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RECONSTRUCTING INDO-EUROPEAN METAPHORS AND
METONYMIES: A COGNITIVE LINGUISTIC APPROACH TO
COMPARATIVE POETICS

Abstract

This contribution aims to show how uniting Comparative Indo-European (IE) Poetics and Cognitive Linguistics is valuable to both disciplines. It first reconstructs, through the methodology of Comparative Poetics, a coherent IE figurative system underlying the widespread expressions of the type *TO BE ALIVE IS TO BE IN THE LIGHT* and the connected figurative usage of *TO SEE FOR TO LIVE*. Next, it analyzes this IE system through Conceptual Metaphor Theory and other cognitive linguistic frameworks, arguing that it results from both metaphoric processes (“Event Structure Conceptual Metaphor”) and metonymic ones (*SUBEVENT FOR EVENT* metonymy).

Keywords: Indo-European, Comparative Poetics, Cognitive Linguistics, Metaphor, Metonymy

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Standard abbreviations are employed for Greek and Latin sources, as well as for the *Rigveda* (RV).

1. Introduction

As is well-known, the Indo-European (IE) language family comprises a number of historical languages which were originally spoken in Eurasia, such as Hittite (attested in Anatolia during the 2nd millennium BCE), Ancient Greek (Greece and Anatolia) and Vedic Sanskrit (South Asia; both from the 2nd millennium BCE onwards), Latin (Italy, from the 1st millennium BCE onwards), as well as ancient Germanic languages such as Old English, Old Norse, and Old Saxon (North-Western Europe, Middle Ages). By means of the comparative method, historical linguists are able to identify and analyze the correspondences between those languages, and to reconstruct not only a wealth of lexical elements and grammatical features of their prehistoric parent language (conventionally called Proto-Indo-European or PIE; probably spoken before the 3rd millennium BCE), but also a range of traditional expressions of often figurative character, which are the subject of study in the field of Comparative IE Poetics.¹

The development of Cognitive Linguistics, and especially of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), has greatly improved our understanding of how figurative expressions like metaphors and metonymies work, i.e., of how domains (conceptual entities like ANGER, HEAT, ENGLAND)² can metaphorically map their structure onto other more abstract domains (e.g., *he was boiling with anger*, i.e., he was very angry; metaphor type ANGER IS A HEATED FLUID) or metonymically give access to other closely related domains (e.g., *Germany declared war on England*, i.e., on the United Kingdom; metonymy type PART FOR WHOLE).³ Even though

¹ For an overview of the field of Comparative IE Poetics, cf., e.g., Campanile 1977; Durante 1976; Schmitt 1967; 1968; Watkins 1995; West 2007.

² By convention, small capitals are used for conceptual entities or domains (e.g., ANGER); metaphors are represented by statements of the type A IS B (e.g., ANGER IS A HEATED FLUID), in which A stands for the target domain (ANGER) and B for the source domain (HEATED FLUID) that is metaphorically mapped onto the target domain; metonymies are represented by formulations of the type X FOR Y (e.g., PART FOR WHOLE), in which X (PART) stands for the conceptual entity that metonymically gives access to the conceptual entity Y (WHOLE).

³ On CMT and Cognitive Linguistics in general, cf., e.g., Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Lakoff 1987; 1993; Fauconnier and Turner 2002; Croft and Cruse 2004. On their application to Historical Linguistics, cf., e.g., Sweetser 1990:23-48; Winters, Tissari and Allan 2011.

cognitive linguistic tools have been successfully employed in the study of figurative language within single ancient IE traditions, such as Latin (e.g., Short 2008; 2013; Fedriani 2016), Ancient Greek (e.g., Pagán Cánovas 2011; Forte 2019; Zanker 2019), and Vedic Sanskrit (e.g., Jurewicz 2010), correspondences between traditional phrases attested in several IE traditions have been traditionally investigated through the lens of Historical Linguistics and Comparative IE Poetics alone.

