

## Language and the Transformation of Consciousness\*

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### Introduction

The practice of law, like the game of football, reflects and embodies the valued behaviors and assumptions of our society: opposition, competition, offense/defense, winning/losing, and strategic deception. The referees, umpires, and line judges of football become judges and juries in the law courts, where prosecuting and defense attorneys vie to win cases, substituting linguistic maneuvers for the muscle and violence of football. Both are conceptually related in our minds for they draw internal coherence from metaphorical concepts that equate them with war: ARGUMENT IS WAR, FOOTBALL IS WAR. This parallelism suggests that our society is preoccupied with the idea of war, if not its reality.

For Feminists<sup>1</sup> committed to the practice of law, these conceptual equations must result in a conflict of values: Feminism, on the one hand, which counsels against war, violence, and competi-

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1. Like other rules and laws in our society, those governing the use of upper and lower case letters to begin words are arbitrary and provide us with an opportunity to exercise our own predilections. The capitalization of proper names, the months of the year, and the first person singular pronoun, *I* (but not *you*, *we*, or *they*) is a typographical convention. Capitalizing the first letter of a word informs the reader that the writer assigns special importance and respect to it. e.e. cummings, for example, shocked readers by using a lower case "i" for the first person singular pronoun and capitalizing only the words he thought were important. More recently, Andrea Dworkin has fought with mainstream editors for her preferred typography. In this essay, I capitalize *Feminist* and *Feminism* in order to signal the importance I assign to the terms.

tion, and the heteropatriarchal<sup>2</sup> legal system, which assumes such activities as inevitable and necessary. How does a Feminist, committed to social change, get up every day to engage in legal battles, fighting in the courts to promote ideas inimical to the system itself? Examining the metaphorical concepts that reflect this contradiction suggests ways to maintain a positive perspective without compromise or cop-out.

First, we can acknowledge we are "at war." The "battle of the sexes" is not an accidental description. We didn't declare the war, but we fight it daily, regardless. (Some call it a "struggle," perhaps, thereby euphemizing its violence.) Second, we can admit we've "chosen sides" in this war, for Feminist values contradict the values of the heteropatriarchy. Third, having chosen "our side," we can distinguish "us" from "them." Making that distinction enables us to exploit the system for our own purposes; failure to do so traps us in guilt, self-recrimination, and tentativeness. Most importantly, we must realize we deal differently with members of our own "team" than we do with opponents, and that is my subject here. Much depends on our ability to compete successfully on hostile turf while, simultaneously, we endeavor to divest ourselves of the very conceptual patterns our success depends upon.

Feminism, it has always seemed to me, sets forth, as one of its essential properties, **personal change**. The explicit purpose of the consciousness-raising groups of the early Second Wave<sup>3</sup> was the identification and validation of each wimon's<sup>4</sup> experiences of op-

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2. Readers may be familiar with the word *patriarchal*, which denotes a society in which men rule, but the term *heteropatriarchal* may cause some readers to balk. I coined the term in 1982 because Canadian friends needed it for what they were talking about in an essay. Since then, I've adopted it myself because it clearly denotes two aspects of our patriarchy that I don't like. The prefix *hetero-* means, among other things, 'different'. In our society, the differences among us form the basis for many of our prejudices: color, age, height, intelligence, sex, class, weight, etc. Being "different," deviating from the white, male, heterosexual "norm," puts one at risk. In this sense, I use *heteropatriarchy* to emphasize how our differences are used to divide and oppress us. More familiar is the word *heterosexual*, which is generally defined as "love of the opposite sex." (Note the equation of love and sex.) My use of *heteropatriarchy* is also intended to remind my readers that "compulsory heterosexuality" (from the title of Adrienne Rich's article, *Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence*, 5 Signs 631 (1980)) is a necessary corollary of our society. Men rule; wemyn are their chattel and legitimate prey. Heterosexual programming maintains and perpetuates the *status quo*.

3. The Second Wave of Feminism is the present "wave" which began in the late 1960's. The First Wave refers to Feminist activism during the 19th century.

