

Metaphor and Gesture

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Metaphor

I feel rather guilty directing you to read Zoltán Kövecses's book *Metaphor*¹ rather than the books of my personal favorite scholars on the topic, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson. I've taught their *Metaphors We Live By*² a good many times. I have included metaphor as one of our topics because I think it is important that we understand how intertwined are language and metaphor. We must shift our attention away from the folk understanding of metaphor as a poetic trope that perhaps muddies meaning or prettifies it rather than clarifies it. Yet, I also wanted the excuse to think more extensively about the structurality of metaphor especially in the context of the various perspectives we have been considering, such as Baudrillard's seduction, Bateson's play, and Merleau-Ponty's flesh and depth. Gesture is good to think and I want to reflect on "hands" particularly in light of the importance of body in language and communication. While strung together, my thoughts span several topics.

Kövecses defines metaphor, or specifically "conceptual metaphor," as "understanding one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain."³ He explains that metaphor is a process of mapping entailments from the more concrete to the more abstract and that the process is unidirectional, that is, the mappings go only in one direction.⁴ In his example, a very common one indeed, LOVE IS A JOURNEY, he holds that journey is the more concrete concept and that its entailments are mapped onto the more abstract, love. The travelers are mapped as the lovers; the vehicle is the love relationship itself; the distance covered is the progress made; and so on. The importance of showing these characteristics of metaphor is that we soon begin to appreciate that our lives and our language are shot through with metaphors. We can scarcely come up with a simple statement that isn't based in some key metaphor and we cannot find any concept or experience that we would hope to talk or think about free of metaphor. Minimally an appreciation of metaphor at even a general level is an awakening. We recognize that concepts are based extensively in embodied experience and that there is a major fluidity in the grasping and expression of concepts.

The structurality of metaphor is what interests me most and I don't find that the extant discussions of metaphor have the same sophistication as do discussions of seduction, flesh, and depth. Let me explore metaphor structurality. First, I am rather fond of the simple definition that metaphor is to understand something in terms of something else *which it is not*.⁵ The convention for stating a metaphor is to use capital letters and the word *is*, for example, LOVE IS A JOURNEY. In Kövecses example, "love" is the target and "journey" is the source, which means that he understands that "journey" is concrete and

¹ Zoltán Kövecses, *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

² George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

³ Kövecses, p. 4.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁵ Kövecses, nor other students of metaphor, does not place any concern with this aspect of metaphor, although Lakoff and Johnson do talk about metaphors hiding as well as revealing.

“love” is abstract. When I read his list of entailments and mappings, I think that a revision to his presentation is necessary. The word “love” names an emotion or a feeling and I believe that all the attributes of “love” that Kövecses names refer to something other than “love.” Rather they refer to a “relationship” and, indeed, all of the features that he assigns to “love” have little, if anything so far as I can discern, to do with any emotion: the lovers, the relationship, the events of the relationship, the progress made, continuing on to the goals of the relationship. So first of all, it seems to me that there is a hidden element in this structurality and it is actually “love” itself. And perhaps the hidden love in this metaphor represents something rather larger in the structurality of metaphor and that is “feeling” or “emotion.” We know that love or feelings or emotions drive a relationship, but we are distracted from this hidden, yet most important, element in the double structure of metaphor.

The unidirectional principle of metaphor is worth thinking about in this respect. LOVE IS A JOURNEY, yet A JOURNEY IS NOT LOVE. The target is abstract, that is, love not journey, while the source is concrete, that is, journey not love. I want to contest this, but first, were we to consider unidirectionality in terms of the metaphor RELATIONSHIP IS A JOURNEY it would be less clear, because the inverse JOURNEY IS A RELATIONSHIP isn’t actually all that implausible. We might think of a journey as a relationship of the traveler through space relating to the road, to the landscape, to the map, to fellow travelers, and so on. I’m far from convinced that metaphorical mappings are simply unidirectional. I believe that they must be reversible to some extent, yet simply incomplete in their reversibility. This is an important development in the understanding of metaphor.

