

UN CAZ PARTICULAR AL LIMBAJULUI RELIGIOS: LIMBAJUL 'NUMINOS' UTILIZAT DE RUDOLF OTTO

A PARTICULAR USE OF THE LANGUAGE OF RELIGION: RUDOLF OTTO'S LANGUAGE OF THE 'NUMINOUS'

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Abstract

The present article seeks to look closer at the language of religion and insight the language used, in particular, by Rudolf Otto in his hermeneutic writings. The research proceeds from the examination of varieties of religious language (liturgical, Biblical, the language of Biblical translations, the language of sermons, the language of theological discourse) as a preamble to the investigation which attempts to trace these varieties in the language used by Rudolf Otto in his complex writings. The study highlights the functional changes resulting from the differences concerning modality, medium and context of use. Due emphasis is given to the marked changes in the language of religion and its varieties caused by functional differences. The study traces down a few language varieties randomly taken from Otto's writing (Das Numinose betreffend), which account for descriptions, explanations of concepts, interpretative texts, commentarial notes, instructions, conversations among mystics, silent worship lines, simple and complex forms of prayer. The range of language functions and varieties used by Otto testifies to the textual and linguistic complexity of his writings.

Rezumat

Articolul present examinează limbajul religios, în general, și introspectează, în particular, limbajul utilizat de Rudolf Otto în scrierile sale hermeneutice. Studiul pronește de la examinarea varietăților limbajului religios (liturgic, biblic, al traducerilor textelor biblice, al slujbelor religioase și discursului teologic) drept preambul la investigația care încearcă să repereze varietățile de limbaj folosite de R. Otto. Studiul pune în lumină modificările funcționale care survin drept urmare a variațiilor ce privesc modalitatea, medium-ul și contextul de utilizare. O semnificație majoră este acordată modificărilor care apar în limbajul religios și varietățile acestuia drept consecință a deosebirilor funcționale. Studiul se oprește asupra unor varietăți lingvistice surprinse în mod arbitrar din scrierea lui Otto 'Despre numinos' și care reprezintă: descrieri, explicații ale unor concepte religioase, micro-texte interpretative, comentarii, conversații între mistici, versuri de rugăciune tăcută, forme ale unor rugăciuni mai simple și complexe. Paleta varietăților funcționale a limbajului precum și cea a celor lingvistice sunt mărturii ale complexității textuale și lingvistice a scrierilor lui Otto.

Key words: *language of religion, liturgical, biblical language, theological discourse, modality, medium, context of use, adaptation, lexical complexity and linguistic variety.*

Cuvinte cheie: *limbaj religios, liturgic, biblic, discurs teologic, modalitate, medium, context de utilizare, adaptare, complexitate și varietate lingvistică*

Introduction

The present paper aims to shed light on the language of religion used by Rudolf Otto in his religious, or rather hermeneutic, writings, and point out some of its distinctive features. As a prerequisite to the linguistic examination of the language used by R. Otto, the paper briefly outlines the sub-genres of the language of religion along with their specific backgrounds, functions, lexical and syntactic features, phonological, graphological markers, and semantic links. Otto's language is subservient to an extremely complex religious background and perspective on theological concepts. The language varieties used are suited to the functions that various text genres perform, such as: *descriptions, explanations of concepts, commentarial micro-texts, pieces of advice, incantations, conversations among mystics, silent worships, written texts read aloud by a person(the priest)*.

The language of religion

The language that is fairly classified as the *language of religion* is a special or specialized language. It is the kind of language used by a speech community for the expression of its beliefs on various occasions, most of which are public, and is, therefore, different from other languages used by other communities for different purposes. This language variety or designation covers several sub-genres: *liturgical language, biblical language, the language of biblical translation, the language of sermons, the language of theological discourse, the Book of Common Prayer (BCP)* and other forms, all defined by differences determined by their *context of use, form and function*. At a first glance, all these sub-genres, which use different language varieties, share many common characteristics: a great deal of vocabulary, biblical quotations, etc. We shall try to identify and isolate the characteristics of the *language of religious texts* and also insist on discriminative characteristics of the sub-genres mentioned above, i.e. on the aspects that would differentiate them. So for example, according to the Concise Oxford Dictionary [1], the *psalms* contained in the Book of Psalms are 'religious songs or sacred hymns set for metrical chanting in a service' and perform a different function from that of the common *prayer*, 'which is a solemn request or thanksgiving to God or to an object of worship, i.e. a formula used in praying. Similarly, the *sermon* is different linguistically speaking, since it is defined as 'a spoken or written discourse on a religious or moral subject, especially a discourse based on a text or passage of Scripture and delivered in a service by way of religious instruction or exhortation'[2].

