Metonymic and Metaphoric Features of the Religion in "God"

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ABSTRACT

The article makes the following novel claims the semantics of noun-noun compounds which is activated by metaphor and/or metonymy (often termed as "exocentric" compounds in linguistics and generally regarded as semantically opaque) can be accounted for with the help of conceptual metaphor and metonymy theory; there are regular patterns of metaphor and metonymy-based compounds, depending on which constituent is affected by conceptual metaphor and/or metonymy. Here we have looked at a subtype of metaphor and metonymy-based noun-noun compounds, where the simultaneous activation of both metaphor and metonymy affects the meaning, and give an account of the productive patterns that underlie this type.

Keywords: Greek gods, container metaphors, personification, entity (or substance) metaphor, God, the soul, the hereafter

INTRODUCTION

What is the nature of Greek gods? It is a large and much-debated question. The questions posed in this chapter are narrower: how did Greeks talk about gods' involvement in our world, and how did they talk about talking that? For all that the historiography of religion has in recent years expanded to include sensory and experiential approaches, and hence gives ever more weight to material-cultural evidence, it remains true that most of our testimony for Greek thought about the gods is embedded in language. First, we need to understand better the nature of that

mediation. All representation mediates, but there is a specific problem with the representation of gods in human discourse. Gods are by definition superhuman, and therefore have a tendency to overspill the capacities of natural language. Human language is inferior to that of the gods, and therefore less able to capture the essence of the divine. My second claim is that the Greeks themselves addressed the issue of linguistic mediation, and analyzed it in rhetorical terms. Modern scholars tend to view rhetoric as inimical to "true" religion: a second-order, intellectualized phenomenon, cynically instrumentalist rather than affective. This prejudice in part reflects the persistence of a nineteenth-century, romantic conception of Greek history in terms of the decline from a state of pure originality into Hellenistic frigidity. To understand how the Greeks imagined their own theology – their own discourse about the gods – we need at least to begin with their own categories of linguistic analysis [15:126].

Conceptual metaphor theory has always shown great interest in the analysis of metaphor as a ubiquitous verbal and cognitive phenomenon. Some linguists In their pioneering work on this topic, thirty years ago (Andrew Ortony, George Lakoff, Mark Johnson, and Mark Turner) and dozens of scholars following them, have firmly established conceptual metaphor theory as a powerful, hence also often criticized, paradigm for analyzing the complex interplay of linguistic, social, and cognitive dynamics. Over the last thirty years, Conceptual Metaphor Theory has clearly evolved from a first generation contains linguistic account for deriving pre-linguistic experiential structures from readily accessible linguistics (language as a direct gateway to the mind) to one of the empirically and interdisciplinary grounded methods currently applied to obtain a better insight in the complexity of meaning and cognition [6:234].

Metaphor has traditionally been viewed as the most important form of figurative language use, and is usually seen as reaching its most sophisticated forms in literary or poetic language (Saeed 1997: 302). For over 2000 years, metaphor was studied within the discipline known as rhetoric. Within this approach, metaphor was characterized by the schematic form: A

is B, as in Achilles is a lion. As a consequence, metaphor has been identified since the time of Aristotle with implicit comparison [2:23].

However, in cognitive semantics, metaphor is seen as an important mode of thinking and talking about the world. Metaphors allow us to understand one domain of experience in terms of another [8:135]. Examples of this include when we talk and think about life in terms of journeys, about arguments in terms of wars, about love in terms of journeys, and many others. A convenient shorthand way of capturing this view of metaphor is the following: conceptual domain a is conceptual domain b, which is what is called a conceptual metaphor. A conceptual metaphor consists of two conceptual domains, in which one domain is understood in terms of another. A conceptual domain is any coherent organization of experience. Conceptual metaphors are distinguished from metaphorical linguistic expressions. The latter are the words or other linguistic expressions that come from the language or terminology of the more concrete conceptual domain. The conceptual domain from which we draw metaphorical expressions to understand another conceptual domain is called the source domain, while the conceptual domain that is understood this way is the target domain shows that in personification, human qualities are given to nonhuman entities [7:310]. Personification is common in literature, but it is also abound in everyday discourse, as the examples below show:

> His theory explained to me the behavior of chickens raised in factories.
> Life has cheated me. Inflation is eating up our profits.
> Cancer finally caught up with him.
> The computer went dead on me.

Theory, life, inflation, cancer, and computer are not humans, but they are given qualities of human beings, such as explaining, cheating, eating, catching up, and dying. In personifying nonhumans as humans, we can begin to understand them better. [7:39]. Three types of ontological metaphors are distinguished in

cognitive metaphor theory. The first is **entity** (or substance) **metaphor**. A typical example of an entity metaphor is the metaphorical concept inflation is an entity, which is instantiated in expressions such as inflation makes me sick and if there is much more inflation, we'll never survive. Examples of **container metaphors** include states are containers (He's in love, we are out of trouble now). Finally, **personification** is the third type of ontological metaphors. A case in point is the conceptual metaphor facts are persons, instantiated in expressions such as "This fact against the standard theories." [5:144).

