Metaphor, Morality, and Politics, Or, Why Conservatives Have Left Liberals In the Dust*

BY GEORGE LAKOFF

We may not always know it, but we think in metaphor.[1] A large proportion of our most commonplace thoughts make use of an extensive, but unconscious, system of metaphorical concepts, that is, concepts from a typically concrete realm of thought that are used to comprehend another, completely different domain. Such concepts are often reflected in everyday language, but their most dramatic effect comes in ordinary reasoning. Because so much of our social and political reasoning makes use of this system of metaphorical concepts, any adequate appreciation of even the most mundane social and political thought requires an understanding of this system. But unless one knows that the system exists, one may miss it altogether and be mystified by its effects.

For me, one of the most poignant effects of the ignorance of metaphorical thought is the mystification of liberals concerning the recent electoral successes of conservatives. Conservatives regularly chide liberals for not understanding them, and

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they are right. Liberals do not understand how anti-abortion "right-to-life" activists can favor the death penalty and oppose reducing infant mortality through prenatal care programs. They do not understand why budget-cutting conservatives should spare no public expense to build prison after prison to house even non-violent offenders, or why they are willing to spend extra money to take children away from their mothers and put them in orphanages—in the name of family values. They do not understand why conservatives attack violence in the media while promoting the right to own machine guns. Liberals tend not to understand the logic of conservatism; they do not understand what form of morality makes conservative positions moral or what conservative family values have to do with the rest of conservative politics. The reason at bottom is that liberals do not understand the form of metaphorical thought that unifies and makes sense of the full range of conservative values.

To understand what metaphor has to do with conservative politics, we must begin with that part of our metaphor system that is used to conceptualize morality—a system of roughly two dozen metaphors. To illustrate how the system works, let us begin with one of the most prominent metaphors in the system—the metaphor by which morality is conceptualized in terms of accounting.

Keeping the Moral Books

We all conceptualize well-being as wealth. We understand an increase in well-being as a "gain" and a decrease of well-being as a "loss" or a "cost." This is combined with a very general metaphor for causal action in which causation is seen as giving an effect to an affected party (as in "The noise *gave* me a headache"). When two people interact causally with each other, they are commonly conceptualized as engaging in a transaction, each transferring an effect to the other. An effect

that helps is conceptualized as a gain; one that harms, as a loss. Thus, moral action is conceptualized in terms of financial transaction. Just as literal bookkeeping is vital to economic functioning, so moral bookkeeping is vital to social functioning. And just as it is important that the financial books be balanced, so it is important that the moral books be balanced.

Of course, the "source domain" of the metaphor, the domain of financial transaction, itself has a morality: It is moral to pay your debts and immoral not to pay. When moral action is understood metaphorically in terms of financial transaction, financial morality is carried over to morality in general: There is a moral imperative not only to pay one's financial debts but also one's moral debts.

The Moral Accounting Schemes

The general metaphor of Moral Accounting is realized in a small number of basic moral schemes: Reciprocation, Retribution, Restitution, Revenge, Altruism, and so on. Each of these moral schemes is defined using the metaphor of Moral Accounting, but the schemes differ as to how they use this metaphor, that is, they differ as to their inherent logics. Here are the basic schemes.

Reciprocation: If you do something good for me, then I "owe" you something, I am "in your debt." If I do something equally good for you, then I have "repaid" you, and we are even. The books are balanced. We know there is a metaphor at work here partly because financial reasoning is used to think about morality, and partly because financial words like "owe," "debt," and "repay" are used to speak of morality.[2]

Even in this simple case, there are two principles of moral action. *The first principle*: Moral action is giving something of positive value; immoral action is giving something of negative value. *The second principle*: There is a moral imperative to pay

one's moral debts; the failure to pay one's moral debts is immoral.

Thus, when you did something good for me, you engaged in the first form of moral action. When I did something equally good for you, I engaged in *both* forms of moral action. I did something good for you, *and* I paid my debts. Here the two principles act in concert.

Retribution: Moral transactions get complicated in the case of negative action. The complications arise because moral accounting is governed by a moral version of the arithmetic of keeping accounts, in which gaining a credit is equivalent to losing a debit and gaining a debit is equivalent to losing a credit.

Suppose I do something to harm you. Then, by Well-Being is Wealth, I have given you something of negative value. You owe me something of equal (negative) value. By moral arithmetic, giving something negative is equivalent to taking something positive. By harming you, I have taken something of value from you.

By harming you, I have placed you in a potential moral dilemma with respect to the first and second principles of moral accounting. Here are the horns of dilemma: *The first horn:* If you now do something equally harmful to me, you have done something with two moral interpretations. By the first principle, you have acted immorally since you did something harmful to me. ("Two wrongs do not make a right.") By the second principle, you have acted morally, since you have paid your moral debts. *The second horn:* Had you done nothing to punish me for harming you, you would have acted morally by the first principle, since you would have avoided doing harm. But you would have acted immorally by the second principle; in "letting me get away with it," you would not have done your moral duty, which is to "make me pay " for what I have done.

No matter what you do, you violate one of the two principles. You have to make a choice. You have to give

priority to one of the principles. Such a choice gives two different versions of moral accounting: The Morality of Absolute Goodness puts the first principle first. The Morality of Retribution puts the second principle first. As might be expected, different people and different subcultures have different solutions to this dilemma, some preferring retribution, others preferring absolute goodness.

In debates over the death penalty, liberals rank Absolute Goodness over Retribution, while conservatives tend to prefer Retribution: a life for a life.

Revenge: Suppose again that you do something to harm me, which is metaphorically to give me something of negative value. Moral arithmetic presents an alternative to retribution. By moral arithmetic, you have taken something of positive value from me by harming me. If I take something of equal positive value back from you, I have taken "revenge." Revenge is the moral equivalent of retribution, another way of balancing the moral books.

Restitution: If I do something harmful to you, then I have given something of negative value and, by moral arithmetic, taken something of positive value. I then owe you something of equal positive value. I therefore can make restitution—make up for what I have done—by paying you back with something of equal positive value. Of course, in many cases, full restitution is impossible, but partial restitution may be possible.

An interesting advantage of restitution is that it does not place you in a moral dilemma with respect to the first and second principles. You do not have to do any harm, nor is there any moral debt for you to pay, since full restitution, where possible, cancels all debts.

Altruism: If I do something good for you, then by moral accounting I have given you something of positive value. You are then in my debt. In altruism, I cancel the debt, since I do not want anything in return. I nonetheless build up moral "credit."

