

03.

Metaphorising
Politics

or

How to Hide
the Obvious

In order to properly reassess the assumption that metaphors are not only an all-pervasive but also an *indispensable* means of our comprehension system, i.e. of our conceptual apparatus and means of communication, as well as to prove whether metaphors have that capacity, it is necessary to question both the material evidence of ubiquity of metaphors and the truth of the claim of their indispensability. To be true, the assumption must hold beyond the realm of contemporary discourse theories for which “anything goes”, in all those fields in which everyday language is included. This entails politics itself and not only discourses about politics. In the following piece, which examines pursues more theoretical issues about metaphors rather than the descriptive goal to empirically document the massive presence of metaphoric language in politics, I am going to analyse some examples of metaphoric speech in the area of formal and informal politics.¹ In doing so, it will be necessary to engage with—without yet entering into all the necessary theoretical elaborations—linguistic, epistemological, and semiotic theories of metaphor, as well as some further explanations of language procedures or communicative behaviour such as speech act theory.

Beginning with these presuppositions, the question is not to which degree metaphors are present in practical politics but rather what effects, if any, metaphors can release as *socially binding power* and, hence, whether *a politics by metaphors* is possible? In order to approach these issues, I will consider some examples of ordinary metaphoric speech, which, in the 1995 Austrian general election campaign, attained an extraordinary political value by being widely cited, commented on, and related to in the public discourse. At that time and afterwards, this political campaign was considered a clear confirmation that the revival of the radical right-wing ideology within formal political parties—first established by the Italian ‘Lega Nord’ in 1989 and early 1990s—has far advanced in democratic Western Europe. That this process has not only continued into the new millennium but seems to be reaching new peaks these very days, is evident both from recent political processes and discourses about politics. Accordingly, research interest in metaphorical speech in politics has increased immensely.²

1 See also G. Lakoff (1995) as paradigm of the cognitive linguistic approach to metaphors in politics. For systematic analyses of metaphors see ch. 8–9.

2 See Musolff (2006) for an approach offering critical analysis of the

‘Haidering’ the Order

If one pays attention to the rhetoric of the Austrian 1995 general elections, one can observe that the use of “strong” rhetorical means increased as one moved from the (un)stable centre, comprised of the governing coalition of the Social Democratic Party of Austria (SPÖ) and the Austrian People’s Party (VPÖ), towards the non-governing parties, such as the national-conservative Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ: *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs*), which was at the time renamed to ‘Die Freiheitlichen’ (The Liberal Ones) and demanded “radical” political changes in the country. The rhetoricity scale changed profoundly from nearly zero with SPÖ to a very high grade with FPÖ. Political messages were mainly, or exclusively, verbal; there was only one example of other forms, such as the one by the centrist Liberal Forum (*Liberales Forum*) where posters and billboards combined verbal elements with graphical ones. Based on that it can be concluded that all parties, at that time, appealed to a quite classical image of citizens supposed to receive messages only in the direct way of “being told” or given information by professional party politicians supposed to be the carriers of political knowledge.

One intriguing aspect of the campaign is that it was the most conservative of all parties represented on the Austrian political scene that used a relatively innovative and sophisticated jargon and rhetoricity in sending political messages. The complexity of this rhetoric is not due to an ultramodern or very sophisticated design but because of the use of a variety of indirect speech forms. One of them calls for particular attention, namely the metaphoric use of the German verb ‘ausmisten’ by the president of the conservative party FPÖ, Jörg Haider. At the first 1995 election meeting in Klagenfurt, he said the following:

“Wenn Haider kommt, dann wird Ordnung gemacht, dann

bilingual corpus of British and German public debates about the ‘European Union’. For more recent linguistic discussions of metaphorical procedures in “nation building” discourse see Šarić and Stanojević ed. (2019). For theoretical discussions on discrepancies between the cognitive-conceptual approach to metaphors in politics and the so-called critical discourse analysis see Hart (2008) who explores metaphors for nation and immigration in the British National Party’s 2005 general election manifesto. See also the more theoretical paper by Musolf (2012) who argues for a more empirical, discursive-pragmatic, as well as sociolinguistic, variation of the cognitive approach.

herrscht Gerechtigkeit in diesem Lande, dann *wird ausgemistet* in allen Bereichen!”³

Although the whole sentence (henceforth referred to as S₁) contains many details worth considering because of their *content* (order, justice, critique of the political party establishment), I will focus on some *formal* details relevant for the analysis that follows. These include the relation of the direct and indirect speech, personal and impersonal grammatical forms, the order of appearance of when-then clauses and the metaphorical climactic point of the statement. It is contained in the expression “(es) wird ausgemistet” (henceforth referred to as mS₁) that has proven to be very fertile; it has been cited more often, answered and extended more than other parts of the sentence expressed in plain language.⁴

The following question may be raised: is this not just a funny language game not worth of further theoretical efforts? Or, is there a *specific* political significance to be ascribed to these indirect and, widely speaking, metaphoric expressions so that the initial metaphor mS₁ cannot easily be replaced by any literal equivalent without loss, not of fun, but of significance? According to the general thesis about metaphors, a certain specific meaning must have been ‘transported’ by, or is essentially entailed in, the metaphor. This is indicated by its extreme discursive productivity and widespread acceptance in a short period of time. But in order to identify and establish this peculiar significance of the expression mS₁, one has, firstly, to ensure that the metaphor within it is necessary and/or irreplaceable and, secondly, to discuss in which way it is, or might be, constitutive for the linguistic and social meaning of the expression developed.