In metaphor an essential condition is ONE THING IS ANOTHER THING. The word “is” is a marker of reversibility. Were it truly unidirectional the conventional presentation would be ONE THING←ANOTHER THING, using a left pointing arrow to indicate the mapping of the source domain named second onto the target domain named first. “Is” means they are equal, yet different, and thus, in some respects, reversible. Mappings of entailments cannot occur without some oscillatory negotiative reversal. However, another essential condition of metaphor is that the “one thing” is also *not* the “other thing.” Were this not so, then the metaphor would be LOVE IS LOVE and who could learn anything from that one. We should be familiar with the structurality I am suggesting; we have seen it before in our consideration of play, seduction, flesh and we have been building richer understandings of the profundity of this structurality in our discussions of depth, chiasm, proprioception, dark space, and movement.

Perhaps a more interesting way of thinking about the relation of the two parts of the metaphor is in Merleau-Ponty’s terms of the “visible and the invisible” rather than the concrete and the abstract. Reviewing Kövecses’s lists of common categories for source and target domains in metaphor there is a general correlation with the visible and invisible. Body, health and illness, animals, plants, buildings and constructions, machines and tools, games and sports, money and economic terms, etc. are the categories common to the source domain, while emotion, desire, morality, thought, society/nation, politics, economy, human relationships, communication, time, religion, and so on are categories common to the target domain. I think there needs to be more extensive consideration than I have time

to do here, but my guess is that even those target domains that are not invisible, such as “human relationships,” as I have shown above, have a hidden invisible such as feelings or emotions.

The common argument is that body and bodily experience are involved in the source domain. This body involvement is the basis for the source domain to be understood as concrete. However, when we consider the target domain, while it is invisible, can it be any less bodily involved? Experience itself suggests the persisting internal bodily connection with the history of the body. Experience is not simply the mechanical and physical movement of the body; it is the impression such posture and movement has and has over time. Experience is a store of the effects and affects of mechanical and physical movement; more than a store it is a deepening well of evolving and changing implications that are essential to affordance and perception. Surely it is a limited or naïve understanding of body, perhaps overly shaped by vision (which sees only the body visible), that truncates this standard argument. Emotion, feeling, proprioception, visceral perception are all deeply bodied and, frankly, anything but abstract. What is abstract about felt pain or the felt knowledge that we sometimes term belief? What we know in our bodily feelings are the hidden certainties that drive everything that we do.

If we accept then that metaphor structurality is comprised of the visible and the invisible or, in bodily terms, the external and the internal, we must then recognize that metaphor structurality is necessarily grounded on depth. The identity of inside and outside, of visible and invisible, has copresent implications, a thickness, a depth. Metaphor structurality can be restated as AN INSIDE THING IS AN OUTSIDE THING. Metaphor then is reversible in turning one outside in. Metaphor is the complement to and in continuity with perception which is grounded in the flesh of the world. Metaphor, as perception, is trafficked in the depth between the inside and outside, the invisible and the visible, concept and form, idea and action. Metaphor, as a trope,⁶ is of a different order than perception. Metaphor is a language act or a conceptual act, yet, like perception it still functions, in naïve terms, to bring the outside inside, or, in more sophisticated terms, to engage the interdependence of outside and inside in the human enterprise of being in the world. And, like perception, metaphor is thoroughly embodied. Yet, this account of metaphor is incomplete, incomplete in several respects.

Metaphor is not unidirectional so much as it is an incomplete reversibility. The incompleteness of the reversibility of the metaphor is the “not” to the “is.” And the “not” typically remains hidden. The metaphor is stated LOVE IS A JOURNEY emphasizing the “is.” However, of actually greater importance is the hidden certainty that LOVE IS NOT A JOURNEY. The reversibility implied by the “is” is known to be incomplete, indeed, false, but only by the hidden and unstated “not.” In Merleau-Ponty’s terms this hidden “not,” this incompleteness in the reversibility, is the chiasm, the crossing place between the two terms of the metaphor, the crossing place where comparison, negotiation, revelation, expansion, construction, creation, thought, and action occur. It is the hidden “not” that gives movement and power and life and heuristic as well as communicative value to metaphor. Metaphor as a linguistic

⁶ “Trope” is a word or phrase, expression, or image that is used in a figurative way, usually for rhetorical effect. However, interestingly, in medieval religious texts a trope was a phrase or text interpolated into the service of the Mass, suggesting that it was a kind of intrusion of the outside to the inside in order to expand or provide affordance.

cognitive act then succeeds perception in a logical sense and depends on it, yet metaphor is in continuity with flesh and this suggests that the linguistic cognitive aspect of metaphor is but one arc of its structurality. It suggests that metaphor is formative, heuristic, provocative, constructive; in a word, gestural. I'll take this up again below. The thickness or depth of metaphor is dependent on a primordial "pure depth" which I discussed in some detail in the last lecture.

