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Religion, Language, and the Human Mind is an edited collection addressing the interface between language, cognition, and the many dimensions of religious experience. Composed of seventeen chapters divided into three distinct parts, along with a 'Preface' and an extensive 'Introduction' by the editors, the volume collates original research from linguistics, the cognitive and brain sciences, and religious studies.

Language is integral to the proliferation of religious belief, the maintenance of religious authority, the composition of religious texts and doctrines, and the widespread practice of religious ritual and prayer. Nevertheless, it remains a relatively neglected area of study in linguistics. However, as the editors note in the 'Introduction', the connection between religious traditions and the study of language is an ancient one, as is the more general connection between academic traditions and religious traditions.

Earlier works do exist where religious language is treated seriously as an object of linguistic study. Crystal (1965; this volume) advanced the field of 'theolinguistics', and more recent studies by Downes (2011), Howe and Green (2014), and Charteris-Black (2016) have made important contributions. What makes this volume unique by comparison is the focus on religious language accompanied by a manifest commitment to interdisciplinarity from a "broad cognitive perspective" (p. xxiv). The editors describe the development of the volume as a "collective intellectual experience rather than a mere collecting of papers" (p. vii). This is evidenced by the quality of each individual piece and the sense that the overall package (including the beautiful jacket image by David Chick) has been carefully crafted and refined.

Rather than organise the chapters by discipline, the volume curates three independent strands. Part I reviews the contemporary study of religious language before and after the 'cognitive turn' in the human sciences. Both cognitive and linguistic aspects of religion are investigated from different theoretical, disciplinary, and methodological perspectives. Part II follows with an emphasis on the centrality of metaphor in religious discourses and

how different approaches to the analysis of metaphor might illuminate the abstract nature of religious thought. Part III introduces cutting-edge Cognitive Linguistic, cognitive-pragmatic, and multimodal approaches to the study of religious communication. A short editorial precedes each section and an extensive editors' 'Introduction' prefaces the volume. The 'Introduction' surveys modern linguistic and cognitive approaches to the study of religious language, particularly the cognitive science of religion (CSR) alongside the neuroscience of religious belief. More crucially, the 'Introduction' provides a brief summary of Cognitive Linguistic perspectives on metaphor (CMT and [C]BT) and the ways these approaches have been applied to the study of metaphorical language in religious texts.

Part I (Chapters 1 to 6) investigates the cognitive and linguistic aspects of religion. Chapter 1 (Crystal) opens with a discussion of 'theolinguistics' (van Noppen, 1981), an approach designed to study "the universal features of linguistic expression that characterise religious discourse" (p. 4). The chapter charts cursory developments from the 1960s onwards relating to revised perspectives on religious (predominantly Christian) texts and advances in linguistics that, for a time, presented opportunities for a 'linguistics of religion' (see Crystal, 1965). The enterprise, however, was less than successful owing to too many new paradigms taking centre stage in the field. Rather than bemoan the failure of the 'theolinguistic' enterprise, Crystal demonstrates and outlines the potential of such an approach by illustrating how idiomatic expressions in the King James Bible (KJB) have not contributed as much to conversational English as may have previously been assumed. Crystal argues that, rather than originate many of these terms, the KJB merely popularised them.

Chapter 2 (Wierzbicka) follows with a less Anglocentric perspective by presenting a set of multicultural, cross-linguistic comparative analyses of religious concepts. Indeed, one of the strengths of this chapter, and the volume in general, is that it doesn't prioritise the English language or Indo-European religious traditions. In contrast, Wierzbicka's argument builds on her previous work developing a 'Natural Semantic Metalanguage' (NSM) (see Wierzbicka, 1996, *inter alia*). NSM is a universal minimal linguistic variant designed to avoid the cultural (often Eurocentric) bias in globally dominant natural languages such as English. Indo-European concepts such as (in English) 'God' and 'religion' encode conceptual properties that are not shared universally. Wierzbicka employs NSM to 'translate' predominantly Christian passages and demonstrates how an NSM might demystify culturally biased concepts to share, more broadly, concepts and articles of distinct faiths between practitioners of those faiths.

