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## Metaphor corpora and *corporeal* metaphors

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### 1) Introduction

Cognitive metaphor theory has highlighted the conceptual function of metaphor by providing evidence of domain-mapping systems that make up our universe of experiences. Is this conceptual function also of relevance in the public political debate? Lakoff and Johnson's answer is an emphatic *Yes*: "Metaphors may create realities for us, especially social realities. A metaphor may thus be a guide for future action. Such actions will, of course, fit the metaphor" (1980: 156). Lakoff himself and others have since produced a number of empirical case-studies of the role metaphors play in public discourse in national as well as international politics (e.g. Chilton and Lakoff 1995; Lakoff 1996, 2001; Schäffner 1996; Dirven, Frank and Ilie 2001). In many of these studies, however, we find a tension between, on the one hand, strong general claims such as the one quoted above which suggest that metaphor sources 'guide' social and political practice up to the point of acting as self-fulfilling prophecies and, on the other hand, actual empirical findings that reveal a "wide variety of possible entailments" of one source domain, which offer "scope for debate and controversy" (Schäffner 1996: 56). If the same source domain can be used to argue for or against specific political positions, its 'guiding' force evidently is ambiguous. It is here that corpus-based studies are needed because they allow us to go beyond illustrating cognitive hypotheses with a few 'fitting' examples by way of eliciting empirical data on whether there are politically significant differences in the ways metaphor source domains are used in particular discourse communities.

The basis for the presentation is a bilingual corpus of texts containing metaphorical references to European politics in the 1990s has been built up, drawn from British and German press coverage of political decisions and developments concerning the European Union. The corpus has a pilot version, called EUROMETA I, which comprises some 2100 passages from 28 British and German newspapers from the period 1989-2000, and a larger version (EUROMETA II) compiled from two general corpora, i.e. the "Bank of English" at the University of Birmingham and "COSMAS" at the Institute for German Language in Mannheim, which comprises in excess of 20.000 entries. For the present study, metaphors from the source domain of LIFE-BODY-HEALTH have been selected. This source domain is among the most fundamental and ancient metaphor systems employed for the conceptualisation of socio-political entities, reaching back, in the Western tradition, to ancient and medieval concepts of the state as a *body politic* (Hale 1971, Struve 1978, Sontag 1991). A first overview shows that by no means all aspects of the source domain BODY-HEALTH-ILLNESS are employed in the modern Euro-political debates, and secondly, that their frequency of use differs greatly, as can be seen from tables 1 and 2.

**Table 1) Conceptual elements of the LIFE-BODY-HEALTH domain in EUROMETA II**

Source concepts	English lexemes	German lexemes
LIFE-SURVIVAL	life, alive, live, survival	Leben, leben, lebendig, über-, weiterleben, ins Leben rufen
BIRTH-BABY	birth, rebirth, born, still-born, premature birth, abortion, baptism, baby, (bouncing) child,	Geburt, geboren, Wiedergeburt, Frühgeburt, Missgeburt, Kind, Baby
DEATH	death sentence/ warrant/ knell	Tod, tot
ILLNESS/DISEASE		
<i>I/D: SICK/ILL</i>	<i>Ill, illness, sick (sick man of Europe)</i>	<i>krank, kranker Mann Europas, kränkelnd</i>
<i>I/D: EUROSCLEROSIS</i>	<i>Euro(-)sclerosis</i>	<i>Eurosklerose</i>
<i>I/D: MADNESS</i>	<i>(Euro-)madness</i>	
<i>I/D: INFLUENZA</i>	<i>Asian (economic) flu</i>	Grippe
<i>I/D: VIRUS</i>	<i>virus</i>	
<i>I/D: COLIC</i>	<i>colic</i>	
<i>I/D: WOUND</i>		<i>Wunde, Narbe</i>
<i>I/D: WASTING/TBC</i>		<i>Schwindsucht</i>
<i>I/D: HURT</i>		<i>wehtun</i>
CURE/THERAPY/CARE	therapy, diagnose	Pflege, pflegen, Nachsorge
HEALTH/FITNESS/RECOVERY	recovery, health, healthy	Gesundheit, gesund, gesünder, gesunden (v.), Fit, Fitness, Erholen
BODY PARTS		
<i>BP: HEART</i>	<i>heart</i>	<i>Herz</i>
<i>BP: EYES</i>		<i>Augen</i>
<i>BP: HEAD</i>		<i>Kopf</i>
<i>BP: LEGS</i>		<i>Beine</i>
<i>BP: FEET</i>		<i>Füße</i>
<i>BP: MUSCLES</i>		<i>Muskeln</i>
<i>BP: BACKSIDE</i>	<i>backside</i>	

