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Metaphors we believe by: Islamic doctrine as evoked by the Prophet Muhammad’s metaphors

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Metaphorical language has an ideological function that needs to be investigated. In this paper, I show how some of the prophetic metaphors are deliberately used to represent a well-defined statement of beliefs that constructs Islamic doctrine based on early Arabs’ beliefs and experiential knowledge. This statement is represented in terms of metaphors from the metaphoric domains of journeying, the heart, slavery or servitude, brotherhood, shepherds, and light.

Keywords: metaphor; Islamic discourse; prophetic tradition; doctrine

1. Introduction

In 570 CE, Prophet Muhammad was born in Mecca, in current Saudi Arabia. At the age of 40, he introduced Islam through what he pronounced as revelations from God. These revelations, known as the Holy Qur’an, had been sent down onto Prophet Muhammad for the sake of converting early polytheist Arabs to worship one god called Allah. This process was not painless for the Prophet and the early believers who had suffered persecution from the leading authorities of Mecca. Therefore, the Prophet urged his companions to migrate to the city of Yathreb (later known as Medina) where they found a safer environment to practice their new religion safely (Sir Hamilton, Bernard, Johannes, Charles, & Joseph, 1960: ‘Muhammad’).

During his life, Muhammad introduced legislations which constitute his ‘tradition’. This tradition involves the laws, principles, and instructions embedded in the Prophet’s sayings, actions, and approvals (consents). In addition, Muslims attribute to this tradition a divine nature since it is mentioned in the Holy Qur’an that ‘Nor does he [Muhammad] speak of (his own) Desire. It is only a Revelation revealed. He has been taught (this Qu’ran) by one mighty in power [Jibril (Gabriel)]’ (An-Najm, the Star, 53, pp. 3–5).

Although Muhammad had emphasised that the three divine messages, Islam, Judaism, and Christianity, stem from the same Abrahamic root, Jews and Christians have deviated from its original principles especially after the death of Jesus Christ. So, the message of Islam urges people to return to the sound faith of original monotheism without worshipping anyone or anything (as a partner) with Allah. Accordingly, Prophet Muhammad’s message simultaneously subsumes and completes the revelations and messages of earlier prophets (Chisholm, 1910: ‘Islam’). This concept encompasses a significant aspect of Islamic doctrine and its ideological assumptions as I will present in the following sections.

2. The prophetic discourse and metaphors

The critical study of metaphors in the prophetic tradition requires its recognition as a discourse. In linguistic research, the word ‘discourse’ is frequently used to refer to any given text that

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involves a group of statements, and which provide a language for talking about – a way of representing the knowledge about – a particular topic at a particular historical moment (Hall, 1992, p. 291). Thus, a discourse could encompass oral or written texts which represent organised forms of human experience. These forms are established through processes of recitation and interpretation of the diverse events and contexts according to a particular domain of experience such as literature, trade, politics, or religion. Thus, Prophet Muhammad’s tradition is the discourse established through its recitation, transmission, and interpretation processes within the contexts of Islamic doctrine.

Fairclough points out that discourse is ‘shaped by relations of power, and invested with ideologies’ (Fairclough, 1992, p. 8); thus, its analysis should focus on the ways by which social and ‘political’ dominations are reproduced by its texts and speeches. Although differences in power and dominion are patiently perceived in political discourse, differences in power and dominion can also be perceived through the different social practices of the society where the discourse has been delivered. Among these social practices, religion encompasses a distinctive discourse that reproduces ethical principles and laws which aim to resist social (and ethical) inequality, oppression (power abuse), or ungrounded supremacy (domination). For this reason, contemporary research in discourse emphasises the critical study of the different discursive strategies employed by the discourse producer, and among these strategies is metaphor.

Modern cognitive approaches to metaphor reveal how the critical approaches of metaphor analysis in discourse draw attention to the critical awareness of the deliberate use of particular metaphors within a given discourse in a specific language and culture. Philip Eubanks emphasises that the ‘connection between the cognitive and the cultural is the greatest strength of cognitive metaphor theory’ (Eubanks, 2000, p. 25), and he builds his proposition on Lakoff and Johnson’s remark that:

[M]etaphors [...] highlight and make coherent certain aspects of our experience [...] metaphors may create realities for us, especially social realities. A metaphor may thus be a guide for future action [...] this will, in turn, reinforce the power of the metaphor to make experience coherent. In this sense metaphors can be self-fulfilling prophecies. (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 156)

Lakoff and Johnson were the pioneers to put forward that metaphorical language holds a vital position in any given language or culture. Their conceptual metaphor theory continually emphasises that metaphors are not consistently tied to physical explanations of reality. Metaphors are perceived as the reflection of the linguistic and social behaviour of their culture because they contain within them beliefs about the reality and nature of everyday language. To illustrate, knowledge acquisition is traditionally depicted as ‘writing’. The mind is portrayed as a tabula rasa or an empty slate on which knowledge is ‘written’. Though, the heart, as we will see later in this paper, is also depicted in Arabic as a vessel in which spiritual knowledge, faith, and religious beliefs are preserved. These two metaphoric representations reflect the diversity of the socio-cultural practices of each society. Thus, following Max Black’s version of the interaction view (Black, 1962, p. 44), an ‘image scheme’ is developed from the particular characteristics of the ‘paper’ or the ‘vessel’ (the container) to project it onto the ‘heart’ or the ‘mind’, and this generates a number of metaphoric expressions which combine elements of the conceptual metaphoric schema the ‘Mind-As-Vessel/Container’. This schema changes the meaning of the ‘mind’ and ‘vessel’ (container) to allow certain predications normally deduced from one (the paper/slate/vessel/container) and applied (with some change in meaning) onto the other (the mind) (Black, 1962, p. 44). Consequently, since each image schema is based on the cultural norms of the society where it emerges, the inherent relationship between early Arabs and their beliefs has incited them to describe their faith using metaphors that involve embodiment rather than writing because writing was not a common practice among early Arabic societies.
It is widely acknowledged that metaphors are mainly employed in religious discourse for rhetorical purposes. Metaphors make religious language more vivid and less monotonous which make it emotionally appealing. However, modern cognitive approaches of metaphor analysis accentuate that the function of metaphor in language transcends this simplified ‘rhetorical’ value. The cognitive machinery metaphors possess and the way they function in everyday verbal communication provides the interlocutors with an influential explanatory linguistic tool that facilitates the understanding of novel ideas by the message receiver on the basis of their common cultural background. Eva Kittay maintains that ‘metaphor has a cognitive value and this stems not only from providing new facts about the world but from a reconceptualisation of the information that is already available to us’ (Kittay, 1987, p. 39). Accordingly, the interlocutors use metaphors to minimise ambiguity by foregrounding in the raised argument the most salient and familiar aspects for them. She further claims that ‘metaphor actually gives us “epistemic access” to fresh experience and, to the extent that we have no other linguistic resources to achieve this, metaphor is “cognitively irreplaceable”’ (Kittay, 1987, p. 39).