Presented as a revised update of a previous work by the authors (see Boeve and Feytaerts, 1999), Chapter 3 surveys the interaction between (cognitive)

linguistics, postmodern philosophy, and religious studies in the domain of apophatic theology (descriptions of the ‘god’ concept by negation). Thankfully, the authors provide a brief, though robust, summary of the theological context in which the subsequent application of CMT operates. The ‘god’ concept, the authors argue, is “semantically non-autonomous” and “necessarily metaphorical” (p. 77). CMT is used to describe how the ‘god’ concept undergoes a recurrent process of recontextualisation where source–target mappings obey a coherent internal logic. That is, ‘god’ is [x] with respect to the entailments generated by [x] (the target) in any given linguistic and extralinguistic context.

Chapter 4 (Downes) approaches ritualistic prayer as a cognitive register inflected by situational processing. The chapter is an eclectic mix of cognitive-pragmatics (relevance theory) and socio-functional linguistics (register, or a domain-specific language variety). By focussing on Christian prayer rituals, Downes outlines the invocational function of petitionary Christian prayer where an address is directed towards a deity to evoke a specified, often contextually localised and manifestly desired, outcome. Prayer, for Downes, enacts a ‘cognitive register’ with respect to both the immediate linguistic event and the emotional texture of the experience. The cognitive register of prayer “conforms the speaker’s will to what they believe is God’s will” (p. 113). That is, internally motivated affect (desire and so forth) is co-ordinated and, indeed, codified, by the cognitive register of prayer.

Chapter 5 (McNamara and Giordano) updates McNamara’s previous work (see McNamara, 2009) and presents a neural account of religious experience. Religious language motivates a “decentering process” (pp. 120–121) where the deity is reified, and the human subject undergoes a form of diminution. The illocutionary force of religious commissives motivates a decentring which is observed vis-à-vis a reduction in ontologically grounded linguistic tokens such as personal pronouns. This thesis is supported by reference to empirical studies in neurology, including the observed role of the basal ganglia in the use of speech acts and the limbic systems subservience to emotional response. The distinctiveness of religious language coupled with the capacity to lessen the adherent’s sense of self is, the authors argue, what gives religious language its distinctive characteristics. In turn, this powerful coupling of votive force with a decentring process leads to the less desirable aspects of religious belief such as dogmatism and violence.

Chapter 6 (McGilchrist) summarises the author’s previous work on hemispheric interaction and the structure of the mind–brain relationship with respect to the metaphoricity of religious experience. The functional inhibition of hemispheric interaction by the corpus collosum, and the adaptive advantage this functional asymmetry seems to provide, lends support to the ‘divided brain’ hypothesis (see McGilchrist, 2009). Premised by the argument

that the left hemisphere favours precision whereas the right hemisphere favours a broader perspective, the inhibition of one hemisphere in favour of another generates complex emergent behaviours such as the ability to mate or hunt while attending to potential predators. Language, too, functions distinctly in each hemisphere: the left processes speech production and reception while the right enables an understanding of an entire utterance in context (pp. 140–142). Metaphor, McGilchrist argues, is primarily a right-hemispheric process as is the gestalt of religious experience. However, much depends on hemispheric interaction with, for example, the left hemisphere processing ritualistic formulas and the right hemisphere processing the ancillary experience of ritual.

Part II (Chapters 7 to 12) offers various illuminating accounts of the role of metaphor in religious language and thought. Chapter 7 (Haskell) concentrates on the metaphorical complexity of the divine face in the *Sefer ha-Zohar*, a Kabbalistic text from Jewish mystical tradition. Haskell argues that the divine face is a “powerful anthropomorphic image” (p. 171) that exhibits a composite countenance. The human face articulates aspects of the divine face and, in turn, the divine face (entirely unknowable in mystic traditions) articulates the mystics’ redemption. Taking a literary-theological approach to metaphorical patterning, the author claims that conceptual mappings in Zoharic descriptions of the divine express the metaphysical bond between the knowable and the unknowable. The linguistic expression of this relationship as metaphor mirrors the broader articulation of this relationship in the Kabbalistic tradition.

Chapter 8 (Hayes) focuses on metaphorical conceptualisations in the *Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā*, a seventeenth-century Tantric text. Vernacular religious language (here, Bengali) demonstrates the rich, complex, and often profound metaphorical language that structures the Tantric tradition. The author argues that CMT is best placed to articulate the linguistic profundity that aids in the structuring of imaginative text worlds. Construal plays an inverse role in the tradition: the material world is a re-articulation of the Sahajiyā’s visionary worlds (expressed by metaphorical structures in the text). The articulation (or inarticulation) of these visionary worlds is “fully grounded in the physical bodies of the practitioners” (p. 203), hence the commensurate erotic dimension of Tantric practice.

