

MULTIMODAL SEMIOTICS OF SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCES: REPRESENTING BELIEFS, METAPHORS, AND ACTIONS

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1 INTRODUCTION

One of the scopes of religious texts cross-culturally is to express and explain the faith of the religious community by revealing the Divine. Islamic texts, for example, teach that any way of speaking about God is but a metaphor, that is, a way to talk about God in a viable manner so humans can understand. In this sense, metaphor is conceptual, which is consonant with Cognitive Linguistics. When the Qur'an, or the Bible, or other sacred texts talk about Divinity in human terms, they all use metaphors, and essentially they make use of the higher-level conceptual metaphor ABSTRACT IS CONCRETE.

2 My fundamental question is how do the modern devotees and faithful, and not just the theologians, how do today's people relate to certain metaphors transmitted by their faiths, and what can these metaphors tell us about the individuals' concepts of themselves. Moreover, how does the faithful keep a viable representation of themselves and the world around them notwithstanding seemingly contradictory aspects of their representations? In this presentation I intend to show that Cognitive Linguistics can provide a new focus on answering these questions, and that those metaphors that concern more "meaningful concepts", such as personhood and the transcendent, are deeply and rigidly enrooted in our individual conceptual system, bringing forth metaphorical and metonymic associations which often are not as evident.

3 My research, which is still in progress, intends to analyze metaphors found in religious and spiritual texts and discourse by using Lakoff and Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor theory and Fauconnier and Turner's Blending theory, and I won't discuss these since you already know of both. I've chosen to study how people represent spiritual experiences through speech, gestures and colored drawings. Today I will be concentrating my talk on a couple of my informants, one a street preacher and the other a street missionary, both Christian and from the streets of Berkeley, California.

The main premise for analyzing gestures is that gestures can reveal more information on the thought process than what speech alone could. Gesture studies of the last few decades (cf. McNeill, Kendon) has revealed that co-speech gestures are tightly integrated with speech, in that they are temporally co-timed and semantically co-expressed. However gestures are structured differently from speech by virtue of the nature of the semiotic channel, encoding in space imagistically abstract thought not encoded in speech, which is temporally linear. In this way, we can imagine a person talking about knowledge and faith using the CONTAINER image schema. So a devotee might talk about “my faith” (up-inward motion) or “my faith” (self-upward motion) and this could indicate where the prime agency of faith comes from.

I have also asked my interviewees to perform pictorial representations of themselves, of the Divine, of heaven and of what happens at the moment of death. The colors they use and the shapes they draw, and the order in which they draw them potentially provide further insight into how they think.

My study intends to be qualitative, and so I’m not interested in whether one spiritual belief system uses more or less metaphors over another, but rather to see what can be said about the phenomenology of spiritual experiences, about personhood and the transcendent using cognitive linguistics as an instrument of analysis.

4

I will start by discussed why spiritual experiences are so interesting to study, and then I will discuss some metaphors used to describe religious and spiritual concepts first in sacred texts and then in everyday life. I hope to show how the faithful keep a viable representation of themselves and the world around them notwithstanding seemingly contradictory aspects of their representations.

5 WHY ARE DESCRIPTIONS OF SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCES SO INTERESTING?

Spiritual experiences are *similar to* all other experiences: Each experience is lived through the body, whether it is sitting through a colloquium or having a divine vision. These experiences are based on concepts and categories, which bridge the mind and the world, and are constructed by our interaction with and encyclopedic knowledge of the world. Many scholars from Merleau-Ponty on would agree that perception of any type is not passive reception of data, but an action-oriented restructuring of the world. As subjects we have a continuing identity of ourselves, and memory plays an important role by reconstructing past events on our present context and not simply by retrieving data stored like a computer might do. This continuous reconstructing of past experiences gives way to coherence and plausibility in our narratives, relating them to future plans and goals. In this sense cognitive sciences see the self, or the person, as an ecological system, a multileveled psycho-somatic unity, and Blending Theory, as I understand it, would say that conceptual integration is a continual process. Each experience, whether it's meeting a friendly face for the first time or having an epiphany of what you should be doing in a given situation, is never experienced if not relationally and contextually, because as humans we embody all our experiences, including the most abstract.