This is but a prolegomenon toward a shift in the way we understand metaphor. I think it complements and extends the understanding of metaphor presented by Kövecses and also by Lakoff and Johnson. Clearly a fuller exploration of the metaphor structurality in light of play, seduction, flesh and so forth will be important as will considering the implications of this perspective on the many metaphor related topics. I'll take metaphor up again below, yet clearly in my thinking there should be a part two to this lecture followed by a dozen or so more.

Poor Gesture

Now I want to turn to the topic of gesture. In my recent studies of gesture I have found it helpful to divide the studies and understandings of gesture into two types or styles, poor and rich. What I am calling "poor" gesture is the focus on gesture as what Adam Kendon in *Gesture: Visible Action as Utterance* (2004) refers to as "a visible action when it is used as an utterance or a part of an utterance." And utterance is understood generally as "giving information." Here gesture is aligned with language, with communication. Gesture has been understood in these terms since antiquity and remains the subject of extensive scientific studies. While these are interesting and I'll deal with them to some extent here, I've come to realize that my interest in gesture is largely as it is understood in what I am referring to as a "rich" sense. I'll deal with this approach to gesture below.

My comments on the "poor" understandings of gesture are perhaps more reactive than constructive. I'll focus first on Shaun Gallagher's chapter "The Body in Gesture" in his book *How the Body Shapes the Mind*, knowing full well that there is a literature on gesture that I have not yet carefully read. First, I must say that I'm tired of Gallagher's use of Ian Waterman. This poor guy's loss of proprioception is Gallagher's career gain it seems to me.⁷ I understand that the single exceptional case is often the ground for breakthrough knowledge, yet I am often not very persuaded by the Waterman case. I also have loads of questions about Gallagher's claim that Waterman has no proprioceptive feedback from the neck down. While I do not doubt that Waterman has impaired neurological connections from the proprioceptors in his muscles and ligaments, I believe that there are other pathways for proprioceptive information to be processed, perhaps in the spinal column or synaesthetically (since one could say that Ian has visual proprioception). I simply do not believe it possible that visual observation of muscle and joint experience could provide adequately complex input to the sensorimotor cortex and other sensorimotor brain functions to control the wonder that is comprised by the thousands of muscle fibers that must act in concert to do the smallest physical tasks. I need to do more research on how muscles work in conjunction with proprioceptors of various kinds, but what I have discovered so far is that basically every muscle movement is necessarily meshed with proprioception.

⁷ Also Jonathan Cole's who has done the principal study of Waterman.

Gallagher is considering gesture in terms of two explanations of gesture. The motor theory holds that gesture is a “matter of movement, falling within the domain of sensory-motor behavior.”⁸ The other, a communications based theory, holds that gesture “is a form of expressive action ... a communicative act. ... tied to linguistic and communicative processes.”⁹ Gallagher argues for the communication theory and further distinguishes two aspects of gesture: “its *inter*-subjective (communicative) and *intra*-subjective (cognitive) functions.”¹⁰ In other words, gestures are good to talk and good to think.

As I think about this, it seems clear to me that the rather routinized patterning of gesturing that accompanies common discourse points strongly to the motor theory. There simply isn't enough variation, as there clearly is in American Sign Language, for example, to achieve anything like the level of speech communication. On the other hand, clearly there is an expressive aspect to gesture that is undeniable.

