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This monograph is a comprehensive study of figures, focusing on the complex relationship between linguistic forms, functions, instrumental uses and creation on the different planes and levels of the linguistic system, from a philosophical-grammatical perspective. As the title indicates, the author's main focus is on conflictual (living) figures, in particular living metaphors, which he considers to be the richest and most complex of all.

The starting point of Prandi's reasoning is that figures are such multifaceted constellations that it is no surprise that different approaches tend to highlight some of their facets at the expense of others, sometimes resulting in contradictory theories. The author's goal is to elaborate an impartial, unitary vision of figures, reconciling such different schools of linguistics as traditional Aristotelian approaches, functional and cognitive linguistics (see, e.g. Lakoff & Johnson 1980; Kövecses 2000) or the pragmatic approach (e.g. Sperber & Wilson 1981). He proposes the following unifying criterion: "figures are forms that highlight the same linguistic means as those that are engaged in instrumental functions" (p. 3). The term *valorisation* is introduced to describe the "skilful use of linguistic means" that are "left aside or kept in the shadows by instrumental uses" (p. 8). To illustrate the manifold relationship between figures and language, the author uses the following convenient simile: "Like a stone in a pond that sets off a widening ripple effect, this criterion has progressively embraced all kinds of figures belonging to any plane and level of language, from expression to content, from sound arrangements to communicative interactions" (p. 3). The same simile also foreshadows the broadening perspective assumed in the book. Following a detailed introduction in which some of the main results of the study are presented, the body of the book is divided into 10 chapters. In eight of them the author engages in examining figures on three different planes of language, which are followed by two chapters of concluding remarks.

The first section (Chapter 1) investigates the figures of *the plane of expression* and observes the amount to which the sharp separation between functions and figures can be applied to this layer of language. Included here are figures of sound (e.g. alliteration, onomatopoeia), order of constituents (repetition, paralellism, chiasmus), and rhythm (pauses, enjambement).

In the second conceptual unit of the book, covered by Chapters 2–7, the author places the figures of *the plane of content* (traditionally called "tropes") under scrutiny. After outlining the key concept of "conflictual complex meaning", which provides the semantic basis for living figures at this level of language, the correspondence between coding regimes (relational and punctual coding and inferencing) and conflict is introduced (Chapter 2). This is followed by a typology of conflicts (formal, conceptual, textual), which is a prerequisite to the description of living figures (Chapter 3). Here, a clear line is drawn between contradiction (formal) and inconsistency (substantive), and thus between oxymoron and all the other figures on the plane of content. Chapters 4–7 analyze the figures of the plane of content, building on the theoretical and methodological basis developed in earlier chapters. Here, special attention is given to metaphor and metonymy. An attempt is made to firmly distinguish these two figures from each other and also from other tropes, such as oxymoron, synecdoche, and simile.

To demonstrate the genuine and innovative nature of the author's approach to figures, let us consider Prandi's view of the relationship between metaphor and metonymy. While cognitive linguists argue that these two figures are strongly interrelated and form a continuum, Prandi, focusing on the structure of the conflictual expression, argues to the contrary. From his perspective, they are distinct and incommensurate figures, due to their opposite orientation of conceptual pressure. According to this view, metonymies put pressure on the conceptual focus, while in the case of metaphors the pressure is on the coherent tenor. In addition, when applying a metonymy, the aim is to connect the conflicting concepts to form a consistent relation. When using metaphors, the conflict is viewed as a conceptual transfer open to projection and is valorised as an instrument of conceptual creation. The author rejects the existence of "unclear or fuzzy cases in between", captured under the category of "metaphtonymy" (see, e.g. Goossens 1990; Gibbs 1994). To illustrate his point, he uses a humorous, expressive comparison: "Coining such portmanteau terms as metaphtonymy treats complex interactions between distinct facts as if they were hybrid facts, just as calling a man on horseback a centaur could suggest the existence of strange monsters that are half man and half horse" (p. 96).

Many other intriguing questions are addressed and answered by applying a complex, unifying methodology. They include: the primacy of thought or expression, the sources of creativity, the correlation between creativity and conflict, whether consistent thought can also be creative, the origins of metaphors such as *liquid light* and *burning desire*, the translatability of figures, whether and how living metaphors can become conventional, and the distinction made between dead metaphors and others that can still be awakened. A typology of consistent figures is also given and the role of living metaphors in the tropological field is determined.

The third conceptual section of the book, formed by Chapter 8, examines the *figures of textual conflict* (allegory, hyperbole, irony, tautology, litotes, negated metaphor, rhetorical question, and euphemism). They are placed on a cline ranging from allegory (as the ideal type of textual figure, the textual counterpart of metaphor) to rhetorical questions, with an increasing distance from the ideal type.

The two concluding chapters (Chapters 9, 10) summarize how the focus on conflict can shed light on the difference between meanings and relevant messages – as the most essential property of verbal communication, and on the process involved in different types of interpretation (literal, non-literal, figurative). The author argues that the conclusions of his study of conflictual figures are in line with the idea of Philosophical Grammar outlined in his earlier work (Prandi 2004): "the idea that the structural scaffolding of the meaning of complex expressions is the outcome of an interaction between two autonomous principles – a grammar of forms and a grammar of consistent concepts – whose balance changes according to the topography of sentence structure. Conflictual complex meanings are just the extreme outcome of this interaction" (p. 211). Quintilian's words quoted as the motto of the last chapter, therefore, seem to be proven right: "Numquam vera species ab utilitate dividitur" ('The truly beautiful is never separated from the useful').