X However, spiritual experiences are *different* from other experiences: Within spiritual experiences, what "appears" paradoxically is often different to what really "is", yet people have a sense of great conviction, to use the term following William James, and that is probably because of the way the narrative self works. Intuitively spiritual, mystical or religious experiences do seem to have a different quality from other profane experiences. The effects of visions, revelations and divine encounters often have great impact on the persons experiencing them, both psychologically and socially. Usually there is a sense of self (awareness), cognition (revelation, knowledge) and emotions. People change their lifestyles, and the effects often endure time. Rarely do people do so with mundane experiences that have no physical or directly social causation. Subjects often describe these experiences as objectively real, and more "intense" experiences are considered "ineffable" (although I would argue that "ineffability" does not exist in most cases, unless you're completely dumbstruck, because people in fact use metaphors to communicate and represent their experiences).

For my study, a spiritual experience can be identified with anything in relation to the transcendent, for example anything from feeling the presence of God in one's everyday life to having visions.

Before presenting you some of my interview data, I will talk just a little about metaphors of God in Sacred Texts and the cognitive origins of anthropomorphism in religious thought.

6 METAPHORS OF GOD IN SACRED TEXTS

DesCamp and Sweetser in an article published in 2005 analyze a total of 44 metaphors from the Hebrew scriptures and 50 from the Christian scriptures, for example God is a Father, God is a Shepherd, a Rock, and so forth. Their analysis points towards relational metaphors between God and Humans, for example Father-child, Lord-servant, and so on, which show “a two-way, loving relationship, with asymmetric power but symmetric love” (p. 233).

7 Elsewhere I've claimed that one very pervasive conceptual metaphor of the Bible is GOD IS A LOVER (Evola 2004, 2005) and you have the blend on the handout. This metaphor permeates the *Sir Hassirim*, or the *Song of Songs*, as well as Psalm 45. In this metaphor, God and devotee are seen as LOVER and BELOVED, and there is symmetry, albeit illusionary or temporal for the devotee, to the point that the devotee, because of his or her experience of mystical union, can profess “I am God”. What is interesting about the *Song of Songs* is that God is never mentioned once, which is probably why this metaphor was not taken into consideration in the aforementioned essay; yet, at least as far back as Rabbi Akiba in the 2nd century, this book was already traditionally seen as an allegory of the love of God, and many saintly figures have used this conceptual metaphor to talk about the Divine Love and Mystical Union (for instance the Spanish mystics Teresa de Ávila and Juan de la Cruz). The same conceptual metaphor manifests itself in other theistic religious systems such as Judaism, Islam and Hinduism.

This doesn't mean that this particular metaphor is acceptable or present for all devotees. In a bit I'll try to show some evidence for the fact that each individual has a “preferred” way of representing God, motivated by their own life experiences.

But it does seem rather surprising that eroticism should be used to talk about God at all. This is not platonic love: it's the typical language used in the poetry of passion, where the beloved lusts for the kisses and caresses of the lover, fearing separation, giving up one's own family and social dignity to be with the lover. In fact there's a whole genre of mystical literature, cross-culturally, which is based on erotic metaphors, and many people consider these writings as the greatest, not only poetically, but also devotionally.

Now, isn't it contradictory that a religious system, whose laws concerning sexuality are so rigorous and whose punishments are so harsh, would even admit more or less explicit descriptions of those same acts to talk about the Sublime? Why should people even talk about God and the Divine in terms of a human source domain? Why not use other non-human domains, like clothing or mechanical objects, especially when for so many religious systems it is a sin to represent God, in particular as a human?

Divine agency is very often seen in terms of the most complex object that man knows of, and that is himself. The cognitive system of humans automatically infers many operations to avoid an overload on itself, and it recruits information from all its resources. “[A] lot happens beneath that Cartesian stage, in a mental basement that we can describe only with the tools of cognitive sciences” (Boyer, 2001: 18). People know a lot about themselves, much more than other things in the world, and human beings become the easiest source for information to produce inferences. God was created in man’s image, and it is an anthropological universal that supernatural beings are considered to have a mind (Boyer, 2001: 143-144) and this places man much closer to the Divine than to the animal on the Great Chain of Beings.