The phrase mS₁ has, peculiarly, caused much excitement in the Austrian public sphere. It has been submitted to different forms of use (citation, reformulation, response) although, at first glance, there is nothing very special or scandalous about it. It is also not a sample of vulgar speech in high politics, nor is the speaker of

- 3 An *approximate* English translation, emulating the indirect, passive and impersonal speech, would be: ‘When Haider comes, then order gets established, then justice gets to rule in this country, then the dung gets cleaned out in all areas.’
- 4 Other complementary metaphoric expressions are: “In Österreich wird nur noch mit zugehaltener Nase gewählt”, “Das ist ein Sumpf”, “Wir misten selbst aus!”

the sentence considered an otherwise timid person; rather, one is used to hearing such expressions from him. Furthermore, it is obvious from this that the mS1 has been widely understood, which means that it can easily be replaced by other more or less literal equivalents. All of this is enough to consider it a *trivial metaphor*. Nonetheless, the reception of this expression suggests the opposite, namely, that it bears a special meaning which could not easily be replaced by another expression without losses. In terms of speech act theory, it seems to be endowed with a certain illocutionary force which can be analysed only in a close relation to the expression which has been used and none other.

In terms of linguistic analysis one may explain mS1 in the following way: the expression ‘ausmisten’, as a literal expression, means “to clean out the stable”, and it is an item of everyday vocabulary of farmers. But when used in the everyday language of the public sphere, which is not predominantly (or not at all) a world of farmers or peasants, where the stable is not a regular element of the world available for association, the expression becomes more harsh. Nevertheless, it seems motivated by other possibilities provided by the average language style. The Austrian-German noun ‘Mist’ is not only a part of peasant vocabulary, it is also used for “rubbish” in general. Hence, it is the carrier of another, actually used, metaphoric expression, ‘Mist bauen’, or the opposite ‘Mist abbauen’, to indicate wrong actions and things done wrongly (or, respectively, removing or “repairing” those). Accordingly, it is possible to establish a parallel between the expression ‘Mist abbauen’ and the expression ‘ausmisten’ in mS1. But ‘ausmisten’ and ‘Mist abbauen’, though nearly the same in meaning, clearly do not have the same value and do not designate the same thing. Every competent speaker of German (Austrian) feels that *ausmisten* aims at “much more”, although the speaker of mS1 (J. Haider) very often utilizes the expression ‘Mist bauen’. But it is certain that, in the situation indicated above, he certainly did not use the expression ‘Mist abbauen’ *instead* of ‘ausmisten’.

There is an additional linguistic difficulty related to this issue. Although it is likely that a German speaker would utilize the expression mS1 in order to say “etwas in Ordnung bringen”, it usually connotes an object in the world that encloses a certain space, such as a house, but also abstract items like interpersonal relations, feelings, thoughts etc.; they are imagined as being

“within” a space, soul, head. Still, the verb *ausmisten* does not lose its harsh character, somewhat inappropriate for “normal” use. For if such a harsh sense, “radical disorder”, were not intended, the speaker would rather have said “Mist abbauen” than “ausmisten” as a contrast to “Mist bauen”, or, even more conveniently, he would have used ‘aufräumen’ (clean up). On the other hand, it is not possible to replace *ausmisten* with the expression “Mist bauen/abbauen” in the natural environment. One cannot say in German “Kühe bauen Mist (ab)” without provoking laughter; if one was to say this, he would be considered a funny person or an incompetent speaker (foreigner). Consequently, a literal expression containing the noun *Mist*, if used with the meaning of household waste or rubbish, and not stable dung, in Austrian German has to take the form of “Mist austragen”. (In German German it is “Müll austragen”.) Nevertheless, in both national versions of everyday language use, the metaphoric use of ‘ausmisten’ for *rebuilding order* or *radical cleaning* are possible. Thus *ausmisten* remains, in its literal meaning, closely related only to the language of farmers.

Therefore, the linguistic (lexical) explanation indicates that the expression ‘ausmisten’ has a very restricted semantic field, i.e. that it cannot be replaced, even in its literal meaning, by many other expressions. As a matter of fact, it seems replaceable only by a description (paraphrase) of what is really being done when someone says in German “ausgemistet wird”: namely, “es wird Mist ausgetragen (aus dem Stall)” oder “der Stall wird gereinigt vom Mist”. But this also shows that the mS1 expression is neither comparable nor, even less, reducible to any other normal expression indicating the action of bringing things in order or reestablishing order by putting unwanted things away or putting them in their proper place.

Instead, one is forced to keep in mind that the expression stands for a very specific action which can hardly be said of other singular actions of that type (cleaning the house, arranging a room etc.) because it has a unique derogatory value. ‘Ausmisten’ means moving dung from the stalls in a stable and not re-establishing any kind of *new* order in the stable. For dung belongs to the natural order of stables and stalls, it is their indispensable element and, insofar as it is natural, it is symbolically irreplaceable. More precisely, *ausmisten* is a strongly stable-bound action and a context-bound way of speaking. Hence, it becomes necessary that, whenever

one uses the verb *ausmisten* outside the strongly presupposed context of the *stable*, one can use it only as a metaphor.

It is likely that the lexical status of the expression mS1 signalizes that we are *not confronted by an intentionally built metaphor* based in a harsh sense of humor, but rather with a *literally intended* expression. The speaker of the sentence, while using the cited expression, speaks as if he assumed that he was in the natural environment of *ausmisten*. Therefore, the metaphorical character of the expression seems to consist only in the fact that it was uttered in another context than the natural one (a political meeting instead of a stable). However, a political meeting is not a stable, the public sphere is not a farm, and consequently, the expression mS1 cannot be taken for a literal one. Therefore, a condition must be provided for a metaphoric expression to function as a literal one albeit remaining metaphoric. The condition is that it gets embedded in another metaphorical framework which, in linguistic practice, need not be visible.

