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CATEGORIES OF THE GENERIC AND THE PARTICULAR IN WINTU<sup>4</sup>

By D. DEMETRACOPOULOU LEE

TO THE Wintu<sup>4</sup>, generic concepts are primary and the particular is derivative. I use the term *generic* rather than *universal* advisedly. To the Wintu<sup>4</sup>, the given is not a succession of particulars, to be conceptualized and classified under universals. Rather, it is immediate apprehension of qualitatively differentiated being. For the Wintu<sup>4</sup> speaker, the phrase *there-is-fog*, with a separate word for the subject and the predicate, is only a grammatical alternative for his other expression, *it-fogs*. He prefers an expression such as *it-roes* to *roe exists*, *it-darks* to *it-is dark*; he will say *she-soups* instead of *she-makes soup*. *Round* is derived from *to-be-round*, *thunder* from *to-thunder*, *nest* from *to-build-a-nest*. Actor and result are one with the act. Substance is one with existence; it cannot be said to be particular, as it is conceived of in European thought. Substances, as for example *roe*, *fog*, *wood*, *deer*, are originally differentiated but since they are not delimited, the particular is a secondary concept.

When the noun is separated from the verb, its primary form is generic. It refers to a genus, to a kind of being; not, like the universal, to a class. The primacy of the generic over the particular is to be seen in different aspects of Wintu<sup>4</sup> culture. It is evident in their myths where Coyote, Bear, Dentalium come first and timelessly, whereas *a* coyote, the many different specific coyotes, come afterward, delimited as to time and circumstance. In the verbal phrase, the category of the given, or the directly apprehended, is primary; morphologically, it is expressed by the simple, unmodified form of the stem. To express activity or being which is delimited according to time and specific personal experience, a modified stem is used.<sup>1</sup> The same attitude is to be seen in the noun. The generic aspect of any object is primary, and is expressed by the simple stem; the particular is derivative. These nominal categories of the generic and the particular form the subject of this paper.

I should state at the outset that I am now referring to what, on cursory acquaintance, appears to be a distinction between animate and inanimate.<sup>2</sup> Upon my first study of the Wintu<sup>4</sup> noun, I found the expected grouping into animate and inanimate; I also found that a large number of nouns were assigned, apparently at will, to either of the groups. This I accepted as natural to the "irrationality" of language. But soon the very basis of the distinction seemed untenable. Why should live deer, presumed to be on a mountainside, be considered inanimate? Why should game slung from a man's shoulder be

<sup>1</sup> I have described the verbal phrase in my article on *Conceptual Implications of an Indian Language*, in *Philosophy of Science*, vol. 5 (1938), pp. 89-102.

<sup>2</sup> I exclude the kinship terms from the class of nouns. Kinship terms belong morphologically with relational terms in general, such as relative pronouns and pronouns of participation. For a fuller description see my article on *Kinship Terms in Wintu<sup>4</sup> Speech* (*AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGIST* vol. 42, 1940), p. 605.

consistently animate, and game carried in a woman's back-basket be inanimate? When I discarded the animate-inanimate grouping, I could see a distinction between genus and the particularized individual within a genus.

## I

Morphologically, the category of the generic is the simpler. The nominal stem, unmodified, is used for subject and object, for attributive and partitive. A number of nouns have a final -n or -m in the stem, which does not appear in the category of the particular. There are reasons to suppose that this was an old formative suffix, which is being lost, rather than a suffix of the generic category; it is probably dropped in the particular because of the particular suffix -'. The generic has one morphological suffix -in, or -n after -i, which indicates a space or, rarely, a time relationship, and serves to form the instrumental. The relationship which in English would have been expressed by means of *of* or *belonging to* is here expressed as a spatial relationship. For example:<sup>3</sup>

kas: live oak acorns.

kas duya': (she) gave acorns.

kastlal: live oak acorn shell.

puyuq: mountain.

buidiba puyuqdo'n: east-crossed mountain-disjunctive; he crossed the ridge of the mountain eastward.

puyuqinsu's: mountain-at stander: beings of the mountain, mountain-beings.

dole, dolem: leg.

dolem xadalahara'da: legs weaken-progress-I; my legs are growing weaker.

The category of the generic since it refers only to a quality of being, is adjectival in force. There is no adjective as such in Wintu'. The generic noun, on the one hand, and the generic form of the nominalized verb on the other, function as attributives. Good is a derivative of being-good, bad isa generic noun, attributively used. For example, the generic form of wintu', person, means *human*; as in wintu'n bo's: human habitation. *Black* tculu'li, is derived from tculu'la: *to-be-black*.

