

**COGNITIVE APPROACH TO RELIGION: A CASE STUDY IN J. FOWLES’  
‘THE ARISTOS’****Heghine Isahakyan**

PhD, Associate Professor,

M. Nalbandyan State University of Shirak

P. Sevak 4, 3126, Gyumri, Armenia,

+37494147926, isahakyan1976@gmail.com,

<https://orcid.org/0009-0007-2400-6465>

**Abstract.** The aim of this article is to study the concept of ‘religion’ in J. Fowles’ ‘The Aristos’ via conceptual metaphors. ‘The Aristos’ is a book of philosophical essays where the author expresses his ideas about different concepts, ponders on crucial issues of human life, such as ‘god’, ‘religion’, ‘death’, ‘life’, ‘money’, ‘wealth’ and many others. Conceptual metaphor is an essential tool for the writer to express his views, as it allows him to highlight those features of the concept which, according to him, characterize the concept best.

In the philosophical essay ‘The Aristos’ religion occupies a distinct position through which the author’s unique world perception is expressed. The study revealed that religion can be stated through the following conceptual metaphors: Religion is a Necessity; Religion is a Reaction to Historical Predicament; Religion is a Reaction to an Environment; Religious Faith is a Mystery/Riddle; Religion is the Satisfaction of the Thirst for Mystery.

**Keywords:** Cognitive approach, Concept, Religion, J. Fowles, Aristos

**INTRODUCTION**

In recent decades, linguistics has experienced a number of qualitative changes in connection with the development of cognitivism, the object of which is the human mind, thinking and the mental processes that are associated with it. A new direction has developed in linguistics - Cognitive Linguistics, the purpose of which is to try to understand how the processes of perception, categorization, classification and understanding of the world are carried out, how knowledge is accumulated. Interacting with the surrounding reality, a person develops an idea of the world, a certain model is formed - a picture of the world. The concept of ‘picture of the world’ is one of the central concepts in Cognitive Linguistics, since it is in the picture of the world that the subjective image of objective reality created by a person is captured.

According to V.I. Postovalova, ‘the picture of the world, is not a mirror reflection of the world and not an open ‘window’ to the world, but a picture, i.e. interpretation, the act of understanding the world. It depends on the prism through which the worldview is made ‘ (Постовалова, 1988:48). The picture of the world contains the features of its creator and, above all, the dynamism of his worldview. The picture of the world is changing. It is not constant even within the life of one person. At the same time, despite the variability and changeability, it simultaneously contains elements of universality that ensure mutual understanding of people, otherwise communication between people would be completely impossible, since communication is based on the presence of some elements of a common understanding, a common view of things among the speakers (Серебрянников, 1988).

According to modern ideas, there are two pictures of the world - linguistic and conceptual. As a result of the interaction of thinking, reality and language as a means of expressing thoughts about the surrounding reality, a linguistic picture of the world arises. It is language that allows us to obtain a complete and adequate understanding of human consciousness. It is language that provides access to consciousness and thought processes, because language records how a person perceives the world and reflects it in his consciousness.

The linguistic picture of the world is closely related to the conceptual system. We understand the conceptual system as that mental level where the totality of all concepts given to the human mind is concentrated. The concept as a unit of thinking, as a quantum of structured knowledge, is the basis of the linguistic picture of the world. The study of the conceptual structure of language is most

relevant within the framework of Cognitive Linguistics. Cognitive Linguistics develops methods and techniques for studying a conceptual system based on key concepts. The clearest methodology for describing a concept is conceptual analysis, which involves establishing meanings under one sign.

E.S. Kubryakova believes that conceptual analysis allows us to begin to study the conceptual structure of a language, leading to understanding the world in terms of concepts. It also allows one to penetrate into the secrets of linguistic consciousness, since “concepts are ideal units of consciousness that form part of the general conceptual model of the world” (Кубрякова, 1991:89). Conceptual analysis has points of contact with semantic analysis, but it has different ultimate goals. If semantic analysis is aimed at identifying the semantic structure of a word, clarifying its denotative and connotative meanings, then conceptual analysis appears as a search for those general concepts that are subsumed under one sign of the cognitive structure. Semantic analysis is associated with the explanation of the word, conceptual analysis leads to knowledge about the world (Кубрякова, 1991:85). At the same time, R. Langacker argues that conceptual analysis is a logical continuation of semantic analysis; it involves the arrangement of information carried out by means of conceptual models, the elements of which, as well as the connections between them, are the essence of a conceptual generalization of the categorical plan (Langacker, 1987).

