Metaphoricizing Modernity

Nicholas Onuf*

Abstract: We of the modern world tell stories about *being* modern, becoming modern. We ask where modernity is *going*. Two metaphorical complexes dominate these stories: We favour metaphors of life and growth; modernity has a life of its own. Or we prefer metaphors of motion and direction; modernity is a journey that takes many paths. The two complexes coexist uneasily even as they feed on each other; together they mark the modern conceit that modernity has left tradition behind. Those whom modern society has victimized, uprooted or abandoned may resist both complexes, often seeking to retrieve the metaphors of a lost, broken, misremembered or invented past. Most beneficiaries of modernity favour the metaphorical complex of life and growth—or merely take it for granted. Scholars with a critical attitude toward modernity often favour many paths and thus the metaphorical complex of motion and direction—without realizing it. Seven metaphors reveal these tendencies: boundary, break, juncture, limit, rupture, stage, transition. They also hint at a third, distinctively modern metaphorical complex. In our stories about modernity, we deploy plural versions of spatial metaphors sequenced in time: frames, boxes, compartments, or containers, and mark the sequence with metaphorical signposts: age, stage, wave, or period.

Key words: boundary; break; juncture; limit; rupture; stage; transition.

* Department of Politics and International Relations, Florida International University, Miami, onufn@fiu.edu. ORCid: 0000-0001-7212-8917.

Language is a labyrinth of paths. You approach from one side and know your way about; you approach the same place from another side and no longer know your way about.

Ludwig Wittgenstein (1968: § 203)

On metaphors and modernity

Language is indeed a labyrinth. Every language offers an abundance of paths in a forest of possibilities, turns, forks and dead ends, moments of confusion, a surfeit of choices. When we speak, we mark our paths with metaphors, we rely on concepts to straighten paths or shorten them, we arrange our concepts in space and time. When we speak to one another, we assure ourselves, and each other, that we are on the same path, going in the same direction. We tell stories about ourselves, each other, and the many of us—stories studded with metaphors, just as this paragraph is.

We who are modern tell stories about *being* modern, becoming modern. We ask where modernity is *going*. We talk about a world we see changing as we speak, before our eyes. Two metaphorical complexes dominate these stories. The first one derives from the way we see our lives, wherever the paths we take. As living beings, we grow, we age. We see changes in ourselves that we see in others, changes in all that lives, changes in the seasons, changes that need no interpretation, changes that announce themselves as necessary and inevitable.

A familiar simile rules this metaphorical complex. Modern society is like a mature adult in any society; traditional societies are like children. The darker version of this story acknowledges that societies eventually grow old, decay, and come to an end, as civilizations always have. Ever since the *philosophes* of the Enlightenment began to assemble signposts in the name of 'universal history,' a good many moderns have firmly believed that modern society has solved the problem of ageing by mastering the material means of growth. And still do, despite the many signs of confusion and disarray.

I have already pointed to the second metaphorical complex dominating the way we who are modern see our ever-changing world by quoting Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*. *Pointing* is a revealing metaphor. Consider this much-discussed passage from the same work: 'A rule stands there like a sign-post . . . . And if there were, not a single sign-post, but a chain of adjacent ones or of chalk marks on the ground—is there only *one* way of interpreting them?' (Wittgenstein 1968: § 85, emphasis in translation). Every world is a world of movement, thick with signposts. Only the modern world is a world *in* movement, going to a *somewhere* that we cannot know for certain. The signposts keep changing with the world. We moderns disagree on what they mean, and which ones matter, even after they have changed. Traditional societies, we moderns like to think, have many paths always leading back, many signposts but just one way to interpret them, nothing ever changing for the better.

These two metaphorical complexes coexist uneasily even as they feed on each other. Most beneficiaries of modernity favour the metaphorical complex of life and growth—or

merely take it for granted. Many contemporary social theorists and edgy intellectuals favour many paths and thus the metaphorical complex of motion and direction—without realizing it. Those whom modern society has variously victimized, uprooted or abandoned may resist both complexes, often seeking to retrieve the metaphors of a lost, broken, misremembered or invented past. Once chosen, metaphors work like rules. They rule us with paradoxical efficiency: behind the scenes, in front of our eyes, whenever we speak.

That metaphors rule our lives by ruling the stories we tell about ourselves commends our attention to the metaphorical complexes ruling the big story of modernity. Our metaphorical choices are never fully consistent; we mix metaphors effortlessly. Nonetheless, we do choose the metaphors we use (on *choice*, more below); they are not just random occurrences or syntactical imperatives. Our metaphorical choices reveal where our values lie. They allow us to see what is good in our stories, what we might regret, and why we may wish to tell the story of modernity differently.

This story about the story of modernity's rise favours the metaphorical complex of motion and direction (on *rise* as an indicative metaphor, see below). Inevitably, metaphors of life and growth also have their place. Given the way so many others have chosen to tell the story, it could hardly be otherwise. I choose my metaphors, but never with complete freedom, whatever some versions of the big story might seem to tell us about free will. As I tell my story, another complex will make an appearance: metaphors of boxes and frames.

Why metaphors matter so much

According to the *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*, a metaphor is a 'figure of speech in which a word or phrase literally denoting one kind of object or idea is used in place of another to suggest a likeness.' In the first instance, we speak in order to *represent* what we think we know about the world; what we think we know is largely dependent on what others say about the world. Adding a figure of speech is a rhetorical embellishment, the point of which is to heighten the effect of any given representation. In a formula that goes back to Aristotle, rhetoric is the art of persuasion; we seek to convince others that the world is as we represent it to be. In my story, I treat representation and persuasion as functionally conjoined. Speaking is a *social* activity; we aim to have an effect on others when we speak; anyone of us can only represent the world more or less as it has already been represented to us—metaphorically (Onuf 1989: ch. 2).

Aristotle insisted that for metaphors to be persuasive, they must be *fitting*, and they must be *fresh* (*Rhetoric*, 1410b13, 1410b32-33; Barnes 1984: 2250-1). Fresh metaphors change the way we see the world. We tend to resist drastic changes in what we think we see; freshness cannot stray too far from fit. Effective metaphors make the world fit them at cost to their freshness. As George Orwell observed, they suffer from 'staleness of imagery' (1953: 158). They become less vivid (*vividus*, lively), more abstract (*tractus*, drawn out). They become concepts.

In Robert Musil's vivid terms, *concepts* are 'metaphors that have been boiled to death' (1996: 648). We might better say that concepts are metaphors that have been tossed into

a steaming stew, in the process losing their distinctive flavours. More abstractly, every concept starts off as, and remains useful, as a metaphor by fitting in with any number of other metaphors. Shifting metaphors, every concept begins *life* as a metaphor; metaphors fit together in *families*; metaphorical families *grow* into conceptual systems (also see Onuf 2018: Prologue).

