

# Polemics: Fitting Metaphors – The Case of the European Union

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**Abstract:** Across many fields, scholars study metaphors, often starting with Aristotle, as I do here. Aristotle saw that we use metaphors to persuade others to accept or act on what we say—they are performative. By virtue of use, metaphors are concepts in the making; concepts are metaphors that we no longer recognize as such. Our representations of the world, however fitting in the moment, are never fully or finally fixed. Metaphors orient us in space and time, express awareness of our bodies, and reflect our relations with other embodied beings. In International Relations, scholars ignore these distinctions and find only a few metaphors worthy of attention. Petr Drulák’s work on motion, container and equilibrium metaphors is an example which I discuss with some care because his view of metaphors as sedimented in time and use is close to my own. I then suggest other metaphors that better fit the experience of the European Union than Drulák’s choices.

**Key words:** metaphor, Aristotle, Drulák, sedimentation, European Union

Metaphors, like epithets, must be fitting, which means they must fairly correspond to the thing signified...

Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1405a10-11<sup>2</sup>

Across many fields of study, scholars have turned to metaphors as a key to understanding some aspect of the human condition that has resisted or eluded their investigations. Many of these scholars offer ritual acknowledgement of Aristotle for defining and elaborating on metaphor in *Rhetoric* and *Poetics* but do not read these texts closely. In this essay, I start with Aristotle as if I were engaged in an archeological undertaking.<sup>3</sup> Yet I do so not simply to bring some ancient, unfamiliar concept, or way of thinking, to the light of day.

Aristotle saw the ornamental value in metaphors, and more. We use metaphors as one of many means to persuade others to accept or act on what we say. In effect, Aristotle anticipated the view that speech is performative—all speech. Representing the world, naming its contents, sorting things out—these are performative acts (further see Onuf, 1989: 78–95). Some names for things that seem to be alike (some concepts) fit better (as representations) and work better (as performances) than others; things change and so do conceptual vocabularies. Metaphors are

concepts in the making; concepts are metaphors that we no longer recognize as such.

Aristotle never went this far. He did say that things have names and that metaphors are names. 'Metaphor consists in giving the thing [any thing] a name that belongs to something else' (*Poetics*, 1457b7-8). Even if every metaphor names a concept, Aristotle did not say that all names are metaphors. In my opinion, he could have done so, had he considered the use of metaphor as an act of predication (here see Onuf, 2009a), and not just persuasion. Through predication, new concepts acquire names already in use, and they give their names to yet newer concepts. I would call this process metaphorical extension.

In Aristotle's view, we can invent a name for some kind of thing that may or may not be new or different instead of using the name of some other kind of thing. The new name works the way a metaphor does and therefore has the same effect as metaphorical extension. While we do find occasion to invent new names for new concepts, we more frequently borrow names already in use and put them to a new use. I suggest we do this because it is easy—there is always an inventory of names at hand—and because what we take to be new nevertheless reminds us of familiar things. It is also frequently the case that things we take to be new are not new. Already named, they end up renamed. Metaphorical extension is an inevitable consequence of predication—of speech itself—and the engine for changing what we think we know.

Not all metaphors are equally persuasive. If we use metaphors to persuade listeners (or readers) that what we say is worth listening to, then those metaphors must seem right. As Aristotle said, they should help us 'get hold of something fresh,' and they 'must not be far-fetched, or they will be difficult to grasp, nor obvious, or they will have no effect' (*Rhetoric*, 1410b13, 1410b32-33). To get at something fresh may take a fresh metaphor—one that is arresting because it is unfamiliar yet fitting—or it may take a familiar metaphor to make what is fresh easier to grasp. Either way, a metaphor must be fitting to be effective. Persuasion takes skill and practice in using metaphors.

The Romans assiduously practiced the art of persuasion but, with so much else, *ars rhetorica* (also the Latin title of Aristotle's work on this subject) fell into the trash heap of history (to use a familiar but still effective metaphor). When Renaissance humanists finally recovered this art, their foremost concern was the many figures of speech to be deployed for ornamental or stylistic effect in a literary culture where plain speech was little valued. Modern egalitarianism gradually undermined the social value and persuasive effect of highly ornamental speech, and thus much of the incentive to ask what metaphors are and how they work.