The category of the particular has suffixes to express different syntactical relationships. A number of nouns are given a strong aspiration at the end, when they serve as the subject of a sentence. Verbal derivatives, and a number of pronouns which have the force of nouns, are given the suffix -t when they have the function of subject in the sentence. The suffix -un (-n) indicates possession and denotes the agent of an action, whether this is expressed through

<sup>3</sup> In the examples given throughout the paper, the verb as a rule occurs in the stem of subjectivity without the usual suffixes which indicate time of occurrence and source of information. This is because the examples come from narratives, where the *-kilake* denoting hearsay knowledge is given usually only once at the beginning of the tale. I render such verbs in the past tense.

the passive or the nominal form. The object affected is indicated through the suffixation of -um (-m); the verb which such an object delimits is not always transitive. For example:

xilit mintcuna' ila'm: Fly died-in-reference-to-himself child: Fly's child died.  
 no'bum tlo'mabe': a deer (no'B plus -um) he killed.  
 no'p banabire': deer (no'B plus -') must be moving about.  
 no'Bun q'ayi: deer's travelling; tracks of a deer.  
 no'btcir: deer meat.

It appears that the generic, lacking specification as it does, has no specific syntactical relationships; the particularized noun, on the other hand, has particular relationships which are expressed by means of suffixes.

Now the process of particularization makes its distinction within a genus, not between genera. The function of differentiation between genera is carried by the disjunctive suffix -do' or -do'n, for the generic, and -do't for the particular. The disjunctive suffix alone may carry the burden of particularization, or may be added to the particularized form of the noun.

dumbe'di . . . xanubaq be'l ya'baidu . . . una' ya'baidudo't . . . weri'likilak: Red-face (a Wintu') grabbed it, they (i.e. he and) the White . . . So the White-disjunctive (i.e. not the Wintu') carried it home.  
 bidep'urum usado't hina qewel. ud bi eleu henmina k'edet: (of a number of brothers who go hunting one is killed) they some-disjunctive (i.e. those in the other class, the class of those not-killed; the rest) arrived home. And he did not arrive, the one.

Furthermore, the category of the particular must not be confused with the "definite" of our grammar books. I quote a sequence to illustrate this point: k'astlal kendile ukin tlo'ldo'nin . . . xa'l p'o'qda . . . niqa' k'astlal tlo'ldo'nin be's: live-oak-acorn-shell fell there in-the-cradle . . . another woman . . . found live-oak-acorn-shell in-the-cradle which-was. Here, the second k'astlal is obviously definite, yet it is in the category of the generic. The distinction is entirely incommensurate with that made through the use of the "definite" *the* and the "indefinite" *a*. Terms such as *the good*, *the ant*, as in *the ant is an insect*, are generic; on the other hand, *the ant*, as in *he stepped on the ant*, is particular. On the whole, however, the distinction corresponds roughly to that which we make when we use an article (particular) or leave the article out (generic). For example: *they ate fish at noon*, and: *they ate a fish at noon*.

The distinction between the generic and the particular is so far-going that it is to be found in all the words which modify the noun. Pronouns and kinship terms have different suffixes according to whether the owned object is considered generic or particular. Adjectival words, including such terms as demonstratives and numbers, are morphologically in concord with the noun they modify. When the subject of a sentence is generic, the verb of statement will

have a simple existential suffix; but when the subject is particular, posture and motion in reference to the speaker must also be given by implication. The existential suffix now will make clear that the particular subject is standing, sitting, lying down, moving toward or moving away from the speaker. The category of the object also may be reflected in the verb. The transitivity suffix is -i'l (-wil) for a particular object, -ma for a generic one. These, and especially the -i'l, are added on often when the verb is transitive already, either so as to emphasize the category of the object, or, in the case of the -i'l, to indicate action with.

## II

A large number of nouns are assigned, as a rule, to either one or the other of the categories. My informant, when I questioned her about specific nouns, said that some were never to be found with suffixes of particularization, while others were never to be found without. Among those which, according to Sadie Marsh, were never particularized, we find two kinds; those which we ourselves consider generic and those which need no particularization because they are unique. The latter are represented by words such as: bo'm: *earth, land*; holol: *sunshine*; k'oltci: *sky*.

Verbal nouns are treated as generic when they refer to the act or state of being; they are particularized when they refer to the actor. Whether this is merely a mechanism for distinction, or whether the act is regarded as unique, it is impossible for me to say. I give examples:

mineles: (gen.) dying, death; (part.) one who has died, a dead one.

minelesum wine: (the) dead one (he) saw.

mineles haihaina'una'nterksen: dying (death) you like, so you said.