In addition to mere literal theology, the better understanding of metaphors in religious language is vital in increasing the humans’ understanding of religious notions. Janet Soskice argues that by the creation of new perspectives, successful metaphors expand humans’ descriptive powers when other types of linguistic expressions fail (Soskice, 1985, p. 66). She suggests that metaphors in religious discourse have an ‘evocative’ function by which a given metaphor evokes a series of associations which provide the recipient of the religious discourse with more ideas about the metaphorised religious notion(s), especially abstract notions and concepts. Charteris-Black contends that the effectiveness of metaphor within religious discourse is related to the fact that:

> [It] [metaphor] is a primary means by which the unknown can be conceptualised in terms of what is already known [...] metaphors are a natural means for exploring the possible forms that such divinity might take and for expressing religious experiences. (Charteris-Black, 2004, p. 173)

Accordingly, metaphors, among other discursive devices, serve a rhetorical purpose in religious discourse that makes its message more appreciable for the recipient(s) (Charteris-Black, 2005, p. 125). In the following section, I will show how Prophet Muhammad relies on metaphors to represent and conceptualise Islamic doctrine and its experience.

### 3. Corpus-assisted analysis of the prophetic metaphors

Metaphors are ideologically significant because they are essentially used in discourse to represent differences in power, social practices, principles, thoughts, and beliefs based on a well-defined statement, or system, of beliefs (Fairclough, 1995, p. 74). Thus, metaphors should be principally analysed with relevance to their themes, contexts, and genres by means of corpus-assisted approaches of discourse, and metaphor analysis.

The cornerstone of corpus-assisted approaches to metaphor analysis is based on investigating the frequent occurrence of particular instances and patterns of metaphoric usages in corpora compiled from a particular type of text and genres to reveal the discourse producer’s viewpoints, or ideologies, evoked by these metaphors. For example, several studies have critically tackled the deliberate and conventional usage of metaphors in different genres of discourse such as politics and ideology (Charteris-Black, 2004; Goatly, 2006), advertising (Lundmark, 2005), educational contexts (Cameron, 2003), politics and race, and economics (Skorczynska & Deignan, 2006).

The corpus-assisted critical analysis of metaphors emphasises that the deliberate use of metaphors in discourse is ‘principally governed by the rhetorical aim of persuasion’ (Charteris-Black, 2004, p. 247). To reveal this aim, the critical analysis of metaphor should
involve identifying, interpreting, and then explaining all metaphors in the compiled corpus by considering the interdependency of the semantic, pragmatic, and cognitive dimensions of the metaphors identified in discourse to discern its ideological implications (Charteris-Black, 2004, pp. 35–39). Herein, the persuasiveness of the metaphoric representation is attained from its positive or negative ‘evaluation’. This ‘evaluation’ is based on the message (and metaphor) recipient’s social and emotional attitudes reflected from his/her common social and individual sets of beliefs.

Corpus-assisted approaches to metaphor analysis rely on looking for ‘the presence of incongruity or semantic tension – either at linguistic, pragmatic or cognitive levels – resulting from a shift in domain use’ (Charteris-Black, 2004, p. 35). Since incongruity is the key factor in identifying a metaphor in a corpus, the systematic analysis of metaphors always begins by extracting the image schemes and metaphorical source domains of metaphors, such as ‘journey’, ‘building’, ‘plant’, ‘conflict’, and ‘religious’ source domains. To achieve this, most frequent metaphorical words and expressions in the prophetic corpus are identified as the ‘metaphoric keywords’. These keywords undergo both quantitative and qualitative investigation to measure their degree of conventionality of the metaphors they represent in the discourse. Thus, the relative frequency of metaphorical keywords reflects the conventionality of the conceptual metaphor it represents. These conventional metaphors are more significant than the novel ones because they provide further indications of the rhetorical or ideological strategies employed by the discourse maker revealing aspects of his/her character. For instance, Prophet Muhammad’s discourse characterises Islamic beliefs which reproduce Islamic doctrine and its ideological convictions through representations based on the experiential knowledge of the Prophet’s society.

My analysis here involves the examination of the ‘source’ and ‘target’ domains of the prophetic metaphors. The ‘source domain’ is recognised as the conceptual domain that includes an idea that conveys a certain meaning on the basis of human experiential knowledge such as physical entities and animate beings. On the other hand, the ‘target’ domain is the conceptual domain that involves the meaning that the metaphor is intended to convey and which generally includes abstract concepts and notions such as emotional states and religious concepts (Kövecses, 2002; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). So, a linguistic metaphor is recognised as the surface representation of a conceptual mapping that systematically associates relevant corresponding elements from the conceptual source domain to the target. For example, the man’s spiritual life is represented in the prophetic discourse through images from the source domain of ‘journeying’ mostly evoked from the two metaphorical keywords ‘follow’ and ‘sunna’ and which constructs the generic conceptual metaphor SPIRITUAL LIFE IS A JOURNEY or the more specific metaphor THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD’S TRADITION IS A PATH; the Prophet says ‘You must therefore follow my sunna [tradition/path] and that of the rightly guided Caliphs . . .’ (Miškat, 165, p. 44). Such a metaphor is selected among many other instantiations of linguistic metaphors in the prophetic discourse because of their frequency and significance. The relative frequent emergence of a specific metaphor reflects its deliberate choice by the Prophet for the sake of evoking a meticulous statement of beliefs.

