



## **On Two Metaphorical Expressions in Feminist Philosophy: Context and Analysis**

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### **Abstract**

Metaphors have been inserted by philosophers in philosophical discourses to simplify abstract and intricate concepts. The practice of using metaphor denotes its rhetorical, aesthetic, linguistic and cognitive function. In basic formulation, philosophers have also used metaphor as a device, strategy, method, stylist ornament and a medium of expression. In this background, the following paper intends to vindicate the intimate interaction between philosophy and metaphor, emphasising the domain of feminist philosophy. Categorically, by considering the context of feminist philosophical discourses, in this work, I explore the contributions of two influential feminist thinkers, namely, Young and Irigaray, to elucidate the proposed metaphorical narrative. I suggest that these feminist philosophers 'talk metaphorically' beyond its ornamental or aesthetic value, beyond objectivism. By broadening and extending the discourse, I propose and argue that their employment of metaphor also appeals to an epistemological thematic. Furthermore, I shall exhibit the close affinity between the metaphors they insert in their respective pursuits. Questions that shall be considered here are: Why metaphor matters in philosophical contexts? What does it mean to talk metaphorically in feminist philosophical scholarship? What and how do these feminist thinkers contribute to this endeavour? What is the implication of their respective contributions? Thus, I aim at uncovering and deepening the appearance, connotation and influence of metaphor in feminist scholarship.

**Keywords:** Metaphor, Theory of Metaphor, Epistemology of Metaphor, Feminist Metaphor, Metaphor in Philosophy

## Introduction

Philosophical concepts and ideas are abstract in nature, and it is often a challenge to teach and understand them. Philosophers have resorted to metaphors to simplify philosophical concepts and propositions. Greek philosophers such as Aristotle, Socrates and Plato have evidentially employed rhetorical, analogical and figurative methods for powerful argumentation. For instance, in his book, *The Republic*, Plato uses the Allegory of the Cave to ruminate on the metaphysical and epistemological dimensions of knowledge and belief. Furthermore, there are an array of other metaphors that have been inserted by philosophers, like John Locke's metaphor of white paper, Nietzsche's metaphor of the *Overmind*, Kierkegaard's metaphor of Abraham, Wittgenstein's metaphor of family resemblance, etc. By employing metaphor, philosophers were not merely able to fulfil philosophical tasks but were also able to float a new method of philosophical exploration.

It is also important to note that some theorists argue against the role of metaphor in philosophical discourses maintaining claims that metaphor involves deception, deviation and trickery.<sup>i</sup> Questions and concerns also surface about metaphor's usefulness, success and practicality. However, moving distant from this contradictory perspective, Donald Davidson writes: "there are no unsuccessful metaphors, just as there are no unfunny jokes" (1978, 31). Thus, in a similar mood, the paper's main objective is not to inspect whether a metaphor succeeds or fails in its effectivity; rather, the prime focus here is to recognise and exemplify the 'epistemic access' they grant. This epistemic exemplification will be brought about by reviewing an assortment of two metaphors from the works of I.M. Young and Luce Irigaray. Thus, through these feminist metaphors, I intend to evince the status of metaphors beyond their linguistic or literary capacity, unveiling their epistemological significance.

Both adopted the metaphorical approach to oppose and question the prejudiced patriarchal structure in their respective projects. For instance, in her book *Throwing Like a Girl: On Female Body Experience*, Young presented fresh insights into women's menstrual

experience by employing the menstrual closet metaphor. In her view, women's subjection to the menstrual closet is an affair related to the act of concealment of menstrual events. The closeted experience of women during menstruation involves the idea of considering menstruation as a shameful, discomforting and disgusting event. Similarly, Irigaray introduces the metaphor of the envelope to reveal the homelessness and disconnection women experience from the maternal/feminine. In this backdrop, the fundamental aim of the paper is to show how these metaphors simplify and shape our understanding of feminist issues.