By reconstructing a coherent IE system of figurative expressions (§2) and analyzing it through the tools of CMT and other cognitive linguistic frameworks (§3), the present contribution aims to show how uniting Comparative IE Poetics and Cognitive Linguistics might be not only possible, but also of great use to both disciplines. To this end, after reviewing the system of IE figurative expressions of the type *TO BE ALIVE IS TO BE IN THE LIGHT* (§2.1) and the clearly connected IE figurative usage of *TO SEE FOR TO LIVE* (§2.2), this article will seek to analyze the former in terms of the so-called “Event Structure Conceptual Metaphor” (§3.1) and the latter as a conceptual metonymy of the type *SUBEVENT FOR EVENT* (§3.2). Finally, the IE evidence will be shown to reflect a combination of these two figurative processes, whose great success may be rooted in universal human experience (§3.3).

2. Two figurative usages of *LIGHT* and *TO SEE* within Indo-European poetics

This section provides a comparative analysis and reconstruction of an IE figurative model, according to which *LIGHT* and *SEEING* would be closely associated with *LIFE*, *HEALTH*, and *SAFETY*.

2.1 *TO BE ALIVE, HEALTHY, AND SAFE IS TO BE IN THE LIGHT*

I first consider a system of figurative expressions attested in several IE languages, in which terms for *LIGHT* were employed to refer to the most desirable location to reach and to stay in, namely the world of

the living (treated, *inter alia*, by Durante 1976:116-118; Giannakis 2001; West 2007:86-87). Its main types may be summarized as follows:

(1a) TO BE ALIVE IS TO BE IN THE LIGHT

This figure is attested, e.g., in Ancient Greek (ex. 1) and Old Norse (ex. 2):

[1] Eur. *Alc.* 394-396

[...] μαῖα δὴ κάτω

βέβακεν, οὐκέτ' ἔστιν, ὦ πάτερ, ὑφ' ἀλίῳ,

προλιποῦσα δ' ἐμὸν βίον ὠρφάνισεν τλάμων.

“My mother has gone below: no more, Father, **is she in the light of the sun** (i.e., **she is alive** no more), and, miserable, she has left me an orphan.”

[2] *Grípisspá* 7¹⁻²

Þú munt maðr vera mæztr und solo

“**You will be** the most glorious man **under the sun** (i.e., **you will be** the most glorious man **alive**)”

(1b) TO BE DEAD IS TO BE IN THE DARKNESS

This figure, the antithesis of 1a, occurs, e.g., in Vedic Sanskrit (ex. 3) and Homeric Greek (ex. 4):

[3] RV 1.32.10d

dīrghám táma áśayad indrasatruḥ

“He whose rival was Indra **lay** there **in the long darkness** (i.e., he **died**)”⁴

[4] *Il.* 16.606-607

[...] ὤκα δὲ θυμὸς / ὤχετ' ἀπὸ μελέων, στυγερός δ' ἄρα **μιν σκότος εἶλεν**.

“at once the spirit fled from his limbs, and **the hateful darkness seized him** (i.e., he **died**).”

Even though both passages actually describe the moment of death, the constructions used imply that, after dying, these characters

⁴ On the Iranian and Greek comparanda of the Vedic expression LONG DARKNESS, see recently Calin 2017:59, with further references; on the antonymous expression LONG LIFE, cf. Schmitt 1967:161f and *EWAlia*, s.v. *dīrghá-*. I am grateful for the suggestions made by one of the peer reviewers on this topic.

will be figuratively located “in the darkness”,⁵ ON DARKNESS as the Realm of the Dead, see below (end of section 2.2).

(2a) TO BE BORN IS TO GO TO THE LIGHT

Correspondingly, to become alive one must reach the light, as attested, e.g., in Ancient Greek (ex. 5) and Old Saxon (ex. 6):

[5] Pi. N. 1.35-36

ὥς, ἐπει σπλάγχων ὑπο ματέρος αὐ-
τίκα θαητὰν ἐς αἴγλαν παῖς Διός
ᾧδινα φεύγων διδύμῳ
σὺν κασιγνήτῳ μόλεν,

“how, as soon as Zeus’ son **came** down from his mother’s womb **into the** wondrous **daylight** (i.e., as soon as he **was born**), fleeing her birth pains with his twin brother”