The language of religion is not used for specific everyday conversation, but for specific community-related or personal religious activities (sermons, masses, common and individual prayers etc). Sometimes the language is so remote and unintelligible that it can be understood only by the initiated community. On rare occasions, a completely different language like Latin or Greek can be used for liturgical purposes, particularly by the Roman Catholic Church. In spite of the staleness of the older or very old versions, new versions emerged and entered the general use, co-existing alongside the older ones.

The older versions have become more significant linguistically for the community in which they have been customarily used, having become part of the community's 'linguistic consciousness'. Consequently, many biblical phrases have passed into general usage, such as "the sweat of your brow", 'prodigal son', etc. In addition, the style of these texts performs a *cultural function* and has a linguistic impact that exceeds the linguistic community in which it emerged and which it serves. In literature, the language of religion with its terminology and phraseology is used deliberately and evocatively to create specific effects. The use of a religious tone, grammar and vocabulary to recount a non-religious topic, for example, would create a comic effect.

In order to better understand religious language, particularly the theological one, we shall first examine succinctly the *liturgical variety* of this language, taking into account the *specific linguistic and cultural background* in which this language is used and which, reversibly, exerts constraints on the choice of forms used. First, this language makes use of quotations from some original writings, such as the Bible, the Book of Prayers etc, and it must, henceforth, conform to the *sacral* character retaining the sense of the original language of those inspiring texts. In addition,

there are traditional formulations for known beliefs, most of which have become familiar to people and are used by them. Second, the language variety conforms to the *medium* and *circumstances* (context) in which it is used. So, for example, the liturgical language is used for common public worship either by groups of people speaking together in a choir, or by individuals speaking to a congregation. Consequently, the language will contain such elements, both linguistic and sonorous, which will help the users thereof to perform the usual rituals. Third, constraints regarding the particular use of the language of religion arise from popular attitudes towards what is intelligible and appropriate. This means that the language must be accepted by the users or by a majority of users and satisfy their linguistic and cultural needs. The language must combine popular intelligibility and pronounceability with religious suitability, the dignity and formality of sacred texts. It must further reconcile the ordinary with the sacred. The tendency to make the language more intelligible, ie accessible and useful, and easier to pronounce by accepting changes represents an attempt to bring it closer to contemporary usage. The *adaptation* or making-it-more-accessible and useable process entails: a significant reduction in the number of *archaisms* used, paraphrasing of *theological terms*, and a tendency to simplify *sentence structure*.

The *Biblical language*, for example, as a sub-variety of the language of religion, is mainly represented by the Authorised Version (AV), which seeks to express sacral grandeur, piety, and wisdom in the 16th century English language. However, nowadays, this language, in spite of its *evocative character*, is mostly deemed to obscurity.

The language is entirely different from the one currently used. The excerpt below will shed light on the differences.

‘Matthew 13 (The New Testament)

2. And great multitudes were gathered together and sate vnto him, so that hee went into a ship, and sate, and the whole multitude stood on the shore...

11. He answered, and said vnto them, Because it is giuen vnto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heauen, but to them it is not giuen.

12. For whosoever hath, to him shall be giuen, and he shall haue more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away, euen that hee hath.

13. Therefore speake I to them in parables: because they seeing see not: and hearing, they heare not, neither doe they understand.’ [3]

Basically, the language used in the text is characterized through differences on the *phonological*, *graphological*, and *grammatical* (lexical and syntactic) levels. At the phonological and graphological levels a number of distinctive features surface, including the following: a constant rhythmical flow, a general slow rate of progression manifest in the break down of the text into smaller units, such as ‘verses’ and their separation through commas, the use of old forms and pronunciation (‘sate’ for ‘sat’, ‘sunne’ for ‘sun’ etc), the use of old writing forms (vpon, vp, Iesus etc), and a different use of punctuation (the use of commas and colons).

The first two levels of religious texts (phonetic/phonological and graphological) display significant *medium* and *modality differences* which stand for their contextual and functional differences.