A human-like God is nonetheless, in Justin Barrett’s words, “theologically correct” (1999). Devotees of Eastern or Western religious systems would say that God has a lot of human-like qualities. For Christians God became human by taking the flesh of Jesus of Nazareth, or for Hindus by becoming an avatar like Krishna. Yet one must agree that these “humanized gods” are not quite *like* other humans (in fact one of the ways the God is often described is through the *via negativa*, or the path of negation). The God presented in the Bible or the Qur’an has a mighty hand, and His eyes see everything, but these are metaphors of His omnipotence and His omniscience. In a way the devotee must juggle with two different mental spaces (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002): one is a human-God, to which she can relate; the other, which builds on the first, is a supernatural-God, far more different from what she can ever imagine. Muslims are warned that God is beyond anything one might devise by the way of concept or definition, and this could be considered true also by other religious systems. Although God has revealed Himself in and through the Holy Word in human language, the devotee constantly shifts between knowing and not being able to know. Devotees can understand God, despite His infinite qualities, only in terms of humanity and considering Him as one of us, albeit the Ultimate Perfection of Humanity.

Since the case studies I present here are of Christians, I’m going to focus my attention on Christian and Biblical language, which nonetheless is analogous in many regards to the language used by other theistic religious systems. People choose to represent God based on tradition, but also on the individuals’ knowledge and experience of themselves and their world. A group of people, like the Eskimos, who had never seen sheep in their everyday arctic world could never have understood the metaphor GOD IS A SHEPHERD, which is why the first missionaries translating the Bible substituted it with GOD IS A REINDEER HERDER, and what gets sacrificed is not the Lamb of God, but the Seal of God.

Let’s now turn to some of the ways in which 21st century devotee talks about their personal spiritual experiences.

9 “METAPHORS WE PRAY BY”

GOOD IS UP/BAD IS DOWN

Probably the most pervasive metaphor in religious and spiritual thought and representation is GOOD IS UP/BAD IS DOWN, which is an extension of the MORE IS UP/LESS IS DOWN image schema. Since we were babies we have all experienced this fundamental image schema: whenever there’s more water in a glass the level goes up, or when we stack things in a pile, more things we stack up, the higher the stack gets. In our culture, and in many cultures in fact, there is also the idea that MORE IS BETTER, thus GOOD IS UP. Even the Romans would give thumbs up or down to approve or disapprove. Indeed the GOOD IS UP metaphor is probably the most profuse and consistent one in my data. “Our Father” is up in the heavens, and people who have out of body experiences say they see things while in this peaceful state from hovering above the real world. Most people will deictically point “up” in reference to God, and “down” for the devil, and in Saint Paul’s Letter to the Corinthians he admonishes, “let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor 10, 12). Medieval European architects played with this conceptual metaphor, in that the architecture of Gothic churches included slender, pointy rooftops. The church, first as a building and then metonymically extended to those who pray in it, is the *locus* where the faithful could go to “lift” their souls to “reach the heavens”.

In my research, this metaphor of GOOD IS UP in one way or another was consistently used in speech, gesture and the drawings, for example, even when drawing Paradise which would already be an “up” space, people would place God in the upper part of their drawings. This is sound evidence that as with any type of experience, common or less common, people’s perception is always embodied. Moreover, they maintain their *habitus* (in a Bourdieuan sense), through which society and culture is impressed on the individual, not only in mental habits, but even more corporeal ones, including gesture.

10 MORAL ACCOUNTING

Lakoff & Johnson (1999) contends that much of our moral reasoning is rooted in metaphors, among which the MORAL ACCOUNTING metaphor. Our knowledge of accounting is laminated onto the metaphor WELL-BEING IS WEALTH (so, for example, one might say that a millionaire who loses his family is a “poor guy”). This is conceptually at the basis of the Catholic notion of indulgences and of many representations of paradise. You pray somewhere or do something so to get into heaven quicker.

