

**The effects of input specificity
on the metaphoricity of blends**

or,

**How can we explain
GENERIC IS SPECIFIC?**

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How can we explain GENERIC IS SPECIFIC?

Arguments against a conceptual view of metaphor tend to use (and re-use) certain examples:

- *She is an angel* (Thomas and Mareschal 2001, Sperber and Wilson *forthcoming*)
- *This journal is a gem* (McGlone 2007)

Conceptual metaphor theorists call these examples “GENERIC IS SPECIFIC”.

How can we explain GENERIC IS SPECIFIC?

- Detractors of conceptual theories of metaphor argue that these “metaphors” **lack the systematic mappings** required of conceptual metaphors:

“... at no point in your reading (of *this journal is a gem*) did you wonder about the journal’s carat weight or how it might look in an engagement ring.” (McGlone 2007:109-110)

- Examples of GENERIC IS SPECIFIC do seem impoverished in their structure compared to more prototypical metaphor

How can we explain GENERIC IS SPECIFIC?

This talk aims to:

- Use Blending Theory to argue against a McGlone-style analysis of GENERIC IS SPECIFIC
- Show how GENERIC IS SPECIFIC can look more or less like metaphor, depending on the similarity of its input spaces
- Explore GENERIC IS SPECIFIC in parables

A Blending Theory analysis of GENERIC IS SPECIFIC

- McGlone (2007) and others analyze *this journal is a gem* as a “**category-inclusion assertion**”
- This “category-inclusion” would include JOURNAL in the category of GEMS, allowing “properties” from GEMS to be “attributed” to JOURNAL (cf. McGlone 2007)

A Blending Theory analysis of GENERIC IS SPECIFIC

Problems:

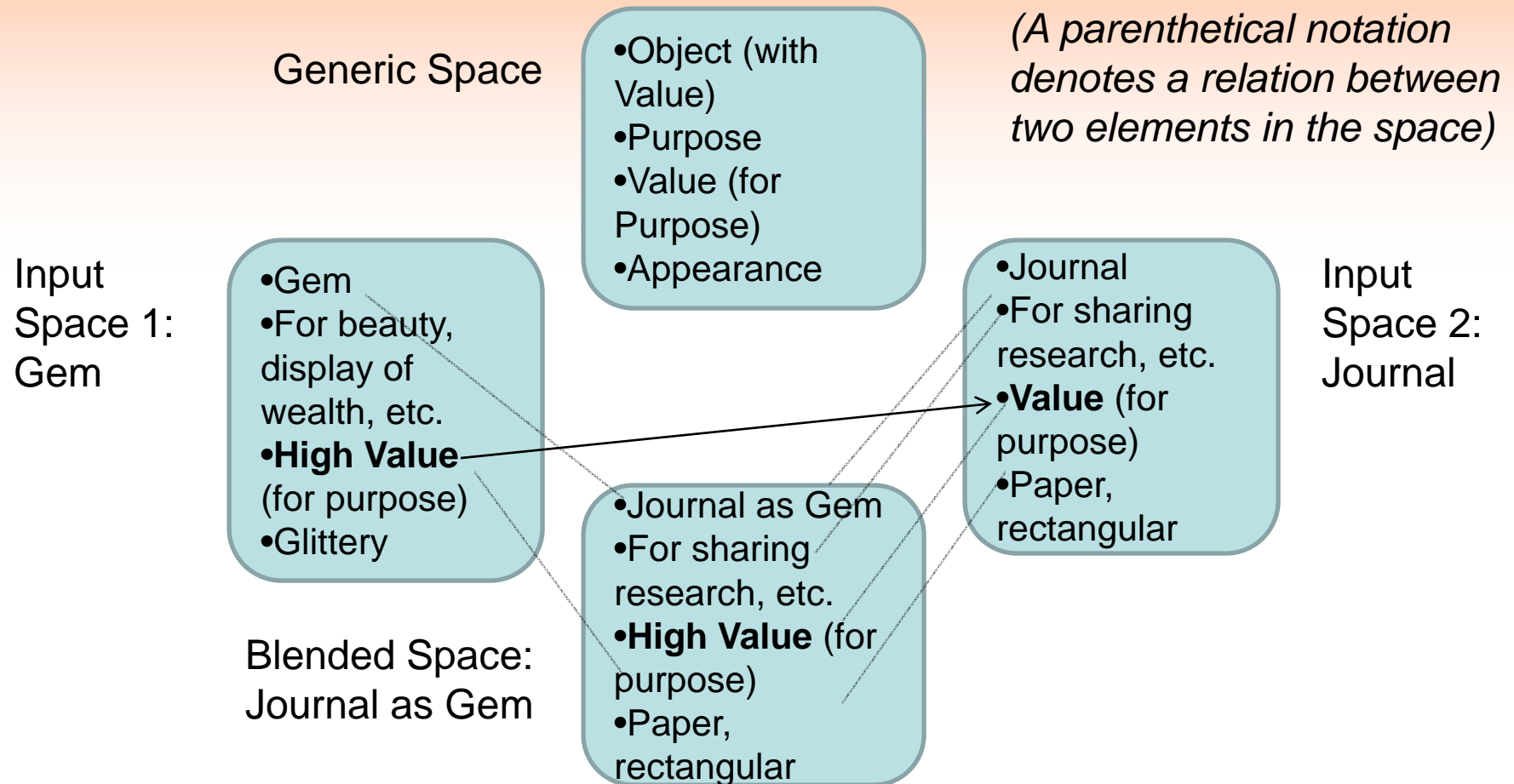
- Categories don't have properties – category members have properties.
- How do we know which properties of GEMS should be “attributed”?