Thanks largely to postmodernist scholarship, there has been a renewed interest in texts and textuality, discourse and the social uses of rhetoric (see White, 1973 for an

influential example). In my view, this kind of scholarly work exhibits a certain ambivalence: figures of speech are ornamental, yet discourse in the most general sense, and not just clever word play, constitutes social reality. The publication of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By* (1980) had an enormous impact in many fields of study, not least because it uses plain language to show that metaphors suffuse the plain language we use every day. In the decades since this fresh and accessible book appeared, there has emerged a new field of metaphor studies, in which Lakoff and Johnson continue to play a significant part. In this essay, I draw selectively on some of the major works marking the rapid development of this new field (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999; Gibbs, 2005; Gibbs, 2008). A major theme in these materials is the importance of our daily experience, as 'embodied' beings, in our choice of metaphors.

I have already asserted that all metaphors are concepts. While most contemporary students of metaphor hold this view, they may not say so directly. Instead, they often talk about conceptual metaphors.<sup>4</sup> Such talk denies, at least implicitly, the sharp distinction between substance and style, concept and metaphor, that defines the humanist heritage in the study of rhetoric.

To soften this distinction, we need only say that so-called literal concepts are generalized, conventionalized and naturalized metaphors. Fixed by repetition, concepts are metaphors that are no longer fresh but all the more fitting in naming some kind of thing. As metaphors become naturalized, they tend to acquire affective and evaluative weight, and when they are used with modal auxiliaries, they also acquire normative weight. If all metaphors are concepts, it is no less the case that all concepts are metaphors.

Aristotle held that metaphors 'must fairly correspond to the thing signified' (*Rhetoric*, 1405a11, quoted above). I would further say that metaphors are fitting when we believe they correspond to the thing signified, which they do because we have already used metaphors to make that thing what it is. No such correspondence is perfect. In saying that 'metaphors are similes' (*Rhetoric*, 1413a14), Aristotle was expressing the same position, if indirectly. To be similar is to be different in some small degree.

Many contemporary students of metaphor agree with Aristotle, even if they do not realize it. Performative language undercuts the possibility that our representations of the world, however fitting in the moment, are ever fully and finally fixed. Yet this existential uncertainty has important cognitive consequences. Similes encourage us to make comparisons. When we compare things that we take to be alike in one respect with things we take to be alike in another respect, we draw analogies and assign kinds of things to more inclusive kinds. By classifying things, we impose an order on the world that our representations depend on if they are to do the work we need them to.

Scholars in the new field of metaphor studies often say that effective metaphors are directional. In Aristotle's language, names are given, but not given back, even if the thing thus named already has a name. Take, for example, this metaphor: THE EU IS (LIKE) A HOUSE WITH MANY ROOMS (here following the convention of using capital letters to indicate some metaphor under consideration).<sup>5</sup> We are unlikely to say that A HOUSE WITH MANY ROOMS IS (LIKE) THE EU. Yet we could well say that BOTH A HOUSE AND THE EU ARE (LIKE) CONTAINERS, in which case directionality goes from the more general kind to the more specific kind. Moreover, metaphors of the same kind will lose their directionality as they become conventionalized. For example, social fraternities on university campuses in the United States have houses, and *fraternity* and *house* are interchangeable names (A FRATERNITY IS A HOUSE/A HOUSE IS A FRATERNITY).

Some metaphors are more durable and more widely distributed across cultures than others. These would seem to be basic or, as many scholars now say, primary because they reflect, or represent, the experience we all have, as embodied beings, in dealing with the world. Even though it is frequently acknowledged that a large, indeterminate number of such metaphors are likely to exist, there has been some effort to assemble a list of primary metaphors (see Lakoff and Johnson, 1999: Table 4.1, 50–54), so far without any system or plan. Few scholars in the new field of metaphor studies are social scientists, and few of the primary metaphors they put forward have a social content or context.

With this in mind, I suggest that any such list should include three kinds of metaphors, all of which will have strong affective and evaluative associations. The first kind represents our experience in orienting ourselves in space and time. The second kind represents our awareness of our bodies. The third kind arises from having learned that there are other embodied beings in the world. As we experience close relations with other embodied beings, we also learn that they have relations with each other. Primary metaphors constitute the world as a social place, even as they remind us that our bodily selves occupy that world.