This means: in order to analyze a metaphoric expression like mS1, we have to take it as an expression which is backed up by a larger metaphorical framework. This is indicated by the lexical instruction about *ausmisten* which necessarily implies that there must be a stable out there. For ‘ausmisten’ in German exclusively means “removing dung from a stable” (or, more moderately, rubbish from a house), and not from any other house-like or room-like space. It is therefore required by language use that one cannot, either in German-German or in Austrian-German, say “ausmisten” without implying that the connoted house-like space is or has become a stable-like space. Thus, the background metaphor we have been searching for in order to explain the literality of the metaphor mS1 is the assumption that something *is* (or has become) *a dirty stable* like a pigsty. This background assumption is the invisible organizer of the metaphoric order of speech through visible items of sentences.

Nevertheless, one may object to the notion that the expression mS1, in order to be understood, needs no further explanation. Indeed, literality and comprehensibility of speech items do not depend on each other. For it is obvious that the metaphoric expression mS1 is very much understandable to native speakers or to every competent speaker of German. The conceptualist theory of metaphor by Lakoff and Johnson reminds us of exactly

this aspect of metaphoric speech. Metaphors we use in normal or everyday language—be it consciously or unconsciously—rely on deeper lying metaphoric conceptual structures. They build the unconscious level of our superficial language use. Thus a metaphor like “es wird ausgemistet” (*it is being cleaned out*), which can be paraphrased as “Mist austragen” (*to bring rubbish out*), is closely connected to our conception that abstract items, such as relations and ideas, are like physical items in the world, and that we do with abstract objects the same as we do with physical ones. If we try to reconstruct a conceptualist explanation of the metaphoric expression mS1 then it looks like the following:

If the speaker uses a metaphoric expression like mS1 in political discourse, then he implies that his job as a politician within a society or within a state is like a job in a peasant domain; both put things in order by removing bad ones. This comparison is based on several background assumptions such as: society is like a family, state is like a house, order in society/state is like order in the family/house; order reflects a good state/good house, disorder reflects a bad state/bad house. Eventually, we associate the moral relationship between good and bad with expressions suggesting physical relations, such as high and low or up and down: good state/good house is up, bad state/bad house is down, which fit with the physical positions of objects in the world; a good house is positioned higher than a bad house: a bad house is compared to a dirty stable, which is positioned morally and physically lower. Thus, we see that the metaphor mS1 can be explained as an indirect metaphor, based upon some intermediary metaphoric assumptions about political activity as an activity within a “space”: state as a “house”, high vs. low, up vs. down etc., combined with moral assumptions about order, which is also associated to the idea of space-order. According to the conceptualist theory of metaphor, these background metaphoric assumptions organize the surface-structure of our speech without a need for referring: i.e. in order to understand the metaphoric speech we do not need to ask what the real object to which the expression refers is; we do not need to ask what the real meaning is. Metaphors are used because they are commonly shared by speakers of a language and, hence, they are understandable.

This kind of explanation fits with the evidence I have pointed to in the beginning. Namely, the problem about an expression like mS1 is not whether it is understood or not but, rather, why it was

used instead of a more convenient “Mist abbauen”. This expression would have been, if it had been used, the most closed of all possible metaphoric expressions, because it expresses the idea of *making order* and it contains an element which is etymologically the same (the noun ‘Mist’ from which the verb ‘ausmisten’ morphologically stems). As I have suggested above, the expressions ‘ausmisten’ and ‘Mist abbauen’ are not interchangeable, and thus, even if we accept the conceptualist explanatory model, allowing for a deeper-lying identification of political space (society and state) with physical forms of space (like house, stable, high, low, up, down), we are not provided with an explanation of the choice of metaphor.

As a result, the appeal to deep levels of metaphoricity brings about very little understanding of the specific character of a single metaphor but, instead, helps identify the structures of its comprehensibility operating in the background. What provides its full—or nearly full—understandability is the context of the expression mS₁, provided by the whole clause cited above. In order to test it, we have to intervene into the syntactic structure of the whole sentence. It is built upon three parallel (or paratactically related) when-then clauses which seem to explain each other. Thus we can turn back to the initial sentence S₁:

“Wenn Haider kommt, dann wird Ordnung gemacht, dann herrscht Gerechtigkeit in diesem Lande, dann *wird ausgemistet* in allen Bereichen!”

It is obvious that the syntactic structure of S₁ allows for the omission of the last expression (the metaphoric mS₁ “es wird ausgemistet”) without risking the destruction of its general structure or seriously damaging the content. The sentence would then be the following:

“Wenn Haider kommt, dann *wird Ordnung gemacht* in diesem Lande (...)!”

This small intervention in the clause (omitting the metaphoric part) seems to better suggest what the speaker intended to say (*establishing of order*) than the metaphoric expression mS₁. The rest of the sentence S₁, maintaining the structural (syntactical) identity of the sentence through two paratactically arranged and literally expressed clauses—“dann wird Ordnung gemacht” and “dann herrscht Gerechtigkeit”—indicates that these two

items have a syntactically equal status and grammatical character (henceforth referred to jointly as litS₁). They are based on the indicative-passive mood (‘wird’ plus past participle), conveying the sense of announcement, promise or even imperative. Although such utterances—as we know from speech act theories—depend only on the speaker as their only warrant, one of the issues that requires explanation is the fact that the speaker of this sentence is using only indirect, impersonal and passive forms of speech that hide him as the subject of the speech act. Nevertheless, at this point, we can reduce the focus of the sentence S₁. Both clauses, although containing forms of literal (non-metaphorical) speech on their surface, turn out to be figurative due to their future-directed, allusive and performative character that anticipates the climax arriving with the metaphorical figure of speech in mS₁. As a result, what all this allows is to claim that mS₁ (“es wird ausgemistet”) accomplishes, by a metaphorical shift, what litS₁ (“Ordnung wird gemacht”) indicates in a non-metaphorical, but emphatically figurative way achieved by shifts of grammatical moods.