11 In one of my case studies, I asked my informant, Edward to draw his vision of Paradise. Edward is a self-proclaimed “street preacher” who calls himself an “apostle of Christ”. In summary, he was mapping onto

his vision of the afterlife all the commodities he didn't have in this world by conceptualizing well-being as wealth. In his drawing, his "piece of paradise" included a house on a piece of land, with a river and waterfalls near it. What is particularly interesting is that in his drawing the house was for him and his wife (even though in this world he's doesn't have a girlfriend), and his house has a chimney and a garage nearby where to keep his many cars. His view of paradise is made of the projection of a wealthy and stable life on earth, but transposed in paradise.

[Just a little side note, we've all probably heard about what happened with the Mormon sect in Texas, when the police raided the compound last week and seized more than 400 children. I read yesterday¹ that the mothers are opening up to the media, trying to convince authorities to have their children back. Someone testifying in favor of the Mormons said in the interview, "To really enjoy heaven, you have to be married and you have to have your kids with you. Everything experienced on Earth will be in its more perfected form in heaven." Here were talking about the same metaphorical concept, which for them is more than just metaphorical.]

Just like on earth you have to earn your way to have a home, the same can be said about paradise. By doing morally positive actions in this world or, like Edward says, "doing the right thing", he would be repaid, and his earthly suffering is a sort of investment for the afterlife.

This metaphor is generally pervasive in religious reasoning, for example when Christians say that "Jesus Christ died on the Cross to pay our debt of sin." For Eastern belief systems, keeping account of the individual's moral actions is the way that Karma is maintained, and this concept is present in many religious systems: there's an investment and a payback, if you do something good, something good will happen back.

12 But what exactly is "doing the right thing" for Edward? Let's let him talk about it in his own words.

Clip1: Edward (00:26:50 – 00:27:02)

1. Well / to put a short / ah: short story together it's just
2. where people choose [and do THIS /]
3. in ah words [peop- other people tryin' to do / ↑THE [RIGHT] THING /]
4. so >e::verybody's< [over here doin' %grunt-"THIS" / the devil thing]

¹ Elliott C. McLaughlin, CNN. "Experts: Sect opens up to retrieve children, hasten heaven" (April 28, 2008)
<http://www.cnn.com/2008/CRIME/04/28/flds.openness/index.html>

13 For Edward, people have to choose to do “the right thing” or “the devil thing”. His co-speech gestures reveal much more than what he says. I want to show you this clip once more, and this time I also want you to notice how he embodies the metaphor GOOD IS UP/BAD IS DOWN, especially on the word “right” when his right hand jerks upward. The “the devil thing” is not the right thing, so it’s excluded and put to the side, whereas the “right thing” is something he’s including himself in.

14 [CLIP 15: 12”]

	
Bad	Good
“The devil thing”	“The right thing”
Downward	Upward (especially on “to do the RIGHT thing”)
Outward palms (exclusion)	Inward palms (inclusion)
Centrifugal	Centripetal

The gesture Edward makes when talking about “the right thing” is in a metonymical relationship with other instances of the same gesture throughout our interview, and it may seem a little idiosyncratic, but it’s not. His gesture is like he’s holding something, and in fact the first time he performs this gesture was in reference to the Bible almost three minutes into the interview.

15 I’ve listed here Edward’s metaphoric/metonymic extensions of first “Bible gesture”. Semiotically the sign is the same but what it represents differs.

Let me show you the clip of the first time he performs this “Bible gesture.” He’ll use it four times in 33 seconds all with different “meanings”. Moreover, when he talks about prayer, notice he is using the MORAL ACCOUNTING schema.

16 [CLIP Edward-struggle-books: 33”]

Clip 2: Edward (00:02:57 – 00:03:30)

1. I was [reading the Bible] I need somethin’ more so I figured [this is it] /

Embodiment of action

Deixis

2. ‘n then / ya know / the bible thing was: where*/ ya know i’ was a* ya know

3. you have to get the [right books so they got like] / ya know so many different books

Metonymy

4. you gotta find the right book so it was like struggle ‘n then /

5.

Now do you think prayer is important?

