This, I propose, may account for the kinds of conscious experiences recounted by language learners encapsulated in Tawada's staple

remover metaphor.

This hypothesis is by no means intended to imply that monolinguals do not make distinctions between category levels. Every monolingual English speaker knows that a sports car is a car is a vehicle and has neural connections among these concepts representing the distinctions between subordinate-, basic-, and superordinate-level categories. Indeed, all of the empirical research on category levels, to my knowledge, is monolingual by design, and does not factor in whether test subjects, and what percentage of them, may have been bilingual or multilingual. This fact does not detract from the findings, however, since bilinguals and multilinguals also make these distinctions between category levels in each of the languages they know, though they may not always make the exact same distinctions the way monolinguals do. It should also be noted that although the English word *bread* expresses a basic-level concept for a baked good that is (for Americans) oblong or rectangular with a soft, thin, golden-colored crust, soft and white inside, and pre-sliced in a plastic bag, the same word is also used to express a superordinate-level category subsuming a variety of different types of baked goods, such as rolls, biscuits, banana bread, focaccia, and even baguettes. This is true of course for the German word *Brot*, the French word *pain*, and the Polish word *chleb*. So there is basic-level as well as generic-level conceptual structure represented by the same word for monolinguals. But this type of generic conceptual structure is something quite different from that represented by the connections bilinguals and multilinguals have between basic-level concepts for the “same thing” expressed by different words in different languages. Furthermore, it should be acknowledged that monolinguals may study Saussure, in the original if they are French speakers or otherwise in translation, and in learning about the distinction between the signifier and the signified they will inevitably form new neural connections representing that knowledge. Similarly, monolinguals may study cognitive science and form new neural connections in learning about the distinction between superordinate-, basic-, and subordinate-level categories. But such learning will be *about* these distinctions, which is something qualitatively different from experiencing such distinctions through the learning of a foreign language. The kinds of neural connections formed in these different types of learning must hence also be qualitatively different.

When you learn a new word in a foreign language and form new neural connections for the corresponding concept, you simultaneously form new neural connections between the ones representing that concept in the foreign language and the ones representing the “equivalent” concept in the language or languages you already know. Such connections between concepts expressed by different words in different languages represent a special kind of generic conceptual structure. They give rise to a radically new concept that is not, to stay with the example used so far, the American idea of bread, nor the German idea, nor the French, nor the Polish, but rather encompasses all of these different more specific concepts and has generic or schematic structure common to each. They represent a concept for which no word in any language exists. It may be described as a baked good that is a staple of the diet in cultures around the world somewhere between the size of a tennis ball and a basketball. But even that generic description would not encompass a baguette, for example, because its size is too limited, and it suggests a spherical schema, whereas much of what would fall under this special generic concept is flat, such as naan. These last two specific examples may suggest that

the generic sense of the English word *bread* is really no different from the kind of generic structure that I have in mind. But such an inference would be a monolingual assumption, for the words *baguette* and *nann* essentially become English expressions for monolingual English speakers, interchangeable as specific-level examples of the generic concept *bread* with *dinner roll* or *biscuit*. For bilinguals and multilinguals, the kinds of neural connections formed between “equivalent” concepts expressed by different words in different languages are distinct from the kinds of neural connections formed by monolinguals between concepts within a category. The concepts represented by these kinds of connections may be attempted to be described, but no language has a word that can express them.

