

# Metaphors We Die By

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**Abstract**—This study, entitled “Metaphors We Die By,” is concerned with death metaphors in Central Kurdish (CK). The “we” in the title refers to Kurdish people, including the researcher, as the study provides a detailed explanation of metaphors the Kurds die by. It attempts to elucidate how CK speakers think about the phenomenon of death. Understanding death is challenging. Human beings do not know what death is like while they are alive, and when they die, they are not here to describe their experience of the other world – the world of death. The study employs Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) within the Cognitive Linguistic approach to examine Kurdish Speakers perspectives on death. This framework is particularly important for understanding Kurdish culture and their view on one of life’s most important phenomena. The study addresses several primary questions: How do the Kurds contemplate death? Is death perceived as an absolute end or a new beginning in Kurdish culture? What is the source conceptual domains that CK speakers rely on to understand death? What factors play a role in structuring the conceptual mappings of the linguistic metaphors? The interpretation of death through CMT involves identifying various source domains that contribute to its conceptualization. Comprehension of death in terms of other concepts is pre-experiential; it is describing death without undergoing the experience of dying. The study posits that everyday linguistic expressions can be used as a source of the worldview of a particular culture. Accordingly, the data of the study are drawn from everyday speech in CK which serves as a window into Kurdish thoughts and worldviews about death. The study, in light of the theory it relies on, views language as a reflection of thought. In CMT, thought has a metaphorical nature, language, mirroring thought, basically works metaphorically.

**Keywords**—Central Kurdish, Conceptual metaphor, Death, Metaphorization of death, Source-path-goal schema

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. Introducing Metaphor and Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT)

The roots of the emergence and study of metaphor date back to the early days of human thought, to ancient Greece. In ancient Greece, the emergence of metaphor is associated with the use and reflection of myth in Greek poetry. For example, in the epic “Iliad,” Homer envisions the gods as human beings, attributing certain human characteristics to them, such as eating and drinking, suffering, crying, and so on. According to some thinkers, portraying gods as human beings in poetry diminishes the status of the gods and causes them to be seen as imperfect creatures in the human mind (i.e., it reduces their perceived divine nature). When these thinkers saw that Homer and other writers regarded the gods as human beings without following the laws of reason and logic, they began to attack the art of poetry and regarded it as useless (Al-Basir, 1981). In contrast to this view, others interpreted poetry as metaphor and began to explain the reasons for the beauty of poetry. They discovered this beauty in language and proved that the language of poetry/poetic language differs from

everyday language in terms of metaphorical expressions and artistic imagery.

Thus, the way myth was used in Greek poetry and the debates about the nature of its usage led to the emergence of metaphor (Al-Basir, 1981). Thinkers thought of establishing a field for the interpretation of poetry, which became known as rhetoric. Metaphor is a major part of rhetoric, the “central trope” (Glucksberg, 2001, p. 3). In the broad sense, rhetoric is all about metaphor (Stern, 2000), a general category covering all the figures of speech. Accordingly, metaphor was associated with style and poetic language from the very beginning. This perspective persisted for centuries, even those working in the scientific fields thought that everyday language is not metaphorical, it is more direct and unambiguous; therefore, it better reflects the truths that science reaches. Gibbs, (1994) claims that according to this view, “reality is thought to have a preferred description, scientific research seeks to uncover this description through objective empirical means and to present these ‘truths’ in a language that best reflects them” (p. 169). In light of this view, everyday language is literal and stable,

while “metaphor is considered an inappropriate, peripheral and deviant use, unsuitable for theoretical, philosophical, and scientific discussions aiming at transparency, clarity, parsimony, and rigor” (Garello, 2024, p. 19).

It could be argued that, one of the key questions repeatedly raised in the field of Metaphor studies, which forms the critical core of the debate on the subject in the history of philosophy, is that is metaphor a matter of style or thought (Garello, 2024, p. 19)? For centuries, it was thought that metaphor is a matter of style that it is beyond ordinary language, a special rhetorical tool only to be found in poetic language (Rasse, 2022). This perspective confines metaphor to the esthetic realm of figures of speech used particularly in poetry. Thus, metaphor was regarded as a matter of language, not of thought, Aristotle was the first philosopher to define metaphor as a lexical phenomenon claiming that metaphor is “giving the thing a name that belongs to something else” (Bywater, 1940, p. 56). Metaphor, here, is a property of linguistic expressions.