[6] *Heliand* 855-856

[...] *Uuissun that thoh managa*

liudi aftar them landa, that he uuas an thit lioht cumin

“And yet many people in the land knew that he **had come to this light** (i.e., that he **was born**)”

(2b) TO DIE IS TO GO TO THE DARKNESS AWAY FROM THE LIGHT

Again, the opposite expression is attested, e.g., in Homeric Greek (ex. 7 and ex. 8):

[7] *Il.* 23.50-51

[...] ὅσσ’ ἐπεικεῖς / νεκρὸν ἔχοντα νέεσθαι ὑπὸ ζόφον
ἠερόεντα

“with all that is fitting for the dead to have when he **goes under** the gloomy **darkness** (i.e., when he **dies**)”

[8] *Hes. Op.* 154-155

[...] θάνατος δὲ καὶ ἐκπάγλους περ ἐόντας / εἶλε μέλας,
λαμπρὸν δ’ ἔλιπον φάος ἠελίοιο.

“black death seized them, frightful though they were, and they **left the bright light of the sun** (i.e., they **died**)”.

⁵ I am especially grateful to Erica Biagetti for useful discussion on this topic.

(3a) TO BESTOW LIFE IS TO LEAD TO THE LIGHT

Leading someone into the light refers to the act of making them become alive, as, e.g., in Homeric Greek (ex. 9) and Latin (ex. 10):

[9] *Il.* 16.187-188

αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ δὴ τὸν γε μογοστόκος Εἰλείθυια

ἔξάγαγε πρὸ φώωσδε [...]

“But after Eileithyia of the hard pains **had brought out** the child **into the light** (i.e., she **had caused him to be born**)”

[10] *Enn.* fr. 165V

[...] *O pater o genitor o sanguen dis oriundum,*

Tu produxisti nos intra luminis oras.

“O father, O sire, O bloodline descended from the gods!
You **have led us to the realms of light** (i.e., you **have bestowed life** on us).”

(3b) TO KILL IS TO LEAD TO THE DARKNESS AWAY FROM THE LIGHT

Conversely, to lead someone to darkness may refer to the act of killing them, e.g., in Vedic (ex. 11 and ex. 12):

[11] *RV* 10.152.4cd

yó asmāñ abhidāsati

ādharāṃ gamayā tāmaḥ

“Who assails us, **make him go to lower darkness** (i.e., **kill him**)”⁶

[12] *RV* 5.42.9d

brahmadviṣaḥ sūr yād yāvayasva

“the haters of the sacred formulation – **keep them away from the sun** (i.e., **destroy them**).”

In the above examples, the poetic phraseology of several IE traditions thus seems to attest a conceptualization of light as a location (standing for the world of the living) which newborns are said to reach, living humans to stay in, and the dead to leave. In some

⁶ For the Indo-Iranian and Indo-European roots of the expression LOWER DARKNESS, see the studies referred to by Calin 2017:59, especially Bodewitz 2002, now reprinted in Bodewitz 2019:223-246; I wish to thank one of the peer-reviewers for suggesting these references to me.

figurative usages, however, to be in the light does not stand for the plain condition of being alive, but rather for the broader condition of being healthy and/or safe as well (cf. Ginevra 2019:75ff). These usages, exemplified in the following expressions, have yet to receive the attention they deserve:

(3C) TO MAKE HEALTHY/SAFE IS TO LEAD BACK TO THE LIGHT AWAY FROM EVIL

This conceptualization is attested, e.g., in Ancient Greek (ex. 13) and Vedic (ex. 14):

[13] Pi. O. 5.12-14

καὶ σεμνοὺς ὄχετοὺς, Ἴππαρις οἴσιν ἄρδει στρατόν,
 κολλᾶ τε σταδίων θαλάμων ταχέως ὑψίγυιον ἄλσος,
 ἀπ' ἀμαχανίας ἄγων ἐς φάος τόνδε δᾶμον ἀσπῶν
 "[...] and the sacred canals, through which the (river)
 Hipparis waters the people, and he quickly welds a tow-
 ering grove of sturdy dwelling, **leading** this community
 of townsmen from helplessness **to light** (i.e., **making it safe**)."

