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Metaphor Is a Constellation

In his book "Bio-Linguistics", Talmy Givon notes that the neural processing of language parallels the pathway for visual processing. Although intended to argue that human language might have evolved through gestural communication, this fact might have more direct significance suggesting the incorporation of visual meaning into linguistic semantic structures.

Although the exact mechanisms for visual-semantic processing remain largely unknown, we *do* know some of its inherent characteristics. Human visual processing allows us to identify and analyze objects and actions from varied distances and aspects (POV), under different visual conditions (brightness, contrast, visual clarity or diffusion, line-of-sight obstacles, etc), and to associate non-real images and patterns with real-world counterparts (subject recognition from photographic images, paintings, drawings, caricatures, etc). However, some of the same traits that allow us to perform such feats are responsible for a number of deceptive visual illusions and misidentifications. Remarkably, many of these traits have parallels in language.

This presentation suggests that the brain utilizes *identical* semantic processing tools and methods in its processing of various language acts, such as metaphor-related phenomena (conceptual), as it does in the processing of visual information, such as the generation of *meaningful* constellations from patterns of random dots (*perceptual* metaphor).

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