

Hypotheses Revisited: The Cognitive Theory of Metaphor Applied to Religious Texts

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Abstract

The main tenets of the Cognitive Theory of Metaphor are summarized in the form of nine hypotheses (cf. Jäkel 1997). Then, instances of the JOURNEY metaphor with its underlying PATH schema from the latest English version of the Bible are analyzed by way of a semasiological approach. The findings of this empirical case study are finally brought to bear on the theoretical claims. While as a result most of these tenets are seen to be corroborated, the "invariance hypothesis" (cf. Lakoff 1993) in particular appears highly suspect.

Die Kernaussagen der Kognitiven Metaphertheorie werden in Form von neun Hypothesen zusammengefasst (vgl. Jäkel 1997). Darauf wird in einem semasiologischen Ansatz die REISE-Metaphorik mit dem zugrunde liegenden WEG-Schema in der neuesten englischen Bibelübersetzung analysiert. Die Erkenntnisse dieser empirischen Fallstudie werden schließlich zur Überprüfung der Theorieaussagen verwendet. Während in diesem Licht die Thesen mehrheitlich als bestätigt gelten können, erscheint insbesondere die "Invarianzhypothese" (vgl. Lakoff 1993) hochgradig suspekt.

Introduction

With respect to metaphors in religious contexts, a cognitive-semantic approach after the manner of Lakoff and Johnson can provide valuable insights.¹ The overall aim of this essay is to exemplify both prospects and limitations of the Cognitive Theory of Metaphor in dealing with religious metaphor. In the first section, a refined framework of the cognitive approach to metaphor (see Jäkel 1997) is given in summary (section 1.1.), before we derive certain predictions about the occurrence, frequency, and conceptual characteristics to be expected of linguistic metaphors in discourse or texts dealing with religious issues (1.2.). The section closes with a short explanation of the theoretical focus of the investigation (1.3.).

The main section (2.) of this paper is devoted to the conceptual analysis of metaphors taken from the Judao-Christian tradition of the Bible, in particular the Old Testament. All linguistic examples are quoted from the latest English translation (1995) *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Anglicized Edition*. I take a semasiological approach to the data, singling out instances of the JOURNEY metaphor.² In the final section (3.), the findings of this empirical case study are brought to bear on the central tenets of the theory of metaphor (3.1.). The so-called "invariance hypothesis" receives particular attention (3.2.) in a final comparison

¹ A heartfelt thank-you goes to James Francis whose detailed comments on an earlier draft saved me from some major (theological) pitfalls. All remaining errors etc. pp.

² The distinction of an onomasiological versus a semasiological approach in the analysis of metaphor was introduced by Weinrich (1958:284). For a comprehensive discussion of Weinrich's merits as a predecessor of the Cognitive Theory of Metaphor see Jäkel (1999b and 1997: sections 4.4. and 5.1.)

of the sublime uses of the JOURNEY metaphor in religious contexts with its conventional applications in profane discourse.

1. The Cognitive Theory of Metaphor and Religious Discourse

In the following, the main tenets of the Cognitive Theory of Metaphor are summarised in the form of nine hypotheses. For a more comprehensive introduction of these tenets and a detailed discussion of problems associated with the cognitive approach to metaphor see Jäkel (1997).

1.1. Nine Central Tenets of the Cognitive Theory of Metaphor

(1.) Ubiquity Hypothesis

Linguistic metaphor is not an exceptional matter of poetic creativity or excessive rhetoric. In perfectly ordinary everyday language (as well as in highly specialised expert discourse), conventional metaphors are abundant. Therefore, linguists have to face the task of accounting for them as part of our general linguistic competence.

(2.) Domain Hypothesis

Most metaphorical expressions are not to be treated in isolation, but as linguistic realisations of *conceptual metaphors*: These consist in the systematic connection of two different *conceptual domains*, one of which functions as *target domain* (X) with the other supplying the *source domain* (Y) of the metaphorical mapping. In this manner, X is conceptualised as Y, one conceptual domain is understood by taking recourse to another domain of experience.

(3.) Model Hypothesis

Quite often, conceptual metaphors form coherent *cognitive models*: complex gestalt structures of organised knowledge as pragmatic simplifications of an even more complex reality. These *idealized cognitive models (ICMs)*, which can be reconstructed by means of cognitive linguistic analyses of everyday language, are regarded as cultural models likely to unconsciously determine the world view of a whole linguistic community.

(4.) Diachrony Hypothesis

Cognitive-semantic studies of metaphor show that even in the historical development of languages, most metaphorical meaning extensions are not a matter of isolated expressions, but provide evidence of systematic metaphorical projections between whole conceptual domains. Therefore a cognitive approach to metaphor can benefit from the integration of the diachronic dimension.

(5.) Unidirectionality Hypothesis

As a rule, metaphor ("X is Y") links an *abstract* and complex target domain (X) as explanandum with a more *concrete* source domain (Y) as explanans, which is more simply structured and open to sensual experience. In this connection, the relation between the

elements X and Y is irreversible, the metaphorical transfer having an unequivocal direction. This *unidirectionality* of metaphor is found both synchronically and diachronically.

(6.) *Invariance Hypothesis*

In conceptual metaphors, certain schematic elements get mapped from the source domain onto the target domain without changing their basic structure. These preconceptual *image-schemata* provide the experiential grounding of even the most abstract of conceptual domains.

(7.) *Necessity Hypothesis*

In general, metaphors have an *explanatory function*. Certain issues could hardly be understood or conceptualised at all without recourse to conceptual metaphor. Abstract conceptual domains, theoretical constructs, and metaphysical ideas in particular are only made accessible to our understanding by means of metaphor. Through relating even the most abstract conceptual thinking to sensual perception, conceptual metaphors supply a bodily, biophysical grounding of cognition, providing coherence and unity of our experience.