[14] RV 6.47.8ab

uríṃ no lokám ánu neṣi vidvān
sᵘvārvaj jyóṭir ābhayaṃ sᵘvastí

"**Lead** us along to a wide world, as the one who knows
 – **to sun-filled light** (i.e., **make us healthy/safe**), to fear-
 lessness, to well-being."

In both passages, the act of reaching the light stands for leaving a difficult situation and attaining well-being. The figurative movement from ἀμαχανία 'helplessness' to φάος 'light' in the Greek passage may have a further parallel in the rescue of the character Atri from both *ámhas-* 'difficulty' (lit. 'narrowness') and *támas-* 'darkness' in RV 7.71.5c *nír ámhasas támasa spartam átriṃ* "you recovered Atri from difficulty and darkness".⁷ The same conceptualization may

⁷ Unless this passage is to be interpreted literally, as per Jamison 1991:236. On the complex Vedic concept of *ámhas-*, cf. Gonda 1957 (= 1975:58-85); on its relationship with *támas-* and *aghá-*, see also Bodewitz 2002; Bodewitz 2019:263f et passim; I am grateful to one of the peer-reviewers for providing me with these references.

also underlie the Vedic term *bhiṣáj-* ‘healer’, which may be analyzed as the reflex of a PIE formation **b^hh₂s-h₂éǵ-* ‘the one who leads to the light (of life, healing, salvation)’, a compound of an agentive derivative of PIE **h₂éǵ-* ‘lead’ (the root of Gk ἄγειν ‘id.’) and a neuter derivative of PIE **b^heh₂-* ‘shine’ (the root of Gk φάος ‘light’), whose exact etymological match with ἄγων ἐς φάος ‘leading to the light’ in the passage by Pindar quoted above allows for the reconstruction of an inherited formulaic expression (Ginevra 2019:76).

In all of the passages in (3c), the characters who serve as direct objects of LEAD BACK TO THE LIGHT FROM EVIL are adults, as opposed to the texts quoted in (3a), where LEAD TO THE LIGHT refers to the action of causing a baby’s birth. This evidence suggests that, within Indo-European poetics, the figurative meaning of TO BE IN THE LIGHT may have actually been TO BE ALIVE, HEALTHY, AND SAFE, i.e., TO BE IDEALLY ALIVE.

2.2 TO SEE (THE LIGHT) FOR TO BE ALIVE

The system described in the previous section is clearly connected to the figurative use of TO SEE (THE LIGHT) FOR TO BE ALIVE, attested in several IE traditions (cf., *inter alia*, the treatment in Dunkel 1993:106-108), e.g., in Hittite (ex. 15), Homeric Greek (ex. 16), and Vedic (ex. 17):

[15] KBo 4.8 ii 10-11
 TI-*an-za-aš nu* ⁴UTU SA-ME-E IGI.ḪI.A-*it uškizzi*
 “She is alive. She **beholds the sun of heaven** with her eyes (i.e., she **lives**).”

[16] *Il.* 5.119-120
 ὅς μ’ ἔβαλε φθάμενος καὶ ἐπεύχεται, οὐδέ μὲ φησι
 δηρὸν ἔτ’ ὄψεσθαι λαμπρὸν φάος ἠελίοιο.
 “Who shot me before I could see him, and now boasts over me, and says that I **won’t look** much longer **on the shining sunlight** (i.e., I **won’t live**)”

- [17] RV 4.25.4ab
tásmā agnīr bhāratāḥ sārma yaṃsaj
jyók paśyāt sūryam uccārantam
 “For him will Agni, the fire of the Bhāratas, hold out shelter, and for a long time he **will see the sun rising** (i.e., he **will live**)”