The concept can be studied at the lexical, phraseological, syntactic levels, as well as at the text level. Of course, the most productive means of studying and describing a concept is text. In this regard, a methodology for conceptual text analysis is being developed. In itself, conceptual analysis of a text is the identification and interpretation of the basic concepts of a particular literary work. The problem of conceptual analysis of a text is the problem of how to isolate, describe and present the author’s unique worldview, embedded in the mind in the form of a conceptual system and expressed materially in the form of text. The study of the conceptual structure of the text appears as a counter movement from the concept to the keyword and from the word and phraseology in a complex system of text to the concept. The key concept is the core of the individual author’s artistic picture of the world. Any literary work embodies the author’s individual way of perceiving and organizing the world (Бабенко, 2004). Worldview, the author’s picture of the world in the author’s mind is presented in the form of a system of concepts, in the form of key concepts and images (Пищальникова, 2001).

Cognitive metaphorical models can be means for conceptual analysis. A cognitive metaphorical model is a cognitive process that ensures the transference of figurative schemes from one sphere to another, i.e. metaphorization is based on the process of interaction between the knowledge structures of two conceptual domains – the source sphere and the target sphere (Lakoff, 2003). In a conceptual metaphor, typically the target domain represents a more abstract concept, while the source domain represents a more concrete concept. The product of metaphor becomes a new conceptual space, which structurally arises from the interaction of the source and target spaces, but at the same time has its own conceptual existence, allowing it to develop and acquire new associations independently of its prototypes (Fauconnier & Terner, 2006).

Conceptual metaphor appears in all aspects of human life. The basic source of knowledge is human experience. However, conceptual metaphor not only reproduces fragments of social experience, it largely shapes this experience. New metaphors have the ability to create a new reality, change the conceptual system, as well as the ideas and actions it generates (Lakoff, 2003:142-143). This point of view is also shared by A.P. Chudinov: “Metaphor can be a powerful means of reconceptualizing public consciousness, i.e. changes in the system of basic ideas of the people about themselves, about their country and their role in its development” (Chudinov, 2001: 227).

Metaphor not only forms an idea of an object, it also predetermines the way and style of thinking (Постовалова, 1988). Metaphors always contain a certain personal element, and therefore they uniquely reflect the world of a given person (Добржинская, 2000: 535).

Thus, the conceptual metaphors embedded in the author’s text are a reflection of his personal picture of the world, his individual vision of the world. That is why the study of individual author’s conceptual metaphors opens the way to the author’s consciousness, to those mental formations that may not have been realized by the author himself. As G. Gasparyan rightly notes in this regard, a cognitive or conceptual metaphor within the framework of a literary text acquires an individual author’s component in the conceptualization of current reality, since the conceptual picture of a work of art becomes a picture of the author’s world, it includes a personal component and is partially

actualized in the metaphor, which in turn, takes part in the formation of the author's linguistic personality (Gasparyan, 2010).

## METHODS

This is a case study based on a specific study of the concept "religion" in a concrete writer's work. Other methods implemented in this article are: conceptual analysis, method of descriptive analysis, cognitive metaphorical models.

## DISCUSSION

### THE CONCEPT OF "RELIGION" ACTUALISED IN J.FOWLES' "THE ARISTOS"

"The Aristos" is a book of philosophical essays written by an outstanding British writer and philosopher, J. Fowles. In the book, the author expresses his ideas about different concepts, crucial issues of human life, such as "god", "religion", "death", "life", "money", "wealth" and many others. Conceptual metaphor is an essential tool for the writer to express his views, as it allows him to highlight those features he wants to draw attention to. This article will concentrate on the conceptual analysis of the concept of "religion" via conceptual metaphor.