\* Not including lexicalised imagery for political leaders as *heads of state/government/commission* (cf. Deignan 1995: 1-2).

**Table 2) Tokens for conceptual elements of LIFE-BODY-HEALTH source concepts in EUROMETA II in the order of overall frequencies**

Source concepts	number of tokens in English sample	*	number of tokens in German sample	*	overall number of passages
BODY PARTS	210		377		587
<i>BP: HEART</i>		209		336	
<i>BP: EYES</i>				19	
<i>BP: HEAD</i>				9	
<i>BP: LEGS</i>				6	
<i>BP: FEET</i>				5	
<i>BP: MUSCLES</i>				2	
<i>BP: BACKSIDE</i>		1			
ILLNESS/DISEASE	60		137		197
<i>I/D: SICK/ILL</i>		40		92	
<i>I/D: EUROSCLEROSIS</i>		12		32	
<i>I/D: MADNESS</i>		4			
<i>I/D: INFLUENZA</i>		2		3	
<i>I/D: VIRUS</i>		1			
<i>I/D: COLIC</i>		1			
<i>I/D: WOUND</i>				5	
<i>I/D: WASTING/TBC</i>				3	
<i>H/I: HURT</i>				2	
BIRTH-BABY	58		100		158
HEALTH/FITNESS/ RECOVERY	37		111		148
LIFE-SURVIVAL	23		55		78
DEATH	4		8		12
CURE/THERAPY/ CARE	2		7		9

<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>394</b>		<b>795</b>		<b>1189</b>
no. of passages	184		485		669

\* figures for tokens in columns 3 and 5 are included in the figures of the preceding columns and thus do not add to total sums

The overall ratios of German and British sample passages and tokens (2.6:1 and 2:1) should not be seen as evidence of greater a popularity of LIFE-BODY-HEALTH metaphors in German press language but are due to the fact that the German corpus contains many more texts for the same period (1989-2001) than the BoE. It would thus be misleading to derive conclusions from the absolute frequency of lexical items or source elements. The following remarks will instead focus on differences between in distribution patterns the two national samples. To do this, I have grouped the concepts into “scenarios” (Lakoff 1987: 285-286) based on three central mappings of LIFE-BODY-HEALTH sources to the target domain of political INSTITUTIONS:

(1) AN INSTITUTION HAS A **life cycle** that lasts from birth to death

scenarios: AN INSTITUTION IS CONCEIVED, CARRIED AND BORN; IF IT CONTINUES TO FUNCTION IT SURVIVES AND GROWS UP; WHEN IT CEASES FUNCTIONING, IT DIES

(2) AN INSTITUTION CAN BE IN A MORE OR LESS **healthy/ill** state

scenarios: THE INSTITUTION CAN SUFFER INJURIES OR FALL ILL, RECOVER, AND UNDERGO MEDICAL TREATMENT

(3) AN INSTITUTION HAS A **body** that comprises various parts

scenarios: THE PARTS OR ASPECTS OF AN INSTITUTION ARE LIMBS AND ORGANS OF ITS BODY (which can also individually become ILL – see (2) - and then may affect the whole BODY).

