Metaphor in Latin Descriptions of Reading and Meaning

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ABSTRACT

In this article, metaphors for reading and meaning in Latin are considered from the perspective of conceptual metaphor theory. The focus is on (1) ascriptions of agency and personhood to inanimate entities such as words, texts, and books, and how the notions of (2) the container and (3) the path help to structure Latin descriptions of the relationship between words and ideas. The article closes with a case study of the noun *intentio*. By demonstrating the existence of these metaphors in Latin (building on previous scholarship), the article augments the historical and transcultural evidence for conceptual metaphor theory, further substantiates the theory's explanatory value, and illustrates the dangers of taking English metaphors of meaning and intention inherited from Latin at face value.

Keywords: Latin metaphors; metaphor theory; reading and meaning.

RESUMO

Neste artigo, metáforas em latim para leitura e significado são consideradas sob a perspectiva da teoria conceitual da metáfora. O foco é (1) atribuição de atividade e personificação de entidades inanimadas como palavras, textos e livros, e como as noções de (2) recipiente e (3) caminho ajudam a estruturar as descrições latinas da relação entre palavras e ideias. O artigo se encerra com o estudo de caso do substantivo intentio. Ao demonstrar a existência dessas metáforas em latim (trabalhando a partir de estudos precedentes), o artigo fornece mais evidência histórica e transcultural para a teoria conceitual da metáfora, além de comprovar o valor explanatório da teoria, e ilustra os perigos de se tomar literalmente as metáforas em inglês, herdadas do latim, para as ideias de sentido e intenção.

Palavras-chave: metáforas em latim; teoria da metáfora; leitura e sentido.

INTRODUCTION

The figurative aspects of descriptions of reading and meaning – the way characterizations of books, grammar, and signification are built on metaphorical

and metonymical bases – are well known.[1] This article will focus on the extent to which these metaphors are reflected in the Latin language, an area where excellent work has been done in the past decade or so. William Short has shown how conceptual metaphor, described *in nuce* later in this paper, structures abstract target domains such as IDEAS in Latin by reference to our embodied state;[2] Short notes, for example, how Roman authors spoke of "entering a plan", "departing from a plan", "standing by a plan", or "dragging others into a plan" via the metaphor IDEAS ARE LOCATIONS.[3] Short has also demonstrated how the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema serves to structure mistakenness in Latin: [4] mistakenness is described as "wandering" (*error*), i.e. the goal of mental motion is not attained. These contributions clearly have relevance to the Roman (and modern) conceptions of meaning and intention. When it comes to reading, Timothy O'Sullivan, drawing on the work of William Johnson, has pointed out the metaphorical background of passages such as the following from Quintilian:[5]

1. *lectio* libera est *nec* ut actionis impetus *transcurrit, sed* repetere *saepius* licet, *siue dubites siue memoriae penitus adfigere uelis. Repetamus autem et tractemus et, ut cibos mansos ac prope liquefactos demittimus quo facilius digerantur,* ita lectio non cruda sed multa iteratione mollita et uelut [ut] confecta memoriae imitationique tradatur.
"Reading is free, nor does it run past us like the rush of oral delivery, but it is possible to go back through it several times, whether you are in doubt or whether you wish to fix it deeply in your memory. We may return to it and examine it, and just as we swallow food chewed and nearly liquefied so that it may be digested more easily, thus [our reading] should not be passed to the memory and imitation raw, but softened and, to use a word, digested by much iteration" (Quint. *Inst.* 10.1.19).[6]

O'Sullivan notes the presence of slightly contrasting metaphors concerning movement in the first sentence – on the one hand, the reading itself (*lectio*) is described as rushing past the stationary reader (*transcurrit*), on the other the

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[1] See e.g. ZANKER (2016). This article is a reworked version of a presentation delivered at the conference "Lector in fabula: leitura e significação entre antigos e modernos" at Unicamp on March 14th, 2018. I am grateful to Isabella Tardin Cardoso, Luciano César Garcia Pinto, and William Short for discussing its themes with me (the latter via email).
[2] See SHORT (2008).
[3] See SHORT (2008), and below.
[4] See SHORT (2013a).
[5] See O'SULLIVAN (2015), 112-114 (113); cf. JOHNSON (2010), pp. 17-31, on how the format of the scroll impacted on ancient reading.
[6] Translations are my own.

reader is the one who does the moving (*repetere*). It is additionally clear from what follows that there are further metaphors for reading too, such as that of digestion.[7] The scope of this paper, however, is limited to three aspects of this vast subject (i.e. ancient metaphors for reading and meaning): the first topic will be (1) the metaphorical ascription of agency to inanimate entities such as words, books, and texts; there follow sections on how the notions of the (2) container/location and (3) path inform Roman conceptions of what texts are and what they do. To close, we shall see how the path metaphor facilitated the creation of a piece of critical terminology that remains important in Anglophone scholarship (*intentio*).

1. THE ASCRIPTION OF HUMAN QUALITIES TO THE TEXT

In a classic experiment undertaken in the early 1940's by the psychologists Fritz Heider and Marianne Simmel,[8] thirty-four students were shown a video featuring the apparent movement and interaction of three different geometric shapes (a large triangle, a small triangle, and a small circle) around an oblong with a section that appears to open and shut like a door.
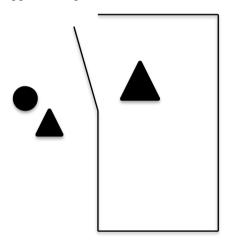

Fig. 1. Recreated still from film used in Heider and Simmel's experiment.