The paper proceeds as follows. As a point of origin, the author begins by estimating the role of metaphors in the realm of philosophy. Questions that shall be addressed here are- Are metaphors well documented in philosophy? Are we aware of the intimate relationship between philosophy and metaphor? How can we comprehend this relationship? Moving ahead, for clarity and precision, the author intends to recover and interpret metaphors employed by Young and Irigaray in their respective philosophical projects. The author shall demonstrate how these feminist thinkers 'talk metaphorically' and what it means to talk metaphorically. The author ends the paper by instituting an 'epistemological' exposition of these two metaphors, thereby moving beyond the standard rhetorical, aesthetic and linguistic essence of metaphor.

Although the author pointedly focuses on the insights of feminist philosophers, the larger objective of this research is to realize and register the philosophical importance of metaphor on the whole. We know, as a matter of fact, that a comprehensive appraisal of metaphor is underdone speculation and demands new reflection. Through this paper, readers can appreciate the status of metaphor in philosophical discourses.

### **Metaphor and Philosophy: Why Metaphor Matters in Philosophical Context?**

In his article, Mark Johnson (1981) underlines the present-day status of metaphor: We are in the midst of metaphormania. Only three decades ago the situation was just the opposite: poets created metaphors, everybody used them, and

philosophers ignored them. Today we seem possessed by metaphor (1981, ix).

Creativity and visualization are cardinal aspects of philosophical deliberation. There are multiple theories of metaphor in the philosophical domain that vindicate the role of metaphor in philosophical argumentation. It is to be noted here that this section does not solely concentrate on stating and explaining a myriad of metaphors that philosophers have incorporated into their doctrines. Here, the author means to estimate theories that rationalize the capacity of metaphor that both ancient and modern philosophers have employed. In this light, the author believes three approaches can help us attain our purpose. The three theoretical approaches are substitution, comparison and interaction.<sup>ii</sup> Max Black (1962) offered an exhaustive analysis of these three possible treatments of metaphor.

The substitution perspective emphasizes the idea of replacement, the replacement of one word with another word. For example, through the “Ring of Gyges”<sup>iii</sup> metaphor, Plato argues that true morality is like an invisible man. Gyges was a shepherd who randomly possessed a golden ring, which had the power to disappear any subject who spun it. In plain terms, this ring metaphor entails invisibility and anonymity. With this magical trick, Gyges became unjust as he began to misuse the power he had acquired from the ring. Plato believes that, essentially, we humans are like Gyges in the sense that we tend to act amorally and egoistically. If given this magical ring and the power of invisibility that follows, we humans would also get inclined towards immorality. So, suppose we study the inherent nuances that the metaphor communicates against the backdrop of the substitution theory. In that case, we discern that when Plato asserts that “Morality is like Gyges ring”, he ultimately claims that “Morality is like an invisible person”. Here, the person is Gyges. Basically, he intends to indicate ‘anonymity’, ‘disappearance’ or ‘dormancy’. These are the terms via which we can explain the idea of ‘invisibility’. Therefore, substitution refers to the replacement of one term with the other. This is the substitution perspective.

Summatively, about the substitution approach, Black posits:

According to a substitution view, the focus of a metaphor, the word or expression having a distinctively metaphorical use within a literal frame, is used to communicate a meaning that might have been expressed literally. The author substitutes M for L; it is the reader's task to invert the substitution by using the literal meaning of M as a clue to the intended literal meaning of L. Understanding a metaphor is like deciphering a code or unraveling a riddle (Black, 1962, 32).

Next is comparison. Comparison in metaphor surfaces when we focus on similarity/symmetry between two terms/phrases/themes and compare them to paraphrase an original statement. "According to this theory, the founding of metaphorical relationship between objects must be based on the similarity between them by comparing the two semantic features of the two words or phrases" (Youguo, 2013, 560). Comparison is considered the most elementary and coherent exposition of metaphor in the philosophical domain. In fact, in this milieu, it would be interesting to note that many schools of Indian Philosophy identify comparison (*Upamāna*) as one of the means/sources of valid knowledge (*Pramana*).<sup>iv</sup> In the Indian tradition, the expression- *Upamāna* is composed and derived from the words: 'upa' and 'mana'. 'Upa' refers to similarity, and 'mana' stands for cognition.

