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Jessie Edmond Mrs. Jennings ENG100 1/10/13 THE SHARPEST TOOL IN THE SHED: A RESPONSE TO JOHNSON and LAKOFF'S METAPHORS WE LIVE BY (1980) Argument is war! Or at least this is what Johnson and Lakoff would have you to believe after reading their 1980 publication *Metaphors We Live By*. In fact, one should be prepared for battle any time you have a verbal argument with your employer, professor, or family member. This is because, according to Johnson and Lakoff, "The language of argument is not poetic, fanciful, or rhetorical; it is literal. We talk about arguments that way because we conceive of them that way--and we act according to the way we conceive of things"(Johnson and Lakoff, 3). While their publication was supported with very influential and suggestive rhetoric to support their thesis, it was in fact their thesis that I disagree with. Even though metaphors are pervasive in language, the human consciousness is designed to prevent these same pervasions from affecting us both mentally and physically. It is not normal, nor is it safe, for metaphors to affect us in our everyday thoughts or actions. In order to better understand this concept, let us first take a consensus of the many definitions of what a metaphor is, so that we can agree to what a metaphor is not. Richard Nordquist from about.com says that it is "A figure of speech in which an implied comparison is made between two unlike things that actually have something in common." Dictionary.com defines a metaphor as "A figure of speech which a term or phrase is applied to something to which it is not literally applicable in order to suggest a resemblance." Finally, merriam-webster.com defines it as "a figure of speech in which a word or phrase literally denoting one kind of object or idea is used in place of another to suggest a likeness or analogy between them." At this point, it would be fair to say that a metaphor can be semantically

defined as a figure of speech. It would also be fair to say that a metaphor IS NOT that which it is being compared to. " A" (being the original idea) cannot and will not ever be equal to " B" (the figure of speech which is being used in similarity to " A"). Argument can NEVER be war. Time can NEVER be money. Therefore, a metaphor IS NOT reality itself. According to grammarist. com, " To perceive is to become aware of something directly through the senses. To conceive is to form something in the mind or to develop an understanding. " Even if we do in fact " act according to the way we conceive of things"(Johnson and Lakoff, 3), as the authors suggest, we can never act on a metaphor because we cannot naturally perceive a metaphor as reality. Therefore the metaphor can never manifest or be conceived as reality. By using methods of deduction and logic, we should be able to agree at this point that a metaphor is not reality itself. Metaphors, in fact, are used to represent something else; much like the menus at a restaurant. The pictures contained in these menus are merely just visual representations of the food that the restaurants serves. Depending on the quality of the pictures, they allow viewers to perceive what the food will look like, smell like, and maybe even taste like. However, the pictures contained in the menus can never be the food itself. You would never eat the menu. Most people would consider that action to be crazy. In fact, most people believe that it is crazy to maintain or act on ideas or beliefs that have been contradicted by what has generally been accepted as reality. Professionals have even coined the term, " delusion", for cases such as these. The definition of what reality means is irrelevant. To act on things that one knows for a fact is not reality, is delusional. According the the American Psychiatric Association, " The essential feature of Delusional Disorder is the presence of one or more

nonbizarre delusions that persist for at least 1 month" (DSM IV, 323). While the metaphor of "time is money" is not bizarre to think, to place an actual value on time, as if it were a tangible item that could be wasted or stolen, is. Time is man made and is merely an system of organization. However, there are many that place value on time causing the mind and body to be effected negatively. Depression is associated with focusing on the past, while anxiety has been associated with focusing on the future. Should one transition from the idea that "there's not enough time", to an idea such as "I have all the time in the world," one's physiology would absolutely change in a positive manner. Therefore, for one to conceive a metaphor as reality to the point that it affects either their physical or mental behaviours, one would literally be considered mentally ill by our cultures standards. In an article by Christof Koch, Koch says, "The fact that there should be a match between perception and reality is not surprising, because evolution ruthlessly eliminates the unfit. If you routinely misperceive or even hallucinate and act on those misapprehensions, you won't survive long in a world filled with dangers whose avoidance requires accurate distance and speed assessments and rapid reactions" (1). By drawing the lines between reality and grammatical fancies, as well as focusing on relevant supporting facts from professional agencies, we can say that Mr. Koch is absolutely correct. And while there is an over abundance of metaphors that exists in the world today, it is absolutely abnormal and unsafe for metaphors to affect us in our everyday thoughts or actions. That's why those who don't will always be the sharpest tools in the shed. Works Cited American Psychiatric Association: Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition, Text Revision. Washington, DC, American Psychiatric Association, 2000. Print. Johnson, <https://assignbuster.com/jessie-edmond/>

Mark, and George Lakoff. *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980. Print. Koch, Christof. "Looks Can Deceive: Why Perception and Reality Don't Always Match Up." *The Scientific American Mind*, July 2010, 70-71. Print