The reconstruction of the figurative usage of TO SEE FOR TO BE ALIVE finds further support in the history of the Homeric Greek name for both the Realm of the Dead and its ruler, Ἄϊδης: according to one possible analysis (cf. Beekes 1998:17-19), its disyllabic stem Ἄϊδ- (directly attested by the genitive singular Ἄϊδ-ος and the dative singular Ἄϊδ-ι) may be the expected reflex of *η-μῖδ-, a compound of the negative prefix *η° ‘not, un-’ and a root noun of PIE *μεῖδ- ‘to see’ (LIV²:665-667), meaning ‘not-seeing’ or ‘un-seen, in-visible’.⁸ Both meanings would attest to the association between the concept TO NOT SEE and the god/realm of DEATH, which corresponds, inversely, to the figurative usage of TO SEE FOR TO BE ALIVE and closely matches the frequent usage of terms for ‘darkness’ or ‘shadow’ to refer to the Realm of the Dead in Greek literature. Compare, e.g., the following passages from the *Iliad* (dative Ἄϊδι in ex. 18), the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (ζόφος ‘darkness’ in ex. 19), and Euripides’s tragedy *Hecuba* (σκότος ‘shadow’ in ex. 20):

- [18] *Il.* 23.243-244
 καὶ τὰ μὲν ἐν χρυσέῃ φιάλῃ καὶ δίπλακι δημῶ
 θείομεν, εἰς ὃ κεν αὐτὸς ἐγὼν Ἄϊδι κεύθωμαι.
 “And let us lay his bones in a golden jar and a double fold of fat, until I myself be hidden **in the Unseen/Invisible** (i.e., **in the Realm of the Dead**).”
- [19] *HDem.* 402-403
 [...] τότε ἄπο ζόφου ἠερόεντος / αὐτίς ἄνει
 “then you (= Persephone) will come back up **from the misty dark** (i.e., **from the Realm of the Dead**)”

⁸ For an overview of other possible interpretations for this name, cf., e.g., Beekes 1998:17-19; Janda 2000:114-138.

- [20] Eur. *Hec.* 1-2
 Ἦκω νεκρῶν κευθμῶνα καὶ σκότου πύλας
 λιπῶν, ἴν' Ἄιδης χωρὶς ᾤκισται θεῶν
 "I have come from out of the charnel-house and gates of
darkness (i.e., **of the Realm of the Dead**), where Aïdēs
 dwells apart from gods."

To sum up, the comparative analysis of a number of figurative expressions attested by the phraseology, the lexicon, and perhaps even the mythology of various IE traditions allows for the reconstruction of a coherent system in which, *inter alia*: TO BE IN THE LIGHT and TO SEE (THE LIGHT) are employed to refer to the state TO BE (IDEALLY) ALIVE (thus also HEALTHY and SAFE); TO LEAD TO THE LIGHT refers to either the causing of a baby's birth (expressed as TO GO TO THE LIGHT) or the healing or saving of an adult human being (FROM EVIL of some kind); TO BE IN THE DARKNESS and TO NOT SEE (THE LIGHT) expresses TO BE DEAD; and TO LEAD TO THE DARKNESS stands in for the concept TO KILL.

3. A Cognitive Linguistic Approach

Comparative Indo-European Poetics has provided clear evidence of a coherent IE system of figurative expressions. In the following sections, I take a step further to offer more detailed analyses that employ some of the tools developed within the framework of Cognitive Linguistics.

3.1 The "Event Structure" Conceptual Metaphor and the Idealized Cognitive Model of TO BE ALIVE

The first group of IE figurative expressions discussed above (2.1) may be analyzed by means of what George Lakoff (1993:222-223) referred to as the "Event Structure Conceptual Metaphor", according to which (*inter alia*) "STATES ARE LOCATIONS (bounded regions in space)",

“CHANGES ARE MOVEMENTS (into or out of bounded regions)”, and
 “CAUSES ARE FORCES”:

(1) STATES (a. TO BE ALIVE / b. TO BE DEAD) ARE LOCATIONS (a. TO BE IN THE LIGHT / b. TO BE IN THE DARKNESS)

In expressions like (1a) “no more, Father, is she in the light of the sun (i.e., she is alive no more)” (ex. 1), the source domain (Location) TO BE IN THE LIGHT is mapped onto the target domain (State) TO BE ALIVE; conversely, in those of the type (1b) “he lay there in the long darkness (i.e., he died)” (ex. 3), the source domain (Location) TO BE IN THE DARKNESS is mapped onto the target domain (State) TO BE DEAD.