The "movement" of the shapes was designed to be understandable in terms of a story involving love, jealousy, and violence, and indeed the great majority of the test subjects interpreted the shapes as both animate and

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[7] On this, see SHORT (2013b).
[8] HEIDER & SIMMEL (1944). The film used in the experiment is widely available on the internet. Heider and Simmel's paper in fact records three different forms of the experiment; only the first is referred to here.

possessing human emotions. Only a single student described the objects in geometric terms – and even she slipped up on one occasion by referring to the larger triangle as a "he". In one of the students' descriptions, the larger triangle was described as a "big bully" and a "villain", while the smaller triangle and the circle were described as "innocent young things", "lovers", "little triangle number two", "our hero", "his sweet", and "sweet circle".[9]

The study is an old one, but it does bring into focus two important aspects of human cognition – first, that as a species we like to construct narratives in order to understand the relationships between things and to link situations together in a causal chain that will explain them in human terms; the students in the experiment almost universally wanted to describe the movement of the geometric shapes in terms of a story involving animate beings. Second, they ascribed human emotions and intentionality to the shapes in order to so: the students superimposed their understanding of human behavior, and knowledge of the narratives and scripts dependent on that behavior, onto objects without human minds. Both of these features remain relevant for our understanding of human cognition, and also for our understanding of the process of reading and interpreting literature – for in descriptions of reading, speakers often turn the word, and the medium upon which it is written, into an agent.

The process whereby the book takes on a mind of its own is a familiar one; books, phrases, and words can "want to say" things, for example, in several different languages – this occurs in Portuguese with "quer dizer", for instance in the phrase "o que isso quer dizer?". Such expressions might be classed as "metaphorical" – speakers use terms such as "want", "say", etc., of books and words in ways that are appropriate for things that can want and speak.[10] It is important to note that these same metaphors can be traced back to an earlier phase of human culture – specifically, to a phase of culture that saw both the adoption of writing (in Archaic Greece) and the much later adoption of the codex in the first centuries AD, which remains the standard form of the book to this day. In Latin, for instance, one common way in which to describe what something means is via the construction *sibi uelle*, which literally means "to want for oneself":

2. *quid <u>uolt sibi</u>, Syre, haec oratio?*
"What does this statement <u>mean</u>, Syrus?" (Ter. *Haut.* 615).

In Varro's investigation of the Latin language from the 1ˢᵗ century BC, expressions such as the following are frequently attested, where words and texts apparently speak themselves:

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[9] HEIDER & SIMMEL (1944), p. 247.
[10] For previous discussion, see ZANKER (2016).

3. *nam, <u>ut annales dicunt</u>, uouit Opi, Florae, Vedioui Saturnoque, Soli, Lunae...*
"…for, <u>as the *Annales* say</u>, [the Sabine king Titus Tatius] vowed [altars] to Ops, Flora, Vediouis and Saturnus, Sol, Luna..." (Varro, *Ling.* 5.74).[11]

Words and texts cannot literally want or say things, but speakers nevertheless describe them as if they do. At times, they could be more precisely characterized: take the following expression from Juvenal's infamous sixth satire, where the poet is attacking women for using lascivious Greek phrases:[12]

4. *quotiens lasciuum interuenit illud*
<u>ζωὴ καὶ ψυχή</u>, *modo sub lodice loquendis*
<u>uteris in turba. quod enim non excitet inguen</u>
<u>uox blanda et nequam? digitos habet...</u>
"Whenever that sexy '<u>Mia vita, mio spirito</u>' comes up, you are using words in public that are only to be spoken under the blanket. <u>For what pelvic area does such a charming and naughty expression not arouse? It has fingers</u>…" (Juv. 6.194-197).

Here, the *uox*, literally an "utterance" or "expression", is described as having fingers, which foregrounds the specific type of agency involved – the utterance is coaxing and lascivious. Such an expression as ζωὴ καὶ ψυχή behaves like the woman who supposedly utters it. It is personified – in order to describe what the *uox* does, Juvenal figuratively gives it animation and body, and a specific part of the body at that.

The same thing applies to entire books – in *Epistles* 1.20, for example, the poet Horace famously addresses his own poetry book. The book is described as having a will of its own: it seeks to leave the safety of Horace's home and to hurry off to the bookseller's market in order to be circulated freely around the city (and beyond). Later on, Horace suggests, the book will ask itself *quid miser egi? | quid uolui?* ("What did I do, wretch that I am? What did I want?" Hor. *Epist.* 1.20.6-7).[13] Such an expanded personification could not have occurred without an underlying vocabulary for what texts do that suggested they were living beings. The material is abundant, and there is no need to go into it in depth here; it must in any case take account of the early Greek material, where similar transferences occurring at the beginning of the use of writing may be

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[11] Cf. "*serpere*" *et* "*proserpere*" *idem dicebant, ut Plautus quod scribit:* "*quasi proserpens bestia*" ("*serpere* 'to creep' and *proserpere* 'to creep forward' said/meant the same thing, as that which Plautus writes: 'like a creeping creature'" Varro, *Ling.* 5.68).

[12] The example is mentioned by CAVE (2016), pp. 9-10.

[13] For an example to set next to the excerpt from Juvenal above (4), compare the following from Mart. 1.35.12-14: *quare deposita seueritate | parcas lusibus et iocis rogamus, | nec castrare uelis meos libellos* ("wherefore with your seriousness set aside, spare my games and jokes, nor wish to castrate my little books").

observed.[14] In sum, if scholars want to understand the figurative aspects of the modern attribution of agency to things such as books, it is important to go back as far as possible to the moment when they were first applied: that is, to the ancient languages.

As mentioned, such expressions are metaphorical – that is, transferred on the basis of a perceived similarity. There is a further type of transference, however, that blurs the lines between the human being and his or her creation: metonymy. For instance, according to the metonymy PRODUCER FOR PRODUCT, speakers can talk about "a Rembrandt" when they mean a painting created by the painter Rembrandt, or apply the name of a book's author to the book itself:[15]

5. "You can find Jane Austen on the top shelf".