One of the main reasons for the emergence of CMT is the rejection of the above-mentioned view. From the perspective of CMT, metaphor is a mechanism of thought, and everyday language is metaphorical in nature. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980a), “Metaphor is for most people a device of the poetic imagination and the rhetorical flourish – a matter of extraordinary rather ordinary language. Moreover, metaphor is typically viewed as characteristic of language alone, a matter of words rather than thought or action. For this reason, most people think they can get along perfectly well without metaphor. We have found, on the contrary, that metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature” (p. 3).

Three concepts are emphasized in Lakoff and Johnson’s view: Language, thought, and action. First, metaphor is pervasive in everyday speech. For instance, people *talk* about death using the language of journey/departure: He/she *left* us, he/she said *goodbye* to the world, he/she *retuned* to God. The expressions *left*, *goodbye*, and *returned* belong to the domain of journey, thus, here metaphor is defined and expressed in terms of that domain. In addition, people *think* of death in terms of a journey of departure. For example, in the Islamic tradition, death is a transition, the deceased is thought to have gone or been transferred to another place. And metaphor shapes how individuals *act*. Religious people plan for the journey of the Hereafter. They believe that human actions and behavior are provisions for this journey. If the journey of life is good, then the journey of death will also be good. In this view, life is a preparation for the afterworld, human’s actions in life determine the quality of their journey of death. So, the language, the thinking process, and the act are metaphorically structured. In Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980b) terms, we talk about death that way because we conceive of it that way-and we act according to the way we conceive of things.

According to CMT, human thought operates metaphorically. In this view, metaphor is a cognitive or

conceptual phenomenon. The metaphorical nature of thought means that the human mind understands a concept (usually abstract) in terms of another (usually concrete). Metaphor has been defined as this process in the cognitive approach. That is, “the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another” (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980a, p. 5). The concept of metaphor as a process of bringing together two different thoughts into a relationship has previously been highlighted by Richards who argues that “when we use a metaphor we have two thoughts of different things active together and supported by a single word, or phrase, whose meaning is a resultant of their interaction” (Richards, 1936, p. 93). In his book, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1963), he introduces two terms: *vehicle* for the metaphorical expression and *tenor* for the subject to which the metaphorical expression is applied. A metaphor works by combining two distinct “thoughts” of the vehicle and tenor so as to create a new meaning that “is a resultant of their interaction” (Abrams and Harpham, 2012). In Richards’s view, a conceptual basis is needed in the process of understanding metaphor.

In CMT, metaphor is the transfer of knowledge between two spheres of the human conceptual system through cross-domain mappings. The theory adopts an analytical structural framework through which a metaphor is recognized as a cognitive phenomenon that associates one notion with an idea, such as the conceptualization of an abstract concept (e.g., argument) in terms of human attributes and experiences (e.g., war), resulting in a metaphorical linguistic expression, like “his idea is indefensible” (El-Sharif, 2011, p. 70).

This means that conceptual metaphors embrace two components named the source and target domains. The terms “source domain” and “target domain” from CMT can be compared to the terms “vehicle” and “tenor” in Richards’ theory of metaphor. In both theories, a component (vehicle/source domain) is relied on to comprehend the other (tenor/target domain). The difference is that Richard’s theory places more emphasis on linguistic metaphors, while CMT focuses on the cognitive aspects of metaphor visualizing it as an essential part of human thinking.

The concept of domain “refers to a conceptual package including a range of connected elements, and is potentially referred to by a shared term” (Semino and Demjen, 2017, p. 29). For instance, a domain such as JOURNEY encompasses several components, such as travelers, crossroads, obstacles, reaching destination, and so forth. A number of metaphorical expressions can be drawn from these components depicting the domain of LIFE. When LIFE is represented in terms of JOURNEY, the concept of journey is the source, while life is the target. Thus, metaphorical expressions originate from a semantic area or conceptual domain referred to as the source domain, and the target domain is the domain being construed using metaphorical language. In other words, the basic idea is that metaphor is basically an association between conceptual domains, through which ways of speaking of one domain called the source can be applied to another domain named the target by virtue of correspondences between the two (Cruse, 2006).