4. I adopt here the spellings of *wimon* and *wemyn* from Old and Middle English as given in 12 Oxford English Dictionary (1961). The word *woman* originated as a compound, *wif* + *man(n)*, during the Old English period, about the same time that *wif*, which originally referred to a female human being, was semantically narrowed to mean 'a woman bound to a man'. Having deprived themselves of a female

pression within the heteropatriarchy. The discovery and naming of our experiences revealed patterns of oppression and showed us how we had internalized oppressive patterns that interfered with our ability and desire to act on our own behalf as effective, autonomous agents. Once a wimon becomes aware of how conventional female behaviors (such as passivity, dependence, coyness, niceness) function oppressively to keep her "in her place," she's ready to undertake the process of unlearning the heteropatriarchal program that structures her life.

Personal change necessarily is antecedent to and is the basis for the activism that initiates social change. The creation and continued use of the word *Feminism* as a label assumes the existence of an ideology, a way of perceiving and framing the world, that distinguishes it from all other conceptual frameworks and ideologies. Even overlap and fuzziness in political concerns require identifiable, separate ways of reacting to and describing events in the world. If this were not so, if Feminism weren't distinct from other ideologies, then the use of the label as a self-description would be meaningless. Likewise, if Feminism didn't require change in our lives, our ideas, and our behaviors, the label would be meaningless. Becoming a Feminist, then, calling oneself a *Feminist*, announces one's voluntary acceptance of the necessity for change, one's commitment to change, not just for the rest of the world, but in oneself. Underlying that announcement is a negative judgment about the "world as it is" and the world as men describe and understand it. Claiming the label *Feminist* also says, "I am not satisfied with who/what I have understood myself to be up to this moment, and I plan to become other than who/what I am in the course of time by critical, self-examination."

When a wimon claims the label *Feminist* for herself, she sets

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generic, speakers of Old English created the compound *wifman(n)*. I believe this compound was based on the xtian precept that *wemyn* derived from men (as ribs), since it appears after the christianization of Britain. For further discussion, see my two earlier articles, Julia Penelope Stanley & Cynthia McGowan, *Woman and Wife: Social and Semantic Shifts in English*, 12 Papers in Linguistics 491-502 (1979) and Julia Penelope, *Lexical Gaps and Lexicalization: A Diachronic Analysis*, in Proceedings of the Tenth LACUS Forum 296-304 (1983). (The acronym LACUS refers to the Linguistic Association of Canada and the United States.)

Prior to the standardization of spelling required by the print medium in the 14th century, numerous spellings of *woman* and *women* were acceptable, among them *wimon* and *wemyn*. This particular instance of "standardization" reminds us that we are the derivative sex, and some radical Feminists, such as Monique Wittig, argue (convincingly, I think) that continued use of the word *woman* helps to perpetuate our subordinate status. Monique Wittig, *One is Not Born a Woman*, 1 Feminist Issues 46 (Winter 1981). In an effort to avoid overburdening my readers with an unfamiliar vocabulary, but hoping to alert them to the dubiousness of the word itself, I have opted to use the nonstandard, original spellings for their shock value.

herself against the world of men, even when she denies that is what she's done. She denies the validity of their descriptions, definitions, structures, and ways of thinking, and asserts that she intends to replace man-made conceptions with her own and those of other wemyn. As many of us know by now, this replacement process takes time and a commitment to dis-covering and identifying those changes we want to make. Furthermore, not just "any changes" will do, and we don't agree on which changes are desirable because, even though we may call ourselves "Feminists," we don't seem to have a common set of values. That is, change, in order to be both feasible and credible, must be motivated. There have to be systematic principles, agreed-upon values, that determine which changes we'll make and provide an internally consistent rationale for their necessity. I doubt that any of us would claim that any change is "good" simply because it's "change." Until we make explicit the underlying principles that distinguish "good" changes from "bad" ones within a Feminist ideological framework, we'll continue to be baffled by our disagreements and disillusioned by our inability to communicate with each other about our differences.<sup>5</sup>

After we've identified those changes we can agree on, it takes still more time and commitment to effect specific changes in our lives. There is, then, a time lag inherent in this process. In spite of our best efforts and intentions, when we come together to work as "Feminists" on wemyn's issues, masculist<sup>6</sup> perceptions and descriptions persist in our behaviors. Because each of us finds herself in a different phase of the process of change at any given time, masculist perceptions and behaviors divide us and keep us from