A Blending Theory analysis of GENERIC IS SPECIFIC

Proposal:

- JOURNAL is considered as a member of the category of OBJECTS WITH VALUE, of which GEM is a paragon prototype, rather than as a member of GEM.
- The family resemblances of GEM as a prototype are mapped from GEM to JOURNAL.

A Blending Theory analysis of GENERIC IS SPECIFIC



This journal is a gem

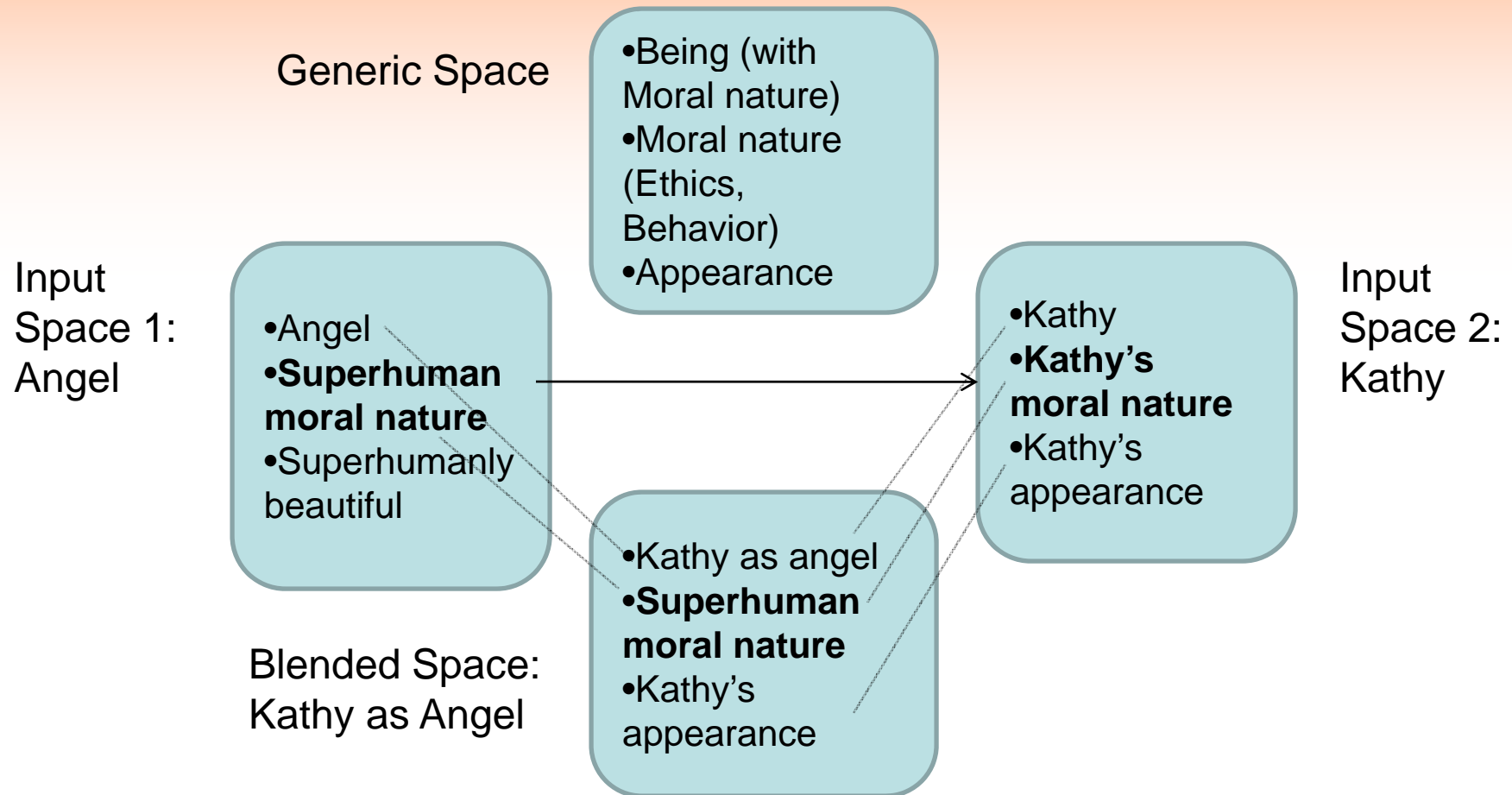
A Blending Theory analysis of GENERIC IS SPECIFIC