## **METAPHORS IN THE FIELD OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

Only in the last twenty years have some few scholars in the field of International Relations (hereinafter IR) given serious consideration to metaphors. The large majority of scholars in IR believe that the function of language, and therefore of concepts, is to represent objects, their properties and relations. They take metaphors to be stylistic flourishes often impeding the clear statement of literal concepts. Only those scholars who have taken the 'linguistic turn' are inclined to consider figures of speech as integral to the way people construct an inter-subjectively meaningful reality for themselves. In my own case (Onuf, 1989: 155–159), I endeavored to show

how metaphors (along with other figures of speech) work in shaping a world that is shaped in turn by our choices of words. To whatever extent my peers could relate to my larger argument about social construction, my more specific claims about figures of speech fell on deaf ears (to use another fitting metaphor).

Among those scholars in IR who have taken the linguistic turn, a growing number, starting with Friedrich Kratochwil (1989), have given their attention to discourse and argument. Yet they tend to disregard Kratochwil's important discussion of rhetoric as persuasive speech and thus have little to say about metaphors. There have been studies of the way metaphors are used in the conduct of international relations and of the constitutive effects of their use (Lakoff, 1991; Chilton and Ilyin, 1993; Chilton, 1996; Mutimer, 1997; Marks, 2001; this list is hardly exhaustive). Not all of these studies are from scholars in the field, and they showed little in the way of constitutive effect themselves. There are, however, recent signs of gathering interest (Beer and Landtsheer, 2004; Hülse, 2006; Slingerland, Blanchard and Boyd-Judson, 2007; Carver and Pikalo, 2008; Kornprobst, Pouliot, Shah and Zaiotti, 2008). One of the more conspicuous signs is the appearance of Petr Drulák's 'Motion, Container and Equilibrium: Metaphors in the Discourse about European Integration' (2006) in a leading journal.

Drulák (2006: 503) adopts a constructivist approach to metaphors: 'Rather than just describing pre-existing similarities between two subjects, and objectively mediating between them, metaphor actually contribute to the establishment of similarities and, thus, to the construction of our knowledge of the world' (2006: 503). Implied here is the Aristotelian position, which was recently reaffirmed by scholars in the new field of metaphor studies, that metaphors are indistinguishable from similes. While Drulák points to Lakoff and Johnson (1980) as a source of inspiration—an earlier version of Drulák's 2006 piece tells us this book offers 'a radical elaboration of the constructivist perspective' (Drulák, 2004: 6)—he has little to say about the relation between metaphor and bodily experience, which Lakoff and Johnson have continued to emphasize. In this respect, Drulák has much company, perhaps because the philosophical idealism of discourse studies and constructivist IR does not fit well with materialist tendencies in the new field of metaphor studies.

'Of paramount importance,' Drulák tells us, 'is the idea that language is not only a simple mirror of social reality, but... contributes to the very constitution of social reality' (2006: 501). This claim would seem to make Drulák a language-oriented constructivist. Since he credits Alexander Wendt (1999) as an influence on his work (even though Wendt is notoriously indifferent to language), we might think Wendt's 'rump materialism' (1999: 92–138) would have pointed Drulák toward Lakoff and Johnson's more thoroughgoing materialism. There is, however, no evidence that Drulák has, as a constructivist, come to grips with this nettlesome issue.<sup>6</sup>

Drulák foregoes any effort to define metaphor precisely. He does, however, quote Kenneth Burke's classic work on literary theory, *A Grammar of Motives*: 'Metaphors...

can be broadly understood as devices for seeing something in terms of something else' (Burke, 1945: 503, quoted in Cameron, 1999: 13). Drulák's choice of the metaphor A METAPHOR IS A DEVICE is related to what I would call a primary metaphor, DOING IS MAKING, and reaffirms his constructivist affinities. Burke's ocular metaphor (KNOWING IS SEEING) points to Aristotle's conception of metaphor as using the name of one thing for another but away from Aristotle's emphasis on predication and, correspondingly, the constitutive power of language.