To exemplify, metaphors from the ‘containment’ image scheme appears in the prophetic corpus in 137 instances (out of 826 instances of metaphors). These metaphors mostly conceptualise abstract religious concepts, such as ‘faith’ in terms of a substance that is contained in the heart. On the other hand, ‘slavery’ and ‘confine’ment image schemas categorise about 40 instances of metaphor which characterise the believers in terms of their intrinsic relationship to God. The relative high frequency of the ‘containment’ image scheme and its metaphors can be attributed to its ontological function by which Prophet Muhammad bestows ontological information to abstract religious concepts. The choice of metaphors from the ‘slavery’ and ‘confine’ment image scheme is culturally motivated from the life of pre-Islamic Arabic society when
slavery and confinement were more widespread social practices as a consequence of repeated conflicts.

Several metaphors are also selected in my analysis for their significance in reflecting the uniqueness of the prophetic message. For instance, metaphors from the ‘brotherhood in Allah’ image scheme, which fairly appear in the corpus, remarkably connect the mutual relationships between the members of Islamic society with the social relationship of ‘brotherhood’.

4. Critical analysis of the prophetic metaphors

In my analysis below, I show how metaphorical language is used deliberately in the prophetic discourse to provide the ground for an Islamic doctrine on the basis of four representations. The first is that Islam constitutes an approach that has a definite goal, and this approach is defined by a set of well-established statements of beliefs. The second is that Muslims are the main target of this approach, and they are the advocates (followers) of this unique Islamic doctrine or ideology. The third is that the spiritual practices are the main factor that characterises Muslims or the advocates (followers) of Islam. The fourth is that the conditions and situations which characterise the different stages of this approach work as indicators and signs to help (guide) the advocates (followers) of Islam. In view of that, I argue that these representations are addressed in the prophetic discourse through metaphors categorised according to seven image schemas. Metaphors from the image schemas of ‘path’ and ‘guidance’ are employed to represent the nature of Islamic doctrine (ideology). Metaphors from the ‘heart as a container’ image scheme are employed to represent the inherent qualities and conditions of those who adhere to this doctrine. Metaphors from the image schemes of ‘slavery to God’, ‘brotherhood in Allah’, and ‘pastoralism’ are employed to represent the intrinsic and acquired moral qualities of the followers of the doctrine. And finally, metaphors from the image scheme of ‘light’ are employed to represent the conditions and situations of the different stages in following this doctrine.

4.1 Metaphors from the ‘path’ and ‘guidance’ image schemas

Prophet Muhammad regards Islam as an approach of life that the believers must follow in order to attain God’s contentment and reward. These two goals are represented following the conceptual metaphor PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS (Kövecses, 2002, p. 70). Accordingly, Islam is mapped into the source domain ‘journey’ to constitute the metaphor ISLAM IS A PATH. Journey metaphors account for a variety of themes based on early Arabs’ experience with travelling for the purposes of trade, pilgrimage, and military campaigns. Hence, they construct the most productive category of metaphors in different domains of Arabic discourse because travelling has been established in the linguistic and cognitive system of the Arabs. Furthermore, the discursive role of these metaphors is to state how a purposeful activity, such as attaining God’s forgiveness and His paradise, is hard task that is similar to ‘travelling along a well-defined path towards a sought destination’ (Charteris-Black, 2004, p. 74). Thus, we infer that – in the prophetic discourse – the believers, the ‘travellers’ in the metaphorical ‘journey’ along the a pre-defined ‘path’, are ‘guided’ to attain a predetermined spiritual state better than their present one, and this suggests the conceptualisation of the individual’s life – from the moment when he/she accepts Islam as a religion to the time of his/her death and resurrection – in terms of the conceptual metaphor THE SPIRITUAL LIFE OF HUMANS IS A JOURNEY ALONG THE PATH OF RELIGION. This metaphor emerges in the prophetic corpus through several keywords which stand for journeying and travelling. These involve the metaphoric keywords: Seraat (path) (x7), sabyl allaah (God’s path) (x23), hudaa (guidance)
(x9), sunnah, (tradition/path), sunan (traditions/paths) (x9), Dalaala (error), and Dalla, yaDellu, taDellu (to lead astray/to be led astray) (x7). Remarkably, some of these keywords appear utterly in Islamic religious discourse such as hudaa (guidance) and Dalaala (error) which predominantly appear in the Qur’an and the prophetic tradition and which mostly collocate with religious notions such as ‘faith’ (eymaan) (Ibn Manzur, 1997: ‘hudaa’ and ‘Dalaala’) standing for the conceptual metaphors: SPIRITUAL LIFE IS A JOURNEY (x27), LIFE IS A JOURNEY (x9), ISLAM IS A PATH (x4), and THE QUR’AN IS A GUIDE (x4).

The frequent emergence of the above keywords in the prophetic corpus reflects the Prophet’s choice in elaborating the ‘the journey along the path’ image scheme. For example, the keyword sunnah (path) (in its singular and plural form (Sunan)) appears in the corpus referring to Prophet Muhammad’s tradition. While the etymology of sunnah refers to the ‘path’ or an ‘approach’, its connotation in Islamic religious discourse reflects the meaning of the good or evil ‘habits’ (suluuk) or ‘usual’ (mu’taad) practice of a person especially the Prophet’s (Ibn Manzur, 1997: ‘sunnah’). Accordingly, the Prophet’s Sunnah is conceptualised as the approach to follow by the believers and which leads them to the abundant reward of God and His forgiveness. This entails that in addition to the sound ‘path’ of God, there would be a wrong ‘path’ that might lead astray to the wrong destination. The Prophet says:6

(1) … You must therefore follow <‘alayka be> my sunna and that of the rightly guided Caliphs… (Miškat, 165, p. 44)

(2) There was no prophet whom God raised up among his people before me who did not have from among his people apostles and companions who held to <ya?xuðuun> his sunna and followed <yaqtaduun> what he commanded;… (Miškat, 157, p. 42)

Here, the Prophet’s Sunnah is portrayed as the sound and unique ‘path’ to achieve the individual’s main goal in this life. Generally, ‘Sunnah’ collocates with the processes <‘alayka be (follow/take), ya?xuðuun (held to), and yaqtaduun (follow) which refer to the concept of ‘adherence to’ and ‘adopting’ an idea or a belief.