Readers may resist this conclusion. Recent discussion of 'conceptual metaphors' presupposes that only some concepts are metaphorical, or that only one kind of metaphor produces concepts, or even that concepts give rise to metaphors and not the other way around. As Mark Johnson has pointed out, 'it is obviously not possible to make an exhaustive survey showing that *all* our philosophical concepts are defined by conceptual metaphors' (2008: 40). Johnson nevertheless set these practical considerations aside. 'Virtually all our abstract concepts appear to be structured by multiple, typically inconsistent conceptual metaphors' (2008: 48). I would go further: As metaphors turn into concepts, their links to other, inconsistent metaphors open up unforeseen interpretive possibilities, and concepts gradually acquire multiple, shaded meanings.

The fashion for conceptual history suggests that even the most rarified concepts change over time. As they lose their metaphorical flavour and familiar associations, they fit together with other metaphors that have become similarly abstract—a conceptual stew with its own aroma. Whenever we tell a story (*this* story, *any* story), we serve up some stew from the back burner, and stir in some fresh metaphors to make the dish more flavourful, more appealing. Concepts change because the metaphors we deploy in our stories continuously *refresh* them. Shifting metaphors, we make the story come *alive*. Stories grow up, grow old, with every telling, metaphorical complexes constantly rearrange themselves, conceptual systems adapt to shifting circumstances. Some stories are forgotten, others given new life; few indeed never seem to change.

To see how this process works, take the word *juncture*. I cannot myself use this term without it conjuring up an image of train tracks coming together. (See Onuf 2018: Prologue for further discussion of *image* and *impression* as relevant metaphors.) In its concrete specificity, this image can only be rendered in metaphorical terms that skew the metaphorical complex in which I use the word *juncture* abstractly—as a concept, apparently fixed in meaning without further elaboration. If, however, I 'see' railroad tracks when I hear the term, then I also see trains in transit, and I situate the metaphor in the metaphorical context of a journey with many junctures and junctions. If I did not refresh the concept in this way, it would lose its place in any arrangement of metaphors, all of which are subject to refreshment in the same way. It should be obvious that we all refresh concepts—recharge them metaphorically—by reflecting on our life experiences. We do it all the time, together, when we speak.

In short, we give our experiences a new and different life when we choose our metaphors to speak of them. We pilfer others' metaphors and mix them up. Collectively, these metaphorical choices converge and overlap; we charitably grant them coherence and overlook inconsistencies. We gain a sense of being members of a community—more specifically, a community of speakers. In every such community, metaphors run rife, concepts stabilize what we say, metaphors refresh concepts at the edges. This process

offers ever-changing opportunities to test, revise and affirm knowledge claims within and among communities of speakers.

There is more to any community of speakers than a stock of concepts subject to continual refreshment. Members tell stories about themselves together—*as* a community. Often these stories convey a sense of moral and political purpose. Through them, we tell each other what we do together matters, and why it matters. Our stories commit us to something beyond ourselves—to the community. As metaphors, *community* and *commitment* refresh each other, through the Latin prefix they have in *com*mon. As *con*cepts, they *con*strain the proliferation of metaphors and *con*stitute a conceptual system. Metaphor by metaphor, story by story, we refresh a common stock of concepts, constitute a community of speakers, reconstitute our collective past, and substantiate a world we think we share.

We can tell our stories in concrete terms, drawing on a rich trove of metaphors to bring our life experiences to bear, to bring them into line with others' stories. We can infuse objects and events with symbolic weight and normative force, as traditional storytellers always have. We moderns can also tell our communal stories quickly and efficiently, in abstract terms, simply by assuming that others will have refreshed relevant concepts more or less as we have. When we realize we are wrong in making this assumption, we clarify our concepts by talking about them—we make our concepts fit together better by refreshing them with new and different metaphors.

In every instance, our stories are rooted in, and nurtured by, the deep, dense histories of the metaphors and concepts we draw on but rarely think about. These histories of refreshment also limit the scope and direction of our stories. Both of the metaphorical complexes I introduced above come into play when we moderns engage in telling stories about ourselves, stories that set us apart. To say that our stories collectively constitute a worldview implies that they belong to us, and to no one else, and that they are always there—in the back of our minds—as tacit knowledge (Polanyi 1958). Even if we do not know how much we know, we have all the signposts we need to carry on.

As scholars, we can do more. In my view, we should. We can read the fine print on the signposts that we see people using most often. We can inspect the etymologies of the metaphors we so conspicuously rely on. Just for example (and drawing on online etymological dictionaries), we see that *metaphor* is a Greek word with Indo-European roots, meaning to transfer or carry across. I suggest that, early on, the term implies nothing about change. Something gets carried over a hill or across a river. When applied to language (that which does the carrying), the thing carried (also language) changes the metaphorical landscape on the other side.

Aristotle's analysis of persuasive speech follows in train. Representation comes first; this is why we speak. Persuasion is an add-on, changing someone's mind a lesser reason for speaking. Metaphor is a rhetorical device, deliberately deployed for persuasive purposes. In the 20th century Wittgenstein and other philosophers taking the so-called linguistic turn disallowed the representation-persuasion binary. (*Turn* is a conspicuously useful metaphor in conceptual refreshment.) When I came to the turn they had mapped, I followed their path. Only then did I come to appreciate Aristotle's criteria of fit and

freshness. Along that path, I encountered metaphors everywhere—they had been there all along—and learned to read them as signposts.

To switch metaphors, once we find the *key* concepts for a community of speakers and look up their etymologies, we have the keys to the story they tell about the world as it appears to them. The metaphors they choose give their story away because they give the story its large and abiding themes. To give a pertinent example, the metaphors *story* and *history* have a common history until the 16th Century, when it began to matter whether the events in a narrative of past events actually took place. Previously, events were what people say they have seen or heard about having been seen. In effect, metaphors associated with the Latin verb *videre*, to see, and its Proto-Indo-European root **weid-*, to know (what one has seen), made *story* and *history* interchangeable terms. Afterwards, metaphorical association with veracity or truth (Latin, *verus*; Proto-Indo-European **deru-*, firm, solid) refreshed the concept of *history*, while metaphors associated with the Latin noun *imago*, copy or likeness (and its Proto-Indo-European root **aim-*, similarity or resemblance), refreshed the concept of *story* as imaginative (re)telling. S*tory* and *history* went their separate ways; we treat them today as distantly related.