## 2) The *life cycle* of Europe

The main focus of the LIFE-CYCLE scenario in both EUROMETA corpora is the concept of BIRTH. It is used to describe momentous and innovative political developments, such as the restructuring of Europe after the collapse of the Warsaw Pact in 1989/90, or the institutional reforms of the EC/EU which were agreed in the Treaties of Maastricht (1991) and Amsterdam (1997). More than 75% of all BIRTH tokens are, however, references to the common currency, the “euro”. They comprise a variety of pre-, peri- and post-natal problems as well as emphatically positive descriptions of a HEALTHY BABY. When we look at the distribution of these scenario versions, the tokens for the characterisation of the euro introduction as a PROBLEM BIRTH in the British sample account for less than 40 % (9 out of 26 in EUROMETA II) but they make up the great majority, 63%, in the German sample (50 out of 79 in EUROMETA II). A closer study of the reasons for this apparent lack of confidence in the *euro-birth* in the German public reveals an interesting characteristic of the German EU-debate as well as a specific problem for the interpretation of statistical corpus data. 90% of all the German tokens consist of citations of and comments on a particular statement by one politician, namely the then opposition contender for the German Chancellorship, the Social Democrat Gerhard Schröder. In a statement made at a crucial time in the run-up to the federal elections in Germany, in March 1998, Schröder warned that a hastened arrival of the euro

was going to *deliver a sickly, premature baby* (“eine kränkelnde Frühgeburt”; W, 27/3/1998). The incumbent Chancellor, Helmut Kohl, and his foreign minister, Klaus Kinkel, launched a counter-attack by condemning Schröder for having denounced the euro as a case of *miscarriage* or even monstrosity (i.e. a “Fehlgeburt” or “Missgeburt”; SZ, 28/3/1998, MM, 3/4/1998). Schröder hit back by accusing his opponents of misquoting him and demonstrated how carefully he had chosen his metaphor scenario: of course, he stated, ‘a *miscarriage* and a *premature birth* were completely different things’ (SZ, 28/3/1998). Calling the *birth* of the euro a *miscarriage* would have implied an utterly pessimistic attitude, namely, that the *child was doomed to die*, whereas the diagnosis of a *premature birth* could be interpreted as a plea for *extra care and support* so that *the child could still survive*. Needless to say, Schröder considered his own party to be *best qualified to give that support* and he reiterated this assessment on the election campaign trail (SP, 14/1998 = example 2). After winning the elections, Schröder was charged, as acting president of the EU Council of ministers from January to June 1999, with *caring for the child* whose allegedly *premature birth* he had criticised only a few months before. In case he might have forgotten his earlier words, the magazine *Der Spiegel* (SP, 1/1999 = example 3) was quick to remind him of that somewhat premature diagnosis. As late as May 2000, the German press harked back to Schröder’s 1998 statement, using it as a foil for evaluating his arguments that the (then topical) decline of the euro’s in the exchange rate against the US dollar was ‘nothing to shed tears over’ (MM, 12/5/2000).

Such debates had a massive impact on the distribution patterns of BIRTH metaphors in the corpus. From the start of the 1990s until spring 1998, BIRTH metaphors occur on average once a year. PROBLEM BIRTH scenarios then begin to pick up in both samples, which can be explained with reference to the approaching date for the currency introduction. This increase is, however, insignificant compared with the sudden inflation of tokens for the PREMATURE BIRTH scenario, which dominate the German sample and make up the bulk of all BIRTH tokens up to October 1998 (i.e., the time of the general election). After that their frequency decreases but still remains at a higher level than before March 1998. We can thus observe how a sub-group of scenarios focussing on a special target topic provide the bulk of tokens in the corpus, due to developments that have nothing to do with the conceptual or ontological centrality of the scenario but rather with social and political dynamics. Once introduced in the public debate by a prominent politician in a salient context, a scenario is disseminated through quotations and comments in the media. In the short term, the metaphor remains the property, as it were, of its author and serves his argumentative needs – thus, the PREMATURE BIRTH metaphor helped Schröder to sound sufficiently Euro-sceptical and to ingratiate himself with the German electorate of 1998. Within a changed political context, however, the metaphor was quoted against him in the context of comments suggesting that Schröder’s *premature birth* warnings had sounded too sceptical to be offset easily by his new posturing as a *caring euro father*. The lesson for the interpretation of corpus data is that the frequency of occurrences of tokens for conceptual elements or scenarios cannot in itself be regarded as evidence of an argumentative or ideological bias of the source as used in a given discourse community.

