

running head left: O. Lizardo

running head right: Dirt and cleanliness in moral and non-moral reasoning

**The conceptual bases of metaphors of dirt and cleanliness
in moral and non-moral reasoning***

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Abstract

In this paper I propose a new understanding of the often-noted phenomenon that much of our conceptualization and reasoning about moral propriety is framed by a set of metaphors that originate from a conceptual structure generated from our experiences with dirt and cleanliness. I argue that reliance on the dirty-clean dichotomy to conceptualize moral propriety or impropriety emerges from metaphorical extensions into various realms of experience (e.g., sports, governance, introspection) grounded in an idealized cognitive model in which dirt is conceptualized as matter out of place and clean is conceptualized as ordered arrangement. The analysis provides a unified framework with which to understand the use of dirty and clean as metaphors to categorize objects, events and actions in the moral domain. Finally, I suggest that the dirty-clean distinction is useful for understanding broader cultural issues (such as moral panics regarding media, immigration and disease), and I show that the conceptualization of certain non-moral properties can be understood using the same framework (e.g., the quality of being exceptional) of objects and actions.

Keywords: *Conceptual metaphor; Categorization; Moral Reasoning; Dirt; Cleanliness;
Idealized Cognitive Models; Image-Schemas; Mary Douglas.*

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1. Introduction

In this paper I propose a new understanding of the often-noted phenomenon that moral reasoning is structured by the conceptual metaphors of “dirty” and “clean.” These metaphorical constructions can be shown to have acquired high levels of intuitiveness and largely conventionalization in a wide variety of linguistic usage data. Reliance on the “dirty/clean” distinction to establish the moral status of certain settings, actors, actions and objects emerges from metaphorical extensions of the same abstract conceptualization of what counts as “dirty” or “clean” into rule-governed settings. These metaphors are also used to make categorizations in more abstract domains (such as the mind), and with tasks not directly connected to the moral qualities of certain entities. I argue that the abstract notions of “dirt” and “clean” are conceptually and experientially grounded in a set of Idealized Cognitive Models (Lakoff 1987) in which **clean** is conceptualized as ORDERED ARRANGEMENT and **dirt** is generally conceptualized as MATTER OUT OF PLACE (which contravenes or subverts that ideal arrangement), a hypothesis first proposed by the anthropologist Mary Douglas in a now classic work in cultural anthropology (1966).

According to Douglas,

There are two notable differences between our contemporary European ideas of defilement and those, say, of primitive cultures. One is that dirt avoidance for us is a matter of hygiene or aesthetics and is not related to our religion...The second difference is that our idea of dirt is dominated by the knowledge of pathogenic organisms...If we abstract pathogenicity and hygiene from our notion of dirt, *we are left with the old definition of dirt as matter out of place.* This is a very suggestive approach. It implies two conditions: *a set of ordered relations and a contravention of that order.* Dirt then, is never a unique, isolated event. Where there is dirt there is a system. Dirt is the by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter, in so far as ordering involves

rejecting inappropriate elements. This idea of dirt takes us straight into the field of symbolism and promises a link-up with more obviously symbolic systems of purity (Douglas 1966: 36).

Douglas' conceptualization of dirt is premised on an abstraction from the culturally-specific and semantically-rich contexts in which it is found in different cultures (e.g., pathogens, hygiene, purity). Her "schematic" approach accounts for a wide range of cross-cultural data, and unifies so-called "modern" conceptualizations of dirt and cleanliness (based on "scientific" criteria associated with modern medicine) with those recorded in historical and anthropological records (based on so-called "religious" or "magical" interdictions). Douglas hypothesized that the conceptualizations of moral purity and impurity evident in both "modern" and "primitive" societies differed in content, not kind.

Douglas did not provide systematic linguistic or cognitive-semantic evidence for her claim (she followed a more informal, interpretative approach), exploring instead the larger sociological and symbolic implications of the argument. This paper integrates for the first time Douglas' insight with the conceptual apparatus of contemporary cognitive linguistics, metaphor theory and cognitive semantics, allowing for a more rigorous examination of Douglas' hypothesis via the development of a concrete characterization of dirt and cleanliness as Idealized Cognitive Models (ICMs), sharing a basic image-schematic structure. This characterization highlights the conceptual underpinnings of moral reasoning, thereby extending Douglas' work to show the pervasiveness of these schemas across various linguistic constructions, including episodes in which categorization loses its primary "moral" connotation, referring instead to the particularly prominent or "prototypical" status of an entity or activity.

2. Scope of the argument

In cognitive linguistics, Lakoff and Johnson (1999) and Johnson (1993) have dealt broadly with the metaphorical basis of moral reasoning and moral cognition. They propose that a set of metaphorical

constructions (the “moral metaphor system”) structures reasoning across a wide set of morality sub-domains, including ideas about moral accounting, moral strength, moral authority, and moral order, among others (see Lakoff and Johnson [1999: 292–307]). They posit that ideas of dirt and cleanliness serve as the experiential source for the notions of moral “purity” and “impurity” (Lakoff and Johnson 307–308). One portion of this metaphor system, the linguistic constructions in which an entity or setting must be categorized as “dirty” or “clean” to establish its propriety, legality or normative status, is examined here.

The forthcoming argument about the usage of these dirt and cleanliness metaphors in moral reasoning builds on Lakoff and Johnson’s contribution, but differs from it in important respects. In particular, I argue that ideas of dirt and cleanliness are not exclusively implicated in the conceptualization of moral *purity* and *impurity* narrowly defined. Instead, a substantial part of the moral metaphor system is dedicated to conceptualizing the abstract notions of *moral order* and *moral disorder* as well as the actors, entities and activities involved in the production and restoration of these states. A metaphor such as MORAL PURITY IS CLEANLINESS, MORAL IMPURITY IS UNCLEANLINESS, as well as its associated root experiences and primary scenes, constitutes an important but somewhat circumscribed source of reasoning about moral propriety and impropriety. This is possibly because of the metaphor’s strong association with (in all likelihood innate) neural structures that initially evolved to produce aversive emotional reactions to potentially harmful substances or objects, and later re-adapted for the job of moral appraisal of actions and situations that violated group norms (Rozin et al. 2009). This argument applies in particular to metaphors associated with the emotion of disgust (Haidt et al. 1997; Rozin et al. 1999; Schnall et al. 2008).

Metaphorical constructions that characterize certain acts as “rotten,” “stinking,” exhibiting a “stench” or “leaving a bad taste” in the mouth, or that invoke biological maturation and decomposition (corruption, decay, etc.) and the consequences that possible contact with body fluids considered

disgusting when encountered outside the body are likely motivated via this pathway (Zhong and Liljenquist 2006).

These metaphors, however, are distinct from the ones of interest in this paper, which argues that a more general yet equally consequential set of morality metaphors establishes the relative *moral status* of agents, activities and objects in the context of their behavior in *rule-governed domains*. Their pragmatic purpose is to *brand* an ambiguous action or agent as contravening the rules of order of that setting. I argue that the constitutive metaphors of cleanliness as ORDERED ARRANGEMENT and dirt as MATTER OUT OF PLACE are recruited whenever one is faced with pragmatic moral categorization tasks in which the rule-governed nature of a given domain forces the conceptualizer to decide which objects, events or activities are allowed *within* the domain, and which ones “have no place in it” (and should thus be expelled, excluded or thrown *out*).

