

“I love thee, my God, with all my heart, soul and mind.”

Blending the Erotic and the Divine in Mystical Literature

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The Beginnings of Symbolic-Religious Cognition

Cognitive Archeology and Cognitive Fluidity: About 30,000 years ago (70,000 years after the fossil records of the anatomically modern human), religious thought and symbolic conceptual activity arose from the capacity of integrating specific-domain a process called "cognitive fluidity" (Mithen 1996).

Metaphor, Anthropomorphism and Cognitive Science: Metaphor is a basic mental capacity by which people understand themselves and the world around them through conceptual mappings of knowledge between mental spaces, using everyday knowledge to reason about more abstract concepts. Of all the templates for supernatural concepts, the ones that seriously matter to people are invariably person-like, because people are the most complex type of object that people know (Boyer 2001).

Why God as an Erotic Lover?

Diffusion and elaboration of religious memes: To reason about the ties between divine and human, man looks at his repertoire of human relationships, and the more significant ones are used to explain and speak of *re-ligio*. There are many metaphors used to represent the relationship between the divinity and the devotee (father/child, doctor/patient, teacher/pupil, etc.) The most significant relationship chosen by the mystic in terms of balance is Lover-Beloved.

Blending between God and Lover: The idealized conceptual models of the Divinity/beloved and of a devotee/lover began to blend through composition, completion and elaboration. The concept of human love relationship of these ancient cultures probably needs to be re-evaluated by modern students if it had become such an entrenched concept to be used as a source for a cognitive input space.

Blending the Erotic and the Religious

Examples of erotic religious texts and emergent structure: Sir hassirim, or Song of Songs (Judeo-Christian); Jayadeva's Gita Govinda (Hindu); Rumi's Mathanawi (Islam). Strongly erotic in content, these are part of the canons of the respective religious traditions, and so have deeply influenced subsequent elaboration of the erotic symbolism. The lover (the faithful) and the Beloved (the Divinity) are usually on a par, and the domination of one is hardly ever present. Poetic descriptions include psychological states of jealousy, passion, separation and reunion, and ultimate union. The time of reunion is spring and the place is nature. What emerges is a relationship that not only unilaterally satisfies the material and spiritual needs of the religious person, but is reciprocal. In other words, the needs of both parties are fulfilled (devotee: food, explanations; god: praise, sacrifice). Moreover, due to the blend, an emotional need is also fulfilled. The dignity of the woman is finding her place in society, like the devotee finds his/her place in his/her creator's creation, and so their relationship must be lived in the same natural setting. Because of the fusion between counterpart input spaces, there is a completion that humanizes the divinity so it becomes a he, the Man, motivated by the dominating role. However the elaboration of the blend tends to eliminate any domination in the relationship, as the needs of both sides are equal, and only when they are united do they feel completely realized. Their place is in nature, at its most energetic and vibrant moment of springtime (ideally the time of life), and the time is eternal.