The grammatical level strikes the modern reader through the features of the *verbal group*, whereby the major characteristics involve:

- the use the old 3rd person sg form ‘hath’ and ‘saith’
- the use of old strong forms of the verb (as in ‘spake’, ‘sprung’)
- the use of old, inflected 2nd person singular forms ‘ye’ and ‘thou’

- the inverted order for PS instead of SP
- the prevailing use of initial clause coordination achieved mainly through ‘and’.

The *lexical level* provides further examples of distinctiveness through the consistent use of *archaisms* (‘vnto’, ‘multitude’, ‘behold’ etc) and *technical religious terms*. The latter category includes terms such as ‘parables’, ‘prophecie’ etc.

It is assumed that these features of the biblical language have laid the basis and model for traditional religious language, which was further on consistently fostered by the influence of the *Book of Common Prayer (BCP)*. The latter accounts for the first attempt to adapt this language to the needs of a formalized liturgical language. However, the two forms of language have many features in common, in spite of the fact that they developed diachronically differently, which, at the same time, accounts for the differences. The language used in the BCP, which was normally spoken by one person, and is an example of written language read aloud, has varied to a certain extent diachronically due to the need to adapt the text to the convenience of a community who, then, uttered the text in unison. For this reason various versions have emerged, all attempting to modernize liturgical language and make it more accessible and usable to the praying congregation during the Mass. The language has mainly remained unaltered, but the repercussions of the functional difference, resulting from the differences in the modality and medium, called for by the particular *context of use*, have caused marked changes in the language. The liturgical texts which are read by the priest do not contain any special graphological marks, since the priest is well familiar with the text and has read it several times in advance. In contrast, an unexperienced reader may find it difficult to read it aloud with the congregation if no mnemonic clues, which could instruct him what words to emphasise or when to pause, are provided. Consequently, the use of paragraphing, spacing, capitalization along punctuation marks serves this purpose. In these texts periods normally coincide with major pauses and shorter pauses with commas, enabling the reader to move smoothly over the text knowing that after each point there will be a pause. From the linguistic point of view, each punctuation group is a prosodic unit, different from the tone-unit inherent to other varieties of spoken English. Between pauses, the rhythm of articulation is slow and regular. Most lexical units are given a strong stress.

Theological language is formal language marked mainly through the use of full forms, absence of contracted forms in auxiliaries, and by the use of such negative constructions as ‘leave us not’ instead of ‘do not leave us’. This language most often restricts itself to the use of the present tense, except for the cases when specific past events are referred to. Imperative forms have a high incidence and display two forms: one is that of imperatives which take nouns, and which, as a rule, are premodified (as in ‘Thou who takes away the sins of the world, receive our prayers. Thou who sittest at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us.’); the other is that of the imperatives which are quite often followed by complex constructions, particularly after main verbs like ‘grant’ (as in ‘Hear us, O merciful Father, we most humbly beseech thee; and grant that we receiving these, thy creatures of bread and wine, according to thy Son our Saviour Jesus Christ’s holy institution, in remembrance of his death and passion, may be partakers of his most blessed Body and Blood...’)(Prayer of Consecration at the Communion)[4].

The vocabulary of the language of religion also displays distinctive features. Just like legal language, this register contains a large number of *archaisms*. These, however, include two kinds of words: words whose referents have no synchronic correlates in contemporary language experience (such as: ‘Pharisee’, ‘centurion’, ‘denarius’), and words, which are not used any more, but where the referents still exist, and for which more synonyms are at hand (as in: ‘whither’, ‘onto’, ‘creatures’ etc). The number of archaisms used in a religious text depends on whether the text has been adapted to more contemporary use or not. Still, there is another kind of words, related to archaisms, whose meaning is derived from a historical situation (which includes persons, places or actions) that really existed at the time when the words were first used. This category includes such words as: ‘the cross’, ‘his death and passion’ and ‘Virgin Mary’(existent in the previous quotation).

Beside archaisms, just like any other language, particularly that of science, the language of religion impresses through the wealth of specialized terms, in this case, *theological terms*. Their role is paramount, since they form the verbal basis for the shared beliefs and religious experiences.