Another example: the metaphor *good*, like its Proto-Germanic root, connotes the property of being fit, adequate or belonging together. The Proto-Indo-European **ghed-*, meaning 'to unite, be associated, or suitable,' tells me that *good* and *suitable* long drew on an image of a well-crafted article (or good)—a coat, saddle, weapon—and that the strongly valenced sense of good is much more recent. To the extent people refresh what it means to be good with the image of a saint but still use *good* in functional terms, they contribute to metaphorical binary of upper-case Good and lower-case good.

In effect, choice of metaphors frames (limits, bounds) and propels the story for the teller and makes it a 'good' story—a good fit with her substantive and normative concerns. Yet *choice*—a metaphor originating with the Proto-Indo-European root **geus-*, to taste or relish, but lately refreshed by association with the imagery of the Cartesian ego, liberal practice, democratic procedures and rational conduct—is a bad choice in this context. Already embedded in the story that makes any given speaker a member of a community, these choices are not as *free* as the term suggests. Indeed, *embedded* is another bad metaphor, inasmuch as it suggests that early metaphorical choices dictate the story to later tellers.

The process of conceptual refreshment eventuates in an accumulation of metaphorical choices (that misleading metaphor) for which a community develops a valenced, generally affirmative stance. What we normally say we hear normatively. In order to tell a 'better' story, some members of the community may jettison key concepts for ones with a different, less encumbered metaphorical trajectory, thereby forming a new community of speakers. Speakers can find themselves members of several, perhaps many communities. Each community has a distinctive set of metaphorical tendencies and conceptual possibilities giving it direction. Every speaker's sense of being at the centre of a whole world eliminates the apparent contradiction of living in metaphorically diversified communities that function as worlds in themselves.

Seven metaphors

Many scholars tell stories about the modern world. Some have asked where this phenomenon, or collection of events, called modernity came from, why it grew as it did, where it is going. Others have asked similar questions about modernity as a concept. Questions call for stories. Modernity is a massive conceptual edifice and the rise of the modern world a huge story that I have myself been episodically involved in telling (most recently, Onuf 2018). I have already commented on two distinct metaphorical complexes informing these stories and alluded to another. At the same time, we tend to use a wide variety of metaphors rather indiscriminately and in various combinations to dramatize any such story. To speak of 'the rise of modern world'—as I have twice already—indicates all too well the metaphorical promiscuity that big stories inspire. Modernity goes up, and up, irresistibly, of its own accord; modernity is a world reborn (the Renaissance), unbound (Percy Bysshe Shelley's Prometheus), ascending (a Christian miracle, defying the dead weight of tradition).

To simplify matters, perhaps unduly, I have chosen (ha!) seven metaphors with significant conceptual histories. They are: boundary (just introduced via Shelley), break, juncture (previewed earlier), limit, rupture, stage and transition. While I could have chosen a number of other metaphors (border, passage, revolution, transformation, and wave come readily to mind; turn, obviously), I limit myself to the seven for the sake of manageability. I should also point out the obvious: I have chosen these metaphors because I am especially familiar with the way they function as concepts. Indeed I have used most if not all of them in my own work—sometimes extensively but never with adequate attention to their effect on the story that I was telling.

I will proceed by taking each metaphor in turn. I present them alphabetically in order to undercut the impression that I am telling the usual kind of story—one that is *going* somewhere. Sketching each metaphor's etymology, I try to give some sense of its concrete expression, the kind of images its use conjures up, and thus the direction of its conceptual refreshment. To illustrate these processes at work in communities that we all know, I reproduce some textual snippets; I have added the **bold print** in each one. I drew on my own experience as a reader, obviously unsystematically, to locate these textual fragments. I don't doubt that there are even better examples than I have come up with to show how metaphorical choices make stories feel good (right, natural, fitting, appropriate) to their tellers. These stories almost seem to tell themselves.

I make no claim about stories told in other languages than English. Each metaphor traces its origin through language families to ancient, now lost languages and finally, in most cases, to Proto-Indo-European, a reconstructed language that seems to have been spoken by a people of the Eurasian steppe perhaps 6000 years ago. Whether or how this deep, massive metaphorical legacy works for people whose worlds owe their cogency to an unrelated family of languages I do not have the metaphorical resources to say. It seems likely that every human language accommodates life as growth and movement by choice, with substantial metaphorical complexes to show for it.

Boundary

Boundary and its cognates would seem to derive from an old French term for a stone marker and a Celtic term for a cluster of trees. We think of boundaries as *natural* or *salient* without either being necessary or necessarily negotiated. Crossing temperate-zone landscapes, they call attention to themselves. We *see* them. If boundaries are signposted, we tend to think the boundaries came first, then markers, and only then fences and walls. Paths cross boundaries, abstraction ensues: land is contained, claimed, owned. This process accelerates when boundaries are drawn on maps, first as simple representations of town-and-country landscapes. Maps, markers, images, and landscapes *map* a complex of metaphors constantly refreshing each other.

Property implies control over contents. Social control is political; it turns land into territory, ownership into sovereignty, maps into evidence of what and who are subject to control. In short, maps make states and their relations into a distinctive feature of modernity's rise (Burch 1998; Bartelson 2014; Onuf 2018: ch. 4, 11). Jordan Branch has emphasized the importance of connecting the dots, so to speak, in the craft of map-making. Although Branch did not say this, we can only get beyond 'a collection of places and jurisdictions' by assuming a bird's eye view.

> At the global level, the mapped image of the world dominates ideas of political organization: states are understood as territorial claims extended to a **mapped linear boundary**. Although this may seem perfectly natural to observers today, how we got here is anything but straightforward.
> [...]
> Traditional political goals, such as territorial expansion and defense, were redefined to fit with the cartographic ideal of rule as a **linearly defined space** rather than as a collection of places and jurisdictions. Conflicts over territory took on their **modern form** of conquering—and defending—spatial areas defined by discrete **boundaries**.
> [...]
> While technological changes had direct effects on actors' capabilities—such as the ability to claim territory from afar or to **delimit boundaries** with increasing precision—there was more to this process. More fundamentally, mapping technology changed rulers' foundational norms and ideas about how politics *could* and *should* be organized, altering the conditions of possibility for political rule and interaction. (Branch 2014: 1, 7, 8; his emphasis)

For scholars in the field of International Relations (my field), *boundary* is a concept so central to a disciplined worldview, and so consistently refreshed with images of landscapes seen from above, that it makes our stories seem fitting—at least to us. It descends from the metaphorical complex of paths, signposts telling travellers where they can go

and petty officials telling them when to stop. In this respect, the title of Daniel Deudney's important book, *Bounding Power* (2007), offers no refreshment. For Deudney, *bounding* has two meanings: power leaps, as does the stallion; ties bind, as does the harness. *Boundaries* and *bounding* (in either sense) seem barely related, even if both terms pertain to a social world of rules and rulers, territory and states.