This discussion of gesture is all too commonly limited to hands. Elocution was a form of rhetoric popular in the eighteenth century that recognized the importance to the art of oratory of gesture, stance (i.e., posture), and dress. Elocution prescribed specific hand gestures to accomplish specific affects. But even in elocution, while prescribed, gesture was not a matter of simply the isolated hand. It was a movement of the arm and hand connected with the posture and stance of the body. In Gallagher's discussion of gesture, as in the other studies I have read, gesture is almost constantly referred to as limited to the hand or hands. For example, Gallagher writes, “one requirement for gesture is that there be some knowledge in the system concerning the location of the hands relative to each other and relative to the rest of the body.”¹¹ He even consults Ramachandran's studies of amputees to see if phantom limbs have evidence of gesture, or phantom gesture. He understands the flapping of stumped upper arms as evidence of gesture, were the hands to be there, rather than the moving stumps themselves being gestures. My point is this, while Gallagher argues for an embodied theory of gesture, he appears not to understand the fundamentals of movement. Hands are the extremities connected to the trunk of the body by arms. Movement of the hands, particularly any hand movement that we would call gesture, also involves the arms. Movement of the arms and hands is initiated from the core of the body and is inseparable from the posture and placement of the entire body. Posture supports gesture. When the analysis of gesture is limited to attending only to hands and the intricacies of digital movement, focus on articulation and communication is predictable. However, if gesture is understood as being initiated in the core of the body and, in sequence, extended into the arms and finally the hands, a different understanding should arise. The arm and hand movements are then the articulation of the body's core which is strongly associated with feelings, emotions, depth rather than cognition, articulate communication, speech, or thought. Rather than being cognitive-linguistic, gesture may be emotive and affective.

⁸ Gallagher, p. 117.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 117-18.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

Based on his experiments with Waterman, Gallagher holds that gesture is not under the control of either body image or body schema, nor is gesture under either visual or proprioceptive control.¹² He holds that “gesture is essentially language and functions primarily in communicative contexts.”¹³ Again, I think that the shortcoming here is the same as that for metaphor in the discussion above. Gallagher has a body concept that separates hands from bodies, that separates emotion and feeling from cognition and language. Were we to re-couple hands to arms to bodies and feelings and emotions to cognition and language, gesture would be complementary to language in communicating the emotional counterpart to the simple conduit understanding of language expression and the embodied metaphorical understanding of conception and cognition. When concepts are thoroughly entwined with body via metaphor, when metaphor has by its structurality depth that is inseparable from emotion and feeling, then speech needs multiple channels by which to express and affect its full richness and nuance.¹⁴ Gesture is not the only means of doing this; so too are facial expression and the nuances of speech articulation, that is, the vocal qualities, timing, and emphasis of speech. There is a well-developed speech act theory, initiated by J. L. Austin’s book *How to Do Things with Words*¹⁵ that explores the amazing complexities of articulation. The pragmatic and locutionary aspects of speech are well considered. So gesture may clearly have a communication function, however, I think it impossible to understand it as Gallagher contends that gesture is “essentially language.”¹⁶

On another point Gallagher argues that gestures are products, as well as active producers, of brain organization. Reviewing his neonate imitation data he proposes that gesture “helps to accomplish thought.”¹⁷ This idea is more fully developed by Raymond Gibbs in his consideration of gesture and language. Gibbs writes,

Iverson and Thelen (1999) claim that speech and gesture momentarily activate and entrain one another as a coupled oscillator. At first, an infant’s manual activity takes precedence, but through rhythmical activity, and later through gesture, manual behavior gradually entrains the speech production system. The initial basis to move hand and mouth together cascade with a single coupled connected system where the mental thought is manifested as movement. ... Eventually, every communicative act, either by speech or gesture, is remembered as an ensemble, including the proprioceptive consequence of that movement. This linkage of speech and gesture provides another example of the sensorimotor origins of thought and of the continual importance of embodied action in mental life.¹⁸

So, we might say that speech and gesture are good to think. Gibbs’s understanding of gesture as “ensemble” that includes proprioceptive consequences of movement moves in the direction of a “rich” understanding.

¹² Ibid., pp. 118 & 120.

¹³ Ibid., p. 118.

¹⁴ Later Gallagher does acknowledge that “the body generates gestural expression,” Ibid., p. 129.

¹⁵ J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2nd ed., 1975)

¹⁶ Gallagher, p. 118.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 128.