(8.) *Creativity Hypothesis*

The potential meaningfulness of metaphor does not yield to simple paraphrase, its meaning cannot be reduced to a nonmetaphorical, propositional format without loss. This is the reason for the enormous *creativity* that metaphor displays not only in poetic discourse: In ordinary everyday life it can restructure ingrained patterns of thinking. And in scientific contexts it can have a *heuristic function*.

(9.) *Focussing Hypothesis*

Metaphors only supply a *partial* description or explanation of the target domain in question, highlighting certain aspects while hiding others. It is this *focussing* that makes the difference between alternative metaphors for the same target domain.

Taken together, these nine hypotheses form the gist of a refined Cognitive Theory of Metaphor. Not all of them will be of the same concern to the following investigation. Thus, hypotheses (4.) and (9.) will be largely disregarded as the metaphor study neither includes diachronic investigations nor compares the different focussing effects of alternative models.³ More central to the present piece of research are hypotheses nos 2, 3, 5, 6, and 7, as explained in the following section.

1.2. General Predictions Concerning Religious Discourse

Relying on this theoretical framework, we can make certain predictions about the occurrence, frequency, and centrality of linguistic metaphors in discourse or texts dealing with religious

³ But see Jäkel (1997) for case studies in metaphor analysis including these dimensions neglected here.

issues. We may further be able to predict some of the conceptual characteristics to be expected from those metaphors.

According to the *necessity hypothesis* (7.), the domain of the religious should be largely if not completely dependent on metaphorical conceptualisation. It is not only a highly abstract domain quite removed from sensual experience,⁴ but its central issues of *God*, the *soul*, the *hereafter*, and the *freedom* of moral choice have traditionally been regarded as *the* metaphysical ideas par excellence.⁵

That our conceptualisation of metaphysical ideas is in principle of a metaphorical nature has been observed by philosophers working in epistemology as well as by philosophers analysing metaphor. A paragon of the first kind is Kant,⁶ major protagonists from the second group are Blumenberg⁷ and Johnson (1992:362). The same or similar observations have been made by theologians and Bible commentators from as early as the sixth century, particularly concerning the conceptualisation of *God*.⁸ To conclude with this most general prediction: Religious discourse should abound with metaphorical expressions.

According to the *domain hypothesis* (2.), these metaphorical expressions should display enough systematicity to be accounted for in terms of conceptual metaphors. Moreover – as expressed in hypothesis (3.) – these conceptual metaphors might even form coherent *cognitive models*.

Due to the *unidirectionality hypothesis* (5.), the metaphorical source domains revealed by conceptual analysis should in principle be of a concrete kind, open to experience through the senses. Of course, the hypothesis would also exclude a reversal of the direction of transfer, with the domain of the religious functioning as source domain.⁹

As for the question of what gets mapped in the metaphorical transfer to the target domain of religious ideas, the *invariance hypothesis* (6.) suggests image-schemata as the privileged structural elements from the concrete source domains in question.

⁴ For metaphor studies of other abstract domains see Jäkel (1997); cf. Jäkel (1993, 1994 and t.a.) on ECONOMY, Jäkel (1995) on THE MIND, and Jäkel (1996) on SCIENCE.

⁵ Cf. for example the seminal treatment in Kant (1781/87).

⁶ Cf. in particular Kant (1790:§ 59) for the general observation, and see his discussion of the metaphor of GOD'S CREATION AS A WORK OF ART in (1781/87:B 655, 1783:§ 57 and 1790:§ 90). For a comprehensive introduction to Kant's contributions as a predecessor of the Cognitive Theory of Metaphor see Jäkel (1999b and 1997: section 4.2.).

⁷ See Blumenberg (1960 and 1971). For a comprehensive discussion of Blumenberg as a predecessor of the Cognitive Theory of Metaphor cf. Jäkel (1999b and 1997: section 4.3.).

⁸ Cf. Boeve & Feyaerts (1996) as well as Platzner (1996), whose formulation (1996:9) is that "even the most intricate of metaphoric constructions cannot bridge the cognitive distance between language and divine reality."

⁹ Cf. Jäkel (1999a) for an empirical test of the unidirectionality hypothesis by means of investigating the understanding of metaphorical expressions.

After our cognitive-semantic analysis in the main section (2.) we will (in section 3) come back to look at these predictions and the central tenets of the Cognitive Theory of Metaphor in the light of the empirical evidence.

1.3. The Focus of the Investigation

Well-known conventional metaphors conceptualise God as *father, lover, shepherd, craftsman, employer, landowner, lord, king, or judge*.¹⁰ The sheer number and pervasiveness of metaphors like these in religious discourse might be taken as a first confirmation of our hypotheses of necessity and unidirectionality.

If the following study does not deal with any of these in particular, this is because these metaphorical "names of God" seem less interesting in respect of theoretical considerations. For one thing, most of these "names" do not come from source domains that comprise clearly delineated image-schemata. My intention to include a test of the invariance hypothesis made it necessary to look for other metaphors from the domain of the religious.

The solution of focussing on JOURNEY metaphors seemed to be advantageous in more than one respect. Besides conceptualising interesting aspects of the target domain, like the idea of the good life, moral choice, hope, and the relation between God and human beings, the source domain JOURNEY has at its heart one of the most clearly delineated of image-schemata: the PATH schema. A brief outline of this conceptual building block may be in place here.