Turning the Other Cheek: If I harm you, I have (by Well-being

is Wealth) given you something of negative value and (by Moral Arithmetic) taken something of positive value. Therefore, I owe you something of positive value. Suppose you then refuse both retribution and revenge. You either allow me to harm you further or, perhaps, you even do something good for me. By moral accounting, either harming you further or accepting something good from you would incur an even further debt: By turning the other cheek, you make me even more morally indebted to you. If you have a conscience, then you should feel even more guilty. Turning the other cheek involves the rejection of retribution and revenge and the acceptance of basic goodness—and when it works, it works via the mechanism of moral accounting.

This example illustrates what a cognitive scientist means when he speaks of "conceptual metaphor." It is an unconscious, automatic mechanism for using inference patterns and language from a source domain (in this case, the financial domain) to think and talk about another domain (in this case, the moral domain). It also shows that a mode of metaphorical thought need not be limited to a single culture. Cultures in many parts of the world conceptualize morality in terms of accounting. Moreover, it shows that the same metaphor can be used in different forms by conservatives and liberals. Conservatives tend to prefer the metaphorical scheme of retribution to that of restitution.

Experiential Morality

Before we proceeed with our discussion of metaphors for morality, we should point out the obvious—that morality is not all metaphorical, and that the metaphorical system is based on nonmetaphorical aspects. Nonmetaphorical morality is about the experience of well-being.

The most fundamental form of morality concerns promoting the experiential well-being of others and the avoidance and

prevention of experiential harm to others. Here is part of what is meant by "well-being": Other things being equal, you are better off if you are *healthy* rather than sick; *rich* rather than poor; *strong* rather than weak; *free* rather than imprisoned; *cared for* rather than uncared for; *happy* rather than sad, disgusted, or in pain; *whole* rather than lacking; *clean* rather than filthy; *beautiful* rather than ugly; if you are experiencing *beauty* rather than ugliness; if you are functioning in the *light* rather than the dark; and if you can stand *upright* so that you do not fall down. These are among our basic experiential forms of well-being. Their opposites are forms of harm. Immoral action is action that causes harm, that is, action that deprives someone of one or more of these—of health, wealth, happiness, strength, freedom, safety, beauty, and so on.

These are, of course, norms, and the qualification "other things being equal" is necessary, since one can think of special cases where these may not be true. A wealthy child may not get the necessary attention of its parents; someone beautiful may be the target of envy; you need to be in the dark in order to sleep; excessive freedom can sometimes be harmful; sadness and pain may be necessary to appreciate happiness; and so on. But, on the whole, these conditions of experiential well-being hold. And these conditions form the grounding for our system of moral metaphors. For instance, Well-being is Wealth (and, hence, Moral Accounting) is based on the knowledge that it is better to be rich than to be poor. Similarly, since it is better to be strong than to be weak, we expect to see morality conceptualized as strength. And because it is better to be healthy than sick, we expect to see morality conceptualized in terms of health and attendant concepts like cleanliness and purity.

What we learn from this is that metaphorical morality is grounded in nonmetaphorical morality, that is, in forms of well-being, and that the system of metaphors for morality as a whole is, thus, far from arbitrary. Because the same forms of well-being are widespread around the world, we expect the same metaphors for morality to show up in culture after culture—and they

do. Where we find purification rituals, we find a manifestation of Morality as Purity. Because of the widespread fear of the dark, we find a widespread conception of evil as dark and good as light. Because it is better to walk upright than to fall down, we find the widespread metaphor that Morality is Uprightness. In short, because our notion of what constitutes well-being is widely-shared, our pool of metaphors for morality is also widely shared. Indeed, the commonality of shared metaphors for morality both within and across societies raises a deep question: What are differences in moral systems, and what is the source of those differences?

Conservative Morality

Of the roughly two dozen conceptual metaphors for morality in our conceptual systems, most are used by both conservatives and liberals alike. But conservatives and liberals give different priorities to those metaphors, and the same moral metaphors with differences in priority result in radically different moral systems. The metaphor with the highest priority in the conservative moral system is Moral Strength. This is a complex metaphor with a number of parts, beginning with: Being Good is Being Upright; Being Bad is Being Low. Examples include sentences like: He is an *upstanding* citizen. He is on the *up and up*. That was a *low* thing to do. He is *underhanded*. He is a *snake* in the grass. Doing evil, therefore, is moving from a position of morality (uprightness) to a position of immorality (being low). The most famous example, of course, is the *fall* from grace.

A major part of the Moral Strength metaphor has to do with the conception of immorality, or evil. Evil is reified as a force, either internal or external, that can make you fall, that is, commit immoral acts. Thus, to remain upright, one must be strong enough to "stand up to evil." Hence, morality is conceptualized as strength, as having the "moral fibre" or

"backbone" to resist evil. But people are not simply born strong. Moral strength must be built. Just as in building physical strength, where self-discipline and self-denial ("no pain, no gain") are crucial, so moral strength is built through self-discipline and self-denial, in two ways: (1) Through sufficient self-discipline to meet one's responsibilities and face existing hardships; (2) Actively through self-denial and further self-discipline.

To summarize, the metaphor of Moral Strength is a set of correspondences between the moral and physical domains: Being Good is Being Upright; Being Bad is Being Low; Doing Evil is Falling; Evil is a Force (either Internal or External); Morality is Strength.

One consequence of this metaphor is that punishment can be good for you, since going through hardships builds moral strength. Hence, the homily "Spare the rod and spoil the child." By the logic of this metaphor, moral weakness is in itself a form of immorality. The reasoning goes like this: A morally weak person is likely to fall, to give in to evil, to perform immoral acts, and thus to become part of the forces of evil. Moral weakness is, thus, nascent immorality—immorality waiting to happen.

There are two forms of moral strength, depending on whether the evil to be faced is external or internal. *Courage* is the strength to stand up to *external* evils and to overcome fear and hardship.

Much of the metaphor of moral strength is concerned with *internal* evils, cases where the issue of "self-control" arises. What has to be strengthened is one's will. One must develop will power in order to exercise control over the body, which is seen as the seat of passion and desire. Desires—typically for money, sex, food, comfort, glory, and things other people have—are seen in this metaphor as "temptations," evils that threaten to overcome one's self-control. Anger is seen as another internal evil to be overcome, since it too is a threat to self-control. The opposite of self-control is "self-indul-

gence"—a concept that only makes sense if one accepts the metaphor of moral strength. Self-indulgence is seen in this metaphor as a vice, while frugality and self-denial are virtues. The seven deadly sins is a catalogue of internal evils to be overcome: greed, lust, gluttony, sloth, pride, envy, and anger. It is the metaphor of moral strength that makes them "sins." The corresponding virtues are charity, sexual restraint, temperance, industry, modesty, satisfaction with one's lot, and calmness. It is the metaphor of Moral Strength that makes these "virtues."

