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Perception of 'Peace' From A Religious Perspective: A Metaphorical Analysis of Martin Luther King Jr.'s Nobel Prize Speech

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Abstract:
Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s eloquence as an orator is widely recognized all over the world and his rhetorical strategies have been subject to many studies. However, very few studies have looked into his use of metaphor as an effective cognitive device and communication strategy. Hence, this paper, drawing upon Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) Conceptual Metaphor Theory, provides a metaphorical analysis of his Nobel Prize acceptance speech (1964), which is among his most popular and influential speeches in the history, to understand the way 'peace' is perceived by him and conveyed to the audience. The findings of this study reveal that this speech is highly metaphorical, which seems to be one of the reasons of its popularity and effectiveness. The findings of the study also reveal that, while King is considered both as a political and religious leader, 'peace' is dominantly framed from a religious perspective via metaphors of 'light' and 'journey', positioning him as a religious rather than political leader. Furthermore, it is argued that the use of dualistic image-making as one of his discursive strategies makes his metaphors more impactful. For instance, while Peace is portrayed as Light, lack of Peace is portrayed as Darkness; and while Peace is portrayed as an Upward Movement, lack of Peace is portrayed as a Downward Movement. Finally, accompanying metaphorical words with adjectives (for instance, employing adjectives of 'dark', 'starless', and 'long' for the metaphorical 'night') gives a more emphatic tone to his metaphors.

Keywords: Martin Luther King Jr.; Metaphor Analysis; Nobel Peace Prize; Peace; Religious discourse.

1. Introduction

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was a successful leader of the African American civil rights movement who has been classified as a religious as well as a political leader (West, 2008; Şen et al., 2013). His speeches are arguably among the most impactful speeches in the history. Even his "I have a dream" speech, delivered in 1963 at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., was ranked the first of twentieth-century American speeches in terms of impact and rhetorical strategies (Wolfram et al., 2016). King's speeches have played a significant role to promote social justice and social activism (Abbott, 2012; Sebag Montefiore, 2015). Considering the significance of his speeches, they have been subject to numerous studies (e.g., Alvarez, 1988; Miller, 1992; Selby, 2008). However, it is surprising that his perception of 'peace' – considering the fact that 'peace' was one of the main goals he was fighting for and even he received the Nobel Prize for it in 1964 – has not been given the attention it should have.

2. Conceptual Metaphor Theory

Metaphor is a comparison between two things (A is B) with the aim of describing A – as an unfamiliar, complex, or abstract concept (called Target) – with reference to B – as a familiar, simple, or concrete concept (called Source). Metaphor analysis mainly came into spotlight by the publication of the book *Metaphors We Live By* (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980) which introduced Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT). From this perspective, metaphor is no longer merely a literary tool but a cognitive device which is central to our understanding of the world around us and the way we transfer our worldview to others.

CMT argues that metaphor formation in our minds includes a mapping from a source domain onto a target domain. This mapping is what enables us to see the target in the form of the source. As Chilton (2005, pp. 6-7) argues, source domains "have a clear tendency to be based in human physiological experience"; while target domains, on the other hand, "tend to be more abstract, under-structured or problematic conceptual areas".

In this sense, one of the missions of metaphors is creating a clear, simplified, and effective image of the target (as an unfamiliar, complex, or abstract concept) in the audience's mind with reference to the audience's familiar experience (e.g., Gibbs, 2015; Thibodeau and Boroditsky, 2011). This feature of metaphor has led to broad research in various fields, one of the most popular of which in the literature is leaders' discourse.

3. Metaphor in leaders' discourse

In linguistic terms, the word 'discourse' mainly refers to a group of statements that create a language for providing knowledge about a particular topic (Hall, 1992). Thus, the term 'discourse' is inclusive of oral or written texts which represent organised forms of human experience.

The literature is a proof that leaders' discourse (either political or religious leaders), particularly their speeches are one the main motivational forces behind public opinion and people's movements. The huge impact of leaders' discourse, particularly their speeches, on public opinion and people's movements has made their discourse a rich source for discourse studies not only to understand the way they employ discourse as a communication tool to win the approval and support of their audience but also to identify the ideologies behind their discourse (Fairclough, 1995; Wodak et al., 1999; van Dijk, 2006; Wodak and Meyer, 2009).

One of the recent trends in the studies on leaders' speeches is the analysis of metaphor (e.g., Mio et al., 2005; Carney and Prasch, 2017; Biria and Mohammadi, 2012). In terms of effectiveness of metaphors, Mio et al. (2005) in a study compared the use of metaphors in the inaugural speeches of 17 high-charisma U.S. presidents with 19 low-charisma presidents. They found out that one of the features of charismatic presidents' speeches was using twice as many metaphors as non-charismatic presidents, which they argue to be one of the features that make their speeches more inspiring to their audience and followers.