¹⁸ Gibbs, p. 169.

Gibbs chapter “Language and Communication” offers insights and extensive evidence on how language and communication are based in body. For example, he concludes that, “Human bodies provide the conceptual basis for defining the range of meanings associated with each verb for hand motion in any language.”¹⁹ Importantly he shows that “people create meaningful construals by simulating how the objects and actions depicted in language relate to embodied possibilities. Thus, people use their embodied experiences to ‘soft-assemble’ meaning, rather than merely activate pre-existing abstract, conceptual representations.”²⁰ There are many things of merit in Gibbs chapter, but I’ll take time here to respond to but one of them.

In a number of the experiments reported by Gibbs, the response time of subjects was often considered a measure of meaning; the more immediate the comprehension the greater the meaning. For example, near the end of the chapter Gibbs discusses affordance (you’ll recall this was introduced by James Gibson). In terms of the affordance related to the word “chair,” he provides two sentences: “Art used the chair to defend himself against the snarling lion” and “Art used the chair to propel himself across the room.” He notes that people judged the first sentence more meaningful which he argues is associated with the greater affordance of using a chair to defend against a lion than to propel oneself across the floor. Interestingly, my experience which I think representative of most would actually produce the opposite. I have often sat in a desk chair with rollers and propelled myself around the room, but I have yet to face a lion or any other animal with a chair. Who on earth would carry a chair along for such purposes. However, the issue I want to address has to do with the correlation of speed of comprehension with meaning. Gibbs writes, “that the nonafforded sentences took significantly longer to comprehend than the afforded ones.” It seems to me that there is a general understanding that speed of comprehension correlates with meaningfulness. Something incomprehensible such as “John scratched his back with thread” is deemed incomprehensible and thus without meaning, because it registers long response times.

I am not so sure Gibbs would actually believe that comprehension speed always correlates with meaning, but it is a point I want to consider further. Jonathan Smith, citing Paul Ricoeur, argues that incongruity gives rise to thought; so too does poetry, complexity, profundity, incredulity, seductivity, and many of the topics we have considered. Comprehension speed may indicate superficial or customary comprehensiveness, but it does not correlate with meaning. I often make a distinction between the words meaning and meaningful. The meaningful is full of meaning, suggesting there is much to comprehend, that there is much to think about, that thinking actually creates more and more meaning. I can in a microsecond dismiss as quotidian the statement “John scratched his back with a floppy disk” finding little about it remarkable beyond the increasing rarity of floppy disks. It is mere information, useful or not, but certainly not provocative or interesting. Not so with the statement, “John scratched his back with thread.” This is of interest and it is so for the very structurality it shares with metaphor. It contains a hidden depth, and it does so precisely because that depth is a gap, an incredulity, an incomprehensibility, a chiasm. And these provocations rise precisely because the statement confounds affordance programs. What sort of thing is John that he could scratch his back

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 197.

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 200-201.

with thread? What sort of thread might work for such a task? Why does he scratch with thread rather than a thread? Perhaps this is symbolic in some sense or needs to be placed in context. Who would make such a statement?

I think it is unfortunate that our culture and era confuses meaning with information and with rapid comprehension speed. Unfortunately I find that students often have the same perspective. A reading that is easy and simple seems somehow more intelligent and meaningful to them, whereas readings that are complex and require much rereading and thought are often dismissed as meaningless and the author stupid. It consigns us to a fast-paced information-crowded world with little depth or thickness. I could go on to preach a bit about the ill consequences of living in a world where production supplants seduction, where hyperreality is our reality, where our energies are directed to end play, to deny depth, and to celebrate being simple.

Rich Gesture

When Jonathan Smith described the future of the academic study of religion over the next 40 years he included gesture as one of the five areas he believes will significantly shape the study. I was surprised by that and I don't explicitly know what he intended by gesture. I should take that up with him one of these days, but I certainly hope and would expect that he was thinking something like what I am calling "rich" gesture.