Regardless of the particular sub-register used, whether liturgical, Biblical or otherwise, the semantic structure of the language of religion relies on a focal item which is the term 'God', from which all other items derive, as in:

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, who of thy tender mercy didst give thine only Son Jesus Christ to suffer death upon the cross for our redemption; who made there (by his one oblation of himself once offered) a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world..' (Prayer of Consecration at the Communion) [5]

This focalization is placed either at the beginning or near the beginning of the religious utterance. In the excerpt above 'God', as a focalization centre, is located right at the beginning, joined by the qualification 'almighty'. In the next quotation 'God' appears near the beginning: 'I believe in one God...the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible...'. (Credo from The Rite of Low Mass)[6]

Such a dependence is obvious in scientific texts as well, with the distinction that there is only a remote, or implicit reference to the key notions, concepts or laws that form the focal point of those texts. While the reference to notions or concepts in scientific texts is only rarely stated explicitly, religious texts place these explicit semantic links in prominent position and are further on referred to throughout the text. The most common and frequently used method to do this is through the *appositional use* of various terms, some of them used as titles or epithets. The theological significance of these terms varies in concord with what they can stand for and what further semantic implications they may generate. Epithets, for example, usually clarify the image or picture of 'God' and are redundant in that further utterance does not depend on them (eg 'King of Glory', 'Light from light' etc). Other terms are central to the text and their relative importance results from the very dependence of further stretches of text and concepts on them. For example, such terms like 'Jesus Christ' stretch out over religious concepts like 'redemption', 'institution', 'consubstantial', 'salvation' etc. The first two terms are traceable in the already quoted lines. Further examples of religion-laden terms are: 'sin', 'sacrifice', 'satisfaction', 'oblation'.

These terms have a two-fold impact: first they are theological expressions or parts thereof. Second, they can be used by believers somewhat more loosely. For example, the term 'almighty', if used by theologians, should necessarily be introduced by metaphysical concepts, or through Scriptural references, possibly followed by some examples or counter-examples. The same term would be used by a non-theologian in a different way, to signify a person of extremely high authority. This twofold use of terms accounts for the 'analogical' nature of religious language, i.e. the capacity of language to be used and interpreted on two semantic levels or planes. Both planes can be conflated in one and only notion 'God'. This 'duality' is a distinctive feature of the religious or theological vocabulary, and cannot be traced down in any other language variety. Third, there are terms which are neither archaic nor theological. Such words are: 'exalt', 'grant', 'receiving', 'remembrance', which are restricted to formal contexts and collocate with a small range of words. Many other terms like: 'glorify', 'adore', 'give thanks', 'praise', 'bless' etc are used by speakers depending on the context, where one and the same word or clusters of words may mean different things for different speakers. For example the word 'adore' is a simple word, which may not confuse any speaker, while 'profound and reverent' is likely to be used by different speakers with different interpretations. From all language varieties, whose word interpretation is relatively confined to a speech community, in the case of religious language the interpretation of one lexical item is dependent on idiosyncratic nuances.

Another vocabulary and semantics-related distinctive feature of this language variety is the high-frequency of collocational idiosyncrasies. Examples of such collocations are: 'kingdom-heaven', 'passion-death', 'body-blood', 'suffer-death-cross-redemption'. The strangeness of these

collocations lies in the fact that the second item is very often the opposite of what someone would normally expect.

Finally, the present survey of distinctive features of the language of religion will focus on the use of formulae. Formulae occur at the beginning, at the end or are interpolated within the prayer structure. For the first category we may quote: '*Almighty God, our heavenly Father, who..*', for the second 'O Jesus Christ with the Holy Ghost, in the glory of God the Father. *Amen,*' for the last 'we beseech thee'. Generally speaking, the language of prayer or public worship has a relatively fixed structure and traditional framework, which, however, can be circumstantially altered.

After having surveyed a number of distinctive features, the present study will shed some light on a particular case of language of religion, that used by the German theologian Rudolf Otto in his hermeneutic writings.

A particular use of the language of religion: Rudolf Otto's language of the 'numinous'

In this section we shall look at the language used by Rudolf Otto in his religious, or rather hermeneutical, writings. Otto is remembered as a prodigious German theologian, philosopher and historian of religions.

In order to understand the language used by Otto in his writings it is paramount to look closer at Otto's religious world of ideas and convictions. Rudolf Otto was a theologian, and it is in this very spirit that he developed his influential ideas on the world of religions.