Hence, the expression litS₁ seems to relate to mS₁ either as its *translation* or its *equivalent*. If so, one could say that the speaker of the sentence, in the very same speech act, translates, substitutes or comments on one part of his own speech using another part. In this sense, a kind of metalinguistic activity is performed which, according to various theories of language, is a normal part of our linguistic behaviour beginning in early childhood.⁵ Consequently, one can say either that the speaker strengthens his weak figurative speech in litS₁ by extending it to a strong metaphor. Or, conversely, that he interprets the meaning of his metaphor mS₁ by appealing to litS₁ as a more understandable and more convenient expression than mS₁. If this is the case, the whole story about the metaphor “wird ausgemistet” could be considered finished at this very point. In order to examine this assumption of a symmetrical mutual relation between the clauses, I shall treat the expression litS₁ “es wird Ordnung gemacht” (including “es herrscht Gerechtigkeit”) as purporting to be semantically equivalent to mS₁, in the hope that one can, in this way, more easily discern the input of the metaphorical twist.

A further important formal argument seems to confirm that the two expressions relate to each other as metaphoric and

⁵ See Winner, Rosentiel and Gardner (1976); Winner (1988).

literal equivalents. This is indicated by the anaphoric structure of reference among the three then-clauses making up the entire S₁, a structure in which one item of speech is considered as leading to, or indicating, another, which is either equally or less figurative. Thus, one can say that the order of appearance of syntactical units in the whole S₁ is built upon a ‘guideline’ made of, firstly, a threefold repetition of the conjunction ‘dann’ (*then*), secondly, a gradation of strength in content from the more abstract to the less abstract and more concrete (“Ordnung machen”—“Gerechtigkeit herrschen lassen”—“ausmisten”), and, thirdly, a common reference to the adverbial expression “in diesem Lande”; characteristically, the latter is positioned in the middle of the sentence S₁ (in the second when-then clause) so that the first and the third clause relate to this central point without repeating it.

However, the syntactical analysis of the whole sentence makes sense only because we have already accepted the idea that one expression is more figurative than the other, ranging from the allusive to the metaphoric. The fact that litS₁ is less figurative than mS₁, or not meant as metaphoric by native speakers, does not provide, however, a sufficient reason for considering it figuratively neutral, objective or literal meaning of mS₁. The difference between the two expressions is not the difference between a metaphoric and a literal expression but rather between plainly metaphoric and less metaphoric, more abstract and more convenient forms of conveying allusions. Hence, the two seemingly literal expressions “(es) wird Ordnung gemacht” and “(es) herrscht Gerechtigkeit” can be considered pre-metaphoric, culminating in a metaphoric climax which provides them with a surplus-value that they lack.

As a result, the whole sentence S₁ cannot be understood merely as piece of meta-speech made up by mutually interpreting or translating items, in which a metaphor is resolved by the speaker giving it a proper literal meaning. Rather, it is an example of speech that itself, by the very use of figurative (metaphoric) items, imposes conditions for its literal meaning (*viz.* literal intention). The main condition for this is that there be a tacit, non-expressed presupposition that the “space” intended—and expressed in the phrase “in diesem Lande”—is meant to be a dirty stall. This presupposition is a necessary implication of the verb *ausmisten* and only this expression makes it necessary.

If seen against this background, the whole sentence S_1 , whose hypotactical structure is based on an underlying paratactical order of when-then clauses (wenn-dann-dann-dann), can be completed and explained by two additional items. In order for the expression mS_1 to be a complete sentence it requires a space indication just in the same way the expression in the clause $litS_1$ is completed by the space indication in plain speech “in diesem Lande”. The lacking space indication of mS_1 , if reconstructed through a syntactical analogy to the rest of the sentence, necessarily has to be the expression “in diesem Stall” so that mS_1 can be extended without saying “es wird ausgemistet in diesem Lande”. The necessity of this “completion” is provided, on the one hand, by semantic entailment (in the standard German “ausmisten” is performed in stables, not in homes) and, on the other, by the fact that just as it is analytically true of snow to be white, it is analytically true of *ausmisten* that it entails a definite direction of moving in space (misten *aus*, not ein, auf, durch etc.). Thus we necessarily have to infer that *ausmisten* is *necessarily* performed in stable-like spaces.

On this ground, the two parallel expressions, the metaphoric mS_1 and the allusive $litS_1$, become two parallel clauses in which—due to the relationship Stable-Land—the metaphoric items become literal:

($metS_1 \rightarrow lit$) ‘Wenn Haider kommt, dann wird ausgemistet in diesem Stall/Lande’ [*When Haider comes, then this stable/country gets cleaned out.*]

And the literal ones become metaphoric:

($litS_1 \rightarrow met$) ‘Wenn Haider kommt, dann wird Ordnung gemacht in diesem Lande/Stall’ [*When Haider comes, then order gets established in this country/stable.*]

These cross-references between clauses are possible because, firstly, they have a main clause in common (“Wenn Haider kommt”), and secondly, they equally indicate another common but lacking linguistic item: the space-indications “in diesem Stall” and “in diesem Lande” refer clearly to nothing other than the one thing which is not mentioned explicitly. This is the proper name of the country, i.e. Austria. However, both “stable” and “Austria” have been omitted in the sentence. From this, we have enough reasons—provided by the syntactical structure of the sentence

and by background implications of the items used—to make two closely related, *hypothetical inferences* based on the literal use of language:

- (Inference1) ‘The house-like space, i.e. the stable that has to be cleaned out is Austria.’
- (Inference2) ‘The house-like space, i.e. the country, in which order has to be established, is Austria.’

