

Linguistics / Psychology

Washing the Brain – Metaphor and Hidden Ideology

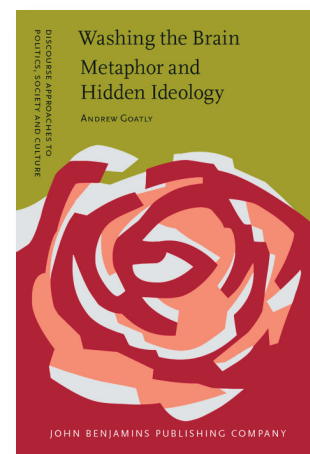
Andrew Goatly

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Contemporary metaphor theory has recently begun to address the relation between metaphor, culture and ideology. In this wide-ranging book, Andrew Goatly, using lexical data from his database *Metalude*, investigates how conceptual metaphor themes construct our thinking and social behaviour in fields as diverse as architecture, engineering, education, genetics, ecology, economics, politics, industrial time-management, medicine, immigration, race, and sex. He argues that metaphor themes are created not only through the universal body but also through cultural experience, so that an apparently universal metaphor such as event-structure as realized in English grammar is in fact culturally relative, compared with e.g. the construal of ‘cause and effect’ in the Algonquin language Blackfoot. Moreover, event-structure as a model is both scientifically reactionary and, as the basis for technological mega-projects, has proved environmentally harmful. Furthermore, the ideologies of early capitalism created or exploited a selection of metaphor themes historically traceable through Hobbes, Hume, Smith, Malthus and Darwin. These metaphorical concepts support neo-Darwinian and neo-conservative ideologies apparent at the beginning of the 21st century, ideologies underpinning our social and environmental crises. The conclusion therefore recommends skepticism of metaphor’s reductionist tendencies.

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“In his brilliant book Andrew Goatly convincingly argues that part of the blame for the way we have messed up our world politically, ecologically, economically, biologically, is on the deep-seated and largely unnoticeable metaphors that shape our thinking. As a first step to remedy the situation, we need to uncover these ideologically-loaded metaphors and look for alternative ones. The book is a clear, well-informed, and sometimes even moving appeal for understanding the role of metaphors in the human predicament.”

Professor Zoltan Kövecses,
Eötvös Loránd University

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