Scholars in other fields stretch and pull the concept of *boundary* to fit their needs when other metaphorical complexes would do a better job. When Jens Bartelson reminded communitarian political theorists that communities do not depend on real estate, he invoked the metaphorical complex of life and growth, and, in my opinion, he was right to do so.

> But if our moral values do not derive from the particular communities we happen to inhabit, but rather from our ability to share meaningful experiences in common with other people, then such values would stand an equal chance of evolving irrespective of the existence of **boundaries** between the people doing the sharing. So even if we agreed that some sense of community is indeed necessary for any morality to evolve, there is no reason to assume that this sense of community requires the prior existence of **bounded societies** in order to **emerge and spread.** (Bartelson 2009: 178)

It hardly needs saying that many other fields of study have adapted the metaphor of *boundary* for their own use, in the process attempting to rid the metaphor of the associations we take for granted. Consider Talcott Parsons' well-known formulation.

> The concept of an open system interchanging with environing systems also implies ***boundaries* and their maintenance**. When a set of interdependent phenomena shows sufficiently definite patterning and stability over time, then we can say that it has a 'structure' and that it is fruitful to treat it as a 'system.' A **boundary** means simply that a theoretically and empirically significant **difference** between structures and processes **internal** to the system and those **external** to it exists and tends to be maintained. In so far as boundaries in this sense do not exist, it is not possible to identify a set of interdependent phenomena as a system; it is merged in some other, more extensive system. (Parsons 1961: 36, his emphasis)

Parsons' attempt at a definition of boundary is worse than useless if we start where he did—with 'significant difference.' Only because we have an image of a boundary in mind—one that he has evoked—can we even discern a difference. Parsons salvaged the situation by introducing the metaphorical binary *internal/external*, only to confirm the abstract emptiness of *system* as a key concept. While metaphors of life, motion and direction help to refresh the kind of stories that Parsons told, he relied on a third metaphorical complex in his work. Among its signposts are work, task, and craft. More generally,

doing and making, need and purpose, come to the fore; *function* joins system as conjoined concepts in constant need of refreshment.

Break

Break is a metaphor with a straight-forward history and consistent pattern of refreshment. Old English *brecan*—'to break, shatter, burst; injure, violate, destroy'—fits the contemporary metaphorical thrust of *break* perfectly. When I hear the term, I always 'see' broken bones; I suggest that this is the case for most people. Any such image point to the implied violence of things being broken. Yet we find some uses of the term so abstract and sanitized as to require routine qualification. Conservative historian Richard Pipes offers a good example when he talked about a 'major break' or 'radical break.'

> Sometime during the period in European history vaguely labeled 'early modern,' there occurred a **major break** in the attitude toward property.
> [...]
> The onset of the eighteenth century thus marked a **radical break** with traditional concepts of human nature. (Pipes 1999: 25, 40)

Yet *major* and *radical* are concepts with their own baggage. *Major* raise the question of scale: How big is major? Does it imply a break in scale? *Radical* suggests a political stance no doubt at odds with Pipes' own beliefs. Metaphorical refreshment could put violence back into the picture, but, for Pipes at least, this would make the story even less edifying.

Michel Foucault warned against thinking that discursive formations would ever break the same way all at once and then heal by the same rules. Instead he insisted that breaks come in clusters, and he refreshed each break in the cluster with a surprising metaphor: *time* as a viscous fluid.

> The idea of a single **break** suddenly, at a given moment, dividing all discursive formations, interrupting them in a single moment and reconstituting them in accordance with the same rules—such an idea cannot be sustained. The contemporaneity of several transformations does not mean their exact chronological coincidence: each **transformation** may have its own particular index of temporal 'viscosity'. (Foucault 1972: 175)

The cost of Foucault's mixed metaphors is an archaeological story all the more cumbersome to tell—not to say that this result ever seemed to trouble him. Just possibly it persuaded him to adopt a different but closely related metaphorical complex (see *rupture*).

In a striking discussion of the way historians periodize modernity, Kathleen Davis (2008: 18) claimed that a break in time produces a 'disappearing trick'—an 'evacuation of "history"' that she emphasized by linking *break* with *tear*, *rupture* and *cut*. All such metaphors point to the violence of modern history's self-creation.

> Wrested from God and claimed for the 'world,' time only becomes truly historical through a political-theological **tear** that inaugurates a new **'age'**—a **tear** that thereby defines the relation between world and time, and that paradoxically occupies a transcendent position by virtue of banishing transcendence. In this way, periodization becomes its own logic, a self-identity that, through **rupture** rather than presence, supplies the necessary platform for the claim to sovereignty. (Davis 2008: 18).

As a concept, *period* implies circularity. The Greek roots are *peri* (around) and *hodos* (path). Applied to time, periodization suggests a traditional, cyclical view of history. Modernity distinguishes itself making time go forward, and only forward; history is a matter of reaching back in time, only to discover that time's forward motion is disjointed (see *juncture*). For us moderns, time is a one-way street; history only repeats itself at the highest level of abstraction; the violent metaphors of breaks and cuts refresh our sense that periods do not come around again.

For Constantin Fasolt, a break in time 'leads us down a path that we would otherwise not take and gives us an experience that we would otherwise not make. It changes the course of history' (2013: 185). Here, as so often, refreshment comes from the metaphorical complex of motion and direction. Fasolt himself changed course by turning to the metaphorical complex of life and growth.

> A **break** in the time of society is made whenever we change our agreement in a **shared form of life** by drawing an imaginary line between the present and the past in order to avoid confronting disagreements we have with ourselves *about* our agreement in a shared form of life. In so doing we **transform** the past we have as members of society into an object of society's imagination, and we found our agreement in society on the illusion that our society has managed to escape from the experience of time. We commit an **act of violence** both against our past as members of society and against our agreement in society. (Fasolt 2013: 186, his emphasis)

Like Davis, Fasolt freshened break as an abstraction by linking it to violence. 'Form of life' would seem to confirm and extend 'the disappearing trick' that Davis alluded to. Once cut off, the path disappears. Once a new era is fully accepted on its own terms, it certifies its origins in the break.

Juncture

Juncture goes back to the Latin noun *iunctura*, a joining or joint, and thence to the Proto-Indo-European **yeug-*, to join, which is also the root of jugular, from the Latin *iugulum*, meaning neck and throat. As a place where things are joined, it dates from the 14th century (junction is much later). I have already remarked on the image that this metaphor

evokes for me. I can imagine it applied to the paths, crossroads, and villages of an early agricultural Europe, and I suspect that this image refreshed the image of boundaries seen from above in the political reorganization of early modern Europe. Juncture has also been used for points in time since the 16th century. A search of the 'Founders Online' database, which James Hrdlicka undertook (personal communication), turned up many examples of important figures in 18th century British North America writing about 'critical junctures.' Critical in this context is a cognate of crisis as a dangerous medical condition.

