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CONCEPTUAL METAPHORS AND CONCEPTS OF MULTIPLE REALITIES: POINTS IN COMMON

The paper discusses the concept of reality and four attempts to account for it: William James's conception of "sub-universes" and Lawrence LeShan's idea of "alternate realities", both developed in psychology; Leon Chwistek's conception of multiple realities in philosophy and art; Alfred Schütz's idea of "limited areas of sense (meaning)", advanced in sociology. It sets them against the second generation cognitive linguistic view of conceptual metaphor, developed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson. The cognitive linguists claim that metaphors shape people's ontological orientations and so largely define their everyday realities. Various points in common between the respective conceptions of realities and the cognitive linguistic view of metaphor are considered. The theory of conceptual metaphor is presented as another attempt to cope with the concept of reality. Like the other conceptions, it claims that reality is not homogenous; instead, metaphorical pluralism is the only way that allows one to deal effectively with the complexity of the surrounding world.

INTRODUCTION: THE CONCEPT OF REALITY

The concept of reality is a vague one, which is reflected in its diverse descriptions. A popular view of it was expressed by the Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset (1986: 167-168):

A man tends to regard as real those things which he knows best and perceives with least effort. In each of us, the attention seems to be inclined to turn of its own accord to one definite class of objects or another. A born scientist will observe, first of all, visible phenomena that allow of exact reasoning; for an ardent financier the world is made of economic facts. It would be in vain to argue about such spontaneous inclinations; no man can be convinced that reality does not, in the last instance, consist of the complex of his chosen objects. It follows that different people may live in different realities, which are largely shaped by their subjective attitudes to the world surrounding them.

The view of reality in psychology is not much different. Mudyń (2000: 266) describes it as "being something real", and admits that the concept is inherently indefinite. Projection plays a major role in establishing reality: real is what we regard as important. Mudyń (2000: 266-267) explains that reality is closely con-

nected with the concept of “ontological orientation”: people focus attention on a selected aspect of life and regard it as real.

Instead of claiming that a single and uniform reality exists for all people, it is thus possible to postulate the presence of multiple realities. Such views were advanced in philosophy and psychology by William James ([1890] 1901) and Lawrence LeShan (1976), in philosophy and art by Leon Chwistek ([1921] 2004b) and Aron Gurwitsch (1964), in sociology by Alfred Schütz (1973).

Cognitive linguists of the second generation base their analysis of language on similar assumptions. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980, 1999) claim that ordinary users of language may have different conceptions of reality. Langacker (2008: 500; 524-525 cited in Kardela 2011) summarizes the idea in the following words:

What happens in the social, cultural, and imaginative spheres is as real and important to us as physical occurrences. Moreover, we are not just concerned with immediate reality. We further engage the world through memory, anticipation, prediction, generalization, and contemplation of alternatives [*my emphasis*]. . . We live in a real world. Since our view of this world is mentally constructed on the basis of experience, each of us apprehends it somewhat differently [*my emphasis*].

People are thus capable of construing the world around them in diverse ways, which is often reflected in actions they undertake.

MULTIPLE REALITIES IN PSYCHOLOGY

In his best known work *The Principles of Psychology* ([1890] 1901), William James (1842-1910) drew a distinction between the objective external world and the way it exists for an individual (Manterys 1997: 16). He claimed that reality was created by active, knowing, and experiencing subjects who select objects out of the “total universe” of things, establish relations between them and themselves, and so form various “sub-universes”.¹ Each of them is internally coherent and can be a separate order of reality. The relations between the subject and the world are thus individual and practical: many potential “sub-universes” are possible,² but those that an individual is currently not in may be neglected or even forgotten (Manterys 1997: 19-21).

The clinical psychologist Lawrence LeShan (b. 1920) also advanced a view that a person may live in more than one reality. His four “alternate realities”, also

¹ The terms “sub-realities” and “sub-worlds” are used as synonyms. See James ([1890] 1901).