- Mapping: The gem's value, for its purpose, maps to the journal's value, for its purpose.
- Inference: Since a GEM is a paragon prototype for the category of OBJECTS WITH VALUE, we can infer from the above mapping that the journal's value for its purpose is likewise very high.

A Blending Theory analysis of GENERIC IS SPECIFIC

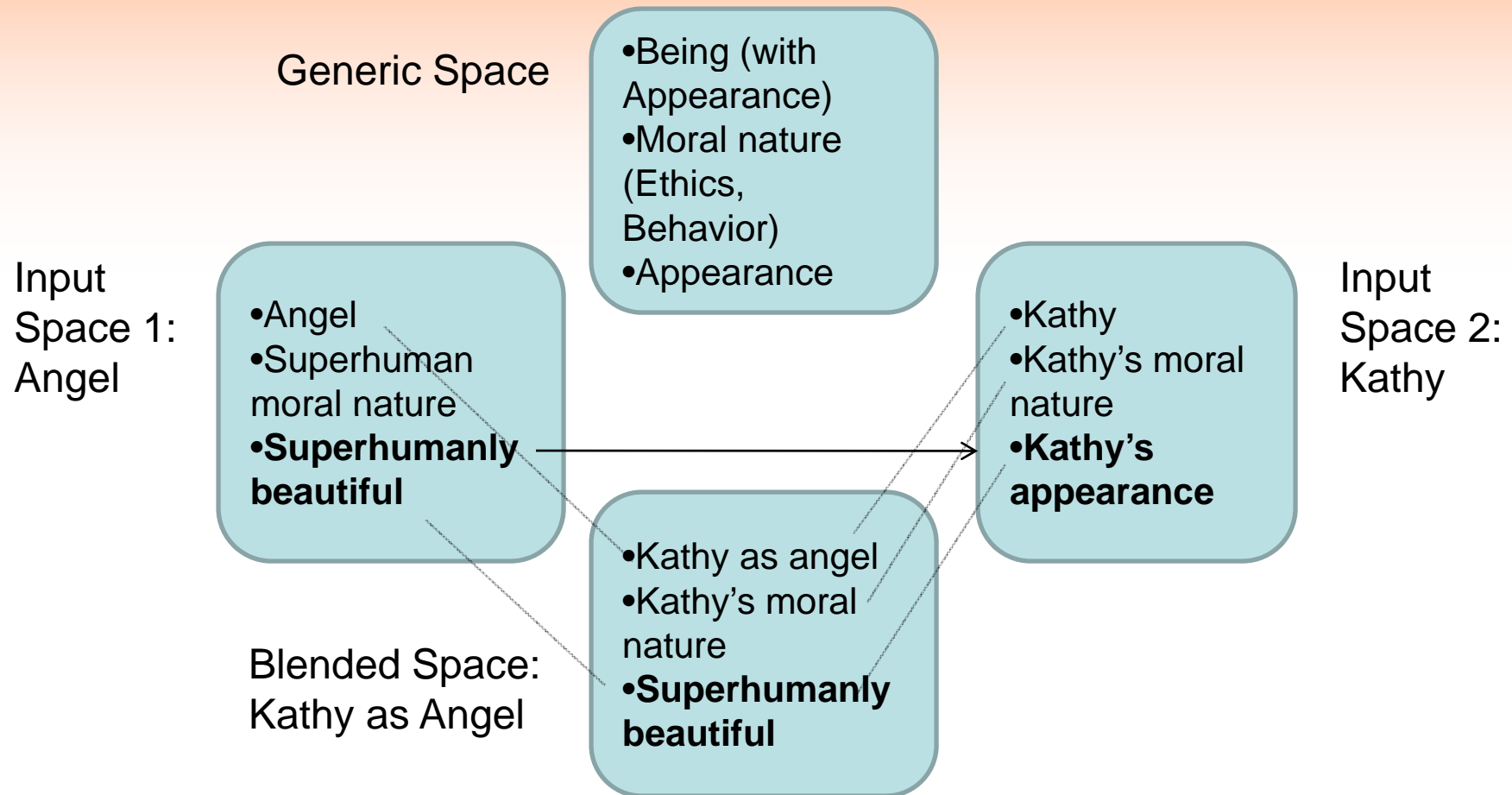
- What happens when we map from an input that is a prototype of more than one category?