6. ↑ Yeah /

7. *Ok, why?*

8. Cuz it always does something for you /

9. So what I found out is / if you don’t pra:y

10. somebody’s not gonna be looking out for you /

11. so [if you pray /] the:n they’re gonna hear the prayer and they’re gonna be lookin’ around ‘n

Prayer

12. doin’ something for you

These associations – bible-prayer-Jesus-“the right thing”-“the way the world works”- “the something more” – may seem evident, but this is only because they are so entrenched in our own conceptual systems as Westerners. However let’s remember that they are contingent, and not necessary. They are fruit of Edward’s experiences and interaction with *his* own world. Keep in mind that non-Christians would deny these associations, and perhaps even some other Christians might wish to argue with them. What is interesting though is that Edward did not manifest these associations either consciously or intentionally, rather the gestures provided a backdoor to Edward’s conceptual system by embodying his system of phenomena and beliefs.

ONE GOD, TWO FATHERS: STRICT FATHER VS. NURTURING PARENT

I will now concentrate on one fundamental metaphor in Christianity, which is GOD IS A FATHER, and how this metaphor plays out in two of my interviewees.

17 You've already met Edward, so let me present to you an older lady who goes by the name of "Mama". Mama is an African-American lady "over 60" who now lives in Berkeley, California and runs a mission for the homeless. Her mother was not present from early, and she talks about her father, a very large man, who liked to drink and who had many wives and many other families. Nonetheless, her father was very nurturing and she loved him very much. When he died, she was alone and homeless and started stealing, doing drugs, and sleeping around. Nonetheless, she always felt the presence of God in her life, guiding and protecting her.

For Mama, God is like a father, and in many ways like her real father. As a matter of fact, every time but once during our interview when Mama talks about God in fatherly terms, she then mentions her own father shortly after. This could simply indicate that when she reasons in terms of this metaphor, her source domain is highly present. For example in this first clip Mama talks about how she and her friends had been doing drugs and were driving along a bridge. All of a sudden she yelled to stop the car, and luckily she did because they were going to die, but she doesn't know what made her scream : [CLIP mama-big-father 11"]

X
18 Now, in this other clip, Mama confesses how she was ready to stop doing drugs and she abandoned herself to God. Notice she'll mention three things that were everything for her: at one point it was her father, then it was being a drug addict (like her father), and finally now, God the Father is her everything. [CLIP mama-took-father 30"]

Clip 3: Mama

1. ↓I prayed to <God I know I'm doin' wro::ng> #
2. 'n I know gyou don't want me to u:se dru:gs #
3. ↑and I actually I really don't want to use 'em either #
4. but Father (2.5) I'm tired / it's the only thing I got #
5. but I didn't know He: was the only thing I really had #
6. 'n the:n so: /
7. I loved my father so much ↓ He took my father from me †
8. and that led me (1.5) by myself

- 19 (Lakoff 1996) describes the STRICT FATHER Model and the NURTURING PARENT Model in political reasoning, a dichotomy useful for religious reasoning as well.

Strict Father	Nurturing Parent
Hierarchical relationship	Two way communication
Power/Authority	Empathy/responsibility
Reward/punishment	Personal earning or loss

In Mama's religious conceptual system, her earthly father maps onto her heavenly Father. One was physically big and the Other is big, powerful. Throughout our interview it's clear that she's able to go beyond her father's faults, remembering how he guided and protected her, and was indeed a nurturing parent; because of the blend, her view of God the Father is analogous.

- 20 Edward's conceptual system, on the other hand, presents an example of the Strict Father Model. His biological father was a drug-addict, and he doesn't talk very highly of him during our interview, yet it is clear that Edward feels his loss.

In this clip which reveals his source domain FATHER, I ask Edward if he's ever seen God, and at the end he gives a vivid description of his vision, and notice his gestures which will be analogous to his drawing of God the Father. It is interesting that, although he's initially talking about Christ's Father, he becomes emotional, and it seems as though he's talking more about the source domain of earthly father than the target domain of heavenly father.