The source domain is more concrete, well-structured that people typically are familiar with. This familiar structure-the source domain-is used to articulate or comprehend the target domain which is more abstract. We map our knowledge of the well-understood source domain onto the less familiar and more abstract target domain. Thus, CMT defines metaphor as a two-domain mapping across conceptual domains

### *B. Metaphorical Systematicity: Highlighting and Hiding*

Lakoff and Johnson (1980a) emphasize one of the key principles of CMT, which is the process of highlighting and hiding. They claim that understanding one aspect of a concept from the perspective of another (e.g., understanding an aspect of arguing in terms of battle) necessarily hides the other aspects of the concept. That is, metaphors represent a particular scene or aspect of the concepts. In an example such as (Zhanyar's Brain was overloaded with information), which is a surface realization of the conceptual metaphor THE MIND IS A COMPUTER, mental processes similar to computer operations are highlighted, such as the ability to store and process information, as well as the emotional, imaginative aspects of the brain are hidden. The mind is metaphorized in terms of computer in a systematic way. Thus, in CMT, conceptualization is a systematic process, an attempt to establish a systematic association between two domains. This principle of the theory suggests that the basis of metaphor is not analogy or comparison, but the systematic process of highlighting and hiding various aspects of the concepts.

The practical part of the present study illustrates how the Kurds depend on a cognitive tool such as metaphor to hide the unpleasant and painful aspects of death. The metaphorical linguistic expressions, which conceal the horror and mystery of death, help the Kurds accept death as an essential part of life and often view it as a transition, believing they will be reunited in the Hereafter. In other words, most of the source conceptual domains through which death is understood can be a source of comfort and strength for those who are losing a loved one.

### *C. The Source-Path-Goal Schema*

The Source-Path-Goal schema is one of the key schemas governing human conceptualization (Johnson, 1993). It can be employed as an analytical framework for understanding many metaphorical expressions related to movement, change, and progress. This schema comprises four elements: A Trajectory (the moving object), a Source (the starting point), a Path (a series of adjacent locations from Source to Goal), and a Goal (endpoint or intended destination). According to this schema, most linguistic metaphorical expressions can be analyzed as a journey from a Source to a Goal along a Path. For instance, when we say "he/she has progressed in his/her studies," we conceptualize education as a path on which the person travels, from a starting point (Source) to an end point (Goal). This schema, in Cognitive Linguistic approach to metaphor, plays a significant role in our understanding of how information is organized in the mind. It postulates that humans primarily use

physical concepts such as motion and space to understand abstract concepts (Lakoff, 1987; Turner, 1996).

The Source-Path-Goal schema can be applied to analyze many metaphorical representations of death. For example, in most cultures, death is seen as a journey where the living world is the Source, the process of dying can be the Path, and the state after death (e.g., the Hereafter, heaven, God, or even destruction) is the Goal. Some cultures perceive death as an ascension, with earth (life) as the Source, the act of rising to the sky as the Path, and Heaven as the Goal.

The present study explores how the Source-Path-Goal schema is reflected in specific examples. It examines whether the Source, Path, and Goal are stated directly or indirectly, if indirect, what interpretation can be drawn from these examples? The study also investigates the existence of specific Paths and Goals in Kurdish culture, questioning where the Goal is located and which Path the deceased travels to reach that Goal. Through the application of this schema, the study aims to gain a deeper understanding of the complex concept of death in Kurdish culture.

## II. THE KURDS' PERSPECTIVES ON DEATH

### *A. The Metaphorization of Death in Central Kurdish (CK)*

In CK, the abstract target concept of death is understood in terms of various source concepts. This part of the study explores how this target concept is construed and expressed in Kurdish culture. The Kurds have delved into this phenomenon of human existence, highlighting various aspects of certain concepts to conceal its terrifying and tragic nature. Through the analysis of the data collected, the study attempts to provide an in-depth understanding of how Kurdish society understands the complex concept of death. The data, taken from everyday speech expressions, are written in the Latin alphabet, and English translations are provided alongside them.