Opposing the views of natural scientists like Darwin and Haeckel (1834-1919) from his very childhood, he drew his argumentative weapons to fight back the 'forces of irreligion' from Schleiermacher and Fries. Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) influenced Otto immensely through his book *On religion: Speeches to its cultured despisers* (1799), which postulates that religion is 'neither metaphysics nor morals, but something *sui generis*, a feeling for the infinite'[7]. Later on, Otto turned to Kant's successor, Jakob Friedrich Fries, who challenged the idea that people could obtain valid knowledge simply from reason and experience, and claimed that knowledge was equally obtained from intuition (*Ahnung*) and feeling (*Gefühl*). His contention was that the very validity of rational and experiential knowledge rests on intuition and the feeling of truth.

Relying on the dichotomy religious-idealistic and naturalistic views, Otto's endeavour and accomplishment was to claim autonomy and validity for the former, and fight the deficiencies in the views of the latter.

Otto had distinguished synchronic worldviews which were primarily aimed at defending idealism and religion against attacks from materialism. For Otto religion was 'a matter of prerational, premoral intuition and feeling'[8].

According to Otto's perception, the *holy* or *sacred* recorded in his writing *The Idea of the Holy* (1917) is a particular fervour or pious ardour, which is 'the very feeling of the being' or a feeling of the 'numinous'. Otto's views centered around God and the feelings of the *sacred* and the *numinous*, henceforth, the language employed by him fully accounts for that. The language is both tense and dense and, at times, loose following a slower progression. His language is first and foremost *descriptive*. Entire writings, and thereby we refer to *Das Heilige (The Idea of the Holy)*, 1917; *Aufsätze das Numinose betreffend (About the Numinous)*, 1923; *West-östliche Mystik (Eastern and Western Mysticism)*, 1926, have turned into lengthy argumentations based on descriptive religious language.

Otto's writings are complex structures consisting of religious passages, philosophical interpretations, excerpts from the Bible and other religious documents, both Christian and Islamic, excerpts in different languages from religious thinkers like Chrysostom, Zinzendorf, Meister Eckhart, Ruskin, Parker, Wundt and religious practices and interpretations. The text's complexity is, nonetheless, enriched through explanatory footnotes, which range from a few lines to extremely long explanations and commentaries.

The prodigy of his writings, apart from the religious concepts couched in that *sui generis* something, emanates from the very *simplicity* of the text, which artfully molds not only the language of Scripture and the Bible but also that of other medieval religious writings. The greatness of Otto's writings arises, equally, from a unique way of expressing the intensity or inner vigour of certain concepts and emotions, because, as Mircea Eliade admits, Rudolf Otto had the rare courage, for such a vivid and capacious intelligence, to say and to repeat simple, accessible things.

The religious language of Otto's writings tops up the hermeneutical level and expresses *concepts, beliefs, events, images, persons and symbols*. *The hermeneutic level* encompasses several complex domains, such as: science of religion, history of religion, philosophy of religion, psychology of religion, concepts and opinions belonging to *homini religiosi* such as: Chrysostom, Zinzendorf, Meister Eckhart, Ruskin, Parker, Wundt, descriptions of various cults and rites, descriptions and interpretations of mystical places and places for prayer (such as the elements of Islamic architecture), accurate displays of emotions (including the ones expressed by sounds, silence, architecture or space), reflected in descriptions like: *Slujba tăcută (The silent mass)*, *Numinosul în plastica budistă (The Numinous in the Buddhist art)*, *Golul din arhitectura Islamului (The void in Islamic architecture)*, incantations, legends and myths, prayers etc. This extremely complex composition, grown out from the afore-mentioned descriptive segments, will result in an equally complex linguistic level or layer. From the linguistic point of view each of these *segments* can be associated with a particular text genre or function, calling for a specific/special use of language, the language customarily used in the particular speech environment. So, for example, descriptions of cults and rites will differ substantially from prayers, or the Bible both structurally and linguistically.

This abundance and complexity of the text, spread out on different hermeneutic and linguistic sub-levels, offer the reader a permanently challenging perspective. *The linguistic level* rests mainly on: *lexical simplicity* counter-balanced by *lexical abundance and variety*. *Linguistic complexity* is expressed through a rich syntax, complex sentence structures with branching subordinate clauses, lengthy nominal structures, impressively long compound nouns, suggestive verbs with original scientific and religious meanings, *original religious or profane connotations of words, use of religious terms with specific or consecrated meaning*, frequent use of quotations from various languages, like : Hebrew, Ancient Greek, Latin, Sanskrit, and, finally, the linguistic fascination of some concepts, notions or *designations*, such as: "cel cu totul altul", 'Zanzen-ul', 'Sunder Warumbe'.