2.1. *Experiential Grounding*

The most fundamental, experientially-grounded foundation for dirt and cleanliness metaphors is the traffic of objects or substances from an environment in which they are usually encountered to one in which they are out of place. This is a “primary scene” in Grady’s sense (1997). The other major experiential foundation for notions of dirt is common experience with substances that soil or stain the body or clothing. An object or setting becomes “dirty” when it comes into contact with a substance that should not normally be attached to it. “Dirt” might take the form of food and liquid, mud, ink, or bodily substances, but the most common example (from an experiential perspective) is *soil* which is brought into the inside of the house. In fact, this soil (or mud as its “staining” counterpart) is without a doubt the prototypical member of the “dirt” category. Note that soil is only “dirt” when it enters a setting (like a house) that is designated as a place that should be free from it. Therefore, soil cannot be dirt in a house with “dirt floors,” but other entities, such as certain animals or insects, can be. Likewise, mud is not dirt inside a pig sty, but becomes dirt once it makes contact with and attaches itself to a body or clothing.

Within a dwelling that is divided into different rooms, dirt is defined in the same way. The transport of objects or artifacts which are usually encountered in one room to another room dirties the second room. Each culture sets the standard rules as to which objects “belong” to what room, and which are “out of their place”:

We can recognize in our own notions of dirt a kind of omnibus compendium which includes all the rejected elements of ordered systems. It is a relative idea. Shoes are not dirty in themselves but it is dirty to place them on the dining-table; food is not dirty in itself, but it is dirty to leave cooking utensils in the bedroom or food bespattered on clothing; similarly, bathroom equipment in the drawing room, clothing lying on chairs; outdoor things indoors; upstairs things downstairs, under-clothing appearing where over-clothing should be, and so on (Douglas 1966: 36–37).

Naive to rules of cultural order, children are repeatedly cast as agents of disorder, as (mostly unwitting) contraveners of adults’ neat and tidy world, resulting from their material disorganization or “messing up” of physical settings. Most of the injunctions directed from adults to children consist not of the transmission of the abstract, propositionally-encoded normative precepts of the culture, but instead of more mundane commands regarding dirt and cleanliness (Douglas 1966; Bourdieu 1990; Toren 1999). These injunctions are connected to children’s role in disrupting the ideal presentation of household areas, as well as the trafficking of substances, animals or objects across certain boundary zones (such as the boundary between outside and inside). Primordial settings such as common living and dining spaces constitute our first experiences with (concretely) organized rule-governed settings, and much of the intercourse between children and the larger culture concerns the organization of events and activities, particularly notions about inclusion and exclusion, and who and what goes where (prototypically in terms of physical location such as who gets to sit where at the table [Bourdieu 1990; Toren 1999]).

In this sense, our earliest experiences with the contravention of order have to do with the production of disorder in concrete “living” settings. Therefore, conceptualizations of the organization of such settings structure understanding of more abstract, rule-governed arenas such as games, contests or political institutions. Children learn quickly to categorize norm-driven activities by imposing an inside/outside boundary, in which the allowed persons or objects count as “in,” and the disallowed persons, objects or events count as “out.” An event or object found where it does not belong thus counts as “dirt,” and bringing dirt into a setting constitutes disorder production. Likewise, cleaning up involves restoring order by expelling the object, person or activity across the (temporal or spatial) boundary that defines the rule-governed domain. Metaphors of dirt and cleanliness implicate an expected order and the “place” of certain entities, and are thus primarily categorization devices. Rather than referring to the purity of certain objects and events, they are instead systematically associated with the objects’ placement in a context in which they are either “in their place” or otherwise dislocated. Neither is this dirt and cleanliness’s sole entrance into moral reasoning, nor are MATTER OUT OF PLACE and ORDERED ARRANGEMENT the only way in which notions related to cleanliness enter into moral cognition. However, empirical evidence presented below shows that when it comes to *moral categorization*, they appear to be especially prominent and result in a single systematic set of metaphorical entailments extensible across a wide range of experiential domains, both concrete and abstract.

2.2. *Image-schematic characterization*

What is left if we “...abstract pathogenicity and hygiene from our notion of dirt?” Writing without the benefit of contemporary metaphor theory and cognitive linguistics, Douglas believed that we are left with a “definition” of dirt as “matter out of place.”¹ I argue instead that we are left with an

¹ This is obviously not a “definition” in the classical sense, because it is unlikely that it will meet the standard set of providing necessary and sufficient conditions for something to count as dirt.

ICM organized around a primordial set of image-schematic relations (see Figure 1 and Figure 2). As illustrated above, the experientially-concrete and semantically-elaborated model of DIRT AS MATTER OUT OF PLACE (Johnson 1987: 21–23) relies on an image schema to produce a recurrent organization of experience in “disordered” settings. In this organization, **dirt** is cast as *something that is normally encountered outside a setting and is brought (either as an impersonal event or, more commonly, through the intentional actions of an agent) across a BOUNDARY towards the internal region of a CONTAINER (where it does not normally belong)*. This is shown in Figure 1. Note that the external region of the setting where the element is usually found may itself be conceptualized as a container, but as given by the dashed lines, this is optional.

In the prototypical case, the focal container is a house or a dwelling, most likely built in direct contra-position to the natural “elements,” in particular soil, rock, water, small animals and insects, etc. Soil thus becomes dirt (and makes something dirty) when it is transported from the outside to the inside of a region across a BOUNDARY. Note that the statuses of the element and the container as “dirt” and “dirty” (respectively) are mutually specifying: once the element crosses the boundary, the container switches from clean to dirty and the element now acquires the status of “dirt.”

In addition, the CONTACT image schema illustrates that direct contact with a foreign substance may suffice to transform the status of a landmark from clean to dirty. This is shown in Figure 2. In this case, an object becomes dirty when a foreign substance makes CONTACT with it. “Staining” as the transfer of a substance from where it usually belongs to a person’s body or clothing is the prototypical event. The same goes for the traffic of a bodily substance such as saliva or blood from a place where it usually belongs (the body, conceptualized as a CONTAINER of the substance) to a setting where it does not belong (e.g., the living room floor). These substances become dirt the moment they cross the BOUNDARY that separates the inside from the outside of the body, but are not dirt as long as they remain inside.

Notice, however, that the prototypical event of staining has the same image-schematic structure as the “bringing dirt into the house” event prototype, but differs in the conceptualization of the final stage of the process. Here a person or garment acquires the status of “dirty” or “stained” once a substance travels from where it is usually encountered (e.g., a wine glass) and becomes part of another object (e.g., a shirt) by making CONTACT with it (instead of crossing a BOUNDARY). In the case of bodily substances that stain external objects, the BOUNDARY that is crossed is that which separates the “inside” from the outside of the body. The object or person so affected now acquires the status of “dirty” or “stained,” and the parts of the substance now incorporated in the person or object come to be defined as “dirt” or “a stain.”

Focus on the schematic basis of the conceptualization of dirt and cleanliness allows for the analysis of the use of dirt-clean metaphors in English that (1) synthesizes in a natural way the moral and non-moral uses of dirt and cleanliness for the categorization of actors, events and settings and (2) allows for maximal flexibility in terms of the cross-cultural and cross-temporal applicability of the framework. Given these preliminaries, the basic ICM for dirt and clean in natural language examples will be examined in the sections that follow.

3. The categorization of Settings, Actions and Agents

3.1. Dirty actions

As argued above, one use of the DIRT AS MATTER OUT OF PLACE and CLEAN AS ORDERED ARRANGEMENT ICMs is the *categorization* of the moral status of objects, settings and agents. Thus, a “dirty player” or a “dirty lawyer” is one whose moral status is compromised. Likewise, a “clean government” conforms to the conventionally accepted standards of governance while a “dirty business” contravenes the normally agreed upon rules of business practice. These sorts of

[DIRTY-NOUN] constructions are used in discourse about the propriety of certain moves or strategies in games and contests, and more generally in *rule-governed settings*.