This helps to make comprehensible the fact that the common invisible referent of both metaphorical expressions is identified as Austria but it is not represented within the sentence S₁. It is, rather, a referent to which the metaphoric expressions relate only by means of internal shifts of literal and figurative speech modes and of anaphorical relations. It has been omitted for the same reason for which the expression “in diesem Stall” is not used: it seems to be the speaker’s avoidance of connecting Austria to a stable, to compare them, and to translate or interpret them using one another. As a result, one may assume that the real, grounding metaphor of the speaker, unuttered but strongly implied, is the following one: ‘Austria is a stable. Being a kind of trigger-assumption, instead of being uttered in the first place, it is *not just substituted* by emphatically figurative statements of litS₁ but, rather, *restituted* by the next possible and the most closed metaphor “es wird ausgemistet”. Just as the unsaid constative in ‘Austria is a stable’ has been restituted by a future-oriented performative of promise.

On this background, one has to consider the consequence that the speaker’s appeal to a non-explicit assumption, such as ‘This country, i.e. Austria, is a dirty stable, may not have the status of a mere additional metaphor, albeit one positioned more deeply. It seems to have the status of an *antecedent* explanatory statement. More precisely, the relation between the two inferences, if seen in the light of the basic metaphor-assumption ‘Austria is a dirty stable’, seems not to be the assumed one, namely, that the figurative but more convenient expression litS₁ (“es wird Ordnung gemacht”) explains, translates or interprets mS₁ (“es wird ausgemistet”)—but quite the opposite. The basic metaphor-assumption allows the interpretation of mS₁ as a climax and the ultimate explication of litS₁. The expression “es wird ausgemistet” tells (or better: indicates) what kind of “order making” and

“justice” is intended. Namely that of *ausmisten*, i.e. the cleaning out of something that is valued as dung.

Metaphor’s Self-Grounding

According to the conceptualist theory of metaphor, as outlined at the outset, it is possible to explain a particular case of metaphoric language use by appealing to deeper positioned metaphoric concepts which serve to explain the logic and conceptual motivation of the sample used. However, this conception does not examine, let alone explain, why a metaphor, be it a surface or a deep assumption metaphor, would be omitted in a certain context. This is why it is worth mentioning that the background assumption ‘Austria is a stable’ cannot be taken, with regard to the metaphoric expression mS1 (“es wird ausgemistet”), as a more general or conceptual metaphor. Namely, *Austria* and *stable* are not terms for abstract items such as building and space, but a singular and a general term. Therefore, the hypothetical metaphor (or metaphor-like) expression ‘Austria is a stable’ is not more general and more “conceptual” than the expression ‘ausmisten’ in mS1. Consequently, the relationship between these two metaphors should not be described in terms of logic of general and singular terms (as is usually assumed of Aristotle’s explanation of metaphoric transference) but *in terms of concurrent, competing signifiers* indicating and referring to one another. In terms of semiotic theory of language, we are dealing with a logic of signifiers, and we move on the so-called syntagmatic axis of speech (in opposition to the paradigmatic one), which ensures that items of speech do not replace one another but are indicated, associated and linked together (Jakobson 1971). This means that, while occupying a place in the flow of speech (or of the text), items indicate that this could be a place of another item which fits semantically and rhetorically with the configuration of the place. In taking a place, if speech-items replace one another, they do it *for* one another. This is, according to the semiotic theory of meaning, the reason why metaphors and metonymies—the figures of replacement—stand for paradigmatic modes of language.

The linguistic analysis of metaphoric expressions contained in S1 has led to the result that the content of linguistic items should not be described in terms of literal meta-language, such as “The metaphoric expression ‘es wird ausgemistet’ is valid because this country is a house-like space in which disorder has reached the

lowest level of tolerance”. This is because the insight-providing assumption is given by *another metaphoric* (or *metaphor-like*) expression with a hypothetical status: *Austria is a stable*. However, its most important feature is that it has *not itself been uttered* in that context. Therefore, as I am suggesting, the purpose of this metaphor is not to make one more statement *about* Austria that has not yet been said, but rather to bring forth a point at which the apparently constative expressions in the passive voice of litS1 reveal their performative character and call for *doing* something about Austria: namely, *ausmisten* viz. *cleaning out dung*.

Thus, although we are forced to move in a circle and to inevitably turn back to the initial cleaning-out-dung metaphor in the sentence S1, the whole trajectory seems to not have been in vain. But before I try to elaborate its possible critical cognitive gain, one brief digression may be allowed concerning the very assumption of a ground-metaphor, the metaphoric implication of a metaphoric expression.

Admittedly, one may disagree in ascertaining whether the exact background implication of “es wird ausgemistet”, in this specific use, is contained in the hypothetically assumed source-sentence ‘Austria is a stable’ or rather in another possible assumption, such as ‘Somebody has made Austria into a stable.’⁶ However, as it should be clear from the analysis thus far, I do not claim that the sentence ‘Austria is a stable’ is the only possible background assumption of the metaphoric expression mS1. It only seems to be the *next analytically possible* pre-assumption. When making this claim, it is important to notice that the sentence ‘Somebody has made Austria into a stable’ is also a hypothetical construction and not a clearly metaphoric one, although it does contain the same metaphoric focus (stable). This is due to the fact that, firstly, the German verb ‘ausmisten’ implies a space indication to be performed (‘aus’ as in contrast to ‘ein’, ‘auf’, ‘ab’); secondly, *ausmisten* is a stable-bound activity; and thirdly—and most importantly—in this very example of speech, *the emphasis is on the impersonality of performance*, indicated by the use of different pronouns of the third person and the passive voice (“(es) wird ausgemistet”). As a matter of fact, the speaker of S1 does not

6 I thankfully owe this suggestion to the late professor Elemér Hankiss, the renowned Hungarian literary historian and sociologist, who in 1995 was a visiting senior fellow at IWM Vienna and kindly read and commented on the first draft of my paper.

say “Wenn *ich* komme, dann wird ausgemistet” but speaks of a “third” person who accidentally happens to be himself. Thus, the most relevant thing politically—the personal connection between the activity spoken of, *ausmisten*, and the performer of the act of speaking—appears broken, delegated to “someone else” and thus hidden, despite the obvious identity between the subject spoken of and the subject speaking. This maneuver of self-presenting through self-concealing is made possible by the asymmetry in the grammatical structure of the main clause, indicating a quasi-non-identity between the two subjects for the sake of their identity yet to appear. It constructs a political person by marking a logical and grammatical subject of the sentence, with the effect that the when-then clauses indicate the content of his performances immediately following (“wird ausgemistet”, “wird Ordnung gemacht”, “Gerechtigkeit herrscht”).

