

# Metaphor Making: Your Career, Your Life, Your Way

Norman E. Amundson  
Reviewed by Carl Leggo

Dr. Norman E. Amundson's *Metaphor Making: Your Career, Your Life, Your Way* is a wise and engaging book that will appeal to a wide and diverse network of readers. It is the kind of rare text that constructs sturdy bridges between the scholarly research of the university and professional practices in communities that extend far beyond the academy. Dr. Amundson has a well-established, international reputation as a scholar and leader in career counselling, but what makes his work singular is that he is a public intellectual whose scholarship can be taken up by diverse communities. *Metaphor Making: Your Career, Your Life, Your Way* is not just a book for career counsellors. As Amundson notes, "metaphors play an important role in the process of meaning and knowledge construction in life and in career" (p. 8). Any reader will find immense benefits in engaging with this book.

Dr. Amundson begins with a clear definition of metaphor: "A metaphor is a figure of speech in which two unrelated ideas are used together in such a way that the meaning of one of the ideas is superimposed and lends definition to the other" (p. 1). He then expands on this definition of metaphor with a concise and cogent explanation of the theoretical foundations for metaphor making. He explains that "the use of metaphors in career counselling can be connected to the theory of constructivism and the use of narrative in counselling practice" (p. 7), as well as "a hermeneutic-narrative approach to meaning making" (p. 7). With his long and distinguished academic commitment to researching career counselling, Amundson knows the vast scholarly literature that defines his discipline, and he excels in drawing out connections among approaches that are both differ-

ent and related. A core theme that runs like a thread through the whole book is the conviction that "we conceptualize (frame) and re-conceptualize (reframe) our lives on a regular basis; this process involves language and dialogue with those around us" (p. 8). As a poet, language and literacy educator, and narrative researcher, I resonate with Amundson's wisdom that in order "to work effectively with stories one has to have a good understanding of metaphor" (p. 9).

I am especially glad to note that Amundson interrogates "a static metaphor of stages as the model for understanding the theory that grounds career work" (p. 10). Instead he proposes "the metaphor of a career wheel" which "allows a person to enter into and participate in any of these components any number of times during one's lifetime and career involvement" (p. 11). Amundson's understanding of career decision-making is hopeful. He recognizes how the individual is always writing a story that is not complete, that is not preordained or even predictable, a story that invites creative and conscientious care.

One of my favourite chapters investigates "Obama Oratory." Through careful rhetorical analysis, Amundson reveals the long list of metaphors that Barack Obama used in his inspiring inauguration speech. Based on Obama's use of metaphors, Amundson notes that career counsellors "are very much in the business of raising people's spirits and pointing to new futures" (p. 16). Therefore, career counsellors "will do well to enrich our speech and practice through the use of metaphors" (p. 16). Amundson is also convinced that by attending to metaphors, counsellors will be able to pay more empathetic attention to the metaphors that others are using. Be-

cause Amundson understands the power of language for communicating, he enthusiastically promotes the importance of metaphors in counselling.

After marshalling thoughtful and compelling arguments for the use of metaphors "in all aspects of the counselling process" (p. 25), Amundson then devotes the second part of the book to exploring forty metaphors that represent a wide spectrum of metaphor making in counselling and every day living. With thoughtful and creative explanations, Amundson explores metaphors like: My Life as a Book; The Backswing; The Yellow Brick Road; The Butterfly; Peach or Coconut; Magnetic Attraction; A Game of Chance. Each section that is devoted to a metaphor begins with an evocative quotation. Then, following each explanation, the reader is invited to engage reflectively with possibilities related to the metaphor. As I read *Metaphor Making: Your Career, Your Life, Your Way*, I spent time relating each metaphor to my own lived experiences, and I was often challenged about the ways I have frequently composed and presented my stories. Amundson offers carefully considered strategies for investigating, interrogating, and transforming our understanding of how we live in the world.

Another of my favourite parts of the book is the playful and ruminative way that Amundson includes numerous wide-ranging quotations throughout his text. He cites novelists, poets, musicians, entrepreneurs, scientists, sports celebrities, philosophers, and psychologists. It is not often that I meet Mark Twain, Lao-Tzu, Simon and Garfunkel, John Lennon, Warren Buffett, Albert Einstein, David Suzuki, Fred Shero, Tiger Woods, Friedrich Nietzsche, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, William



James, and Carl Jung all together in one book. And the conversation is rich because of the diversity that Amundson calls together in his writing.

Though I do not generally comment on the physical appearance of a book when I write a review, I need to comment on the graphic design and production values of *Metaphor Making: Your Career, Your Life, Your Way*. It is an attractive book. In metaphorical language, you might not be able to tell a book by its cover, but having been an avid reader and book collector all my life, Amundson's book is attractively designed. The cover is superb, and the text is presented in a way that invites the reader to linger. This is a book for sharing with others.

Also, I commend Amundson for the creative invention of a deck of metaphor making cards. Designed to be used with the book, the cards invite readers to consider the metaphors presented in the book. For example, on the card titled "Ladder Metaphors," the reader is asked three questions, including: "Are you on a ladder to success or doing something else? What are the rungs on your ladder? What is your ladder leaning against?" These questions stimulated in me a wide

range of memories, stories, ruminations, concerns, and hopes. Amundson has a remarkable gift for synthesizing complex experiences in creative ways that honour the original complexity while also opening up perspectives that show possible paths to follow.

Above all, *Metaphor Making: Your Career, Your Life, Your Way* is characterized by a compelling sense of voice. I hear Amundson calling out with a lively sense of urgency and heartfelt commitment. As I hear Amundson's voice, I am reminded of a prophet who knows he must stir up conventional ideas and practices, and I am reminded of a teacher who wants to help others on their journeys of learning and living, and I am reminded of a scholar who knows that a life devoted to words is a life that can transform the world.

*Metaphor Making: Your Career, Your Life, Your Way* represents the kind of scholarly research and writing that exemplifies the emerging call in academic circles for knowledge mobilization—seeking ways to share the best wisdom of the academy with the expansive world that stretches far beyond the privileged halls and walls of the university.

I trust that this poetic and profound book will invite many readers to engage actively with meaning-making through metaphor making. In his concluding comments Amundson emphasizes "the significance of metaphors as a communication tool that will improve one's ability to deliver effective and efficient career counselling" (p. 140). His book provides compelling arguments to support his conviction, and I am certainly convinced that readers will take up his strategies in order to shape renewed ways of understanding our lives and connecting with one another. So, with an abiding sense of thankfulness, I commend Dr. Norman E. Amundson for a book that is personal and provocative, hopeful and evocative, instructional and inspiring.

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