
Cocta News

Metaphor which denotes binding, as used for labelling the types of interpersonal relations by Waclaw Makarczyk

There are some *metaphoric* terms among those used in sociology and other social sciences. Sometimes, metaphoric terms and phrases are used even for denoting the *key* concepts in a given field; hence the difficulties in interpretation of the phenomena under discussion. With reference to the tradition of Stanislaw Ossowski who was analyzing the role of the *spatial metaphor* ('social structure', 'stratification', and the like), I am dealing with another type of metaphor, namely the one which denotes *binding* (both the state of being bound, and the processes which lead to it), or in short: *binding metaphor*. Terms like 'social bond', 'integration', 'cohesion', etc., constitute a kind of family of terms which are based on the same metaphor.

The common language and the scientific language exert an influence on each other. The character of this influence is evaluated differently by various scientists. *Bacon Petrazycki* indicated that sometimes the common (colloquial) language can have a positive effect here. Namely, as far as some legal concepts are concerned, e.g., 'law', 'crime', the distorted or eclectic definitions are frequently formulated by professional jurists. For they tend to mould these concepts according to their practical needs. Instead, the common language, being not under the pressure of such a partiality, develops on the base of a wider exchange of social experience. Thus it can "produce" the *general concepts* in a more proper manner from the theoretical point of view.

But the influence of the scientific language perhaps not always leads to the amending of the common language, since the former itself is frequently oppressed by ambiguity or conceptual and terminological divergences. It is worthy to note the distinction between these two kinds of divergences, according to Ossowski. *Terminological differences* occur when we are employing the same concepts but assign to them different terms. As an example, we can take a comparison between two definitions: that of the 'cohesiveness' by Thibaut, and the one of the 'social bond' by Szczepański. Each of these two authors uses a different term, but at the same time in both cases the terms are based on an identical metaphor. Despite the different language, both of them try to define a concept having analogical sense and the same, crucial importance. For the subject is "something" which guarantees the duration of human collectivities.

A second and far more important category of differences is to be found in situations where the same term refers to different concepts. This case was called by Ossowski *conceptual differences*. He quotes as an example the definition of religion employed by a majority of anthropologists and/or psychologists of religion on the one hand, and on the other – Emile Durkheim. His concept

would embrace "atheistic" religion as well as others, while from the other viewpoint 'atheistic religion' is a *contradictio in adiecto*. At the same time, the Durkheimian definition would not apply to individual religious beliefs because in this case religion always requires a church, an assembly of the faithful.

At this moment, Durkheim sends the reader to "The Rules of the Sociological Method" where we can find the references to the relevant fragments of Bacon's "Novum Organum". It was the source of some ideas borrowed by Durkheim: a criticism toward the *notiones vulgares* being the "idola of the market", rejection of the hypertrophy of practical orientation, and so on. Durkheim, following Bacon, "has varied the lines which define things", or – in other words – he has given a *regulative definition* of religion.

Aristotle, when describing *friendship* in his "Nicomachean Ethics", has presented the examples of two contradictory causes of this phenomenon: one, based on likeness, and another, based on difference. Durkheim has quoted this passage from Aristotle's work; moreover, he proposed the definition of two kinds of solidarity, analogical to the above mentioned categories of friendship. The source of *mechanical solidarity* was likeness, while the source of *organic solidarity* was difference. The latter was based on the complementary cooperation, and the best instance here was the *division of labour*. However, Durkheim who tried to avoid the use of psychological categories, has omitted an essential part of Aristotle's considerations.

Ossowski in his early works, was using the term 'bond' (Polish: 'wiaz') rather loosely: "Biological bond and social linkage" (1938), "Social bond and heritage of blood" (1939), "The problem of regional and national bond in Opole Silesia" (1947). Later on, however, he began to analyze the conceptual and terminological problems aiming at greater strictness, and he even was "trailing" the metaphoric phrases used as scientific terms. In the reference to the terms denoting various forms of social differentiation, he has displayed in his "Class Structure in the Social Consciousness" (1957) the fact of using the space metaphor. However, he also paid great attention to the concept of the *social bond* and indicated the metaphoric character of this term. Ossowski has pointed out the importance of the relationship between *identification* (which is a psychological category) and *cooperation* (which is a behavioural category).