The study hypothesizes that Kurdish is a language rich in various metaphors to express the concept of death. It assumes that death metaphors in the language have a systematic structure, which is one of the key principles in CMT (1.2 Metaphorical Systematicity). The metaphors reflect the cultural and social characteristics of Kurdish society. In other words, the source domains relied on in the interpretation of the target concept-*death*-originate from the worldview of Kurdish society. Every nation that has its own culture with all its cultural branches has its own worldview. Worldview is the perspective from which the spirit of a nation sees the world. The present study presents the Kurdish worldview of death, that is, it deals with the relationship between metaphors and Kurdish culture. From the perspective of CMT and through a qualitative analysis, it provides a deeper understanding of the relationship between language and thought in Kurdish society

*Death is a journey*

In CK, the abstract concept of death is often conceptualized in terms of the concrete concept of journey. CK speakers rely on the semantic features of the concept of journey in the process of understanding and structuring the target concept

of death. Of course, the dead person is no longer around, he/she cannot be seen in the places where he was before, so it is natural to describe the dead as “gone.” Human beings, regardless of language and culture, will at some point observe the absence of a loved one from a familiar place (Wachowski and Sullivan, 2022).

The Conceptualization of death as a journey has different dimensions, some of the metaphorical linguistic expressions that represent this conceptualization are influenced by religious discourse, sometimes philosophical thought is their main feature, often cultural characteristics (politeness/euphemistic expressions) are behind their conceptual mappings. The following examples represent DEATH as a JOURNEY.

- (1) *Koçî diwayî kird* {= He/She made the final *journey*}
- (2) *Malawayî le jiyan kird* {= He/She said *farewell* to life}
- (3) *Becêyhêştîn* {= He/She left us}

The above examples conceptualize DEATH as a JOURNEY. In example (1), the linguistic expression *Koç-journey* represents the conceptual mapping between the two domains. The lexical item *diwa-final* signifies that human beings make many journeys; death is their final or last journey in the real world. In example (2), the word *Malawayî-farewell* depicts DEATH as a JOURNEY. Death is saying goodbye to the world, the world is the home of life, so leaving this home (the real world) toward the other world (the ideal world) is a kind of farewell. In (3), (he/she left us) means (he/she died). Here, the Kurdish speaker euphemizes death, instead of saying he/she died directly, he/she uses the euphemistic metaphor of (3). The examples (1), (2) and (3) hide the sad and painful aspects of death, in them, CK speakers depend on a cognitive mechanism (metaphor) to think and express death softer, making it more acceptable. In these examples, life is seen as a short-term journey and death as the final station of this journey. That is, Kurdish speakers have contemplated life as a place of departure. In other words, it may be related to the Kurdish worldview that have considered and thought of life from a quantitative perspective, seeing it as a short journey.

In the above three examples, the emphasis is on the departure of the deceased, death is seen as the act of leaving the Source (the living world). All three linguistic expressions (journey, farewell, and leaving) carry the meaning of transfer, so they can be interpreted as assuming the existence of the Hereafter. But they don't express anything about the Goal location and the Path to reach the Goal. That is, if human life is interpreted in terms of the (Source-Path-Goal) schema, all three expressions determine the Source (starting point) of the journey of death and nothing about the Path and the final destination, that is, death is a journey without specifying the GOAL. One of the reasons for using the Source-specifying structure is the avoidance of naming the Path and the Goal by the speaker which may result in the linguistic expression not carrying any religious perspective. In other words, speakers may use the Source-specifying structure to avoid explicit religious connotations making their expressions more neutral. At the same time, the use of this structure by religious individuals and believers in the Hereafter emphasizes the

real-world changes occurring as a result of death. That is, it may be intended to highlight the impact of death on life.

- (4) *Geřayewe lay xuda* {= He/She *returned* to God}
- (5) *Xiwa birdiyewe bo xezênekey xoy* {= God *took him/her back* to his treasury}

The examples (4) and (5) also represent death as a journey of departure. The linguistic expression *Geřayewe-returned* in (4) and *birdiyewe-took him/her back* in (5) conceptualize DEATH as a JOURNEY. They state that the origin place of human beings is with God, they (humans) come here (the world) for a journey and finally return to their origin place (with God). In examples (1–3), the speaker is the center, but in (4) and (5) God is the center. It is God who takes us on the journey back to Himself through the gate of death. Both examples were produced under the influence of Islamic discourse. For example, verse (156) of Surah Al-Baqarah says: {To God we belong and to Him we shall return}. Both linguistic expressions (4 and 5) metaphorically express that human beings have been brought here from a treasure and death is a journey back to that treasure. Both expressions also carry a philosophical perspective in that “who comes must go, and who goes will come back” (Osman, 2013, p. 170). The examples (1–3) specify the Source of the journey, but (4) and (5) specify the Goal location as well. Almost all expressions that depict death as a journey of departure and specify the Goal of the journey carry a religious worldview (Wachowski and Sullivan, 2022, p. 104). This is because in religion, human beings are assured that after death the soul goes to another world. Therefore, according to Biela-Woloncej (2013), the structures that specify the Goal of the journey of death are spiritual models.

