

Actualization of the stylistic figure of simile in meditative parables by Anthony de Mello

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Abstract. The article analyzes simile as one of the main means of structural and semantic organization of meditative parables that implements the pragmatic component of the works in question. Meditative simile constructions are characterized by a three-componential structure that consists of the basis of a simile, a simile conjunction *like* (sometimes *as*) and a notion on which the comparison is based. Semantic analysis of simile agents in meditative parables simile constructions helped us to point out anthropomorphic, naturemorphic, zoomorphic simile constructions and those where the simile agent is expressed by an object, an abstract notion or an action.

Keywords: *meditative parable, simile, pragmatic loading, anthropomorphic simile, naturemorphic simile, zoomorphic simile.*

Any analysis of stylistic devices is primarily a deeper understanding of their impact on the reader, i.e. a pragmatic analysis of their content. Under the notion of pragmatics of the text we understand “the ability of the expression to be actively perceived by the reader, the focus of the expression on some reaction, its ability to generate some influence” [3, p. 127]. In other words, “the whole communicative-functional paradigm in linguistics may be called activity oriented onto a person. The analysis of common knowledge about the world of communicators and their communication skills, communication tools etc. is a typical feature of all interpretative approaches in linguistics since... target attitude, intention is the driving force of human behavior, including speech” [11, p. 13-15].

The analysis of tropes – words and word combinations by means of which, mainly in fiction, one reaches the aesthetic effect [1, p. 83] – became the object of study in antiquity and the Middle Ages in Poetics and Rhetoric of Aristotle, Quintilian, Scaliger and others.

The main markers of the lexical-semantic loading of meditative parables are the stylistic figures of simile, figures of opposition (antithesis, oxymoron, paradox) and personification, which actualize the ideological position of the author, serve as the means of structural and semantic organization of meditative parables.

Simile is the most frequent figure of speech used in meditative parables in the final part of a narration as a climax element revealing the ideological conception of a parable and verbalizing the pragmatic orientation of the author by means of creating proper and easy for remembering analogies. Actually, analogies created by similes help the author to point out the necessary feature in an object and demonstrate it in a proper way. Simile is also a vivid way of assessing the surrounding reality, thanks to which the author, in his works, has the opportunity to show an emotional attitude to everything he describes.

Meditative parables by Anthony de Mello, a Jesuit priest and a psychotherapist, constitute the **object** of this research. Simile used as the means of structural and semantic organization of meditative parables that implements the pragmatic component of the works in question is the **subject** of the given investigation. The **aim** of the article is to analyze the types of similes and their pragmatic realization on the basis of meditative parables by An-

thony de Mello.

Simile belongs to the main figures of speech known since Aristotle's time and, as a result, was highlighted in various aspects: grammatical [4], functionally-stylistic [6; 10], phraseological [5] etc. There are some researches dealing with the differences in structurally-semantic peculiarities of similes and metaphors [7; 8]. If we abstract from the linguistic aspect of simile and consider it within a philosophical framework, we find the idea of K.D. Ushinsky to be very interesting, he claims that comparison is the basis of any understanding and any thinking. We get to know about everything in the world only by means of comparison [9, p. 28].

Describing phraseological units O.H. Vazhenina, referring to M.F. Aliferenko, states that they are characterized by a three-componential structure, i.e. the basis of simile (*tertium comparationis*), a simile conjunction – a formal index of a simile and the agent of simile [2]. Similar structure is presented in meditative simile constructions where we have the basis of any simile, a simile construction *like* (sometimes *as*) and a notion on which the comparison is based.

Charles Dodd defined parables as metaphors or similes taken from nature or everyday life, which attracts the listener by its strangeness, leaving some doubts about its exact use, which forces the mind to work actively [12, p. 16]. That is, a parable is first of all a comparison, always with an unexpected turn, which encourages understanding and provokes a certain reaction of readers. Similes, in meditative parables, did not betray their primary functions, and within the works we analyzed, like other means of organizing language material used by the author, perform a pragmatic function, i.e. the function of influencing the addressee, the function of accentuating the author's position and culminating in the final part of the work (or in the conclusion to it) its meaning.

Semantic analysis of simile agents in meditative parables simile constructions helped to point out anthropomorphic, naturemorphic, zoomorphic simile constructions and those where a simile agent is expressed by means of an object, an abstract notion or an action.

The most numerous are the similes with a person 29% (or nature phenomena 22%), the fact that may also be connected with the dominant anthropocentric paradigm in linguistics stating that while exploring the world a person

evaluates it on the basis of his/her experience.