² James’s ([1890] 1901): 293-295 cited in Manterys 1997: 20) typology of “sub-universes” is as follows: world of sense/physical things instinctively apprehended; world of science/physical things conceived by the learned; world of ideal relations/abstract truths; world of ‘idols of the tribe’/illusions/prejudices; various supernatural worlds, e.g. Christian heaven and hell; worlds of individual opinion; worlds of sheer madness or vagary.

called “modes of being”, are “invented-discovered” (Mudyń 2006: 72-77). “The sensory reality” assumes that all knowledge comes from the senses, and that all events and objects are separate and governed by the relation of cause-and-effect. In “the clairvoyant reality”, all objects and events are integral parts of a totality; all borders and barriers, including those of time, are a fiction, and the events simply are. In the “transpsychic reality”, in turn, people see objects and events as separate, but not clearly divided from one another in the totality: action undertaken in a part always affects the whole; good is all that contributes to integration of a part with the whole, and bad is what prevents it. Finally, in “the mythic reality” there is no difference between an object and its perception, everything has meaningful contents, and the subjective/objective distinction does not exist.

Each of those “realities” is regarded as the only one acceptable as long as one is inside it, but all “realities” have equal status and are necessary for good functioning of a human being (Mudyń 2006: 77). They follow the pattern of 1+3: “the sensory reality” is subconsciously accepted, fits the commonplace view of reality, has no axiology, plays the dominant role in everyday functioning, and makes biological survival possible (Mudyń 2006: 73-74, 77). Finally, all these “realities” presuppose alternate ontologies, and should be regarded as forms of interaction of the subject with the rest of the universe: the interaction is the essence of what we regard as objective reality (Mudyń 2006: 79).

MULTIPLE REALITIES IN PHILOSOPHY AND ART

Leon Chwistek (1884-1944) was a Polish logician, philosopher, and painter. His concept of multiple realities was developed between 1917 and 1924 (Mudyń 2003: 101-102). It is based on Bertrand Russell’s theory of logical types (Mudyń 2003: 104).

Chwistek ([1918] 2004a: 3-10; [1921] 2004b; Mudyń 2003: 107) postulates the existence of four distinct realities. “The reality of things” is a commonplace view of the world created by a naturally disposed mind, a reality of entities that exist irrespective of whether they can be seen or not. “The physical reality”, in turn, consists of conceptual constructs that cannot be seen or examined by senses, such as atoms, electrons, gravitation, etc. They can be used for the interpretation of the structure of the world. “The reality of sensory impressions” consists of individual perceptions of things visible and directly given to one’s consciousness under normal circumstances. Finally, “the reality of things imagined” is typical of dreamers and visionaries: it means being engrossed in a vision that does not correspond to the surrounding reality.

Each of the “realities” is paired with specific philosophical assumptions and a style in painting:

- a) “the reality of things”: natural realism/primitivism;
- b) “the physical reality”: rational realism/realism;
- c) “the reality of impressions”: idealism (psychologism)/impressionism;
- d) “the reality of things imagined”: idealism/futurism.

Since each reality is an internally coherent deductive system of axioms (Mudyń 2003: 103), truth or falsity of a proposition can be evaluated only relative to a system or a kind of “reality” and on condition that it can be formulated in that system (Mudyń 2003: 104). It follows that two philosophical systems can be contradictory, but at the same time internally coherent. In a similar way, a work of art, for example a painting, should be consistent with only one reality (Chwistek [1918] 2004a: 19), and be evaluated in accordance with the reality in which it was created.

MULTIPLE REALITIES IN SOCIOLOGY

The Austrian-American sociologist Alfred Schütz (1899-1959) modified James’s idea of multiple realities (Manterys 1997: 22). Rather than “sub-universes”, he calls them “limited areas of sense (meaning)” (Schütz 1973: 230ff cited in Manterys 1997: 23). Unlike James, who emphasized subjects’ relations to various parts of the “total universe”, Schütz focused on the way in which social actors made sense of the environment (Manterys 1997: 23-24). Each of the realities, that is, everyday life, dress stage-play, the pictorial world, the fictitious world of the jest, the child’s play-world, the province of religious experience, the world of scientific theory, represents a different manner of cognition (Schütz 1973: 229ff; Schütz and Luckmann 1973: 21ff quoted in Manterys 1997: 24). The fictitious world, for example, is a product of unrestrained *ego*, remaining outside the objective space and time. Its duration depends on the action of the fantasizing *ego* (Schütz and Luckmann 1973: 28-34 quoted in Manterys 1997: 25).

MULTIPLE REALITIES IN LINGUISTICS

Cognitive linguists George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980: 3) claim that language provides access to human conceptual system. The system itself makes our everyday existence possible:

The concepts that govern our thought are not just matters of the intellect. They also govern our everyday functioning, down to the most mundane details. Our concepts structure what we perceive, how we get around in the world, and how we relate to other people. Our conceptual system thus plays a central role in defining our everyday realities [*my emphasis*].