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5. An excellent example of this conflict is the Feminist Anti-Censorship Taskforce (FACT) brief filed against the MacKinnon-Dworkin antipornography ordinance in Indiana. See Brief Amici Curiae of Feminist Anti-Censorship Taskforce, American Booksellers Assoc., Inc. v. Hudnut, 598 F. Supp. 1316 (S.D. Ind. 1984), *aff'd*, 771 F.2d 323 (7th Cir. 1985), *aff'd*, 106 S. Ct. 1172 (1986). The name adopted by the task force is indicative of the misunderstanding which exists between the two groups. Censorship is not the issue in the antipornography ordinance. The issue is whether wemyn suffer harm as a result of pornography. The research leads to the conclusion that they do. See generally Margaret Baldwin, *The Sexuality of Inequality: The Minneapolis Pornography Ordinance*, 2 Law & Inequality 629 (1984). The ordinance provides a civil cause of action for individual wemyn who have been harmed by pornographic materials. *Id.* at 630; Andrea Dworkin, *Against the Male Flood: Censorship, Pornography and Equality*, 8 Harv. Women's L.J. 1, 22 (1985). The antipornography groups and the anti-censorship groups are working at cross purposes.

6. *Masculist*, rather than *masculinist*, is the appropriate antonym of *Feminist*, for it refers to the cultural, rather than biological, differences between the sexes that rationalize the subordination of wemyn. A "masculist," female or male, supports and defends the values of patriarchal culture.

working together because we aren't aware of what's happening between us. Our commitment to on-going personal change means that no one of us can assume that her conceptual framework at a given moment is permanent or absolute in any sense. If we are, indeed, "in process," it is a mistake to regard ourselves and other wemyn as "products," fixed and unchanging.

I'm assuming here that we *do* share common values and that we *do* want to work together toward social changes that will eradicate oppression based on our biological sex. If we do want to work together, we must become more consciously aware of how old behaviors continue to impede our efforts. Our use of English reveals our conceptual framework as we speak, as surely as our body language betrays our allegiances. Each of us must learn to hear ourselves as we speak, to monitor our language use as we describe events and individuals. We have to care about what we say.

Identifying some of the most prevalent masculist descriptions that promote male-identified behaviors and ways of thinking and making them explicit will, I believe, make it possible for us to work together more consciously on eliminating such descriptions and behaviors from our interactions. This process of change may then increase the likelihood of our success in accomplishing both short-range and long-range political goals as we learn different ways of interacting with each other.

### Metaphorical Concepts

A first step in the processes of unlearning old thought patterns and adopting new ones is identifying the masculist descriptions we rely on. Here, I'll focus on one type of masculist description, metaphors, and discuss the metaphorical concepts that underlie them.<sup>7</sup> Metaphorical concepts are abstract connections between unlike objects or events; we've learned these abstract connections as we've learned language, from social interactions of various kinds. Just as we're socialized as we learn a language, so, too, we acquire the social values embedded in metaphorical concepts. Among the metaphorical concepts we've learned are "structural metaphors," such as ARGUMENT IS WAR and LANGUAGE IS A

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7. Throughout my discussion, I rely on certain concepts used by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson. See George Lakoff & Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (1980). In particular, I've adopted their distinction between metaphorical concepts (always represented by capital letters) and metaphors, the expressions we use in speech, and their classification of metaphorical concepts as structural, orientational, or ontological (the latter isn't relevant to this paper). Even though I don't think their categorizations or representations are adequate, I've retained them here.

CONTAINER,<sup>8</sup> and "orientational metaphors," such as UP IS GOOD/DOWN IS BAD and FORWARD IS GOOD/BACKWARD IS BAD. A metaphorical concept may underlie numerous metaphorical descriptions.<sup>9</sup>

A structural metaphor "structures" one concept in terms of another, as in the equation X IS Y, where X stands for the object/event being described, and Y stands for the descriptive term. The semantic features and associations attached to the Y term are transferred conceptually to the X term. If I say, for example, JOHN IS A GORILLA,<sup>10</sup> in which X is "John" and Y is "a gorilla," the semantic features of gorilla, along with our associations with the term, are now conceptually attached to the X term, "John." The metaphorical assertion, JOHN IS A GORILLA, ascribes to John the features ANIMATE and NONHUMAN, along with the cultural associations we've learned about gorillas, e.g., "very big," "very strong," "mean," "vicious," "dirty," "aggressive," etc. (Note that it doesn't matter at all that gorillas are actually clean, gentle (unless cornered), and social beings.) What the metaphor establishes is an identity relation between John and our soci-