*A religion is a specific reaction to an environment, a historical predicament; and therefore always in some sense inadequate to those who live in different environments and predicaments (Aristos, 1981: 98).*

The categorization of the concept "religion" in the author's conceptual picture of the world is embodied through the conceptual metaphor *A religion is a specific reaction, response to an environment, to a historical predicament*, in other words religion is inevitability dictated by historical events, difficulties and the corresponding environment. This can be understandable by people living in another environment. The idea is revealed and developed in subsequent segments of the text.

*After Platonism, and surrounded by the puerilities of the debased classical religion of the later Roman civilization, Mediterranean man was bound to develop a monotheistic and ethically inclined counter-religion. A Kind of Jesus and a kind of Christianity was as inevitable as was a kind of Marx and Marxism in the later stages of the Industrial revolution (Aristos, 1981:102).*

In order to express his thoughts more impressively, the author uses an extended simile (*a kind of Jesus and a kind of Christianity was inevitable as was a kind of Marx and Marxism in the later stages of the Industrial revolution*) where Christ and Christianity are compared with Marx and Marxism. Here, special attention should be paid to the combination *a kind of*. It is used with the nouns Jesus (a kind of Jesus) and Christianity (a kind of Christianity). The inevitability dictated by the situation and circumstances is expressed precisely by these phrases. Someone like Christ was needed to create a monotheistic (one-God) religion in the era of the collapse of the classical Romance religion, just as someone like Marx was needed in the last stages of the industrial revolution. J. Fowles believes that the creation of Christ and Christianity were a necessity dictated by the historical circumstances, in the same way he believes that Marx and Marxism were inevitable for another period of time.

Further, J. Fowles develops this idea.

*Humanity is like a tall building. It needs stages after stages of scaffolding. Religion after religion, philosophy after philosophy; One cannot build the twentieth floor from the scaffolding of the first. The great religions prevent the Many from looking and thinking. The world would not at once be a happier place if they looked and they thought; but this is no defense of dogmatic religions (Aristos, 1981:102).*

In this paragraph, the author again resorts to simile to actualize the conceptual information *Humanity is like a tall building*. Humanity is compared to a tall building. If you build the twentieth floor from the scaffolding of the first floor, then it will immediately fall down. Likewise, mankind needs stages to develop. An indicator of gradualness is the preposition *after*, which is repeated three times in this paragraph (stages after stages of scaffolding, religion after religion, philosophy after philosophy). So humanity needs religion after religion, philosophy after philosophy. It is noteworthy that J. Fowles uses the noun "Many" with a capital letter and with the definite article (*the Many*), most likely to give the majority even more significance. Despite the author's neutral attitude towards religion, he also sees its positive side. The author believes that the main merit of religion is that it prevents the Many from looking and thinking (*The great religions prevent the Many from looking and*

*thinking*). This means that if there were no religions, the knowledge of many substances could be devastating for mankind, since knowledge must be gained gradually, it should be “digested” little by little. However, J. Fowles is against dogmatic religions, since he believes that dogma is a reaction to a specific situation, and not to all situations.

*A dogma is a form of reaction to a special situation; it is never an adequate reaction to all situations (Aristos, 1981: 98).*

Further, J. Fowles goes deeper into the essence of religion in the following passages of the text.

*Religious faith: mystery. Rational faith: law. The fundamental nature of reality is mysterious – this is a scientific fact. In basing themselves on mystery, religions are more scientific than rational philosophies. But there are mysteries and masteries; and Christianity has foolishly tried to particularize the fundamental mystery. The essential and only mystery is the nature of what the Christians call God or Providence. But the church, has introduced a fairground of pseudo-mysteries, which have no relation to truth, but only to the truth that mystery has power (Aristos, 1981:103).*

Here we should pay attention two conceptual metaphors: Religious Faith is a Mystery/Riddle and Rational Faith is a Law. In the conceptual metaphor Religious Faith is a Mystery/Riddle, the conceptual core is the noun “*mystery*”. The conceptual information is grounded on the secret that forms the whole context. The nature of reality is fundamentally mysterious. Based on mystery, religions are more scientific than rational philosophies. However, J. Fowles finds that the church introduces many pseudo-mysteries that are not related to truth as such. The most important thing is that mystery has power, which is the basis of religion. At the climax, the author summarizes the idea by focusing his attention to the nature of what the Christians call God or Providence which is the essential and only mystery in Christianity. Further, the author delves into the essence of the mystery.