Let us take a metaphoric expression from William Paley. When William Paley (1802) offered the design argument for God's existence, he hinges upon a teleological appeal. The metaphor he inserts in this context is known as the Watchmaker metaphor. He compares God with a watchmaker in order to substantiate the foundational premise that every effect has a cause. In his view, as in the case of a watch, a prior existence of an intelligent designer (watchmaker) is assumed. Similarly, if we talk of the universe, the existence of an intelligent designer (God) can be supposed. Thus, here, the universe is 'compared' to a watch and God's existence is 'compared' to the existence of a watchmaker. To add, resemblance/similarity/symmetry concepts extend an explanatory framework for the comparison model of metaphor.

The author thinks the comparison viewpoint of metaphor does not merely allude to linguistic or literal affairs. Rather, the

discernible relation between a word and its reference/denotation also indicates an epistemological edge (as expressed by the Indian Philosophers). Also, as mentioned earlier, the fundamental aim of the paper is to unearth and illustrate the ‘epistemological’ access of the two feminist metaphors I shall be reviewing. Mindful of this objective, a question surfaces- ‘Is the comparison framework appropriate and adequate for founding this epistemological estimation of philosophical metaphors, in general?’ After reflecting on the interaction paradigm, this question shall be addressed in the last segment.

According to Black, “Metaphorical statement is not a substitute for a formal comparison or any other kind of literal statement, but has its distinctive capacities and achievements” (1962, 37). What are these distinctive capacities and achievements? How do we think beyond the literal meaning of metaphors? The substitution and comparison view claim that metaphor is formed based on the ‘mutual interaction’ between the original and the referred meaning. Hence, in this background, let us now consider the Interaction standpoint.

In his book, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, Richards adds his insights to the discourse on metaphor by foregrounding the interactive mechanism. The interaction view approaches metaphor beyond its literal/linguistic capacity. Richards suggests that an active transaction happens between the tenor and the vehicle.<sup>v</sup> This transaction or deal between the two happens in an interactive manner, wherein this interaction yields cognitive content. Richards writes:

The traditional theory noticed only a few of the modes of metaphor; and limited its application of the term metaphor to a few of them only. Moreover, thereby, it made metaphor seem to be a verbal matter, a shifting and displacement of words. In contrast, fundamentally, it is a borrowing between and interaction of thoughts, a transaction between contexts (Richards, 1936, 94).

If we examine this excerpt, we comprehend that metaphor represents and surfaces from a ‘process’, a process of interaction. It is a phenomenon. The interaction model involves the reasoning that the tenor and vehicle co-exist and determine each other. Now, we

may ask: What is this co-existence like? How does interaction happen? In order to find answers to these questions, I would like to resort to Black's theory of 'filtering'. Filtering here refers to the filtering of the status and identity of the tenor. In his view, good metaphors involve drawing speculations and deriving sense. The interaction approach serves a three-fold purpose; first, it focuses on functionality; second, it grants a cognitive/pedagogical/epistemological value to metaphor; and third, it builds an interactional link between the tenor and the vehicle, thereby moving beyond the inactive grammatical identity they clasp. Thus, the meaning that a metaphor fetches is the product of interaction.

Furthermore, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980) provide a cognitive theory of metaphor through which they attempt to approach metaphor given the ordinary conceptual and empirical framework. In plain terms, the cognitive model interprets metaphor by quoting the metaphorical concept's position.<sup>vi</sup> It recognises pre-established concepts that we already have in our minds that help us analyse a metaphorical discourse. This paradigm conceives metaphor as a matter of reason, awareness and comprehension. Thus, metaphor is founded on certain concepts with the help of which our conceptualisation of a tenor (topic) gets structured.

In a nutshell, I have specified the nub of these theoretical avenues to cogitate about metaphor as a notion. Let me clarify that the central objective of the paper is not to specify and review these theoretical models of metaphor. However, to achieve the goal of exploring the position of metaphor in the philosophical domain, a brief sketch of notable research on metaphor is required before directly delving into its potential 'epistemological' nuances.

### **Encounters with Metaphor in Feminist Philosophical Discourses: Two Close Readings**

Within philosophy, metaphor has gained remarkable appreciation and appraisal. Interest of philosophers in metaphor ranges back to Greek philosophy's era, with a primary focus on the cognitive aspect of metaphor. Aristotle highlights this aspect:

Nevertheless, the greatest thing, by far, is to be a master of metaphor. It is the one thing that cannot be learnt from others; it is also a sign of genius since a good metaphor implies an intuitive perception of the similarity of dissimilars. Through resemblance, the metaphor makes things clearer (Aristotle, 1984, pp.5-7).