Such view has serious philosophical consequences. First, it means that no metaphysics is possible independent of epistemology (Lakoff 1987: 207-208). Secondly, we may live in a number of different realities, all of which depend upon our concepts.

PLURALISM OF METAPHORS AND REALITIES

Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 3) also claim that human conceptual system “is fundamentally metaphorical in nature.” It follows that metaphors often shape our everyday realities, even if in most cases we are not aware of their presence (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 3).

Cognitive linguistic view of metaphor owes a lot to Max Black, who probably was the first scholar to recognize the role that metaphors play in creating reality. He believed that at least some of them were “cognitive instruments, indispensable for perceiving connections that, once perceived, are *then* truly present” ([1977] 1993: 37). The metaphors helped to see aspects of reality that they themselves constituted: “...the world is necessarily a world *under a certain description* – or a world seen from a certain perspective. Some metaphors can create such a perspective” (Black [1977] 1993: 38).

Lakoff and Johnson (1999: 70-71, 137-344) show that multiple metaphors for a single concept are possible. They illustrate it by analyzing the structure of such concepts as love, time, events and causes, the mind, the self, and morality. Metaphorical pluralism results in multiple conceptualizations of the same idea, which, in turn, may produce different realities and engender different actions undertaken by subjects living by the given metaphors.

INTERCULTURAL PLURALISM OF METAPHORS AND REALITIES

Different metaphor-based realities are often created by unrelated cultures. It is enough to consider how cultures as distant as Amerindian and Western/North American make sense of the concept of time. Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 7-9; 1999: 161-166) argue that in the Western culture time is understood by means of the metaphors TIME IS MONEY/A RESOURCE/A VALUABLE COMMODITY:

How do you spend your time these days? The flat tire cost me an hour. I've invested a lot of time in her. You need to budget your time. You don't use your time profitably. You're wasting my time. This gadget will save you hours. I lost a lot of time when I got sick. Thank you for your time.

That is not the case in Amerindian cultures. Lakoff and Johnson (1999: 164-165) quote the anthropologist Elizabeth Brandt's (personal communication) description of the concept of time of the Pueblo Indians in New Mexico and Arizona:

[. . .] the Pueblos do not even have in their languages a means of saying the equivalent of "I didn't have enough time for that." They can say "My path didn't take me there" or "I couldn't find a path to that," but those are not instances of time being conceptualized as a resource.

The metaphor of MOVING OBSERVER, OR TIME'S LANDSCAPE (Lakoff and Johnson 1999: 145-147), also functioning in the Western culture, may be there, but the Pueblos do not have the economy-related metaphors. As a result, they do not act in ways that aim at *making most of* their time. The North Americans and Pueblos thus live in entirely different temporal realities.

INTRACULTURAL PLURALISM OF METAPHORS AND REALITIES

Multiple temporal realities are also possible within the Western culture. One may live by the economy-related metaphors of time and attach a lot of importance to the value of time. In contrast, living by the motion-based metaphors of time means focusing on the passage of time. The metaphors may be coherent with one another, for example, one may want to spend time profitably because it passes. Alternatively, one may perceive time as going by and not regard it as scarce. The two attitudes to time may result in entirely different patterns of behavior: the economy-based metaphors are more likely to motivate actions aiming at proper allotment of time.

The TIME IS MONEY metaphor is reified in various social institutions, such as hourly, weekly, or monthly wages, telephone message units, hotel room rates, interest on loans (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 8), as well as in the idea of "time theft" by employees who abuse paid working hours (Lakoff and Johnson 1999: 164-166). Our everyday reality is strongly affected by it. In contrast, the following passage illustrates a different view of time present within the Western culture:

One of the best things you can do when you arrive in Greece is take off your watch. Service is slow, schedules are often blatantly disregarded, and businesses open and close on a whim. If you can't resign yourself to the Greeks' sense of time, you may just go mad. But only in a country where *time isn't money* [my italics] and deadlines don't exist can you stare at the sea for days (or even months), find illumination in a remote outcropping of wildflowers that took you a lifetime to discover, or watch the sunset from the same beach night after night, marveling anew at approaching dusk each time.

The passage was written by American students traveling in Greece, who experience the temporal reality there as very much different from the one at home. There can be no doubt that many of the social institutions that reify the TIME IS

MONEY metaphor function also in Greece. In spite of that, the Greeks' temporal reality is very different.

