

The Concept of “Magic” in Religious Picture of The World

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Abstract:

The concept of “magic” in two different religions is portrayed and interpreted in a surprisingly similar way. Magic has long been in existence in all cultures and traditions; it has preserved its impacts and importance regardless of such significant changes as civilization, urbanization and globalization. People in all parts of the world have had faith in magical beliefs ever since. This work provides a clear understanding of how magic is represented in two religions with relevant examples from reliable religious sources.

Keywords: Magic, Religion, Portray, Prohibition, Witchcraft, Spell

Introduction

The concept of “magic” has proven that it has been in co-existence with people and has a range of phenomena for ages. Not only does magic settle in the areas and beliefs of mythology, folklore and traditions, but it plays a crucial role in religious beliefs as well. The idea of magic is a complicated, culturally charged phenomenon that lies at the nexus of language, religion, and thought.[1] Concepts are viewed as mental structures that encode culturally meaningful information and values within the paradigm of cognitive and cultural linguistics. Religious discourse's portrayal of magic reflects both deeper cognitive models that influence how people perceive supernatural happenings and theological ideas.[2] The Arabic name “sihr” and the English terms “sorcery” and “witchcraft” are examples of how the concept of magic has been primarily linked to prohibition, deceit, and resistance to divine power in both Islamic and Christian traditions. Within their various religious systems, classical scholars like Thomas Aquinas and Ibn Khaldun offer fundamental views of magic.[3] In his Muqaddimah, Ibn Khaldun acknowledges the presence of magic while highlighting its incompatibility with Islamic law: “Now, the sorcerer possesses his particular quality in potentiality, as is the case with all human powers. It is transformed (from potentiality) into actuality

by exercise. All magical exercise consists of directing oneself to the spheres, the stars, the higher worlds, or to the devils by means of various kinds of veneration and worship and submissiveness and humiliation.[4] Thus magical exercise is devotion, and adoration directed to beings other than God. Such devotion is unbelief. Therefore, sorcery is unbelief, or unbelief forms part of the substance and motives of sorcery, as has been seen. Consequently, (sorcerers must be killed). Jurists differ only as to whether they must be killed because of the unbelief which is antecedent to the practice of sorcery, or because of their corrupting activity and the resulting corruption of created beings”.[5] He views magic as a component of the “occult sciences” (of or characteristic of magical, mystical, or supernatural arts, phenomena, or influences). Similarly, Thomas Aquinas reinforces the primacy of divine cause in *Summa Theologiae* by interpreting magical events as either illusory or mediated by demonic forces.”It is a good thing to acquire knowledge, but it is not good to acquire it by undue means, and it is to this end that the magic art tends”.[6]

Modern scholars, including works by Ronald Hutton, further expand the understanding of magic as a socio-cultural and symbolic construct. Comparative cultural linguistics analyses that look at how the concept of magic is cognitively structured across religious traditions are still lacking, despite substantial theological disputes. This study attempts to examine how the idea of magic is represented in Islamic and Christian religions using a cognitive and linguocultural aspects.[7]

Methods

The current study uses a qualitative research design grounded in comparative linguistic cultural analysis. The fundamental religious texts—the Bible and the Qur’an—as well as traditional and recent scholarly research are included in the data corpus. Conceptual analysis, semantic field analysis, and the comparison technique are all integrated within the methodological framework.[8] Conceptual analysis is used to determine the central and peripheral aspects of the notion of magic and recreate its internal structure. The comparative approach makes it possible to find parallels and discrepancies between the representations of magic in Islamic and Christian discourses. The writings of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, especially their theory of conceptual metaphor—which holds that abstract concepts are structured through metaphorical mappings—provide theoretical foundation. In order to understand how religious language encodes cultural values and beliefs, the study also makes use of the notion of the “linguistic worldview” which was developed in cultural linguistics.[9]

Results

The research shows that the idea of magic is primarily organized around a collection of negatively marked semantic elements, such as deceit, illegitimate power, and moral transgression, in both Islamic and Christian traditions. The term “sihr” is commonly used in Islamic discourse to refer to actions that include manipulating perception or interacting with supernatural beings like jinn.[10] Magic is positioned within a moral and epistemological opposition to revelation in Qur’anic narratives, especially those involving prophetic people, which portray magic as a deceitful force that questions divine reality. Similar ideas about magic as an unapproved means of gaining supernatural power—often connected to demonic influence—can be found in Christian writings. According to Thomas Aquinas’ theological perspective, magical powers rely on either illusion or the influence of bad spirits rather than being autonomous. This is consistent with the larger Christian focus on the uniqueness of divine miracles.[11]

Internal variance within each tradition is also revealed by the results. While some Islamic scholars believe “sihr” to be purely psychological or illusory, others believe it to have a limited amount of actual potency. Similarly, Christian belief has always wavered between seeing magic as a physical manifestation of demonic activity and as nothing more than superstition. From a cognitive standpoint, these differences show that different conceptual models coexist in every religious system.[12]

Discussion

The findings demonstrate how deeply ingrained magic is in the theological and cognitive frameworks of both Islamic and Christian faiths. Both traditions reinforce the primacy of monotheistic belief systems by creating a binary contrast between illegitimate power (magic) and divine power (miracle). Conceptual metaphor theory, which contrasts divine truth and enlightenment with magic figuratively presented as deception, darkness, or false knowledge, might be used to analyze this conflict.[13] The viewpoints of Thomas Aquinas and Ibn Khaldun show how religious academics try to reconcile doctrinal ideas with the seeming existence of supernatural experiences. Their interpretations are part of a larger cognitive strategy that uses moral and theological values to classify and regulate ambiguous occurrences.[14] Additionally, from a linguistic cultural perspective, the idea of magic serves as a symbolic border marker that distinguishes between knowledge and practices that are acceptable and those that are not. Ronald Hutton pointed out that views about magic are frequently influenced by historical and social settings, which affect how such acts are viewed and governed. As a result, the idea of magic is dynamic and changes in response to intellectual and cultural developments.[15]

Conclusion

In conclusion, a complex interaction between theology, language, and cognition is revealed by how the idea of magic is portrayed in both Islamic and Christian religions. Although there is internal variation in interpretation, both traditions view magic as a negatively characterized phenomenon connected to deceit and resistance to divine power. The study shows how culturally specific cognitive models and metaphorical patterns create the concept of magic, making it an important subject of study in cultural and cognitive linguistics. These results emphasize the value of comparative methods in exposing both universal and culturally particular aspects of conceptualization and advance our understanding of how abstract religious ideas are expressed in language. In order to better understand the cognitive processes underpinning the depiction of supernatural phenomena, future study may expand this investigation to different linguistic and cultural situations.

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