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8. LANGUAGE IS A CONTAINER is our primary metaphorical concept for talking about linguistic communication. Michael Reddy has identified this as the Conduit Metaphor, and explored its intellectual and pedagogical ramifications in his article, *The Conduit Metaphor—A Case of Frame Conflict in Our Language about Language*, in *Metaphor and Thought* 284 (Andrew Ortony ed. 1979). It's a complex metaphor, combining three distinct metaphorical equations (as represented by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson):

IDEAS (or MEANINGS) ARE OBJECTS  
LANGUAGE IS A CONTAINER  
COMMUNICATION IS SENDING

Lakoff & Johnson, *supra* note 7, at 10. Diverse phrases are derived from this metaphorical concept, all of them familiar: "I can't put my thoughts into words," "His words carry little meaning," "They don't know how to convey their ideas," "I don't get your meaning." *Id.* at 10-11.

I discuss the Conduit Metaphor and another metaphorical concept, central to the popular thesis that language (any language) must remain "pure," LANGUAGE IS A WOMAN, in *Users and Abusers: On the Death of English*, in *The English Language Today* 80-91 (Sidney Greenbaum ed. 1985). The social and political consequences of LANGUAGE IS A WOMAN are illustrated in an earlier article, Julia Penelope, *Two Essays on Language and Change: II: John Simon and the "Dragons of Eden,"* 44 *College English* 848-54 (1982).

9. For example, Francine Hardaway explores the many ways the metaphorical concept LIFE IS A GAME appears in daily conversations. Francine Hardaway, *Foul Play: Sports Metaphors as Public Doublespeak*, in *Speaking of Words: A Language Reader* 167-72 (James MacKillop & Donna Woolfolk Cross eds. 1982).

10. The metaphor, "John is a gorilla," is a popular one in the literature on the subject of metaphors, but my discussion here draws on observations about semantic "interactions" in metaphorical statements made by John R. Searle, *Metaphor*, in *Metaphor and Thought* 92 (Andrew Ortony ed. 1979). In Searle's article, however, it's "Richard is a gorilla." *Id.* at 97.

ety's STEREOTYPED IDEA of what gorillas are "like."<sup>11</sup>

One of the patriarchal metaphorical concepts that we continue to act out is ARGUMENT IS WAR. By accepting the identity relation of this metaphorical concept, we think of arguments as inherently violent conflicts, and we behave, when we're arguing with someone, as though we're dealing with an "opponent." The following metaphorical descriptions illustrate some of the ways ARGUMENT IS WAR underlies how we talk and think about arguments.

Her claims are indefensible.  
 She attacked every weak point in my argument.  
 Your criticisms are right on target.  
 I demolished her arguments.  
 I've never won an argument with her.  
 If you use that strategy, she'll wipe you out.  
 She shot gaping holes in my argument.

Such examples show how we use the metaphorical concept, ARGUMENT IS WAR, which we've learned from patriarchal culture. The process of arguing, of debating different perspectives, is conceived of as though it were a war.

In a law court, awareness of this metaphor can only help us. The American legal system is an "adversarial system" in which words replace flak and shrapnel.<sup>12</sup> Our effectiveness as lawyers depends upon our assimilation of the adversarial model. To ignore the ARGUMENT IS WAR metaphorical concept in the legal context *disarms* us. Because the legal system assumes arguing is conflict, we must be prepared to parry the assumptions imposed by the dominant description of reality. If we continue to argue with each other as though ARGUMENT IS WAR is an accurate model for conceiving of disagreements, we will perpetuate emotional pain

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11. The pejorative uses of such metaphors presuppose that human beings are superior to all other species (this attitude is called "speciesism"), and those in power often use other animals as metaphors in order to dehumanize whoever they wish to persecute. Familiar examples include calling wemyn "chicks," "dogs," "cats," or "cows." In Nazi Germany, Jews were identified as subhuman by equating them with insects or pests, thereby rationalizing the attempt to eradicate them. This metaphor surfaces in a letter from Himmler to one of his top SS officials (circa 1942), where the official is told: "The occupied Eastern territories are to become free of Jews." Lucy Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews 1933-1945*, at 129 (1975).