### 3) *Health and illness of Europe*

Whilst the PREMATURE BIRTH scenario includes SICKNESS only in some variants, there are also scenario versions in which the concepts of ILLNESS, TREATMENT and RECOVERY are explicitly foregrounded, comprising

physical, psychological and psychosomatic conditions and concomitant effects such as PAIN and AGONY, as well as forms of PREVENTION and THERAPY, e.g. FITNESS PROGRAMMES, HEALTH TESTS, PILLS OR MEDICINES. General terms for concepts in the ILLNESS domain, namely English *disease*, *illness*, *ill* and *sick* and German *Krankheit*, *krank* as well as *kränkeln* ('being poorly', 'beginning to be ill') collocate in some cases with specific LIFE/ILLNESS terms, but most of their tokens appear in the fixed phrase *the sick man of Europe* (in German: *der kranke Mann Europas*). This phrase is by no means new to European discourse – the *sick man of Europe* formula can be traced back to the late 17th century but gained prominence in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a reference to the declining military and economic power of the Ottoman Empire (Büchmann: 1898: 531-514; Brewer's 2001: 1083-1084). More recently, in the 1970s, Britain had also been dubbed the *sick man of Europe*. It was with considerable relief, and in a few cases with *schadenfreude*, that British media passed the stigma label onto Germany, when the erstwhile model of a *healthy economy* in Europe experienced the double threat of recession and of not meeting the EMU stability criteria (T, 26/10/2001). Altogether, the *sick man* references make up 29 of the 40 British SICK/ILL(NESS) tokens in EUROMETA II, i.e. 72%., with most of them harking back to Britain's past status as the *sick man* (15 tokens). Germany comes second (10 tokens); apart from it only Albania and the euro carry this stigma (each just once). On the German side, the *sick man of Europe* theme is much less prominent: there are overall just 13 tokens of *kranker Mann Europas* (= 14% out of 92), and Germany is by no means the only target: there are also tokens for Russia, Greece and Spain, plus acknowledgements that Britain has left the negative image behind.

Whilst the *sick man of Europe* phrase presupposes a mapping from the concept of SEVERAL PERSONS to the DIVERS EUROPEAN STATES, so that one of them can be identified as *the SICK MAN*, an alternative perspective is that of the EU as one integral ORGANISM THAT SUFFERS FROM A ILLNESS OR DISEASE. This concept underlies the two remaining ILLNESS scenarios manifested in the EUROMETA corpora, i.e. the scenario of a special ILLNESS called *Euro-sclerosis* and that of an affliction of THE HEART OF EUROPE. *Euro-sclerosis* is the only medical metaphor in Euro-discourse that has achieved the status of a well-known key-term that can be identified 'in its own right', as it were, in a general corpus. It seems to have been coined first in the 1980s to warn against a decrease in economic and institutional *flexibility* and *growth* (Jung and Wengeler 1995: 110), in keeping with its source meaning of "morbid tissue hardening" (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary* 1979: 1014-1015). During the second half of the 1990s, the verdict of *Euro-sclerosis* was used predominantly in the British press to condemn low growth and rising unemployment in continental member states and to promote abstention from Monetary Union (T, 25/12/2000).

#### 4) The *heart of Europe*

Of the altogether nine body parts named in texts of the two EUROMETA corpora, only one constitutes a significant source concept for Euro-metaphors: i.e. the HEART. The remaining BODY PART concepts appear, in special one-off formulations that have the HEART source concept as their principal semantic clue. Two main types of folk-theories seem to be activated in the analogy HEART:BODY to X:EUROPE, as documented in the corpus: a) an understanding of the HEART as the CENTRAL PART of the BODY, and b) the notion that the HEART as an ORGAN can suffer damage from INJURY or DISEASE.