Both examples (4) and (5) imply belief in the Hereafter and eternity. That is, here, death is seen as another journey toward humans' last home or his origin place. They reflect the basic metaphor STATES ARE LOCATIONS “that one can be in, enter, or leave. Being dead is a final state, and therefore, metaphorically, a final destination. Through death is departure, this final location is the final destination toward which one departs” (Lakoff and Turner, 1989, p. 7). The final destination varies according to the metaphorical expressions, either with God, God's heaven or hell. In Examples (4) and (5), man's final home is with God, thus, DEATH IS RETURNING TO THE GOAL. In examples such as (4) and (5), a specific interpretation of the Path can be given, it might be possible, through mental imagery, to envision the Path as life experience.

- (6) *Çiwe řêzî nemiran* {= He/She *went* to the rank of immortals}
- (7) *Giyanî pakî berew beheştî berîn helfîrî* {= His/her pure soul *flew* towards the vast Paradise}
- (8) *Çiwe jêr xak* {= He *went* under the soil/earth}

Examples (6–8) depict DEATH as a JOURNEY. In (6), the linguistic expression *Çiwe-went* represents the conceptual metaphor. The example depicts the journey of death as immortality, that is, it implies the religious view that there is eternal life after death. Here, religious knowledge plays a significant role in structuring the conceptual mapping, since in the religious view, the life of the Hereafter is eternal. According to Example (6), death is a journey to an eternal

world that is continuous and infinite. The example is a Goal-specifying version. The lexical item *nemiran-immortals* implies two conceptual metaphors which are DEATH IS REGROUPING IN AN AFTERLIFE and DEATH IS A DEPARTURE TO THE ETERNAL.

In (7), the Goal of the journey of death is explicitly stated as heaven. Here, the journey of death is the journey of the soul and the body is neglected in the expression. This example is an orientational metaphor, in which an abstract concept is construed in terms of spatial orientations. It is “the formation of implicit associations between space and non-spatial concepts” (Jezhny et al., 2024, p. 922). That is, a spatial orientation is given to an abstract concept. In this expression (7), the “soul” has elevated. From a religious perspective, goodness or virtue is interpreted in terms of UP spatial orientation, Goodness is ascending and getting closer to God’s Paradise. Paradise in religious texts – for example in the Qur’an – is described using linguistic expressions: (high, highest,...) like {In a lofty Paradise} (Al-Haqqah:22). The linguistic expression *pak-pure* in (7) indicates that the deceased had a virtuous life; therefore, his/her soul has ascended (flew) to Paradise. The example is also Path-specifying, the Path is flying represented through the verb *helfîrî-flew*. The place of the Hereafter is depicted in the sky, one of the ways to ascend is to fly. In both examples (6) and (7), the end point of the journey of death is conceptualized as one’s last home. The expressions have been produced under the influence of the religious view that death is reunion.

In (8), the Goal location is *jêr xak-under the soil/earth* or grave, but there is no reference to the Hereafter. In this example, death is a journey from the upper world to Hades (the underworld). The example does not indicate that human’s origin place is under the soil and that he returns to it, that is, it does not contain details about human’s final destination. The word *jêr xak* implies that LIFE IS UP and DEATH IS DOWN. In brief, here, death is a movement to the grave.

(9) *Řohî derçû* {= His/her soul departed}

In (9), the verb *derçû-departed* is used which depicts death as a journey of departure. In this example, death is the journey of the soul (Řoh), that is, as in example (7), only the soul is mentioned. Therefore, there are two perspectives in CK, one is the journey of body and soul, the other has no reference to the body, that is, the body is neglected in the expression. In this view, death is the journey of the soul beginning by leaving the body, continues, and remains.

In the above examples, which depict death as a journey, the Source of the journey is specified, in most of them, the Goal location is also specified under the influence of religious perspective, and the Path is rarely mentioned.

#### *Death is sleep*

In CK, the abstract concept of death is also interpreted in terms of the concept of sleep, in which the positive aspects of sleep are highlighted and the frightening aspect of death is hidden.