A Blending Theory analysis of GENERIC IS SPECIFIC



Kathy is an angel / Kathy acts like an angel

A Blending Theory analysis of GENERIC IS SPECIFIC



Kathy is an angel / Kathy looks like an angel

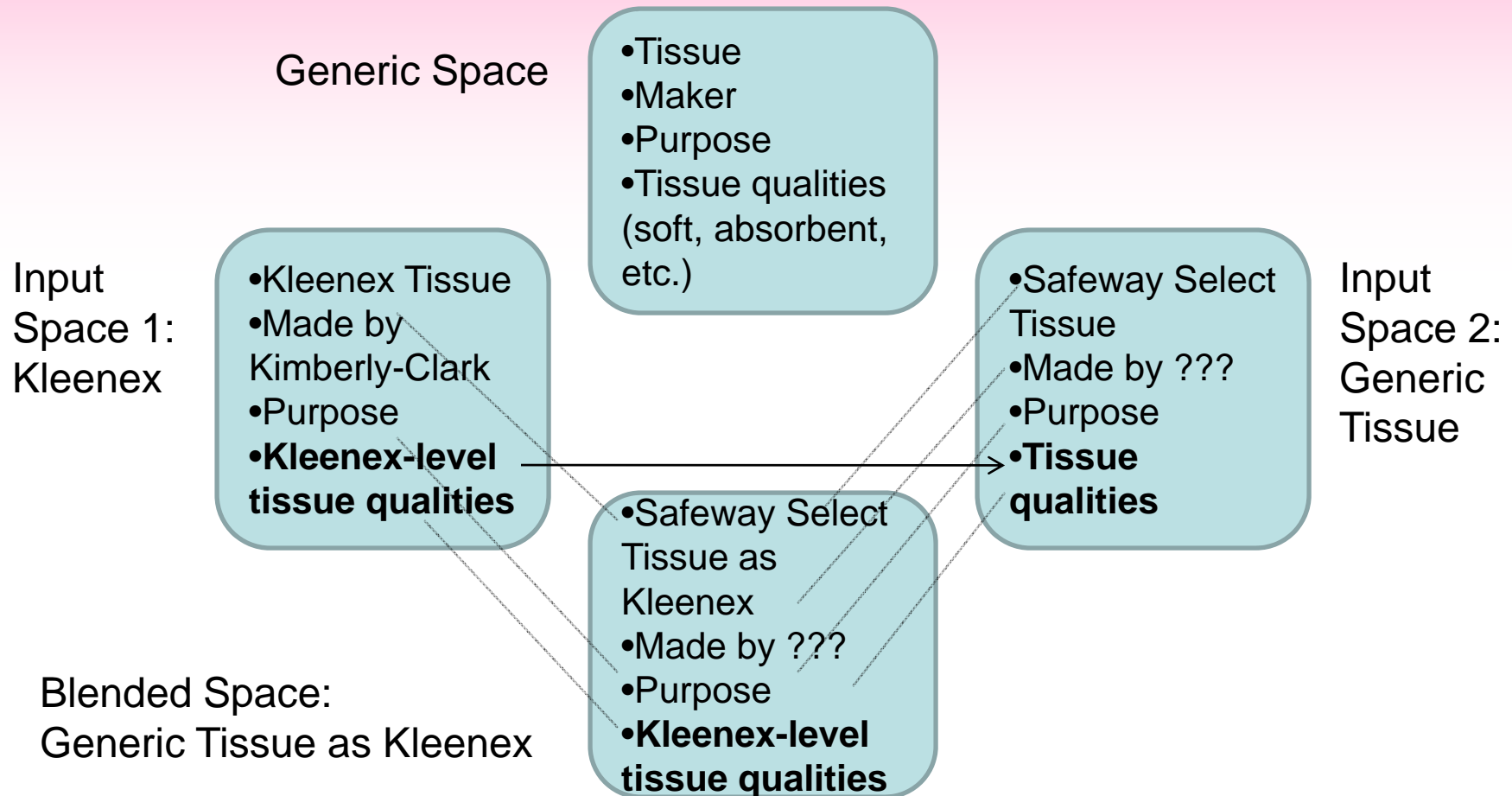
A Blending Theory analysis of GENERIC IS SPECIFIC