In another respect, the Prophet frequently refers to Seraat (x7) and sabyl (x23) (path) which has two different connotations with respect to Islamic religious discourse. To illustrate:

(3) God has propounded as a parable a straight path <Seraat mustaqym> on the sides, of which are walls with open doors over which curtains are hanging down. …there is one who calls, ‘Go straight: on the path <Seraat> and do not follow an irregular course.’ …He [the Prophet] then interpreted it telling that the path <Seraat> is Islam, …the crier at the top of the path is the Qur’an, … (Miškat, 191, p. 48)

(4) If anyone comes to this mosque of mine, coming only for some good which he will learn or teach, he ranks as a mubtaad [the holy fighter] in God’s path <sabyl allaah>;… (Miškat, 742, p. 149)

(5) I command you five things: to maintain the community, to listen, to obey, to emigrate, and to fight in God’s path <sabyl allaah>…(Miškat, 3694, p. 785)

(6) Knowledge from which no benefit is derived is like a treasure from which nothing is expended [for charity] in God’s path <sabyl allaah>. (Miškat, 280, p. 63)

Originally, the word (Seraat) appears in Islamic religious contexts to refer to the narrow bridge that leads to Paradise and which also dominates Hell, and over which all people should surpass on the day of resurrection (Sir Hamilton et al., 1960 ‘al-Sirat’); metaphorically its refers to the ‘path’ or the ‘way’ (x7). And this meaning is invoked through the verb hadaа (to guide to the sound path) to indicate that the soundness of the path of Islam and its ‘straightness’ (mustaqym) (extract no. 3) (Ibn Manzur, 1997: ‘Seraat’) and which is understood in terms of the conceptual metaphors STRAIGHTNESS IS GOOD and RELIGIOUS STRAIGHTNESS IS PHYSICAL STRAIGHTNESS.

In addition to Seraat, the keyword sabyl (path) emerges frequently in the prophetic discourse (x23) especially in the phrase ‘God’s path’ (fy sabyl allaah) (extracts 4, 5, and 6 above) denoting the statement ‘in the cause of Allah’ to emphasise that all deeds performed by the believer should
only be performed to seek God’s consent and appraisal. Demanding deeds which the believers perform, such as fighting enemies in war and giving money in alms and acquiring knowledge and delivering it, are all performed by the ‘travellers’ during their course along the ‘path of God’ without seeking people’s respect and appraisal for their deeds. Again, images of hudaa (guidance) and Dalaal (to go astray/to be led astray) belong to the metaphor ISLAM IS A PATH reflecting how the process of following the traces (beliefs) of preceding people may lead to the wrong destination not the sound one characterised by the qualities of God Himself. The Prophet says:

(7) The best discourse is God’s Book, the best guidance <hady> is that given by Muhammad,… (Miṣkat, 141, p. 39)

(8) If anyone summons others to follow right guidance <hudaa> his reward will be equivalent to those of the people who follow him… (Miṣkat, 158, p. 42)

Accordingly, the words hudaa and its antonym Dalaal emphasise the necessity of the divine message and how that all Muslims should be charged with the responsibility of summoning (yahdy) the non-believers to adopt Islam and ‘follow’ its sound ‘path that is based on Islamic doctrine; otherwise it will be an error (Dalaal) (extract 8). The image of huda (guidance) along the path reflects the positive evaluation of the notions collocating with it as understood from describing this guidance as the ‘best’ (xayr) guidance because it is full of reward (?ajr); two attributes which evoke ideas of incitement and encouragement.

Remarkably, the recurrence of the keyword hudaa in the corpus repeatedly has entailed the introduction of an ‘agent’ that acts as the ‘guide’ along the ‘path’ of Islam. In the main, this guide could be God (through the Qur’an as in extract 7), the Prophet (extract 7), or a person (extract 8). In particular, the Prophet emphasises that the most reliable source of guidance is that given by God as invoked through the Holy Qur’an. The Prophet says:

(9) As long as you hold fast to two things which I have left among you, you will not go astray <lan taDelluu>: God’s Book and His messenger’s sunna. (Miṣkat, 186, p. 47)

(10) …, but I am leaving among you the two important things, the first of which is God’s Book which contains guidance <fyhe alhudaa> and light,… (Miṣkat, 6131, p. 1350)

The conceptual metaphor THE QUR’AN IS A GUIDE implies the concept of ‘free-will’ by which the ‘travellers’ along the ‘path’ of Islam have the free-will to decide which ‘path’ to choose and which ‘travellers’ to follow; then they are accountable for their decision. In addition, the Prophet emphasises that the believers should adhere to the Qur’an because it is the perpetual source of spiritual guidance in Islam. And in many cases, the Prophet portrays himself as the ‘guide’ of his followers in that ‘path’.

To sum up, metaphors from the ‘journey’, ‘path’, and ‘guidance’ image schemas are deliberately used in the prophetic tradition to represent Islamic doctrine. According to these representations, several entailments can be derived by means of a process of structure-mappings (Gentner, 1983, p. 156ff) by which a sort of mapping (an analogy) of knowledge from one domain (the source/base) into another (the target) takes place. This mapping works on conveying systematic relations between elements from the source domain and the target domain to facilitate the recognition of the embedded common relations between the metaphorised notion and its image. By this structure-mapping, a set of ‘ontological correspondences’ (Lakoff, 1990, p. 48) based on our human experiential knowledge and understanding of the real world are highlighted to associate between the source domain ISLAM and the target domains JOURNEY and PATH. According to this mapping, the image of the ‘travellers’ corresponds to the believers; the ‘guides’ correspond to the Qur’an and Sunnah; the ‘path’ corresponds to Islam represented through its laws and principles; and finally the desirable ‘destination’ corresponds to God’s forgiveness and paradise.
4.2 Metaphors from the ‘heart’ image scheme

Islam distinguishes its followers, the ‘travellers in the its path’, by foregrounding their intrinsic qualities which assist them finding the sound path of Islam. The Prophet accentuates that the intrinsic qualities of the ‘travellers’ are known from the quality of their ‘hearts’. This image is motivated from the fact that the heart, being in the centre of human body, is conventionally used as a metaphoric source domain that implies the significance of the target domain it represents following the metaphors IMPORTANCE IS BEING AT THE CENTRE (Rash, 2006, p. 103) and THE HEART IS THE CONTAINER FOR FAITH/SPiritual KNOWLEDGE.