Many studies have investigated the use of metaphors in leaders' discourse (e.g., Biria and Mohammadi, 2012; Charteris-Black, 2005, Carney and Prasch, 2017); however, surprisingly metaphor in King's speeches is not given the attention it deserves and only very few studies have looked at the metaphorical nature of his speeches. For instance, Alvarez (1988) only partially provides a metaphor analysis of King's "I have a dream speech" delivered in 1963. Among other features of the speech, she argues that the speech is metaphorical in nature; however, she does not discuss the metaphorical nature of the speech in full. While metaphor is a less attended feature in the studies on King's speeches, metaphor analysis of 'peace' is also quite rare in the literature on influential leaders' discourse. Even though a few studies have investigated metaphor of 'peace' (e.g., Rohrer, 1991; Carney and Prasch, 2017), much more research is required for such a complex and broad term.

Hence, while the gaps in the literature regarding metaphor in Martin Luther King's speeches was the main motivation behind this study, this paper specifically focuses on the concept of 'peace' as a gap in the literature on King's speeches, who was himself one of the pioneers of 'peace' and even the receiver of Nobel Peace Prize.

4. Method

The text used in this study was the Nobel Prize acceptance speech delivered by Martin Luther King Jr. (1964), which was subject to metaphor analysis using Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) Conceptual Metaphor Theory as the theoretical framework behind this study. Metaphor in this paper is construed in its basic sense of perceiving one thing in terms of another (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) as well as being a tool that enables a reconceptualization of experience.

Furthermore, this paper draws on the definition of metaphor by Charteris-Black (2004, p. 21) as "a linguistic representation that results from the shift in the use of a word or phrase from the context or domain in which it is expected to occur to another context, thereby causing semantic shift".

The selection of the speech was due to its importance, as one of the most significant speeches in the history, regarding peace. The analysis of the speech included metaphor identification and metaphor interpretation. Metaphor identification was conducted based on Metaphor Identification Process (MIP) suggested by Pragglejaz Group (2007). In this method, every word of the text was carefully read to decide whether they were used metaphorically or in their literal meaning. Then the words were double checked with another scholar in the field of metaphor. The second layer of analysis included metaphor interpretation. At this level, conceptual metaphors were identified for the identified metaphorical expressions and words, and their intended meanings were discussed in the text.

5. Findings

As the analysis of the speech revealed, 'PEACE IS LIGHT' and 'PEACE IS A JOURNEY' were by far the most two frequently used conceptual metaphors in King's Nobel Prize acceptance speech (1964). Table 1 presents the Light and Journey metaphors as identified in King's Speech.

Table 1: Light and Journey Metaphors in King's Speech (1964)

No.	Metaphorical Expressions	Conceptual metaphors
1	I accept the Nobel Prize for Peace at a moment when 22 million Negroes of the United States of America are engaged in a creative battle **to end the long night of racial injustice**.	Peace is light
2	I refuse to accept the view that mankind is so tragically bound **to the starless midnight of racism and war that the bright daybreak of peace and brotherhood can never become a reality**.	Peace is light
3	I believe that even amid today's mortar bursts and whining bullets, **there is still hope for a brighter tomorrow.**	Peace is light
4	When our days become dreary with **low-hovering clouds and our nights become darker than a thousand midnights**	Peace is light
5	Yet when years have rolled past and when **the blazing light of truth** is focused on this marvellous age in which we live	Peace is light
6	**The tortuous road which has led from Montgomery, Alabama to Oslo bears witness to this truth.** This is a **road over** which millions of Negroes are **travelling to find a new sense of dignity**. This same **road** has opened for all Americans a new era of progress and hope. It has led to a new Civil Rights Bill, and **it will, I am convinced, be widened and lengthened into a superhighway of justice** as Negro and white men in increasing numbers create alliances to overcome their common problems	Peace is a journey
7	This faith can give us courage to face the uncertainties of the future. It will give our **tired feet new strength as we continue our forward stride toward the city of freedom**	Peace is a journey
8	Every time I take a flight, I am always mindful of the many people who make a successful journey possible – the known pilots and the unknown ground crew. So, you honour **the dedicated pilots of our struggle who have sat at the controls as the freedom movement soared into orbit.**	Peace is a journey
9	You honour the **ground crew** without whose labour and sacrifices **the jet flights to freedom could never have left the earth**	Peace is a journey