- X [CLIP edward-father-son 1'07"]

Clip 4: Edward (00:15:14 – 00:16:20)

1. Yeah I have but /
2. That guy's* he's kinda tight so %laugh:
3. He's like / kind of a meanie or %laugh-“whatever” %laugh
4. *Who's this?*
5. The Lord Jehu or / Christ's father (1.5)
6. So he* he's / yeah he does {that} so /
7. *Now what's the difference between the Father and the Son?*
8. %sniff (1.5) %exhale / He's almighty /
9. He create* / ya know / he could take something and make this into an animal %laugh:

10. He's a cr'ator /
11. He's a great man (3.5-%cry) but when it come to /
12. being like a man he doesn't %laugh-"do it very well I'm thinking" /
13. ↓ cuz I know he made me suffer a lot
14. ↑ And then they'll use this long suffering >{this} suffering th: suffer long suffer he's like<
15. He could be a better ↑ man /
16. So: the difference is Christ is pro'ly /
17. The difference is the same but / he's a li'l more compassionate ↓ <than his father> (1.5)
18. So he's a good man bu:t he needs to show more compassio- ya know
19. He needs to do a li'l more so /
20. *Now you're saying man, is he a man like you and me?*
21. (1.0-%laugh) ↑ Yeah, I seen a vision of him /
22. ↓ like I seen a little scene like the powers
23. he's like ah <he's a man> /
24. (2.0) so he's like (1.0) all grown tan man /
25. (2.0) and then he's: just like just like that so he's like
26. if you seen a guy that was tan like hair /
27. he's just like that

What is revealing is that he mapped the relationship of God the Father and God the Son onto his own relationship with his father. These concepts have a special cognitive role in devotees because they become highly relevant in their everyday lives and not only their conceptual system, but more profoundly, in their system of beliefs.

21 During my interviews, after I've identified the main metaphor used to talk about God, I introduce other metaphors in the discourse and try to see which catch on. What I've noticed is that the other metaphors are not compatible with whatever is in the source domain depending on the interviewees' real-life experiences. Depending on the source target, it is difficult for them to see the correspondences.

22 Because Mama during our interview was quite good at citing and referencing the Bible, I asked her to talk about the Song of Songs, and to explain the imagery of the lover and the beloved. When I asked Mama if she could see God as being a lover, or even as a husband, she accused me of blasphemy, because of an incompatibility of domains.

X

Clip 5: Mama

1. *In the book of Solomon, could it be?*
2. >yeah: 's a book of Solomon<
3. *ok, where it talks about two lovers,*
(2.5) the bride, and the groom /
4. (1.5) ↑ God is the groom
5. *ok, so you can see how some people*
see God as being like a lover, like being a boyfriend, or being a husband, or being a groom
6. he's the husband >of the church< /
7. *ok*
8. yeah, 'at's the way you look at that
9. you don't look at that in a /
10. <he's my lover / he comes to me at night and we have s:ex> / no
11. that's >very, very ↑ u:nchristian talk<
12. I don't even talk like that

I just want to highlight that Mama throughout the interview was alluding to Biblical verses, but perhaps the Song of Songs at chapter 5, verse 2 wasn't relevant to her. It reads:

I slept but my heart was awake.
Listen! My lover is knocking:
"Open to me, my sister, my darling,
... my hair [is damp] of the night."

Other metaphors besides God is Lord, Creator and Father analogously seemed implausible for her conceptual system.

23

As for Edward, Edward basically refused any alternative metaphors for God other than God is a Father. When asked if God is a mother he only accepts this view in that God is a creator, and says "but as far as anything like that...nah". When asked if God is a lover, he replied without thinking "he's not!". But listen to what he replied when I asked him to tell me if God can be thought of as a doctor:

X

[CLIP edward-doctor 37"]

Clip 6: Edward (00:21:23 – 00:22:00)

13. (~1.0) Doctor::: (1.5) ye:ah he does do that
14. >So he'll pinch your fee::t or he'll hurt your tee:th
15. So he'll give you um like a- <a ↓ cu:re>
16. ↑ So he's like a doctor >like you're sayin'<
17. So what he'll do is >hurtcha<
18. Cuz he's havin' his little vengeance on ya cuz you sinned
19. So I {knew} right from wrong / like ya know /
20. Don't mess with my stuff and then I mess with it and then he's gonna
21. %yell-"ow:" %laugh: %laugh-"he's gonna hurtcha" /
22. So he'll fix your tee:th /
23. Er ya know you're like you have a: >a:arth- somewhe- he'll go / hurt it 'n then< /
24. So yeah he's like that ↓ like you're sayin'
25. <Like a f:ather> kinda thing /

Edward tries to elaborate the metaphor of GOD IS A DOCTOR, but because his fundamental metaphor is so salient for him, he blends the two source domains and at the end even reverts back to GOD IS A FATHER, a tough, uncompassionate father, unlike his own, a real "meanie."