We learn in an excellent review essay that the 'concept of "critical junctures" is an essential building block of historical institutionalism' (Capoccia and Kelemen 2007: 341). Two and a half centuries ago, junctures were thought to be dangerous moments. Today we say that such moments permit institutional change but quickly become path-dependent. 'Junctures are "critical" because they place institutional arrangements on paths or trajectories, which are then very difficult to alter' (Pierson 2004: 135). While the book that I have just quoted, Paul Pierson's exceptionally influential *Politics in Time*, is obviously indebted to the metaphorical complex of motion and direction, Pierson cast around an alternative path to metaphorical refreshment.

> Perhaps the better metaphor is a tree, rather than a path. From the same trunk, there are many branches and smaller branches. Although it is possible to turn around or clamber from one to the other . . . the branch on which a climber begins is the one she tends to follow. (Pierson 2004: 20)

In my view, the metaphorical complex of branching trees is a poor fit. In failing to explain why some branches wither and others become mightier in time, it weakens the abstract notion of a *critical juncture*—a concept in dire need of refreshment. Indeed the image of many junctures, many branches undercuts any explanatory thrust for historical institutionalism. The refreshing effects of these metaphors make the story all the harder to tell.

If juncture conveys a sense of branching out, then *conjuncture*—a term that Leon Trotsky and Nikolai Kondratiev made familiar in the 1920s—reverses the image. When several branches, paths or trajectories come back together, that conjuncture may produce moments of significant change. This kind of thinking runs against the temper of the *Annales* School and especially Fernand Braudel's advocacy of the *longue durée* in framing history. In particular, Braudel's use of the metaphor *rhythm* is richly, refreshingly metaphorical.

> Our problem now is to imagine and locate the correlations between the **rhythms** of material life and the other diverse fluctuations of human existence. For there is no single **conjuncture**; we must visualize a series of overlapping histories, developing simultaneously. It would be too simple, too perfect, if this complex truth could be reduced to the **rhythms** of one dominant pattern. (Braudel 1995: 892)

Lurking in this passage is another *source* of metaphorical refreshment. Such terms as *fluctuations* and *overlapping* link converging paths to a metaphorical complex that depends on water and its properties as a liquid (also see Onuf 1982: 57-66). Springs, waves, rivers, not to mention fresh, flowing water: all such metaphors reinforce the metaphorical complex of motion and direction.

Limit

Limit is metaphor that has become a concept of exceptional range and utility. Closely associated with *boundary*, the term derives from the Latin term for embankment between fields or the threshold of a house. In uses consistent with this origin, a limit may be traversed with little or no difficulty. Once on the other side, you still 'know your way about.' Limits limit complexity, such as we find with language (recalling Wittgenstein); the term belongs to the metaphorical complex of motion and direction. Signs posting speed limits on roadways tell us, in a strict language, what we should do. They do not tell us that we cannot possibly exceed the limit. They leave unsaid what may transpire on the other side of the limit; we know well enough our way about, as do the authorities charged with enforcing rules setting speed limits.

Over time, limit has come to be seen as an abstract condition to be approached ever more closely but beyond which it is impossible to go. The term itself becomes a limit to formal analysis; there is no other side, even if the metaphorical heritage of motion and direction remains—we approach limits that we can never reach. Foucault associated this process with a *spiral*—a ready metaphor for that which has no discernible end. In doing so, he refreshed the concept in his own inimitable terms.

> Transgression, then, is not related to the **limit** as black to white, the prohibited to the lawful, the outside to the inside, or as the open area of a building to its enclosed spaces. Rather, their relationship takes the form of a spiral which no simple infraction can exhaust. (Foucault 1977: 35)

In the field of International Relations, R. B. J. Walker has used the metaphor *limit* more effectively than any other scholar. Walker associated limits with boundary conditions and horizons. His pairing of 'external limit' with anarchy and 'internal limit' with the local is refreshingly direct, and it saves the inside/outside binary from conceptual sterility. His book, *Inside/Outside* (1993), is an imperishable reminder that the state-as-house has a threshold to its world. With this one metaphor, Walker's story is all but foretold.

> As discourses about **limits** and dangers, about the presumed **boundaries** of political possibility in the space and time of the modern state, theories of international relations express and affirm the necessary horizons of the modern political imagination.
> [...]

I am also concerned with broader theoretical analyses of the rearticulation of spatiotemporal relations in late or postmodernity, and with what the specific experiences of international relations theory might tell about the **limits** of our ability to comprehend and respond to contemporary spatiotemporal transformations more generally.

[...]

I think especially of the treatment accorded to those **boundary conditions**, those marginal situations through which the contradiction between universal aspiration and particularistic practice is affirmed; the **external limit** framed spatially as 'security' and 'international anarchy' and temporally as 'development'; the **internal limit** framed most tellingly as the 'local'; and all those accounts of difference that affirm the sovereign identity of 'rational man', an identity that has, since the European seventeenth century, found such a comfortable home in the great Leviathan that still dominates our understanding of what democracy, indeed politics in general, can possibly be. (Walker 1993: 6, 9, 147; on containers, see below)

Walker gave his story a more sustained telling in a later book he called *After the Globe, before the World* (2010). As its title suggests, it is perhaps even more metaphorically attuned to time and history than *Inside/Outside*. In the early pages of the 2010 book, we see this formula repeated several times: 'boundaries, borders and limits' of contemporary political life. One wonders why he felt the need to combine these metaphors. Do they refresh each other? Do they direct attention to the possibility that these limits, like boundaries, can be transgressed? The earlier Walker held that there are limits to 'our ability to comprehend,' and we find the same thought in *After the Globe*: there are 'limits of our capacity to understand' (2010: 4). That these limits are not associated with boundaries and borders suggests that Walker was playing two images of *limit* off each other. It may also suggest that his reluctance to speak of modernity's path (2010: 32, 234) deprives him of an important source of metaphorical refreshment.

One of the great conceits of the modern condition is this: limits can be raised. *Limits to Growth* (1972) challenged this conceit and met with an uproar of criticism and rejection. Written by MIT system dynamicists, the book provided a lucid conceptual discussion of *limit* to accompany its computer projections. Many economists argued that there are no such limits in the modern world economy, thanks to increased willingness to finance technological innovation when scarcity makes it profitable to do so. This claim is vulnerable to the charge that an economy may grow beyond its limit or long-term 'carrying capacity.' This is what *Limits*' authors called 'overshoot,' a condition from which a catastrophic falling back is inevitable.