This metaphor has an important set of entailments: The world is divided into good and evil. To remain good in the face of evil (to "stand up to" evil), one must be morally strong. One becomes morally strong through self-discipline and self-denial. Someone who is morally weak cannot stand up to evil and so will eventually commit evil. Therefore, moral weakness is a form of immorality. Lack of self-control (the lack of self-discipline) and self-indulgence (the refusal to engage in self-denial) are, therefore, forms of immorality. Moral strength thus has two very different aspects. First, it is required if one is to stand up to some externally defined evil. Second, it itself defines a form of evil, namely, the lack of self-discipline and the refusal to engage in self-denial. That is, it defines forms of internal evil.

Those who give a very high priority to Moral Strength, of course, see it as a form of idealism. The metaphor of Moral Strength sees the world in terms of a war of good against the forces of evil, which must be fought ruthlessly. Ruthless behavior in the name of the good fight, thus, is seen as justified. Moreover, the metaphor entails that one cannot respect the views of one's adversary: Evil does not deserve respect; it deserves to be attacked!

The metaphor of Moral Strength imposes a strict us-them moral dichotomy. The metaphor that morality is strength induces a view of evil as the force that moral strength is needed to counter. Evil must be fought. You do not empathize with

evil, nor do you accord evil some truth of its own. You just fight it.

Moral strength, importantly, imposes a form of asceticism. To be morally strong you must be self-disciplined and self-denying. Otherwise you are self-indulgent, and such moral flabbiness ultimately helps the forces of evil.

In the conservative mind, the metaphor of moral strength has the highest priority. Though it clusters with other metaphors that we will consider shortly, it is the one that matters most. It determines much of conservative thought and language—as well as social policy. It is behind the view that social programs are immoral and promote evil because they are seen as working against self-discipline and self-reliance. Given the priority of Moral Strength, welfare and affirmative action are immoral because they work against self-reliance. The priority of Moral Strength underlies conservative opposition to providing condoms to high school students and clean needles to drug addicts in the fight against teen pregnancy and AIDS. This is seen as promoting the evil of self-indulgence; the morally strong should be able to "Just say no." The morally weak are evil and deserve what they get. Orphanages are seen as imposing discipline, which serves morality. They may cost more than AFDC payments to mothers, but the issue for conservatives is morality, not just money. Conservative opposition to student aid also follows from this metaphor; morally strong students should be self-reliant and pay for the full cost of their own eductation. Similarly, the opposition to prenatal care programs to lower infant mortality stems from the view that moral mothers should be able to provide their own prenatal care, and if they cannot they should abstain from sex and not have babies.

An important consequence of giving highest priority to the metaphor of moral strength is that it rules out any explanations in terms of social forces or social class. If it is always possible to muster the discipline to just say no to drugs or sex and to support yourself in this land of opportunity, then

failure to do so is laziness, and social class and social forces cannot explain your poverty or your drug habit or your illegitimate children. And if you lack such discipline, then by the metaphor of Moral Strength, you are immoral and deserve any punishment you get.

The metaphor of moral strength does not occur in isolation. It defines a cluster of other common metaphors for morality that are important in the conservative world view. Here is a list of the others:

Moral Bounds: Here action is seen as motion, and moral action is seen as motion within prescribed bounds or on a prescribed path. Immoral people are those who transgress the bounds or deviate from the path. The logic of this metaphor is that trangressors and deviants are dangerous to society not only because they can lead others astray, but because they create new paths to traverse, thus blurring the clear, prescribed, socially accepted boundaries between right and wrong.

Moral Authority: Moral authority is patterned metaphorically on parental authority, where parents have a young child's best interests at heart and know what is best for the child. Morality is obedience. Just as the good child obeys his parents, a moral person obeys a moral authority, which can be a text (like the Bible or the Koran), an institution, or a leader.

Moral Essence: Just as physical objects are made of substances, which determine how they will behave (for example, wood burns, stone does not), so people are seen as having an essence—a "character"—which determines how they will behave morally. Good essential properties are called virtues; bad essential properties are called vices. When we speak of someone having a "heart of gold" or "not having a mean bone in his body" or "being rotten to the core," we are using the metaphor of moral essence. The word "character" often refers to moral strength seen as an essential moral property. To "see what someone is made of" is to test his character, to determine his moral essence. The logic of moral

essence is this: Your behavior reveals your essence, which in turn predicts your future behavior.

Moral Health: Immorality is seen as a disease that can spread. Just as you have a duty to protect your children from disease by keeping them away from diseased people, so you have a duty to protect your children from the contagion of immorality by keeping them away from immoral people. This is part of the logic behind urban flight, segregated neighborhoods, and strong sentencing guidelines for nonviolent offenders. Since purity and cleanliness promote health, morality is seen as being pure and clean.

Moral Wholeness: We speak of a "degenerate" person, the "erosion" of moral standards, the "crumbling" of moral values, the "rupture" or "tearing" of the moral fabric. Wholeness entails an overall unity of form that contributes to strength. Thus, moral wholeness is attendant on moral strength.

We can see these metaphors at work in the conservative worldview, in conservative rhetoric, and especially in social policy. The "three strikes and you're out" law, which is popular with conservatives, is a reflection of the metaphor of moral essence: Repeated criminal behavior reveals an essence that is "rotten to the core." If you have an immoral essence, you will keep performing immoral acts that can be predicted even before they are performed. Locking you up for 25 years, or for life, may seem like punishment for metaphorically predicted crimes, but if you believe in Moral Essence, then it is simply protection for society.

The metaphors of Moral Boundaries, Moral Health, and Moral Wholeness can be seen clearly in conservative views of pornography and sexually explicit art. Pornography should be banned to stop the contagion of immoral behavior (Moral Health). If pornography is allowed, then it marks out new paths of sexual behavior as normal, and the old, clear paths and boundaries that define right and wrong become blurred (Moral Bounds). Sexually explicit art defies the edifice of traditional sexual values, leading those values to "crumble" or "erode" (Moral Wholeness).

Indeed, deviant behavior of any kind challenges all these metaphors for morality, as well as the metaphor of Moral Authority, according to which deviance is disobedience.

From the perspective of these metaphors, multiculturalism is immoral, since it permits alternative views of what counts as moral behavior. Multiculturalism thus violates the binary good-evil distinction made by Moral Strength. It violates the well-defined moral paths and boundaries of Moral Bounds. Its multiple authorities violate any unitary Moral Authority. And the multiplicity of standards violates Moral Wholeness.