The metonymy according to which the author's name is used for the text can certainly be found in early Latin – in the opening of Plautus' *Menaechmi*, for instance, the character of the Prologue refers to how he is presenting Plautus by means of his tongue rather than by means of his hand – that is, Plautus is being presented as a play rather than as a person:

6. *apporto uobis <u>Plautum</u>, lingua non manu*
"I'm bringing you <u>Plautus</u> – by tongue and not by hand" (Plaut. *Men.* 3).

The polysemy thereby created could be amusing, but it also had more serious possibilities: the metonymy became one of the key ways by which Roman authors such as Horace (*Carm.* 3.30) and Ovid, following their Greek predecessors, proclaimed their immortality; at the very end of the *Metamorphoses*, for example, Ovid states that he will be recited by readers long after he has died:[16]

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[14] Equivalents to Latin *sibi uelle* and *dicere* (in the usages discussed above) can readily be found in Greek ἐθέλειν ("to want") and λέγειν ("to speak"); for references and discussion, see ZANKER (2016), pp. 90-145. For further examples, cf. ...γιγνώσκομεν γὰρ ὅτι τοῦτο <u>φρονεῖ</u> ἡμῶν ἡ ἐς τοὺς ὀλίγους ἀγωγή "...for we know well that this is what this presentation of us to only a few men <u>means</u>" (Th. 5.85); καὶ Ἀλέξανδρος ἤρετο Ἀρίστανδρον τὸν μάντιν, ὅ τι <u>νοοῖ</u> ὁ οἰωνός... ("and Alexander asked the priest Aristandros as to what the bird-sign <u>meant</u>" Arr. *An.* 2.26.4).

[15] For discussion, see ZANKER (2016), pp. 247-163. This last instance (5) becomes interesting in the case of anaphora, or "referring back", whereby a book is referred to (under certain constraints) by means of the gender of the author: "You can find Jane Austen on the top shelf; I think you'll find her a good read". See FAUCONNIER (1994 [1985]), p. 5-6.

[16] On the relationship between the bodies of Horace and Ovid and their books, see FARRELL (1999, 2007).

7. *quaque patet domitis Romana potentia terris,*
<u>*ore legar populi*</u>*, perque omnia saecula fama…*
"And wherever Roman power expands over the tamed lands, <u>I shall be read by the mouth of the people</u>, and [I shall live] as a rumor through all the ages…" (Ov. *Met.* 15.877-878).

Ovid enacts the metonymy with the phrase *ore legar populi*, a first-person version of the metonymy that allows him to suggest that a better part of him will live on *post mortem*;[17] of course, no actual consciousness of the poet will survive, just his text. Thus, besides the metaphorical personification of texts, there is a metonymical substitution available in Latin that further muddies the relationship between people and books.

2. CONTAINERS

The material in the previous section has been studied in the past,[18] yet further aspects of the relationship between words and meaning become apparent when studied from the perspective of the theory of conceptual metaphor associated with Lakoff and Johnson.[19] In brief, proponents of conceptual metaphor theory consider metaphor not as a trope that is necessarily intentional and willed, a departure from normal speech used for effect, but rather as a cognitive operation that human beings use in order to think about the world and to describe it. Take the normal, apparently non-metaphorical sentence:

8. "Penelope went through life full of joy".

There are many things that can be said about this expression, and it is possible to devise a diagram for it:
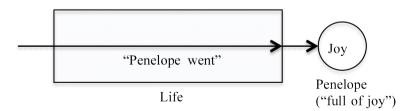

Fig. 2. "Penelope went through life full of joy".

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[17] Martial used a different variation of the metonymy in stating *scrinia da magnis, me manus una capit* ("give bookcases to the great, a single hand can hold me" Mart. 1.2.4). Here, the "me" referred to is a book.

[18] For bibliography, see ZANKER (2016).

[19] LAKOFF & JOHNSON (2003 [1980]). For a more recent introduction, see DANCYGIER & SWEETSER (2014).

First, there is a human subject (a trajector) that has moved "through" a container (a landmark), i.e. life.[20] It is evident that she is outside of the container because of the use of the past tense verb ("went"). Indeed, Penelope herself is described as a container, in that she is characterized as being "full of joy": joy is radiating out to fill Penelope's body. Most importantly, movement through life is being described in terms of movement through space ("went"). Nor is this a one-off transference. In their early publications, Lakoff and Johnson stressed the prevalence of the conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY throughout English – the conventional "mapping" yields numerous different expressions. For instance, the following sentences are perfectly intelligible:

9. "Penelope had many obstacles in her path".

10. "Penelope's end [i.e. her death] was swift".

In a number of languages (but by no means in all), the verb "to go" has been turned into a marker for the future tense – speakers of English, for instance, say "I am going to be like Penelope". And the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor is, incidentally, clearly apparent Latin – compare basic terms such as *exitus* ("departure" > "death"), which suggests that the subject has passed through (or is passing out of) the container of existence/life.

These two conceptual structures – the CONTAINER and the PATH – are fundamental to human cognition and its expression in language, and serve as the bases for countless types of conceptualization and description. These highly physical notions, mentally abstracted in a set of structural relationships that some scholars term an Image Schema,[21] are transferred to describe a raft of different non-concrete entities and processes. It has already been noted how both are activated in our description of Penelope's passage through life, but they are highly prominent when it comes to descriptions of reading and meaning as well. The point is banal when it comes to reading – besides notions of "reading deeply" as opposed to "skimming" a text, which rely on DEPTH, or those that pertain to "struggling" or "wrestling" with a difficult book, which cast the book in terms of an OPPONENT, speakers regularly talk about "going through" a work of literature or "struggling through" a book (where the book appears to offer resistance or impede the reader).[22]

When it comes to the issue of meaning, however, let us turn to the CONTAINER structure first of all: while it has been much debated and questioned

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[20] For "trajector" and "landmark" in cognitive linguistics, see e.g. LANGACKER (1987, 2008).