Let us examine a stretch of language from *West-östliche Mystik (Eastern and Western Mysticism)* which seeks to explain what *metaphysics* is:

"...in ihrer Eigenschaft als Doktrin des Seins (Ontologie) wird sie [Metaphysik] verstanden als eine Ableitung aus der archaischen Meditation über die Natur (peri physeos).

Wenn man zugibt (1), dass sie nur existiert unter der Bedingung der Einbringung des „Einen“ ins Sein (2), ist die Mystik eine Beschäftigung des Menschen fundiert in seinem Wesen als wesensgleich mit der Natur (3), die die Frage nach der kryptischen Hälfte der Physis, der teilhabenden, deontischen (normativen), der ausgeschlossenen aus dem Horizont der Wissenschaft, der Philosophie und sogar der Religion, durch die großartige ableitende Mutation die die Geburt der Metaphysik darstellt (4), aufgreift (5) und wachhält (6).

In diesem Fall legitimiert sich die Mystik als Bewahrerin des unschätzbaren Schatzes, den sie als Einzige selbst nie vergessen hat: den Ursprung der ganzen Natur, die Seele der Welt, das tiefe Fundament auf dem das Sein selbst ruht, den Erbauer, der das Sein schuf, das „Es“ aus „Es gibt Sein“...“[9]

The examination of this stretch of language reveals a formal language that wraps up linguistically a philosophical and religious background and which is specific to the two areas of

pursuit. The envisaged audience is that of religious and highly trained scholars and thinkers and, since the language is restricted to the definition of *metaphysics*, philosophical terms and associations blended with religious terms prevail. The extract displays special or specific *modality* or *medium differences* resulting from its *particular use*, which is to voice the theologian's interpretations and views on metaphysics. Since the scholars will easily understand the writing because of their knowledge of such texts, the lines run smoothly and the only graphological devices used are *paragraphing* and use of *normal punctuation* (full stop and commas). The text addresses fellow scholars or theologians, consequently, no further (linguistic, graphological or sonorous) clues were necessary to make the text accessible and understandable.

The excerpt is both *descriptive* and *interpretative*. It entails three sentences, a shorter one, a lengthier one and an incomplete one. The second sentence, the one we shall focus on, is made up of 74 items, most of which are nouns (18 items), adjectives (5 items), 6 verbs and the remaining items are prepositions and conjunctions. Surprisingly, the sentence contains no adverbs. The absence of adverbials and the heavy reliance on nouns and NPs is indicative of the descriptive and interpretative nature of the sentence.

The sentence structure is highly complex, as the examined sentence contains: a conditional clause (1), direct object clause (2), a main clause (3), 3 relative clauses (4), (5) and (6). The main clause contains 17 words, the conditional clause 3 words, the relative clauses 3, 1 and 1. The variation in sentence length, particularly the overwhelmingly prevailing word-load associated with the relative clause, predicts the kind of texts this is, i.e. descriptive and interpretative.

The nouns are all formal and rather scientific given the fact that they belong to philosophical and religious areas. So are: 'Mystik', 'Physis', 'Horizont', 'Wissenschaft', 'Philosophie', 'Religion', 'Mutation', 'Geburt', 'Metaphysik' etc. Neither archaisms nor other special words occur in the sentence. The adjectives present in the sentence partake of the same status. Examples of adjectives are: 'teilhabenden', 'deontischen (normativen)', 'großartige ableitende', 'wesensgleich' etc. The NP is kept simple, composed of Det + Noun, or Det + Noun + postmodification.

The verbs used in the examined sentence are all, invariably, in the present tense, the tense used for scientific texts. No imperatives, no past tense forms crop up.

If we looked at another section, the language would change to suit the rhetorical function and the text genre. So for example, the following extract reflects a different type of discourse, that of a *commentarial* and *explanatory* one.

