Eschatology tailoring the Identity

This paper is in every way a work in progress and a part of the initial phase of my Ph.D. project. The first section describes the purpose and outline of my Ph.D. project involving brief reflections on previous scholarship, brief material presentation and theoretical perspectives. The second section contains a case study in which I apply one of my theorical tools, Construal Level Theory on the composition of The Rule of Community.

In the Ph.D. project, I aim to investigate how authority is established, maintained, and contextualized in three selected Qumran compositions:1QS, 1QH, and 4QInstruction.

I work from the presupposition that cognitive mechanisms and in particular memory is a key to unlock the mysteries of development and renewal of biblical authority in Qumran literature.

The Qumran library contains a wide variety of literary genres, diverse narratives, which illustrate the human needs to narrate stories. I use the term narratives in its broadest sense, every literary text implies a narrative of some sort. Scholars agree that the Qumran texts are dependent on, and reflect, biblical texts and traditions. They are retellings and reinterpretations of established stories - told within a familiar but continuously renewed framework. In other words, the narrators seem to have felt obliged to reinterpret earlier texts in order to maintain authority and adjust the significance of previous traditions to their own circumstances and religious status.

Theological or Functional Canon

There have been many fruitful discussions concerning the topics of authority, canonicity, and the questions about which texts were considered influential and canonical in Qumran literature. My vantage point in this discussion builds on Philip S. Alexander useful distinction between *Theological Canon* and *Functional Canon* (Alexander 2017, 51):

> It is important to distinguish between a theological canon and a functional canon. The theological canon comprises those texts which as Scripture are supposed to serve as ultimate authorities in belief and practice—in Rabbinism, the Tanakh. The functional canon comprises those texts which actually serve as authoritative in belief and practice (Alexander, 2017).

The notion of functional canon allows us to look for the authority of those texts which seems to have been more influcial with regard to faith and practice. Authority becomes a less formal and rulebound idea and a more dynamic process orientated phenomenon.

In order to uncover the nature of authority I will apply social anthropological and cognitive approaches in addition to classical exegetical methods.

Basically, the authority of sacred texts is sustained in memory through transmission. What we remember has authority, compared to all that is forgotten. Our identity evolves through what we remember, whether we recognize or distance ourselves from the remembered content.

The selected Qumran Material

I briefly introduce the material chosen for the purpose of this project (1QS, 1QH, 4QInstruction). The three compositions are chosen because: 1) they are texts of central importance in the Qumran library judging from the number of extant copies; 2) they exhibit narrative structures and elements of various kinds; 3) they include elements of ritual practice; 4) they contain explicitly named "orators", serving as figures of authority. All three compositions have intertextual connections to biblical literature by means of retellings and reinterpretations.

1. The Rule of the Community or 1QS, was one of the first scrolls to be discovered in 1947. This text is considered a key sectarian document and is seen as definitive for classifying other compositions as sectarian or non-sectarian (Mink 2008). 1QS contains instructions and rules by which the community of God should be organized and structured. This composition addresses the figure of authority as the maskil.
2. Hodayot or Thanksgiving Scroll (1QH), is also one of the first discovered Dead Sea compositions. This text contains a patchwork of hymns and is predominantly considered as a sectarian text (Holm-Nielsen 2008, 293-297). The figure of authority in this composition is the first person speaker or the psalmist, who is the receiver of divine knowledge.
3. 4QInstruction or Sapiential Work A (4Q415-418, 4Q423, 1Q26), is considered the longest wisdom text from the Dead Sea Scrolls, is generally categorized as non-sectarian or, perhaps, "pre-sectarian" (Elgvin 1998, Høgenhaven 2008) . In this text the figure of authority is addressed as the understanding one who receives the divine secrets.