Chapter 9 (Kowalewski) investigates the conceptualisation of emotion in the suttas of the *Pali Cannon* in early Buddhist tradition. Emotion-as-force and emotion-as-object metaphors both systematise and motivate the conceptualisation of emotion in the *Pali* texts. They also compose the force–object metaphor as a combinatorial system which is, Kowalewski argues, fundamental to early Buddhist thought. The author presents a general taxonomy of these metaphorical complexes to illustrate the systematicity of their use in the *Pali Cannon*.

Chapter 10 (Gao and Lan) examines metaphorical selection, or choice, in the *Heart Sutra* and the *Diamond Sutra*, texts drawn from Mahayana Buddhism and composed originally in traditional Chinese (to which the authors provide approximate English translations). Following Charteris-Black (2004), Gao and Lan code each text for explicit, implicit, and transliterated metaphorical expressions and align each occurrence with five themes: Space, Time, Life, (Buddhist) Practice, and Emptiness. Analysis reveals “the tangle of the five themes” (p. 257) with a paradox at the core, namely the ‘emptiness’ (or ‘voidness’) of metaphorical complexity that accords with received Buddhist wisdom.

Chapter 11 (El-Sharif) analyses metaphorical patterns in a corpus drawn from the *Mishkat Al-Masabih* [*The Niche of Lamps*], a twelfth-century Arabic text essential to the Prophetic tradition (*Hadith* or *Sunnah*) in Islam. The author argues that metaphorical language is “an indispensable linguistic tool in religious discourses” (p. 263), given that religious discourses rely on highly abstract conceptualisations of the unknowable. Using the ‘Metaphorical Identification Procedure’ (MIP) developed by the Pragglejazz Group (2007), El-Sharif identifies the dominance of spatial schemas (containment, location, orientation, etc.), especially in terms of expressing relationships between the human, the material, and the immaterial.

Chapter 12 (Bisschops) charts the transition from Judaism to Christianity as a transformational shift from earlier Rabbinic traditions to the conceptual restructuring afforded by the Pauline circumcision metaphor. Genital circumcision in Jewish ritual is both a sacrifice and an emblem of communal membership. The Pauline rejection of genital circumcision in favour of circumcision as “that of the heart” (Romans 2:29) marks a value-shift exemplified by the internalisation of faith and the reification of the self in the Christian tradition. Culturally speaking, European Christianity transforms Rabbinic law into an article of personal faith and interpersonal ethics rather than an article prescribed by a deity. This transformation, argues Bisschops, assures the “centrality of inwardness” which marks the “Western conception of self” (p. 323).

Part III (Chapters 13 to 17) presents a range of mixed-methods and multimodal approaches to the study of religious expression. Chapter 13 (Unger) develops a cognitive-pragmatic account of religious language and visual representation in the tradition of relevance theory (Sperber and Wilson, 1986/1995). Concentrating on Christian allegory, Unger argues that comprehending such complex narrative forms relies on “our ability to detect multiple simultaneous layers of communication” (p. 333). Indeed, the author links allegory more to the structures of fictional narratives than the nature of metaphor. This means that while allegory is the narrative expression of one thing in terms of another (a moral principle in terms of a coded narrative), an audience with a low expectation of relevance in terms of the metaphorical

framing of a moral principle might still be rewarded by the relevance of the narrative structure. More so, the author claims, allegory can “indirectly communicate controversial claims to cautious or unsympathetic audiences” (p. 349). Implied propositional content, whether relevant or not to any given audience, might maintain relevance by virtue of the narrative package.

Chapter 14 (Barcelona) examines the role of metonymy in the context of interpreting visual and linguistic representations of the Christian dogma of the Holy Trinity. The Holy Trinity is, in essence, a metonymic structure: the ‘god’ concept is realised in a triad of forms (the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit), yet this triad is also a realisation of the ‘god’ concept in Trinitarian dogma. In turn, traditional theographic (conceptual) metaphors correspond with traditional iconographic (visual) representations. Barcelona explains this correspondence in terms of a “double metaphorical” source–target mapping (p. 383). Visual representations map the abstract to the physical and the relationship is substantiated on a second level as a divine connection (that the physical is the divine by proxy of the abstract). Visual representations must resort to this first level and rely on the textual representation of the second.