*Yet man is starved of mystery: so starved that even the most futile enigmas have their power still. If no one will write new detective stories, then people will still read the old ones. Virgin birth makes Jesus unique; the mystery of this impudent uniqueness is so pleasurable that we cannot resist it (Aristos, 1981:103).*

The secret has power, energy, which a human being constantly needs. The conceptual information here is actualized by the participle “*starved*”, which is repeated in the amplifying construction *so starved that that even the most futile enigmas have their power*. Hence, humans will always need a religion based on mystery. The riddle, the mystery of the Christian faith, originally comes from the virgin birth of Jesus.

*For every Christian who believes in all the dogma of this church, there are a thousand who half believe because they feel a man should believe in something. If the old religions survive, it is because they are convenient receptacles of the desire to believe; and because they are, though poor ones, ports; and because they at least try to satisfy the hunger for mystery. All the old religions cause a barbarous waste of moral energy; ramshackle water mills on a river that could serve hydro-electric dynamos. (Aristos, 1981:104).*

And only in the climax of the utterance the concept of “*religion*” finds its explicit reflection. Religion is based on faith. The verb “*believe*” actualizes the conceptual information. Man inherently believes that he must believe in something, because faith has tremendous power. Due to anaphoric repetition of the conjunction because (because they feel a man should believe in something, because they are convenient receptacles of the desire to believe; because they are, though poor ones, and because they at least try to satisfy the hunger for mystery) and by syntactic parallelism the author creates an emotional intensity. The last and concluded sentence is expressed by another conceptual metaphor Religion is the Satisfaction of the Thirst for Mystery.

### Conclusion

Thus, in the philosophical essay “The Aristos” religion occupies a distinct position through which the author’s unique world perception is expressed. Religion can be stated through the following conceptual metaphors: Religion is a Necessity; Religion is a Reaction to Historical Predicament; Religion is a Reaction to an Environment; Religious Faith is a Mystery/Riddle; Religion is the Satisfaction of the Thirst for Mystery.



In fact, the author's picture of the world referring to religion is stated via the given conceptual metaphors, which completely illustrate his attitude towards religion and faith. He does not blindly believe in the essence of religion, Christianity, the church or its dogmas, however, he sees true mystery in the nature of what Christianity calls God or Providence, and this means that he does not deny that supernatural power still has power over human beings who strive for mystery. He argues that Christianity was a necessity at the time of its creation to transfer from polytheism to monotheism. The basis of Christianity is mysterious in itself - the Virgin birth makes Jesus unique. Moreover, people want to believe in something especially in mystery. Hence, religion becomes a means of satisfaction of the thirst of mystery.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY:

- Fauconnier G., Turner M. (2006). *Mental Spaces: Conceptual Integration Networks // Cognitive Linguistics: Basic Readings / Ed. by Dirk Geeraerts/*. Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co. KG, – pp. 303 - 371.
- Fowles J. (1981). *The Aristos / Revised by the Author*. London: Triad Grafton Books. – 256 p.
- Lakoff G., Johnson M. (2003). *Metaphors we Live by (Reprinted Version)*. Chicago: University of Chicago. Press,. – 276 p.
- Langacker R. W. (1987). *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar. Theoretical Prerequisites*. Stanford, Vol. 1. – 540 p.
- Бабенко Л. Г., Казарин Ю.В. (2004). *Филологический анализ текста. Основы теории, принципы и аспекты анализа*. М.: Флинта: Наука . – 462 с.
- Добжинская Т.(2000). «Мой интимный маленький мир» и поэтические способы концептуализации: метафора // *Слово в тексте и словаре: Сборник статей*. М.: Языки русской культуры. – С. 529 - 537.
- Гаспарян Г. (2010). Предлог как элемент метафоризации концепта «дом» в рассказе У Сарояна «My Home, My Home» // *Լեզուն և գրականությունը գիտական իմացության ժամանակակից հարացույցում (գիտական հոդվածների ժողովածու)*, Երևան, «Լուսակն» հրատ., №2. – С. 64 - 73.
- Пищальникова В.А., Лукашевич Е. В. (2001). *Когнитивизм как новая методология семантических исследований // Когнитивные исследования в языковедении и зарубежной психологии: Хрестоматия*. Барнаул: Алт. ун. – С. 5 - 34.
- Постовалова В. И. (1988.) *Картина мира в жизнедеятельности человека // Роль человеческого фактора в языке: Язык и картина мира*. М.: Наука, – С. 8 – 69.
- Серебрянников Б.А. (1988). *Как происходит отражение картины мира в языке? // Роль человеческого фактора в языке: Язык и картина мира*. М.: Наука, – С. 87 - 107.
- Чудинов А. П.( 2001). *Россия в метафорическом зеркале: когнитивное исследование политической метафоры (1991-2000): Монография*. Екатеринбург: УГУ. – 238 с.