[21] For Image Schemas, of which there will be no further mention in this paper, see the early contributions of LAKOFF (1987); JOHNSON (1987); LAKOFF & JOHNSON (1999).

[22] See the points made in the Introduction.

since Reddy's early exposition,[23] the concept (CONTAINER) is a particularly prominent way of discussing the relationship between words (form) and ideas (meaning). Consider the following phrases:

11. "I could not put it into words".

12. "The contents of the statement".

13. "I got a lot out of that statement".

Here, one is either putting an object (i.e. meaning) into a container or, conversely, retrieving the object from the container.
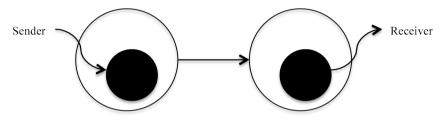

Fig. 3. The "container" metaphor

When words are "meaningful", they are "full of meaning", i.e. "pregnant", whereas "meaningless" words are "empty" or "vain". At times, the content of the words seems to be characterized in different ways; the notion of "getting a lot out" of someone's statement suggests that the meaning is a disaggregated substance or a fluid that fills the words, whereas the idea of "pregnant" words suggests a unified body within the container that can be extracted as a unit.[24] In any event, the container metaphor can be misleading, as it may suggest that exactly the same semantic "content", i.e. the same idea or meaning, will be extracted from the word as was put into it – a notion that is of course absurd to anyone who has actually experienced communication:[25] meanings are not preserved as unified entities within word-packages. In any case, the container metaphor is systematic and firmly embedded in English, and is reflected in a significant number of other natural languages.

[23] On the original framing of the "conduit metaphor", see REDDY (1979); for rejoinders, see e.g. KRZESZOWSKI (1997); GRADY (1998). DANCYGIER & SWEETSER (2014), call it the COMMUNICATION IS EXCHANGE OF OBJECTS metaphor. In this paper, the term "container" will be used to refer to the metaphor.

[24] On the different ways in which the ideas "within" words can be characterized, see KZRESZOWSKI (1997), p. 1617.

[25] On this, and other mismatches between the situation suggested by the metaphor and the realities of communication, see REDDY (1979).

It is definitely reflected in Latin – take, for instance, expressions such as the following, again from the opening of Plautus' *Menaechmi*:

14. *quam potero in uerba conferam paucissuma*
"I shall put it [i.e. the plot of the play] into as few words as possible" (Plaut. *Men.* 6).

Here, the metaphor of words as containers is used to high effect, as the speaker of the prologue literally stuffs the plot of the play into the individual words. The speaker wants to use as few words as possible, and so we are presented with a scenario in which a minimal number of word-packages are "filled" with the *argumentum* ("plot of the play"). But the conceptual metaphor is also behind such everyday Latin expressions as the simple *uerbis* ("in words"), where there is no motion involved – the idea is simply "in" the words (the term standing in the ablative rather than accusative). In such expressions, meaning is put into the word-containers from outside and is preserved within them until it is time for it to be retrieved.

It is rare, however, to find items of any importance in human culture characterized by a single metaphor; take the idea of TIME, for example, a notion that has already been observed to be metaphorically structured by the frame of SPACE. On the one hand, one can "go through life", or "encounter problems along the way", where the human subject is characterized as moving along a road. On the other hand, there is a contrasting metaphor whereby things or events are thought of as approaching the human subject; compare the following sentences:[26]

15. "We are approaching Christmas".

16. "Christmas is approaching".

In these sentences, two different metaphors for time are in play to communicate the same idea; why there should be two different types of expression is a good question, although it may be noted that the two metaphors are structurally inverted when it comes to the attribution of agency – in the first, it is the human agent who is moving, while in the second it is the event itself. It is likely that the differing attribution of agency is useful for communicators – the notion of Christmas *approaching* takes the power from

[26] For abundant Latin examples of these metaphors, see SHORT (2016).

the human subject, ascribes a threatening aspect to the event (Christmas), and thus increases the urgency of the situation.[27]

The container metaphor of meaning may also be reversed by apparently, at least, switching the figure with the ground. It has already been demonstrated that Roman authors could describe putting meanings into words, yet things could, as in English and Portuguese, also be said "in the same meaning" or "no mesmo sentido". Compare the following:

17. *non solum <u>in eodem sensu sed etiam in diuerso</u> eadem uerba contra sumuntur* "Words may be opposed not only when used <u>in the same sense, but in a different sense</u>" (Quint. *Inst.* 9.3.36).

18. *aliter quoque uoces aut eaedem <u>diuersa in significatione ponuntur</u>* "In other ways as well the same words <u>can be used [lit. placed] in a different meaning</u>" (Quint. *Inst.* 9.3.69).

The force of the ablatives is locatival. From these examples it appears that the container metaphor of meaning takes two distinct forms in Latin – in the first, meaning is said to exist in words, while in the second words are said to exist in the meaning:
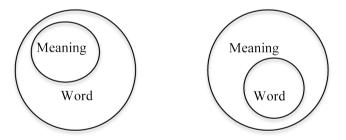

Fig. 4. Word and meaning

In both cases the language used is highly physical – it involves the notions of placing, setting, and locating. In order to describe something that humans cannot see or point to – i.e. the relationship between meaning and words – numerous natural languages (including Latin) structure the relationship with reference to physical space.