Therefore, what is indicated by the sentence is the so-called objective state of things and a need for intervening in it rather than a reference to subjects of action. Since the possible subjects of action indicated (be it “ausmisten” or the opposite “Mist bauen”) are grammatically and ontologically *external* to the speech item, they may be implied (and expected) only on another level of consideration which is interpretative and not analytical. Furthermore, the speaker of S1, using the third person pronouns and the impersonal passive forms of the verb *ausmisten*, aims at impersonality, objective necessity and mandatory character of the action to be performed, and presents himself not only as an instrument of the future action but as a witness—or warrant—of its necessity. Opponents accused by the speaker of S1 to ‘have turned Austria into a stable’ are not parts of his metaphoric speech; they are not the subjects talked about by the metaphor but remote targets of the speaker’s second-order allusions (threats). Accordingly, the speaker does not need metaphors as an instrument of debate with political opponents; he refers to them not as subjects addressed to but rather as subjects told about (i.e. as objects). Metaphors are means of their political devaluation.

On this background, an alternative, analytically closest *metaphoric* implication of mS1 should be found in an expression such as ‘Etwas ist Mist in diesem Lande’ [*Something is/has become dung in this country*] instead of ‘Somebody has made Austria into a dirty stable’. The proposed alternative—albeit being analytically trivial due to the semantic relation between *ausmisten* and

Mist, which results in the impossibility to say “Mist ausmisten” without committing redundancy—clearly explains a further peculiar feature of the political attitude of the real speaker of S1 (i.e. Haider). It is a deep disdain for his political opponents: they are not opponents to be argued with but to be thrown away (like dung) together with the rotten state of affairs for which they are held responsible. Therefore, there is no doubt that opponents are meant as “someone” who made Austria into a stable, but they are, as it were, a second-hand implication of the *ausmisten*-metaphor.

Finally, the advantage of assuming metaphoric expressions such as ‘Something is dung in this country’ or the aforementioned ‘Austria is a stable’ for the purposes of my procedure, which consists first and foremost of an analytical treatment of speech forms and not of an interpretation of their political content, is that these metaphors clearly refer to those background assumptions which are necessary for visible metaphoric speech items to function as literally meant expressions. For only if one assumes that something is (like) dung or (like) a stable, can one utilize indirect metaphoric expressions like *ausmisten* and mean it straightforwardly literally.

On this background, the simple expression ‘ausmisten’, endowed with a very precise literal meaning, can no more be considered an inconvenient metaphor stemming from the language of peasants. Instead, even when used metaphorically, it is a “normal” expression whose literality is provided by the background assumption that this country is thought of *as* a stable. The relationship between two metaphoric items, between one which is an expression and one which is a tacit assumption, can comprehensively be described in terms of an anaphora which relates to the syntagmatic axis of speech: the two metaphors do not just replace or explain each other but mutually supply themselves. The first one (mS1: “Es wird ausgemistet”) indicates—and implies—that the other one, the ground-metaphor (“Austria is a stable”) is “really working”. That means: providing, in the background, an emotionally loaded, tacit assumption about the ultimately “bad state of affairs”, which does not necessarily need to be formulated—or even must not be uttered—as an explicit statement. Austria is being imagined, not as comparable to a disordered house, about which one could deliberate, but as a dung-ridden stable to be cleaned up without any further discussion.

Metaphor and the Self-Interpellation of ‘Subjects’

This judgment, itself being metaphorical, seems to carry some “real”, non-metaphorical content not transported by the expression itself. Namely, despite the abundant rhetoricity of the public speech, we still know that neither Austria nor any other country *is* a “stable” and have to admit that a strong metaphor is still a metaphor. Additionally, we can only deliberate if it is *like* a stable. Hence, the “real content” of expressions like mS1 cannot by definition be provided by any insightful competence of the specific speaker of the whole S1 to make statements about his country or by searching for the real meaning of his rhetorical figures. (As a matter of fact, Haider’s statements were largely contested by his political opponents among Austrian politicians, political activists and ordinary citizens.) The real content can only be sought for in other real procedures insofar as it may be proven that the speech items of the speaker’s discourse become formative parts of the discourse of other political subjects. In order to explain this, it is necessary to take into consideration another public speech item which is a direct echo of the one analyzed so far.

As it is well known, shortly after the utterance of mS1, Austrian farmers protested against government policy and used, among other slogans, an expression very similar to mS1. They carried a poster with the slogan:

“Wir misten selbst aus!”