#### REFERENCES:

- Fauconnier G., Turner M. (2006). *Mental Spaces: Conceptual Integration Networks // Cognitive Linguistics: Basic Readings / Ed. by Dirk Geeraerts/*. Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co. KG, – Pp. 303 - 371.
- Fowles J. (1981). *The Aristos / Revised by the Author*. London: Triad Grafton Books. – 256 p.
- Lakoff G., Johnson M. (2003). *Metaphors we Live by (Reprinted Version)*. Chicago: University of Chicago . Press,. – 276 p.
- Langacker R. W. (1987). *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar. Theoretical Prerequisites*. Stanford, Vol. 1. – 540 p.
- Babenco L. G., Kazarin Yu.V. (2004). *Filologicheskij analiz teksta. Osnovy teorii, principy i aspekty analiza. [Phylogological Aanalysis of the Text. Basic theory, principles and aspects of analysis]* М.: Flinta: Nauka . – 462 s.
- Dobzhinskaya T.(2000). «Moj intimnyj malenkij mir» i poeticheskie sposoby konceptualizacii: metafora .[ “My intimate little world” and poetic methods of

- conceptualization: metaphor*]// Slovo v tekste i slovare: Sbornik statej M.: Yazyki russkoj kultury. – S. 529 - 537.
- Gasparyan G.( 2010). Predlog kak element metaforizacii koncepta «dom» v rasskaze U Saroyana «My Home, My Home»[ Preposition as an Element of Metaphorisation of the Concept «home» in Saroyan's «My Home, My Home»] / Lezown & grakanow'tyowny' gitakan imacow'tyan jhamanakacic haracowycowm (gitakan hodvac'neri jhoghovac'ow), Erevan, «Lowsakn» hrat., №2. – S. 64 - 73.
- Pishalnikova V.A., Lukashevich E. V.( 2001). Kognitivizm kak novaya metodologiya semanticheskikh issledovanij [*Cognitivism as a new methodology of semantic research*] // Kognitivnye issledovaniya v yazykovedenii i zarubezhnoj psihologii: Hrestomatiya. Barnaul: Alt. un. – S. 5 - 34.
- Postovalova V. I. (1988.) Kartina mira v zhiznedeyatelnosti cheloveka [*The Picture of the World in a Human's Life*] // Rol chelovecheskogo faktora v yazyke: Yazyk i kartina mira. M.: Nauka, – S. 8 – 69.
- Serebrennikov B.A. (1988).Kak proishodit otrazhenie kartiny mira v yazyke? [*How is the picture of the world reflected in a language?*] // Rol chelovecheskogo faktora v yazyke: Yazyk i kartina mira M.: Nauka, – S. 87 - 107.
- Chudinov A. P.( 2001. Rossiya v metaforicheskom zerkale: kognitivnoe issledovanie politicheskoy metafory (1991-2000 ) [*Russia in a Metaphorical Mirror: Cognitive Studies of a Political Metaphor (1991-2000)*]: Monografiya. Ekaterinburg: UGU. – 238 s.