The latter form of the metaphor (where words are described as being "in" meanings) is, however, in actual fact a variation of the IDEAS ARE LOCATIONS

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[27] For other explanations, see e.g. MCGLONE & HARDING (1998); BORODITSKY & RAMSCAR (2002).

metaphor in Latin. The following examples are offered by Short, who has investigated such expressions at length:[28]

19. *qui consilium iniere…*
"Those who have entered into [i.e. formulated] the plan…" (Plaut. *Capt.* 493).

20. *quo timore perterriti Galli… consilio destiterunt*
"The Gauls, terrified by this fear…, stood away from [i.e. ceased from] their plan" (Caes. *BGall.* 7.26.5).

21. *ea omnes stant sententia*
"All stand by [i.e. in] that opinion" (Plaut. *Curc.* 250).

22. *haud magna mole Piso promptus ferocibus in sententiam trahitur*
"Without much difficulty, Piso, always ready for violent action, was dragged into [i.e. compelled to adopt] this view" (Tac. *Ann.* 2.78).

Here, IDEAS are described as LOCATIONS into which one enters, within which one is located, or from which one departs. On other occasions, one may be "dragged" into an idea or attitude by another, or kept away from it in other cases. The cases (e.g. accusative of direction) and prefixes/prepositions (e.g. *in*, *de*, *ab*) help to structure the relationship between the trajector and the location he or she is entering. Short has linked the metaphor to the Roman notion of the memory palace, where each item to be remembered is set in its own location in a fictional site.[29] The words-in-meaning metaphor is built on top of such notions, in that the word is "taken up" or "set down" in (*in*) a sense-location (consider once again phrases such as those in excerpts 17 and 18, e.g. *in diuersa significatione ponuntur*).

Yet there are further variations on the IDEAS ARE LOCATIONS metaphor; one might, for example, turn to the related notion whereby words are placed "on top" of their meanings, and the meanings are said to "lie beneath" words; consider the following:

23. *quemadmodum uocabula essent imposita rebus in lingua Latina, sex libris exponere institui…*
"I have begun to set out in six books how words have been set upon things in the Latin language" (Varro, *Ling.* 5.1).

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[28] SHORT (2008).
[29] On the memory palace, see e.g. BLUM (1969); SMALL (1997).

24. …*quod debeat <u>subesse res</u> quae designetur*
"…that <u>there is something underneath [the words]</u> that is to be designated" (Varro, *Ling.* 9.37).

The *res*, or object to which the word refers, figuratively lies "under" the word that serves as the marker. Words are "set on top" of things by an *impositor* ("setter", "planter"),[30] such that grammarians like Varro (from whose *De lingua Latina* the previous excerpts are taken) could expand the metaphor, on several occasions, to describe the derivation of words in terms of a tree; the following is only one such example:

25. *duo enim genera uerborum, unum fecundum, quod declinando multas ex se parit disparilis formas, ut est lego legi legam, sic alia, alterum genus sterile, quod ex se parit nihil, ut est et iam uix cras magis cur.*
"There are two types of words – one fertile, which by bending down gives birth from itself to many different/unlike forms, e.g. *lego* 'I collect', *legi* 'I have collected', *legam* 'I shall collect'; and another type that is sterile, which gives birth to nothing from itself, e.g. *et* 'and', *iam* 'now', *uix* 'scarcely', *cras* 'tomorrow', *magis* 'more', *cur* 'why'" (Varro, *Ling.* 8.9).

Fertile words – e.g. the verb *lego* – can be conjugated or declined (Varro uses the term *declinare* for both operations) whereas indeclinables such as *iam* or *magis* are sterile. The situation can be described in a diagram (where the left and right halves represent "sterile" and "fertile" word trees respectively):
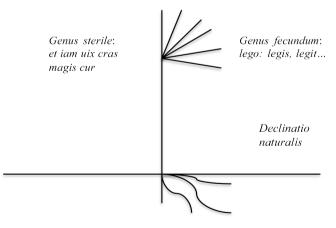

Genus sterile:
et iam uix cras
magis cur

Genus fecundum:
lego: legis, legit…

Declinatio
naturalis

Fig. 5. Varro's word tree at *Ling.* 8.9.

[30] Cf. *cum haec amminicula addas ad eruendum uoluntatem impositoris, tamen latent multa* ("Although you supply these tools for the purpose of unearthing the intent of the planter, nevertheless many things remain hidden" Varro, *Ling.* 7.2).

There is much to say about Varro's word trees and there is no space to go into them in depth here.[31] Suffice it to say that the image of the tree is used in different ways in Varro's *De lingua Latina*, and the various usages are not coherent with each other. In the previous excerpt (25), at least, the polymath is capitalizing on terms such as *sterilis* and *fecundus* ("sterile" and "fertile"), as he does elsewhere on the metaphorical potential of the grammatical term *declinare* ("lean away", i.e. "decline"), in order to describe the process of word derivation by means of a visual analogy. Elsewhere, Varro reinforces the image by using the terms *casus* ("falling", i.e. "case"), *radix* ("root"), and *ramus* ("branch"). In the above example (25), in "natural declension" the derived forms of a word (e.g. *legam* and *legi* - the choice of term is perhaps suggestive) "lean away" from the trunk. The Latin language may be thought of as a field on which name-givers have "planted" names in order to designate the *res* ("things"), or at least ideas of things, that lie under them: the IDEAS ARE LOCATIONS metaphor interacts here with an agricultural metaphor in order to offer a peculiarly Roman way of understanding language.