The etymology of the word qalb (heart) in Arabic stems from its triad root qlb, which means ‘turning over’ implying the heart’s constant state of alteration and change. This scheme is conventionally motivated also from the universal folk belief that assigns an alleged relationship between the heart and human cognitive capacities. In the prophetic tradition, the Prophet draws a relationship between the individual’s spiritual state and behaviour and the state of his/her heart. The Prophet emphasises that:

(12) ... In the body there is a piece of flesh, and the whole body is sound if it is sound <Saluha>, but the whole body is corrupt if it is corrupt <jusuwa>. It is the heart. (Miškat, 2762, p. 592)

Metaphors involving the ‘heart’ appear frequently in Prophet Muhammad’s discourse following the two conceptual metaphors FAITH IS IN THE HEART (x7) and THE HEART IS A CONTAINER FOR QUALITIES (x5). These metaphors emerges in the corpus through the metaphoric keywords qalb (heart), quluub (hearts), fyl-qalb (in the heart), menal-qalb (from the heart), meeu qaala/abate xardale (a grain of mustard seed (in his heart. x6)) and the prepositional phrases fyl qalb (in the heart) and menal qalb (from the heart). For example, the Prophet pronounces that faith resides in the heart, and it is not known only from the acts or words of the person. It is mentioned in the prophetic tradition that:

(11) Usama b. Zaid said: God’s messenger sent us to some people of Juhaina, and I attacked one of them and was about to spear him when he said, ‘There is no god but God.’ I then spearred him and killed him, after which I went and told the Prophet. He said, ‘Did you kill him when he had testified7 that there is no god but God?’ I replied, ‘Messenger of God, he did that only as a means to escape death.’ He asked, ‘Why did you not split <saqaqa> his heart?’. (Miškat, 3450, p. 734)

Here, the Prophet emphasises that it is not acceptable to judge people’s faith from their precipitate reactions because no man can ever know what another hides in the heart and, it is, God Who knows the truth of the one’s intention and the genuineness of his faith. Such a statement is motivated from the constant use of the metaphor FAITH IS IN THE HEART. This metaphor is also elaborated by means of the explicit use of material processes and prepositional phrases to present faith as a ‘substance’ that naturally exists in the heart. For example, the Prophet says:

(13) ... and niggardliness and faith will never be combined <yajtame’aan> in the heart of a servant of God. (Miškat, 3828, p. 813)
(14) He who has in his heart as much faith as a grain of mustard-seed will not enter hell, ... (Miškat, 5107, p. 1058)
(15) Faith had come down into the roots of men’s hearts <fy jadro quluube alrejaal>, ... A man will sleep and faith will be taken from his heart (men qalbehe), but its mark will remain like the mark of a spot. ... (Miškat, 5381, p. 1120)

Here, the existence of faith in the heart is mostly described using material processes denoting ‘combining’ and ‘splitting’ and which imply that original faith is an inherent quality of humans and not ‘acquired’. This idea is explicitly stated in Islamic doctrine emphasising that all people are born having an innate capacity to accept faith in God ‘Everyone is born a Muslim’ (Miškat, 90, p. 26).
In addition, the prophetic discourse conforms to the Arabic convention that assigns the capacities of the mind to the heart such as emotional states; a process that follows the metaphor THE HEART IS THE CONTAINER FOR EMOTIONS. The Prophet says:

(16) There are three things on account of which no rancour enters a Muslim’s heart: sincere action for God’s sake, good counsel to Muslims, and holding fast to their community. (Miṣkāt, 228, p. 55)

(17) He [Almighty God] will reply, ‘Go back and bring forth those in whose hearts you find as much as a dinar of good.’ (Miṣkāt, 5579, p. 1185)

(18) I cannot help you [a nomadic Arab] since God has withdrawn mercy from your heart. (Miṣkāt, 4948, p. 1031)

By assigning the heart the human emotional states and attributes, Islamic religious discourse emphasises that fine emotional qualities of Muslims are intrinsic as they (Muslims) are ‘severe against disbelievers, and merciful among themselves’ (Al-Fath, the Victory, 49, p. 29). Thus, the heart is portrayed as a ‘container’ for positive qualities which the ‘travellers’ possess such as goodness (extracts 17) and mercy (extract 18) and through the use of the different material processes assigned to the heart such as yarēllu (entering), yajtameu (combining) and naṣa’a (withdrawing). So, these metaphors accentuate that faith is a source of intrinsic strength for the believers, and that emotional states and human attributes are innate not acquired. In this, the heart is represented as an ‘agent’ who stands for all sorts of human capacities as it is explicitly shown below:

(19) There are seven whom God will cover with His shade on the day when there will be no shade but His: a just imam; ... a man whose heart is attached to, mucallaq. (Miṣkāt, 701, p. 13)

(20) Keep straight [in the prayers row]; do not be irregular and so have your hearts irregular. (Miṣkāt, 1088, p. 223)

(21) Temptations will be presented to men’s hearts as a reed mat is woven stick by stick, and any heart which is impregnated by them will have a black mark put in it, but any heart which rejects them will have a white mark put in it. (Miṣkāt, 5380, p. 1120)

Here, the conceptual metaphor THE HEART IS AN AGENT OF GOD reflects how the heart is perceived in the prophetic discourse as a mediator between the believer and his God and the agent that mirrors its possessor’s spiritual status.