Mohamed Shokr Abdulmoneim explains the linguistic creativity of the Quran through applying the cognitive theory of metaphor to religious metaphor "Life is a journey". He believes that the domain of religion should be largely dependent on metaphorical conceptualization. He reasons that this is due to the fact that it is not only a highly abstract domain quite removed from sensual experience, but also its central issues of "God", "the soul", "the hereafter," and the freedom of moral choice have traditionally been regarded as the metaphysical ideas.

The Bible constitutes the basics of faith for millions of Christians of different denominations, as well as for the Jews who were the first authors and readers of the Bible. The hHoly scripture, and especially its oldest part, The Old Testament, is also respected by numerous Muslims, and by believers of other religions. Also, those who do not believe in the God of the Bible read it and describe its various literal, linguistic, or philosophical merits. The history of the chosen nation described in The Old Testament is a history of a dialogue between God and the People. The notion of God seems to be central to the Bible. Biblical authors use different strategies to describe Him, and among others, metaphors and metonymies. The object of this article is to analyse these phenomena with reference to the cognitive theory of conceptual metaphor and metonymy by George Lak off and Mark Johnson (2003). In this view metaphor and metonymy are not merely ornamental devices used for rhetorical or poetic purposes, but they hold a fundamental function in our cognition and understanding ofreality. The New Testament is not analysed

as the idea of God in it is extended into three persons: *God the Father*, *God the Son* and *God the Holy Spirit*. [16:151]

Let's interpret the word "God" is a unique because "God" is transcendent by His nature. This means that He is beyond human empirical cognition, and is different from anything people know. Dictionaries differentiate between the word God spelt with a capital letter, meaning the being worshipped in Christianity, Judaism and Islam, and a god or gods used as a common noun referring to male spirits in some other religions. In the Bible God introduces His name YHWH (pronounced Yahweh or Yahveh) which can be interpreted as "He exists" and wants people to call Him in this way. This shows that the nature of God is His existence, and that is all we learn about God's name [17:38].

For instance, *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary of Current English*, God noun l (God) [sing.] (not used with the) (in Christianity, Judaism and Islam) the being or spirit that is worshipped and believed to have created the universe. For example,

1. *Do you believe in God?; I Good luck and God bless you*!;*I the Son of God(Christ)* 2 [CJ (in some religions) a being or spirit who is believed to have power over a particular part of nature or who is believed to represent a particular quality: *Mars was the Roman god of war.*; *I the rain/sky god are Hindu gods*
2. *Moses then said to God, "Look, if I go to the Israelites and say to them, ,, The God of your ancestors has sent me to you",and they say to me, ,, What is his name?" what am I to tell them? God said to Moses, "I am he who is."And he said, "This is what you are to say to the Israelites, I am has sent me lo you.""God further said to Moses, "You are to tell the Israelites, Yahweh, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you". This is my name for all time, and thus I am to be invoked for all generations.*

From the linguistic point of view it is impossible to attribute to God any common or general names: He cannot be classed as He is not a member of a class of objects. Actually, it can be said that God is a "class" for himself. No properties can adequately describe God since being transcendent He is by His very nature

indescribable. However, despite this fact theology attempts to describe God in a few ways. Authors write about revealed attributes of God, found in the Bible, and about natural attributes, which are all possible positive properties in the utmost possible degree. Among the revealed attributes there are such as being omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient orimmutable. Natural attributes are deduced by theologians in their discourse, for instance the property of being infinite or the holiest.

There are four groups metaphors and metonymies in English religious discourse:

1. **Metaphors for God in The Old Testament**
2. **Personifications**: *God is a creator-artist; God is a father; God is a friend; God is a judge; God is a king; God is a lover; God is a mother; God is a provider; God is a shepherd; God is a teacher; God is a warrior.*
3. **Structural metaphors for God are as following**: *God is love; God is a hideout.*
4. **Orientational metaphors for God are as followings**: *God is far; God is up.*

This article reviews, four groups of biblical metaphors and metonymies were analyzed. Personifications, which are instances of ontological metaphor, structural metaphors, orientation metaphors and metonymies. These phenomena seem to be widespread in the Old Testament since they appear in different biblical books. They definitely do not function only as stylistic figures, but allow the readers to learn about God and help understand Him. Thanks to grounding the process of conceiving of God in people's everyday experiences, the reader of the Bible receives a multifaceted and complex picture of God. Moreover, not only do these metaphors and metonymies prevail in the Bible, but they are also present in today's religious language and our culture. Conceptual metaphor and metonymy have influenced the way people conceive of God and speak of Him. Most ofthe examples analyzed in this article have implications in the theological language: God is frequently perceived, for instance, as a creator-artist, father, king, and judge in religious discourse,

and as a friend or lover by mystics; believers pray to God - the hideout when in trouble or raise their eyes up to heaven, where He "lives".

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