I argue that categorization of certain actions and agents *within* games, contests and other arenas of social life that are perceived as being governed by rules and other (explicit or implicit) standards of behavior is made intuitive via the ICM of DIRT AS MATTER OUT OF PLACE. The game or the contest is usually conceptualized as a container, within which resides morally-allowed actions and agents. When disallowed actions enter the contest, they stand out as “out of place” within the game, and so are naturally conceptualized as “dirty.” Allowable actions, meanwhile, are “clean.” Following the entailment — given by the basic image-schematic relations — that any entity that comes into CONTACT with an object classified as dirty inherits the status of dirty, we will see that a game or contest cannot count as clean if it contains even a single disallowed action or a single agent that has already been categorized as “dirty.”

Take for instance the following discourse samples taken from printed sports news:

(1) a. Bengals coach Marvin Lewis called the incident “unfortunate.” Assistant head coach Paul Alexander and Bengals players weren’t as diplomatic when discussing defensive tackle Tony Williams’ season-ending injury in Cincinnati’s 23-10 victory over Denver on Monday night[...]. “That’s strictly nonsense, a play like that,” Bobbie Williams said. “This is a professional league, and they work so hard to keep it **clean**. For a guy to do a **dirty play** like that, it’s uncalled for. Hopefully, the league will take action.”²

b. Karl Malone of the Utah Jazz, suspended for one game and fined \$10,000 for a flagrant foul against Detroit’s Isiah Thomas that caused a 40-stitch slash above the eye, says that he

² Dayton Daily News, “Bronco’s ‘dirty’ block angers Bengals” [27 October 2004].

knows in his heart that he was right. But he will not appeal[...] “I thought it was a **clean foul** but obviously the NBA didn’t think that.”³

As we saw above, the ICM of DIRT AS MATTER OUT OF PLACE entails a “relativist” conceptualization of dirt (Douglas 1966: 36–37). That is, an object is not inherently dirty or clean, but becomes so as it crosses the boundary (or is “carried” by an agent) from a region where it naturally “belongs” to one where it does not “belong,” resulting in its entrance into or permanent contact with the landmark (conceptualized as container in the former case).

This analysis accounts for such cases as 1a and 1b. “Plays” are not free-standing actions, but are elements *within* a game (which functions as a container for plays). The inside-outside scheme imposes a binary categorization on the “types” of plays that are presumed to exist: some *belong* in the game (*clean* plays), while the rest *do not belong* in the game. The latter class of plays, when they are introduced into an otherwise normal game, are *dirty*. The same analysis applies to the local category of “clean foul” in American basketball in 1b. Fouls are a normal part of the game of basketball. The fouls that normally belong (hard but without intent to harm) are therefore “clean,” fouls that do not belong are “not clean,” and therefore constitute “dirty fouls.”

3.2. *Dirty actors*

Executing a dirty foul may lead to sanction or expulsion from the game, and even the reputation as a “dirty player.”⁴ In fact the “dirty player” construction has achieved highly conventionalized status across a wide variety of sports. Consider:

(2) a. Kobe Bryant says he can handle just about any kind of criticism. Calling him a **dirty player** crosses the line[...]Bryant reacted angrily to such a concept Wednesday, and expressed gratitude for the support given him by Los Angeles Lakers coach Phil

³ *Kentucky New Era*, “Utah’s Malone gets suspension for foul” [16 December 1991].

⁴ More generally, it is notable that the word “foul” itself shares an etymological root with the word “filth.”

Jackson[...] “It’s insulting,” Bryant said before the slumping Lakers flew to Denver for tonight’s game against the Nuggets. “I don’t need to be a **dirty player**. That’s just ridiculous. I’m not a **dirty player** — never have been, never will be.” [...]Regarding criticism, Bryant said it’s fine for people to say, for example, that he shoots too much. [...] “I don’t want the image of being a **dirty player**,” he added.⁵

b. “I’m an old alley fighter but I want equal muscle,” declared Coach Bob Cousy of the U.S. national team after Russia squared their series in a rough basketball battle[...]On the other hand, Russia’s coach Vladimir Kandrashin declared through an interpreter, “Swen Nater is a **dirty player**,” and he made motions with his elbow.⁶

In the ICM for dirt, the status of dirt “affects” not only the matter that is out of place and the setting that becomes disordered, but also the agent responsible for bringing it from its normal place to its current (wrong) place. Especially in situations like 1a, where “order” implies the existence of certain prescribed actions and the systematic exclusion of others, a person who brings an excluded action *into* an activity not only makes a “dirty play” but also “soils the game,” and becomes a “dirty player.” A dirty player regularly executes dirty plays within a series of games as is clear from 2a and 2b. The dirty player brand is a well-recognized label signaling moral opprobrium and is usually rejected by those so labeled (as in 2b).

Dirt, therefore, has a contagious quality, since transporting matter out of place from the outside of a boundary to the inside requires an agent to make CONTACT with the substance, thus becoming dirty him or herself. He or she must cause the object to make CONTACT with the setting in which it is placed. Accordingly, a dirty person is one who transports (potentially) dirty objects, and a setting becomes dirty when a dirty person enters it and deposits dirt within it.

⁵ *Seattle Post Intelligencer*, “NBA Notebook: Dirty-player talk angers Bryant” [14 April 2007].

⁶ *Gadsden Times*, “Russian Coach Accuses Nater of Playing Dirty” [1 May 1973].

The use of dirt and cleanliness to categorize agents as moral or immoral inherits this entire set of conceptual entailments. The “dirty player” construction refers to the special case of a player who *carries within* him or herself intentions to engage in illicit acts during games as a dispositional aspect of his or her personality. Thus, a player could be dirty even before committing a dirty act if he or she is thought of as having intended (because the intentions are “part” of the player) to introduce the “out of place” action into the game.

3.3. *Activities out of place*

A direct empirical implication of the present argument is that if the prototypical conceptual construal is of DIRT AS MATTER OUT OF PLACE, then when agents detect immoral actors or actions within a rule-governed setting and classify them as “dirty,” they should also comment on the “out of place” nature of those agents or actions using the resources afforded by the GAME IS A CONTAINER metaphor alluded to above. This is clear in the following discourse samples:

(3) a. It is well [known] that both Marius Bosman and Elandre van der Bergh have been heavily fined for the hooligan tactics of Witbank — even if the Mpumalanga officials were rightly forced to act following the strong denunciation of the **dirty** deeds by Lions manager Fran Cotton.[...]Cotton, in his summation of the crippling of Scots lock Doddie Weir, was dead right. **This type of play has no place in the game of rugby.** Certainly not South African rugby.⁷

b. It could get ugly tomorrow.[...]Armed with tapes of what they say are evidence of blatant chop blocks by the Raiders, the Giants warned yesterday that they can play just as **dirty** if Oakland linemen go at their knees.[...] “If they chop-block one of us, it’s going to be on out there,” cautioned defensive tackle Keith Hamilton, who is contesting \$19,500 in

⁷ *Mail & Guardian Online*, “Adapting to new styles and stars” [14 June 1997].

finest for two hits on quarterbacks this year. “**There ain’t no place in the game** for it, and if that’s the game they want to play, then we’re going to take care of business out there.”⁸

3.4. *Dirty settings*

A particularly clear example of the recruitment of dirt and cleanliness to conceptualize the “out of place” nature of certain objects, actions or agents within rule-governed settings can be found in the recurrent scandals over the use of performance-enhancing drugs (such as steroids) in competitive sports. Here, across various sports, players who engage in the practice are labeled as “dirty,” and those who do not are labeled as “clean.” In addition, once it is discovered that some competitors are using such drugs, the status of dirty spreads upwards by part-whole association to the entire sport:

(4) a. When Lance Armstrong arrives at the head of the pack next Sunday — as he almost surely will — he will deserve all the cheers as a strong and charismatic six-time champion of the Tour de France[...]But trailing right behind Armstrong, like a malevolent shadow, is the ugly culture of cycling — eight riders who died in the past 15 months, at least 16 riders who have been yanked out of this Tour because of drugs.[...]Cycling cannot escape the suspicion of being **dirty**.⁹

b. As riders gear up for the opening stage of the 96th Tour De France, the people with the job of stamping out doping in sport are getting ready with their needles and swabs. They are preparing for what’s being billed as the most rigorously tested sports event ever.[...] The Tour’s organisers are hoping it will restore some shine to cycling’s **dirty reputation**.[...]“We’re going into this year’s race with some confidence that there will be

⁸ *New York Daily News*, “Giants prepared for raider tricks” [11 November 1995].