4.3 Metaphors involving ‘slave/servant’ image scheme

The ‘slave/servant’ image scheme distinguishes Muslims by their fine qualities obtained by joining Islam and following its ‘path’. This image emphasises the Islamic principle that the main reason for the creation of man on earth is to obey God and worship Him ‘God has created mankind and the jinn so that they should worship (yacbud) Him (alone)’ (Adha-Dhariyāt, The Winds that Scatter, 51, p. 56).

The etymology of the word worship (’abada) in Arabic stems from the verb yutũũ(u) to obey); thus, a worshipper is called ’aabed, meaning an ‘obedient’. Typically, the word ’abd also denotes a ‘slave’ or ‘servant’ (’abd). Thus, the act of ’ebaada (worshipping) is mentioned in Islamic discourse in relation to the acts and deeds which God decrees for His worshippers and thorough which He will reward them by His Paradise. The word ’abd (servant/slave), which appears metaphorically in 29 places in the prophetic corpus, reflects the metaphor PEOPLE ARE SERVANTS OF GOD. This metaphor is elaborated by the constant use of the keyword d’taqa (to set free) (x7) that refers to the state of salvation from the punishment of Hell, and which is evoked by the metaphor AMORAL LIFE IS SLAVERY.

Generally, Islamic religious discourse does not plainly differentiate between Muslims and non-Muslims when addressing all people as ‘slaves’ or ‘servants’ (’abd). In addition, it is
noticed that the involved metaphoric scenarios do not show elaborated images that involve mistreatment or abuse. The Prophet says:

(22) Islam is based on five things: the testimony that there is no god but God and that Muhammad is His servant *<‘abduhu>* and messenger, … (*Miṣkat*, 4, p. 6)
(23) The nearest a servant *<‘al‘abid>* comes to his Lord is when he is prostrating himself, so make supplication often. (*Miṣkat*, 894, p. 183)
(24) When I [God] afflict a servant of mine *<‘abd man ‘ebādī>* who is a believer and he praises me for the affliction I have brought upon him, … The Lord who is blessed and exalted will say, ‘I fettered and afflicted my servant *<‘abdy>*., so record for him what you were recording for him when he was well’. (*Miṣkat*, 1579, p. 329)

And when *‘abd* (servant/slave) does not explicitly differentiate between Muslims and sinners or non-Muslims, we see that the Prophet highlights the fine qualities of God and humans. He says:

(25) … But God has kept back ninety-nine mercies by which He will show mercy to His servants *<‘ebādī>* on the day of resurrection. (*Miṣkat*, 2365, p. 502)
(26) The sultan is God’s shade on the earth to which each one of His servants *<‘ebādī>* who is wronged repairs. … (*Miṣkat*, 3718, p. 789)

Metaphors involving ‘slaves’ and ‘servants’ in the prophetic tradition emphasise that the mutual relationship between God and his subjects resembles the one between the ‘master’ and his ‘servants’ or ‘slaves’. However, the image implicitly evokes the idea that all humans are equal regardless of their origin, gender, or age, and may be religion in their relationship with God because the word *‘abd* (servant/slave) does not denote Muslims or the believers exclusively; instead, it appears in contexts of universal human issues such as offering help to other people, patience, moral values, and maintaining justice.

The metaphor PEOPLE ARE SERVANTS OF GOD does not show great variety in the prophetic tradition in terms of its mapping and entailments. Only few ontological correspondences represent the target domain ‘people’ by the source domain ‘servants/slaves’. These correspondences involve just the metaphoric representations GOD IS A MASTER, PEOPLE ARE SERVANTS/SLAVES, and the act of worshipping God and following his orders as the act of BEING AFFILIATED TO THE MASTER. These metaphors do not explicitly state how is the state of being a servant/slave established or terminated, and this implies that this ‘enslavement’ is meant to be timeless and perpetual.

4.4 Metaphors of BROTHERHOOD IN ALLAH

The followers of Islam, the ‘travellers’, are conventionally represented in the prophetic discourse as ‘brothers’ in Allah, reflecting the conceptual metaphor MUSLIMS ARE BROTHERS IN ALLAH using the metaphoric keyword *ax* (brother). For example, the Prophet says:

(27) A Muslim is a Muslim’s brother *<‘axīr>*: he does not wrong him or abandon him. If anyone cares for his brother’s *<‘axīr>* need God will care for his need; … (*Miṣkat*, 4958, p. 1032)
(28) … May God redeem your pledges from hell as you have redeemed the pledges of your brother *<‘axīr>*. Muslim! No Muslim [original Arabic “*‘abd* (servant/slave)”] will discharge his brother’s *<‘axīr>* debt without God redeeming his pledges on the day of resurrection. (*Miṣkat*, 2920, p. 624)
(29) God has put your brethren *<‘exwaamukum>* [the Prophet refers to slaves in Islamic society] under your authority, so he who has his brother *<‘axaah>* put under his authority by God must feed him from what he eats, … (*Miṣkat*, 3345, p. 714)

The ‘brotherhood in Allah’ image scheme which appears frequently in Islamic religious discourse is characterised by its emotional appeal which arouses sentiment of solidarity and kindliness among the followers of the ‘path’, and this is most patent in extracts 27 and 28 above. The emotional appeal is also reinforced by associating images of ‘slavery’ and ‘enchainment’ to images of ‘brotherhood in Allah’ in the same saying, as in extract 29 above.
As with the metaphor PEOPLE ARE SERVANTS OF GOD, the metaphor MUSLIMS ARE BROTHERS IN ALLAH does not vary considerably in its metaphorical mappings and entailments. Thus, few ontological correspondences describe the entities in the target domain ‘Muslims’ from the source domain ‘brothers’. These correspondences associate Islam to ‘tie of brotherhood’, Islamic society and ‘family’, members of Islamic society and ‘brothers’, and the representation of the relationships between Muslims as that between the ‘brothers in blood’.