Evidence from neurobiology supports this hypothesis. Language is spread across the brain and involves regions and structures such as the primary auditory cortex, Wernicke’s area, the arcuate fasciculus, Broca’s area, and the motor cortex in comprehending and producing speech, as well as the primary visual cortex and the angular gyrus in comprehending written language and reading out loud (Breedlove, Watson, and Rosenzweig). But neurological research on bilinguals reveals distinct differences in neural activity in one language-sensitive region, Broca’s area, between individuals who learn two languages simultaneously in childhood and those who learn a second language as an adult (Kim, Relkin, Lee, and Hirsch). Functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) shows that second languages acquired in adulthood are spatially separated in Broca’s area from native languages learned in childhood. But when two languages are acquired simultaneously during early childhood development, both are represented in common, overlapping areas. The authors of this research posit that such differences have to do with “perceptual acoustic space” (173) and “the role of Broca’s area in processing the phonetic structures of different languages” (174). But since the experiments conducted for this research involved subjects performing “[s]ilent, internally expressive linguistic tasks” (171) “with similar semantic content across multiple languages” (173), they were not actually designed to specifically test acoustic perception of phonetic differences and instead inevitably, if inadvertently, required the understanding of meaningful concepts. The authors’ conclusions, therefore, seem overly cautious. If, as I have proposed, bilinguals build neural connections between the concepts expressed by words in the different languages they know, and these connections represent a special kind of generic conceptual structure, the evidence that second languages learned in adulthood are spatially separated in the brain from native languages supports the hypothesis that there are unique neural connections between them.

Experiments in cognitive psychology are also relevant to my hypothesis. In a study conducted in English involving German-English and Spanish-English bilinguals, subjects were asked to describe basic objects that have the opposite grammatical gender in German and Spanish. When describing the concept *key*, the word for which is masculine in German and feminine in Spanish, German-English bilinguals consistently used more stereotypically masculine English words like *hard*, *heavy*, *jagged*, *metal*, *serrated*, and *useful*, whereas Spanish-English bilinguals used words like *golden*, *intricate*, *little*, *lovely*, *shiny*, and *tiny*. When describing the concept *bridge*, the word for which is feminine in German and masculine in Spanish, German-English bilinguals tended to use words like *beautiful*, *elegant*, *fragile*, *peaceful*, *pretty*, and *slender*, whereas Spanish-English bilinguals said things like *big*, *dangerous*, *long*, *strong*, *sturdy*, or

towering (Boroditsky 126-27). These findings indicate that neural connections are indeed formed between the concepts expressed by words in different languages, and that such connections may represent a special kind of generic conceptual structure. Even when speaking in languages without grammatical gender, like English, bilinguals whose other language does have grammatical gender engage neural connections that involve generic structure representing abstracts concepts like masculinity and femininity.

If the kinds of neural connections I am positing represent generic conceptual structures for which no word in any language exists, which are unlike other generic concepts such as *vehicle* or *furniture*, this may account for a heightened awareness of the ineffable reported by some bilinguals and multilinguals. Certainly, all individuals have experiences that cannot be encompassed by the socially sanctioned order of reality that is represented in the grammar and lexicon of any given language. As H. G. Widdowson puts it, “We know that there are vast expanses of reality within the awareness of the individual which are beyond the scope of conventional statement” (75). Widdowson makes this point in the context of his case for the value of poetry in education, arguing that poetry, given the appropriate pedagogy, can instill knowledge of the importance of subjective individual experience, which the successful functioning of democratic societies depends on. Given my considerations above of the ways that learning a foreign language may heighten awareness of the inadequacies of conventional understandings of categories, the ways it makes salient the important difference between words and concepts, and the ways it may create generic conceptual structures that defy expression in any language, I contend that foreign language education possesses an analogous potential to foster the kind of subjectivity that Widdowson sees for poetry as being crucial for democracy. Though she does not focus on subjectivity per se, Doris Sommer also argues for the value of bilingualism for democratic societies, since democracy thrives on pluralism and difference rather than uniformity. And Claire Kramsch in her most recent book, *The Multilingual Subject*, demonstrates beyond the shadow of a doubt that learning a foreign language is a thoroughly subjective experience that produces a radical subjectivity disposed to question and attempt to transcend the conventional categories and concepts that any one particular language imposes on its speakers. Kafka’s fiction, through its consistent highlighting of generic over specific conceptual structure, reveals the unmistakable characteristics of a multilingual mind. That one of these characteristics may be a heightened awareness of the kind of subjective experience that no particular language can encapsulate is revealed in a remark in a letter Kafka wrote toward the end of his life to his Czech translator and lover, Milena Jesenská:

...ich suche immerfort etwas Nicht-Mitteilbares mitzuteilen, etwas Unerklärliches zu erklären, von etwas zu erzählen, was ich in den Knochen habe und was nur in diesen Knochen erlebt werden kann.