Where many of the previous authors limit explorations of metaphoricality to CMT, Chapter 15 (Antović) employs conceptual blending theory ([C]BT) along with Talmy’s Force Dynamics to investigate conceptualisations of Christian ascetic practice. Antović deconstructs the metaphor “struggle against oneself” (p. 386) as a subtype of the UNSEEN WARFARE schema. By first using CMT and then a traditional [C]BT mirror network, the author settles on an extended [C]BT-Force Dynamics analysis. The power of this integration is in the extended capacity to describe the complex internal properties of the metaphor. Where [C]BT assists with the description of analogic and disanalogic blends between input spaces, Force Dynamics assists with the description of the emergence of reinforced semantic information. The result indicates that the metaphorical “struggle against oneself” is too conceptually complex to be deconstructed by an analogic mapping exercise alone.

Chapter 16 (Chilton and Cram) uses Chilton’s (2014) Deictic Space Theory (DST) to analyse the liturgical language of the Christian Eucharist, particularly the phrase *hoc est corpus* (‘this is my body’). The authors argue that such liturgical language co-constructs (or ‘builds’) an integrated ritualistic space where the ritualistic aspects of liturgical language connect with the physical actions and the spatial environments in which such rituals unfold. Deictic spaces function as “secondary reference spaces” (p. 426) that are exploited by the verbal and material elements of the Eucharistic ritual. The neurological basis of spatial cognition creates a foundation for processing salient deictic reference points, and shifts between reference points, in the secondary space generated by the more abstract aspects of the liturgy.

The volume ends with Chapter 17 (Kopytowska) which is, perhaps, the most critical piece in the volume. The author investigates religious ritual and deixis as multimodal dimensions of television evangelism. Arguing that mediatization has added “another dimension” (p. 466) to the social construction of abstract realities, Kopytowska argues that mediated communicative modes (radio, television, etc.) inter-mediate religious experiences from a perceived, often material, distance. Distance is reduced, in part, by employing the RELATIONSHIP IS PROXIMITY metaphor. Receivers are addressed as members of a congregational family, a blurring of the distinction between a practitioner’s relationship with the deity and a practitioner’s relationship with the institution (extended here from the church to the commercial institution).

Where the final chapter (Kopytowska) examines the socio-political impact of religious belief, employing this type of criticality is not an explicit aim of the volume. Instead, it is directed towards a “more fundamental understanding of the complex phenomenon of the human religious consciousness” (p. vii). Decoupling the phenomenon of religious belief and practice from the wider socio-political effects engendered by adherents to religious doctrines seems like a gap in the work. The decision risks a characterisation of traditional religious creeds as ‘special cases’, somehow distinct from the general human propensity to develop fictional narratives with explanatory power. Indeed, attention to the ideational effects of religious discourses may have rounded off the volume. Another ‘gap’ in the work is that none of the authors explicitly address the role of language in the *formation* of religious belief. Much work has been done on the notion of ‘promiscuous teleology’ and the ways in which humans ascribe functions and values to inanimate and, indeed, abstract entities, properties, and processes (see Kelemen and Rosset, 2009; Tomasello, 2018). However, having said this, the volume does act as a platform which might support further collaborations in this area or, ideally, a second collection.

Overall, the volume delivers on the promise of bringing together a range of different perspectives, methods, and frameworks. Interdisciplinarity raises the challenge of expecting prospective readers to grapple with the unfamiliarity of neighbouring disciplines. Reading this volume, however, is an adventure for the curious, and some readers (this one included) may find themselves exploring a substantial amount of secondary literature to contextualise the theological aspects of the volume. Here, though, lies a sense of wonder. From the visionary text-worlds of the *Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā* to the unarticulated emptiness of the *Mahayanan Sūtras*, the volume traces the scope and scale of human invention, imagination, and ingenuity. There is so much here, both stated and unstated, that readers of Language and Cognition need not hesitate if considering a purchase, especially those who may wish to further explore the role of language and cognition in the domain of religious belief and other forms of cultural ideation. The volume is an invitation to those

who may wish to join the authors on an intellectual journey into relatively uncharted territory. Cognitive linguists and scientists might consider the collection an essential read, as both a testament (pun intended) to the power of interdisciplinarity, and as a new benchmark in the cognitive study of religious discourses.

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