⁹ *New York Times*, “Sports of The Times; Armstrong’s Toughest Rival May Be the Sport of Cycling” [19 July 2004].

clean cyclists competing," he said.[...]He cautions against rushing in too quickly to make **clean Tour** claims.¹⁰

c. Baseball's current testing program, introduced in the 2002 contract, is widely viewed as a toothless joke. For years, neither the players nor the owners have had much stake in catching drug cheaters. The **dirty players** didn't want to get caught, the **clean ones** didn't want to lose any slugging teammates to drug suspensions, and the owners didn't want to know if the guys whose homers were putting butts in the seats were doing more than eating their Wheaties.¹¹

d. Relay teammates of confessed steroid user Marion Jones should be able to keep the medals they won with her at the 2000 Olympics, a poll found[...] "The public spoke to the innocence of her teammates and spoke from the heart on this one," Rick Gentile, the poll's director, said in a statement.[...] "It would be a shame for them to lose their medals, but the victory is obviously tarnished with the star of their team **running 'dirty.'**"[...] Last week, Rogge said the IOC would upgrade only athletes who were determined to be "**clean.**"¹²

Steroid use in competitive sports conforms in almost all respects to the prototypical situation of an agent intentionally bringing an entity or object that does not belong into an organized setting, thus upsetting its inherent order. Note that, in accordance with the "contagious" nature of dirt, the athlete becomes "dirty" upon injection of the illicit substance, and then categorically transforms the game from clean to dirty by competing under the substance's influence. An athlete counts as "dirty" even after a single episode of drug use, and a game does not count as clean until every single "dirty" athlete has been expelled from the game, or until every single athlete in current competition has been ascertained to be "clean."

¹⁰ ABC News, "'Athlete's passport' a ticket to clean Tour" [4 July 2009].

¹¹ Salon.com, "King Kaufman's Sports Daily" 3/4/2004 [4 March 2004].

¹² *Seattle Post Intelligencer*, "Poll: Penalize Marion Jones, not teammates" [15 November 2007].

It is possible for a dirty sport (in 4a cycling) to have one or more “clean” players (e.g., cyclists who are not doping, or in 4c, “clean players” who are not taking steroids in baseball). Conversely the *Tour de France* cannot count as clean, as noted in 4b, until it is ascertained that it does not contain *any* dirty parts (participants). The same goes for Marion Jones’ running team in 4d: because she was “running dirty.” This construction is used here to construe the contravention of order within a setting as an ongoing (imperfective) activity (located in the past). The status of “dirty” spreads upwards by part-whole association to the entire team, thus affecting the moral status of its “clean” runners *qua* members of the team. Such a conclusion that is intuitive — because it is entailed by the ICM — but is resisted as “unfair” by a rationalistic analysis of the situation based on abstract discursive rules.

3.5. *Government and Politics*

While the examples in this section have been restricted to games and competitive sports, they should be generalizable to essentially all constructions in which an agent or setting is metaphorically categorized as dirty or clean concerning the moral status of its behavior within a rule-governed setting. More schematically, we should observe the deployment of the [CLEAN-NOUN] and [DIRTY-NOUN] constructions, where the noun characterizes actors in a role or a position within that setting. This includes such conventional constructions as “dirty cop,” “dirty politician,” “dirty lawyer,” etc. In addition, the same analysis should be applicable to judging the moral status of settings themselves, as in the “clean/dirty government” “clean/dirty elections” or “clean/dirty tour” constructions. Take for instance:

- (5) a. Bolivians danced down the stretch of boulevard known as the Prado last week, chanting over and over, "The corruptos are leaving!" Buoyed by the wide support for

Gonzalo "Goni" Sanchez de Lozada in Sunday's presidential election, they were taking to heart his pledge to **clean up** what many condemn as an exceptionally **dirty government**.¹³

b. In this election, it was the National Republican Congressional Committee that was by far the most egregious practitioner of **dirty politics**[...]Rep. Simmons says untruthful and vicious allegations **have no place** in politics.¹⁴

c. Stone, and many historians, have been unkind to [Lyndon B.] Johnson, portraying him simply as a mean-spirited **dirty politician**, and his administration as a total failure[...]¹⁵

In 5a a government as a rule-governed setting is conceptualized as a container in which certain actions and activities are allowed or disallowed. A government that contains actions out of place counts as "dirty," and politicians vow to restore order by "cleaning up." In 5b, the abstract realm of politics is also conceptualized as an ordered, rule-governed realm containing the actions and activities that are allowed. "Dirty politics" include disallowed actions which (under normal or ideal circumstances) "have no place" in it, and in 5c, a dirty politician brings these tactics into the setting, just as players who bring disallowed tactics into sports are "dirty" (as are the tactics themselves).

3.6. *Abstract rule-governed domains*

The DIRT AS MATTER OUT OF PLACE metaphor is commonly used in discourse about games and other institutionalized settings that resemble contests or arenas structured by rules (such as elections, police precincts or governments as in 5a), which are the most commonly experienced rule-governed settings. However, by linking this primary metaphor to the conceptualization of abstract domains as "regions" or "containers," dirt and cleanliness metaphors can be extended to the mind (which is commonly conceptualized as a rule-governed domain in the Judeo-Christian tradition) via the highly conventionalized MIND IS A CONTAINER metaphor (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). Consider for instance:

¹³ Philadelphia Inquirer, "Bolivians Cheer President's Anti-Corruption Vow" [13 June 1993].

¹⁴ The Day, "Local Control Slips Away from Campaigns" [10 November 2002].

¹⁵ The Cavalier Daily, "'JFK' Unduly Criticized or Historically Flawed" [15 January 1992].

- (6) a. You have a **dirty** mind.
- b. I keep having **dirty** thoughts.
- c. It's time to come out with your **dirty little secret**.

The “dirty mind” construction is no different from the “dirty politics” or “dirty government” constructions discussed above. Here the mind is conceptualized as a container that includes the thoughts that are allowed. When a disallowed thought *enters* the mind from the outside, the thought and mind both become dirty. In addition, the entire system of entailments discussed above in the case of concrete rule-governed settings follow in this case. A single dirty thought is sufficient to dirty a mind, even if the mind still contains clean parts (thoughts). Conversely, a mind cannot reclaim its clean status until all dirty thoughts have been expelled from it back to the outside. As such, there is an isomorphism between expulsion and the restoration of order within the (abstract) setting.