I’m continually trying to share something unshareable, to explain something inexplicable, to relate something that I have in my bones and that can only be experienced in these bones. (*Briefe an Milena* 249).

Image Schemas and Metaphors

Thus far I have considered some of the ways that learning a foreign language may foster an awareness of the true nature of human categories. I have also hypothesized that by forming new neural connections in the brain that represent a special kind of generic-level conceptual structure, foreign language learning may promote a particular sensitivity to the inability of language to express the fullness of subjective human experience. In this section I propose that learning foreign languages may help bring typically unconscious generic conceptual structures such as image schemas and primary metaphors into more conscious awareness.

One of the ways this may happen is by encouraging attention to etymologies. Throughout this study I have provided numerous examples that indicate how image schemas and metaphors underlie the etymologies of a significant part of any language's vocabulary. In Chapter 2, discussing the several possible English translations of the German expression *Gleichnis*, I note, for example, that the etymologies of the words *parable* and *metaphor* mean "to throw beside" and "to carry over," respectively, and I stress that it is the literal, physical senses revealed in these etymologies which provide the image schematic structure that is projected metaphorically to obtain the meanings we commonly associate with these terms. I also mention how the etymologies of words like *comprehend* (from "to grasp together"), *apprehend* (from "to seize or grasp toward"), or *conceive* (from "to take together") express the primary conceptual metaphor UNDERSTANDING IS OBJECT MANIPULATION. In Chapter 3, I point out that the concept *success* and its German equivalent *Erfolg* share the same underlying PATH image schema along with its conventional transformation from *path-focus* to *endpoint-focus*. In Chapter 5, I discuss the metaphorical sense of the word *state* meaning a condition and the associated primary metaphor STATES ARE LOCATIONS. I note that the same image schemas of ROTATION and PATH underlie the English expression *evolution* (from "to unroll" or "to roll out") and its German equivalent *Entwicklung* (from "to unwrap" or "to roll out") and that the conceptual metaphor specifying these image schemas is CHANGE IS MOTION, which results in the meanings of the words as we understand them. I also point out how the PATH image schema informs the etymologies of expressions like *progress* (from "to go forward"), its German equivalent *Fortschritte* (from "steps forward"), *attain* (from "to touch toward"), its German translation *erreichen* (from "to reach"), *report* (from "to carry back"), and its German equivalent *berichten* (from "direct toward"), and I explain how this same PATH image schema is metaphorically elaborated differently in each case to obtain the meanings we understand by these words. At the risk of stating the obvious, I have made such observations and deemed them important to my argument because, as a learner of several languages myself, I have gained a heightened awareness of etymologies in the course of my own intellectual development. Now I explain how such an awareness may come about in the process of learning foreign languages.

When studying a foreign language you will almost certainly discover that a word like *discover*, for example, has an image schema underlying its etymology and that its meaning expresses a metaphorical elaboration of that generic conceptual structure. If studying German, you learn that the word for *discover* is *entdecken*. And from having learned other words with the same prefix *ent-*, such as *entfernen* ("to remove"), *entfliehen* ("to escape"), *entführen* ("to kidnap"), *enthüllen* ("to expose"), *entkommen* ("to escape"),

entlassen (“to let go”), *entleeren* (“to empty out”), or *entziehen* (“to take away”), for example, you will have gained an understanding that the prefix *ent-* signifies “away” and you will recognize, if only subconsciously, that a common image schema informs the senses of all of these quite different expressions, namely PATH. You may, of course, have learned the word *entdecken* (“discover”) before you learned any of these other words, though you will likely have learned some. But the question of the order in which you may learn these words is irrelevant to my point, which is that in the course of learning a foreign language you inevitably acquire an awareness of the image schematic structure, in this case PATH, which underlies the meanings of prefixes (in those languages with prefixes, of course, like German and English), in this case *ent-*. This cumulative awareness gives you a sense of how the same image schematic structure underlies the senses of all of these different words, which metaphorically elaborate that image schematic structure differently in each of their individual meanings.