"Garbe tălmăcește versurile în felul următor:	1
Unul îl privește (pe spirit) ca pe o minune.	
Un altul vorbește despre el tot ca despre o minune.	3
Un altul aude despre el ca despre o minune.	
Însă chiar dacă a auzit despre el, totuși nimeni nu îl cunoaște.	5

Poate că tonalitatea afectivă a versurilor ar fi redată mai bine dacă s-ar spune:

Ca despre un "cu totul altul" vorbește cel ce vorbește	7
Despre atman.	
Pe "cu totul altul" l-a învățat cine l-a învățat pe "atman".	
Nici chiar cel ce l-a învățat – nimeni nu te face să îl cunoști." [10]	10

The striking aspect of this extract is the rhetorical repetition of the word 'minune' which is located at the end of the first three lines. Another rhetorical element used is the distribution of language flow into poem-like lines, which follow an internal rhythm. An additional rhetorical element is the antonymy relationship 'unul'- 'un altul' and the repetition 'Un altul' which holds sentence-initial position.

The language employed is simple, particularly in the lines 1-5. The only religious or 'specialized' items are: 'spirit' and 'minune'. Each line is characterized through a simple sentence-clause structure of the type: subject- predicate- object. The verbs used are verbs of perception like: 'privește', 'vorbește', 'aude'. This stretch of language reminds the reader of the old simple language of the Bible.

The remaining lines (6-10) feature the rhetorical repetition of 'cu totul altul', 'atman', 'vorbeste', 'cel ce vorbeste'. The use of the rhythmical repetition of certain lexical items or lexical clusters renders the language both simple and, at the same time, surprisingly intricate.

Another extract, taken randomly, from the same writing [11] reveals different discourse features.

"Oriîncotro te vei îndrepta, să-l ai pe Dumnezeu în fața ochilor pretutindeni"

The extract expresses the monk's ideal of following God. The utterance works as an *instruction* or *piece of advice*. Henceforth, the words are simple and belong rather to the old lexis without, however, being archaic. The string of words resembles the language used in the Bible, in proverbs and other folk-addressed utterances to express instructions.

Arathos, the Greek poet, in another extract, exclaims:

"Te salut, o, Părinte, minune uimitoare, o, mângâiere a oamenilor"[12]."

The words account for an *incantation* or *high reverence* addressed to the Holy on particular prayer-related or liturgical occasions. The wording foregrounds vocatives and devotion-laden adjectives.

Conversations among mystics, like those imagined between Ummon and his disciple have a dialogic structure and contain monosyllabic words, instructions and educational or ideological suggestions evidenced in the extract provided below:

"Care este sabia (spirituală a lui Ummon)
Tronc!
Care este drumul drept spre Ummon
Cel mai lăuntric.
Care dintre cei trei kaya ai lui Buddha ne propovăduiesc
Învățătura
Cel potrivit.
Unde este ochiul adevăratei legi
Pretutindeni.
Care este calea
Înainte." [13]

Lines like:

Tăcere sfântă, născută în liniște,
Zăgaz ești al valurilor din adâncuri. [14]

Were taken from a quaker writing about the *silent Worship*. The lines try to render the way silent worship had been carried out in George Fox's time and further on.

The next quotation is a *prayer* which belongs to the text genre *written texts* read aloud by a person:

"Preotul: Doamne Dumnezeul nostru, care ești aproape de toți

cei ce te cheamă cu temeinicie, vino Tu însuși în mijlocul nostru
pentru ca sufletul nostrum să renască la lumina chipului Tău.” [15]

Assumably, the excerpt made up of one lengthy sentence is reflected in the following structure: Vocative-dependent clause- imperative.

Some more *complex prayer forms* comply with a more elaborate structure like:

Vocative-dependent structure- dependent structure- conjunction dependent structure-
conjunction dependent structure- imperative- parenthetic SPC- conjunction P(imperative)-
dependent structure- dependent structure.

The variety of passages reproduced reflects the variety of language functions performed by these micro-texts. The variety of micro-texts stands for the complexity of Otto's writing and is indicative of the language varieties employed.

Conclusion

The present study brought into the foreground the broad array of sub-genres of religious texts and highlighted their discriminative linguistic features. These distinctiveness-determining factors are associated with the particular function that the text performs in the religious community in which it emerged and functions. Henceforth, such linguistic varieties like: *the liturgical language, the Biblical language, the language of common prayer* display specific features related to the function they perform, the particular way in which the language is used by its users in order to satisfy the religious and cultural needs.

The language used by Rudolf Otto in his religious writings is extremely complex and varies in accordance with the type of micro-text used, but adheres mainly to the conventions that characterize the established religious varieties.

The linguistic richness of the text along with its religious conceptual deep-layer invite and, at the same time, open up new challenges to the researcher.

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