The PATH schema (alternative labels: SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema, MOTION schema) has been described in detail in cognitive-semantic literature.¹¹ It is one of the most pervasive of image-schemata with a firm experiential grounding. Its basic structure includes a starting point or SOURCE of motion, the PATH traversed, and a GOAL. This simple basic structure implies other important notions, like FORWARD MOTION in a certain DIRECTION (making PROGRESS), DISTANCE travelled, or SPEED of motion. The PATH consists of spatial POINTS in linear succession, which may include salient LANDMARKS. The PATH may also feature CROSSROADS or FORKS. The traveller may be faced with OBSTACLES that he has to go around.

We will look at the mapping details of this image-schema in the main section (2.) and draw some conclusions concerning the invariance hypothesis in section 3 below. There we will also exploit yet another advantage of the JOURNEY metaphor: It is not limited to religious discourse but has conventional applications in non-religious discourse as well. Thus we can make a comparison of the sublime religious uses of the metaphor with its profane manifestations in everyday English.

¹⁰ Cf. Radman (1996) for several of these metaphors. See Botha (1996) as well as Stoica (1996) for *God as father* and Daly (1973) for a feminist criticism of that metaphor, and Francis (1996) for *God as craftsman*.

¹¹ See both Lakoff (1987:275ff.) and Johnson (1987:113ff.) as well as Krzeszowski (1993:317-18).

One last preliminary remark concerns the choice of linguistic material for the following investigation. With the exception of the four examples of sayings of Jesus in 2.5., all metaphorical expressions have been taken from the Old Testament of the Bible. This focus has two advantages: The conceptualisations analysed are central not only to the Christian faith, but also to its "parent" Judaism. And although the different books of the Old Testament display an amazing heterogeneity of styles and textual sorts, it was found advantageous to rely on linguistic examples the bulk of which do *not* come from overt similes or parables proper, which are so characteristic of the New Testament Gospels.

All (74) linguistic examples are quoted from the latest English translation (1995) *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Anglicized Edition*. Though checking with the original Hebrew texts would have been desirable, this must be left for another time. Just over half of the quotes (54 %) come from the two books of *Psalms* and *Proverbs* due to the fact that many of the biblical JOURNEY metaphors are concerned with worldly wisdom. All sources of material are given in the appendix.

2. Analysis: The JOURNEY Metaphor in a Religious Context

There can be no doubt that the JOURNEY metaphor in the religious context of the Bible draws a clear, dichotomous distinction between two ways of life, the *good, moral* life on the one hand versus the *bad, immoral* life on the other hand. This dichotomy runs through all the detailed aspects of the metaphorical model. Thus, following the introduction (in section 2.1.) of the two general kinds of *journey*, we will look at the two sorts of *paths* (2.2.) and the two kinds of *travellers* (2.3.) involved. Finally we will come to *God's role* in the metaphorical scenario (2.4.), which also comprises two basically different attitudes and ways of acting. After this analysis of metaphors from the Old Testament we will take a short look at some interesting reflections of these in examples from the New Testament (2.5.).

2.1. The Moral Journey

The most important structural metaphor in the model investigated is a specification of the simple LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor. The result is a clear moral imperative: LEADING A MORAL LIFE IS MAKING A JOURNEY ON GOD'S WAY.

- (1) You must ***follow exactly the path*** that the Lord your God has commanded you, [...]
- (2) ***My foot has held fast to his steps; I have kept his way and have not turned aside.***
- (3) I have chosen him, that he may charge his children and his household after him to ***keep the way of the Lord*** by doing righteousness and justice.

As example (1) shows, the imperative itself is God-given, consisting in the command to follow God's way exactly (1) and without turning aside (2). That the target domain issue is *ethical conduct* is confirmed by example (3): God's way is kept by doing what is right. The

following verses exemplify an ontological metaphor in which the *path* itself represents God's *commandments*, GOD'S COMMANDMENTS ARE THE PATH:

- (4) **Lead me in the path** of your commandments, for I delight in it.
- (5) Do not let me **stray from** your commandments.
- (6) They did not **walk in the ways of God's commandments, or tread the paths his righteousness showed them.**

As a consequence of this general model of the good life, violations of God's commandments are conceptualised as a kind of *swerving*, a *deviation* from God's way: SINNING IS DEVIATING/SWERVING FROM GOD'S WAY.

- (7) For I have **kept the ways of the Lord**, and have not wickedly **departed from** my God.
- (8) But when they [the Israelites] **departed from the way** he [God] had prescribed for them, they were utterly defeated [...]
- (9) [The Lord to Moses] Your people [...] have been **quick to turn aside from the way** that I commanded them.
- (10) Because they **turned aside from following him, and had no regard for any of his ways** [...]

This metaphorical swerving of the sinner may result in a complete change of route, with the sinful traveller *following other gods*:

- (11) [...] if you do not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but **turn from the way** that I am commanding you today, **to follow other gods** [...]

But this desertion from God's way and the sinner's following of a bad path is not necessarily irreversible. The next verse (12) exemplifies the metaphorical conceptualisation REPENTING IS RETURNING:

- (12) Then I will teach **transgressors your ways**, and sinners will **return to you.**

If on the other hand the sinner does not repent and his immoral conduct remains persistent, he is conceptualised as a traveller walking on evil ways: LEADING AN IMMORAL LIFE IS WALKING EVIL WAYS.

- (13) Even after this event Jeroboam did not **turn from his evil way** [...]
- (14) Live uprightly all the days of your life, and do not **walk in the ways of wrongdoing.**

Thus we have seen the two basic alternatives offered by the JOURNEY model: The traveller can either follow God's way and be a moral person, or he can walk off to travel on evil ways and be an immoral person. The choice is his, and in the metaphorical model MORAL CHOICE IS CHOICE OF PATH:

- (15) I have **chosen the way** of faithfulness.
- (16) Happy are those who do not [...] **take the path that sinners tread.**

(17) ***How lightly you gad about, changing your ways!***

In verse (15) the good way is chosen, in verse (16) the bad. The final example (17) expresses criticism of rather unsettled and dubious moral conduct, which is conceptualised as an erratic *gadding about* of the traveller.