- In these blends, ANGEL is treated either as a paragon of beauty or a paragon of ethics – not both.
- Additional space-builders are needed to bring in the characteristics associated with ANGEL as the prototype of the other category, as in *Kathy acts like an angel, and she looks like one too*.
- If *Kathy* were added to the category ANGEL, we wouldn't know which, or how many, properties to “attribute”.

A cline of metaphoricity in GENERIC IS SPECIFIC

- If GENERIC IS SPECIFIC isn't "category inclusion," is it metaphor?
- Why do some instances of GENERIC IS SPECIFIC seem **more** like metaphor than others?

A cline of metaphoricity in GENERIC IS SPECIFIC

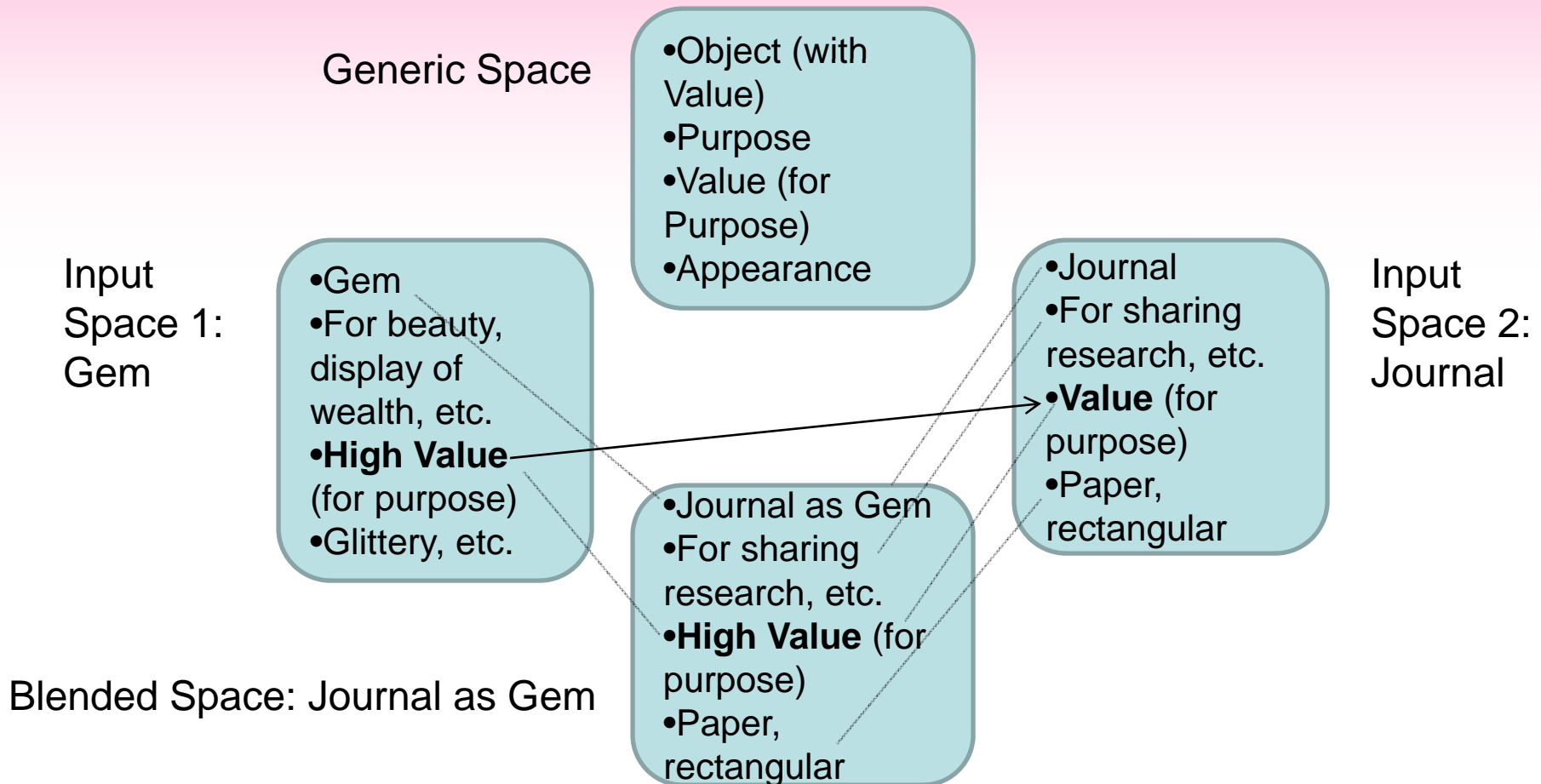


Here's a Kleenex (referring to generic tissue)

A cline of metaphoricity in GENERIC IS SPECIFIC

- Brand-name manufacturers are concerned that by using the brand name to refer to generic products, consumers will map the perceived **qualities** of the brand-name products.
- This mapping generates **inferences** about the high quality of generic-brand products.

A cline of metaphoricity in GENERIC IS SPECIFIC



This journal is a gem

A cline of metaphoricity in GENERIC IS SPECIFIC

How well does GENERIC IS SPECIFIC fit the characteristics of metaphor (Lakoff and Turner 1989:103)?