(10) *Serî nayewe* {= He/She put down his/her head}

(11) *Çawî lêkna* {= He/She closed his/her eyes}

In everyday CK speech, the expression *Sernanewe-putting the head down*-means to sleep. A Kurdish speaker might say (go put your head down for a while) meaning (go get some sleep and rest). Accordingly, example (10) euphemistically conceptualizes death as putting one’s head on a pillow. Here, life, which is represented through the lexical item *Ser-head*, is associated with awareness and holding the *head* high, while death is putting the head down on a pillow. Hence, the example implies the conceptual metaphors of LIFE IS UP, DEATH IS DOWN. The expression also means to rest and relieve tiredness through sleep; therefore, it depicts the conceptual metaphor DEATH IS REST.

Example (11) euphemizes death and uses *Çawlêknan-closing the eyes* metonymically instead of dying. Closing the eyes as a physical sign of death is reflected in a painting by Polish painter Jacek Malczewski, in which, death is personified and like a merciful mother closes the eyes of an old man:



Jacek Malczewski, *Smierc*, 1902 (Death)

According to Wachowski and Sullivan (2022), death in this image is kind, compassionate, and motherly. The use of closing the eyes as a symbol of death shows that the interpretation of death in terms of sleep is not random, it is experience-based. Lakoff (2006, p. 226) raises the question of what principle determines the choice of a specific source concept among hundreds of concepts in interpreting a target concept. That is, why the human conceptual system allows certain conceptual mappings and disallow others. From the perspective of CMT, the choice is experience-based. And according to Kövecses (2017), a specific source domain is paired with a specific target domain based on similarity or resemblance. In the metaphorical expressions (10) and (11), the selection of the conceptual domain of sleep to understand the target concept of death is governed by the principle that there are a number of physical similarities between the two concepts, like “dead bodies, resemble sleeping bodies. Both sleeping and deceased people are silent and motionless compared to living, walking people. People who are sleeping are, of course, normally lying down and so are people who are dead” (Wachowski and Sullivan, 2022, p. 79). Thus, human knowledge of the

physiological effects of death is the basis for the conceptual mapping of DEATH IS SLEEP.

Another aspect that is highlighted in conceptualizing DEATH as SLEEP is rest, “sleep and death are strongly interrelated, often sleep has been considered as the brother of death, little death or temporary death. Because sleep is a moment of tranquility, a moment of rest, a moment when consciousness and senses rest, death is the great tranquility, eternal rest” (Osman, 2013, p. 109). In CK, the lexical word *aramga* is used for grave, where *aram* means *calm* and the suffix *ga* indicates place, together meaning *the restin g place*. According to (Allan and Burridge, 1991, p. 162), metaphorizing DEATH as SLEEP reveals human concern about the soul, which is assumed to sleep or rest and await another form of life after death.

In these two examples, the Source-Path-Goal schema is not directly stated. The Path can be indirectly interpreted as the process of sleep, and the Goal as deep sleep (death).

#### *Death is a loss*

In CK, sometimes death is understood in terms of loss, for instance:

(12) Serî tîyaçu {= His/Her head was lost in it}

(13) Ledestman çu {= He/She went out of our hands}

Example (12) is used indirectly instead of (he died), *Ser* means *head* and *tîyaçun* means lose. In this example, the lexeme *Ser-head* denotes life, that is, the loss of the head is the loss of life. *Ser-head* means thinking and consciousness as well. Therefore, the loss of the head is the loss of consciousness. This view is consistent with the atheist view of death believing that consciousness ceases at death, that is, “atheism, like, religion, offers an explanation for what happens when we die. According to most atheist belief systems, awareness ceases at death. This state can be the Goal of a metaphoric journey, as in pass into oblivion” (Wachowski and Sullivan, 2022, p. 79). Thus, in Kurdish, the loss of head metonymically means stopping consciousness and death.

Example (13) conceptualizes death as the loss of an important person. *Dest* means *hand*, *man* means *we*, and *çu* means *went*. The example refers to the power of death against which humans are helpless or powerless. On the other hand, it indicates that the life of the deceased was important to the speaker, so his death is a loss and harm to him/her. That is, in addition to representing the concept of DEATH as LOSS, it is also a metaphor to express that the deceased was an important person.