Whether Drulák would concur with my view that all metaphors are concepts and all concepts metaphors is unclear from a close reading of his work. He affirms a distinction, first drawn by Lakoff–Johnson (1980), between 'conceptual metaphors' and 'metaphorical expressions' (Drulák, 2006: 503–504). While such a distinction might indicate resistance to the directionless metaphor A CONCEPT IS A METAPHOR, methodological considerations may also be a factor. 'The distinction between conceptual metaphors and metaphorical expressions reflects two different ways of examining metaphors: the micro perspective at the level of the participants and the macro perspective viewed by the analyst' (Drulák, 2006: 504).

Methodologically speaking, I fail to see what Drulák gains by introducing different 'levels' (in this context an ill-fitting metaphor) when his concern is language users' 'perspective' (reverting to an ocular metaphor). By standing back, an observer–'the analyst'–presumably sees something–a 'structure'–not visible to those whose language the observer is attending to. Yet the observer is also a language user (and could be the very one stepping back for a better view) who uses a 'metaphorical expression' to conceptualize whatever she sees (or hears–auditory metaphors fit better here). Everyone is speaking and listening all of the time; in the process everyone is making, using and remaking concepts–'conceptual metaphors'–all of the time. Drulák says that conceptual metaphors are 'abstract' and metaphorical expressions are 'specific' (2006: 503–504). Yet this formula gives the game away. Over time and with use, fresh metaphorical expressions become familiar, and as this happens, they seem to their users to have become more generally relevant to their conversational needs.

Drulák seems to concur on this point at least. He emphasizes that 'a metaphor first emerges as a novel and unusual statement, and then gradually loses its metaphoricity by intensive usage to eventually become part of plain thought' (2006: 506–507). Much as I endorse this view, the term *metaphoricity* is ambiguous. It might be taken to imply that a metaphor has some essential properties which would mean that the metaphor would cease to exist if these properties were to disappear. Aristotle's belief that metaphors must be fresh but also fitting does not make these properties essential *if*, as Drulák insists, we treat 'metaphors as necessary conditions of speaking and thinking, rather than as mere rhetorical deviations from normal language' (2006: 502).

Granting Drulák a coherent position consistent with his constructivist claims, he is inclined to minimize the distinction between metaphors and concepts. Thus in the early version of his piece, he invokes 'the traditional distinction between "dead" and "live" metaphors' (2004: 9). Later he no longer makes this distinction. Instead he refers to the 'life cycle of metaphors' (Drulák, 2006: 506), which suggests metaphorically that metaphors change with time. He also claims that 'many seemingly literal statements are actually hidden metaphors' (Drulák, 2006: 506). This is a significant metaphorical shift, suggesting that a metaphor ages and fades from view, but does not die. More abstractly, some of the observable properties of a metaphor change over time without adversely affecting their function in social construction. Indeed metaphors may function better as constituents in the process of concept formation because they are hidden.

That metaphors go from being novel to familiar to hidden results in 'three stages of sedimentation' (Drulák, 2006: 507). Linking stages and sedimentation results in a mixed metaphor. The metaphorical thrust of the term *sedimentation* derives from what is certainly a primary metaphor (UP IS NEW), while the term *stages* derives from a different yet also primary metaphor (CHANGE IS FORWARD MOTION). Drulák gives Ole Wæver credit for the term *sedimentation*. In Drulák's summary (2006: 502), 'social and discursive structures can be seen as layered. The different layers of sedimentation are the result of historical practices, while at the same time they impact on actual practices.'<sup>7</sup>

Using the term *sedimentation* for the conventionalization of metaphors seems to be Drulák's innovation. This is a fresh and effective way of talking about a cumulative but periodically discontinuous process. Indicatively, the earlier version of Drulák's piece titles a section 'The Conventionalization of Metaphors' (2004: 11), which the later version changes to 'The Sedimentation of Metaphors' (Drulák, 2006: 506). Distinguishing 'three stages of sedimentation gives us a useful system for classifying metaphors. Metaphors can be categorized as sedimented, conventional, or unconventional' (Drulák, 2006: 507). 'Sedimented metaphors are taken for granted and, thus, uncontested,' and they are 'ubiquitous' (third stage); 'conventional metaphors are frequent and contested' (second stage); 'unconventional metaphors are rare but contested' (first stage) (Drulák, 2006: 508).