As can be seen from Table 1, metaphors of Light and Journey are dominant in King's speech. The results here are quite similar to Alvarez's (1988) report of King's 'I have a dream' speech. In this speech, peace is mainly seen as one type of light, or one type of movement. Besides the concept of 'peace', the metaphors also include peace-related concepts such as 'brotherhood, justice, freedom, and faith' which are seen either as the causes or the outcomes of peace. For instance, in Metaphorical Expression No. 7 (ref. Table 1), 'faith' is considered as the strength given to our feet on this journey; and 'freedom', in the same sentence, is framed as the destination of this journey. Hence, in Metaphorical

Expression No. 7, 'peace' is portrayed as a journey, while 'faith' is one of the causes of achieving 'peace' and 'freedom' is the outcome of achieving peace.

Below, the findings are discussed in the two categories of 'Light' and 'Journey', and finally the concept of peace in King's perception is discussed.

6. Discussion
6.1 Light

From the lens of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980), peace is an abstract and broad term which can mean differently to different people. From this perspective, 'light', as a familiar human experience, is employed by King to frame peace and its related concepts. For instance, in Metaphorical Expressions No. 1 and No. 2 (ref. Table 1), peace and brotherhood are portrayed as 'light', while racial injustice, racism, and war are framed as 'darkness'. As can be seen here, the concepts of light and darkness are used in contrast to each other, to especially create the image of daybreak and night. The arrival of dawn means that the darkness automatically disappears. In other words, even the longest nights eventually end. Hence, this metaphor has a natural tone which promises peace as a definite and natural result of the movement. Besides that, light is the source of hope, purity, and righteousness.

Light is a metaphor which is more than often associated with religious discourse and religious thinking employed across various religions (e.g., Weightman, 1996; Persich, 2021; Christiansen, 2021). From a religious perspective, God is the source of light and what is spiritual is described as light. For instance, in the Bible, God separates light (good) from darkness (evil), or Jesus is the 'light of the world'. Hence, this metaphor seems to reflect King's religious background. Alvarez (1988) argues that King's 'I have a dream' speech has features of a sermon. Similarly, this speech can be categorized as a religious discourse, especially a religious tone is identifiable in terms of metaphor use. For instance, in this speech King states: "*... and the lion and the lamb shall lie down together, and every man shall sit under his own vine and fig tree and none shall be afraid...*" which is obviously a direct reference to the Bible. From a religious perspective, in the battle between the good (the light) and the evil (the darkness), it is always the light that wins. Hence, his metaphors promise inevitable victory to the supporters of peace.

In terms of metaphor usage, King employs two rhetorical strategies to give a stronger and more emphatic tone to his metaphors. Firstly, co-occurrence of metaphors of light and darkness in the same metaphorical expressions creates a dualistic image which seems to serve as a strategy to give a more emphatic and stronger tone to the metaphors. The second strategy employed is the use of adjectives. For instance, racial injustice is not merely 'a night' but it is 'a long night' which emphasizes the need for patience to achieve peace. Similarly, racism and war in Metaphorical Expression No. 2 (ref. Table 1), are not merely 'a night' but a 'starless night' emphasizing the existing desperation and lack of hope among many people and the difficulty of the situation. For instance, both strategies are observable in his following statement: "*I refuse to accept the view that mankind is so tragically bound to the starless midnight of racism and war that the bright daybreak of peace and brotherhood can never become a reality*". This metaphor, which employs both strategies, inspires hope to those who are fighting for peace immediately after describing the difficulty of the situation. As another instance, in Metaphorical Expression No. 5 (ref. Table 1), truth as one of the concepts related to peace is not merely light but a 'blazing' light: "*Yet when years have rolled past and when the blazing light of truth is focused on this marvellous age in which we live*".

While PEACE IS LIGHT, as discussed above, was one of the main conceptualizations of peace in King's speech, PEACE IS A JOURNEY was another main conceptualization of peace, as discussed below.

6.2. Journey

From a journey point of view, peace is seen as a process, movement, or progress from one state or point to another, as will be discussed below. Journey, which is seen as movement from one location to another, is another familiar human experience frequently used as a source of many metaphors. Journey or path framework generally highlights or talks about the goal, direction, or progress of a process (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). Similar to Light metaphor, Journey metaphors are frequently employed in religious discourse. For instance, Knepper (2019) argues how Journey metaphor 'offers a new orientation and point of origin for philosophy of religion that is inclusive of a global diversity of religious traditions'. Similar to Light metaphors, Journey metaphors are also popular across various religions (e.g., Karaman, 2021).

Destination in the journey is the purpose and goal of the movement. In other words, destination is the most important element in the journey and the underlaying motivational force that brings the audience together in the form of a group. In this sense, the journey domain the audience are encouraged to select a goal and become devoted to it.