Studies on the conceptual apparatus, or – in other words – the conceptual and terminological analyses, constitute an area in which the knowledge of the phenomena being subject of a given science, meet (and interact) with the knowledge concerning words (or other symbols) denoting these phenomena. The first of the above mentioned kinds of knowledge should be regarded as the primary one, while words should perform the serving role. Sometimes, however, certain words "run ahead": they denote some spheres of reality not yet investigated enough. It occurs that the delimitation of these spheres is defected. It was the case of "flogiston", i.e., would-be fire substance which had to be contained in any combustible substance. "Flogiston" has disappeared from the scientific language after the discovery of

oxygen. Some words are more fortunate. The word 'element' has been accompanying the successive (changing) conceptions of the structure of matter and its indivisible parts. However, there is something which is more important than the fates of words. I mean the fates of our knowledge on the social reality. We should follow Cato who said: "Rem tene, verba sequentur", but we frequently keep rather the word than the thing. Why is it so in the case of the terms like 'bond', 'cohesion', 'integration', and others based on the binding metaphor? Certainly, each of them has its own "biography", but all of them are ambiguous, and are used in various senses. I think that one could distinguish four ways of using terms of this type: (a) the usage in a loose sense, not pretending to the strictness; (b) referring to the definitions formulated by other authors; (c) proposing (or imposing) of one's own definition; and (d) searching for the (proper) meaning of the term. Probably, each of these four categories contributes to the fact that a given term becomes a "fixture": not only loose usage, or repeating the other authors' definitions, or creating one's own definition but also searching of the meaning, since it maintains also the belief that the very existence of a given word implies the existence of the relevant phenomenon. Is there any analogy between this situation and the case of flogiston? With what aim in view was the theory of flogiston developed? Its authors believed that it was able to explain the processes of burning. Thus the aim was rational, but the explanation was searched in a wrong sphere. I put forward a hypothesis that the theories and conceptions in which the term 'social bond' is used (or other terms based on the binding metaphor), are developed in order to explain the survival (or functioning) of human groups and societies. Also here, the cognitive goal is rational, but it seems that some assumptions are wrong: before all, the assumption according to which the social conditions of the duration of human collectivities might be contained in a single concept. Since the operationalization of such a concept is obviously difficult (if possible at all) people tend to express it in metaphoric terms. Thus the metaphor of binding seems to be a kind of sociological "flogiston".

In the case of the terms based on binding metaphor, what may become visible from behind the mysterious formulas of "cohesion", "bond" or "integration" is the problem of the survival and functioning of societies. However, what (or who) can help us do "decipher" this problem when expressed in metaphoric terms? I think that we are able to find such help in those scientists who are also dealing with the same problem but do not use the concepts termed in metaphoric manner, or use them merely occasionally and not as key concepts.

One of the most important elements of statements by Adam Smith is that the main conceptual categories include *mutual assistance* and its *motives* i.e., behavioural and psychological phenomena respectively, instead of vague categories like "keeping together", etc. It is also noteworthy that while in "The Theory of Moral Sentiments" Smith presents such an alternative as *higher motives* (like beneficence) versus *justice* (which is related to legal or moral constraint), in his "Wealth of Nations" he gives a different alternative, namely: higher motives

(like friendship) versus *self-love* (which is connected with searching of one's own interest). Hence – the exchange of goods and services. And this system constitutes the main base of functioning of society. I think that we may combine both approaches and formulate a classification of motives of human activities. Activities performed: nonvoluntarily (e.g., as a result of legal constraint); voluntarily: motivated by interest-motivated disinterestedly.

In Petrazycki's considerations we can find a similar "motivational triad". According to this author, the gradual shift from the motives connected with constraint, through the stage of interest, up to the disinterested, altruistic motives may be regarded as symptom of the ethical progress of human societies.

A separate problem is connected with the fact that 'cohesion', 'integration', and some similar terms have been used as names of certain *sociometric indices*.

Sometimes, the terms and phrases based on the binding metaphor may be used as a result of a tendency to avoid such words as 'love' or 'friendship' to which a sentimental or pathetic character is ascribed. It is also probable that the use of metaphoric expressions is convenient when we do not want to speak about the motives of human activities. The reasons may be political, although not always: science has also its own biases, myths and idols. It seems that the effort toward the improvement of the conceptual apparatus of sociology, could contribute – at least indirectly – also to the explanation and elimination of the existing political myths.

This article comes out of a larger study by Dr. Makarczyk. Please contact him for further discussion as well as for his references: Dr. Waclaw Makarczyk, Polska Akademia Nauk, Instytut Filozofii i Socjologii, Warszawa, Patac Staszica, Poland.

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2nd International Expert Systems Conference & Exhibitions

A provisional program for this conference from 30 Sept.-2 Oct.1986 at Bloomsbury Crest Hotel, Coram Street, London WC1 was distributed recently. 63 papers are to be presented in 21 sessions after an introductory session on "The Experts' View of Expert Systems" at which under the chairmanship of Diane BERRY, University of Oxford, three experts will give their views of the knowledge engineering process. For more information write to Learned Information Ltd., Besselsleigh Road, Abingdon, Oxford OX13 6LG, England.