2.2. Paths

In the following we will make a closer inspection of the *paths* on which the good and bad journeys are located. The metaphorical expressions found in the corpus draw vivid images, characterising basically two kinds of paths, one good and one bad. As above, our presentation starts with the good side of this dichotomy.

2.2.1. God's Way – The Good Way

In the religious model investigated, the only good way is God's way. The most distinctive characteristic of this way, exemplified by a great number of expressions in the corpus, is its *straightness*: GOD'S WAY IS A STRAIGHT PATH.

(18) [...] you averted our ruin, ***walking in the straight path*** before our God.

(19) ***To the faithful his ways are straight, but full of pitfalls for the wicked.***

(20) At all times bless the Lord God, and ask him that ***your ways may be made straight*** and that ***all your paths*** and plans may prosper.

Our source domain knowledge about journeys and their paths tells us that a straight path is usually directed towards a specific goal. If we inquire about the destination of God's way, though, we are faced with its supernatural character. Unlike every ordinary path in our experience, God's way does not reach an end – it is *everlasting*:

(21) See if there is any ***wicked way*** in me, and ***lead me in the way everlasting.***

Nevertheless, we can learn something about the metaphysical destination of God's way. The "path of life" (22) is indeed the path *to life* (23): GOD'S WAY LEADS TO (ETERNAL) LIFE.

(22) You show me ***the path of life.***

(23) Whoever heeds instruction ***is on the path to life***, but one who rejects a rebuke ***goes astray.***

The word *life* in these examples must be interpreted as referring to the religious notion of (*eternal*) *life in God*. In the metaphorical model investigated, *life* as we know it – the time span between birth and death of a biological organism – is already conceptualised as the journey itself, so *this* life could not at the same time be the final goal of that journey. The next example shows that the metaphorical journey towards life has an *upward* orientation: GOD'S WAY LEADS UPWARDS.

(24) For the wise ***the path of life leads upwards***, in order ***to avoid Sheol below***.

Example (24) already mentions *Sheol* ('death') as situated in the opposite direction. As this is the final destination of the *bad* journey, we will look at this in the next section (2.2.2.).

The final features of the good way somehow seem to slightly contradict the upward orientation of the path introduced above. One of the major conceptual metaphors in the corpus characterises the path as *level*, GOD'S WAY IS A LEVEL PATH:

(25) Teach me ***your way***, O Lord, and ***lead me on a level path*** [...]

(26) ***The way of the righteous is level***; O Just One, ***you make smooth the path of the righteous***.

If this conceptualisation focuses on the *easiness* of travelling on God's way, the following example goes even further in this respect, drawing an image of the "Holy Way" as a proper *highway* which is so devoid of any danger to the traveller that it can even be characterised as *foolproof*:

(27) ***A highway*** shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way; ***the unclean shall not travel on it, but it shall be for God's people; no traveller, not even fools, shall go astray. No lion shall be there nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it; they shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there.***

2.2.2. Evil Ways

Whereas there is only one good way – namely God's way – in the religious JOURNEY model, the ways of evil may be manifold. And if the good way was straight, the opposite is true of the bad ways: EVIL WAYS ARE CROOKED.

(28) But those who ***turn aside to their own crooked ways the Lord will lead away*** with evildoers.

(29) It [understanding] will save you from ***the way of evil***, from those [...] who ***forsake the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness***, [...] those ***whose paths are crooked***, and who are ***devious in their ways***.

Example (29) shows that in addition to their *crookedness* and *deviousness*, evil ways are also characterised by *darkness*. The following example (30) confirms this feature, adding *slipperiness* to the already unpleasant scenario: EVIL WAYS ARE DARK AND SLIPPERY.

(30) ***Therefore their way shall be to them like slippery paths in the darkness, into which they shall be driven and fall.***

As if this were not enough of unpleasantness, there is another sharp contrast to the good level highway (31) outlined above: EVIL WAYS ARE FULL OF OBSTACLES.

(31) ***The way of the lazy is overgrown with thorns, but the path of the upright is a level highway.***

- (32) ***Thorns and snares are in the way of the perverse; the cautious will keep far from them.***

And while the final destination of the journey on the good way was (eternal) life, all evil ways come to an end in death, EVIL WAYS LEAD TO DEATH:

- (33) Sometimes there is ***a way*** that seems to be right, but in the end it is ***the way to death***.

- (34) ***The way of sinners is paved with smooth stones, but at its end is the pit of Hades.***

Example (34) not only makes the point that wicked ways, though they may be disguised by smooth pavement, retain their evil destination. It also indicates the *downward* orientation (suggested already by the *falling* of the wicked in example 30) of the sinful journey, which is headed for the *pit* of death – the exact opposite of the upward direction we found for the good way towards life.

2.3. The Travellers

In this section we come to the *travellers* taking part in the moral journey described by our metaphorical model. Once again, there is a dichotomy of two kinds: the good or righteous on the one hand, and the bad or wicked on the other. As in the above sections, we take a look at the good side first.

2.3.1. The Righteous

As part of the metaphorical model of the good life, a number of characteristics are ascribed to the righteous persons who lead a moral life. First, these people are not careless about their way: THE RIGHTEOUS TAKE HEED TO THEIR WAY.

- (35) If your heirs ***take heed to their way***, to ***walk before me*** in faithfulness [...]

Next, the good travellers are constant in their moral conduct, THE RIGHTEOUS HOLD TO THEIR WAY:

- (36) Yet the righteous ***hold to their way***.