Reflecting on a person's ability to listen (and this, in fact, the author repeatedly emphasizes), Anthony de Mello makes a comparison with a jeweler whose work requires detailed and meticulous treatment. *So, the ability to listen: Buddha formulated it beautifully. He said, "Monks and scholars must accept my words not out of respect, but must analyze them the way a goldsmith analyzes gold: by cutting, rubbing, scraping, melting"* [14, p. 70].

We often come across examples where the author presents similes in the form of a rhetorical question, which, striking in its brightness and unexpectedness, encourages the reader to draw independent conclusions:

"Where can I find God?"

"He's right in front of you."

"Then why do I fail to see him?"

"Why does the drunkard fail to see his home?"

Later the Master said, "Find out what it is that makes you drunk. To see you must be sober" [13, p. 52].

There are interesting examples when the author uses not only one simile, but several ones, the fact that makes the statement more convincing, and adds, through redundancy, expressiveness to the statement. *Awareness involves as much effort as a lover makes to go to his beloved, or a hungry man to eat his food, or a mountaineer to get to the top of his beloved mountain; so much energy expended, so much hardship even, but it isn't effort, it's fun* [16, p. 96].

In the previous and subsequent passages, similes are presented in the form of parallelisms connected by polysyndeton (with *or* and *to* conjunctions) and amplified by anaphora. *The act of seeing is something like the terror that comes to a rich man when he sees he sets out to really see the pitiful condition of the poor, to a power-hungry dictator when he really looks at the plight of the people he oppresses, to a fanatic, a bigot, when he really sees the falsehood of his convictions when they do not fit the facts. The terror that comes to the romantic lover when he decides to really see that what he loves is not his beloved but his image of her* [16, p. 34]. In general, anthropomorphic similes additionally confirm the author's vision of the world and a man's place in it, actualizing his individual model of the world. Regardless of profession, social or financial status, a person always strives to change and improve something, while you need to learn to listen, contemplate and learn, especially in nature, as evidenced by the following group of similes.

Similes with nature phenomena can be considered one of the dominants of Anthony de Mello's idiosyncrasy. Reference to nature may be defined as a primary characteristic of the author's idiosyncrasy. Anthony de Mello holds the opinion that nature, in all its variations, is crucial for the development and self-understanding of a person and his/her life mission. Analogies with nature determine that all our attempts to reveal the life essence are vain as it is always in front of us, simple and understandable as wind, sun, air, rain, sunlight etc.

*Such is the resourcefulness
and ignorance of those who use their brain
to understand the Scripture which can as well be
'understood' by the brain as can a sunset or the
ocean or the murmur of the night wind in the*

trees [13, p. 15].

A person who managed to achieve that state is happy and free, devoid of conventions because stands over them. *The person produced by Enlightenment is ...*

to be like a mighty gale,

like a feather in the wind,

like weeds floating on a river,

like a mill stone meekly grinding ... [14, p. 208].

It is clear that examples of naturemorphic similes are not limited to the above-mentioned examples, but due to lexical and semantic units denoting natural phenomena, the author always emphasizes the completeness of a human life, which we instead look for in complex formulas and conventions.

Zoomorphic similes constitute 18,7% of the total number of simile constructions. This group, similarly to the previous one, also shows inconsistency of our convictions and views in the attempts to understand simple things we have already encoded.

*The final barrier to our attaining God
was the word and concept "God."*

*The donkey that brings you to the door is not
the means by which you enter the house* [15, p. 193].

Explaining students why the master does not try to convince everyone of his ideas and viewpoints he mentioned. *"Don't attempt to teach a pig to sing.*

It wastes your time – and irritates the pig" [14, p. 168].

Disapproving of some of his followers who tried to imitate the behavior of a master the author rhetorically asks:

Does a goat become a rabbi

because he grows a beard? [15, p. 67]

*Of what use is your learning and your
devotions? Does a donkey become wise
through living in a library or a mouse
acquires holiness from living in a church?* [15, p. 49]

The author leaves the reader alone, hoping that in solitude and contemplation, the latter, according to the author, has to understand the meaning of a parable, that is, to interpret its pragmatic loading.

In parables, the author always calls for simplicity in behavior, lifestyle and worldview, which, accordingly, confirms the means he uses. This concept is profiled by the following group of similes, where the agents represent various objects (16% of the total number), belonging to the lexical-semantic group of nouns to denote "household items". One parable says that during a court hearing on horse theft, judges heard the prosecutors, and when it came to defense, the judge said that others' testimonies were not needed because they would only confuse the jury. Therefore, in the comments the author concludes:

*If you have one watch,
you know the time.*

*If you have two watches
you're never sure* [16, p. 269].