The CENTRALITY aspect of the HEART concept serves, first of all, as a reference to countries, regions or

cities as being situated geographically at the *heart of Europe*. They are statistically by far the most prominent uses of the phrase *heart of Europe* in the EUROMETA II German sample (with 257 out of 336 tokens), and still make up a sizeable portion in the English sample (34 out of 209). Nearly half (i.e. 116 out of the 252) German tokens relate to Germany as a whole or German cities as being the *heart of Europe* or as being *in the heart of Europe*. There are no similar references to Britain - in either the British or the German sample of the corpus. As regards continental Europe, the HEART=CENTRE equation extends not just over the countries of central Europe - i.e., Poland, the Czech Republic, Germany, Austria, Slovenia - but also includes Belgium, the Franco-German border regions (Alsace-Lorraine, Burgundy and the Palatinate), Switzerland, and the Balkans. The latter occur mainly in references to the wars in the former Yugoslavia as taking place *in the heart of Europe*, with the implication that what happens *in the heart* is - or should be - close to, and of particular importance for, one's emotional centre (cf. (G, 5/4/1999). This emotive dimension of positioning a nation *in the heart of Europe* is also discernible in references to candidate states for the EU enlargement process, such as the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary (taz, 2/1/1995). The localisation of a nation (or metonymically, its capital) *in the heart of Europe* carries with it the demand or promise that it has a right to be taken seriously as a member of a united Europe.

This implicit bias is even stronger when we move on to non-geographical *heart of Europe* categorisations. In this context, Britain finally comes into the picture - indeed, the British public debate about EC/EU-politics in the 1990s can in some sense be summarised as a dispute about the nature and function of the *heart of Europe* and Britain's relation to it. At the beginning of this debate stands again another prominent key-utterance by John Major, in a speech held four months after he had succeeded Margaret Thatcher as British Prime Minister and Tory Party leader. In it he pledged that "[...] Britain would work 'at the very heart of Europe' with its partners in forging an integrated European community" (G, 12/3/1991). Over the following months, Major's *heart of Europe* slogan triggered a host of interpretations and variations. For a while, the majority of interpretations and comments were consistent as regards the scenario of WORKING AT THE HEART OF AN INSTITUTION, i.e. they treated it as equivalent to the notion of BEING CLOSELY INVOLVED WITH IT. In 1994, the joint parliamentary groups of the ruling German Christian Democrat parties even used the reference to Major's statement in a manifesto to express their 'hope that 'Britain should play its role at the heart - i.e., at the core - of Europe'. The *Guardian* commented that the paper was "by far the most important recognition by a political body indisputably - as opposed to rhetorically - at the heart of Europe that the Maastricht project will now be rethought" (G, 3/9/1994). The thinly disguised condemnation of the Conservatives as being 'only rhetorically at the heart of Europe' signalled that the dominant political interpretation of the BRITAIN-AT-THE-HEART-OF-EUROPE notion had changed. Major's claim from 1991 was by now seen as hollow. In the following years German media repeatedly quoted Major's promise as evidence against his apparent turn-around to a Euro-sceptical position, in way not unlike their strategy of confronting Chancellor Schröder with his former *premature birth* misgivings. In the British debate, similar attempts were made to remind Major of his erstwhile Euro-enthusiasm but there were also more direct challenges to his BRITAIN-AT-THE-HEART-OF-EUROPE promise. With the integration process slowing down after several delays in the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty and the withdrawal of the Pound Sterling from the European Exchange Rate Mechanism, the originally intended positive appeal to CENTRAL involvement in the EU as expressed in the *heart* metaphor lost some of its plausibility, and Major's

phrase was adapted to pessimistic scenarios of an imminent HEART FAILURE (I, 11/9/1994). As if this was not enough to give the *heart of Europe* a bad name, a further scenario emerged with the publication of a strongly Euro-critical book written by the EU official Bernard Connolly in 1995, entitled *The Rotten Heart of Europe*. It captured the headlines of the British press (e.g. E, 9/9/1995; G, 11/9/1995), as well as leading to his sacking by the EU commission. The ROTTEN HEART scenario constitutes a special blending, insofar as the well-established mapping ENTITIES THAT ARE DETERIORATING ARE ROTTEN or ROTTING ORGANISMS, is applied to the concept of HEART in its metaphorical meanings of CENTRE and CHIEF ORGAN of the EU. It thus conveys a sense of a particularly dangerous type of deterioration which is hard to heal, if at all.