The distinction between *sectarian* and *non-sectarian* Qumran texts has been regarded by a majority of Qumran scholars as being of primary importance. However, scholars have not reached any

consensus concerning the exact criteria for such a distinction. Generally, the classification of texts as sectarian is based on the occurrence of specific linguistic expressions, and, more vaguely, on the occurrence of a specific sectarian world-view including a developed eschatology. I seek to offer a novel perspective, which goes beyond these two categories.

My suggestion is that 1QH, 1QS and 4QInstruction represent a comparable eschatological worldview. I propose that an overall reading of these compositions gives the impression that the eschatological worldview could be the driving force behind their shared message. Despite the three substantially different approaches, it seems relevant to discuss the idea that these compositions are directed towards the same purpose and therefore mediate the same ideology. While using different terminologies and approaches, all three compositions divide the cosmos in two parts. The cosmos is painted in black and white, in right and wrong. In this context, the purpose of these compositions is providing the correct knowledge of good versus evil, so the addressee is ensured the right place in the righteous community and eventually an eternal salvation while evading eternal damnation.

Theoretical perspectives

As mentioned before, the theoretical perspectives of this project include cognitive and social anthropological approaches. I aim to utilize the theory of Modes of Religiosity (Whitehouse 2002), Narrative Analytical Theory (Polkinghorne 1988), and Cognitive Literary Science (Burke & Troscianko 2017). These different approaches generally rest on models describing functions of human cognition. The advantage of the theory of Modes is its approach on how memory and emotions affect one another at a fundamental level. Additionally, the Cognitive Literary Science is an umbrella term that covers different analytical tools which are helpful in investigating cognitive and memory mechanisms closer. Finally, the Narrative Analytical Theory could be valuable in understanding how we need to narrate and retell stories to remember - and to pass on what we think is worthwhile remembering. These particular theories are selected with the hope of understanding why and how we establish and maintain authority through cognitive mechanisms.

Modes of Religiosity

The *Modes of Religiosity* theory explains underlying cognitive processes, by which religious devotion is experienced, organized, transmitted, and politicized (Whitehouse 2002, 293). Religious content and rituals take form, when two things occur: First, beliefs and rituals must take a form that people can *remember*. Second, people must be *motivated to pass on* these beliefs and rituals (Ibid., 295).

Consequently, *memory* and *motivation* become the foundation for transmission of any religious ideology, which is imprinted in human memory by the interaction between *frequency* (i.e., repetition) and *emotionality* (e.g., fear) (Atkinson & Whitehouse 2011, 51-52)..

In order to understand how *frequency* and *emotionality* facilitate the imprinting of religious information in memory, I will now provide a brief overview of essential memory functions.

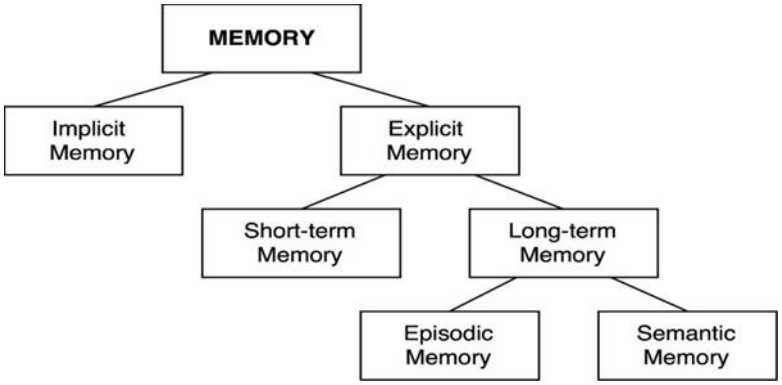


Figure 1. Memory functions

Memory can be divided into implicit and explicit types. Implicit memory deals with things we know without being aware of knowing, for example the procedural competences required in riding a bicycle. Explicit memory deals with things we know at a conscious level and can further be sub-divided into two types: Short-term and Long-term. Short-term memory enables us to hold on to concepts for a matter of seconds, for example, a new phone number remembered just long enough to write it down. Long-term memory is sub-divided into semantic and episodic types. Semantic memory consists of ”general knowledge” about the world, for example what is the capital city of France. We can rarely recall how or when we acquired this sort of knowledge. In contrast, episodic memory contains specific events in our life experience, it could be the death of a family member or our first kiss. Accordingly, features of episodic memory may also be referred to as autobiographical or narrative memory. These types of memory are activated differently in so-called *doctrinal* and *imagistic* modes of religiosity.