- (37) ***I have avoided the ways of the violent. My steps have held fast in your paths; my feet have not slipped.***

- (38) Therefore ***walk in the way of the good, and keep to the paths of the just.***

As the good way was found to be *straight* (cf. examples 18-20 above), so is the direction the righteous travellers have to keep; THE RIGHTEOUS KEEP A STRAIGHT PATH:

- (39) ***Keep straight the path of your feet, and all your ways will be sure. Do not swerve to the right or to the left; turn your foot away from evil.***

- (40) [...] a person of understanding ***walks straight ahead***.

Even *speed* of movement can be involved, when THE RIGHTEOUS RUN GOD'S WAY:

(41) I **run the way** of your commandments [...]

(42) When I think of **your ways**, I **turn my feet to** your decrees; I **hurry** and do not delay to keep your commandments.

The *speed* in these examples (41, 42) already focuses the eagerness of the good travellers who make haste in their journey along God's way. The following verse (43) shows that the pious travellers really *enjoy* their journey: THE RIGHTEOUS DELIGHT IN GOD'S WAY.

(43) I delight in **the way** of **your** decrees as much as in all riches. I will meditate on your precepts, and **fix my eyes on your ways**.

In this example (43), God's way is experienced as delightful enough to prevent the travellers from even looking in other directions. Instead, they *fix their eyes* on the path of God's commandments, which should also help them in keeping straight to the way chosen. Naturally enough, the same travellers' emotions towards alternative paths are clearly negative in kind: THE RIGHTEOUS HATE FALSE WAYS.

(44) I hate every **false way**. **Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path**.

Example (44) not only expresses a pious person's hatred towards wicked ways, but also mentions one further aspect to be added to the characteristics of the good way (cf. section 2.2. above): In marked contrast to the *darkness* found in evil ways (cf. example 30), THE GOOD WAY IS LIGHTED BY GOD'S WORD.

2.3.2. The Wicked

As well as characterising the *righteous* by metaphorically ascribing certain actions and attitudes to them, the JOURNEY model features a number of characteristics indicative of persons who lead *immoral* lives. The first one is a sort of "conservative" trait or "inertia", THE WICKED TROD THE OLD WAYS:

(45) Will you **keep the old way that the wicked have trod**?

(46) But my people [...] **have stumbled in their ways, in the ancient roads, and have gone into bypaths, not the highway**.

Example (46) not only suggests that the *old ways* or *ancient roads* are so decayed that they make the travellers *stumble*. It also expresses the notion that the immoral persons *wander off into bypaths*, instead of travelling on God's highway (cf. example 27 above). The simple reason for this is explained in the following examples (47, 48): THE WICKED ARE IGNORANT OF GOD'S WAY.

(47) There are those who rebel against the light, **who are not acquainted with its ways, and do not stay in its paths**.

Simple *lack of knowledge* alone would not be so bad. But the case is indeed worse with the really immoral, whom verse (48) characterises as *stubborn* in their ignorance: THE WICKED REFUSE TO BE INFORMED ABOUT GOD'S WAY.

(48) They [the wicked] say to God: 'Leave us alone! We do not desire to know ***your ways***.'

In the JOURNEY model, *speed* of movement alone is not good or an end in itself, but all depends on the direction the runners take. So while we found travellers in a hurry on God's path (cf. examples 41 and 42), runners can also race for bad directions on wicked ways as in the next example (49), where THE WICKED RUN TO EVIL:

(49) My child, ***do not walk in their way, keep your foot from their paths; for their feet run to evil***, and they hurry to shed blood.

Finally, there is even some kind of indirect contact between the good and the bad parties, in which the latter take the evil-minded initiative, THE WICKED LAY TRAPS FOR THE RIGHTEOUS:

(50) ***In the path where I walk they have hidden a trap for me***.

Having acquainted ourselves with the human actors in the metaphorical JOURNEY model, we can now turn to what must be the most important figure in the whole scenario: God.

2.4. God's Role

It goes without saying that God has an essential part in the religious concept of the good life. Here we will only investigate the role ascribed to God as an agent in our metaphorical scenario. Before we enter into the by now well-known dichotomous pattern displayed also by God's different attitudes and actions towards the two kinds of travellers, we can start with one divine feature relevant to every person irrespective of their ethical conduct: GOD OBSERVES ALL HUMAN WAYS.

(51) Does he [God] not ***see my ways, and number all my steps***?

(52) For ***his eyes are upon the ways of mortals, and he sees all their steps***.

(53) I keep your precepts and decrees, for ***all my ways are before you***.

(54) For ***human ways are under the eyes of the Lord, and he examines all their paths***.

There is no way of hiding from the divine observer, whose supernatural powers enable him to keep track of the movements of every single mortal traveller *sub specie aeternitatis*. But God's role is not only that of an all-perceiving spectator. He is also conceptualised as an agent who takes different action towards the righteous and towards the wicked. The two sides of this dichotomy are not developed symmetrically in the corpus, noticeably more concern being given to God's relation with the morally good travellers.

2.4.1. Supporting the Righteous

The general attitude of God towards the righteous is one of supportive action. Even the passive, neutral observation described above changes into a committed *watch* where good, righteous travellers are concerned, GOD WATCHES OVER THE RIGHTEOUS' WAY:

(55) For the Lord *watches over the way of the righteous*, but *the way of the wicked will perish*.

(56) *You search out my path* and my lying down, and are acquainted with all *my ways*.

As knowledge of the one and only good way does not come naturally to the mortal travellers, God becomes actively involved as a *teacher* of those willing to listen, GOD TEACHES THE RIGHTEOUS HIS WAY:

(57) He will teach them *the way that they should choose*.

(58) He made known *his ways* to Moses [...]

(59) Make me to know *your ways*, O Lord; teach me *your paths*.