This analysis is consistent with the pervasive cultural ideal in Christianity (beginning in the early modern period) that the source of sinful thoughts is external (that sinful thoughts invade the mind from the outside, usually via “The Devil” or some other wicked supernatural agency). During the ritual of confession, order is considered restored by the linguistic act of “expelling” the thought back to the outside.¹⁶ The fact that today, the dirty mind and dirty thought constructions are conventionally understood primarily to be thoughts about *sex* is a historical idiosyncrasy of these religious traditions, in which the thoughts that are usually policed are those associated with sexuality. However, it is likely that the experiential association of sexuality with unwanted bodily fluids and with purity as abstention

¹⁶ As Daniel Defoe commented (in one of his rather lesser-known works):

It is also a great inquiry here, Whether the Devil knows our thoughts or not? If I may give my opinion, I am with the negative, I deny that he knows any thing of our thoughts except those which he puts us upon thinking; for I will not doubt but he has the art to *inject* thoughts... *in* us. It is not so wild a thought as some take it to be, that Mr. Milton lays down to represent the Devil *injecting* corrupt desires and wandering thoughts *into* the head of Even, by dreams... (Daniel Defoe, *The History of the Devil: Ancient and Modern in Two Parts* 1726[1814]: 135, italics mine).

from bodily contact and activities serves to over-determine this association of dirty and specifically sexual thoughts.

The highly-conventionalized “dirty little secret” construction in 6c is interesting. The fundamental DIRT AS MATTER OUT OF PLACE ICM classifies objects within the context of a broader cultural ICM that designates which secrets are allowed to be kept and which are “out of place.” The semantics are thus provided by an ICM related to behavior in the secret-keeping and secret-divulging domain. In the dirty secret ICM, a person is allowed a certain set of secrets but others, especially those that would dramatically change the general perception of that person, are “dirty” and should be let *out*. This appears to be connected with the general cultural rule against the radical misrepresentation of personal character; persons should be who they claim to be (Goffman 1959). Thus, a secret of this sort is out of place within the allowed set of secrets that are usually kept, and thus counts as dirty.

4. Cleaning and dirtying as moral actions

I have shown thusfar that conceptual metaphors originating from the realm of dirt and cleanliness can be used for the categorization of objects, events and settings. It will be argued in this section that the ICMs of DIRT AS MATTER OUT OF PLACE and CLEAN AS ORDERED ARRANGEMENT can also be used to conceptualize the qualities of certain *activities*. Conceptualizations of actions thought to bring order or disorder into the moral realm are structured via projections from the ICM for dirt and cleanliness as outlined above. Two primary conceptual metaphors are recruited to do the job: RESTORING MORAL ORDER IS CLEANING and DEGRADING THE MORAL STATUS OF AN OBJECT IS DIRTYING.

As we have seen in the prototypical set up, something becomes dirty when an extraneous element is introduced by an agent into a previously “clean” (e.g., regularly ordered) setting. The highly conventionalized folk-psychological model of intentional action — as outlined for instance in D’Andrade (1987) — assigns blame to those who purposefully make previously clean settings dirty. Dirtying and cleaning are rarely conceptualized as unintentional actions, so moral categorization via

the assignment of responsibility for outcomes is a relatively smooth affair. Moral responsibility and negative moral valence are automatically assigned to agents who bring extraneous elements into settings in which they do not belong. Likewise, positive moral valence attaches to actors who attempt to restore order to settings that have been disrupted by dirt.

(7) a. A call for outdoor billboards to be G-rated has been rejected by a parliamentary committee, which has given advertisers one last chance to **clean up their act**.¹⁷

b. What allowed Chief Parker to **clean up** the LAPD 40 years ago was the public sense that major changes were needed.¹⁸

c. Each party fielded a phalanx of candidates, and the primary contests, debates, and campaigns **quickly devolved into a mud-slinging circus**.¹⁹

d. Joseph DiGiorgio Jr., who was convicted of molesting a teen, has **smeared the family name** for both his father and another family member.²⁰

In 7a the concrete experiential source domain of cleaning actions (those geared towards restoring order) is recruited to conceptualize the more abstract target domain of actions intended to restore moral order. For instance, “cleaning up” one’s act requires the inclusion of only morally-approved actions into one’s behavioral repertoire. Conceptualizing actions that bring or restore moral order via the metaphor of “cleaning” leads naturally to thinking of somebody **who cleans up their act** as somebody who **gets their act together**. In this way, the action of cleaning is conceptually isomorphic to bringing order or structure to a previously disordered or unstructured setting (in this case, one’s life). Gathering or bringing together previously disconnected or strewn about parts counts as an ordering activity under this conceptualization. The more amenable the object is to being construed as a complex entity made up of interacting or connected parts, the more cognitively natural the construction will be. Sometimes,

¹⁷ *Brisbane Times*, “G-rated billboard campaign falters” [2 July 2011].

¹⁸ *Daily News of Los Angeles*, “Lessons of the Tapes” [3 September 1995].

¹⁹ *The Baltimore Chronicle*, “Why Did the Illinois Republicans Import an Arch-Conservative for the US Senate Race?” [9 August 2004].

²⁰ *Bucks County Courier Times*, “Name sharing not blame sharing” [17 July 2005].

just expelling all of the extraneous elements currently disrupting a given context may be sufficient to bring order to a setting, as in 7b. Thus, when a new police commissioner eliminates (putatively incompetent or corrupt) elements at LAPD headquarters, his or her action is conceptualized as “cleaning up.” Here the police department is the container, and the commissioner is the cleaner who organizes it by expelling the unwanted elements (e.g., “dirty cops”).

The same analysis applies to “dirtying” actions. In 7c the abstract target-domain action of attempting to morally compromise another person is conceptualized by recruiting content from the source domain of “actions that make things dirty.” Thus, making accusations that critically compromise the moral status of others is structurally analogous to making an object dirty by slinging mud at it. In this instance one intentionally transports (slings) a potentially soiling substance so that it makes CONTACT with an adversary, thus changing his or her status from clean to dirty. In 7d a family member’s conviction for having molested a minor is thought of as directly analogous to “smearing” an object or setting with some extraneous substance. Here the criminal action makes CONTACT with the (previously “clean”) family name, thus soiling or staining it (putatively permanently). By engaging in a morally-dubious action, a family member thus smears “the entire” family name. This is consistent with the entailment analysis above in which the entire object becomes dirty once any part of it comes into contact with even a single, delimited instance of the dirt-inducing substance. Because other family members *share* the family name (and thus make permanent CONTACT with it), they are also smeared by the incident, even if they took no direct part in it. Note that this natural intuition (all family members are smeared) clashes with the more reasoned conclusion that only one person — the perpetrator — is morally degraded.²¹

²¹ This is a case in which our interpretation of the intuitive import of the conceptual metaphor (which occurs through the fast “System I” pathway) in which all parties are smeared is not in accord with that which can be reached via the more effortful process (which occurs through the slow “System II” pathway) of moral reasoning based on abstract rules (consistent with a dual-process model). Note that this is precisely the same moral situation encountered in the Marion Jones case; here the entire team was “dirty” even though she was the only one accused of doping. This strikes us as inherently unfair from a propositional approach to moral

Note that dirtying and cleaning activities (and their metaphorical projections) are not simply “opposites” of one another, but rely on qualitatively distinct underlying conceptual metaphors, themselves dependent on distinct ICMs and compound image-schematic structures. The source domain for the conceptual metaphor of DEGRADING THE MORAL STATUS OF A PERSON IS DIRTYING has an actor intentionally transport or project a foreign object or substance so that it makes CONTACT with another actor or object, or enters a setting from the outside after crossing a boundary. The introduction of the foreign object is then thought of as compromising the natural order internal to that setting (the same analysis applies to the prototypical case of staining by making a foreign substance make contact with a landmark). The ICM for cleaning does not feature an agent crossing a boundary; instead here the agent actively engages in an ordering activity *within* a region. This ordering activity may consist in the agent expelling extraneous elements outside of this region, or in the agent reorganizing the elements within that region with the aim of increasing structure and order. In contrast to the “dirtying” ICM, the agent is not conceptualized as necessarily “carrying” those elements across a boundary from the outside.