To remain with the example of *entdecken*, when you learn this word in the course of your study of German, you will almost certainly have learned the simple verb it is based on, *decken* (“to cover”), and another word with the same root, namely, *die Decke*. You will have learned that this word means “cover” in the sense of “bedspread” or “blanket,” and you will probably also have learned that it is also the German word for “ceiling.” This identity in a foreign language of the linguistic label for two things that are linguistically unrelated in English and that for an English speaker have nothing semantically to do with each other may prompt an awareness of the fact that the two concepts *bedspread* and *ceiling* share the same image schematic structure of a flat SURFACE. This same image schematic structure underlies the senses of the English words *level*, *plane*, and *plain*, all expressed in German with *Ebene*, as discussed in Chapter 4. So given this potential heightened awareness of the image schemas underlying the German prefix *ent-* and the German root *decken* through exposure during the course of language learning to different linguistic expressions of the same generic conceptual structures, you become predisposed to recognize that the same exact image schematic structure informs the meaning of the concept as expressed in the English word *discover*.

Typically we don’t recognize the image schema or the conceptual metaphor underlying the meaning of a word like *discover*, and monolinguals almost certainly never do. We use the word when we say things like *Columbus discovered America* or *Marie Curie discovered plutonium*, and we believe that we are speaking literally, when we are in fact speaking metaphorically. Such a false belief comes from the objectivist, literalist ideology of our culture, an ideology that sees metaphor as exotic, poetic, and untrue language—an ideology that foreign language learning, even the learning of languages within the same cultural tradition, may foster a critical awareness of. When we say things like *Columbus discovered America* or *Marie Curie discovered plutonium*, we certainly do not imagine that Columbus or Marie Curie literally removed a screen that was obscuring their respective discoveries. The suggestion is almost ludicrous: “Why, America! You were there all along!” or “Well, look what I found here—plutonium!” Occasionally we do use the word *discover* in a literal, physical sense, as when we say something like *I discovered a twenty under my sofa cushion*. But the sense in which we most commonly use the expression is not the literal, physical meaning revealed in its etymology but is rather a metaphorical sense projected from the image schema entailed in that etymology for what typically, literally consists of a series of complex actions and events. Learning a

foreign language, therefore, which inevitably heightens awareness of word etymologies, may simultaneously also foster a profound understanding of the ways that language is pervasively metaphorical and that all metaphorical meaning is based on generic conceptual structures such as image schemas that arise from our embodied, physical experience. When one discovers through foreign language learning that the word *discover*, for example, literally means “to uncover” by learning that its equivalent expression in the foreign language has the same underlying conceptual structure, one may experience a minor “Aha!” moment. Cumulatively, however, such everyday revelations for foreign language learners may add up to a deep insight into the nature of language and the human mind and consequently a heightened sensitivity to the generic conceptual structures that underlie all human understanding.

It is well known that Kafka was interested in etymologies (Hutchinson and Minden 18), and so it is plausible that, as a learner of several languages, Kafka himself had frequent insights of the kind described above. If so, such insights may have been a source for the demonstrable cognitive preference for the generic or schematic that he exhibits in his fiction. I can certainly say that that has been one of the most profound aspects of my own language learning experience. And it is an experience that only increased in profundity when I began learning a third language, Polish, and discovered, for example, that the Polish word for *discover*, *odkryć*, also entails the exact same image schematic structure in its etymology, with the prefix *od-* signifying “from” or “away” and the root *kryć* meaning “to cover.” It is also an experience, as I can attest from conversations with countless bilinguals and multilinguals, that is common among language learners. Many such words in European vernaculars that exhibit identical schematic structure in their etymologies may be calques, that is, direct translations of the semantic components of the Latin or Greek term from which they are derived. But this circumstance, when it is the case, represents a historical explanation for the existence of a given lexical item in a particular or in several European languages, and does not diminish the fact that the original Latin or Greek term entails image schematic structure in its etymology. Given these considerations, I suggest that Walter Benjamin’s well known notion of *die reine Sprache* (“pure language”) as described in his essay “Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers” (“The Task of the Translator”) may be understood as a designation for the generic conceptual structure that underlies all specific linguistic expressions. Benjamin writes:

Es bleibt in aller Sprache und ihren Gebilden außer dem Mitteilbaren ein Nicht-Mitteilbares, ein, je nach dem Zusammenhang, in dem es angetroffen wird, Symbolisierendes oder Symbolisiertes. Symbolisierendes nur, in den endlichen Gebilden der Sprachen; Symbolisiertes aber im Wesen der Sprachen selbst. Und was im Wesen der Sprachen sich darzustellen, ja herzustellen sucht, das ist jener Kern der reinen Sprache selbst. (19)

In all language and linguistic creations there remains in addition to what can be conveyed something that cannot be communicated; depending on the context in which it appears, it is something that symbolizes or something symbolized. It is the former only in the finite products of language, the latter in the evolving of the languages themselves. And that which it seeks to represent, to produce itself in the evolving of languages, is that very nucleus of pure language. (Zohn 79)

Benjamin is clearly using the word *language* in his notion of “pure language” metaphorically. He is not referring literally to any existing human language or to any potential future language that could be uttered in human speech or written in words. It is not any dream of a unitary language that he means, but rather a plane of consciousness that transcends all language, that is by definition non-language, and that we can know or sense without being able ever to articulate it. As a multilingual himself, Benjamin was attempting with his notion of “pure language” to express his intuitive awareness of the fundamental schematic conceptual structures grounded in our embodied experience that inform all language.

Being Multilingual during a *Sprachkrise*

Recently there have been calls in cognitive science for greater attention to the specificity of culture in cognitive analysis (Harder; Hutchins, *Cognition*, “Mental Models”; Itkonen; Shore; Sihna, “Cognitive Linguistics,” “Grounding,” *Language*; Tomasello; Zlatev). If the mind is ineradicably embodied as the basic premise of cognitive science holds, then it is always embodied in a particular body in a particular time and place and culture. Though the human mind and the human nervous system are essentially the same today as they were during the Pleistocene, the human mind is eminently malleable, and the particular culture in which an embodied human mind is situated shapes it in important ways. A prime example of this is language, which empirical research shows influences how we think (Boroditsky). In light of this recognition, it is important to acknowledge that Kafka was not just a learner of several different languages in a geographical and historical vacuum, as my discussion thus far may have seemed to imply. On the contrary, Kafka lived in a time and place where language itself as a phenomenon had become not only a philosophical preoccupation among artists and intellectuals but also, which is not unrelated, a highly contested aspect of political and hence daily social life.

A substantial tradition in Kafka scholarship within the wider body of literature that takes a historicist approach to Kafka’s works focuses on the so-called *Sprachkrise*, or language crisis, which formed an important intellectual current of the period (Arens; Corngold, *Necessity*; Gray, “Aphorism”; Koelb; Sokel, “Kafka’s Poetics,” “Language and Truth”). Toward the end of the nineteenth century, doubts began to emerge among European artists and intellectuals about the ability of language to adequately represent reality. This trend is often characterized as linguistic skepticism. All of the Kafka scholarship that emphasizes this historical phenomenon rightly addresses the political and social context that gave rise to it. The period witnessed the beginning of the dissolution of the multilinguistic and multiethnic Habsburg Monarchy, which finally culminated in World War One. A seminal political event in this process was the Badeni language reforms. After the *Ausgleich* of 1867, which gave Hungary equal political recognition with Austria within the Empire, the Slavic nationalities’ demands for greater independence became increasingly louder, and Czechs were by far the loudest. When the Czech prime minister Badeni decreed in 1897, when Kafka was thirteen, that German and Czech would both be official languages in Bohemia and Moravia, it led to riots in the

Austrian Parliament and to protests in Vienna and Prague. Martial law was even declared in Prague for a period. The Badeni reforms were suspended two years later as a result of the social and political unrest, but the incident provides a telling glimpse into the political and social tensions surrounding the very question of language in the time and place Kafka lived.