The most significant work that draws this view as it has been developed by a number of scholars through the twentieth century to the present is Carrie Noland's *Agency and Embodiment* (2009). She traces this understanding of gesture from Marcel Mauss's 1935 "Techniques of Body" essay, through the paleoethnography of André Leroi-Gourhan, to the works of Maurice Merleau-Ponty among others. These works and ideas deserve much greater attention than I have time and space here to give them, but a summary commentary as I have attempted to digest and develop my own statement of this rich view can be done here, if hastily.

Noland, as others, seems to me to understand gesture as applicable to every human movement. I'm not clear that I am ready to go that far, but the very idea opens our understanding of gesture well beyond a visible act of utterance. Broadening this view we should consider that gesture has an agentive role to play. The poor view limits that agency to the act of communication or cognition, yet even parallel to the speech act theory we would immediately expand that to having a performative function, as doing something in communicating something. Standing beside the road with one's thumb raised communicated the information "I need a ride," but it also performs the act of "getting that ride," that is, the agency performed by "thumbing a ride" is much more important and significant than is communicating a message or a bit of information.

But further, gesture is understood as having much deeper agentive force. Our gestures create space. Our gestures correspond with affordances and thus with our makings. Our gestures enculturate. Our gestures actually remake the body of the one gesturing at the level of tissue. Our body movement, our postural attitudes, our actions; they all correspond with our gestural practices. We are, in the literal sense evident at the level of tissue, our gestures. Gestures are affective as well. They shape and

determine our own feelings as well as those of others that experience our gestures. So the rich view of gesture sees it as having an enormous range of agentive powers that serve to create and shape ourselves and our environments. I see this agentive aspect of gesture as efferent, as an arc that extends the body into the environment as well as into one's very flesh.

This reaching out, this extension, this expression, this agency is complemented by a corresponding arc of gesture that typically goes unidentified, not discussed. There were hints of this in the discussion of agency above, in that agency is also always a reaching out to impact the environment with the expectation that it will return to also change the self. Gesture is always a reaching out to touch, to grope, to investigate, to explore. In this sense its function, its agency, is heuristic and affective. This is I think an afferent arc of gesture; a movement from the environment to the one gesturing. In gesture we discover ourselves and our environment; we explore possible meanings as we physically and mentally grope the world with our gestures.

Against the background of our numerous studies of movement we can begin to understand gesturing in terms of the structurality we have called many names: play, seduction, touch, flesh, dance, movement. We might explore gesture as a form of perception as well as a form of expression. You can predict how this view of gesture would be developed.

At this point let me reflect on the importance of the "rich" view of gesture to the academic study of religion. Throughout my career I have tended to be interested in cultures that do things without also writing about why and how they do what they do. In contrast, the academic study of religion has been primarily, almost exclusively, interested in the study of people who have written about ideas and beliefs. Should doings come into the picture at all they come as aspects of written histories, or as the subject of interpretive texts, or as prescriptions of appropriate actions. I have always felt that the problem lay, in part anyway, in that we didn't have a clue about how to comprehend peoples' doings, their actions, their repetitive movements, their gestures. Indeed, the very repetitive and seemingly "thoughtless" associations with gesture have disqualified them as "religious" casting them to that embarrassing category of "magic" most carefully avoided.

It is my feeling now that gesture, understood in this rich sense, may offer an important way that we may begin to attend carefully to movement, to actions, to emotions, to affect, to gesture thus reclaiming the great bulk of human action that we would identify as religious, even if religiously avoided by academics.

I have begun to look at some of my earlier cultural studies to begin to identify key and important gestures that can now be identified in these "rich" terms with the benefit of us more fully comprehending and appreciating their importance and richness.

Well, this is but a hint of ideas about gesture, but it has been interesting to attempt to understand what Jonathan Smith might have had in mind by his statement about gesture. I have begun to see that gesture is indeed an unbelievably rich way to understand human movement and that it promises much.