We saw above (cf. example 48) that the wicked are characterised by a stubborn refusal to pay heed to this kind of teaching. As this may also apply to many human leaders of various political or religious persuasions, who often prove insufficient and rather *misleading* their people (60), God himself acts as *guide* on the path of life (61), GOD IS THE GUIDE:

(60) O my people, *your leaders mislead you, and confuse the course of your paths*.

(61) *He* [God] *will be our guide forever*.

Example (61) again contains a glimpse of the metaphysical, in that no human leader could do his guiding work *forever*, but God can. As guide to the righteous, GOD LEADS THE RIGHTEOUS:

(62) *He leads me in right paths*.

(63) *Some wandered in desert wastes, finding no way to an inhabited town. [...] He led them by a straight way, until they reached an inhabited town*.

In his role of guide and leader of the righteous, God's support is close and caring, in fact GOD HOLDS THE RIGHTEOUS BY THE HAND:

(64) *Our steps are made firm by the Lord, when he delights in our way; though we stumble, we shall not fall headlong, for the Lord holds us by the hand*.

While we witnessed the wicked walking in metaphorical *darkness* (cf. examples 30 and 47 above), God's leading of the righteous delivers them from such unpleasant circumstances, GOD BRINGS THE RIGHTEOUS OUT OF DARKNESS:

(65) *He brought them out of darkness and gloom* [...]

Sometimes, God has a divine messenger do the leading job for the righteous, GOD LETS HIS GOOD SPIRIT LEAD THEM:

(66) *Let your good spirit lead me on a level path.*

In this example (66) the *level* character of the path (cf. examples 25 and 26 above) may be due merely to the supernatural leader's choice of way. But the following examples (67, 68) reveal the even more constructive part ascribed to God. At all times, GOD GUARDS THE PATH AND PRESERVES THE WAY:

(67) He [the Lord] is a shield to those who walk blamelessly, *guarding the paths of justice and preserving the way of his faithful ones.*

(68) *In all your ways* acknowledge him [God], and *he will make straight your paths.*

Thus even the *straightness* (68) of the paths travelled by the pious, which we already observed (cf. examples 18-20) above, is here conceptualised as a result of God's constructive activity to support the righteous.

2.4.2. Obstructing the Wicked

Although the corpus material is more scarce where God's relation with the wicked is concerned, the metaphorical model includes the conceptualisation of divine acts towards sinners. In general, GOD OBSTRUCTS THE WAYS OF THE WICKED, as in the following examples:

(69) He [God] has *walled up my way so that I cannot pass*, and he has *set darkness upon my paths.*

(70) *Let their way be dark and slippery, with the angel of the Lord pursuing them.*

In these verses, God's obstructive activity is specified as putting *obstacles* in the sinners' ways (69), setting *darkness* upon their path (69, 70, cf. also example 30 above), or even having another heavenly messenger, his angel, *pursue* them (70). All these actions, though they seem to display an unfair hostility on God's part, may be taken as divine attempts to prevent the travellers from making progress on ways that are clearly wicked, attempts to make them stop their immoral conduct.

2.5. Reflections of the JOURNEY Model in the New Testament

While so far we have investigated the JOURNEY model of the good life as instantiated by metaphorical expressions in the Old Testament of the Bible, we will conclude with a short look at some interesting reflections of this model from the New Testament. The final examples (71-74) are all taken from sermons or speeches of Jesus.

(71) They [the Pharisees] are *blind guides of the blind. And if one blind person guides another, both will fall into a pit.*

Here we have an argument that can be seen as a metaphorical elaboration of the criticism expressed in example (60) above: The reason why human (religious) leaders are so often

found to be *misleading* their peoples is their lack of even the most rudimentary of qualifications for such a job: they are *blind*. This is why the human travellers are in need of more inspired guidance, provided by either God the father himself or now by Jesus. Taking over the role of metaphorical guide, Jesus describes some interesting details of the PATH missing from the Old Testament's account:

- (72) ***Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the road is easy that leads to destruction, and there are many who take it. For the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life, and there are few who find it.***

This sermon keeps up the *good-bad* dichotomy known from the metaphors of the Old Testament as well as its moral imperative. The metaphorical reasoning accounts for the *difficulty* of finding and choosing the good way and, once found, keeping to it until successful completion of the journey. The good way that leads to eternal life is a *hard road* passing through a *narrow gate*. The characterisation of immoral conduct as *taking the easy road* through the *wide gate* somehow naturalises that way of life as the "default case". The metaphorical conceptualisation gives the good life-journey of the religious travellers some sort of "achiever" orientation, at the same time providing even stronger reason to rely on help from the divine guide.

Taking up the imagery of this example (72), the two final examples (73, 74) highlight even more the importance of Jesus, who presents himself (according to the Fourth Gospel) as the divine guide. In a most unusual elaboration of the JOURNEY metaphor, he depicts himself as the *gate* (73) or, in the famous passage from the "farewell discourse" (74), as the *way* itself:

- (73) ***I am the gate.*** Whoever *enters by me* will be saved, and will ***come in and go out and find pasture.***
- (74) [Jesus speaks]"And you know ***the way to the place where I am going.***" Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "***I am the way***, and the truth, and the life. ***No one comes to the Father except through me.***"

There is a strong sense of dissonance in these examples.¹² How can the *guide* at the same time figure as the *path* (74), or a salient part of it (73)? Surely the importance of Jesus for the believer is highlighted by these statements. But it may be that the conceptual dissonance is an intended one, the violation of ordinary metaphorical coherence hinting at the metaphysical, and indeed supernatural character of the whole enterprise of the religious life. This is a question that metaphor analysis will have to leave for theologians to tackle.