12. The meaning of plaintiff and defendant exemplifies the ARGUMENT IS WAR metaphor in the legal context. Plaintiffs are those who "prosecute the action." *McFadin v. Simms*, 309 Mo. 312, 328, 273 S.W. 1050, 1053 (1925). "The word 'defendant' as used in legal controversies implies an attitude of defense; such person need only stand and repel the assaults of his [sic] adversary." *Henderson v. Applegate*, 203 S.W.2d 548, 552 (Tex. Civ. App. 1947) (citation omitted).

and violence among ourselves because those are the features imposed on arguing by the metaphorical concept.

Persisting in its use to describe disagreements among ourselves hinders our attempts to build the trust necessary for cooperation. Arguing itself is perceived as a "bad thing"; not agreeing with other wemyn becomes something scary, frightening, dangerous, something potentially painful, and therefore, to be avoided. When we do argue with each other, we perceive ourselves as having something to "lose" or "win." If we "lose," we're likely to perceive ourselves as having "been beaten," as being made to look inferior or becoming powerless. If we win, on the other hand, we're prone to feel powerful or superior to whoever "lost." This "win or lose" approach to arguing traps us into thinking of other wemyn as "opponents," "enemies," even "antagonists," and so we cast ourselves in the roles of "offense" and "defense," and ascribe "weakness" and "strength" to our differing beliefs. Abstract ideas and values are treated as though they were concrete, tangible objects like chairs or territory, something to be taken away from us or another wimon. Indeed, the typical patriarchal justification for war is the acquisition of new territory from someone else or the "protection" of territory already possessed. Since very few wemyn have "territory" to be taken away, it's usually our self-concepts and personal esteem that end up being "at stake" in arguments.

For contrast, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson suggest that we'd think and act very differently when we argued if we lived in a society where we'd learned that ARGUMENT IS DANCE.<sup>13</sup> ARGUMENT IS DANCE suggests ways of behaving that are very different from those imposed by ARGUMENT IS WAR. Instead of conceiving of ourselves as "combatants" or "enemies," we'd be willing participants in arguments, performers working together to create an artistic, pleasant event. We'd think of the desirable outcome of an argument as a balanced, aesthetically satisfying experience for everyone involved, rather than as the "victory" of one wimon "over" another. In order to achieve such an experience, we'd cooperate with each other in the development of our observations, instead of antagonistically "facing off" across imagined lines that distinguish "friends" and "allies" from "enemies." In this other culture, arguing would be a pleasant, mutually-satisfying pastime to be sought and cultivated rather than avoided. We wouldn't argue among ourselves in order to "win," but to create from the different points of view an integrated composition, the

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13. Lakoff & Johnson, *supra* note 7, at 4-5.



process of the dance itself. We can choose the language that suits the context of our involvement.

### Metaphorical Functions

Metaphors seem to be essential to our thinking, our ability to conceptualize and frame new ideas. Abandoning metaphors utterly would linguistically impoverish us, I believe. Failure to identify and understand the favored metaphors of our society would hamper, and has hampered, our ability to reconceive our lives. We need to remain conscious of the cultural metaphors that structure our thinking and actions, and to construct new metaphors that reflect and promote the changes we seek, such as the ARGUMENT IS DANCE metaphor suggested by Lakoff and Johnson.<sup>14</sup>

As we set about this process, there are two functions of metaphorical concepts we need to remain aware of. First, they're SYSTEMATIC. Once we begin to look for metaphorical concepts and become aware of them, we very quickly realize they interact with and reinforce each other. Because we live in a materialistic society, money, resources, finance, valuable commodities, and the scarcity of such things figure prominently in metaphors. One of our most common metaphorical concepts is TIME IS MONEY, as the following descriptions illustrate.

You're wasting my time.  
 This gadget will save you hours.  
 I don't have the time to give to that project.  
 She spends her time wisely.  
 Your negligence has cost me an hour.  
 I've invested a lot of time in our relationship.  
 You spend too much time bar-hopping.  
 Is that project worth your while?  
 We're running out of time.  
 We're living on borrowed time.