Aristotle regarded metaphor as an instrumental notion that enriches our learning capacity. Similarly, other philosophers from the Greek scholastic tradition spoke of the cognitive feature of metaphor by emphasizing the role of reasoning, perception, comparison and logical deduction. The use of metaphor also appears within the works of philosophers from the Romanticism heritage, philosophy of language, analytic philosophy, phenomenology and so on.<sup>vii</sup> Compactly put, there has been a noticeable rise in interest towards metaphor in the philosophical realm. One such realm is Feminist Philosophy. Feminist theorists extend the value of metaphor by foregrounding its linguistic, aesthetic and epistemological content.

Before exploring the relation between feminist philosophical theory and metaphor, it would be interesting to note and learn that when we talk of the feminist movement in terms of ‘waves’, this idea of ‘talking in waves’ depicts the very first instance of using metaphor in the feminist discourse. It brings out the fluctuating, dynamic, and continuous nature of the feminist movement. Through the wave metaphor, we grasp the historical root and progression of feminism. Thus, the wave metaphor serves as a tool for understanding the origin and development of feminism.<sup>viii</sup> However, it is also important to listen to the voices of a few present-day feminist scholars who exclaim the deficiencies of the metaphor of a wave. Women’s studies scholar Emily Hoeflinger assesses this issue by writing:

Wave rhetoric evokes notions of generational or familial feminist tensions and the exclusion or ignorance of certain feminist groups within feminism’s historical framework. It announces how feminists have sculpted their image, and how the media sensationalizes that image. In some ways, explicit rejection of this cumbersome metaphor seems to be the next logical step. However, what remains to be addressed in the argument surrounding wave



rhetoric is consistency regarding which wave movements have occurred over periods and national boundaries, outside of existing notions of the First, Second, or Third 'Wave.' (Hoeflinger 2008).

Apparently, tensions that internally subsist within the wave paradigm both electrify and disturb the soul and substance of feminism. Thus, the wave metaphor clasps an ambiguous character.

The author now intends to introduce two metaphors from feminist philosophy that this study intends to assess. I.M. Young's book, *Throwing Like a Girl: On Female Body Experience* presented fresh insights into women's menstrual experiences by centrally highlighting the socio-ontological implications of the phenomenon. Young explores the metaphor of the menstrual closet, wherein she attempts to re-consider Eve Sedgwick's image of the homosexual closet<sup>ix</sup> and aligns menstruation under the metaphor of the menstrual closet. About menstruation, Young asserts that "from our earliest awareness of menstruation until the day we stop, we are mindful of the imperative to conceal our menstrual processes" (2005, 106). Women's entry into the menstrual closet is an affair related to the act of 'concealment' of menstrual events. The closeted experience of women during menstruation involves the idea of considering menstruation as a shameful, discomfoting and disgusting event, downright.

The socio-ontological connotations associated with the metaphor of the closet have been investigated by Young. Over and above that, the author would like to root out the implicit and constitutional nuances of this metaphor in the subsequent section. When we evaluate the word/tenor/topic 'closet' in the context of menstruation, we construe that this metaphorical characterization denotes a sense of 'secrecy', 'privacy', and 'concealment'. It implies the idea of being hidden and masked. According to Young, a range of codes and rules collectively enhance the case of the menstrual closet.

These menstrual codes are intimately complemented by feelings such as shame, embarrassment, disgust, etcetera, which presuppose the presence of a sense of threat/ danger/ horror. Young attempts to examine menstrual taboos by contrasting them with the scheme of menstrual etiquette. She maintains that the foundation of the rules

that reinforce menstrual taboos is spiritual and metaphysical in nature.<sup>x</sup> On the other hand, rules that govern menstrual etiquette are associated with a sense of mannerisms and behavioral ethics. Secondly, Menstrual taboo is more of a universal/public regime; on the other hand, menstrual etiquette is a private affair. Menstrual taboos view behavior from a sociocultural front by evoking fault lines of the social system. When menstrual taboos exist, the whole woman must be confined to, closeted, or kept away from certain people, processes or substances (Young, 2005, 112).