3. Conclusions: Feedback on the Theory

¹² Cf. Turner (1990 and 1993).

We have now provided a cognitive-semantic analysis of a religious folk model or theory of the good life. This folk theory approaches by means of metaphorical conceptualisation such fundamental human issues and perennial questions as the following: What is the meaning of life and death? Is there a reason for hope? What is the relationship between human beings and God? (Does he care?) Are there general rules for moral conduct? All in all, these issues converge in the question "What is the good life?", which the metaphorical folk theory answers from a religious perspective.

Thus, our analysis in terms of conceptual metaphors may go some way towards a better understanding of religious reasoning. But we will now turn back to the central tenets of the Cognitive Theory of Metaphor as explained above (see section 1.1.) to see if they stand up in the light of the empirical evidence. In this, we will pay particular attention to the predictions made in section 1.2. above.

3.1. Hypotheses Corroborated

Most of the theoretical tenets of the cognitive approach to metaphor are in fact corroborated by our empirical findings. Though the presentation in section 2 could only feature a relatively small excerpt of the whole biblical corpus, the *ubiquity hypothesis* (1.) as well as our prediction derived from the *necessity hypothesis* (7.) can be confirmed. Linguistic metaphors were found to be abundant in the texts investigated, even though most of the latter would not be classified as overt similes, parables, or other sorts of "excessive rhetoric". The fact that metaphorical expressions like those analysed above constitute the ordinary biblical ways of expressing central religious ideas strongly suggests that the ubiquity of linguistic metaphors is here due to the necessity of metaphorical conceptualisation.

Our investigation also revealed a high degree of systematicity in the linguistic metaphors. Not only could the semantic motivation of many metaphorical expressions be accounted for by reconstructing the underlying conceptual metaphors. These conceptual metaphors also fitted neatly into the overall gestalt structure of a cognitive or cultural model of LIFE AS A JOURNEY with its inbuilt *good-bad* dichotomy. Thus, both the *domain hypothesis* (2.) and the *model hypothesis* (3.) are clearly corroborated by our results.

We collected ample evidence of the systematic linkage between the two domains LIFE and JOURNEY, the first functioning as target domain with the second supplying the source domain of the metaphorical mapping. Being much less complex and much more concrete than the explanandum of THE GOOD LIFE, the domain of TRAVELLING provides a good explanans. And of course, not only was the corpus investigated devoid of any examples of a reversal of source and target domain, but such a reversal of direction seems indeed more than unlikely. Surely it is at the most a theoretical possibility to talk about simple *travelling* in terms of *life, death, hereafter, moral choice, or God*. In short, the *unidirectionality hypothesis* (5.) and its predictions were confirmed to hold true of the metaphors investigated.

One further aspect of the necessity of metaphors in religious discourse is the issue expressed in the *creativity hypothesis* (8.), which is also corroborated by our investigation. Though all the linguistic examples were accounted for by assigning them to systematic conceptual metaphors forming coherent parts of an overall cognitive model, most of the metaphorical expressions would indeed be very hard if not impossible to paraphrase literally without loss. The meaning of particular metaphorical expressions in religious contexts may be characterised as either too rich or too vague to yield to simple paraphrase. The choice between the two probably depends on one's religious persuasion as much as on one's personal appreciation of metaphor as a linguistic and conceptual tool.

3.2. The Invariance Hypothesis

One of the most general tenets of the cognitive approach has not yet been mentioned in this conclusion. As a matter of fact, in contrast to the other tenets of the theory, the *invariance hypothesis* (6.) appears not to be borne out by the data. According to the hypothesis, the structures mapped from the source domain JOURNEY to the target domain LIFE should be that of the PATH schema which is at the heart of the JOURNEY domain. To show why this claim seems problematic, we will compare the actual mapping found in our analysis of the religious JOURNEY model to that found in non-religious applications of the same conceptual metaphor.

In fact, LIFE IS A JOURNEY constitutes one of the most general conceptual metaphors in ordinary everyday English. Detailed descriptions of this conventional metaphor are to be found in the cognitive-semantic literature.¹³ Here I will just provide some of the most important details of the general conceptual mapping, only exemplifying each conceptual metaphor by providing one single linguistic example.¹⁴

- (i) THE PERSON LEADING A LIFE IS A TRAVELLER: As we *travel down life's path* [...]
- (ii) PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS: He's *headed for* great things.
- (iii) MEANS FOR ACHIEVING PURPOSES ARE ROUTES: If this doesn't work, I'll *try a different route*.
- (iv) DIFFICULTIES ARE IMPEDIMENTS TO TRAVEL: He has *a rocky road ahead* of him.
- (v) COUNSELLORS ARE GUIDES: His mother *gave him guidance*.
- (vi) PROGRESS IS DISTANCE TRAVELLED: We've *come a long way*.

¹³ See Lakoff, Espenson, Goldberg & Schwartz (1994:36-37); cf. also Lakoff & Turner (1989:9-11, 60-65) as well as Turner (1990 and 1993).

¹⁴ All linguistic examples have been taken from Lakoff, Espenson, Goldberg & Schwartz (1994:36-37).

A comparison of these mapping details with our findings from the JOURNEY metaphor in religious discourse reveals a number of similarities as well as some striking differences. The similarities include the conceptualisation of THE PERSON LEADING A LIFE as A TRAVELLER (i), of DIFFICULTIES as IMPEDIMENTS TO TRAVEL (iv), and of COUNSELLORS as GUIDES (v), to name only the most important mappings. What could cause problems now for the invariance hypothesis is the fact that there is a number of central aspects of the PATH schema (see section 1.3. above) that appear not to be mapped in the religious application of the conceptual metaphor.

