

Generic as Specific Metaphors

The claim that metaphor involves a generalisation from a specific to a subsuming, abstract case, sometimes called following Lakoff and Turner (1989), GENERIC-AS-SPECIFIC, (henceforth: GS) is common in one form or another to very many approaches to metaphor dating back to Aristotle. Thus, Lakoff (2006) states that 'Mappings (as in A-COMPETITION-IS-A-RACE) ... from a specific case (a race) to a more general case (a competition)' is one of the results from 1979 that have 'stood the test of time'. Grady (1999) includes GS, such as RISK-TAKING-IS-GAMBLING, in his typology of motivations for conceptual metaphors and notes that PURPOSEFUL-ACTIVITY-AS-A-JOURNEY could also be seen as an example. Generic Space is a crucial part of the architecture of blending theory. Outside of Cognitive Linguistics, we might note Glucksberg and Keysar's (1990) Class Inclusion approach and Relevance Theoretic approaches to metaphor. Abstraction to a subsuming class is also important in the approaches of Wilks (1978), Fass (1997) and Way (1994).

I will argue that GS as a motivation for primary metaphor plays a much larger role than often assumed and present the results of a re-examination of examples of correlation metaphors such as those listed in the appendix to Grady 1997. I will argue that the GS structure is often obscured in three different ways in what might appear to be 'Correlation Metaphors. I give an example of each here.

Firstly, the names given to the source and target suggest different domains, but choosing essentially synonymous terms shows the similarity. Consider Grady's well known decomposition of THEORIES-AS-BUILDINGS into the primary, correlation, metaphors: PERSISTENCE-IS-REMAINING-ERECT and (LOGICAL)-ORGANIZATION-IS-PHYSICAL-STRUCTURE. But remaining is a loose synonym of persisting. Thus, the primary metaphor can also be glossed as: PERSISTING-AS-PERSISTING-IN-AN-UPRIGHT-STATE i.e., the specific 'persisting upright' stands in for 'persistence' in general. Similarly, structure and organization are synonyms; they could easily be reversed in the metaphor.

Secondly, VNMA's, (Wallington et al. 2006, Wallington 2008) or principles for mapping specified types of information invariantly from source to target and which act as adjuncts to primary-like metaphors, extending and elaborating the primary metaphor, can lead to the underlying GS structure of the primary metaphor being obscured. Consider Johnson's (1987) conceptual metaphor, IMPORTANCE-IS-CENTRALITY, which motivates examples such as *'The idea was at the back of her mind'*. But, being in a central position is not an instance of importance. We assume instead the primary metaphor: KNOWLEDGE-IS-KNOWLEDGE-GAINED-BY-PHYSICAL-MANIPULATION plus a DEGREE VNMA. If something is 'at the back' of a space it can only be manipulated to a very limited degree. This limited degree transfers as an adjunct to the primary metaphor.

Thirdly, we can reanalyse the source and or target. Consider IMPERFECTION-IS-DIRT. We can reanalyse 'dirt' following Douglas 1976 as 'matter out of place'. We might then propose the following core metaphor: IMPERFECTION-IS-MATTER-OUT-OF-PLACE and its converse: PERFECTION-IS-MATTER-IN-ITS-CORRECT-PLACE.

Consider finally an example which Grady claims argues against a GS analysis and is a clear example of correlation, MORE-IS-UP. But this is THREE-DIMENSIONS-AS-ONE-SALIENT-DIMENSION, which is often 'up', but may be, as in text, lengthhh.

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