Why the classificatory scheme reverses the order of the stages is unclear and somewhat confusing. Why contestation is one of the scheme's two discriminating properties (the other is frequency) is not explained. I would think that some few novel metaphors work well (for rhetorical purposes) because they seem incontestably right, and they are added to the stock of familiar metaphors because they are not generally contested. Those novel metaphors that do not work well and thus do not achieve rapid acceptance will simply die from neglect.

As I have already indicated, I would call a metaphor no longer recognizable as a metaphor naturalized and, in many cases, normativized. Often used by postmodern

writers, the term *naturalization* suggests that the metaphor in question seems natural to its users—they feel it is given by nature rather than by human artifice. As with most of nature so-called, such a metaphor is subject to change, however gradual and causally complex. More than this, naturalized metaphors are active concepts, constantly put to use and infinitely subject to novel applications and alterations. As shifting metaphors, they are subject to metaphorical rehabilitation. The term *sedimented* suggests that once a metaphor is buried under layers of unconventional and conventional metaphors, ‘the harder it is to change it’ (Drulák, 2006: 502). In metaphorical terms, the accumulation of dead metaphors turns into rock.

Wæver addresses this issue: ‘the deeper structures [of discourse] are more solidly sedimented and more difficult to politicise and change, but change is always in principle possible since all of these structures are socially constituted’ (2003: 32). Discursive structure consists of extended arrays of related metaphors, some of which are normativized. Such massively complex metaphors disrupt layers and afford opportunities for change, for example, through the circulation of novel metaphors. Because Drulák deals with discrete metaphors, sedimentation packs them together like specks of sand—they have no structure, metaphorically speaking.

Drulák associates *sedimentation* with *internalization*, the latter term referring to individuals, the former to ‘speech communities’ (about which see Drulák, 2006: 505–506). We might better associate sedimentation with *socialization*—a term that points to external conditions (institutions, social-material factors) in the process of sedimentation. Drulák introduces internalization by reference to Wendt’s ‘two levels of structure: micro-structure and macro-structure’ (Drulák, 2006: 501, citing Wendt, 1999: 147–153; recall Drulák’s micro and macro perspectives). In my view, specific institutional contexts shape processes of internalization and socialization, not abstract structures as observers’ metaphorical contrivances (unless, of course, those contrivances have become sedimented features of institutional arrangements) (see further Onuf, 2009a).

## **METAPHORS IN THE DISCOURSE ABOUT EUROPEAN INTEGRATION**

Europe’s novel institutional arrangements have prompted the metaphorical extension of familiar concepts (sedimented metaphors) to previously unnamed phenomena. Many of these metaphors have rapidly sedimented. *Spillover*, *engrenage*, *acquis* and *supranational* are obvious examples. Even the extension of the term *integration* to economic relations dates only from the 1940s. Some extensions of sedimented metaphors to European arrangements have been contested—for example, that of *federation*—on grounds of dissimilarity.

Drulák applies the ‘framework’ he has so carefully constructed to the European Union as a case study. He says this framework ‘relies on discourse analysis,’ but that



it is 'structure-oriented' (Drulák, 2006: 511). Even if Wæver talks about discursive structures, Drulák does not. Had he actually developed the sedimented metaphor *structure*, which he introduces on methodological grounds (see above), it would have unduly complicated his framework. As it is, talk of structure gets him in trouble.

Because 'there is a close connection between IR theories and theories of European integration,' Drulák identifies 'the EU as a type of international structure' (2006: 511) and proceeds to classify theories of European integration as either *intergovernmental* or *supranational* (2006: 509). Too much is going on here with too little clarification. Any claim that IR theories and theories of European integration are structurally similar is contestable. While intergovernmental theories do resemble IR theories in their emphasis on the relations between governments, supranational theories are anomalous at best in IR, just as the prefix *supra-* implies. The frequent recourse to novel metaphors in supranational theories suggests that IR's sedimented metaphors do not fit the European situation.