This concerns the central schematic element of spatial DISTANCE, which has no part in the religious model, whereas it conceptualises PROGRESS in the profane metaphor (vi). Also, the religious model has no need for any *stages*, physical *landmarks* or other *salient points* on the PATH to conceptualise target domain issues. Moreover, there are no *intermediate destinations* on the religious JOURNEY, but just *one* final GOAL on which the whole model focuses: (ETERNAL) LIFE IN GOD (cf. section 2.2.1. above). This is why conceptualisations of PURPOSES as DESTINATIONS (ii) or MEANS FOR ACHIEVING PURPOSES as ROUTES (iii), which are among the most common mappings within the profane version, have no part to play in the religious version of the JOURNEY model.

If image-schematic structure from the source domain was really always preserved in the metaphorical mapping to the target domain, differences like those observed here between the religious and the profane versions of the JOURNEY metaphor for LIFE should not occur. After all, both versions utilise the same source domain of TRAVELLING and the PATH schema that goes with it. If nevertheless mapping differences occur even within the small set of structural elements of the PATH schema, there must be something wrong with the invariance hypothesis.¹⁵

Apparently the target domain has a greater role to play in constraining the mapping than the invariance hypothesis admits. In our case, we have different ideas and knowledge about religious versus profane aspects of life.¹⁶ These differences in target domain knowledge must be responsible for the different "choices" made by the two models from the basic structure "on offer" from the PATH schema.

Thus, in the light of our empirical results we cannot confirm the invariance hypothesis. But does this mean that the hypothesis has been falsified? Probably that would be doing it too much honour. Judging by the diverse versions that are in circulation (e.g. Lakoff 1990, Brugman 1990, Turner 1990, Turner 1993, Lakoff 1993), the so-called "invariance

¹⁵ This goes at least for Lakoff's (1990:54) original version of the hypothesis. In Lakoff (1993:215), the hypothesis – despite being promoted to the status of "principle" – is in fact weakened almost beyond recognition.

¹⁶ Contrary to Turner's (1990 and 1993) view, this target domain knowledge itself is in most cases *not* of image-schematic nature. Certainly in the domain of the RELIGIOUS any image-schematic structure is imported via conceptual metaphor.

hypothesis" is simply too vague to be falsified empirically. Further reasons for this vagueness lie in the facts that the inventory of image-schemata is anything but agreed upon, and that not all image-schemata are as clearly delineated in their internal structure as the PATH schema.¹⁷ Different from the other hypotheses central to the cognitive approach, the "invariance hypothesis" is not an empirical hypothesis whatsoever. The Cognitive Theory of Metaphor would be better off without it.

Appendix: Sources of Linguistic Examples

The source of each example presented in this paper is provided by giving the biblical book plus the standard verse number. All quotes have been taken from the *New Revised Standard Version (Anglicized Edition)* of the Bible: Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press (1995).

- | | |
|------------------------|---------------------------|
| (1) Deuteronomy 5:33 | (38) Proverbs 2:20 |
| (2) Job 23:11 | (39) Proverbs 4:26-27 |
| (3) Genesis 18:19 | (40) Proverbs 15:21 |
| (4) The Psalms 119:35 | (41) The Psalms 119:32 |
| (5) The Psalms 119:10 | (42) The Psalms 119:59 |
| (6) Baruch 4:13 | (43) The Psalms 119:14-15 |
| (7) 2 Samuel 22:22 | (44) The Psalms 119:104-5 |
| (8) Judith 5:18 | (45) Job 22:15 |
| (9) Exodus 32:8 | (46) Jeremiah 18:15 |
| (10) Job 34:27 | (47) Job 24:13 |
| (11) Deuteronomy 11:28 | (48) Job 21:14 |
| (12) The Psalms 51:13 | (49) Proverbs 1:15-16 |
| (13) 1 Kings 13:33 | (50) The Psalms 142:3 |
| (14) Tobit 4:5 | (51) Job 31:4 |
| (15) The Psalms 119:30 | (52) Job 34:21 |
| (16) The Psalms 1:1 | (53) The Psalms 119:168 |
| (17) Jeremiah 2:36 | (54) Proverbs 5:21 |
| (18) Judith 13:20 | (55) The Psalms 1:6 |
| (19) Sirach 39:24 | (56) The Psalms 139:3 |

¹⁷ For a more comprehensive criticism of the invariance hypothesis, see Jäkel (1997), section 9.2. in particular.

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|------------------------|--------------------------|
| (20) Tobit 4:19 | (57) The Psalms 25:12 |
| (21) Judith 9:6 | (58) The Psalms 103:7 |
| (22) The Psalms 139:24 | (59) The Psalms 25:4 |
| (23) The Psalms 16:11 | (60) Isaiah 3:12 |
| (24) Proverbs 10:17 | (61) The Psalms 48:14 |
| (25) Proverbs 15:24 | (62) The Psalms 23:3 |
| (26) The Psalms 27:11 | (63) The Psalms 107:4-7 |
| (27) Isaiah 26:7 | (64) The Psalms 37:23-24 |
| (28) Isaiah 35:8-9 | (65) The Psalms 107:14 |
| (29) Proverbs 2:12-15 | (66) The Psalms 143:10 |
| (30) Jeremiah 23:12 | (67) Proverbs 2:7-8 |
| (31) Proverbs 15:19 | (68) Proverbs 3:6 |
| (32) Proverbs 22:5 | (69) Job 19:8 |
| (33) Proverbs 16:25 | (70) The Psalms 35:6 |
| (34) Sirach 21:10 | (71) Matthew 15:14 |
| (35) 1 Kings 2:4 | (72) Matthew 7:13 |
| (36) Job 17:9 | (73) John 10:9 |
| (37) The Psalms 17:4-5 | (74) John 14:4-6 |

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