Doctrinal and Imagistic Modes of Religiosity

The Doctrinal mode favors high-frequency and low-arousal, less stimulating, religious content and rituals. This allows a large body of religious teachings to be stored in semantic memory. Frequent repetition has the effect of firmly fixing the teaching in people’s minds. The crucial thing is that standardized versions of the religious teachings are shared and accepted through regular public or private rehearsal. Most traditions of this sort have celebrated leaders, messiahs, prophets, divine

kings, and high priests. Such leaders are emphasized as "special" partly due to their skills as orators. The proclamations of the leaders provide the central tenets of a belief system, and their deeds become the basis for widely recounted religious narratives.

The Imagistic Mode concerns the sort of practices that are low frequency, rarely enacted, and highly arousing. Such rarely performed, and highly arousing rituals trigger vivid and enduring episodic memories among the people involved. It appears to be a combination of episodic distinctiveness, emotionality, and consequentiality that together result in lasting autobiographical memories, which forms the identity. Both *Doctrinal* and *Imagistic* modes can occur separately as organizing principles of religious experiences, beliefs, and practices. But often the two modes occur together, in a single tradition, while interacting with each other (Whitehouse 2004).

Construal Level Theory

In the following we will briefly familiarize ourselves with some of the basic assumptions in Construal Level Theory.

Humans can only experience the here and now directly (Liberman 2010). In spite of that, at this very moment you are a traveler who travels in time and space. Your mind travels in many directions; you might think: " Will I ever get through reading this paper?" Or "When is it time for coffee?" Maybe you recall a memory or maybe you are pondering about the future? Our minds constantly travel even though, it is impossible to experience the past, and the future, other places, other people, and alternatives to the present reality.

However, our minds can plan, remember, predict, hope, cause emotional responses, and guide our choices and actions. We can build civilizations, create ideologies, and start religions because our minds are able to travel in space and time and across social affinities and systematically calculate hypothetical situations.

At the same time no matter what, when, where, or who we are, our minds are continuously influenced by the context we are at. The puzzling thing is how we transcend the here and now and connect to the things we no longer are able to experience directly? How do we plan for the distant future, understand other people's point of view, and consider hypothetical alternatives to reality?

Construal level theory (CLT) is a theory in social psychology that describes the relation between psychological distance and the ability of abstract thinking with regard to objects and events.

CLT proposes that we form abstract mental construals dependent on how distant events or objects are. The general idea is that the more distant an object is from the individual, the more abstractly it will be perceived, whereas the closer the object is to the individual, the more concretely it will be perceived. As previously mentioned, we are only capable of experiencing the here and now. However, our cognitive ability to move in time and space, social affinities, and hypothetical thinking, enables us to predict the future, remember the past, imagine other people's reactions, and speculate. Predictions, memories, and speculations all serve to transcend the immediate situation and represent psychologically distant objects. The two key notions in CLT are *construal level* and *psychological distance*.

1. *Construal level* is a measure of abstraction, how concretely or abstractly we perceive an event or object. Construal level is divided into high-level and low-level construals. Lower-level construals are concrete, contextualized representations that include subordinate and random features of events or objects. Higher-level construals are abstract, schematic, and decontextualized representations that extract the gist from the available information. They emphasize superordinate, essential features of events and omit random features that may vary without significantly changing the meaning of the events.