This cluster of metaphors—what I will call the "strength complex"— defines the highest priorities in conservative moral values. There is another metaphor that serves these priorities—the metaphor of Moral Self-Interest. It is based on a folk version of Adam Smith's economics: If each person seeks to maximize his own wealth, then by an invisible hand, the wealth of all will be maximized. Applying to this the metaphor that Well-being is Wealth, we get: If each person tries to maximize his own well-being (or self-interest), the well-being of all will be maximized. According to this metaphor, the highest morality is when everyone pursues his own self-interest unimpeded.

In conservative thought, self-reliance (a goal defined by Moral Strength) is achieved through the disciplined and unimpeded pursuit of self-interest. In metaphorical terms, the complex of strength metaphors define the moral goal, and Moral Self-Interest defines the means for achieving that goal. In moderate conservatism, the reverse is true. There, maximizing self-interest is the goal, and conservative values (defined by the strength complex) is the means. Thus, the difference between strict and moderate conservatism is a matter of priorities. Strict conservatives are moralistic, giving highest priority to the conservative moral metaphors and seeing the pursuit of self-interest as the natural means for achieving conservative moral values. Moderate conservatives are more pragmatic and less moralistic, seeing conservative

moral values as the natural means to achieve the pragmatic end of maximizing self-interest.

Consider for a moment what a model citizen is from the point of view of this moral system. It is someone who, through self-discipline and the pursuit of self-interest, has become self-reliant. This means that rich people and successful corporations are model citizens from a conservative perspective. To encourage and reward such model citizens, conservatives support tax breaks for them and oppose environmental and other regulations that get in their way. After all, since large corporations are model citizens, we have nothing to fear from them.

The Family

At this point, a natural question arises. What gives rise to the cluster of conservative moral metaphors? Why should those metaphors fit together as they do? The answer, interestingly enough, is the family. Conservatives share an ideal model of what a family should be. I will refer to it as the Strict Father Model:

> *The Strict Father Model.* A traditional nuclear family with the father having primary responsibility for the well-being of the household. The mother has day-to-day responsibility for the care of the house and details of raising the children. But the father has primary responsibility for setting overall family policy, and the mother's job is to be supportive of the father and to help carry out the father's views on what should be done. Ideally, she respects his views and supports them.
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> Life is seen as fundamentally difficult and the world as fundamentally dangerous. Evil is conceptualized as a force in the world, and it is the father's job to support his family and protect it from evils—both external and internal. External evils include enemies, hardships, and temptations. Internal evils come in the form of uncontrolled desires and are as threatening as external ones. The father embodies the values needed to make one's way in the world and to support a family: He is morally strong,

self-disciplined, frugal, temperate, and restrained. He sets an example by holding himself to high standards. He insists on his moral authority, commands obedience, and when he does not get it, metes out retribution as fairly and justly as he knows how. It is his job to protect and support his family, and he believes that safety comes out of strength.

In addition to support and protection, the father's primary duty is to tell his children what is right and wrong, punish them when they do wrong, and bring them up to be self-disciplined and self-reliant. Through self-denial, the children can build strength against internal evils. In this way, he teaches his children to be self-disciplined, industrious, polite, trustworthy, and respectful of authority.

The strict father provides nurturance and expresses his devotion to his family by supporting and protecting them, but just as importantly by setting and enforcing strict moral bounds and by inculcating self-discipline and self-reliance through hard work and self-denial. This builds character. For the strict father, strictness is a form of nurturance and love—tough love.

The strict father is restrained in showing affection and emotion overtly and prefers the appearance of strength and calm. He gives to charity as an expression of compassion for those less fortunate than he and as an expression of gratitude for his own good fortune.

Once his children are grown—once they have become self-disciplined and self-reliant—they are on their own and must succeed or fail by themselves; he does not meddle in their lives, just as he does not want any external authority meddling in his life.

This model of the family (often referred to as "paternalistic") is what groups together the conservative metaphors for morality. Those metaphorical priorities define a family-based morality, what I will call "strict father morality." Though many features of this model are widespread across cultures, the No Meddling Condition—that grown children are on their own, and parents cannot meddle in their lives—is a peculiarly American feature, and it accounts for a peculiar feature of American conservatism, namely, the antipathy toward government.

Conservatives speak of the government meddling in people's lives with the resentment normally reserved for meddling parents. The very term "meddling" is carried over metaphori-

cally from family life to government. Senator Robert Dole, addressing the senate during the debate over the Balanced Budget Amendment, derided liberals as those who think "Washington knows best." The force of the phrase comes from the saying "Father knows best," which became the title of a popular television sitcom. It appears that the antipathy to government shown by American conservatives derives from the part of the strict father model in which grown children are expected to go off on their own and be self-reliant and then deeply resent parents who continue to tell them how they should live.

Despite the fact that strict father models of the family occur throughout the world, this aspect of the strict father model appears to be uniquely American. For example, in strict father families in Spain or Italy or France or Israel or China, grown children are not expected to leave and go off on their own, with a proscription on parents playing a major role in guiding the life of the child. Similarly, conservative politics in such countries do not involve a powerful resentment toward the "meddling" of government.

The centrality of the strict father model to conservative politics also explains the attitudes of conservatives to feminism, abortion, homosexuality, and gun control. In the strict father model of the family, the mother is subordinated to running the day-to-day affairs of the home and raising the children according to the father's direction. It is the father that bears the major responsibility and makes the major descisions. The strict father model is exactly the model that feminism is in the business of overthrowing. Hence, the appropriate antipathy of conservatives to feminism (although there is the recent phenomenon of conservative feminists, namely, women who function with the values of conservative men such as self-disicipline, self-reliance, the pursuit of self-interest, and so forth). The conservative opposition to homosexuality comes from the same source. Homosexuality in itself is inherently opposed to the strict father model of the family.

The conservative position on abortion is a consequence of the view of women that comes out of the strict father model. On the whole, there are two classes of women who want abortions: Unmarried teenagers, whose pregnancies have resulted from lust and carelessness, and women who want to delay conception for the sake of a career but have accidentally conceived. From the point of view of the strict father model, both classes of women violate the morality characterized by the model. The first class consists of young women who are immoral by virtue of having shown a lack of sexual self-control. The second class consists of women who want to control their own destinies, and who are, therefore, immoral for contesting the strict father model itself, since it is that model that defines what morality is. For these reasons, those who abide by strict father morality tend to oppose abortion.