24 DRAWINGS

I'm only going to show you two pictures that Edward was asked to draw. On the left is his representation of God. Notice how it's consistent with the description he gave before and how his gestures imaginatively drew in space what he's put on paper. God is a tan man, and he's placed in a bounded region like what he saw in his vision in front of him, like a hologram. What is more interesting, though, is that when he was drawing God the Father, he started with the body and only at the end did he draw the head and the face, the parts more identifiable with a person.

In his second drawing he was asked to draw a picture of himself and then to place God in the picture. When he was drawing himself, he began with a large head in the middle of the page (and no body). Notice that he has a beard, whereas God the Father in his first drawing does not, which is unusual since typically in Western culture God the Father is depicted with a beard. In this second representation God is drawn in, but not as a person, which may be more relational. Rather, God is an amorphous ball in the upper right-hand corner, and right after that, he draws a divide right between himself and God. Because of reasons of time, and my incompetence in psychoanalysis, I'm going to leave you with your own personal interpretations, but I can confidently say that having to classify Edward's individual positions in relation to his belief in God, he is one "who struggle with a demanding, harsh God [he] would like to get rid of if [he] were not convinced of his existence and power."²



² Rizzuto, A.-M. (1979). *The Birth of the Living God: A Psychoanalytic Study*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. p. 91.

25 CONCLUSIONS

To conclude, people's views about themselves and the world around them are deeply rooted in their conceptual systems, which are created by their experiences and their bodily interactions with the world, whether it's having to do with gravity in the case of UP and DOWN, or what our individual and social concepts are. When people talk about religious and spiritual concepts, they are revealing a great deal about the way they are, their world, and the way they interact with it.

The more entrenched a frame of mind is, the less plastic it is, and this is confirmed by the neurosciences which claim that it is difficult to break down and reconstruct certain synaptic structures of the brain. Our basic way of seeing things are often incompatible or at best seep through when a new frame or a new conceptual metaphor is introduced, whether it be in the form of speech, gesture or drawings. I hope this was convincing, based on the evidence I've presented, which is by the way consistent with my other data collected from another dozen of informants who define themselves as Jewish, Muslim, Monotheistic, Pagan, New Age, Reiki, and so forth, and not only Christians. One conceptual metaphor does not give way to another one immediately, and according to psychoanalytic studies, it is possible to substitute conceptual metaphors and frames of mind, but only with a great deal of effort. The primary source domain of our habitual conceptual metaphor, I would say, will always motivate any other laminated domain mappings, or blends, especially for such meaningful concepts like personhood or belief systems.

Moreover, speech alone doesn't provide all the information. Conceptual metaphor certainly tells a great deal about the way we think the world works, but a lot more needs to go into the conceptual integration networks. Gesture studies has proven to be yet another powerful instrument, which should demonstrate how useful it can be for discourse analysis, psychoanalysis and various types of counseling, just to mention a few. Speech, gesture and drawings, each semiotic mode has its characteristic affordances and limitations, but when used together, they can paint a more complete picture of what we are looking for, whether it be a person's concept of God or of himself. Thank you!

TRANSCRIPTION LEGEND

*	speaker self-interrupt, self-correction or restart	↑	rising pitch
		↓	falling pitch
:	prolonged or stuttering	>text<	the enclosed speech was delivered more rapidly than usual
#	breath pause	<text>	the enclosed speech was delivered more slowly than usual
‡	palato-alveolar click release	text	emphasis
%	non-speech sound; e.g. %laugh, %sneeze	[beginning of gesture phrase
{	uncertain speech]	end of gesture phrase
/	unfilled speech pause, <1.0 seconds	CAPS	main stroke of gesture phase
(1.5)	unfilled speech pause in seconds	bold	comment on gesture
-	abrupt halt in utterance		

N.B. Signs are in gray in transcript to heighten readability of discourse text.