   For example, "going on date": On low-level construal, this action includes details of where you are going to meet, who your date is and what you might wear. A high-level construal of the same action, would omit these details and represent it as "searching for love" and even "finding happiness". The lower-level covers the *How*, the feasibility of an action or the details of an object. The higher-level construal covers the *Why*, and gives direction to the lower-levels. In case of the aforementioned action, "finding love and happiness" are the higher construals and the why. The lower levels are the how, "wearing the right dress or being at the right time".
2. *Psychological distance*, is applied on four dimensions—temporal, spatial, social, and hypothetical distance. The temporal dimension covers the time aspect such as planning the future or remembering the past. Spatial dimension concerns the place where an event or an object is perceived. The social dimension covers how a subject experiences itself or someone else in a given situation. The fourth dimension, hypothetical distance, involves how we can predict and envisage a supposed object or event.

Case study (1QS & CLT)

My case study focuses on the composition 1QS/The Rule of Community as it is documented in the cave one manuscript. I do not intend to open the otherwise relevant question of the redaction history. First, I will simulate an interview with the Maskil of 1QS as a way of letting the text speak for itself. Second, I will draw an outline on how Construal Level Theory can function as an analytical tool in interaction with 1QS.

The advantage of the interview form is that it can take us around a rather large composition and give us a more coherent picture of the text.

First – an interview with the Maskil

I would like you to imagine and play along, that we are able to interview the Maskil of The Rule of Community. As you will notice, our Maskil has a certain preference for the study edition by Martinez and Tigchalar (Martínez & Tigchelaar 1999).

1. *How will you describe or profile the Yahad Community?*

   To outline it shortly, the Yahad group identifies itself with "Community of Truth, of proper Meekness, of Compassionate Love and upright purpose towards each other, in a Holy Council, associates of an everlasting society." II, 23-25

   The Yahad Community is aware that every member has his rightful rank and position in God's community and no one should try to move away from his place.

2. *You describe the Yahad Community with broad qualities such as truth, proper meekness, compassionate love and a society, which is holy and lasts forever. Most religious communities, would in some degree, subscribe to these terms. Can you take us deeper and explain the specific origins and ideology of the community?*

   Sure! ☺ The Yahad community believes in the realization of divine promises through enactment of the right lifestyle. We believe that we are the true Israel, making atonement for the sins of the people and we will become the children of light.

   Going back to the beginning: "There were in the Community council 12 men and 3 priests, perfect in everything that was revealed from all the law to implement truth, justice, judgment, compassionate love and unassuming behavior of one to another, to preserve faithfulness in the land with firm purpose and repentant spirit in order to atone for sin by doing justice… When these things exist in Israel, the Community council shall be founded on truth, to be an everlasting plantation, a holy house for Israel and the foundation of the holy of holies for Aaron… This is the tested rampart, the precious cornerstone… …and it will be a house of perfection and truth in Israel."

   VIII, 1-9

This is our story and at the same time our goal, what we all strive for and believe that we can achieve.

3. *How do you see yourself in this, what is your function as a Maskil?*

Well, to be quite clear, as for myself, I "belong to evil humankind, to the assembly of unfaithful flesh; my failings… with the depravities of my heart, I belong to the assembly of worms and of those who walk in darkness." XI, 9-10

But the duty of the Maskil is: " to seek God with [all (one's) heart and] with a[ll (one's) soul;] in order to do what is good and just in God's presence, as he commanded by the hand of Moses and by the hand of all his servants the Prophets; in order to love everything, which he selects and to hate everything that he rejects…" I, 2-6

The Maskil must keep these regulations, so he can "welcome all those who freely volunteer to carry out God's decrees into the covenant of kindness; in order to be united in the counsel of God and walk in perfection in his sight… …in order to love all the sons of light, each one according to his lot in God's plan, and to detest all the sons of darkness..." I, 7-11

For the members of the community the Maskil "should reproach (with) truthful knowledge and (with) just judgment those who choose the path, each one according to his spirit... He should lead them with knowledge and in this way teach them the mysteries of wonder and of truth..., so that they walk perfectly, one with another, in all that has been revealed to them." IX, 17-19

Summing up: My duties as a Maskil is to wholeheartedly and with complete devotion carry out God's commandments and see to it that the every Yahad member acts in accordance with his proper place.