It is important to understand that conservative opposition to abortion is not just an overriding respect for all life. If it were, conservatives would not favor the death penalty. Nor is it a matter of protecting the lives of innocent children waiting to be born. If it were, conservatives would be working to lower the infant mortality rate by supporting prenatal care programs. The fact that conservatives oppose such programs means that they are not simply in favor of the right-to-life for all the unborn. Instead, there is a deep and abiding, but usually unacknowledged, reason why conservatives oppose abortion, namely, that it is inconsistent with strict father morality.

The protection function of the strict father leads to conservative support for a strong military and criminal justice system. It also leads to an opposition to gun control. Since it is the job of the strict father to protect his family from criminals, and since criminals have guns, he too must be able to use guns if he is to do his job of protecting the family against evil people who would harm them. Although the NRA talks a lot about hunting, the conservative talk shows all talk about protecting one's family as the main motivation for opposing gun control.

The Nation-as-Family Metaphor

What links strict-father, family-based morality to politics is a common metaphor, shared by conservatives and liberals alike—the Nation-as-Family metaphor, in which the nation is seen as a family, the government as a parent, and the citizens as children. This metaphor turns family-based morality into political morality, providing the link between conservative family values and conservative political policies. The strict father model, which brings together the conservative metaphors for morality, is what unites the various conservative political positions into a coherent whole when it is imposed on political life by the Nation-as-Family metaphor.

The strict father model of the family, the metaphors that are induced by it, and the Nation-as-Family metaphor jointly provide an explanation for why conservatives have the collection of political positions that they have. It explains why opposition to environmental protection goes with support for military protection, why the right-to-life goes with the right to own machine guns, why patriotism goes with hatred of government.

The requirement of such forms of explanation is not the norm in discussions of politics. Political commentators are all too ready to accept random lists: Conservatives favor A, oppose B, favor C, and so on. But, on occasion, explanation is attempted, and all the other attempts I know of have failed. For example, William Bennett defines conservatism thus:

> Conservatism as I understand it . . . seeks to conserve the best elements of the past. It understands the important role that traditions, institutions, habits and authority have in our social life together, and recognizes our national institutions as products of principles developed over time by custom, the lessons of experience, and consensus. . . . Conservatism, too, is based on the belief that the social order rests upon a moral base . . . (Bennett, 1992, p. 35).

This does not explain which elements of the past are judged to

be best (certainly not witch burning or child labor or slavery), or on which moral base the social order rests. It also does not explain why traditional institutions like public schools are not to be preserved. Nor does it explain conservative views in cases where there is no consensus, such as abortion.

Other conservatives claim that conservatives just want less government at the federal level. This does not explain cases where conservatives favor more government. The obvious examples are increased military funding, the three-strikes law, which requires many more prisons and the costs of keeping prisoners, the promotion of orphanages (which would be more expensive than the welfare programs they would replace), and tort reform, which would take enormous powers from the states and give them to the federal government. In short, conservative theorists are not very good at explaining what unifies conservative positions.

Conservatives sometimes claim that they are just following the Bible. But the Bible requires interpretation, and there are plenty of liberal interpretations (for example, the National Council of Churches, Liberation Theology). It is strict father morality that determines what counts as a conservative interpretation of the Bible.

Liberals have not done much better. The common liberal idea that conservatives are just selfish or tools of the rich does not explain conservative opposition to abortion, feminism, homosexuality, and gun control.

To sum up, the conservative world-view and the constellation of conservative positions are best explained by the strict father model of the family, the moral system it induces, and the common Nation-as-Family metaphor that imposes a family-based morality on politics.

Liberalism

The conceptual mechanisms I have just described are largely unconscious, like most of our conceptual systems. Yet,

conservatives have a far better understanding of the basis of their politics than liberals do. Conservatives understand that morality and the family are at the heart of their politics, as they are at the heart of most politics. What is sad is that liberals have not yet reached a similar level of political sophistication.

Liberal politics also center on a family-based morality, but liberals are much less aware than conservatives of the unconscious mechanisms that structures their politics. While conservatives understand that all of their policies have a single unified origin, liberals understand their own political conceptual universe so badly that they still think of it in terms of coalitions of interest groups. Where conservatives have organized for an overall, unified onslaught on liberal culture, liberals are fragmented into isolated interest groups based on superficial localized issues: labor, the rights of ethnic groups, feminism, gay rights, environmentalism, abortion rights, homelessness, health care, education, the arts, and so on. This failure to see a unified picture of liberal politics has led to a divided consciousness and has allowed conservatives to employ a divide-and-conquer strategy. None of this need be the case, since there is a worldview that underlies liberal thought that is every bit as unified as the conservative worldview.

The family-based morality that structures liberal thought is diametrically opposed to strict father morality. It centers around the nurturant parent model of the family:

> *The Nurturant Parent Model*: The family consists of either one or two parents. Two are generally preferable, but not always possible.
>
> The primal experience behind this model is one of being cared for and cared about, having one's desires for loving interactions met, living as happily as possible, and deriving meaning from one's community and from caring for and about others.
>
> People are realized in and through their "secure attachments": Through their positive relationships to others, through their contribution to their community, and through the ways in which they develop their potential and find joy in life. Work is a

means toward these ends, and it is through work that these forms of meaning are realized. All of this requires strength and self-discipline, which are fostered by the constant support of and attachment to those who love and care about you.

Protection is a form of caring, and protection from external dangers takes up a significant part of the nurturant parent's attention. The world is filled with evils that can harm a child, and it is the nurturant parent's duty to ward them off. Crime and drugs are, of course, significant, but so are less obvious dangers: cigarettes, cars without seat belts, dangerous toys, flammable clothing, pollution, asbestos, lead paint, pesticides in food, diseases, unscrupulous businessmen, and so on. Protection of innocent and helpless children from such evils is a major part of a nurturant parent's job.

Children are taught self-discipline in the service of nurturance: To take care of themselves, to deal with existing hardships, to be responsible to others, and to realize their potential. Children are also taught self-nurturance: The intrinsic value of emotional connection with others, of health, of education, of art, of communion with the natural world, and of being able to take care of oneself. In addition to learning the discipline required for responsibility and self-nurturance, it is important that children have a childhood, that they learn to develop their imaginations, and that they just plain have fun.

Through empathizing and interacting positively with their children, parents develop close bonds with children and teach them empathy and responsibility towards others and toward society. Nurturant parents view the family as a community in which children have commitments and responsibilities that grow out of empathy for others. The obedience of children comes out of love and respect for parents, not out of fear of punishment. When children do wrong, nurturant parents choose restitution over retribution whenever possible as a form of justice. Retribution is reserved for those who harm their children.