In another work, the comparison of life with the car is verbalized on the basis of the common semantic meaning of "overcoming distance", because the car helps to overcome the distance in its physical interpretation, similarly to a person who goes along a certain philosophical path.

Life is like a motor car.

A motor car can be used to travel to the heights.

*But most people lie in front
of it, allow it to run over them,
then blame it for the accident* [14, p. 64].

While reading meditative parables, we often encounter passages where several types of similes are interconnected (similes with nature phenomena and certain objects), supplemented, as in the following example, by an allusion to a quote from the Bible (*But Jesus said, "Let the children come to me. Don't stop them! For the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to those who are like these children."* - Matthew 19:14) and syntactic parallelism:

*The world you see is not the Kingdom seen
by children but a fragmented world, broken into a
thousand pieces by the word... It is as if each
ocean wave were seen to be distinct and
separate from the body of the ocean.
When words and thoughts are silenced the
Universe blossoms forth - real and whole and
one - and words become what they were always
meant to be: the score, not the music; the menu,
not the food; the signpost, not the journey's end* [13, p. 51].

As a result, we state that the phenomenon of stylistic convergence (when several stylistic means are used in one part of writing) is typical of meditative parables aiming at influencing and changing the reader's worldview altogether.

Similes with "abstract concept" (11%): *hollowness, blankness, void, holiness, mystery* etc constitute another group of similes. In one parable, reflecting on the Buddhist notion of impermanence and emptiness, the author compares the latter to the emptiness necessary for the sound of a flute, the emptiness of a page to write letters, the emptiness of a window in which light finds its way out. In Anthony de Mello's interpretation, the word "emptiness" has a positive connotation because it helps to comprehend the truth by going beyond oneself, while in the traditional understanding *emptiness* usually has negative associations. *If I had spoken of my emptiness or even been aware of it, would it be emptiness? Music needs the hollowness of the flute, letters, the blankness of the page, light, the void called a window, holiness, the absence of the self* [13, p. 149].

There is also a comparison of politeness with hot air, the presence of which in the tires facilitates bumps, and politeness, by analogy, facilitates communication. In this case the comparisons are verbalized on the level of the common semantic denominator "help in something".

*"Politeness is nothing but a lot of hot air."
"True enough," said the Master pleasantly, "but
that's what we have in our automobile tires and
see how it eases the bumps"* [16, p. 50].

We also encounter similes that seem to be quite clear, but sometimes it is quite difficult for our minds and

worldviews to accept and comprehend them. They need additional reading, analysis, self-immersion.

Life is like a Mystery. Death is the key that unlocks it. The moment you turn the key you disappear into the Mystery forever. ... you could turn it now – through Silence – and dissolve into the Mystery [14, p. 76].

The next category of similes consists of the constructions where the agent of comparison is an action. Constructions of this category make up 3.3% of the total number of similes. The theme of enlightenment is one of the central of A. de Mello's meditative parables and is profiled on the basis of the statement that nothing needs to be done to attain enlightenment. The futility of any attempt to understand this state is based on a comparison with breaking into a house through a window, i.e. the semantics of similes are united by the meaning of "inexpediency." The teacher symbolically tells about his attempts to obtain enlightenment. *Master explains that when he understood enlightenment ...*

*... it was like going to
great pains to break into a house by
climbing a ladder and smashing a window
– and realizing later that the door of
the house was open* [15, p. 153].

The author repeatedly emphasizes that religion, with all its inherent canons and rules, has nothing to do with spirituality, as it generates fear and greed, traits that are detrimental to spirituality. And in the end he provides a simile. *It is like tackling a flood with water; or a burning barn with fire* [13, p. 166], the semantics of which is verbalized by the meaning of "unnecessary due to inappropriateness."

Similes in the texts of meditative parables are profiled on the level of lexical units denoting anthropo-, nature-, zoomorphic notions, abstract concepts, objects from everyday life, actions. Text units of the above-mentioned classes are projected from the author's viewpoint and understanding of the world, make the parables familiar to any reader, contribute to their reconstructions as citations proving the viewpoint that a simile has modality; it's not neutral as it reveals the author's attitude to the events described. At the same time associations which emerge when similes are used say more than a simple, logically arranged description.

All in all, similes in meditative parables provoke reflection not because of incomprehensibility or complexity, but sometimes because of the banality and mundaneness of the depicted phenomena, the technique which is used as one of the means to implement the author's pragmatic attitude, because the appeal to the realm of existential aspects is more acceptable for the reader.

The **perspective** of the meditative parables research lies in the analysis of other figures of speech used in modeling of meditative parables pragmatic loading.

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