### 4.5 Metaphors of ‘shepherds’ and ‘pasturalism’

In Islam, every person is considered responsible for his/her own deeds, and it is emphasised in the Holy Qur’an that ‘No one laden with burdens can bear another’s burden’ (*Al-Isra’*, the Journey by Night, 17, p. 15). However, Islam still regards every person responsible for guiding other ‘travellers’ along the ‘path’ of Islam. This idea is invoked by portraying every Muslim as a ‘shepherd’ (*ra’ay*) responsible for his/her ‘flocks’ (*ra’eyah*) following the metaphor A MUSLIM IS A SHEPHERD. This metaphor is highlighted through the keywords *ra’ay* (shepherd) (x7), *ra’eyah* (flocks) (x5), and *hemaa* (preserve) (x3) which reflect how the ‘pasturalism’ image scheme is established in the cognitive and linguistic systems of early Arabic societies characterised by their nomadic style of life.

Remarkably, in Arabic, the two words ‘shepherd’ and ‘ruler’ are homonyms and have a similar spelling and pronunciation (*ra’ay*). In the prophetic corpus, *ra’ay* appears seven times in the corpus clustered in just two sayings and reflecting the metaphor A MUSLIM IS A SHEPHERD. The Prophet says:

(30) Each of you is a shepherd *<ra’ay* en*> and each of you is responsible for his flock *<ra’eyah* en*>. The imam who is over the people is a shepherd *<ra’ay* en*> and is responsible for his flock *<ra’eyah* en*>; a man is a shepherd *<ra’ay* en*> in charge of the inhabitants of his household and he is responsible for his flock *<ra’eyah* en*>; a woman is a shepherdess *<ra’eyah* en*> in charge of her husband’s house and children and she is responsible for them; and a man’s slave is a shepherd *<ra’ay* en*> in charge of his master’s property and he is responsible for it. So each of you is a shepherd *<ra’ay* en*> and each of you is responsible for his flock *<ra’eyah* en*>. (Miškat, 3685, p. 784)

And in another saying, the Prophet warns that:

(31) …., but he who falls into doubtful things falls into what is unlawful, just as a shepherd *<ra’ay* en*> who pastures his animals round a preserve will soon pasture them in it. … (Miškat, 2762, p. 592)

The metaphor A MUSLIM IS A SHEPHERD does not vary considerably in the prophetic discourse in its mappings. However, it entails plenty of implications deduced from its many ontological correspondences. Thus, we have the image of the ‘pasture’ that corresponds to Islamic society/state, the image of the ‘limits of the pasture’ that corresponds to what God decreed unlawful, the image of the ‘flock’ that corresponds to the Muslim’s subjects. These ontological correspondences entail that the state in which the Muslim avoids sinful deeds corresponds to the state of the shepherd being vigilant to protect his flock against what is considered dangerous (unlawful).

### 4.6 Metaphors of ‘light’ and ‘darkness’

Images of ‘light’ and ‘darkness’ in the prophetic discourse reflect the states of progress or decline of the ‘follower’ of the ‘path’ of Islam. In fact, they represent the security and rightness of the chosen ‘path’, and they reflect the idea of the believer’s hope to reach a wanted destination. Light metaphors characterise Islamic doctrine because they illustrate the conditions of the chosen ‘path’ in the same manner signs and indicators guide the ‘travellers’ along the ‘path’ of
Islam. So, light signifies God’s acceptance of the believer’s endeavours in obeying His commands. In addition, images of ‘light’ and ‘darkness’ draw attention to the existing differences between opposing spiritual qualities. While ‘light’ signifies the understanding achieved through spiritual knowledge and right-mindedness, ‘darkness’ signifies the spiritual ignorance and wrong-mindedness.

The metaphorical illustration of sensory perception of light plays a central role in invoking religious messages. Traditionally, the presence of light, as opposed to its absence (darkness), is a common way to metaphorically represent the contrast between opposing attributes such as good and evil, knowledge and ignorance, and good moral values vs. bad ones. In Islamic religious discourse, it is emphasised that God’s nature is understood in relation to the nature of light. It is mentioned in the Qur’an that:

Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The parable of His light is as (if there were) a niche and within it a lamp: the lamp is in glass, the glass as it were a brilliant star, lit from a blessed tree, . . . . Light upon Light! Allah guides to His Light whom he wills. . . . (An-Nur, the Light, 24:35)

Similarly, images of ‘light’ (nuur) in the prophetic discourse follow the metaphor GOD IS LIGHT, and this also entails that the recognition by God is also characterised by being near to Him and underneath His light. This representation constructs the metaphor HOPE FOR GOD’S REWARD AND FORGIVENESS IS LIGHT and which appears in 19 places in the corpus. However, its antonym ‘dark’ (Zalaam) or DARKNESS IS BAD metaphor appears only in four places. The metaphoric keywords nuur (light), a?Da?a? (to light up), Zalaam (darkness), and muZlem (dark) are mostly used to stand for light image scheme and which in turn reflect the evaluation of the ‘path’ chosen by the ‘travellers’. To illustrate, the keyword ‘light’ (nuur) evokes positively evaluated religious and moral notions and concepts such as ‘paradise’ and ‘sound faith’. On the other hand, ‘dark’ (Zalaam) stand for negative notions and concepts. The Prophet says:

(32) I may be likened to a man who kindled a fire <estwaqada naaran>, and when it lit up <?aDa?a?at> the neighbour insects and these creeping things which fall into a fire began to fall into it. . . . (Miškat, 149, p. 41)

(33) Announce to those who make a practice of walking to mosques during the times of darkness the good news that they will have complete light <nuur> on the day of resurrection. (Miškat, 721, p. 145)

(34) O God, place light <nuuran> in my heart, light <nuuran> in my eyesight, light <nuuran> in my hearing, light <nuuran> on my right hand, light <nuuran> on my left hand, light <nuuran> above me, light <nuuran> below me, light <nuuran> in front of me, light <nuuran> behind me, and grant me light <nuuran>.