Because, in our society, TIME is treated as a VALUABLE COMMODITY, as a RESOURCE, we act as though it were something necessarily limited, to be doled out or allocated. Because wemyn, as a class, have so little money, however, we usually substitute ENERGY for TIME in our descriptions. We talk often, for example, about "investing our energies," "wasting our energies," "putting our energies into each other," as though our energy was a concrete object and our projects, including relationships with other

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14. For additional suggestions and analysis of other metaphorical concepts, see *The Mystery of Lesbians*, 2 Lesbian Ethics 29-67 (1985). Both the body and the endnotes of the essay contain discussions of metaphorical concepts and their ramifications.

wemyn, were containers into which we "put" our energies. Like the ARGUMENT IS WAR concept, the TIME/ENERGY IS MONEY metaphor also encourages us to think of time and energy as valuable objects to be "protected" from "theft" and other "predatory" activities. In this way, we treat our time and energy as though they are territory we need to defend against unwanted incursions. When we talk about "investing" time or energy in projects or other wemyn, we also set ourselves up to expect a "pay-off" or "profit." We expect to "get back what we put in," thereby setting ourselves up for disappointment and disillusionment. Feminism isn't a financial enterprise or a business deal, and neither are interactions with other wemyn. If we continue to think of our energy as money or as a valuable resource, we'll also keep behaving as though either or both were subject to scarcity.

Which brings me to the second aspect of metaphorical concepts we need to be aware of: they not only highlight specific features of an object or situation, they hide others as well. As we pick and choose among potential descriptions, we need to remember that metaphorical concepts are only *partial descriptions* of our perceptions. We cannot forget this, nor can we believe that our metaphorical descriptions are both true and complete. If we continue to rely on the metaphorical concepts learned from our culture, and refuse to question their usefulness and accuracy, our possible behaviors will be limited and constrained by how we understand an event or emotion.

For example, those who believed the selection of Geraldine Ferraro as Walter Mondale's vice-presidential candidate ("running mate") in 1984 was politically significant would have known better if they'd understood the insult implied by New York governor Mario Cuomo's description of her (borrowed from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*): "She will be the moon to Mondale's sun." The sun, Mondale, is the active, life giving source. The moon, Ferraro, is passive. The speaker implicitly communicates that Ferraro does not stand on her own. Rather, she, like the moon, reflects the sun's light. By attending to the hidden as well as the high-lighted implications of structural metaphors, and remaining aware of the systematicity of their connections, we can learn more than the speaker intends to communicate.

### Oriental Metaphors

Oriental metaphors, unlike structural metaphors, are derived from our physiognomy as human beings and the way our bodies are oriented spatially with respect to the perceived horizon.

We are bipedal, standing on our hind legs so that our bodies are vertical with respect to the earth. Our faces contain both of our eyes, positioned side by side, with our noses and our mouths on the same surface. While it's certainly possible that these traits serve some purpose of survival, they also determine how we perceive the world and ourselves in relation to it. **ORIENTATIONAL METAPHORS**, furthermore, make value judgments about spatial position with respect to our own: **UP IS GOOD** but **DOWN IS BAD**, **HAPPY IS UP** but **SAD IS DOWN**, and **IN FRONT IS GOOD** but **IN BACK IS BAD**.

**UP IS GOOD/DOWN IS BAD**

She rose quickly in their esteem.

Her influence fell.

I certainly look up to her.

They look down on weirdos.

**HAPPY IS UP/SAD IS DOWN**

I'm feeling up these days.

She's been down lately.

Her smile boosted my spirits.

She's really high today!

My spirits sank when I saw them.

**IN FRONT IS GOOD/IN BACK IS BAD**

I like everything up front.

Don't do anything behind my back.

They're really forward-looking.

Don't be so backward.

She's trying to get ahead.

Nebraska lags behind every other state.