(2) CHANGES (a. TO BE BORN / b. TO DIE) ARE MOVEMENTS (a. TO GO TO THE LIGHT / b. TO GO TO THE DARKNESS)

Consequently, in type (2a) “as soon as Zeus’ son came down into the wondrous daylight (i.e., as soon as he was born)” (ex. 5), the source domain (Movement) TO GO TO THE LIGHT is mapped onto the target domain (Change of state) TO BE BORN (i.e., TO BECOME ALIVE), whereas, in type (2b) “when he goes under the gloomy darkness (i.e., when he dies)” (ex. 7), the source domain (Movement) TO GO TO THE DARKNESS is mapped onto the target domain (Change of state) TO DIE (i.e., TO BECOME DEAD).

(3) CAUSES (a. TO BESTOW LIFE / b. TO KILL / c. TO MAKE HEALTHY OR SAFE) ARE FORCES (a. TO LEAD TO THE LIGHT / b. TO LEAD TO THE DARKNESS / c. TO LEAD BACK TO THE LIGHT AWAY FROM EVIL)

Finally, in figurative expressions of the types (3a) “Eileithyia had brought out the child into the light (i.e., she had caused him to be born)” (ex. 9), (3b) “make him go to lower darkness (i.e., kill him)” (ex. 11) and (3c) “lead us to sun-filled light (i.e., make us healthy and safe)” (ex. 14), the source domains (Force-dynamic actions) TO LEAD TO THE LIGHT, TO LEAD TO THE DARKNESS, and TO LEAD BACK TO THE LIGHT AWAY FROM EVIL are mapped onto the target domains (Causation processes) TO BESTOW LIFE (i.e., TO MAKE ALIVE), TO KILL (i.e., TO MAKE DEAD) and TO HEAL/SAVE (i.e., TO MAKE HEALTHY/SAFE), respectively.

The ontological correspondences making up this metaphorical system may be summarized as in the following table:

	Source domain	Target domain
1a	LOCATION: BE IN THE LIGHT	STATE: BE ALIVE
1b	LOCATION: BE IN THE DARKNESS	STATE: BE DEAD
2a	MOVEMENT: GO TO THE LIGHT	CHANGE OF STATE: BE BORN (BECOME ALIVE)
2b	MOVEMENT: GO TO THE DARKNESS	CHANGE OF STATE: DIE (BECOME DEAD)
3a	FORCE-DYNAMIC ACTION: LEAD TO THE LIGHT	CAUSATION PROCESS: BESTOW LIFE (MAKE ALIVE)
3b	FORCE-DYNAMIC ACTION: LEAD TO THE DARKNESS	CAUSATION PROCESS: KILL (MAKE DEAD)
3c	FORCE-DYNAMIC ACTION: LEAD BACK TO THE LIGHT AWAY FROM EVIL	CAUSATION PROCESS: HEAL/SAVE (MAKE HEALTHY/SAFE)

As I explained at the end of section 2.1, these correspondences make it clear that, within Indo-European poetics, *TO BE IN THE LIGHT* did not just stand for *TO BE ALIVE*, but rather for *TO BE ALIVE, HEALTHY, AND SAFE*, i.e., *TO BE IDEALLY ALIVE*. This is indeed expected within our cognitive linguistic framework, as CMT's domains do not reflect reality exactly as it is. As theorized by Lakoff (1987:68ff), conceptual domains should rather be thought of as Idealized Cognitive Models (ICMs). By definition, an ICM cannot "fit the world very precisely. It is oversimplified in its background assumptions. There are some segments of society where the idealized model fits reasonably well, [...] but the ICM [of *BACHELOR*] does not fit the case of the pope or [...] Tarzan". Within the metaphorical system described above, *TO BE IN THE LIGHT* is thus mapped onto an ICM of the concept *TO BE ALIVE*, which is not just limited to the plain biological condition of having a pulse or breathing, but rather, as Marcello Durante (1976:117) has already noted, ideally refers to the full enjoyment of our mental and physical functions ("*pienezza della vitalità psicofisica*").