This way, Young equates the idea of the menstrual closet with the set of prohibitions and taboos that are sharply related to the belief that menstruation, more specifically, menstrual blood, is dirty, disgusting and impure due to which the events of menstruation must be concealed. Hence, closeted experiences of menstruating women are a practical enactment of the injunctions related to concealment and secrecy.

The second metaphor the author considers is the metaphor of Envelope by Luce Irigaray. In the contemporary scene, Irigaray's feminist philosophical position is considered one of the most influential contributions. She addresses the 'sexless' status of the subject in philosophy and floats her acclaimed doctrine known as the Sexual Difference theory. In her text, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, she develops her articulation of sexual difference by instituting the envelope metaphor. The envelope metaphor has been employed by Irigaray to exhibit the symbolic destitution of the female from her protective envelope (the womb). She has argued that women are deprived of the envelope and, this deprivation entails a state of homelessness and mother-lessness. Furthermore, since a woman's status as an envelope, a container, has not been depicted, and the maternal-feminine does not gain recognition in philosophical discourses, this brings about the condition of the male imaginary<sup>xi</sup> that frames her identity. Male identity, therefore, becomes the ontological base for women.

In Irigaray's words:

If traditionally, and as a mother, woman represents place for man, such a limit means that she becomes a thing, with some possibility of change from one historical period to

another. She finds herself delineated as a thing. Moreover, the maternal feminine also serves as an envelope, a container, the starting point from which man limits his things (1993, 10).

Through the envelope metaphor, Irigaray aspires to disclose the separation of the maternal-feminine from its real place, its proper base. "The maternal-feminine remains the place separated from "its" own place, deprived of "its" place. She is or ceaselessly becomes the place of the other who cannot separate himself from it" (1993, 10). She figures the role of a maternal envelope that would serve as a safety shade, cover and guard for women. The inner skin that offers a sense of safety shield and guard is the womb, for a woman. At the same time, Irigaray goes on to rationalize woman's inclination towards 'artificial enveloping'. This idea of artificial enveloping refers to concerns surrounding female beautification. The specificities of beautification that underscore practices of nudity and, make up, sketch out a woman's pursuit of creating an artificial envelope for herself. These act as cover-ups and containers for women. They are acts of 'veiling'.<sup>xii</sup> This act of veiling is, altogether, a masculine approach.

Additionally, Irigaray associates the commodification of the female body with the envelope metaphor and writes:

Women-as-commodities are thus subject to a schism that divides them into the categories of usefulness and value; into matter-body and an envelope that is precious but impenetrable, ungraspable, and not susceptible to appropriation by women themselves; into private use and social use (1985, 176).

Thus, the envelope metaphor plays the function of exposing the politics of male imaginary. The author maintains this stance because Irigaray remarkably hints a woman cannot locate herself inside her protective 'first home' as this first home is governed by the male order. The feminine, the home

within, the inner skin that essentially acts as a woman's proper place gets abstracted from her. Therefore, the 'real' envelope is seized, and the 'artificial' one is consequentially launched.

Furthermore, the author now plans to briefly remark on a predicted question- Can we talk of a common thread between Young and Irigaray's respective metaphors? The metaphor of the 'closet' and the metaphor of 'envelope' both give the impression of being identical with regard to the participatory meaning of the terms/tenors. To be closeted and enveloped both involve the act of covering up, shielding or protecting. Precisely, they betoken the idea of 'veiling'. Thus, if we philosophically interpret the concept of the veil as a common thread between the two metaphors to effectuate the larger objective of the 'conceptual' content of the metaphors on the agenda.

### **Employing Metaphor to Teach Feminist Philosophy? Towards an 'Epistemological' Exposition**

If we recall the substitution, comparison and interaction models and speculate their deficiency in the philosophical sphere, we ultimately recognise a call for a more revised and exhaustive model; the epistemological model. In the author's understanding, an epistemological model of metaphor proffers a heuristic, expository and analytical undertone.