Drulák (2006: 510) tells us the 'conceptual metaphors used by EU leaders' are the 'actual subject' of his research. This claim is misleading. His paper has two actual subjects (in addition to itself). One subject is the conceptual metaphors constituting scholarly discourse, metaphorically identified as theory. The second subject is the conceptual metaphors leaders use in public, metaphorically identified as practice. The point of Drulák's study is to use each discourse to look at the other. If we call theories of European integration *discursive institutions* (discourse set apart as a relatively stable complex arrangement of metaphors), we avoid the disadvantages of using structural metaphors and downplay the unhelpful comparison with IR theories. By doing so, we take European Union studies and the European Union's institutional arrangements to be discrete discursive fields, each with at least some discursive conventions of its own. Then there are other discursive conventions that are shared between two or more discursive fields and still other conventions that are even more widely shared.

Drulák limits his research to three years of official debate over a Constitution for the European Union. This framing of the subject effectively removes institutional arrangements from consideration, leaves a nominally homogenous 'speech community,' and relieves him from complicating his exposition with talk of 'micro-structure.' The other subject—theories of European integration—he classifies by reference to structure (in effect, different institutional features). Then he associates these theories with familiar metaphors: 'while intergovernmental approaches see the EU as an EQUILIBRIUM OF CONTAINERS, supranational approaches imagine the EU as a CONTAINER' (Drulák, 2006: 511).

Container metaphors are much favored in metaphor studies. In IR, STATE AS CONTAINER is understandably treated as a constitutive metaphor. Insofar as inter-

governmental theories start and end with states as units of analysis (as do most IR theories as discursive institutions), the container metaphors will be found in abundance. With such an obvious finding, it is hard to see what is gained by subjecting these theories to a metaphorical assessment. If, however, we switch from IR to Political Theory or Constitutional Law as fields of study, we might expect to find metaphors involving bodies and persons: THE BODY IS (NOT JUST) A CONTAINER, SOCIAL BODIES ARE PERSONS, LEADERS ARE HEADS, THE STATE IS A POLITICAL BODY, etc. Alternatively we might follow Weber and say THE STATE IS A CHAIN OF COMMAND and go on to say NATION IS BODY or NATION IS FAMILY.

In an *ad hoc* alteration of the initial classificatory scheme (side-by-side containers), Drulák takes neofunctionalism out from under the supranational ‘umbrella’ and designates it as a container like the other two because ‘the central neofunctionalist metaphor sees the EU as a MOTION’ (2006: 511). This claim seems wrong on the face of it. The central metaphors for neofunctionalism are FUNCTION IS NEED ADDRESSED and FUNCTION IS TASK PERFORMED. If this metaphorical complex is not obvious, then we should surmise that it is so sedimented in bureaucratic discourse (i.e. institutionalized) that public officials and scholarly observers take it for granted. Motion is metaphorically highly visible because the future of the EU is much contested.

Drulák’s texts have very little (two paragraphs) to say about the remaining contents of the supranational container. Yet federalism and constitutionalism (closely related as discursive institutions) offer sedimented metaphors as pervasive as they are unseen. Perhaps the best examples have to do with levels: LEVELS ARE PLATFORMS, LEVELS ARE LAYERS. Federalism is one important part of an exceptionally old and dense discursive institution which, as a whole, is no longer in view. This institution is called republicanism; as glossed by scholars, it is republican theory. Republicanism consists of a great many sedimented metaphors that no longer seem to be related in the way they once were.<sup>8</sup>

Drulák holds that federalism and constitutionalism ‘are among the most influential examples of CONTAINER thinking’ (2006: 512). I find this claim unconvincing. It rests on a tendency (hardly Drulák’s alone) to extend the metaphor CATEGORY IS CONTAINER to social phenomena where relations are paramount. Even with respect to categories, we often prefer to employ the metaphor CATEGORY IS FAMILY, as in Aristotle’s *species* and *genera* and Wittgenstein’s *family resemblance*.

Once we say, following Aristotle, that an association, as a whole, is a voluntary relation of like, that like associations form wholes by voluntarily associating, and so on, we begin to visualize the relations within associations horizontally and those between associations vertically (even if Aristotle did not). Here we discover the metaphorical value of the metaphor LINES ARE BORDERS—in this case, horizontal

lines. This metaphorical complex is at the heart of republican theory as a body of claims, for which Aristotle is the canonical source, about institutional arrangements for the common good. This metaphorical complex does not insist that LINES ARE BARRIERS (lines mark layers but do not make them impermeable). On the contrary, Aristotle took for granted that parts and wholes are always related, and the Renaissance and early modern revival of republican theory developed *representation* as a metaphorical complex to show just how relations between levels worked in principle.