Nouns representing the means or implement for the act are also treated as generic. From lule': to sing girls' puberty songs we derive lulu's: a bunch of sticks for keeping a rattling rhythm while singing such songs; from t'ama': to wear footwear, we get t'amu's: footwear. My informant considered lulu's and t'amu's as immutably generic. Words for undelimited substances, such as water, smoke, rain, fire, wood she also considered as always generic. And in this category she included all dead things.

To the category of the particular, Sadie Marsh assigned in theory all people and live animals.

## III

So far I have not shown that we have here in fact a distinction between generic and particular. The reader will say that footwear and earth and wood, and rain are regarded as inanimate, and animals as animate. To this I reply that often the same noun will be found referred sometimes to one, sometimes to the other of the categories, according to a principle which has obviously nothing to do with animation. Nouns representing dead animals are to be

found in both categories, and, less frequently, so are nouns referring to live animals. At times, particularization seems to depend entirely on the whim of the speaker; at least, it is impossible for me to find the basis on which it is made. But, quite often, the assignment to the category of the particular is evidently a device, deliberately used.

Particularization may be used to create a new word, denoting a delimited form of something commonly regarded as generic. I give a list of such words to illustrate my meaning:

sem: (gen.) hand or hands, including the fingers.

se' or set: finger.

bohem sem: big hand.

bohe' se': thumb.

mai: (gen.) feet, foot, including the toes.

ma': toe.

tlal: (gen.) shells of acorns, nuts.

tlal: (part.) mussel.

tc'odos: (gen.) acorn bread, bread.

tc'odos: (part.) bread flour, nowadays a sack of flour.

qewel: (gen.) house.

qewel: (part.) woodrat's nest.

This is a tribal convention which is not followed rigidly. For example, when Syke Mitchell told the story of the girl who ate her little finger and then her whole hand, he particularized the sem: hand. However, *little finger* has a special name of its own, so the generic need not be used for the purpose of making a distinction. On the other hand, the narrator has to indicate that he is speaking of one hand only; instead of using the more common *half-hand*, tc'ansem, he particularizes the sem.

And so with other words which are generic according to tribal habit, we find that the speaker will particularize whenever the occasion demands this. *Wood* and *fire*, theoretically, are never particularized. Yet, in a myth, when a man goes fishing at night, and holds up a burning brand, the narrator says: "pohum dowuna: the fire (part.) he held in his own hand." Recently the particularized form of po' is coming to be used for *match*; for example, pohum q'artcu means *strike a match!* In the Bear and Deer myth, Bear sends the two Deer boys up the hill to get fire-wood. She says: "har winεu . . . paqatc'us: go get manzanita wood (gen.);" They go up the mountain and call down to ask what manzanita wood she wants. The answer is: "mis waie'labo'm buD weri'l tcalim paqatc'usum: there further-uphill-being (part.) that (part.) bring (part.) nice (part.) manzanita -wood (part.)."

The clearest indication that we are dealing here not with categories of the

animate and the inanimate, but with a distinction between generic and particular, is to be seen, I think, in the treatment of animals. When a hunter loses his luck and can get no deer, we are told: *noʼBmai wiʼntʼan ɛʌu noʼB wiʼnmina*: deer-tracks though-he-saw did-not deer (gen.) see-not; though he saw deer tracks he did not see any deer. The first *noʼB* is attributive and perhaps may rightly be expected to be “inanimate”; but what of the second *noʼB* which refers to live deer? Dead deer, as a rule, are treated as particular when they are whole, maintaining so to speak their individuality; when they are cut up, they are so much meat, and are treated as generic. I give below a list of examples referring to dead deer. It must be kept in mind that game carried by men is slung whole from the shoulder; carried by women, it is cut up in pieces in the back-basket. When it is being skinned it is whole; when it is being eaten, it is merely so much flesh-food. I have added two examples referring to dead salmon. In every case, particularization is indicated by the *-um* suffix, since all the occurrences of *deer* and *salmon* are in the accusative; the absence of the suffix implies the generic.

*hariʼl qewel noʼBum tʌomit*: (he) took to the house (a) deer carrying -(it)-slung-from-his-shoulder

*noʼB harmɛ abames*: deer take (along) carrying-in-your-back-basket.

*noʼBum pʼirtcakɛnhaleʼs*: we might have to skin (a) deer.

*noʼB loʼma humus*: deer (she) boiled fat; (i.e. fat deer meat).

*boyum noʼBum tʌomit . . . buD noʼB tʌaʼma*: many deer having-carried-slung-from-their-shoulders . . . to-him deer they-gave-as-a-gift.