In her esteemed volume on metaphor, Kittay (1989) describes metaphor as:

Metaphor is a primary way in which we accommodate and assimilate information and experience to our conceptual organization of the world. In particular, it is the primary way we accommodate new experience. Hence it is at the source of our capacity to learn and at the centre of our creative thought. In the process of accommodation and assimilation through metaphor, we gain a needed epistemic access to the metaphorical referent (1989, 39).

It appears that by employing the method of metaphorical thinking, Young and Irigaray have primarily acceded to simplifying and enhancing abstract feminist concepts and concerns. So, can't we attest that they conjure up the epistemological function of metaphor in the philosophical realm? Curtly put, this epistemological function of metaphor orbits around the following assertions:

1. A metaphorical statement fosters insights.
2. It is a matter of thought.
3. It instills reflective awareness.
4. It has a meaning/ sense content.
5. It entails persuasiveness.
6. It is a device of cognition.

A prompt mention of Ricoeur's book, *The Rule of Metaphor*, becomes paramount in this milieu. Here, Ricoeur argues that metaphors have multiple levels. He explicitly indicates three principal levels: the word level, the statement level and the whole level.<sup>xiii</sup> In his view, metaphor is a linguistic 'act' and involves a 'process'. Further, this act engenders metaphorical sense and meaning through three components- the cognitive, the imaginative and the emotional. To ponder these three components is to place metaphor within the boundary of epistemological thought. "The metaphorical utterance makes speculative discourse possible" (Panneerselvam 1994, 51).

As initially indicated, Young and Irigaray implicitly shed light on the concept of the 'veil' or the act of 'veiling' as comfortable hiding or sheltering. For Young, the closeted experience of a female body during menstruation entails a cover-up, silence and seclusion. Similarly, for Irigaray, the enveloped experience of a female body (also in the context of artistic ends, i.e., artificial envelope) connotes covering up, sheltering and protection. The common thread between the two thinkers and their respective metaphors alludes to the idea of the 'veil'. Do these metaphors merely represent the substitution, comparison and interaction perspective? Are these just literary and aesthetic devices? Can we determine and establish an epistemological articulation of these metaphors?

For instance, expanding on her conceptualization of the menstrual closet, Young writes: “The physical limitations that menstruation brings by nature or convention symbolize the relatively constricted life that is a woman’s in a male-dominated society” (2005, 100). Here, the closet highlights epistemological nuances two-fold: closeted experience is a ‘boundary’ for the female body and a ‘tool’ for sexual differentiation and oppression. Young’s position, the closet metaphor grants us epistemic access to more significant issues surrounding muted femininity, diminished female lived experience and authoritative, patriarchal order.

Young explicitly writes about her epistemological endeavour: “I wish to explore here some of the tensions and personal shames that capture women who aim to be normal human beings in a somatophobic culture that finds menstrual processes dirty and even frightening” (2005, 108). Here, she talks about the ordered systems and asserts that individuals and communities maintain a particular order by abiding by certain rules and regulations pertaining to related societal code elements like taboos and stigmas. Young draws a parallelism between what she calls the ‘normal body’ and the closeted experiences of women during menstruation in order to distinctly explain the socio-ontological messages that menstrual events deliver; thus, moving beyond the epistemology of medical sciences. In her words:

Assumption that menstrual “knowledge” is equivalent to medical science may itself contribute to a sense of alienation women have from the process. Certainly, we need some reassuring account of why we are bleeding, but to have such does not imply being able to give a textbook description of reproductive biology (Young, 2005, 102).

Besides, as discussed in the previous segment, for Irigaray, envelope refers to the maternal-feminine place where female subjects are deprived of. Moreover, this deprivation happens because of the influence of the prevalent male/masculine imaginary that fosters sexual subversion. Moreover, another instance from Irigaray’s work must be considered in order to outline the epistemological effect of the envelope metaphor. In one of the chapters called “The Envelope: A Reading of Spinoza, Ethics, “Of God”,” she considers and elaborates on another facet of the envelope

metaphor. She says that men receive their envelopes from women. In Irigaray's words: "the maternal-feminine exists necessarily as the cause of the self-cause of man. But not for herself. She has to exist but as an a priori condition (as Kant might say) for the space-time of the masculine subject" (1993, 84-85).