3. PATHS

This article opened with a discussion of how the text is frequently described as if it were animate in Latin (as it is in the modern languages), and continued with a description of how the notions of the CONTAINER and LOCATION are metaphorically prominent in our descriptions of speech. It is now necessary to return to an equally important physical notion noteworthy in descriptions of reading, meaning, and communication in general – that of the PATH. Take the following expression from Cicero's *De finibus*, where Cicero is criticizing a statement made by his collocutor, Piso:

26. *"tria genera bonorum": procliui currit <u>oratio</u>. uenit ad extremum; haeret in salebra; <u>cupit enim dicere</u> nihil posse ad beatam uitam deesse sapienti.*
"'[There are] three classes of goods': the <u>phrase</u> runs smoothly. When it arrives at the end, it comes to a halt at the rough patch [in the road]; <u>for it wishes to say</u> that that nothing for a happy life can be lacking to the wise man" (Cic. *Fin.* 5.84).

In English one speaks of a phrase "going" or "running", while in Portuguese one talks of "uma expressão corrente" or of "uma conversa fluente". The Ciceronian *currit oratio* reflects the way a *spoken* expression is enunciated

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[31] On Varro's word trees, see in particular GITNER (2014).

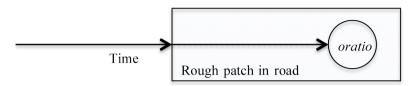through time, such that it can be described in terms of movement through space:

Fig. 6. Diagram of the scenario depicted at Cic. *Fin*. 5.84.

The previous sentence (26) is of course interesting for other reasons that should be apparent from what has already been said – just like Penelope, the expression goes along and comes to an end, yet over and above this it "wishes to say something". *Written* discourse can also be thought of as "running across" a page by the metaphor FORM IS MOTION ("fictive motion").[32] Consider terms such as the Greek στίχος and Latin *uersus*: στίχος, which came to mean "line of poetry", had the earlier meaning of "column" or "file" of soldiers in Homer (from στείχω, "march"), whereas *uersus* ("line of poetry") had the prior meaning of "the turning of the plough at the end of the furrow".[33]

Yet there is a further way in which directionality plays a role in discussions of speech, and this pertains to neither (1) the time-bound nature of physically enunciated words nor (2) the movement of words depicted on the page, but rather to (3) the direction that the text is going in terms of its meaning.[34] Some of the most important modern verbs and nouns of reference and meaning, for example, are in fact derived from terms for carrying, stretching, going, and other forms of implicit motion. Examples in English include the phrase "the drift of the statement", where the noun "drift" seems to configure meaning

[32] For a brief introduction to fictive motion, where a static entity is said to e.g. "go" or "stretch" ("the highway runs through the mountains"), see MATLOCK & BERGMANN (2015). See originally TALMY (2000), p. 171, who analyzes the phenomenon in terms of the "mapping of motion as a source domain onto stationariness as a target domain"; contrast LANGACKER (2008), pp. 528-531: "through subjectification, the dynamicity inherent in the apprehension of events is transferred to the conception of static scenes"; LAKOFF & TURNER (1989), pp. 143-144, posit that the phraseology is prompted a conceptual metaphor FORM IS MOTION; see also KÖVECSES (2015), pp. 18-19.

[33] BEEKES (2010), s.v. στείχω: "στίχος [m.] 'file, rank', of soldiers, trees, etc., often of words, 'line' in verse and prose..."; ERNOUT & MEILLET (1959) s.v. *uerto*: "«fait de tourner la charrue au bout du sillon, tour, ligne»; puis concret «sillon»; par analogie «ligne d'écriture» (d'abord écrite βουστροφηδόν, comme dans l'inscription du Forum), et spécialement «vers»".

[34] See SHORT (2008, 2013a). The verb *pertineo* ("refer", "concern") is often used in this way: e.g. *quorsum... haec oratio pertinet?* ("to what does my speech refer?" Cic., *Dom*. 115).

in terms of the statement's movement; the endpoint of that movement can of course be conceptualized as the statement's "aim" or "goal".[35]

This latter type of motion, the movement of a human or a text towards a meaning (via the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL metaphor), supplied a Latin vocabulary that was key to subsequent discussions of meaning. Take the following instance, where an expression is "twisted away" from its normal course towards a depraved meaning:

27. *mala consuetudine in obscenum intellectum* <u>*sermo detortus est*</u>, *ut 'ductare exercitus' et 'patrare bellum'*…
"<u>A phrase [may be] twisted away</u> into an obscene meaning by wicked usage, as in the examples of 'lead armies' and 'finish off battle'" (Quint. *Inst.* 8.3.44).

The phrases "lead armies" and "finish off battle" have taken on untoward meanings: *ductare exercitus* plays on the two meanings of *ducto*, i.e. "lead [an army]" and "take home [a prostitute]", while *patrare bellum* is likewise ambiguous, as it can be used for reaching sexual climax. Here, the verb *detorqueo* ("twist away") is employed to describe the deviation of the phrase from its proper path:
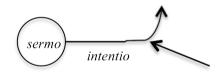

Fig. 7. Diagram of the scenario depicted at Quint. *Inst.* 8.3.44.