As noted above, the Kafka scholarship that focuses on the question of the *Sprachkrise* as an important intellectual influence on Kafka's work also addresses this highly contentious political atmosphere surrounding the issue of language at the time. But, incredibly, this work also all treats Kafka essentially as a monolingual speaker of German in this environment, a presumption that recent scholarship dispels. Given the highly politicized nature of language in the time and place Kafka lived, everyday linguistic practice was often fraught with risk, as it typically required the use of one specific language or another, which implied particular national or ethnic affiliations. The simple act of sending a letter, for example, and the decision to write *ulice* or *Straße* on the envelope could have serious consequences for the recipient, from social ostracism to the loss of livelihood. Especially since much of the political and social tension surrounding the question of language was concentrated precisely between the two linguistic communities to which Kafka as a German-Czech bilingual himself belonged, he must have felt the conflict acutely. If learning foreign languages, as argued throughout this epilogue, has the potential to heighten awareness of the generic conceptual structure underlying all thought and language, then the particular conditions in which Kafka learned the several languages he did ought logically to have magnified that potential. Kafka's devotion to literature and his tendency to foreground the schematic over the specific in his fiction may thus be understood as a strategy to attempt to transcend the conflicts inherent in everyday pragmatic language use at the time.

These considerations cast Kafka's celebrated speech on the Yiddish language in a new light. Enamored of the performances of a Warsaw theater troupe visiting Prague and staging plays in Yiddish between late 1911 and early 1912, Kafka delivered a lecture to introduce an evening of recitation of Yiddish literature by the leader of the troupe, Yitzhak Löwy, held on February 18, 1912. In his speech, Kafka provides his audience of assimilated Western European Jews with some historical background on Yiddish. Most commentators have understood his remarks as characterizing Yiddish as basically a mishmash of several different European languages, but I would argue that his speech, consistent with his predilection for generic conceptual structure as demonstrated throughout this study, describes Yiddish less as an amalgam of different languages and more as a sort of superordinate language, one that encompasses and subsumes all specific European national languages. He reassures his listeners that although they may not be able to understand every word of the texts they are about to hear in the same way they are used to comprehending the languages they know, they will nevertheless be able to understand the Yiddish language at a more basic conceptual level, with their emotions and feelings. This more basic level that Kafka has in mind may be taken as the level of generic or schematic conceptual structure, the level of embodied human meaning that underlies all specific human languages.

The opening paragraph of Kafka's last novel *Das Schloß* has been seen as emblematic of his work as a whole, as a beginning that is not one, that stalls, for example, or as a figure for his general approach to metaphor. These readings are certainly valid.

But in light of the argument I have advanced in this study, I propose that it may also be read as yet another significant example of his demonstrable proclivity to highlight generic and incomplete conceptual structure:

Es war spät am Abend als K. ankam. Das Dorf lag in tiefem Schnee. Vom Schloßberg war nichts zu sehen, Nebel und Finsternis umgaben ihn, auch nicht der schwächste Lichtschein deutete das große Schloß an. Lange stand K. auf der Holzbrücke die von der Landstraße zum Dorf führt und blickte in die scheinbare Leere empor.

It was late evening when K. arrived. The village lay under deep snow. There was no sign of the Castle hill, fog and darkness surrounded it, not even the faintest gleam of light suggested the large Castle. K. stood a long time on the wooden bridge that leads from the main road to the village, gazing upward into the seeming emptiness. (Harman 1)

K.'s hesitation on the bridge may be understood as a figure for Kafka's characteristically incomplete metaphoric mappings, in which he indicates merely a source domain, while readers are left to determine the target domain themselves according to their own personal preferences or proclivities. At the image schematic level, this rich image instantiates just the beginning of the PATH schema, an incomplete schema transformation. And the depiction of K. gazing up at a castle that is not visible may be understood as emblematic of the experience readers of Kafka's works have, the intimation of generic or conceptual structure that, because it is above the basic level, is never imageable. It is precisely these characteristic features of Kafka's fiction that allow or, more frequently, prompt readers to fill in the conceptual details and complete the incomplete conceptual mappings in their own minds.

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