The "Event Structure Conceptual Metaphor" may thus account for the various permutations of our metaphorical system (*TO BE IN/GO/LEAD* to mapping onto *TO BE/BECOME/MAKE*), but it does not explain the basic

correspondence between TO BE ALIVE and TO BE IN THE LIGHT – one would have actually expected TO BE ALIVE to be mapped onto a figurative location TO BE IN LIFE. As I explain in the following section, the connection between the concepts LIFE and LIGHT actually reflects a metonymic process, rather than a metaphoric one.

3.2 TO BE ALIVE as a “complex event ICM” and TO SEE FOR TO BE ALIVE as a CO-PRESENT SUBEVENT FOR COMPLEX EVENT metonymy

As noted above (2.2), the TO BE ALIVE IS TO BE IN THE LIGHT metaphor is clearly connected to the figurative use of TO SEE (THE LIGHT) FOR TO BE ALIVE, which may in turn be connected to the latter’s possible analysis as a so-called “complex event Idealized Cognitive Model”. In the words of Kövecses and Radden (1998:51), within a complex event ICM an event is conceptualized as if “involv[ing] several distinct subevents which are viewed as objects with parts”; within such an ICM, “a whole event may metonymically stand for an “active-zone” subevent and vice versa”. Within IE poetics, TO BE ALIVE seems to have been conceptualized as a complex event ICM involving several distinct subevents that are habitually more or less co-present in the life of a human being (at least within an idealized conceptualization), such as TO SEE, TO EAT, TO SPEAK, TO BREATHE, TO HEAR, OR TO STAND (cf. Ginevra 2020:117ff). The following Vedic passage offers an example:

- [21] RV 10.125.4ab
máyā só ṅnam atti yó vipásyati
yáh prāṅiti yá īṃ śṛnót,y uktám
 “Through me he **eats** food – whoever **sees**, whoever **breathes**, whoever **hears** what is spoken (i.e., whoever is **ideally alive**)”.⁹

⁹ Cf. Jamison and Brereton 2014, ad loc. (“[...] Eating is essential to life: one can’t see, breathe, or hear without being alive [...]”).

Within this framework, TO SEE FOR TO BE ALIVE may thus be analyzed as an instance of the CO-PRESENT SUBEVENT FOR COMPLEX EVENT metonymy (Kövecses and Radden 1998:52; a sub-type of PART FOR WHOLE). To give an example of how this metonymy functions, the habitual event TO SPEAK A LANGUAGE (e.g., in *Mary speaks Spanish*) stands for the whole respective complex event ICM, namely TO BE COMPETENT IN A LANGUAGE, which (ideally) includes other co-present habitual events and linguistic skills, such as reading and writing.

This analysis of the IE figurative use of TO SEE FOR TO BE ALIVE finds support, e.g., in the fact that in Hittite TO BE ALIVE could be metonymically expressed not only, as seen above (Section 2.2), as TO SEE THE SUN (ex. 15: “she beholds the sun of heaven with her eyes”, i.e., she lives), but also, by selecting a different subevent of the same complex event TO BE ALIVE, as TO EAT AND DRINK (ex. 22):¹⁰

- [22] KBo 3.1+ ii 13-15
nu=wa=za azzikandu akkuškandu idālu=ma=šmaš=kan
lē ku[itki] taggašši
 “Let them eat and drink (i.e., let them live). Let no one do harm to them.”

It may be worth noting that this metonymic use of TO SEE, TO EAT, and other bodily functions as co-present subevents standing for the complex event TO BE ALIVE allows for the reconstruction of an extremely ancient (prehistoric, more precisely) folk theory of human life as a complex embodied experience (in some ways anticipating the findings of contemporary cognitive theory).

3.3 TO BE ALIVE IS TO BE IN THE LIGHT as a metaphonymy and the experiential basis of metaphors

If we take into account the findings of the previous sections (3.1 and 3.2) and assume the intermediation of the well-attested PERCEIVED

¹⁰ On this formula in Hittite, see Watkins 1995:209.