An Astonishing Hypothesis, but a Slightly Blind One

Alva Noë in his new (2011) book *Out of Our Heads: Why You Are Not Your Brain, and Other Lessons from the Biology of Consciousness* quotes Nobel laureate codiscoverer of the structure of DNA, Francis Crick, who proposed an astonishing hypothesis, in a book by this name, that hypothesis being “you, your joys and your sorrows; your memories and your ambitions, your sense of personal identity and free will, are in fact no more than the behavior of a vast assembly of nerve cells and their associated molecules” (5). Noë responded that what he finds interesting is how astonishing this view isn’t! And he turns to show how common are views that “there is a thing inside each of us that thinks and feels and wants and decides” (5) He acknowledges, as clearly we would protest, that Crick is proposing something quite different than a spirit or soul or even a mind, yet his point is really that it has been common, if not the exclusive approach, to understand consciousness by looking within. Recently neuroscientists have sought consciousness in the “brain in the skull,” as I have come to call it, and Noë recounts this for us as well.

Noë then turns to what he considers to be a “really astonishing hypothesis” and he states it this way, “we must look not inward, into the recesses of our insides; rather, we need to look to the ways in which each of us, as a whole animal, carries on the processes of living in and with and in response to the world around us. The subject of experience is not a bit of your body. You are not your brain. The brain, rather, is part of what you are” (7). Well, I must say that I was immediately perked up by the phrase “the processes of living in and with and in response to the world around us” because to me this could refer to nothing other than gesturing in the rich sense. Yet, Noë never mentions the word gesture in the book. He has a chapter on “Habits” that borders upon a discussion of gesture, yet it tends to emphasize the negative association of habit rather than something like Pierre Bourdieu’s notion of *habitus*. Noë discusses perception somewhat, yet even here he focuses on vision. And he seems not to know of the extensive philosophical work on perception by Merleau-Ponty and others.

Still, I find Noë’s book of great interest in its unspoken affirmation of the essential role that gesture plays in the formation and existence of consciousness. It powerfully affirms, from a perspective of neuroscience and biology, that our study of gesturing, especially if understood in its richness, will be central in the era of the study of culture and religion that is just beginning.

Metaphor as Gesture

Okay, now I want to return to a brief addition to my discussion of metaphor in light of this brief consideration of gesture. The principal criticism I have of extant views of metaphor parallel those I have of what I have identified as a “poor” view of gesture. Thus, they are “poor” metaphor. They understand metaphor primarily as a means of communicating and seem to somehow assume that the interconnection between the source and target sides of metaphor is already formed, as are the definitions of words. My critique is that the incompleteness of the metaphor structurality, that is, the seemingly annoying “not” occluded by the dominant “is,” fuels movement and an oscillatory one between source and target domains, however consciously or unconsciously performed. In this oscillatory movement we explore the possible implications of entailments seeking coherences, possible coherences, and the implications of incoherencies. The structurality of metaphor is similar to

comparison in that it is the differences that make the connected domains, which we perhaps should rename, of interest; the differences give the metaphor its power; the differences seduce us to construct meaning. So my point is really that there is an afferent aspect of metaphor (afferent here meaning something that comes from the metaphor process into the construction of concepts and ideas) as well as an efferent or communicative side. The two are always paired and always at play. Through the gestures of metaphor the world is always open, always in motion, always crazily creative. And it is so even if we are not aware of the ongoing process. I think we are better off understanding metaphor as a type of rich gesture, as movement, as depth made possible by embodying “pure depth.”

Metaphor is foundational, I believe, to any comparative study, to any study of any other. Metaphor is foundational to who we are as human beings, how we build conceptions, how we understand ourselves, how we create ourselves. Metaphor, as I argue above, is fundamental to being human. As many studies of metaphor show, because many structural and ontological metaphors are based on the distinctiveness of the human body, metaphor offers a base, a ground, for comparison, and also translation, to be even possible. Were there not some ground common to all human beings then we would have no place to stand to consider the more interesting differences. A careful study of these body-based metaphors shared among human beings is then important for this fundamental stance. However, metaphor is also powerfully shaped by culture, by history, by any accumulation of experience. Since all experience is body based and since all bodies are, also cultural and historical, then to explore the operative metaphors of other peoples is a powerful method providing a way to hopefully surpass our studies being simply projections of our expectations onto others. Much more could be said on this. I also believe that to understand metaphor structurality in light of gesture and movement, as I have begun to develop it, is important for our self-understanding and appreciation. To embrace the hidden chiasm of metaphor is to open ourselves to profundity and richness, to depth and beauty.