4. *How can one become a member of the Yahad Community?*

Whoever wishes to become a member must: "Enter the covenant of God in the presence of all who freely volunteer. He shall swear with a binding oath to revert to the Law of Moses, according to all that he commanded, with whole heart and whole soul …" V, 7-9

And furthermore: "anyone from Israel who freely volunteers to enroll in the council of the Community, the man appointed at the head of the Many shall test him with regard to his insight and his deeds. If he suits the discipline, he shall let him enter into the covenant… …and he shall teach him all the precepts of the Community." VI, 13-15

The applicant undergoes an admission process of two years and during this period, he is examined regarding his deeds, knowledge, and purity.

5. *Why should anyone really want to join the Yahad community?*

If you are not a part of the Yahad and in process of learning the hidden matters, then you will face judgment and everlasting annihilation.

"All the men of injustice who walk along the path of wickedness… are not included in God's covenant since they have neither sought nor examined his decrees in order to know the hidden matters in which they err by their own fault and because they treated revealed matters with disrespect; this is why wrath will rise up for judgment in order to effect revenge by the curses of the covenant, in order to administer fierce punishments for everlasting annihilation without there being any remnant."

V, 11-13

6. *Why do you believe that humans will face judgment and annihilation?*

This is not merely, what I believe, it has been decreed by God from the beginning of creation: "From the God of knowledge stems all there is and all there shall be… From the spring of light, stem the generations of truth and from the source of darkness the generations of deceit."

III, 15;19

And, the visitation … will be an abundance of afflictions at the hands of all the angels of destruction, eternal damnation by the scorching wrath of the God of revenges, permanent terror and shame without end with the humiliation of destruction by the fire of the dark regions. And, all the ages of their generations (they shall spend) in bitter weeping and harsh evils in the abysses of darkness until their destruction, without there being a remnant or a survivor for them. In these (lies) the history of all men…

IV, 11-15

Whether you choose to join in or not, the course of time was set and the circle will be completed. You will either belong to the children of light or to the doomed children of darkness.

7. *Is then avoiding eternal damnation the ultimate reason for joining the Yahad?*

NO! The ultimate reason is to do what is Right: "In order to carry out all that God has commanded." I,16-17

"My eyes have observed what always is, wisdom that has been hidden from mankind, knowledge and prudent understanding (hidden) from the sons of man, fount of justice and well of strength and spring of glory (hidden) from the assembly of flesh. To those whom God has selected he has given them as everlasting possession; and he has given them an inheritance in the lot of the holy ones." XI, 5-8

By doing right and following God's commandments, man will become what he is destined for.

CLT & 1QS

In the second and final section, we will briefly visit three studies where CLT has been successfully used. In these studies, CLT has pinpointed how psychological distance inevitably effects the way we reflect on, approach, and construct various phenomena. The first study concerns values and morals (Eyal & Liberman 2012), the second study is in the genre of Science Fiction (Carney 2017) and the third study is in the field of linguistics and religious discourses (Grabwoska 2013).

To my knowledge, CLT has not yet been applied to ancient texts or scriptures. With the aforementioned three studies in CLT, we can approach 1QS on different levels:

Morals & Values

In the first study, Eyal and Liberman begin from the observation that any definition and construction of morality, and ideology is an abstract concept. Values and morals are defined as high-level construals, the *why*. Often morals and values are the perspectives from which we tend to plan or predict. We see values and morals as distant objects, but at the same time they are very much present. They shape the outer line of our choices and actions (Eyal and Liberman 2012).

However, the high-level construal, *the why*, is not enough. We need to know how to approach and realize the high-construal. Here the low-level construal covers the *how*, making the process of realization of values and morals feasible.