The pursuit of self-interest is shaped by these values; anything inconsistent with these values is not in one's self-interest. Pursuing self-interest, so understood, is a means for fulfilling the values of the model.

This model of the family induces a very different set of moral priorities, which can be characterized by another set of metaphors for morality. Here are those metaphors:

Morality as Empathy: Empathy itself is understood metaphorically as feeling what another person feels. We can see this in

the language of empathy: *I know what it is like to be in your shoes. I know how you feel. I feel for you.* To conceptualize moral action as empathic action is more than just abiding by the Golden Rule, to do unto others as you would have them do unto you. The Golden Rule does not take into account that others may have different values than you do. Taking morality as empathy requires basing your actions on their values, not yours. This requires a reformulation of the Golden Rule: Do unto others as *they* would have you do unto them.

Morality as Nurturance: Nurturance presupposes empathy. A child is helpless and to care *for* a child, you have to care *about* that child, which requires seeing the world through the child's eyes as much as possible. The metaphor of morality as nurturance can be stated as follows: The Community is a Family; Moral agents are Nurturing parents; People needing help are Children needing care; Moral action is Nurturance. This metaphor entails that moral action requires empathy, involves sacrifices, and that helping people who need help is a moral responsibility.

Moral Self-Nurturance: You can not take care of others if you do not take care of yourself. Part of the morality of nurturance is self-nurturance: Maintaining your health, making a living, and so on.

Morality as Social Nurturance: There are two varieties of moral nurturance—one about individuals and the other about social relations. If community members are to empathize with one another and help one another, then social ties must be maintained. The metaphor can be stated as follows: Moral agents are Nurturing Parents; Social ties are Children needing care; Moral Action is the Nurturance of Social Ties. This entails that social ties must be constantly attended to, that maintaining them requires sacrifices, and that one has a moral responsibility to maintain them.

Morality as Happiness: This is based on the assumption that unhappy people are less likely to be empathetic and nurturant, since they will not want others to be happier than they are.

Therefore, to promote your own capacity for empathy and nurturance, you should make yourself as happy as possible, provided you do not hurt others in the process.

Morality as Fairness: Fairness is understood metaphorically in terms of the distribution of material objects.There are three basic liberal models of fair distribution: (1) Equal distribution; (2) impartial rule-based distribution; and (3) rights-based distribution. Metaphorical fairness concerns actions conceived of as objects given to individuals. One can act to the benefit of others equally, impartially and by rule, or according to some notion of rights. According to this metaphor, moral action is fair action in one of these ways.

Moral Growth: Given that morality is conceptualized as uprightness, it is natural to conceptualize one's degree of morality as physical height, to understand norms for the degree of moral action as height norms, and, therefore, to see the possibility for "moral growth" as akin to physical growth. Where moral growth differs from physical growth is that moral growth is seen as being possible throughout one's lifetime.

These are the metaphors for morality that best fit the nurturant parent model of the family, and accordingly they are given highest priority in liberal thought. The metaphor of Moral Self-interest, here as in conservative thought, is seen as operating to promote the values defined by this group of metaphors. And as in the case of moderate conservatism, moderate liberalism can be characterized by placing Moral Self-interest as the goal and seeing these metaphors as providing the means by which to help people seek their self-interest.

Applying the metaphor of the nation-as-family with the government-as-parent, we get the liberal political worldview:

Social Programs: The government, as nurturant parent, is responsible for providing for the basic needs of its citizens: Food, shelter, education, and health care.

Regulation: Just as a nurturant parent must protect his

children, a government must protect its citizens—not only from external threats, but also from pollution, disease, unsafe products, workplace hazards, nuclear waste, and unscrupulous businessmen.

Environmentalism: Communion with the environment is part of nurturance, part of the realization of one's potential as a human being. Empathy includes empathy with nature. Caring for children includes caring for future generations. Protection includes protection from pollution. All of these considerations support environmentalism.

Feminism and Gay Rights: Nurturant parents want all their children to fulfill their potential, and so it is the role of government to provide institutions to make that possible.

Abortion: Women seeking abortion are either women who want to take control of their lives or teenage children needing help. Considerations of nurturance for both require providing access to safe, affordable abortions.

Multiculturalism: Nurturant parents celebrate the differences among their children, and so governments should celebrate the differences among its citizens.

Affirmative Action: Since women and minorities are not treated fairly in society, it is up to the government to do what it can to make sure that they have a fair chance at self-fulfillment.

Art and the Humanities: Knowledge, beauty, and self-knowledge are part of human fulfillment, and so the government must see to it that institutions promote such forms of human nurturance.

Taxation: In a nurturant family, it is the duty of older and stronger children to help out those that are younger and weaker; so in a nation it is the duty of citizens who are better-off to contribute more than those who are worse-off.

Again, what we have here is explanation—explanation of why liberal policies fit together and make a coherent whole: What affirmative action has to do with progressive taxation, what abortion has to do with affirmative action, what

environmentalism has to do with feminism. And again, the explanation centers on a model of the family, the moral system that goes with that model, and the Nation-as-Family metaphor.

Unfortunately, liberals are less insightful than consevatives at recognizing that morality and the family lie at the center of their political universe. The cost to liberals has been enormous. Where conservatives have organized effectively in a unified way to promote all their values, liberals misunderstood their politics as being about coalitions of interest groups and so have remained divided and unable to compete effectively with conservatives.

Filling in Some Details

As discussed at the outset, this is a brief overview of a long study, and, as such, it has been drastically oversimplified. Some of those oversimplifications are so important that they must be addressed, if only in a cursory way.

All of us—liberals, conservatives, and others—make use of all of the metaphors for morality discussed here. The difference is in the priorities assigned to them. Thus, conservatives also see morality as empathy and nurturance, but they assign a lower priority to them than liberals do. The result is that nurturance and empathy come to mean something different to conservatives than to liberals. In conservatism, moral nurturance is subservient to moral strength. Thus, moral nurturance for a conservative is the nurturance to be morally strong. For conservatives, moral empathy is subservient to moral strength, which posits a primary good-evil distinction. That distinction forbids conservatives from empathizing with people they consider evil, and so empathy becomes empathy with those who share their values. Thus, where liberals have empathy even for criminals (and thus defend their rights and are against the death penalty),

conservatives are for the death penalty and against decisions like Miranda, which seek to guarantee the rights of criminals.

Correspondingly, liberals too have the metaphor of Moral Strength, but it is in the service of empathy and nurturance. The point of moral strength for liberals is to fight intolerance and inhumanity to others and to stand up for social responsibility.