#### *Death is handing over the soul*

(14) Giyanî sipard {= He/She entrusted his/her soul}

The expression *sipardin-entrust* is an old, authentic Kurdish word meaning to entrust valuable items, money, or belongings to someone for safekeeping and care (Harshami, 2022, p. 607). Example (14) construes death as the entrustment of the soul to someone. In this example, as in (7) and (9), the body is neglected and only the soul is referred to. Here, the soul is conceptualized as an entity that has left the body. Certainly, conceptualizing death as the act of the soul leaving the body is common across cultures,

that is, it is a universal metaphor, but CK speakers have a particular way of expressing it. Kövecses and Koller (2006) claims that two languages can share a conceptual metaphor that could be expressed through a wide range of overlapping metaphorical expressions, but the expressions may show subtle differences in the cultural-ideological background in which the conceptual metaphor functions. In example (14), the Kurdish speaker imagines the soul as a trust given to the body by God and at the end of life the body entrusts the trust (soul) to God. Accordingly, the example is a Goal-specifying structure. Here, too, death is seen as an act of transfer, and the soul continues and remains after death.

#### *Death is the repayment of life's debt*

(15) Hemuman mirdnêk qerzarîn {= We all owe a death}

Example (15) imagines life as a debt and death as the repayment of that debt. Debt is associated with the act of receiving and returning, and death is a return from life's journey. The example also implies the inevitability of death which may stem from a religious worldview. For instance, the Quran states: {Every soul shall taste death} (Al'Imran:185). According to example (15), we all owe the surrender of our lives, that is, DEATH IS THE SURRENDER OF LIFE.

#### *Death is surrender*

This conceptual metaphor is closely related to the previous two conceptual metaphors. In this conceptual metaphor, human beings are depicted as an obedient creature who submits to God's commands. This is explicitly stated in the following instances:

(16) Emrî xîway kird {= He/She did God's command}

(17) Emrî xîway bejêhêna {= He/She fulfilled God's command}

Example (16) conceptualizes death as a divine command. Here, too, one surrenders the trust of life through death. Example (17) is the fulfillment of God's command, that is, the deceased has fulfilled God's command through the act of dying.

#### *Death is the end*

(18) Rôjî tewawbu {= His/Her day had finished}

(19) Jiyanî kotayî hat {= His/Her life came to an end}

CK speakers conceptualize DEATH as the END. In example (18), Rôj-day/time is seen as an entity that deserves to disappear. That is, the result of the passage of time is death. In other words, in presenting life as a process with a beginning and an end, death is the last point of human time span, “Human life is characteristically construed as a process, and as such it is constrained by the Source-Path-Goal schema, so that it is viewed as having a starting point, and end point and a time span. In this way, death may be conceptualized as the last moment in our time span” (Marin-Arrese, 1996, p. 48). This example (18) also implies the inevitability of death. Death's inevitability is present in a Kurdish expression: “Mirdin la dargay hamûwan dadat” meaning “death knocks on everyone's door.” That is, someone is coming unexpectedly, his name is *death-mirdin*, he knocks on the *door-darga* of everyone's life, enters the home of life, and destroys it (Osman, 2013, p. 142). The expression personifies death and implies that no one can escape death, as it is an inevitable part of everyone's life.

In example (19), death is thought of as the last stage of life, it is conceptualized as the end, but the metaphor does not lay emphasis on how the end is, only that death is the end of life, that is, it only implies that death is the end of life and there is no life after death.

#### *Death is divine mercy*

Sometimes death is conceptualized as divine mercy for some individuals. The following example is a common euphemistic way of this conceptualization:

(20) *Xiwa ruhmi pêkird* {= God had *mercy* on him/her}

Here, death is conceptualized in terms of God's mercy. The metaphorical expression has a religious meaning wherein the deceased has fallen under God's *mercy-ruhm*. The example euphemizes and conceptualizes death from the perspective of a positive concept which *mercy-ruhm*. It is more commonly used for someone who is in pain due to illness or old age. In such a situation, death is seen as the person's relief from the painful condition. The metaphor expresses that death is mercy when life is suffering. There is a Kurdish prayer saying "Xwaye zelîlî serjêman nekey" meaning "May God not make us bedridden." The expression asks God to take our lives before we fall into a life full of pain and disease. It is a prayer for a painless death. Humans do not desire death; the prayer signifies the Kurdish people's fear of becoming a burden on others and losing the ability to manage their own lives.