5. Cultural resonance of dirt-cleanliness metaphors

It is well known in cultural studies that moral construals of seemingly disparate “social problems” (such as drug smuggling, immigration, epidemics and parental concerns over media content) are constructed within the larger cultural discourse using metaphors that recruit conceptual structure from the target domain of “displacement” (such as “smuggling,” “invasion” and “infection” [Cresswell 1997]). It is also well known that metaphors of dirt, cleanliness and filth are typical in these seemingly disparate set of cases. This analysis offers a unifying explanation for this phenomenon. In the four cases suggested above, (1) smuggling an illegal object or substance, (2) invading an area, (3) infecting

culpability based on abstract rules, even though it makes sense according to the abstract ICM; hence the title of the article “Penalize Marion Jones, not Teammates.”

a person with a disease and (4) transporting media content via the “airwaves,” there is a shared image-schematic conceptualization of an agent transporting some sort of foreign object across a boundary (Figure 1). This shared conceptual structure is isomorphic with the ICM of dirt outlined above. We should thus expect “dirt” metaphors to have a natural affinity with all four types of situations.

Contraband — The clearest case of the use of dirt metaphors for the case of carrying illicit contraband is found in contemporary urban slang. The construction “ridin’ dirty” denotes possessing an illicit substance or object, or having been caught by the police in the act of transporting an illicit substance (Nielson 2009: 14). This is evident in the following excerpt from the song “Ridin’” by rapper *Chamillionaire*:

(8) a. They see me rollin’. They hatin’. Patrolling, they tryin’ to catch me **ridin’ dirty**.²²

Note that the “ridin’ dirty” construction is a specific variant of the more general [VERB(ING)-DIRTY] construction discussed above in the Marion Jones example (“running dirty”). The primary semantic function of this construction is to categorize an on-going action within a given rule-governed setting as not conforming to the accepted rules; “dirty” thus categorizes a particular agent’s action (running, riding [in an automobile], etc.). The association with contraband is over-determined within the ICM of DIRT AS MATTER OUT OF PLACE, since the primary experience of contravening an existing order entails the displacement of objects or substances into settings in which they should not be found. Here the source of displacement is a human agent who willfully transports the substance or object into a setting where it does not belong. Thus, an agent is considered “dirty” whenever he or she is currently in possession of an illegal (“dirty”) object or substance. This is a natural extension of the conceptualization of rule-governed settings (in this case the entire society) as containers of allowed actions. These conceptualizations of illegal activities involving contraband using

²² <http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/chamillionaire/ridin.html> [last accessed 29 March 2011].

dirt metaphors emerge naturally from the “agentic” version of the dirt ICM described above, in which a person’s action transports an object out of place.

Immigration — In the case of racist moral panics regarding immigration, we find one special (limiting) case in which the boundary-crossing agent *is* the foreign object conceptualized as not belonging to the setting.²³ Thus, racist talk of immigrants as “dirty” is best thought of as determined by a conceptualization of immigrants *as* dirt; that is, persons out of place.²⁴ For example, characterizing a region via the NATION AS HOUSE metaphor allows for the branding of an immigrant as “*dirt* to be swept *out*” (Santa Ana 1999:199–200), analogous to the metaphorical banishing of a “dirty thought” from an otherwise clean mind. This is predictable from the present framework, since the prototypical ordered setting that is disrupted by the incorporation of external objects that do not belong is in fact the house (or rooms within a dwelling). Note that the entailments regarding appropriate order restoration actions (and their conceptualization using the metaphor RESTORING MORAL ORDER IS CLEANING) follow naturally as a result. Thus, in the racist imaginary, authorities bring order by “cleaning up” “our nation” (or lower level geographical regions conceptualized as containers, such as cities) of the immigration threat by expelling the foreign object to the region “where it belongs” (presumably the country of origin).

Infectious Disease — The same analysis applies to moral panics centered on sufferers of stigmatized infectious diseases such as SARS, syphilis or AIDS (Wallis and Nerlich 2005). Here, purveyors of the moral panic stigmatize victims of the disease by casting them as agents who “carry” the matter (the virus) out of place within his or her body, and transport it into places that it does not belong (our “community,” our “children’s schools,” etc.). The highly-conventionalized categorization of putatively infectious objects or persons using the [DIRTY-NOUN] construction (e.g., “dirty

²³ Another limiting case predicted by this account is one in which the agent’s *action* is the very object that is disallowed in the setting, as in the case of “dirty plays” examined above. Other structurally analogous variants (e.g., the case of “dirty dancing”) are subject to the same analysis.

²⁴ See Chilton (1994) for a related line of analysis that also departs from Mary Douglas’ work.

needles”) is accounted for using the same explanation; needles are dirty because they carry within them the foreign object (the virus) that could *enter* our bodies (the container at risk of getting dirty) or make CONTACT with it.

Objectionable Media Content — Moral panics surrounding the spread of certain ideas, symbols and images “carried” through media are yet another conceptual variation of the same use of dirt metaphors to conceptualize objects out of place. Here, no human agent carries the noxious object across regions; instead the media are conceptualized as the agents, and the media content as the matter out of place. This accounts for such constructions as “media filth.” Consider:

(9) a. Conservative William Bennett’s crusade against **media filth** has a new target: daytime TV talk shows that present a dizzying parade of prostitutes, porn stars and promiscuous teens.²⁵

b. The Parents Television Council, an aggressive critic of indecency on the public airwaves, praised Congress for listening to Americans “fed up with the sexually raunchy and gratuitously violent content that’s broadcast over the public airwaves”...Rep. Fred Upton, R-Mich., a chief supporter of the legislation in the House, said the tenfold increase in fines to get “the **filth** and triple-x smut **off** the public airwaves” was appropriate...²⁶

Conceptualizing the action of removing objectionable content as a moral campaign to “clean up” the airwaves or the Internet — abstract “places” conceptualized as containers harboring the objectionable content — from the “filth” construed as being transported from some external place (e.g., Hollywood) where it might belong to a place where it certainly does not (e.g., “our homes”) then follows naturally.

²⁵ *New York Daily News*, “Attacking Sleaze Tv Crusader Says Scrap Lurid Daytime Talkies” [27 October 1995].

²⁶ *USA Today*, “Congress increases indecency fines tenfold” [16 June 2006 2006].

6. Extensions of dirt/clean metaphors for categorization outside of the moral realm

Metaphorical uses of the notion of “dirt” can be found in cases where the profiled features of the target object that motivate the categorization are unrelated to its moral status or with its role in the contravention of the rules. Consider for instance:

(10) a. An anonymous tip Wednesday is prompting an East Coast manhunt for four Chinese scientists and two Iraqis said to be planning to detonate a **dirty bomb**, public safety officials briefed on the threat told the Boston Globe.²⁷

b. Because nuclear reactors were developed by governments in a wartime hurry, the best technological routes were not always taken. The pressurized-water design was a **quick-and-dirty solution** that we have been stuck with ever since.²⁸

c. Giants starter Tim Lincecum has a **filthy curveball**, but scientists say it doesn’t move differently than any other curveball.²⁹

In this section I argue that conceptualizing non-moral qualities of objects using dirt and cleanliness metaphors relies on the same schematic features of the ICMs outlined above: the notions of dirt as MATTER OUT OF PLACE and clean as ORDERED ARRANGEMENT. These non-moral uses of the dirt metaphors thus do not require a separate analytic treatment. Rather than having the status of non-standard deviations from the rule, they serve as additional evidence for the claim that dirt is conceptualized using a fairly simple set of conceptual resources across a wide variety of domains.