A variable may increase, decrease, remain constant, oscillate, or combine several of these characteristic modes. For example, a population growing in a **limited environment** can approach the

ultimate carrying capacity of that environment in several possible ways. It can adjust smoothly to an equilibrium below the **environmental limit** by means of a gradual decrease in growth rate, as shown below. It can **overshoot the limit** and then die back again in either a smooth or an oscillatory way, also as shown below. [graph deleted] Or it can **overshoot the limit** and in the process decrease the ultimate carrying capacity by consuming some necessary non-renewable resource, as diagramed below. [graphs deleted] This behavior has been noted in many natural systems.

[...]

[I]t is vitally important to gain some understanding of the causes of growth in human society, the **limits to growth**, and the behavior of our socio–economic systems when the **limits are reached**. Man's knowledge of the behavior modes of these systems is very incomplete. It is currently not known, for example, whether the human population will continue growing, or gradually level off, or oscillate around some **upper limit, or collapse.** (Meadows *et al.*: 1972: 91-3, 94-5)

In half a century, public policies have not changed. Growth is still the first criterion of success in any modern society, even if climate change is reckoned as a limit to be overcome. Metaphors of life and growth constantly refresh the way we moderns talk about modernity, thus giving life to the project of modernity—until it is too late. Overshoot and collapse are metaphors of motion and direction. As such, they refresh the conceptual implications of limit as a mathematical abstraction and they are still available to anyone already disposed to tell a story about growth as the large problem of late modernity (also see Onuf 2018: 183-9).

Rupture

Rupture bears a close metaphorical relation to *break*. In Latin, rupture referred specifically to a broken limb. Its Proto-Indo-European root, **reup-*, means 'to snatch,' which suggests a sudden change in states. Rupture belongs to the metaphorical complex of body and growth. So clearly associated with explosive violence, *rupture* is one of the most powerful metaphors deployed in contemporary social theory (for an overview, see Eisenstein and McGowan 2012). Yet it is perhaps used too often for rhetorical effect, and thus subject to becoming stale over time. The same can be said of *violence* (recalling Fasolt).

Rupture and its cognates are closely identified with Foucault, who used it to give his kind of stories a stunning impact. Yet Foucault generally coupled *rupture* with *discontinuity*. Discontinuity is not just a quieter, more abstract concept than rupture. It imagines things connected in a line then broken; it belongs in the metaphorical complex of motion and direction. Perhaps Foucault was simply piling on metaphors. Perhaps he was drawing on one metaphorical complex to enliven another. In any event, there is a strong

sense in Foucault that *rupture/discontinuity* describe the *limit* of what it is even possible to think. To illustrate:

> The last years of the eighteenth century are broken by a **discontinuity** similar to that which **destroyed** Renaissance thought at the beginning of the seventeenth; then, the great circular forms in which similitude was enclosed were **dislocated** and opened so that the table of identities could be unfolded; and that table is now about to be **destroyed** in turn, while knowledge takes up residence in a new space—a **discontinuity** as enigmatic in its principle, in its **original rupture**, as that which separates the Paracelsian circles from the Cartesian order. (Foucault 1971: 235)

In Jens Bartelson's effective use of Foucault to investigate the genealogy of sovereignty, he avoided *rupture* in favour of *discontinuity*. He did so the better to tell his story, in which sovereignty and knowledge, considered separately, appear to have been subject to discontinuities but together display 'a certain thematic continuity.'

> When sovereignty and knowledge are interpreted in isolation . . ., their episodic configuration looks **highly discontinuous**. But interpreted together, and inscribed within a genealogical series in which the conditions of knowing are productively interlinked with discourse on rulership and sovereignty, their **discontinuity** is counterbalanced by a **certain thematic continuity**. Concepts may vary as to their meaning and function, yet their interrelations—for all their indeterminateness and openness—seem to remain intact in their most abstract form. Thus interpreted, the periods exemplified in this study appear as sedimentary in our political understanding, together constituting something—not despite, but rather by virtue of its immanent plurality—which would merit the label of tradition. (Bartelson 1995: 247)

This is not Foucault's story—at least the story I hear as I thread my way through his mountains of layered metaphors.

Stage

Stage is a metaphor with deep roots but a relatively recent strong association with a raised platform or stories of a building. The very title and first words in Walt Whitman Rostow's influential book, *The Stages of Economic Growth* (1960), present us with a compound metaphor.

> This book presents an economic historian's way of generalizing the sweep of modern history. The form of this generalization is a set of **stages-of-growth.** (1960: 1)
> [...]

> It is possible to identify all societies, in their economic dimensions, as lying within one of five categories: traditional society, pre-conditions for **take-off**, the **take-off**, the drive to **maturity**, and the **age** of high mass-consumption. (1960: 4)

Most living beings grow gradually, even if the rate of growth changes over time. We say of ourselves that we grow up, grow old, knowing full well that the intervals are arbitrary, the signposts ambiguous. While Rostow's framing metaphor is human growth, metaphors for each stage are madly mixed. Tradition and mass-consumption have no obvious and immediate connection to growth, take-off strongly suggests motion and direction (airplanes taking off), the drive to maturity animates growth with purpose. *Stage* and *age* are presented, without comment, as interchangeable terms.

Much contemporary discussion of stages claims to build on a conceptual scheme of Adam Smith's, although he used the term *age*, not *stage*. On Smith's account (1982: 14), societies normally advance from hunting and gathering, to herding, then farming, and finally to commerce. Smith did not take his four stages to be inevitable. He worried that the fall of the Roman Empire was a falling back to the second stage that could be repeated in his own time (see further Onuf and Onuf 2006: 206-12). Nevertheless, we have naturalized the *stage* metaphor to the point that its upward thrust underwrites the story of modernity in the quarter-millennium since Smith put forward his so-called 'stadial theory.' For this we can hardly blame Smith, any more than we can blame him for liberal excesses.

Many scholars are critical of the modern ideology of economic growth (or *development*, a more readily sanitized concept deriving from the Proto-Indo-European **werb-*, to turn or bend). Among them, David Blaney and Naeem Inayatullah have gone back to Smith and his contemporaries not only to unmask the power of the stage metaphor, but also to show how it combined with the concept of national markets, for which Smith also bears some credit, to yield an ideology in which some nations develop faster than others because they accept modern values more readily.