Functional theory postulates a variety of human needs, a division of labor in meeting those human needs, and increased task specialization over time. Functionalists draw vertical lines between sectors differentiated by task. If we combine federal and functional theory (with Aristotle's figurative blessing and republican theory as discursive institution), we can visualize institutional arrangements as a *lattice* (Onuf, 1998: 271–272). Insofar as a lattice suggests straight lines both in parallel and at right angles, and thus an ordered arrangement of self-contained boxes (CONTAINERS ARE BOXES) or cells, this metaphor may create the impression that stable relations across both vertical and horizontal lines are seriously hampered. Furthermore, when this metaphor is applied to European institutional arrangements, it is immediately clear that lines are irregularly spaced and cells vary considerably in size (hence *variable geometry* as an associated metaphor).

An alternative metaphor, well-known to students of the United States as a federal republic, is the layer cake (with local, state, and federal layers). We can visualize this cake as a disk and thus cut it in different-sized wedges (separation of powers as constitutional doctrine, functional bureaux). If this metaphor is too tidy for descriptive purposes, then the metaphor of a *marble cake*, which Morton Grodzins popularized (President's Commission on National Goals, 1960: 265), may be too messy. Despite the sedimented status of the marble cake metaphor, it leaves no way to discriminate between association visualized by place or space and function as activity fixed not by place but by needs, skills and tools.

## DOWN AND UP

If every concept started off as a metaphor and most concepts have buried histories, then most of the metaphors deployed in a public debate go uncounted and their importance in discursive institutional change goes unrecognized. In other words, the deeper layers of meaning and significance do not register when the observer has 'metaphoricity' in mind and chooses metaphors accordingly (Drulák, 2006: 509). One could start with the claim that buried meanings are basic (PRIMARY IS BASIC) and then proceed by digging through sedimented layers (LEARNING IS DIGGING) for metaphors that reveal what has later disappeared from view. There is a methodological problem: How does the investigator identify an exemplary text, or a

metaphorical complex, from the accumulated rubble making up deeply sedimented layers? Must it protrude into higher layers, have 'ripple effects' in its own layer, seem to be typical for its time and place, or display exceptional craftsmanship? Many scholars will be relatively untroubled by these questions on the assumption that scholarship is cumulatively self-correcting (MORE IS UP). Those scholars (such as myself) who do not find this assumption persuasive will claim instead that the past is what we make it today, for reasons (REASONS ARE SUBJECTIVE CONSIDERATIONS) that some future scholar may wish to investigate.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> I presented a longer version of this essay at the Institute of International Relations, Prague (Onuf, 2009c). I am grateful to Petr Drulák and Petr Kratochvíl for their hospitality and encouragement, and to all present on that occasion for a bracing discussion. Eric Blanchard deserves much of the credit (or blame) for reviving my interest in metaphors. I thank Harry Gould for serving, yet again, as sounding board and gentle critic. Finally, I thank Vendulka Kubálková for insisting that the time had come for me to visit her homeland.

<sup>2</sup> All translations of Aristotle are from Barnes (1984).

<sup>3</sup> For a much fuller statement of what I think this undertaking involves, see Onuf (2009c, 2009d). Onuf (2009d) adapts material from Onuf (2009c) which is not used here.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Johnson (2008: 44): 'Philosophical theories, like all theoretical constructions, are elaborations of conceptual metaphors. In a very strong sense, philosophy is metaphor' (his emphasis).

<sup>5</sup> The metaphor EUROPE IS A HOUSE is often used. See Hülse (2006: 412–414) for discussion and citations.

<sup>6</sup> Of course, the same can be said of my own Kantian constructivism. In recent work, I try to show in different ways (Onuf, 2003, 2009b) that constructivist idealism and a materialism more expansive than Wendt's can be reconciled.

<sup>7</sup> Drulák cites Waever (1998: 106–112)—a text that I have not read. But see Waever (2003: 23–47) for what appears to be a similar exposition.

<sup>8</sup> To illustrate the point, Hooghe and Marks (2003) discuss the concept of multi-level governance, as developed in several fields of study (European Union Studies, IR, Federalism, Local Government, and Public Policy), with no reference whatsoever to republican theory as a discursive institution.

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