- In *metaphor*, there are **two conceptual domains**, and one is understood in terms of the other.
- In *metaphor*, a whole schematic structure (with **two or more entities**) is mapped onto another whole schematic structure.
- In *metaphor*, the logic of the source-domain structure is mapped onto the logic of the target-domain structure.

A cline of metaphoricity in GENERIC IS SPECIFIC

- Are GENERIC TISSUE and KLEENEX “two conceptual domains”?
- Probably not. The lowest-level category that both belong to is very specific: TISSUES.
- The generic space in the blend evoked by *here’s a Kleenex* is therefore very specific:

- Tissue
- Maker
- Purpose
- Tissue qualities (soft, absorbent, etc.)

A cline of metaphoricity in GENERIC IS SPECIFIC

- Are JOURNAL and GEM different enough to constitute “two conceptual domains”?
- Maybe. The lowest-level category that both belong to is very general: OBJECTS WITH VALUE.
- The generic space in the blend evoked by *this journal is a gem* is therefore very general:

- Object (with Value)
- Purpose
- Value (for Purpose)
- Appearance

A cline of metaphoricity in GENERIC IS SPECIFIC

- Inputs that belong to the same low-level category, and take part in blends with relatively specific generic spaces, seem less like separate domains, and result in blends that seem less “figurative” and less “metaphoric”.