The resulting picture of the priorities of the strict father and nurturant parent moral systems is as follows:

Strict Father Morality (Basic Conservative Morality): The Strength Complex; Moral Self-Interest; The Nurturance Complex.

Nurturant Parent Morality (Basic Liberal Morality): The Nurturance Complex; Moral Self-Interest; The Strength Complex.

Here one can clearly see the opposition in moral priorities.

Of course, not all liberals are the same, nor are all conservatives. This model oversimplifies many divisions within the liberal and conservative ranks. First, there are moderate versions of both, pragmatic views in which Moral Self-Interest is put first:

Moderate Conservative Morality: Moral Self-Interest; The Strength Complex; The Nurturance Complex.

Moderate Liberal Morality: Moral Self-Interest; The Nurturance Complex; The Strength Complex.

Another source of variation on all these categories comes within the Nurturance and Strength complexes, where different kinds of liberals assign different priority to the morality metaphors. For example, President Clinton, unlike most other liberals, assigns higher priority to the nurturance of social ties than to moral nurturance itself. That is, he sees it of the utmost importance to compromise for the sake of trying to bring people together. This makes him seem like a waffler to liberals for whom the nurturance of social ties has a lower priority. The point is that these are rich systems, with lots of room for variations of all sorts. In addition, there are lots of

other factors that are not part of this analysis that distinguish other political positions. This is, after all, not intended to account for everything there is in politics.

It is important to understand that one can have different family-based moralities in personal and political life. Thus, one can have strict father morality at home and nurturant parent morality in politics—and the reverse. And finally, the strict father model does not rule out strict mothers. Though it is based on a masculine family model, women can use that model. And though I have used the gender neutral term "nuturant parent," that model ultimately derives from a woman's model of the family.

In short, the models are ideal, and the general tendencies are simple, but in practice there are extremely complex variations on these models.

Moral Pathologies

It is one thing to analyze a moral system and another to criticize it. Criticisms of moral systems are often suspect because they come from within opposing moral systems. I would like to suggest that it is possible in various ways to criticize a moral system on other grounds—either on structural or empirical grounds. I believe that it is meaningful to speak of moral pathologies, and I will briefly discuss three of them, namely:

Deviational Pathology: Here, a deviation from an ideal model turns out to harm people the ideal model was supposed to help.

Foundational Pathology: Here, a moral system contradicts its own foundations.

Empirical Pathology: Here, the moral system simply makes an empirical error about the helpful effects it is supposed to produce.

Let us begin with cases of deviational pathology. Since

models of the family are ideal ones, real people are less than ideal, so real family life may very often fall short of what the ideal models would project. The same is true of political ideals, which in practice often fall short of their aims. Interestingly enough, valid critiques of both the strict father and nurturant parent family models are critiques not of the ideal cases but of cases that fall short of the ideal. For each such critique, there is a parallel critique of the shortcomings of liberalism and conservatism.

Parents can misuse the nurturant parent model in a number of ways:

Overprotection, where parents fail to teach their children self-discipline, responsibility, and self-reliance through interpersonal ties, support, and trust.

Self-sacrifice, where the overly self-sacrificing parent fails to take care of himself or herself and cannot nurture properly as a result.

Hedonism, where the cultivation of happiness ceases to be in the service of empathy and nurturance and becomes an end in itself, draining resources needed for nurturance.

Interestingly, each of these corresponds to classical critiques of liberalism by conservatives. In overprotection, the government helps people without being sure they have the means to become self-reliant. In self-sacrifice, the government spends too much, gets deep in debt, and cannot help people very much any more. Hedonism is overspending now for our own sake without thinking of the future.

Similarly, the strict father model can also be misused in various ways:

Excessive discipline, when normal desires are seen to be evils to be punished, or when punishment is excessive and results in harm.

Authoritarian behavior, when rules are laid down either for no good reason or without appropriate explanation and discussion.

Neglect, when there is neglect for the purpose of building self-reliance, and it results in harm.

Selfishness, when those needing care are ignored out of selfishness in the name of building self-reliance.

These correspond to common liberal critiques of conservatism.

In short, both models can be misused. Many of the critiques of the models are really critiques of the misuse of the models. Are such critiques fair? Yes and no. No, because they are not critiques of the ideal models in themselves. Yes, because those ideal models have to be used by real people, who will fall short in many cases in just the ways indicated.

While deviational pathologies clearly occur in both liberal and conservative family-based moral systems, foundational and empirical pathologies occur, so far as I have been able to tell, only in the conservative family-based moral system. To see the conservative foundational pathology, recall that the foundation of any abstract moral system is experiential morality, as described at the beginning of this paper. Experiential morality consists in helping, not harming, people in experientially-basic forms of well-being: Health, strength, wealth, and so forth. As we saw, the abstract metaphors for morality are grounded in the experiential moral system. Nurturant parent morality contains a structural feature that guarantees that experiential morality is not overridden, namely, that moral empathy has the highest priority in that moral system. The idea that Morality is Empathy entails that if you feel what others feel, you will abide by experiential morality since, by empathy, you yourself will experience any harmful effects of what you do to others.

But strict father morality does not have empathy as its highest principle. Instead, moral strength is its highest principle, and moral empathy is relatively far down on the list. But the metaphor that Morality is Strength allows experiential morality to be overridden regularly. Strict Father morality allows one to impose experiential harm on others in the name

of the abstract metaphorical principle that Morality is Strength. In short, strict father morality allows you to hurt people in the name of morality. That violates experiential morality, which is the foundation of every abstract moral system.

Finally, strict father morality has an empirical pathology. At its core is a model of the family that makes empirical claims about raising children. It says that the way to raise a child to be self-reliant and responsible to others is through discipline and denial. If your child cries at night or shows neediness, you do not pick him up and pay attention to him and play with him. If you do, you will be spoiling him, making him dependent, not imposing discipline, and, therefore, not allowing him to grow up to be self-reliant, self-controlled, and responsible. In fact, the major empirical studies in child development over the past quarter century show just the reverse. Children who are nurtured and taken care of and played with when they are needy are more likely to grow up self-reliant and socially responsible than those who are ignored or punished for showing neediness. Such children are called "securely attached." Insecurely attached children, who are ignored or punished for showing neediness, are more likely to engage in anti-social behavior and to show inner rage.

In short, the strict father model of the family is just plain wrong—indeed, it is harmful to children—on its most central points. In fact, if proponents of conservatism have grown up in strict father families with insecure attachment, then we may have an explanation of conservative rage at the government: It is the rage of the insecurely attached child toward his parents, especially his father.