By contrast with the British debate, SICK, ILL or ROTTEN HEART metaphors are rare in the German sample: there are only two occurrences. The remainder are neutral or positive, and a substantial sub-section, i.e. 25 tokens, is made up of references to the British debate. On the occasion of the 1999 nepotism scandal we find - despite massive critical coverage -, no HEART FAILURE imagery in the German media but just one mildly ironical reference by the *Frankfurter Rundschau* to Blair as a would-be ‘*dragon slayer at the heart of Europe*’ (FR, 24/3/1999).

Such use of the phrase *putting Britain at the heart of Europe* with regard to Blair betrayed a good knowledge of British debates. Blair had ‘inherited’, as it were, the role of promoter of the *Britain at the heart of Europe* slogan from his predecessor. Together with that claim he has inherited the challenges to it in the form of DISEASE/ILLNESS scenarios: at the end of Blair’s first term of office, a *Guardian* article depicted him as a man, who talks about being *at the heart of Europe*, but when arrives there might be received as someone in need of “*a look of pity and a cup of sweetened tea — but only after he has wiped his feet in a trough of disinfectant.*” (G, 4/4/2001). This example links the slogan of *being at the heart of Europe* with an allusion to the then topical “foot-and-mouth” epidemic in Britain. Even though there is no connection between the HEART concept and the EPIDEMIC scenario, the latter provides the thematic perspective of HEALTH/HYGIENE PROBLEMS that affects the understanding of *heart of Europe*, suggesting inferences that the EU might not want Britain to be *close to its heart* because of its perceived *sickness*. This produces a sarcastic effect of exposing a perceived lack of realism and common sense among the *heart of Europe* supporters.

## 5) Conclusions

This survey of LIFE-HEALTH-BODY metaphors from the EUROMETA corpora demonstrates that elements of conceptual source domains and their configurations in scenarios can be found in a general corpus by defining using key-word searches consisting of pairs of lexical items that belong to the source and target domains. On the other hand, the analysis shows that conceptual domains as such cannot provide a sufficiently well-defined basis to explain the *distribution* patterns of source concepts that are characteristic for the respective discourse communities. The evidence from the LIFE-HEALTH-BODY domain data leads to the hypothesis that within a domain certain elements and scenarios have a privileged, prominent status in that they account for most of the metaphor tokens as well as for their textually most elaborate variations. In the course of public debates within a discourse community, traditions of metaphor use emerge in which specific scenarios (e.g. *premature birth*, *being at the heart of Europe*, *Euro-sclerosis*, *the sick man of Europe* etc.) become the foci of extensions and re-interpretations and ‘conceptual contests’ – hence a sudden inflation of tokens for the respective scenarios in the cor-

pus at particular points in the communicative history of that community. Some of these contests become so prominent that they are reported in a neighbouring discourse community (e.g. British claims of being *at the heart of Europe* that were commented on in German media). In the course of these debates, the ideological and argumentative bias of source concepts may change drastically. Thus, the initially optimistic-sounding phrase *being close to the heart of Europe* was turned against its authors in comments that highlighted *diseases* or *injuries* to that *heart*; and Schröder's verdict on the euro's *birth problems* was quoted against him as well as being twisted around by himself. By focusing on such traditions of usage, corpus-based analysis can highlight argumentative tendencies and ideological assumptions that are associated with specific scenarios rather than with the abstract level of source domains. The grouping of lexical and phraseological items in specific scenarios and the distribution of scenarios in a public discourse corpus can thus be understood as indicators of thematic and argumentative perspectives that are representative for a discourse community.

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