Let us look at 1QS through CLT-lenses, having the simulated interview with the Maskil in mind. In question no 1 and 7 the Maskil describes the Yahad community's qualities in broad and general terms. The Maskil aka 1QS uses high-level construals and sketches an outline of the community. Here the general terms, truth, meekness, love, and divine commandments function as abstract, schematic, and decontextualized representations. They omit the details and extract the gist to be able to present a clear profile of the community.

Going back to the interview, question no 4 briefly touches upon one of the main rituals of membership. With CLT terms, it describes the low-level construals, the *how*, and the feasibility of the high-level construals. The rituals in 1QS involve the low-level construal, because they are concrete, contextualized representations that include subordinate and random features of how to become a member or maintain the membership and excel. The descriptions of rituals make it possible to realize the normative high-levels, which consist of the broad ideological principals of 1QS.

Science Fiction

Going on to the second study, CLT has been utilized to analyze the genre of Science Fiction (Carney 2017). Science Fiction is a genre of cognitive estrangement, which alienates readers from their habitual environment. The cognitive estrangement happens through psychological distance, which occurs on several dimensions.

If we go back to the interview, in questions no 5, 6, and 7 the Maskil summarizes and defends the main reason for becoming a member of the community, here his answers reveal how a Qumranite's worldview is highly colored by an eschatological expectation.

I see an overlap between the way the science fiction universe is depicted and its effects on the addressee - and the way an eschatological world-view is described and effects its addressee.

Boldly speaking, the eschatological worldview in 1QS could function as an example of Science Fiction. In both Science fiction and 1QS eschatology, the temporal dimensions involve the intangible time and future. Yet, while the spatial dimension in Science Fiction involves the outer space, the spatial dimension in 1QS involves the true understanding of the real creation and cosmos. In Science Fiction, the social dimension often involves alien creatures, whereas in 1QS supernatural creatures such as Angel of Darkness, Prince of Light, or The Two Spirits fulfill the same part. Regarding hypothetical distance, the distinction between the real world and the otherworldly can be applied to both Science Fiction and 1QS.

The four psychological distances: Temporal, spatial, social, and hypothetical dimensions create altogether an eschatological worldview in 1QS that can be identified as high-level construal. The distances generate a reliable frame of reference and makes it possible to speak in eschatological terms. If 1QS portrayed an eschatological worldview that was going to happen in a near future, then it would not have the same effect and reliability.

Linguistics and Religious Discourses

The last study, where CLT has shown good results concerns a survey on the concept of "faith in God" and the linguistic discourse of Polish Christians (Grabwoska 2013). A large amount of data shows that people in their vocabulary switch between high-level construal and low-level construals when they articulate their image of faith in God. Like values and morals, the concept of faith in God, is an abstract and high-level construal. However, no matter if informants are believers or not, they will switch from articulating faith in God in general terms, such as Church, Dogmas, or Organization, into

their personal perception and relationship to these general terms. This has been observed linguistically. Every time a person articulates a high-level construal, the sentences become impersonal, general, and abstract. On the other side, every time the informant articulates a low-level construal, they use pronouns to describe their relation to the general terms.

Going back to the interview one final time, the Maskil aka. 1QS, switches from impersonal, abstract definitions, high-level construals, to low-level construal language describing his own role and perception of the Yahad ideology. The questions 1, 2, 5, 6, and 7 concern the overall ideology and the overarching goal of the Yahad Community, but if we look closely to question no 3, the Maskil articulates his own function by describing himself. We have pronouns and the maskil functions as a subject, whereas in the answer to the other questions the subject is impersonal.

Conclusion

This initial study has hopefully shown that there is some unexplored ground to cover and CLT perspectives can come in handy. The mutual interaction between the psychological distances and the high and the low-level construals can help us identify different cognitive mechanisms employed in 1QS. CLT appears as a promising analytical tool in demonstrating the relationship and the coherence between eschatological ideas and identity formation and daily practice in a Qumran text.

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