It is obvious that this slogan (henceforth referred to as mS2) is meant to be a *response* to the expression mS1. However—and this is the crucial point—we know this not from outside sources, e.g. because the protest meeting of Austrian peasants in Vienna took place *after* FPÖ’s election meeting in Klagenfurt, and not even because the protest *repeated* a slogan with the verb ‘ausmisten’, which became well-known in the meantime. Instead, one may observe that the slogan in mS2, “Wir misten selbst aus”, contains a new element, namely the emphatically personal, although collective, reflexive pronoun in the first person plural, “wir selbst” (*we ourselves*), which directly negates the impersonality of the subject in mS1. It alone indicates that the latter slogan is a direct response to the former one, and not just one more slogan exploiting the same expression. The expression in mS2 implies univocally, by means of emphasis, that it is *We* and not someone

other than the speaker who will perform the indicated action. By the same act of self-reference, it indicates that there is, or was, another pretender to the position of speaking-performing the same. Thus, the expression in mS2, despite *citing* the initial slogan mS1, dethrones both the anonymous speaker of mS1 and the subject spoken of (Haider), only reminding us, by using the ‘wir selbst’, that there used to be another subject and only marking his absence. The new collective subject of the utterance, the peasants, substitute both subjects by means of the speech act regardless of the question whether they agree or disagree politically either with the impersonal speaker of mS1 (the hidden Haider) or with the third-person Haider spoken of, whether they follow Haider’s political ideas and goals or not. The only clear political message transmitted by the slogan is the internalisation of the politics propagated by the metaphor: ‘We do not need any third person [politician] to clear out the dung, we do it ourselves’.

Therefore, it is the self-reflexive, surplus-element “ourselves”, which provides a significant difference between the two expressions, and ensures that mS2 is not just a citation but a response to mS1. And only this provides that the impersonal promise mS1, an action deferred into the future and delegated to a “third person”, becomes a real event through a simple rhetorical shift. The real political effect performed by “we ourselves” is the cutting off of the connection between the speaking subject (hidden behind the impersonal passive mood ‘es wird’) and the subject spoken of (Haider) in mS1: ‘We need no Haider to clean out the dung’.

This rhetorical event is not real in the sense that peasants perform in reality the action indicated (cleaning out dung) in front of the Austrian parliament. For had they done this, the literal action of *ausmisten* would have been nothing but another type of metaphor—a performing action with metaphori value comparable to artistic performances—but still a falling back to mere metaphoric, allegoric or symbolic utterance. Quite to the contrary, it is real in the sense that people who usually perform the action of *ausmisten*, and use the word ‘ausmisten’, appear in reality to use the expression in a new, improper, but strictly definable context, which is political struggle. Namely, these are people who by definition use the literal *ausmisten* metaphorically when engaged in contexts other than activities characteristic

of peasant life.⁷ This special group of people (farmers or peasants) are the only instance apt to give the metaphor expressed in mS1 an aspect of reality. Although still using it as metaphor mS2, they mean it literally. Nevertheless, had they really tried to re-literalize the metaphor “ausmisten” by performing the action of *ausmisten* in front of the Parliament building, it would have inevitably first provoked laughter in the public and the intention to protest might have failed since everybody knows that peasants literally perform *ausmisten* and expects them to do so. But had they done it literally in front of the Parliament, they would have acted metaphorically, achieved the opposite, namely “Mist bauen” (loading dung), and provoke much laughter and sympathy. At any rate, the conditions for interpretations of their symbolic action would have drastically changed.

Thus, the reality of the action indicated by the series of metaphors is not ensured by approaching the literal meaning of the expression by performing the action or by any other means of representation. It ensured rather by applying to oneself the metaphor which had previously been uttered publicly by another speaker. Thus, as suggested, the repetition of the metaphoric expression ‘ausmisten’, contained in mS1 and mS2, turns out to be not just another example, a mere extension of the same figure and political intention, but a discursive reaction to it, indicating *possibly* a new (different or even opposite) political event.

Hence, the *ausmisten*-metaphor is not only a means of understanding and agreement between speakers but also of misunderstanding and disagreement since it is not required that both sides really have the same political or ideological presuppositions. What one of them considers “a stable”, from which one has to “clean out dung”, the other need not necessarily share. What they certainly do share is the *indirect* approach to one item they have in common: the *ausmisten* as critique of government. Whether the output of this criticism is the same on both sides, is not clear. It depends on the political behaviour of both or of any possible participants in the metaphoric communication, since it

7 This explains, in my view, the paradox that the *repetition* of the expression cannot, even in a very closely related context, be used to *demonstrate* the connection between the two political events. The verb *ausmisten* is an item of the normal peasant everyday language and it is the farmers who are expected to use it. If they perform *ausmisten* literally, they perform *Mist bauen* politically, and vice versa.

is, by definition, more an indicator of behaviour than an abstract statement about the state of things.

On this background, the metaphoric expression mS2 can be adequately reformulated and interpreted as

- (a) ‘Wir sind es, die ausmisten’.
- (b) ‘Wir sind die Ausmister’.

The formal transformation of the metaphorical expression in the sentence mS2 into two derived sentences makes clear that the self-application of the metaphor by farmers entails a two-step-process. It consists, firstly, of a self-identification (a) and, secondly, of a self-denomination or a re-naming of themselves (b). Self-naming serves as a direct contradiction to the preceding act of self-depersonalisation in mS1, be it intentional or not, be it real or not. On this background, both versions of mS2 have to be read as “We are the ones who have been appealed to by the sentence ‘Es wird ausgemistet!’”⁸

In other words, the expression mS2 (“Wir misten selbst aus!”) appears to be a critically self-implemented effect of *interpellation* by mS1, regardless of the intentions of the redoubled third-person-subject of mS1. Accordingly, the metaphoric expression mS1 cannot be considered an improper or inconvenient metaphor any more, but as the most proper, convenient, and reliable ‘transporter’ (metaphor) of political messages. Moreover, it can be treated as the medium by which political events can be evaluated, i.e. whether the speakers of mS2 are or are not direct ideological and political followers of the speaker of mS1. The real interaction seems to be occurring as re-cognition of mS1—critical rather than apologetic—through rhetorical means of a commonly shared language and values, and not necessarily of institutional party politics. It lasts as long as the metaphoric process is capable of providing a unifying sense.