A cline of metaphoricity in GENERIC IS SPECIFIC

So, how well does GENERIC IS SPECIFIC fit these characteristics of metaphor (Lakoff and Turner 1989:103)?

- In *metaphor*, there are **two conceptual domains**, and one is understood in terms of the other.
- In *metaphor*, a whole schematic structure (with **two or more entities**) is mapped onto another whole schematic structure.
- In *metaphor*, the logic of the source-domain structure is mapped onto the logic of the target-domain structure.

A cline of metaphoricity in GENERIC IS SPECIFIC

So, how well does GENERIC IS SPECIFIC fit these characteristics of metaphor (Lakoff and Turner 1989:103)?

- In *metaphor*, there are **two conceptual domains**, and one is understood in terms of the other.
- **Maybe: Inputs may seem more or less like domains.**
- In *metaphor*, a whole schematic structure (with **two or more entities**) is mapped onto another whole schematic structure.
- In *metaphor*, the logic of the source-domain structure is mapped onto the logic of the target-domain structure.

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- **Maybe: Inputs may seem more or less like domains.**
- In *metaphor*, a whole schematic structure (with **two or more entities**) is mapped onto another whole schematic structure.
- **No: Sometimes one quality of a prototype is mapped.**
- In *metaphor*, the logic of the source-domain structure is mapped onto the logic of the target-domain structure.

A cline of metaphoricity in GENERIC IS SPECIFIC

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- **Maybe: Inputs may seem more or less like domains.**
- In *metaphor*, a whole schematic structure (with **two or more entities**) is mapped onto another whole schematic structure.
- **No: Sometimes one quality of a prototype is mapped.**
- In *metaphor*, the logic of the source-domain structure is mapped onto the logic of the target-domain structure.
- **Yes: At least one unidirectional inference is generated.**

GENERIC IS SPECIFIC in proverbs

- Lakoff and Turner (1989) suggest that proverbs also involve GENERIC IS SPECIFIC.
- Do blends in proverbs look like instances of “GENERIC IS SPECIFIC” such as in *this journal is a gem*?