The deviational pathologies of both nurturant parent and strict father moralities can be remedied in principle by sticking as closely as possible to the ideal models and avoiding pathological deviations. But the foundational and empirical pathologies in strict father morality, and, hence, in conserva-

tism, are inherent and cannot be remedied. They make strict father morality an inherently pathological moral system.

At this point, it is crucial to raise the issue of the Oklahoma City bombing, in which more than one hundred adults and scores of children were killed by a radical conservative who saw himself as striking at the "meddling" of the federal government in the lives of citizens. Do conservatives and conservative ideologues bear any responsibility for that bombing? Here is the answer of Gary L. Bauer, president of the Family Research Council, an arm of the religious right,

> How could any of us have imagined the horror of the bombing on Oklahoma City? . . . What do the hundreds of thousands of parents who educate their children at home, or the millions of Americans who oppose high taxes, have to do with the thugs who bombed the federal building? (Family Research Council Newsletter, May 22, 1995).

Gary Bauer is in denial, as are others on the right. The Family Research Council promotes strict father morality. It is the strict father model of the family that, under the ubiquitous Nation-as-Family metaphor, gives rise to the resentment of government "meddling" and the conservative hatred of government, and it is the application of discipline and denial in child rearing that produces conservative rage. When tens of millions of people are daily told that strict father morality is the only morality and that their rage is justified, the result is bound to be not just right-wing militias with automatic weapons and bomb-making capacity, but eventually action taken upon that rage. The lesson of Oklahoma City is that strict father morality does bear major responsibility for that unconscionable act. The Gary Bauers of this country, who promote strict father morality, have a heavy moral burden to bear. And so do most liberals, who have left the fields of morality and the family to the conservatives.

Consequences

If this analysis is right, or even close to right, then a great deal follows. Liberals do not understand what unifies their own worldview and so are helpless to deal effectively with conservatism. Not only is there no unified liberal political structure, but there is no overall effective liberal rhetoric to counter the carefully constructed conservative rhetoric. Where conservatives have carefully coined terms and images and repeated them until they have entered the popular lexicon, liberals have not done the same. Liberals need to go beyond coalitions of interest groups to consciously construct a unified language and imagery to convey their worldview. This will not be easy, and they are thirty years behind.

If this analysis is right, there are implications not just for contemporary politics but also for the long term philosophical study of moral systems. I have argued that perhaps the most important part of any real moral system is the system of metaphors for morality and the priorities given to particular metaphors. If I am correct, then vital political reasoning is done using those metaphors—and usually done unconsciously. This means that the emprical study of metaphorical thought must be given its appropriate place in ethics and moral theory, as Mark Johnson has argued (Johnson, 1993).

Finally, there are major consequences for social research itself. Social research these days tends not to take into account empirical research on conceptual systems done within cognitive science in general and cognitive linguistics in particular. Cognitive explanations, like those given here, are not the norm. Instead, explanation has tended to be based on economics, or class, or the rational actor model, or models of power. I would like to suggest that the study of conceptual systems is a major tool for explanation in social research —a tool so vital in our current situation that it cannot be ignored.

Coda: Deep and Superficial Metaphor

The metaphors I have discussed so far in this paper have been both conceptual in nature and deep, in the sense that they are used largely without being noticed, that they have enormous social consequences, and that they shape our very understanding of the everyday world. It is important to contrast such deep conceptual metaphors as Morality is Strength and The Nation is a Family with superficial metaphors, which are only of marginal interest but which often lead analysts astray. Consider the following quote from the *International Herald Tribune*, May 8, 1995: "Senator Phil Gramm told a college commencement audience that the social safety net erected by government by the New Deal and the Great Society had become a 'hammock' that is robbing the country of freedom and virtue."

The safety net metaphor for social programs and Phil Gramm's hammock metaphor are examples of such superficial metaphors. The saftey net metaphor is used consciously and evokes a vivid image that organizes much deeper metaphorical concepts. The image of the safety net has been a mainstay of the rhetoric of liberal moral politics for many years. The saftey net metaphor presupposes as part of its background an image of the citizen on a tightrope. The tightrope is straight and narrow—a moral path. The citizen is doing what he is supposed to be doing—working with skill and dedication. But one thing we all know about tightropes is that all but the most skilled are bound to fall—and if there is no safety net, they will be severely hurt when they do. If walking the tightrope is working, falling off is losing your job. The safety net is a means of support—temporary support until you can pull yourself up again and get back on the tightrope. The physical support of the net is the financial support of social programs designed to help moral, dedicated, hard-working citizens who might not survive without it.

This is not all conscious, but it is implicit, and it is what gives

the safety net metaphor its moral force. People who need a safety net are moral people of ordinary skills who walk the straight and narrow. To remove it is to virtually guarantee harm to the normal moral citizen who would rather be working than lying helplessly in a net.

The safety net metaphor may be superficial, but its power consists in evoking a worldview beyond itself. It invokes a worldview about the typical working citizen of ordinary or less than ordinary skills. He is moral, wants to work, and needs and should have protection. To remove the safety net is immoral. No ordinary tightrope walker should be required to work without a safety net.

When Phil Gramm turns the safety net into a hammock, he is doing more than just replacing one image with another that looks similar. He is imposing another worldview. The man in the hammock is lazy; he is not interested in working. The hammock is not necessary; it is a luxury. When you replace the safety net with the hammock, you also replace the tightrope, the desire to walk the tightrope, and the morality of following the straight and narrow. You replace the energetic, athletic tightrope walker with the paragon of laziness in the hammock. Changing metaphors means changing prototypes. The typical person who relies on social programs is no longer moral, skilled, and energetic. He is unskilled and lazy, and his laziness makes him immoral. The moral implication is clear: The government should not be supplying the luxury of hammocks to lazy people. It just encourages them in their laziness.

The safety net and hammock metaphors pack a complex worldview into a single image. But they are, nonetheless, still superficial metaphors that rely on much deeper and less obvious metaphors for their power. Those deeper metaphors are the ones we have already explored: Moral Strength, Moral Bounds, Moral Nurturance, Moral Empathy, The Nation-as-Family. The safety net and hammock metaphors are tapping into the deep metaphorical moral systems underlying liberal

and conservative values. It is that deeper metaphorical system that must be understood.

Notes:

[1] For an introductory survey of basic results in the theory of metaphor, see Lakoff, 1993. Other suggested readings include Gibbs, 1994; Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; Johnson, 1987; Lakoff, 1987; Sweetser, 1990; Turner, 1987; Lakoff and Turner, 1989; and Winter, 1989.

[2] This analysis is taken from Taub, 1990; Klingebiel, 1990; and Johnson, 1993.

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