8 If read in this way, the Austrian peasants’ slogan from 1995, announcing a kind of direct politics without politicians in front of the Austrian parliament, appears as directly comparable to the famous slogan “Wir sind das Volk” used by East German citizens against the Party establishment during the 1989 demonstrations in Leipzig (former DDR). It preceded the 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall but was soon, due to the logic of subsequent political development, altered into the slogan “Wir sind *ein* Volk!”

Based on the above, one can say that a political event is represented through an *event within language*. It is precisely and only the peasants' answer to the initial metaphor—i.e. a further rhetorical means of language of the same order—which casts light on the specific character of the metaphor as a practical means of politics and not “merely” a stylistic figure of speech, replaceable by another. More precisely, it is the illocutionary force of promise in mS2 that clearly *recalls* the illocutionary force of the initial metaphor mS1 and in which the illocutionary force of promise (annunciation) is covered up by a more complicated syntactic structure of S1 quoted at the outset:

“Wenn Haider kommt, dann herrscht Gerechtigkeit, dann wird Ordnung gemacht in diesem Lande, dann wird ausgemistet in allen Bereichen (...)”

Contrary to mS2 “Wir misten selbst aus!”, where the promise of performing ‘ausmisten’ does not depend on any further condition⁹, it is clear that, in the entire sentence S1, the performance of action indicated (*ausmisten, Ordnung machen*) is made dependent on the condition indicated by a series of *wenn-dann* clauses. Given that the German conjunction ‘wenn’ indicates both temporal and/or hypothetical condition, it becomes clear that the illocutionary force of the sentence is due to an internal drama of transforming the ambiguity of conditions into univocity of meaning, namely into the temporal and more real (probable) instead of temporal and hypothetical (only possible) one. Hence, the promissory strength of the sentence is justified as long as—and insofar as—the speaker is able to avoid the hypothetical conditionality of his speech (being elected or not) or, more precisely, to convert the hypothetical status of the sentence content into a performative strength of utterance (as if he had already been elected).

This conversion is provided, as indicated above, by choosing a particular means of promissory speech. The evasive hypothetical character of the future event, expressed by the German conjunction ‘wenn’, and the subject referred to indirectly in the third person singular (“Wenn Haider kommt...”), appear reinforced by the imperative sense of the impersonal passive form of the

⁹ This becomes visible if we correctly transform the present tense of mS3 “Wir misten selbst aus!” into the future tense, as follows: “Wir werden selbst *ausmisten!*”

verb (“es wird ausgemistet”). The passive indicative mood does not convey a constative sense but is a mandatory (imperative) utterance which alludes to *what* is to be done by the very omission of further information as to *who* is supposed to receive the action (e.g. the peasants) or who is the speaking subject that refers to a ‘Haider-to-come’. The effect of such a multiply-broken indirect speech act is, as already shown, the impersonality of the speaking subject and the purported immediacy of performance of the intended action. This is a notorious rhetorical means characteristic of giving orders indirectly, usually applied to small children for actions such as sleeping, eating, going to the toilet etc. It is an impersonal form of ordering by which it is indicated that there is no further deliberation and, consequently, no “discursive procedure”.

Thus, the asymmetry between the constative grammatical structure and the promissory sense of the utterance uncovers the performative type of speech under the constative, which is an imperative projected into the future that necessarily adopts the sense of annunciation, if not revelation, of the time to come. But in order to give the promise real strength, the content of the annunciation has to appear *as already realized* viz. *as if it were* already realized. The sentence, however, lacks a performative authority for this purpose. It cannot rely on hypothetical conditions, such as being, or not being, elected by a sufficient number of people.¹⁰ Also, the necessary authority is not given—and cannot be given—by any other instance than the speaker themselves. But it still must not be identical with the speaker if it is expected to provide more power than a singular person or a particular group is able to. Thus, it is exactly the quest for a higher authority than the speaker itself that is needed for a promise to be a *performative speech act of annunciation* (or a self-fulfilling necessity). Moreover, it is also this quest for authority which necessarily causes a split between the subject of utterance and the subject of the sentence, the Haider speaking and the Haider spoken of. This means, however, that the quest for a higher authority than the subject of utterance is a quest for a higher Haider than Haider himself.

As a result, speaking in the third person singular and the impersonal passive mood does not indicate infantile features of

¹⁰ For a recent discussion of performative aspects of metaphorical expressions in the Croatian right-wing political discourse see Šarić (2019).

Haider's person or of his political language game. Rather the opposite, it indicates that he infantilizes the political audience in the country. This is exactly the point where the rhetorical intervention of the peasants' 'we ourselves' becomes ever more politically important. But beyond this complicated issue, which calls for further analyses of a less formal kind, one can see that this very peculiar feature of a right-wing politician's discourse indicates that the speaker, in order to provide authority to their speech and to legitimize their political goals and discursive practices, appeals to an instance which, then, was positioned without or *beyond* the actual political field of Austrian society. It was, and still is, defined by parliamentary democracy despite its antidemocratic tendencies. This instance of self-legitimation was apparently reduced to *language* itself (Austrian German) which, being the common medium of all political participants, was used to offer one political option as a medium of *re-unification* of a "badly dispersed" nation in order to avoid the regular solutions to political issues of this kind—such as "Austria has too many foreigners"—issues that could be submitted to rational discursive struggles among political participants. The allusive speech of metaphors was used by a right-wing politician for a clearly opposite aim: to mobilize citizens as "people" and achieve tacit consent without deliberation. It turned out, however, that the same metaphor can turn the tacit consent upside down.

In order to approach this issue, one should necessarily take into consideration further items of the same speaker's language use and pass to other levels of political analysis and interpretation. Since this cannot be done within the present framework, the above analysis might suffice to indicate the problem and point to critical issues. ●