Generally, two types of movements are observable in King's journey metaphors. The first group of metaphors are horizontal. For instance, in Metaphorical Expressions No. 6, and 7, 'peace' is seen as a journey, which is currently on foot. Journey on foot shows that obtaining peace is a long and difficult process; hence, it is an invitation to patience and perseverance. Hence, short-term sufferings or inconveniences are portrayed as a means to achieve long-term positive objectives (Woodhams, 2012; Charteris-Black, 2005). In other words, this journey may not be easy; however, the joy of arriving at the destination is what makes a journey worth the difficulties. While in metaphors of light, ending the darkness was the inspiring factor, in metaphors of journey, arriving at the destination is the persuasive factor.

Furthermore, Journey metaphors have a promising tone that this difficult process will become easy. For instance, King in Metaphorical Expression No. 6 (ref. Table 1) states: "*The tortuous road which has led from Montgomery, Alabama to Oslo bears witness to this truth. This is a road over which millions of Negroes are travelling to find a new sense of dignity. This same road has opened for all Americans a new era of progress and hope. It has led to a new Civil Rights Bill, and it will, I am convinced, be widened and lengthened into a superhighway of justice*".

The second group of Journey metaphors are those that refer to an upward movement such as Metaphorical Expressions No. 8 and 9, where the movement has been portrayed as a jet flight or a journey into orbit. The destination of this journey is freedom; however, freedom is not on the earth now, but it is a destination in the sky. In this regard, those who fight for this movement are the pilots of this flight, which is a reference to King himself and other leaders who fight for this movement. Similar to metaphor of light, this upward movement metaphor can imply a religious tone as God is in the sky and also the source of light (Persich et al., 2021), and thus this movement can be even taken as a journey towards the source of light.

While peace is portrayed as an upward movement, anything that stands on the way of achieving peace, is portrayed with a downward movement. For instance, when King in this speech states: "*I am mindful that debilitating and grinding poverty afflicts my people and chains them to the lowest rung of the economic ladder*", he is referring to the economic aspect of peace. From this perspective, a peaceful society where all races can live and work peacefully and freely moves up the economic ladder, while a society that lacks peace suffers from poverty which is like chaining the people in that society to the lowest rung of the economic ladder. As another instance of this downward movement, in another part of the speech King states: "*I refuse to accept the cynical notion that nation after nation must spiral down a militaristic stairway into the hell of thermonuclear destruction*". In this sentence, he is criticizing turning to violence. In other words, taking a militaristic approach is against achieving peace, and while peace is an upward movement, turning to militaristic approach is portrayed as a downward movement.

6.3. Peace in King's Perception

Peace in King's perception has a religious meaning. From a religious perspective, peace has two dimensions: social and spiritual. A closer look at the metaphors reveals that both dimensions are intended in their use. In this regard, peace not only means social justice for all members of the society to live and work freely and peacefully, but it also means caring for each other and justice. In this sense, peace not only means economic growth, respecting human rights, and nonviolence but it also means loving each other and brotherhood. Hence, peace in this broad sense, cannot be simply taken as opposite of war, but it even includes war: a non-violent war against injustice, racism, and militaristic approach. Hence, this war should not be mistaken with a militaristic war.

In King's perception, achieving peace in this sense is a lengthy, difficult, and slow process which requires participation and engagement of all members of the society, faith, patience, and perseverance. However, regardless of all these, peace is portrayed as a natural process that is guaranteed to be eventually obtained like a long night that finally ends. In other words, he promises that peace is certainly obtained in the world, only its achievement is prolonged until all people accept it and cooperate.

7. Conclusion

This paper applied a metaphor analysis approach to explore how peace, as the main concept behind Martin Luther King's movement, was conceptualized in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech delivered in 1964. The results of the study revealed that King's speech was quite metaphoric, and that peace was mainly perceived from a religious perspective positioning him as a religious leader rather than a political leader. In this sense, PEACE was mainly perceived in the form of 'light' and 'journey' metaphors. His metaphors took a hopeful tone promising that regardless of the existing difficulties on the way of achieving peace, it will eventually be achieved as a natural outcome of the patience, perseverance, and collaboration of all members of the society similar to the daybreak that ends the darkness of the night. Furthermore, his metaphors took an emphatic tone by presenting peace and its opposite concepts in the form of a dualistic religious image as well as by accompanying metaphors with emphatic adjectives. Finally, this study provides insights into effective role of metaphor to represent complicated and abstract concepts such as peace in the form of familiar experiences such as light and journey.

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(Endnotes)