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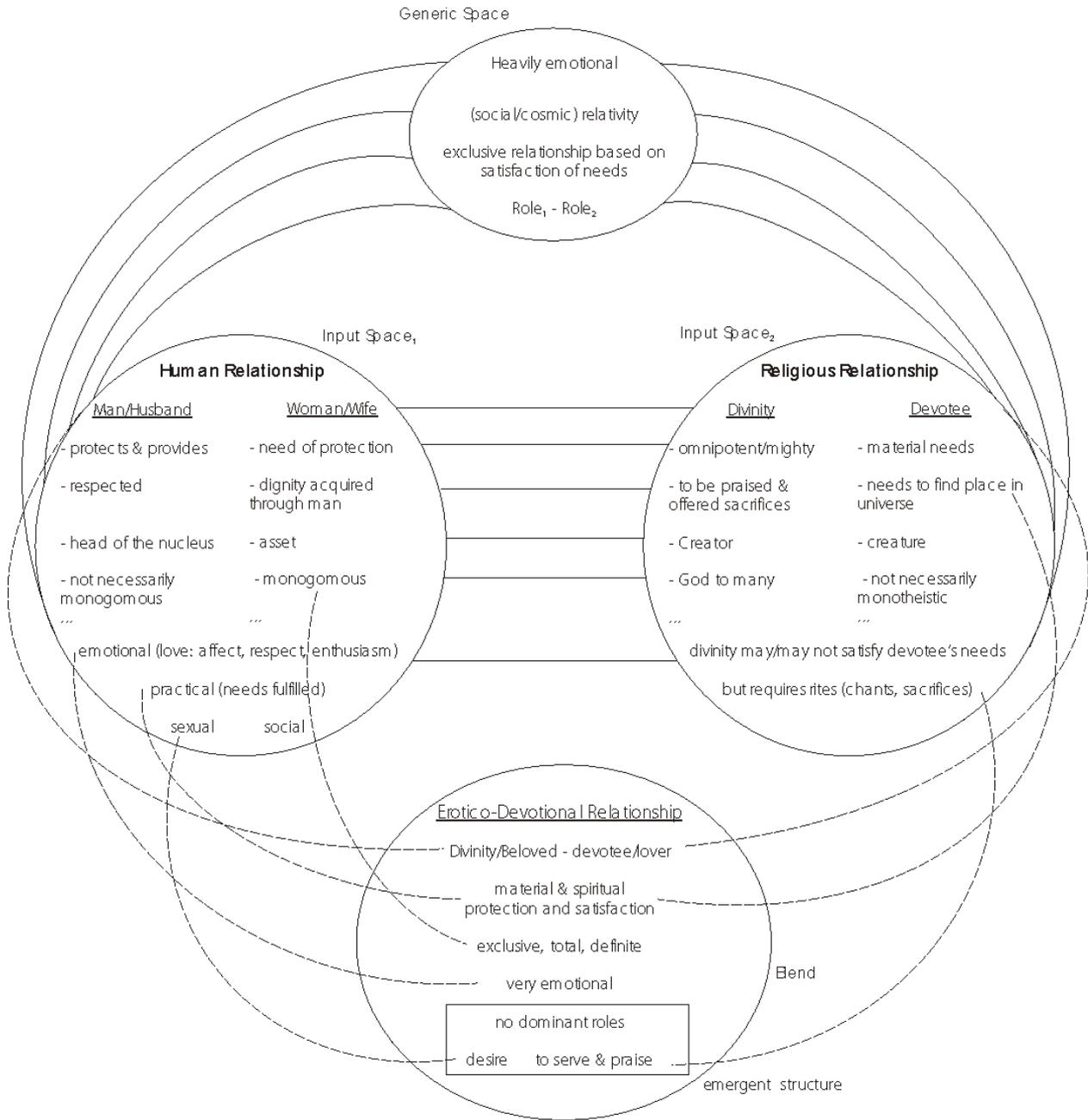


FIGURA 1: "GOD IS A LOVER" BLEND (CF. EVOLA 2004, 2005)