Images of ‘light’ depict the signs and indicators for God’s satisfaction and His promise to reward the believers in the worldly life and on the day of resurrection for their obedience. Thus, the positive evaluation of the two metaphors LIGHT IS GOOD and HOPE FOR GOD’S REWARD AND FORGIVENESS IS LIGHT in the prophetic discourse is invoked through the reference to the natural human trait that favours light over darkness. For example, extract 34 above involves the keyword nuur (light) mentioned 10 times denoting the good qualities and favourable spiritual and moral attributes that the ‘follower’ of the ‘path’ of Islam must have. On the other hand, images of darkness constantly reinforce the idea of the goodness of having light; as light is considered as an inherent quality of God, darkness is conventionally considered negative because it is associated with the concepts of evil and the trials of worldly life.

5. Conclusion
I have illustrated through examples how the prophetic discourse combines several metaphors which collectively construct a coherent comprehensive image scheme that represents Islam as
a unique doctrine (and ideology). Accordingly, Islam is introduced as a system of beliefs that is characterised by the emergence of metaphor as a discourse practice (Fairclough, 1992). Metaphorical language is used to stand for Islamic doctrine through shared cognitive and linguistic representations of early Arab society where the prophetic discourse was delivered.

Prophet Muhammad significantly relies in his discourse on metaphorical language as a discursive practice. My contextual analysis of metaphors from the ‘path’ and ‘guidance’ image scheme reveals how Islamic statement of beliefs regards Islam as a PATH. Herein, the prophetic discourse refers to the spiritual ‘path’ and ‘guidance’ metaphors to evoke the state of being adherent and committed to follow this statement of beliefs. This statement promotes a ‘chosen’ group of people to follow the path of Islam and the guidance of the Prophet in accordance with early Arabs’ familiarity with travelling. The sayings involving the ‘heart’ image scheme define the followers of Islamic doctrine by intrinsic qualities. The followers, as ‘travellers’ along the ‘path’ of Islam are sincere in their faith, and the degree of their faith is constant and does not decline by worldly trials because they have enjoyed the spiritual knowledge and wisdom which God has ‘implanted’ in their hearts as a reward of their obedience to His commands. On the other hand, ‘slavery/servitude’, ‘brotherhood in Allah’, and ‘shepherd and pastoralism’ image scheme in the prophetic tradition establish Islamic doctrine in terms of culturally acknowledged social practices. These image schemes promote favourable values such as allegiance to God, obedience to His commands, modesty, patience, solidarity and comradeship, and a sense of responsibility. Furthermore, they establish spiritual slavery, servitude, brotherhood in Allah, and collective responsibility in terms of social practices which maintain equality, modesty, solidarity, and allegiance to Islam.

To conclude, the prophetic discourse establishes its unique doctrine and statement of beliefs described by means of metaphorical language. Accordingly, Islam is a well-established statement of belief, or a doctrine, that is portrayed as a ‘path’. The advocates of this doctrine are the followers of Islam who are represented as ‘travellers’ who have already enjoyed intrinsic fine qualities bestowed by God. These ‘travellers’, the believers, have also enjoyed other qualities and attributes obtained when they joined Islam and followed its ‘path’. In addition, the followers of Islam, the ‘travellers’, are asked to obey and perform the commands of God as stated by a ‘guide’ which might be the Prophet, the Holy Qur’an, the rightly guided rulers, or those who are versed in religion. Finally, in order to indicate the conditions and situations that characterise the state of following this doctrine, the ‘straight path’, the Prophet allegorically represents this state by metaphors from the domain of ‘light’ and ‘darkness’. All these schemes are derived from the linguistic and cognitive practices of pre-Islamic and early Arab society.

Notes on contributor
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Notes
1. What is written between two square brackets is the researcher’s addition to the original text.
2. According to the Islamic fundamental belief, Jesus Christ was not crucified; instead, the Romans mistakenly crucified a person who was similar to Jesus. The identity of this substitute person has been a source of great interest among Muslims. The most frequently cited name refers to one of Jesus’
enemies and traitor called Judas Iscariot. A second proposal suggests that it was Simon of Cyrene who voluntarily accepted to be crucified instead of Jesus.

3. It is conventional in the field of cognitive linguistics to represent conceptual metaphors in small upper-case letters.

4. My examples are extracted from the Arabic version of Miškaṭ Al-MaSaabic (the Niche of Lamps), and all of the relevant information on the English translations and commentaries on the sayings of this study were taken from Miškaṭ Al-MaSaabic: English translation with explanatory notes by James Robson (Robson, 1965). The original collection (Miškaṭ) is considered to be one of the most authentic secondary collections of the prophetic tradition. For centuries, this collection has been subject to much meticulous investigation and refinement. Now, it involves about 5600 sayings; over half of which were collected from Al-Bukhari and Muslim’s collections of sound tradition (the primary collections of the prophet Muhammad’s sound sayings). A digital copy (doc.) of Miškaṭ can be downloaded from Meshkat Islamic Network for Arabic digital books (www.almeshkat.net/books/open.php?cat=8&book=1762).

5. The corpus is compiled from a digital Arabic version of Miškaṭ Al-MaSaabic. I refined the corpus by removing words and expressions which are not necessary for the analysis (such as names of the narrators, and the author’s commentaries which are not essentially part of the body of the sayings). This process reduced the size of the corpus from about 390,000 words to about 320,000 words. Later, I identified and tagged all instances of linguistic metaphors to facilitate their identification for the analysis.

6. For purposes of elucidation, metaphoric keywords from the source domain are represented in bold and their Arabic transliteration are represented in italic between two angle brackets, <xxx>.

7. The prophet emphasises that he was commanded by God to fight with men till they testify that there is no God but God and that Muhammad is God’s messenger. This testimony, called asḥaadaataan (the two testimonies), are the Muslim’s declaration of his belief in the oneness of God (tawhid) and acceptance of Muhammad as God’s prophet. Thus, if anyone utters these testimonies then his life should be kept, and his actual reckoning will be to God only.

8. Jinn, or Djinn, according to the Muslim conception, refers to the bodies (adjsam) composed of vapour or flame, intelligent, imperceptible to our senses, capable of appearing under different forms and of carrying out heavy labours (Sir Hamilton et al., 1960: ‘Djinn’).

9. There are two plurals for the word ‘abid in Arabic: the word ‘cebaad’, which is restricted to religious contexts, refers to all humankind, the other form is ‘cabyd’ which plainly means ‘slaves’.

References