> Smith's primary project in *The Wealth of Nations* is none other than to explain the differences in wealth associated with [the] temporal difference between savage and civilized nations (and secondarily those falling in between). What he does not explicitly allow is an overlap of **temporal boundaries**. The present is purified in the past. In this way Smith also effects a compartmentalization of time into distinct national units; political economy forms as part and parcel of the Westphalianization of developmental time.
> ... [W]e can begin to understand how Smith barricades modern commercial society within a temporal/ethical fortress. Both time and space operate as a set of **boundaries** that demarcate 'nations' by developmental level. Where a stage-theory of history informs moral judgment, the institutions and practices of the most-advanced

serve as the basis for evaluating those of temporally backward nations. (Blaney and Inayatullah 2010: 45, footnote deleted)

Stages have firm 'temporal boundaries' that combine with a nation's spatial boundaries to form compartments, or containers in a row. Here we see the *stage* metaphor directly refreshing the concept of the *nation* becoming modern by moving from box to box, stage by stage, in a prescribed direction. Blaney and Inayatullah weakened their story by invoking the binary of savagery and civilization to heighten their moral indignation. The stage-theory, as they called Smith's conceptual scheme, shifts attention away from the first stage, metaphorically savaged as *savage*, and toward the difficulties in moving from the third to the fourth stage. Even if every society of any size has long left the first stage behind, calling it savage may substantiate Blaney and Inayatullah's postcolonial anger or indeed strike a popular chord in self-styled developed societies. Yet refreshment along these lines has little relevance to the large community of speakers committed to the modern ideology of economic growth. Thanks to the *stage* metaphor and the moral support it grants them, they will simply brush aside the metaphor of the *savage* and the unappealing story it draws attention to.

Transition

Transition is a Latinate metaphor, arising at a time when Latin was itself slowly falling out of use. Conveying the image of going or crossing over, it is furthermore a rather limp metaphor. Orwell (1953:167) noticed the euphemistic quality of 'transitional periods' as a turn of phrase. In the same vein, Immanuel Wallerstein pointed out that

> most Marxists have talked of a **'transitional' stage**, which is in fact a blurry non-concept with no operational indicators. This dilemma is heightened if the unit of analysis used is the state, in which case one has to explain why the transition has occurred at different rates and times in different countries. (1974: 398, footnote deleted)

Linking 'transition' with 'period' or 'stage' does not help. Instead *transition* makes a virtue of its limpness by creating the impression that something is happening so slowly as to be almost imperceptible. Motion is metaphorically subdued; even the metaphorical complex of flows and fluctuations (long waves, for example) is too active; Foucault's index of viscosity approaches zero. Insofar as we trouble to refresh this concept, I believe we do so by personalizing it—we see transitions in family life and day-to-day social relations, often only retrospectively.

In Wallerstein's late work, we find an effort to breathe more life into the concept of *transition*.

> Thus it is that we can say that the capitalist world economy has now entered its **terminal crisis**—a crisis that may last up to 50 years. The real question before us is what will happen during this crisis,

this **transition** from the present world system to some other kind of historical system or systems.

[...]

Precisely because [the transition's] outcome is unpredictable, and precisely because its fluctuations are so wild, it will be true that even the slightest political action will have great consequences. I like to think of this as the moment in historical time when free will truly comes into play. (Wallerstein 2002: 265, 267)

The effort fails: 'terminal crisis' is not just a transition, or even a critical juncture—a terminus is a signpost marking the end of the path. Wallerstein's hope for a moment of 'free will' is ill-supported by any metaphorical complex in which *transition* or *crisis* figures prominently.

Postcolonial thinkers have also paid attention to the transition to modernity (and not just the 'world capitalist system') but with an eye to the global setting in which it took place and the global consequences that ensued. Both setting and consequences suggest a switch in metaphors. *Translation* would be an obvious alternative to *transition* insofar as the former metaphor draws attention to embedded difference and cultural arrogance. Dipesh Chakrabarty goes further.

A key question in the world of postcolonial scholarship will be the following. The problem of capitalist modernity cannot any longer be seen simply as a sociological problem of historical **transition** (as in the famous 'transition debates' in European history) but as a problem of **translation**, as well. (2008: 17)

Switching metaphors does more than refreshing a stale concept. It solves a problem. The Latin *translatio* translates the Greek word *metaphrasis*, which denotes a direct, word-for-word correspondence, in contrast to *paraphrasis*. Whenever we use the term *translation* (and its etymological cousin *transfer*), we honour the concept by thinking of it as a 'literal' substitution of one word for another.

We ask, for example: How do you translate *dispostif* (a favourite term of Foucault's) from French to English? When it turns out that there is no one word that does the job in English, we say that something is lost in translation. The affective imagery of being lost is such as to refresh the concept of *translation* in a way that undercuts translation as a straightforward undertaking. From a postcolonial perspective, that sense of loss informs, indeed suffuses, a well-told story of all that went wrong on the road to modernity.

Conclusion

The seven metaphors so briefly introduced in these pages point to a deep confusion in the way we (we moderns, we scholars) talk about the experience of modernity. We deploy metaphors to which we give little or no thought—*as* metaphors. Two metaphorical complexes compete for our attention, and we use both indiscriminately to freshen a stagnant

conceptual vocabulary. One complex features metaphors of motion and direction; modernity is a journey that takes many paths. The other complex points up metaphors of life and growth; as a dynamic whole, modernity has a life of its own, a *history* both prescribed and unique.

Historians are story tellers in the first instance. They routinely deploy metaphors to enliven their stories, put them in motion. As a calling and a craft, history shares with the rest of modern social thought an ancient philosophical legacy, one that creates an expository dilemma of its own. On the one hand, the world (any world, the modern world) consists of discrete *things*. Specific events, identifiable people, material objects are things that can be sorted, counted. This essay, my story, is loaded with metaphors for things and their properties. On the other hand, *relations* among things give the world its apparent coherence and account for what happens within it. Relations are hard to visualize; we fall back on abstract concepts like *force* and *field*, and we grant them the properties of things by fixing their coordinates in space and time. Relations call for gassy metaphors of studied imprecision (*freshen* is a good example) or metaphors for things situating other things (*frame*, for example). I use them often.

Whether, how, and to what extent we moderns gave space and time the Euclidian, metricized properties that we now take for granted, at least in mundane affairs, is beside the point. Taken together, space and time are, or have become, a *thing* of a third kind, a *thing* of straight lines and right angles, a frame or box containing every*thing* else. As a metaphorical container, Euclidian space and time has no beyond; it cannot leak, for its contents have nowhere to go. Fasolt notwithstanding, time cannot break, any more than space can warp in terrestrial circumstances.

It would seem then that modernity has endowed us with a third metaphorical complex, a third way to describe things and tell stories about what happens to them. With time as a metric, we 'see' modernity tracking on a line in two-dimensional space. When we tell stories about modernity, we deploy plural versions of spatial metaphors sequenced in time: frames, boxes, compartments, or containers, within which things happen. We mark the sequence with metaphorical signposts: age, stage, wave, or period. When we ask what's next, we look at the signposts, follow the track. We may see a fork in the path, cross a threshold. Do we pause in telling the story, start a new chapter?