Instead of relating one term to another, as the structural metaphors do, orientational metaphors place a negative or positive valuation on one spatial relationship rather than another. In our culture, whatever we conceive of as "in front of us" is positively valued, while those events/objects thought of as "behind us" are negatively valued. What we can see, what is known is "good," while what we cannot see, the unknown, is "bad." In this way, we're taught to fear the unknown, to avoid taking risks, and to rely on our perceptions, even when additional information contradicts them. Things we describe as being "up" or "high" are "good," while those that are "down" or "low" are bad. Because we perceive the world as being in front of us, we believe that "facing" something is good, and "not facing" something is bad. We talk about "being able to face someone or something," "facing the issues," "facing reality," "facing the music," or failing "to face an issue squarely." (Common usage of the verb *to confront* also relies on this orientational metaphor.) In a hostile situation, we say we "face off." If we were physically different, if our eyes were on stalks, or could swivel like

those of the praying mantis, or were placed on either side of our head, like those of dogs, or if both eyes were on one side, like those of the flounder, or multi-faceted, like those of flies, the metaphorical descriptions that "made sense" to us would be very different!

We need to begin to conceive of ourselves in relation to the world in very different ways because orientational metaphors underlie many of our sizeist, classist, and able-bodied assumptions. In our society, TALL IS GOOD but SHORT IS BAD, HAVING MONEY IS UP, NOT HAVING MONEY IS LOW, SEEING IS GOOD but NOT SEEING IS BAD. One branch of western philosophy is based on the metaphorical use of *perception*, and the equation of sightedness with intelligence and understanding permeates our conversation. We may have expunged the more obvious metaphors, e.g., "blind as a bat," "up a blind alley," "blind with rage," but I still hear a lot of expressions that incorporate able-bodied assumptions that exclude blind people: "Oh, I see," "She has a lot of vision (or foresight)," or "I can do it with my eyes closed" (as though the act was insignificant).

Furthermore, and more importantly for Feminists, the sexism in our society has institutionalized these orientational metaphors. As a consequence, a personality or physical trait regarded as "good" for a man is simultaneously judged as "bad" for a wimon. It's a "good" thing in our culture for men but a "bad" thing for wemyn to occupy space. Consequently, tall men are valued, but tall wemyn aren't; short wemyn are positively valued, but short men aren't. The same can be said about size. BIG IS GOOD only if the "big" person is male; if it's a wimon, SMALL IS GOOD. The widths of chairs made for each sex reflect this valuation, as do numerous instances of behavior: the way we sit (wemyn all drawn up, occupying as little space as possible, men all spread out and taking up as much room as possible), the way we talk (wemyn softly, men loudly—men can occupy an extremely large space with their voices alone), the way we walk (small, dainty steps for wemyn, large strides for men), etc. BEING A WIMON IS DOWN, BEING A MAN IS UP in our society.

My discussion here has barely begun to show how thoroughly our everyday language, which we take for granted and of which we're largely unconscious, reflects and perpetuates heteropatriarchal values. Hopefully I've said enough, however, to suggest the urgency of actively seeking different ways of talking to and about other wemyn. If we don't act to change how we talk about the world, we certainly will not feel compelled to change the way we perceive the world and ourselves as agents in the world.

What's more, we can communicate very well without these metaphorical conceptions. Most of them are "dead metaphors" or clichés, and perpetuating their use is banal and mediocre, at the least. If we refuse the challenge to our preconceptions and attitudes, we also deny the transformative potential of Feminism as an ideology, and make our use of the label mere cant.

How seriously are we committed to change? How can we find different ways of talking to each other? How willing are we to learn new ways of behaving in situations, especially scary ones? We can't continue to use masculinist concepts as though it's OK to talk in their language. If we do, we'll never discover our own meanings and the new conceptualization of the world those meanings would necessitate. We can no longer persist in taking the "easy way." Let's not fool ourselves: the language that comes most easily and quickly to mind is heteropatriarchal language—masculinist words, syntax, intonations, and concepts. Instead, we must start by taking the long route to saying what we want to say, no matter how ridiculous we may feel at first when we try saying something different from what we've learned. We have to be willing to "go around" the available words, the labels given to us by our culture. This process will require us to cooperate with each other as we learn how to talk and think differently. We may have to use phrases, clauses, even one or more sentences in order to talk about something our culture provides a single word for, and this effort can be tedious. But what cannot be forgotten or ignored is that the process of finding different ways to talk is a necessary prerequisite to reshaping what and how we think.