Here, Irigaray's stance offers three epistemological lessons about the maternal-feminine subject; first, that it is disconnected from itself; second, that the cause of this disconnection rests on the masculine discourse and third, that there is a need to overthrow the established symbolic masculine order and establish a female-centric order.

When we start to accommodate and envision the deeper shades of these metaphors by thinking and conceptualizing matters associated with the status of the female body (biological, ontological and social), then the epistemological content gets substantiated. In a linguistic sense, it is discernible that the terms 'closet' and 'envelope' denote shade, safety and guard. They also give grounds for the formerly reviewed substitution, comparison and interaction models of metaphor. However, to add, as far as the epistemological nuance of the metaphor is concerned, I would like to remark that the envelope metaphor does not solely help us 'identity' the socio-ontological status of women, but compels us to 'understand', 'conceptualize' and 'learn' this position as a phenomenon.<sup>xiv</sup>

Contemporary scholars, Ervas and Sangoi (2014) write, "metaphors, engaging abductive reasoning as well as imagination and creativity, imply an "immediate learning"" (2014, 16). Immediate learning transpires because abstract ideas become concrete, theoretical become practical and eristic become logical. Similarly, in this light, the two metaphors entail a form of 'epistemological engagement' that simplifies abstract and compound ideas. The reader wants to clarify that by referring to the idea of epistemological engagement, I do not intend to claim that metaphor here is a 'valid source' of knowledge. Instead, my vision is to evince the cognitive, reflective and persuasive effect of these metaphors (and metaphors, in general). In the author's understanding, these three effects connote the way a knower thinks,

comprehends and learns abstract concepts through metaphorical formulae.

Furthermore, about the scope of epistemic access, Kittay states: “the role of metaphor is not to tell us of something new, but of something new about what we already know” (1989, 313). This way, as the author spelt out earlier, by uncovering the entrenched epistemic capacity of the metaphors of the menstrual closet and feminine envelope, I mean to re-assert that a metaphorical approach involves conceptual explication, property characterization and anticipatory potentiality around the topic of menstruation. The insertion of these can be identified in light of the limits of the social position of the female/maternal body and the threat and destitution it is confronted with. These experiences are distinctly linked with the reigning social order and hierarchy; we may call it the ‘male’ order. It highlights exclusion, silence and repression of the feminine. To sum up, their stances compel us to re-think the status of the feminine, re-introduce it into everyday discourse and re-claim the significance of it.

Let us now outline how these metaphorical discussions foster epistemological significance. In outline, the epistemological essence and value of these two metaphors underscore and establish three cardinal points:

1. That metaphor serves as a revelatory mechanism, not merely an aesthetic citation.
2. It foregrounds metaphorical perspectives, not only metaphorical language,
3. It accentuates cognitive engagements.

Thus, metaphors enhance and concretise pre-established knowledge of something. One point is clear that the epistemological capacity of metaphor justifies the scope of the proposed the author hereby concludes with a quote from Kittay: “To explicate fully the way in which metaphor provides epistemic access requires giving an account of metaphor’s role in *establishing* concepts and categories” (1989, 326). These metaphors spectacularly serve as creative redescriptions of many women-centric concepts and concerns.



## Conclusion

Metaphor is a powerful vehicle of expression and inquiry that has a constitutive role in developing and exposing concepts. In this paper, I have exhibited that metaphor could function beyond the typically designated ornamental, rhetorical and linguistic, thereby vindicating its epistemological facet. By appropriating the position of Young and Irigaray within the brackets of the newly lodged 'epistemological' content of their respective metaphors, I have attempted to address the question- How is it that metaphor, the description of one thing as something else, has become so crucial for questions of knowledge? Through this brief journey of cruising over metaphors, I have uncovered, recovered and re-instituted the value of metaphor in the philosophical realm, consequentially, in the pedagogical province. Metaphors may be plumbed for fertile thought provocation, conceptual development and learning. Thus, metaphor mediates between imagery and understanding. It is a pathway to mental potency, conceptual coherence and learning enhancement. The importance of metaphor in research must be acknowledged and accelerated because of its cogency and persuasiveness.