> Here it is difficult to see that what is at issue is the *fixing* of concepts. A concept *forces* itself on one. (This is what you must not forget.) (Wittgenstein 1968: 204, emphasis added)

References

Barnes, J (ed.). 1968. *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, Vol. 1 (many translators). Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Bartelson, J. 1995. *A Genealogy of Sovereignty*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bartelson, J. 2009. *Visions of World Community*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bartelson, J. 2014. *Sovereignty as Symbolic Form*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Blaney, D L, and N Inayatullah. 2010. *Savage Economics: Wealth, Poverty, and the Temporal Walls of Capitalism*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Branch, J. 2014. *The Cartographic State: Maps, Territory, and the Origins of Sovereignty*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Braudel, F. 1995. *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean world in the Age of Philip II*, Vol. 1 (trans. S Reynolds). Berkeley: University of California Press.

Burch, K. 1998. *'Property' and the Making of the International System*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner.

Capoccia, G, and R D Kelemen. 2007. 'The Study of Critical Junctures: Theory, Narrative, and Counterfactuals in Historical Institutionalism.' *World Politics*, 59 (3): 341–369.

Chakrabarty, D. 2008. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, with a New Preface. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Davis, K. 2008. *Periodization and Sovereignty: How Ideas of Feudalism and Secularization Govern the Politics of Time*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Deudney, D H. 2007. *Bounding Power: Republican Security from the Polis to the Global Village*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Eisenstein, P, and T McGowan. 2012. *Rupture: On the Emergence of the Political*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Fasolt, C. 2013. 'Breaking up Time—Escaping from Time: Self-Assertion and Knowledge of the Past.' In C Lorenz and B Bevernage (eds), *Breaking Up Time: Negotiating the Borders between Past, Present and Future*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, pp. 176-196.

Foucault, M. 1971. *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (trans. A M Sheridan Smith). New York: Pantheon.

Foucault, M. 1972. *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (trans. A M Sheridan Smith). New York: Pantheon.

Foucault, M. 1977. 'A Preface to Transgression.' In Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews* (trans. D F Bouchard and S Simon). Ithaca: Cornell University Press, pp. 29-52.

Johnson, M. 2008. 'Philosophy's Debt to Metaphor.' In R W Gibbs, Jr (ed.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 39-52.

Meadows, D H, D L Meadows, J. Randers, W. W. Behrens III (eds). 1972. *The Limits to Growth: A Report for the Club of Rome's Project on the Predicament of Mankind*. New York: Universe Books.

Musil, R. 1996. *A Man without Qualities*, Vol. 2 (trans. B Pike and S Wilkins). New York: Knopf.

Onuf, N G. 1982. 'Global Law-Making and Legal Thought.' In Onuf (ed.), *Law-Making in the Global Community*. Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, pp. 1-81.

Onuf, N G. 1989. *World of Our Making: Rules and Rule in Social Theory and International Relations*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press.

Onuf, N G. 2018. *The Mightie Frame: Epochal Change and the Modern World*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Onuf, N, and P Onuf. 2006. *Nations, Markets, and War: Modern History and the American Civil War*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press.

Orwell, G. 1953. 'Politics and the English Language.' In Orwell, *A Collection of Essays*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, pp. 156-171.

Parsons, T. 1961. 'An Outline of the Social System.' In Parsons, E Shils, K D Naegele, J R Pitts (eds), *Theories of society: Foundations of Modern Sociological Theory*, Vol. 1. New York: Free Press, pp. 30-79.

Pierson, P. 2004. *Politics in Time: History, Institutions, and Social Analysis*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Pipes, R. 1999. *Property and Freedom*. New York: Alfred Knopf.

Polanyi, M. 1958. *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Rostow, W W. 1960. *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Smith, A. 1982. Report of 1762-3. In Smith, *Lectures on Jurisprudence* (R. L Meek, D D Raphael and P G Stein, eds). Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, pp. 1-340.

Walker, R B J. 1993. *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Walker, R B J. 2010. *After the Globe, before the World*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Wallerstein, I. 1974. The Rise and Future Demise of the World Capitalist System: Concepts for Comparative Analysis.' *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 16 (4): 387-415.

Wallerstein, I. 2000. 'Globalization or the Age of Transition? A Long-Term View of the Trajectory of the World System.' *International Sociology* 15 (2): 249-265.

Wittgenstein, L. 1968. *Philosophical Investigations*, 3rd ed. (trans. G E M Anscombe). Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Acknowledgments

About the author

Nicholas Onuf is Professor *Emeritus*, Department of Politics and International Relations, Florida International University, Miami. He is author of *World of Our Making* (1989), *The Republican Legacy in International Thought* (1998), *International Legal Theory* (2008), *Making Sense, Making Worlds* (2013), *The Mightie Frame* (2018), and *International Theory at the Margins* (2023). With his brother, Peter Onuf, he is author of *Federal Union, Modern World* (1993) and *Nations, Markets and War* (2006). He has also edited or co-edited five books, including, most recently, the *SAGE Handbook of the History, Philosophy and Sociology of International Relations* (2018). As Nicholas Greenwood, he wrote and self-published a novel called *The Hairy Saint* (2020).

Metaforizando a modernidade

Resumo: Nós, do mundo moderno, contamos histórias sobre ser moderno, tornar-se moderno. Perguntamos para onde a modernidade está indo. Dois complexos metafóricos dominam essas histórias: Preferimos metáforas de vida e crescimento; a modernidade tem vida própria. Ou preferimos metáforas de movimento e direção; a modernidade é uma jornada que toma muitos caminhos. Os dois complexos coexistem desconfortavelmente, mesmo quando se alimentam um do outro; juntos, eles marcam o conceito moderno de que a modernidade deixou a tradição para trás. Aqueles que a sociedade moderna vitimou, desenraizou ou abandonou podem resistir a ambos os complexos, muitas vezes buscando recuperar as metáforas de um passado perdido, quebrado, mal lembrado ou inventado. A maioria dos beneficiários da modernidade favorece o complexo metafórico da vida e do crescimento - ou simplesmente o toma como garantido. Os acadêmicos com uma atitude crítica em relação à modernidade geralmente favorecem muitos caminhos e, portanto, o complexo metafórico de movimento e direção - sem perceber. Sete metáforas revelam essas tendências: fronteira, quebra, junção, limite, ruptura, estágio, transição. Elas também sugerem um terceiro complexo metafórico distintamente moderno. Em nossas histórias sobre a modernidade, empregamos versões plurais de metáforas espaciais sequenciadas no tempo: molduras, caixas, compartimentos ou contêineres, e marcamos a sequência com sinais metafóricos: idade, estágio, onda ou período.

Palavras-chave: fronteira; quebra; junção; limite; ruptura; estágio; transição.