METAPHORS, WORLDS, AND REALITIES

Like Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 1999), Mudyń (2008: 109) emphasizes the role of metaphors in human life. He explains that their dependence on sensory data paired with generative function of language makes them efficient tools of imagination. Metaphors thus not only create various epistemological constructs, but also shape socially accepted ontological judgments. They are psychologically convincing, but not always logically consistent.³ The concept of time, which, like so many other abstract concepts, lends itself to many metaphorical interpretations, is a good example (Lakoff and Johnson 1999; Mudyń 2008: 110).

Mudyń (2008: 110) argues that there is a fundamental difference between realized and unrealized metaphors. The former are used intentionally, and each such metaphor can be replaced by another one just because the speaker knows that they are speaking metaphorically. The latter, however, are more important: unless questioned, they become "true descriptions" of reality and tend to be identified with reality as such. Mudyń (2008: 110) concludes that the unrealized metaphors make up "images of the world" and personal ontologies of reality. He quotes Jäkel's (2003: 43) view that "idealized cognitive models" based on them can be regarded as culture-specific modes of thinking which determine the worldview of a given linguistic community.

Employing a given metaphor, we at the same time project a given "ontological orientation".⁴ It need not agree with orientations accepted by other people, both in intracultural and intercultural context. Thus, to speak a "common tongue", two persons must have a "common ontology" (Mudyń 2008: 120).

CONCEPTS OF MULTIPLE REALITIES AND METAPHORS: POINTS IN COMMON

In spite of obvious differences, there clearly exist points in common between concepts of multiple realities developed within psychology, philosophy, art,

³ They may be at odds with the correspondence theory of truth accepted in analytic philosophy. See especially the discussion of Frege's ([1892] 1966) senses in Lakoff and Johnson (1999: 99, 249-250) and Tarski's (1933) semantic definition of truth in Bocheński (1992: 70-75).

⁴ This is irrespective of whether the metaphor is ontological or not. See Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 14-51) for the basic classification of conceptual metaphors.

sociology, and cognitive linguistics. Though each of those branches of science studies different aspects of human activity and employs different methodological frameworks, they all focus on to the relation between a human being and the surrounding world.

WILLIAM JAMES

James claims that it is possible to have different views of the same object: at one time it may be a part of a given “sub-universe”, but at some other time it may lose its significance to an individual (James [1890] 1901: 288 quoted in Manterys 1997: 19). Multiple views of the same entity are also taken for granted in cognitive linguistics. They are expressed by means of different metaphors thanks to which people create their own realities (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 3; Mudyń 2008: 113). We thus have various metaphorical concepts of love, time, events and causes, the mind, the self, and morality which can be at odds with one another (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 44-45, 49; 1999: 137-334). Some of them may be permanently or temporarily insignificant to an individual.

Like one dominant “sub-universe” with its inherent order, the dominant metaphor, whether realized or unrealized by its user, will determine their actions. If they, for example, strictly adhere to the metaphor TIME IS MONEY, they may regard a break in an activity they have undertaken as behaviour that does not contribute to its completion or, simply put, a *waste*. Others, however, may regard it as an interval that is necessary to achieve a higher level of efficiency in future, hence as a contribution to the task’s overall success.⁵ Various metaphors of marriage (Quinn 1987), as well as cultural models of morality based on different family metaphors (Lakoff 1996), also lead their users to think and act in diverse ways.

Within his typology of “sub-universes”,⁶ James ([1890] 1901: 301 quoted in Manterys 1997: 21) grants a privileged position to the “sub-universe of senses/physical things instinctively apprehended”. Such experience is absolutely fundamental for human existence because its universality is rooted in our biological functioning. Cognitive linguistics also attributes primary role to this form of experience – concepts derived from it shape many other abstract concepts. They are usually reflected in source domains of various types of metaphors, be they spatial relations, physical objects, or highly structured scenarios of actions, for example of journeys.⁷

⁵ See McGrath and Kelly (1986) for a discussion of this and other potential conflicts involving various temporal frames, as well as Lakoff and Johnson’s (1999: 165-166) view of the problem of “time theft”.

⁶ See footnote 2.

⁷ The three types of concrete concepts correspond to source domains of the basic triad of experiential, ontological, and structural metaphors. Sensory experience also plays a fundamental role in the emergence of primary metaphors – see Lakoff and Johnson (1999: 45-59).

LEON CHWISTEK

First, each of Chwistek's four realities consists of a set of axioms that rid it of contradiction. Each conceptual metaphor, in turn, is a system of mappings and corresponding linguistic expressions that make it consistent throughout.