In 10a, reference is made to a “dirty bomb” using a construction that is at least superficially similar to the “dirty player” example above. However, “dirt” is not used here as a commentary on the moral status of the bomb in question. While the [DIRTY-NOUN] construction is a semantic categorization tool in this context, this categorization does not involve the object’s moral status. Further, the

²⁷ CBS News.com, “Report: Boston Dirty Bomb Threat” [20 January 2005].

²⁸ *Wall Street Journal*, “Does a Different Nuclear Power Lie Ahead?” [19 March 2011].

²⁹ The Kansas City Star, “Scientists say a curveball doesn’t actually break” [21 October 2010].

conceptualization of a dirty object as one that crosses a boundary from the outside and enters a region where it does not belong is not relevant here. Under this formulation, some bombs are “dirty” because they happen to be a foreign object that is smuggled by morally-suspect agents into a foreign country. Consider, however, the Department of Homeland Security’s definition of a “dirty bomb”:

A **dirty bomb**, or radiological dispersion device, is a bomb that combines conventional explosives, such as dynamite, with radioactive materials in the form of powder or pellets. The idea behind a **dirty bomb** is to blast radioactive material into the area around the explosion. This could possibly cause buildings and people to be exposed to radioactive material. The main purpose of a **dirty bomb** is to frighten people and make buildings or land unusable for a long period of time.³⁰

No mention is made of the provenance of the bomb, or to the fact that it is smuggled or illicitly transported by foreign agents. Instead, the most salient reason for characterizing these types of bombs as “dirty” has to do with their *method of construction* and with their role as *agents of pollution*. The construction of dirty bombs is unusual since they combine elements and parts that are usually found in different types of weapons. Additionally, their primary usage is contamination — to make the place in which they are detonated “dirty” with radiation. Thus, the designation of these types of weapons as “dirty” is motivated by two elements taken from the original ICM of dirt as MATTER OUT OF PLACE.

First, objects that have a non-standard construction, containing elements or parts usually found in other types of objects — like an otherwise pristine vodka martini mixed with olive juice — are profitably conceptualized as “dirty.” Here the “matter out of place” are the object’s non-standard parts (e.g., radio-active material in a traditional explosive device). This is consistent with the use of the dirty bomb construction (and its obvious counterpart “clean bomb”) in the following excerpt:

³⁰ To be found at: <http://www.nationalterroralert.com/dirtybomb/> [last accessed July 2010].

(11) a. Sen. Clinton P. Anderson (D-N.M.) says the U.S. military not only is piling up “**dirty**” **nuclear bombs** but is deliberately making them “**dirtier**.” Anderson, member and former chairman of the Joint Congressional Atomic Energy Committee, said this is in contrast to the administration’s public avowal of a desire to concentrate on perfecting “**clean**” **bombs**. He said the State Department wants **cleaner bombs** “but I believe the military is steadily stockpiling **dirtier bombs**...they are not only supporting them, they have pulled bombs out of the stockpile and inserted something which makes it **dirtier**.”³¹

In this example, bombs which are already classified as dirty are made even “dirtier” when additional non-standard elements are incorporated into them. Bombs can be made cleaner when these extraneous elements are removed (consistent with the metaphor of cleaning as ordering activity that involves the expulsion of out-of-place elements outlined above).

Second, objects that dirty settings or persons by making them come into contact with a foreign substance are themselves dirty. In the “dirty player” example, a player who performs a dirty play and thus soils the game is himself “dirty,” since when a person or an object is conceptualized as a dirt-inducing agent, he or she is perceived as having made direct CONTACT with the dirt-inducing substance prior to transporting it to the new setting.

The use of the dirt ICM to categorize objects that feature a non-standard construction as members of the “dirty” class is most clearly appreciated in 10b. For expediency purposes, a “quick and dirty” solution incorporates elements or shortcuts (the “matter out of place”) not normally found in standard solutions for a given problem. This explains why the notion of “quick and dirty” solutions is popular among programmers. Programs are complex objects easily analyzable into their component parts, and thus are naturally conceptualized as exhibiting an ordered arrangement of those parts. A “quick and

³¹ *The Deseret News*, “Solon Hurls ‘Dirty Bomb’ Charge” [28 April 1958].

dirty” program does its job, but incorporates “kludges” and shortcuts that would otherwise be absent in a more elegant and well-structured version.

In 10c we encounter an even harder case for the argument, since here “filthy” is used to imply that Giant’s pitcher Tim Lincecum’s curveball is *exceptional*. This contrasts semantically with the recruitment of dirt metaphors for moral reasoning where dirty is invariably used to cast objects, events, settings and agents in a negative light. The dirt ICM and its associated [DIRTY-NOUN] construction classify Lincecum’s curveball positively, as above the average, so it is harder to see how “the matter out of place” conceptualization figures here.

I argue that the affinity between “filthy” and “exceptional” is a result of an implicit cognitive consequence of the primary experience of dirt: insofar as the prototypical example of dirt is something out of place (e.g., an item of food in the bathroom), the identification of something as dirt requires the imposition of a figure-ground construal on the scene in question in which invariably the object classified as “dirt” acquires special prominence. In terms of cognitive grammar (Langacker 1987), the matter out of place, as the trajector, is *profiled* against the setting in which it is found (which plays the role of the landmark). Thus, it is cognitively natural to use dirt-based metaphors to set apart an especially prominent (and in this case, exceptional) object. A “filthy” curveball, then, stands out from the rest as particularly deserving of attention, just as “dirt” does vis a vis the settings in which it is found in the prototypical experience. In this case, the affective valence of the “dirt” metaphor is secondary to the typical cognitive construal of situations involving dirt, in which the dirt-inducing object is usually a prominent participant.

Once again, some constructions that have become conventionalized in urban slang provide support for this hypothesis. It is commonly understood that the phrase “Lebron James is dirty” means that Lebron James is a *particularly excellent player*. For instance, one meaning given for the word “dirty” in the online *Urban Dictionary* is as follows:

- (12) a. **Dirty.-** Really good. a superlative, sick, awesome.

Micah is real good at basketball.

Yeah, he's **dirty**.³²

An analysis similar to the one offered above for the case of dirt can be developed for metaphorical uses of the notion of “clean” outside of the moral realm. Classifying an object (abstract or concrete), process or event as clean relies on the notion of cleanliness as ORDERED (OR EXPECTED) ARRANGEMENT.

Consider for instance:

- (13) a. Annika Sörenstam usually strikes the ball using a hard, **clean stroke**.
- b. Using her newly sharpened machete, she sliced the top of the coconut **clean off**.
- c. It is time to make a **clean break with the past**.

In these cases, clean characterizes an action as belonging to a certain class. What is the conceptual import of the “clean” metaphor in these sorts of categorizations? Classifying a given process as “clean” relies on one’s underlying ability to decompose a process into a temporally-interlinked set of component parts that regularly comprise an instance of that process (Langacker 1991). Following the ICM of clean as ORDERED ARRANGEMENT, a stroke or an act of slicing is deemed to be “clean” when a conceptualizer wants to highlight that a particular instance of the process in question *does not incorporate any extraneous elements* that might be seen as interfering with its proper execution. Analogously, a clean break with the past (13c) brooks no ambiguity, but severs the past from the future in a categorical manner.³³ In 13a, “clean” has a normative (but not necessarily moral) connotation: a clean golf swing has no “hitches” (elements out of place), and thus is expected only from a good player (it is a “pure” instance of its class). In 13b, clean refers to the fact that the top came off easily and without obstruction. Here any kind of impediment to the top of the coconut coming off would have counted as an “out of place” element interfering with the sequence of component parts that makes up a

³² <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=dirty> [last accessed July 2010].