Here, a phrase originally moves along a figurative PATH towards its GOAL, but then is acted upon so that it moves towards a different goal (meaning).[36]

The metaphor played a role when it came to the development of specific pieces of Latin terminology: the term *intentio*, which of course gave rise to the English term "intend" (Portuguese: "pretender"), offers a good example of this process. The Latin verb *tendere* ("to stretch") yielded a number of verbs that were important to the Latin vocabulary for what things meant. While the

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[35] To take a related metaphor, one can also speak of what a statement or phrase "brings" to us, as in "the *import* of the oracle" or "the *bearing* of the phrase". Cf. e.g. *non ego celari possum, quid nutus amantis | quidue <u>ferant</u> miti lenia uerba sono* ("I am not able to mistake as to what the nods of the lover or the soft words with their mild ring <u>mean</u>" Tib. 1.8.1-2); *nescioquid peccati portat haec purgatio* ("this excusing <u>implies</u> some kind of crime" Ter. *Haut.* 625).
[36] Cf. *uereor ne illud grauius Phaedria | tulerit neue <u>aliorsum atque ego feci acceperit</u>*… ("I fear that Phaedria has taken it badly and has interpreted it <u>in a different way from what I intended</u>" Ter. *Eun.* 81-82).

verb is derived from an inherited root for "stretching",[37] the basic form *tendere* could also take on the sense of "to go" or "to strive":

28. *fratresque* <u>*tendentes*</u>*…*
    Pelion imposuisse Olympo
"…the brothers <u>striving</u> to place Pelion on top of Olympus" (Hor. *Carm.* 3.4.51).

The verb had a number of prefixed forms (e.g. *intendere*, *ostendere*, and *portendere*), but to concentrate on *intendere* one may note how the idea of stretching gave rise to a sense that implies movement:

29. *quo nunc primum* <u>*intendam?*</u>
"In what direction <u>shall I strive</u>?" (Ter. *An.* 343).[38]

This instance involves actual physical movement, but the "striving" also clearly relates to the speaker's will/volition, as it does the previous example from Horace (28). In addition, the verb could be used purely of mental intentions; Plautus, for instance, used it to describe what a human being intends or wants to do:

30. *pergin, sceleste,* <u>*intendere*</u> *hanc arguere?*
"Do you continue, scoundrel, <u>to intend</u> to accuse her?" (Plaut. *Mil.* 380).[39]

Generally, this last sense of the verb was reserved for animate beings, i.e. things with minds that could "intend" things, but sentences such as the following from Lucretius, where the verb *intendere* is used of inanimate entities, nevertheless existed:

31. *quod facere* <u>*intendunt*</u> *facere, neque adhuc conata patrantur.*
"…which they [heat and sun] <u>seek to do</u>, but do not yet gain their end" (Lucr. 5.385).

Moreover, the verb could occasionally serve to articulate the meaning of phrases and statements, as is clear from the following excerpt from Sallust:

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[37] See ERNOUT & MEILLET (1959), s.v. *tendo*. For the idea of stretching in Latin, cf. e.g. <u>*manus ad caeli caerula templa*</u> *|* <u>*tendebam*</u> *lacrumans* ("<u>I was stretching my hands</u> at the sky-blue vaults of the heavens" Enn. *Ann.* 48-49 Skutsch).

[38] Cf. *ut eo quo intendit cum exercitu mature perueniat* ("…so that he might swiftly arrive with his army to that place to which he has directed his course" Cic. *Mur.* 22).

[39] Cf. *hostes undique circumventi… se per munitiones deicere et fuga salutem petere* <u>*intenderunt*</u> ("the enemies, having been surrounded from all sides, threw themselves through the defenses and <u>tried</u> to seek safety by flight" Caes. *BGall.* 3.26.5).

32. *igitur ubi Marius haruspicis <u>dicta eodem intendere</u> uidet, quo cupido animi hortabatur, ab Metello petundi gratia missionem rogat.*
"Therefore when Marius saw that <u>the words</u> of the haruspex <u>tended in the same direction</u> as his mind's desire was encouraging, he asked Metellus for leave for the purpose of seeking the consulship" (Sall. *Iug.* 64).

This is a rare usage, but gives us a glimpse of the way such expressions could come to be used of speech: literally, the speech of the priest "tends" in the same direction as Marius' desire. The directional *eodem*, taken together with the *quo*, would suggest that the usage is to be characterized as dependent on the idea of motion – yet not motion through time and space but rather in terms of thought. The motion should be construed as the semantic "drift" of the *dicta* – the direction in which the words are tending semantically.

There is more, in that the word of course developed into a special piece of critical vocabulary. The noun *intentio* (English "intention", Portuguese "intenção"), as described by Donatus (4ᵗʰ century AD) in the preface to his commentary on Vergil, seems to correspond with this usage; on the one hand, an *intentio* is ascribed to a poet:

33. *ante opus titulus causa <u>intentio</u>. Titulus, in quo quaeritur cuius sit, quid sit; causa, unde ortum sit et quare hoc potissimum ad scribendum poeta praesumpserit; <u>intentio, in qua cognoscitur, quid efficere conetur poeta</u>*
"Before [dealing with the work itself], there is the title, the cause, and the <u>intention</u>. The title is that in which one asks whose the work is and what it is; the cause involves inquiries about its origin and especially why the author took to writing it; <u>the intention is that in which one learns what the poet was trying to achieve</u>" (Donat. *Vit. Verg.* 47).

Here, the *intentio* consists in the direction the author is "striving" with regard to his meaning. Later on in the same preface, however, the term *intentio* is applied to a book:

34. *<u>intentio libri</u> quam σκοπόν Graeci vocant, in imitatione Theocriti poetae constituitur, qui Siculus ac Syracusanus fuit. Est <u>intentio</u> etiam in laude Caesaris et principium ceterorum, per quos in sedes suas atque agros rediit, unde effectus finisque carminis et delectationem et utilitatem secundum praecepta confecit.*
"<u>The intention of the book</u>, which the Greeks call the 'skopos', consists in the imitation of Theocritus, who was a Sicilian and Syracusan. The <u>intention</u> also exists in praising Caesar and the other leaders, with the help of whom he returned to his property and fields; on account of this, the accomplishment and result of the poem has been to create pleasure and utility in accordance with the rules" (Donat. *Vit. Verg.* 64).

