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METAPHOR AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF REALITY

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Johnson and I (1980) have argued that metaphors are essentially conceptual in nature, rather than linguistic, and that a metaphor provides a way of understanding one kind of thing in terms of another. Since we base our actions in our understanding, and since actions are real, it follows that reality, especially on the social, interpersonal, and emotional domains, is structured according to our metaphors. Though I think this is an essentially correct view, it is certainly oversimplified and in need of more detailed study.

Here are some of the questions that I think need to be answered:
- Which conceptual metaphors do we live by, and which do we use "merely" for the sake of under-

standing?

- What does it mean to live by a metaphor?
- Which metaphors do we believe, and which don't we believe?

- Are some metaphors more essential than others in defining a concept?

And finally:

- To what extent does a given metaphor "create" the structure of a concept it defines, and to what extent does it merely "decorate" an already given structure?

In addition, I will review very briefly some results on image-based metaphorical concepts. These results suggest to me that even spatial understanding may not be universal.