Secondly, Chwistek's four realities are concepts functioning on the same level of validity. This means that they can co-exist without being contradictory, and that it is possible to move from one reality to another (Mudyń 2003: 105, 109). Metaphor-based realities are similar. Lakoff and Johnson (1999: 127) show that inconsistent metaphors of marriage can function side by side and help people make sense of this social institution. Chwistek's pluralism of realities thus corresponds to the cognitive linguistic pluralism of metaphors, which also shape people's everyday realities.

Third, Chwistek claims that a proposition can be true or false only with respect to a given reality (Mudyń 2003: 104). Cognitive linguists argue that a statement can be true or false with respect to a given metaphor, which shapes a given worldview. To say *His ideas have finally come to fruition* is true only if we take the metaphor IDEAS ARE PLANTS (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 47) for granted. In contrast, the expression *He produces new ideas at an outstanding rate* makes sense only within the metaphor IDEAS ARE PRODUCTS (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 47). Both expressions and metaphors are inconsistent since they highlight two entirely different ways in which ideas emerge. Since they need not be simultaneously activated, each may retain its separate validity.

Finally, Chwistek ([1924] 1960: 55 quoted in Mudyń 2003: 107) claims that 'reality of things' consists of entities that exist irrespective of anyone's perception. It is also a reality of habit, of commonplace view of the world, which can be perceived by the subject using the principle of least effort (Mudyń 2003: 107). At the same time, entities that make it up, for example plants, buildings, food, our own bodies, etc., are automatically and effortlessly used as source domains of conceptual metaphors. Since it is a reality of a naturally disposed mind (Chwistek [1924] 1960: 55 quoted in Mudyń 2003: 107), it corresponds to the concept of everyday experience in cognitive linguistics. The status of experience is reflected in the conception of experiential or embodied realism, which forms the philosophical framework of the second generation cognitivism (Johnson 1987: 101-138; Lakoff and Johnson 1999: 74-93).

ALFRED SCHÜTZ

One point in common between Schütz's "limited areas of sense (meaning)" and conceptual metaphors is the active role that subjects play in making sense of

reality. The similarity, however, is limited. For Schütz, the degree of interest that a subject takes in a given section of experience is crucial (Manterys 1997: 26-27). For cognitive linguists, the active role of subjects has a conceptual dimension: realities are not out there to be perceived, but they are products of human ability to conceptualize, even if the latter is heavily dependent on sensorimotor and cultural experience (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 3-9; 1999: 16-46). Despite this difference, in both cases the perception of reality is fundamentally subjective.

LAWRENCE LESHAN

There is also some common ground between LeShan's "alternate realities" and conceptual metaphors. Both presuppose alternate ontologies and are independently valid ways of interaction with the environment (Mudyń 2006: 79). All the four realities are necessary to make human functioning in the world complete; likewise, people need multiple metaphors for the same concept to interact with the world successfully.

LeShan's "sensory reality" has a privileged position because it makes everyday functioning and biological survival possible (Mudyń 2006: 73-74, 77). Its status is thus close to the role of sensorimotor experience in cognitive linguistics, which not only is the basis of human interaction with the world, but also shapes many of our metaphorical concepts, both simple and complex.

CONCLUSIONS

The idea of pluralism of realities is present in psychology, philosophy, art, and sociology. In physics, the classical approach of Newton's mechanics functions side by side with Einstein's relativity theory (Kostyrko 2004: XVII). Chwistek himself noticed that in mathematics Euclid's and Łobaczewski's systems of geometry can be simultaneously valid (Mudyń 2003: 104). Interdisciplinary studies of time distinguish the Classical Newtonian Time Paradigm, the Einsteinian conception of time, the Biological Transactional Time Paradigm, and the Paradigm of Eastern Mysticism. Each of them has a separate validity, and it is possible for different conceptions of time to co-exist within the same culture (McGrath and Kelly 1986: 28-33). Finally, Meyer-Abich (1966 cited in Mudyń 2003: 112) claims that complementary descriptions of phenomena are possible in biology, as well as in other sciences.

Reality thus cannot be regarded as uniform or homogenous – no way of accounting for it as a whole exists. Similar assumptions have been advanced by

contemporary cognitive linguistics. It has shown that there exist multiple, independently valid concepts of everyday experience, many of which are based on conceptual metaphors. Language and the ability to think metaphorically thus make it possible for us to see the world in diverse, conflicting, but often complementary ways.

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