FOR PERCEPTION metonymic use of LIGHT FOR SEEING,¹¹ or, alternatively, of a common PLACE FOR EVENT metonymy (BEING IN THE LIGHT FOR SEEING), the following analysis is possible. TO BE ALIVE IS TO BE IN THE LIGHT (i.e., TO SEE), together with its various permutations, can be understood as a figurative expression which involves both metaphoric and metonymic processes, i.e., a so-called “metaphonymy” (a term coined by Goossens 1990), arising from the combination of the “Event Structure” conceptual metaphor (STATES ARE LOCATIONS and its variants) with the SUBEVENT FOR EVENT metonymic use of TO SEE FOR TO BE ALIVE.¹²

This figurative system has been particularly successful within IE traditions. One explanation for this is that highly conventional metaphors often have an experiential basis (Lakoff and Johnson 1980:19-20), i.e., they originate in human bodily (ibid.:14ff) and cultural (ibid.:65-66) experience. The close match with a universal experiential basis (by which being alive usually implies being located on the sun-lit surface of the earth) might be among the possible reasons for the high success of the type TO BE ALIVE IS TO BE IN THE LIGHT, as opposed to, e.g., a type TO BE ALIVE IS TO BE IN THE FOOD (not attested, to the best of my knowledge).

4. Conclusion

The results of this study may be summarized as follows:

(1) A system of figurative expressions is attested in several IE languages, by which TO BE ALIVE/DEAD is conceptualized as TO BE IN THE LIGHT/DARKNESS, TO BECOME ALIVE/DEAD (i.e., TO BE BORN/TO DIE) AS TO GO TO THE LIGHT/DARKNESS, and TO MAKE ALIVE/DEAD (TO BESTOW LIFE/TO KILL) AS TO LEAD TO

¹¹ Cf., e.g., Lat. *damnum lucis* “the loss of my light” for BLINDNESS in Ovid (*Met.* 14.197); Gk φάος ὀμμάτων “the light of my eyes” for SIGHT in Pindar (*N.* 10.40-41); Ved. *jyōtir andhāya cakrathur vicākṣe* “you made light for the blind one to see” for TO GIVE SIGHT in the RV (1.117.17d).

¹² A less likely alternative would be to posit an intermediate metaphor TO BE ALIVE IS TO BE IN LIFE (less frequently attested in ancient IE traditions, but cf., e.g., Cic., *Sen.* 13: *diu esse in vita* “to be in life for a long time”).

THE LIGHT/DARKNESS. This system is clearly a reflex of the “Event Structure Conceptual Metaphor”, according to which (*inter alia*) STATES may be conceptualized as LOCATIONS, CHANGES AS MOVEMENTS, and CAUSES AS FORCES.

(2) The further metaphoric type TO MAKE HEALTHY/SAFE IS TO LEAD TO THE LIGHT AWAY FROM EVIL (with instances in Greek and Vedic phraseology, as well as in lexical items like Ved. *bhiṣáj-* ‘healer’) makes it clear that TO BE IN THE LIGHT actually stood for an Idealized Cognitive Model of TO BE ALIVE (thus including also HEALTHY and SAFE), by which the latter was not just conceptualized as the plain biological condition of having a pulse or breathing, but ideally construed as the full enjoyment of human mental and physical functions.

(3) More precisely, within IE poetics, the state TO BE ALIVE WAS conceptualized according to a so-called “Complex Event Idealized Cognitive Model”, involving several subevents which are (ideally) co-present in the life of a human being, such as TO SEE, TO EAT, TO BREATHE, and TO HEAR, reflecting an ancient folk theory of human life as a complex embodied experience. Figurative usages such as TO SEE (THE LIGHT) FOR TO BE ALIVE and TO EAT AND DRINK FOR TO BE ALIVE, attested in various IE traditions, may thus be analyzed as conceptual metonymies of the type CO-PRESENT SUBEVENT FOR COMPLEX EVENT.

(4) Accordingly, TO BE ALIVE IS TO BE IN THE LIGHT is best analyzed as a figurative expression involving both metaphoric processes, like the “Event Structure Conceptual Metaphor” (STATES ARE LOCATIONS and its variants), and metonymic processes, like PERCEIVED FOR PERCEPTION (OR PLACE FOR EVENT) and SUBEVENT FOR EVENT. The success of this figurative usage may have been influenced by the close match with the universal experiential basis that conceives of human life (ideally) as taking place on the sun-lit face of the earth.

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