GENERIC IS SPECIFIC in proverbs

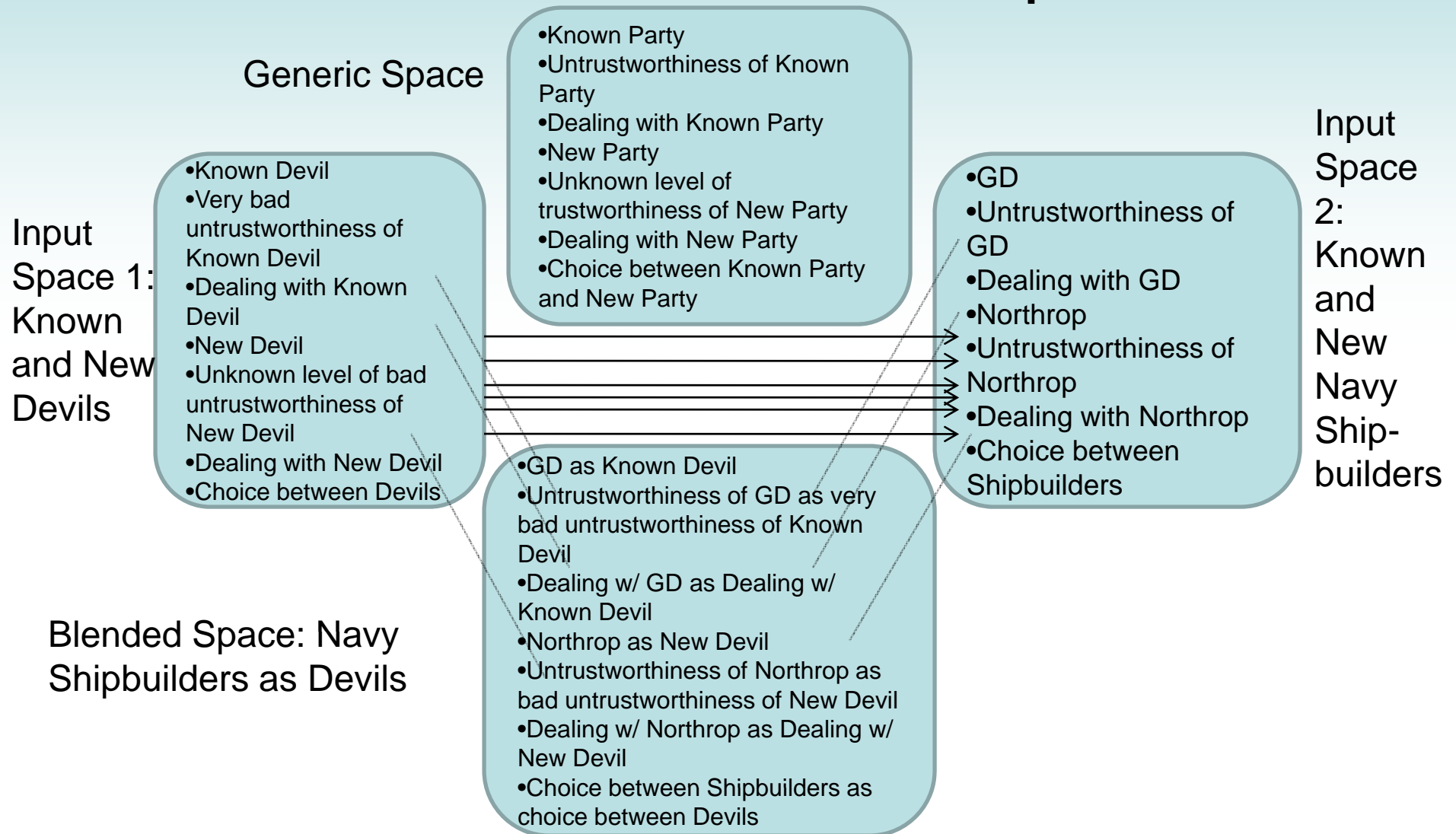
“(The Navy knows shipbuilder) GD; they’ve dealt with them for years and decades. Northrop is a ‘Johnny Come Lately.’ **Better deal with the devil you know than the one you don't.**”

-- Paul Nisbet, defense analyst at Newport, R.I.-based JSA Research Inc.



St. Wolfgang and the Devil, by Michael Pacher

GENERIC IS SPECIFIC in proverbs



Better (deal with) the devil you know than the one you don't
 (in reference to Navy shipbuilders GD and Northrop)

GENERIC IS SPECIFIC in proverbs

What is mapped:

- Prototype qualities
- Scales (of relative trustworthiness, etc.)
- Temporal relations and sequences
- Causal relations and causal chains

Blends necessarily preserve these structures (via the Invariance Hypothesis).

- The “category inclusion” explanation of GENERIC IS SPECIFIC can’t explain how these blends map sequences and scales as well as “properties”.

GENERIC IS SPECIFIC in proverbs

How well does GENERIC IS SPECIFIC in proverbs fit these characteristics of metaphor (Lakoff and Turner 1989:103)?

- In *metaphor*, there are **two conceptual domains**, and one is understood in terms of the other.
- **Maybe: Inputs may seem more or less like domains.**
- In *metaphor*, a whole schematic structure (with **two or more entities**) is mapped onto another whole schematic structure.
- **Maybe: Certain types of schematic structures map.**
- In *metaphor*, the logic of the source-domain structure is mapped onto the logic of the target-domain structure.
- **Yes: At least one unidirectional inference is generated.**

Conclusions

- Connectionists and “category inclusion” proponents are not justified in using “GENERIC IS SPECIFIC” (and especially the least-metaphoric types of “GENERIC IS SPECIFIC”) as counterexamples to a conceptual theory of metaphor.
- “Category inclusion” fails even to explain GENERIC IS SPECIFIC, because categories don’t have “properties,” the theory doesn’t explain which “properties” would be “attributed,” and we would have to call some strange things “categories,” such as DEALING WITH THE DEVIL YOU KNOW....
- However, GENERIC IS SPECIFIC may look more or less like metaphor depending on how much structure is mapped and the specificity of the generic space/ the lowest-level category to which the inputs can be assigned.

Thank you!

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