#### *Death is salvation*

(21) *Leko xeman biwewe* {= He/She was relieved from *sorrows*}

In (21), death is conceptualized as salvation, in which *xem-sorrow* is seen as a heavy burden on the *kol-shoulders* of the deceased, and death is the disappearance and removal of the heavy burden of sorrow on his/her shoulders. That is, death is relief from the sorrows of life.

#### *Death is darkness*

In CK, sometimes, darkness is the source domain through which the concept of death is understood, for instance:

(22) *Momî temenî kujayewe* {= The *candle* of his/her life was *extinguished*}

In this example, life is light and fire, death is the *extinguishing-kujanewe* of fire and darkness. Conceptualizing DEATH as DARKNESS is present in the Kurdish prayer: "Xwaye *agirdanman* xamosh nekey" which can be translated as "God, do not extinguish our *fireplace*." The speaker prays to *God-Xwa* that their family members will not die and their descendants will not end. That is, *fire-agir* is thought of as a symbol of life and the extinction of fire/darkness as death. The unextinguished *fireplace-agirdan* in the prayer is a symbol of continuity of life. Understanding DEATH as DARKNESS may be related to the conceptual metaphor: A LIFETIME IS A DAY, in which "birth is dawn, maturity is noon, old age is twilight, and the state of death is night" (Lakoff and Turner, 1989, p. 6). In other words, the bright moments of the day are depicted as life, the last moments (twilight) as old age and the end of the day as death.

Here, as in some of the examples above, an indirect interpretation can be drawn in terms of the Source-Path-Goal schema. Life or bright fire is the Source, the Path can be

perceived as the deceleration and quenching process, and the Goal as Extinguished fire (death).

### III. CONCLUSIONS

In CK, the concept of death is conceptualized in terms of various conceptual source domains. One of the domains that are significantly relied upon in structuring and understanding death is journey. In this conceptualization, the painful and frightening aspects of death are hidden, while the aspects of journey are emphasized. This conceptual metaphor is very productive in CK and has produced a number of different expressions that carry many meanings and various interpretations. In some examples, death is a transition, the end of the journey of life and the beginning of another journey, leading to belief in the Hereafter. Yet, in some of the examples, there is no reference to the Hereafter. Some examples, in addition to the Source, refer to the Goal location, and rarely the Path to achieve the Goal is specified. In many examples, life is thought of as a temporary stage and a place to be left behind.

In Kurdish culture, as seen in other cultures, death is construed in terms of sleep. This is due to the shared physical similarities between the two concepts. In the examples mentioned, either the head is seen as a representative of life and death is laying the head on a pillow, or the eyes depicts life and consciousness, opening the eyes implies life and awareness, while closing the eyes signifies the end of life and unconsciousness.

Another conceptual domain through which the Kurds understand death is loss. Sometimes, death is metonymically understood as the loss of the head. Here, too, the head represents life and consciousness, which shows the importance of the head in Kurdish culture. This conceptual metaphor in CK also signals that the deceased was important. Here, the powerlessness of humans in the face of death is revealed. Death is capable of snatching away our important and essential individuals.

CK speakers also conceptualize death as the repayment of a trust. Death is thought of as the act of giving back the soul or life. It is depicted that the soul separates from the body at death and returns to its origin source. That is, there is a divine creator (God) to whom the soul is entrusted. Death is also conceptualized as the repayment of life's debt. Here, life is a debt, and death is the repayment of the debt of life. In this conceptualization, the inevitability of death and the temporality of life are conveyed. For Kurdish speakers, death is also seen as an act of obedience to God's command. That is, death is surrender, life is entrusted to human beings as a duty or trust. Death is the end of the duty of life or the repayment of the trust of life. In this conceptualization, both life and death are the fulfillment of God's command. After the end of the duty of life and the entrustment of the soul, humans return to their origin source.

Unlike many examples, death is seen as the end in Kurdish culture. Here, life has a beginning and an end, and death is

the end. There is no indication of what happens after reaching the end point, that is, death is seen as the absolute end.

For CK speakers, death is also thought of as a positive event, the linguistic expression *mercy* reflects the positivity of death. It is interpreted as if the deceased has received God's mercy. Death has also been seen as an act of salvation when life is pain.

Death in Kurdish culture is darkness. Kurds regard life as light and fire, and death as darkness and the disappearance of the light of life. The presence of light and the constant burning of fire are metaphors for the continuity of life.

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