³³ I thank an anonymous reader for suggesting this example.

“clean” instance of the act of slicing. Thus, in both of these cases the status of a given act as clean relies on the fundamental ICM of clean as ORDERED ARRANGEMENT that does not contain any parts or elements that do not usually belong to it.

7. Discussion

In this paper, I have provided a unified analysis of dirt and cleanliness metaphors as they apply to moral reasoning and moral cognition, building on and expanding upon previous considerations of the phenomenon in two primary ways. First, I show that the motivation for the use of dirt and clean as metaphors for moral order and disorder can be traced to an underlying conceptualization of dirt and cleanliness as ordered and disordered arrangements of concrete settings. These base conceptualizations (constituting separate idealized cognitive models) are motivated by experiences with prototypical instances of situations of soiling and ordering respectively. I have argued that — following the proposal of anthropologist Mary Douglas (1966) — these prototypical events refer (in the case of dirt) to instances of matter out of place and (in the case of cleanliness) to instances of expected or prescribed arrangement of parts within a given setting or (concrete or abstract) region. Thus, conceptualizations of dirt and cleanliness presuppose a larger cultural and experiential order, which provides the expectational background from which to formulate judgments as to whether a given object “belongs” or “does not belong” to a certain setting, or whether a given setting meets the conventional criteria for proper organization. This links the semantics of the primary metaphors and ICMs to the experiential correlations afforded by a given set of cultural arrangements.

The analysis offered here provides a unified account of a wide range of usages of dirt and cleanliness metaphors, and clarifies the specific entailments that are inherited in moral reasoning from the underlying conceptualization of right and wrong in terms of cleanliness and dirt. In particular, I provide an account of the *binary* conceptualization of “moral staining” based on the perceptual logic afforded by the CONTAINMENT, BOUNDARY and CONTACT compound image schema. In addition, the

analysis offered here provides a revealing characterization of why dirt and cleanliness metaphors are naturally transportable to the task of categorizing *moral agents* as dirty, and for the metaphorical conceptualization of certain *actions* having moral consequences in terms of “cleaning up” or “soiling.” The analysis also accounts for the structural similarities between the underlying ICM for dirt and other related ICMs, for instance those associated with “invasion” and “infection.” This is consistent with discourse-based data from cultural studies that show that dirt metaphors are naturally found to conceptualize those apparently unrelated processes. Finally, the analysis shows that conventionalized uses of dirt and cleanliness metaphors for purposes of categorization that appear to have non-moral connotations can be made sense of using the same overall scheme. Thus, moral and non-moral recruitment of metaphors of dirt and clean are special cases of the same set of ICMs. In particular, the analysis accounts for why dirt can do the apparently unrelated semantic jobs of referring to both “non-standard organization” and “exceptional” while clean can be used to conceptualize certain actions as particularly “pure” instances of their class.

One way in which the framework offered here could be extended is by applying to the study of diachronic changes in meaning and the emergence of polysemy in words that come to refer to dirt and cleanliness. For instance, one French term for clean is *proper*, which is etymologically related to the Latin *proprius*, which means “one’s own” (related English words include “proper,” “property,” and “propriety”).³⁴ The connection of morally-worthy status to the self appears to be conceptually primary, so that self-referential words are also used to conceptualize moral order via the linkage between the more abstract realm of morality and the more concrete source domain of cleanliness as an ordered arrangement. This is consistent with recent evidence that shows that words with positive moral connotations are more likely to be associated with spatial proximity to the self at an implicit level than words with a negative moral valence (Chen and Bargh 1999).

³⁴ I thank an anonymous reader for bringing this example to my attention.

In addition, as argued by Sweetser (1990), the diachronic emergence of polysemic structures of this sort has an underlying conceptual motivation and tends to go from concrete (socio-physical usages) to more abstract usages. It is clear from the etymological roots of English words for dirt and cleanliness (e.g., dirt, filth, clean, foul, etc.) that the earlier usages are confined to the socio-physical realm to refer to moral and physical cleanliness. Only later do we find more elaborate constructions in which the moral categorization function is softened (e.g., “dirty look,” “dirty linens”) or almost completely suppressed (as in the above examples where dirty simply indicates prominence). The same can be said for more abstract uses of “clean” to indicate such things as “good form;” we should expect these to come later than the more direct semantic usages of clean to refer to the moral propriety of events and persons and to the actual pristine status of objects and regions.

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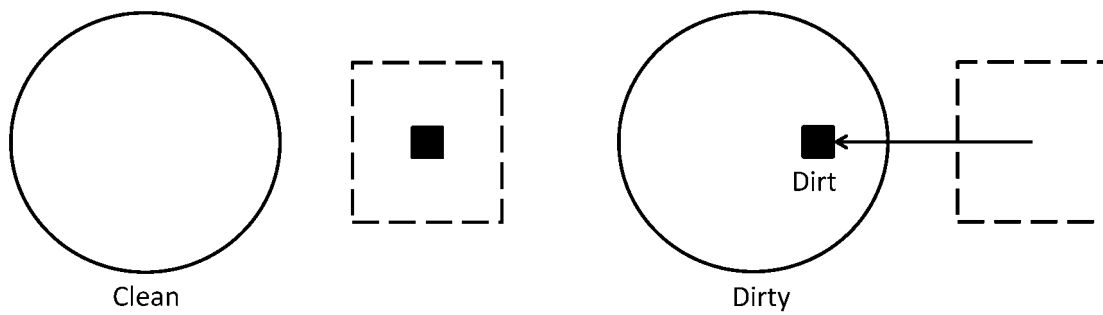


Figure 1. A previously neutral ENTITY becomes **dirt** once it crosses a BOUNDARY and enters a CONTAINER which it does not belong. The CONTAINER is now **dirty**.

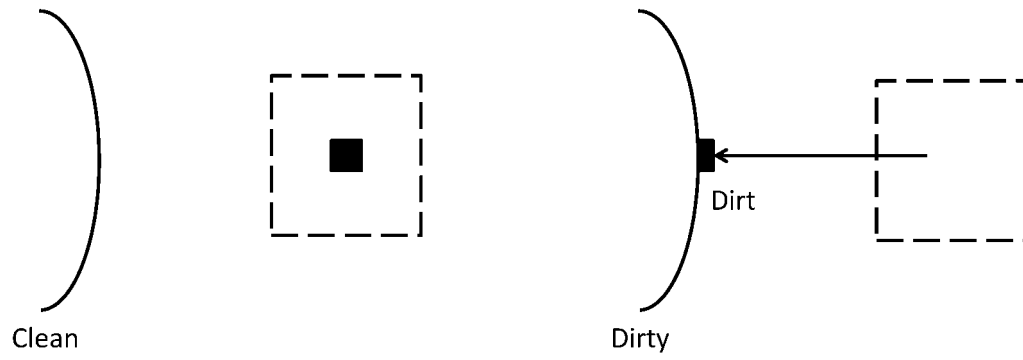


Figure 2. A previously neutral ENTITY becomes **dirt** once it makes CONTACT with a landmark, where it is considered a foreign substance. The landmark is now **dirty**.