The fact that the main focus of the author's approach is on conflicting figures – sharply divided from consistent ones – and that the conflict is regarded as the strongest form of creativity, makes this approach inherently different from the cognitive linguistic view. Cognitive linguistic studies concentrate on consistent figures, which are also thought of as building blocks in the creation of living figures. These building blocks either belong to the conceptual heritage of all human beings (due to their embodied nature) or are shared by a community (due to geographical, cultural, social, etc. context). In the philosophical-grammatical perspective taken by Prandi, for example, *waste time* is a consistent metaphor, documenting the shared metaphorical concept TIME IS MONEY. As *waste* is a polysemous word with one of its meanings referring to *time*, it is not conflictual. The metaphor is in the history of

the word. On the other hand, Alcman's line *They sleep, the mountain peaks* is indeed conflictual, because it challenges our firmest conceptual structures by speaking of mountains as if they were human beings.

Undoubtedly among the major achievements of this volume are the fine-grained, innovative analyses of the examples from the field of poetry, sciences, information technology, and philosophy, which the author invites the reader to contemplate. Prandi argues that consistency criteria are based on a shared natural ontology that goes far beyond linguistic and cognitive structures and is independent of actual experience. It can, therefore, be called "a groundless ground", "ultimate presuppositions", or "the riverbed of our very form of life" (p. 53). This view on figures goes against the cognitive liguistic paradigm, which is based on language use, and in which "metaphor means metaphorical concept" (Lakoff & Johnson 1980: 6). Several important questions come to the fore once we consider the author's exciting proposition of referring to the primacy of categories lying beyond our experiences. Firstly, how can we presuppose ontological categories beyond cognition and independent of our experiences, if we, human beings, can only think about the world based on our cognition and experiences, and even our doubts are related to them? Is it not a logical contradiction? Secondly, how is it possible to draw a sharp dividing line between ontological categories such as animate and inanimate in an age when people can potentially get married to robots? For example, in Hungarian folklore, still attested in some communities in the diaspora, like Transylvanian and Moldavian Csángó villages, it is natural for people to surround themselves and their family with objects of protection, and to practice rituals to make their life fertile and keep evil forces at bay. These are not thought of as mere ornaments and traditional events, but are functional. For example, so-called *bunned chairs*, modeled on the shape of a woman with hair combed into a bun (the intended user), often have a tree of life motif on the back. This motif follows the line of the spine and has a design at the base featuring a so-called spiral of life. This spiral is intended to be aligned with the position of the womb of the sitting woman. The function of the spiral and the tree of life is to support the fertility and well-being of the user. Another random example from the same culture is minstrel songs, which were sung on Midwinter night (winter solstice), the darkest day of the year, because this is also the time when light is born out of darkness. It is not accidental that this is the same time of year when Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus, the redemptor of the world. Such rituals and protecting objects make the transcendental world tangible in this culture, based on the special instantiations of the CAUSE FOR EFFECT metonymy: PERFORMING RITUALS FOR THE WELL-BEING OF THE PERFORMERS, APPLICATION OF SPECIFIC MOTIVES ON OBJECTS OF USE FOR THE WELL-BEING OF THE USERS

(for details see, Szelid, forthcoming). We might suppose that in a world where the borderline between humans and the transcendental sphere on the one hand, and between animate and inanimate on the other, is so malleable and permeable, the *smiling moon* and the *singing grass* is much less conflictual than presented in the book. This goes against the idea of the importance of categories beyond our experiences in the creation and interpretation of figures. Something similar can be observed in child communication; children find it natural to feed and cherish their toys and give a face to all kinds of creatures, be it a celestial body or a blade of grass.

In addition, from a historical perspective, it appears that there has always been doubt about the possibility of clearly distinguishing animate and inanimate categories. According to cognitive archeologists, the human brain has only been capable of metaphorical thinking since the Upper Paleolithic period (100 000 to 30 000 years ago). Before that it was domain-specific, with cognitive domains related to tools, the natural world, and social interaction being isolated (see Kövecses 2005). The tools and artwork of the Upper Paleolithic period makes us suppose that the first metaphors were connected to anthropomorphism (ANIMALS AND PLANTS ARE PEOPLE), totemism (PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS) and objectification (ANIMALS AND PLANTS ARE STRUCTURED OBJECTS, PEOPLE ARE STRUCTURED OBJECTS). Kövecses raises the possibility that the birth of these metaphors might have been the result of local co-occurrences of experiential entities, like in the case of primary metaphors such as INTENSITY IS HEAT and INTIMACY IS CLOSENESS (pp. 24–26).

This example just hints at the complexity and importance of the questions Prandi has raised and broadly analyzed in the book from several angles. The author has, no doubt, undertaken the dificult task of trying to strike a balance between the principles of logical thinking and poetic licence. The rationality that permeates the book also applies to the way the author places his own approach in the context of other research on figures. He argues: “There are many gateways to enter such a rich and multifaceted domain. What ultimately matters is not the gateway one chooses, but that the whole territory is explored in all its facets as a consistent domain. I have chosen conflict as a privileged gateway.”

Because of the complexity of the issues raised and the author’s manifold approach to addressing these issues, this book will prove useful to researchers of cognitive and theoretical linguistics, as well as to experts in the philosophy of language, and literary studies.

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