Interesting here, besides the fact that a human being is not moving or stretching here but rather the book itself, is the fact that the term *intentio* is equated with the Greek term σκοπός (Portuguese: "escopo"). This Greek noun, derived from σκεπτέομαι ("to look"), can be translated into English as "target" or "goal",[40] and therefore relies on a conceptual metaphor similar to yet distinct from the Roman one: the movement is described in terms of an arrow's flight (cf. Germ. "eine treffende Aussage").[41] In Latin, however, the path metaphor structures meaning as something towards which an entity is striving; it is also behind Latin terms such as *destinatum* ("object aimed at", "goal", "intention"), *finis* ("end"), and *propositum*. To take the last of these, a *propositum* was literally something "set in front of one"; it later morphed into the English noun "purpose" (Portuguese: "propósito"). To close this section, a visual depiction of the two types of intention mentioned in excerps 33 and 34 (that of the author and that of his book) might look like the following:
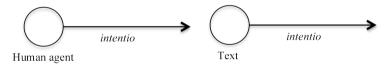

Fig. 8. The *intentio* of a human agent and of a text.

This situation is not without importance, since the notion that both human beings and texts might have an *intentio* suggests that both might be agents – yet texts are not agents in the way that human beings are. The situation, however, became a problem in the 20th century, when critics sought to remove the author from the interpretative equation. If one seeks the lexical polysemies that led to this quandary (repeated in expressions discussed above such as *sibi uelle*), one has to turn to Latin and Greek.[42]

CONCLUSION

This article has surveyed – albeit very briefly and only with reference to a few examples – how the Latin vocabulary of reading and meaning was

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[40] The archery metaphor naturally lies behind English term "scope", although it has become somewhat hidden – compare: "within the scope of the exercise" and "we have to broaden the scope of our inquiry". It is unclear whether many native English speakers are aware of the metaphor that motivates this diction.

[41] On the differences between the Greek arrow metaphor and the Latin equivalents, see SHORT (2013). The Greek term is used by Cicero: Cf. σκοπὸς (hoc est enim) huic nostro nihil praebere, illa autem οὐ παρὰ τοῦτο ("his intention (for this is the truth) is to offer no allowance to our friend; but the lady says that she will not be παρὰ τοῦτο" Cic. *Att*. 15.29.2).

[42] See ZANKER (2016).

generated via metaphor. The key term *legere* ("collect", "read"), which Varro etymologized as "collecting with the eyes" in the 1ˢᵗ century BC,[43] has not even been touched upon. But even by grazing the surface of the subject, the deeply metaphorical nature of conceptions of reading and meaning should be clear. First, there is the attribution of human agency and volition to the book; second, the words that one reads are described in Latin, as in many other languages, as containers from which one extracts meanings or conversely terms set in locations; and third, meaning is often described in terms of movement in a direction towards a goal. All of these metaphors are derived from the embodied state of language users – their status as human beings and familiarity with human volition, containers, and movement along paths allow them to use these domains to conceptualize and describe less well-delineated phenomena.[44] Such physical and psychological qualities are fundamental to our existence within the world; in order to describe and communicate abstract notions, it is natural that vocabulary is transferred from these more concrete or well-known domains.

But why is this important? Why are modes of speech used long ago interesting in any meaningful way? Two major reasons are readily apparent and have already been referred to throughout this paper. On the one hand, establishing the presence of conceptual metaphors in Latin that are shared in the modern languages helps the scholar to understand the time-bound nature of the modern expressions: modern metaphors are often part of a tradition that goes back to antiquity. This is true for English, but it is even truer for Portuguese, where there is a strong and unbroken tie with Latin. Yet appreciation of this aspect of the relationship between the ancient and modern metaphors must be offset by an awareness that certain metaphors appear to be prevalent throughout the world's languages and therefore are not solely due to their being passed down within a single tradition; the metaphors for time described above ("Christmas is coming" versus "We are approaching Christmas") are attested in a great number of languages.[45] Such metaphors appear to arise from the ways our minds work, and would therefore seem to be beyond the functioning of a tradition. Even in such cases, however, it is important to study the ancient languages, since they supply evidence for or against the case for universality.

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[43] O'SULLIVAN (2015), p. 112, has also drawn attention to the way in which the verb *legere* can also refer to movement, both in actuality and on the page. Take the following expression from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: *nec me studiosius altera saltus | legit* ("nor did another [nymph] traverse the glades more eagerly" (Ov. *Met.* 5.578-579). Reading can also be a journey, as one passes "through" a text.

[44] See, originally, LAKOFF & JOHNSON (2003 [1980]).

[45] See e.g. MOORE (2014).

Yet there is an additional reason to be interested in the classical metaphors for reading and meaning. There is a tradition of analytic philosophy going back to the later Wittgenstein and his peers in which language, and the metaphors contained within language, are viewed as a chief source of philosophical problems.[46] The phrases "I have a cat in the box" and "I have an idea in mind" both appeal to the notion of the container ("in"), but having a cat in a box is a very different thing from having an idea in mind. The similar syntax of the sentences may suggest to us, however, that an idea is like a cat in certain ways, or that a mind is like a box. Such misleading analogies could, according to Wittgenstein, confuse us about the world; for him, the task of philosophy was to undo the knots created by human agency in language. The metaphors that have been surveyed in this paper are connected with long-standing problems in philosophy – the relationship between meanings and words ("where is the meaning in the words?"), for instance, or the notion of intentionality ("how can texts intend things when they are not sentient beings?"). By learning about the histories of words and of the conceptual metaphors that originally motivated their application, one can guard oneself (somewhat) from the prejudices and misconceptions that can arise from taking language at face value.[47]

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[46] WITTGENSTEIN (2001 [1953]).

[47] This is the theme of LAKOFF & JOHNSON (1999).

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