*noʼB baʼwida*: deer we-shall-eat.

*ɛʌu noʼBum tʌummina unir ɛʌu noʼB baʼmina*: did-not (a) deer kill, saying, (he)-did-not deer eat.

*nurum henʼlkila*: salmon when-(the youths)-brought-home.

*nur tʌamtʌamaʼikilak*: salmon (he)-distributed.

Yet a piece of meat, too, may be particularized, when it is a special piece of meat. In one of the myths, a number of brothers kill deer near the earthlodge, and in the evening invite their elder brother to come and eat of their venison. They say, “Come, we are about to eat venison (*noʼB*).” The brother answers, “That offal-fed venison (*noʼBum*) you better eat yourselves.” Again, two men pretending to be on their way to hunt, say to a woman, “You shall eat good venison (*noʼBum*), that carried home slung on our shoulders.”

I am tempted to conclude that originally the categories of the generic and the particular were used to indicate participation and otherness respectively, and that only secondarily they are used to make other distinctions. However that may be, in reference to the body the two categories are actually used to make just this distinction:—identity versus otherness.

Except where particularization is used as a lectional device, as in the examples which I quoted above, the body parts of an individual, while they function

as part of that individual, are referred to the generic category. The impression given is that they are considered as attributes of the individual; the individual acts, feels, exists as an integral whole. I quote examples.

k'edem q'edem wenemhara': one arm he-went-in; one of his arms went in.

semppoquna': hand-clapped-himself; he clapped his hands.

tc'anq'edem xandile sedet: half-arms (he)-fell-off Coyote; one of Coyote's arms fell off.

poyoq ko'm dede'kit: head whole (he)-was-bloody; his whole head was bloody.

sono tcuba'da: nose I-drip; my nose is running.

When grammatical subject and object are different, that is, when one man does something to the body of another man, particularization is used. For example, when the little bird is fighting the monster, he hugs him hard and "he bent his ribs (particular)." But when the narrator goes on to say that the monster, "ribs he-was-bent," she uses the generic. Again, when body parts are physically separate from the individual they are assigned to the category of the particular. For example:

pu'rum badile: he took out the heart (part.)

luba' pu'rum: she strung the hearts.

But:

bud pu'ruskomes hntca: him heart (gen.)-exactly-stabbed. Since we are inclined to identify the heart with the individual, we render this as the Wintu' do: he stabbed him exactly in the heart.

However, the categories do not always distinguish the identical from the other because, once body parts are separate from the body, the words referring to them are treated like any other noun. For example, when head hair is part of the body, it is always referred to as generic, whether it is a head of hair or merely so much hair. When it is not on the body, hair remains generic, but a head of hair, such as a scalp, is referred to the category of the particular. For example: maDom en qomosun Domoyum tconi'lar niDe ie' ibi'da: we are dancing with the hair (part.) of your elder relatives.

In addition, there is a large number of cases where particularization is not used as an implement for making either a semantic or a conceptual distinction. In these cases, it seems to reflect the interests of the speaker, or even his momentary mood. It is not easy for the linguist to uncover the reason for the choice of category when this is purely subjective. The texts, however, give some suggestions. To give an example, I quote two lists of implements. One was given by a woman, the other by a man. Both informants are telling the myth of the little bird who fought the monster, and describe him as he is getting ready to set out. Jenny Curl tells of his putting "all sorts of things" in a sack: "barbed-stick (gen.), club (gen.), arrow-straightener (gen.), curve-topped-stick (gen.)." Syke Mitchell says: "a-drill (part.) in-the-sack he-put-in;



and a-horn-wedge (part.) he-put-in, a-club (part.) he-put-in.” The man particularizes; the woman, to whom these are just man’s affairs, refers to them in the generic. Again, there is the case of EDC Thomas, who liked to dramatize herself. When she talked to me about flowers one day, she said: “Beautiful (part.) flowers (part.) I-have-found (part.); let-us-two-make-a-chain-of (part.) wild-azalia-blossoms (part.). When I read this to Sadie Marsh, she remarked that EDC liked to put on airs. Yet EDC herself sang a dream song where all the references to flowers are generic.

The distinction, then, superficially parallels but is not identical with the common distinction between animate and inanimate. It sets into two different groups nouns referring to that which is generic in experience, and nouns referring to that which is delimited. The generic may imply participation, yet it may also be used because of a lack of interest; and particularization may be used as a purely lectical device. In particularizing, the speaker may be following tribal linguistic convention; but often he merely expresses free and temporary choice.

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