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<sup>i</sup> One of the earliest philosophers to highlight this aspect of metaphors is Plato, who criticises the role of metaphors in philosophical argumentation as a form of 'verbal trickery' (he says this only of those poets and philosophers who employ metaphors as a trick). In his view, metaphorical/analogical methods involve deviation from truth. It is to be noted that he acknowledges the role of metaphor to influence thought and persuasion, but disapproves of its use by some poets, literates and philosophers to confuse and delude the public.

<sup>ii</sup> It is argued that the substitution approach and the comparison approach are closely linked, and it is maintained that the comparison approach is a special case of the substitution approach.

<sup>iii</sup> Gyges was a shepherd belonging to the Lydian dynasty. It is believed that Gyges had a mythical ring with the use of which he had the power to become invisible and anonymous. Plato refers to

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the tale of Gyges ring with the objective of illustrating the concept of justice in his moral project.

iv Some schools accept comparison (*Upamāṇa*) as an independent source of knowledge, while for some, it can be identified as a source of knowledge, but in a dependent manner. For instance, the Buddhist school reduced comparison to perception (*Pratyakṣa*) and verbal testimony (*Śabda*).

v According to Richards, tenor and vehicle are two fundamental components of metaphor. Tenor stands for the concept, person or thing that demands description, and vehicle refers to the figurative language that describes the tenor. See Richards' book, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, pp. 94-102.

vi By metaphorical concepts, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson emphasise the role of everyday concepts that fabricate our understanding of a particular metaphor. According to them, a cognitive approach to metaphor  
See, Lakoff, George and Johnson, Mark (1980). *Metaphors We Live By*.

vii In order to gain a detailed understanding of the impact of metaphors in philosophy, E.F. Kittay's text, *Metaphor: Its cognitive force and linguistic structure* might help.

viii It has been argued by contemporary feminist theorists and scholars that the wave metaphor is ambiguous, divisive and reductive. Linda Nicholson (2010) in her article "Feminism in "Waves": Useful Metaphor or Not?", questions the wavering (shifting) nature of the feminist movement by arguing that if we interrogate feminism in terms of waves (meaning it peaks and recedes from time to time), its usefulness and diversity gets outlived. Furthermore, Nicholson proposes an alternate metaphor called the Metaphor of the Kaleidoscope. To read more about this new metaphor visit: <http://newpol.org/print/content/feminismwaves-usefulmetaphorornot> In addition, in the book, *We Don't Need Another Wave: Dispatches from the Next Generation of Feminists*, Melody Berger (2006) criticises mainstream feminist theories and the positioning of

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the wave metaphor into their respective research. One may refer to this book as well.

<sup>ix</sup> Young was greatly influenced by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1990). Sedgwick had predominantly addressed the homosexual closeted experience.

<sup>x</sup> Additionally, British anthropologist, Mary Douglas defines menstrual taboo in light of certain pollution beliefs related to the menstrual blood and forbidden stature assigned to a menstruating body. Douglas also explains that this idea of sexual pollution can be identified in light of the limits and social position of the female body and the threats/ dangers it is confronted with. As Douglas examines the oppressions related to menstruation in correlation to the dominant norms of purity and proper, in a similar vein, Young delineates her narrative about the menstrual closet along the notion of normal, clean and proper.

<sup>xi</sup> This condition of male imaginary is problematic and deficient because it centres around male supremacy and authority. In her book, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, Irigaray reviews Freud's one-sex theory in order to further explain the problem of the male imaginary. Additionally, I would also like to mention that apart from this text, readers may also see the other Irigarayan text, *This Sex Which is Not One*. Here, she explicitly discusses Lacan's perspective on the masculine/male imaginary.

<sup>xii</sup> Here, the idea of 'veil' or 'veiling' does not entail a material veil. This aspect shall be considered in the last section of the paper.

<sup>xiii</sup> Ricoeur centrally shows a three-level shift in his metaphorical project- from the rhetorical to the semantical and from the semantical to the hermeneutical.

<sup>xiv</sup> According to Irigaray, women do not deliberately deviate from their respective envelopes, rather, there is a separation; a separation that is imposed from the external realm

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