

Lost in Translation: Mental Maps and the Cultural Understanding of Scripture

Introduction

Paul Ricoeur (1981:140) states (in his own way, using the term ‘distanciation’) that texts lose their original contexts of interpretation as conditions and thus corresponding mental maps change: “...when it is no longer possible to identify the thing spoken about as part of the common situation of the interlocutors.” Mary Douglas (1996:1) expands on the problem in a way relevant to the task of Bible translators:

There is always a problem of how to interpret a story when it is not clear whether it is meant to be funny or tragic, and when the whole social context is missing. It must be in line with critical theory to say that when *all* you have is the story itself the meaning is whatever the reader assigns to it. In a sense you, the newest reader, become the author of the current meanings. This should be a comfort to the updating feminist readings of Mother Goose stories, and to psychoanalytic readings, or jazzy Monty Python style reworking... But it is very little comfort to old-fashioned folklorists or anthropologists who might want to know what the story originally meant to say.

In what follows, the ideas of George Lakoff and Mary Douglas have provided much of the theoretical basis for examining the ways in which culturally constructed mental maps continually transform the way in which scripture texts are understood. Understanding these transformational processes themselves can help translators mediate meaning between intended audiences and what the biblical texts presumably “originally meant to say.”

Foundational to such a study is the idea that words (or text-signs) do not refer directly to entities in the real world, but rather to the mental maps that cultural communities have constructed to understand that world. Since these modes of organization can differ dramatically across time and cultural space, original communication events can be and at times are in fact lost or changed almost beyond recognition.

There is no point in taking a position on whether these transformations are to be celebrated or resisted in principle. They are inevitable. Yet there is some value (historical, if nothing else) in trying to uncover the processes of understanding involved in both ancient and modern communities. For Bible translation, it is certainly worthwhile to reveal some of the terrain of the mental maps of the different thought-worlds, and in so doing shed light on both the ancient and modern understandings of scripture.

This phenomenon raises obvious questions for translation as well. When mental maps diverge, are translators to explain what the text possibly meant in ancient times, or are they to try to communicate something similar (all necessary changes having been made) to a modern audience? Or are they to try to do both? And to what degree this can be done in translation? What is the role of reader's helps? These and other questions will be used to explore the role of translation in the mediation of divergent mental geographies.

Frames, Networks, and Prototypes

Lakoff (1980, 1986) has shown how terms and concepts are often related in complex webs of association, often through underlying metaphors. In the first example below, the different meanings of English “key” seem to have a common metaphorical basis in the idea of ACCESS TOOL. But the corresponding terms and concepts in Spanish show another quite different, yet also entirely logical, category structure. Rather than the ACCESS TOOL (physical or abstract) metaphor underlying “key” in English, the corresponding Spanish domain is organized into TURNING TOOL, STRIKING TOOL, and ACCESS TOOL (abstract). In trying to relate the terms cross-linguistically, the issue is further complicated by the fact that in English the prototypical key belongs to the TURNING TOOL category in Spanish, and not to the ACCESS TOOL category, the only place the conceptual systems in the two languages match up well.

“Key” in English and Spanish (from Bascom:2003)

For most English speakers, the word “key” will most quickly be associated with the frame of entering a previously locked door. But this prototypical use of the word is extended to uses in other frames associated with, for example, pianos, computers, maps, codes, music, and problems. The relationship might be associated with size as well as access: a key is a small item enabling access to a relatively large one, such as a locked box or house, or by extension, a “small” detail enabling accessing to a “big” problem.

The frame for entering a house is of course shared by Spanish speakers and English speakers and it is easy to establish an intercultural link between “key” and *llave*. However, as always found out early in the process of learning a second language, a correspondence in meaning between terms of different languages in one situation does not entail their correspondence in other frames. *Llave*, but not “key”, can refer to the handle of a faucet or to a wrench. In more general terms, *llave* seems to be something you handle to open and shut things, or get things on and off. Unlike English, a different word, *tecla*, (with a “finger-strike” physical orientation) is used to refer to piano or computer “keys”. There is also a domain in Spanish having to do with abstract access, but here the word is *clave* (related historically to *llave*, but now independent).

The figure below illustrates the problem. The prototypical use of “key” leads us to *llave* in Spanish, although the terms arguably belong to different domains: *llave* being an instrument for turning and “key” an instrument for enabling access. Piano and computer keys are covered in Spanish by *tecla*, a specific striking tool. The area of meaning where the use of “key” matches well with a corresponding use in Spanish is where the English term is least prototypical — least like a key to a house or box: when it refers to an abstract tool of access. But as noted above, Spanish uses a different term for this domain (*clave*). The complexity of the networks is seen in the fact that English “key” produces three different corresponding Spanish terms/domains (*llave*, *clave*, *tecla*), while Spanish *llave* has three quite different term/domain results in English (key, faucet, wrench). Both systems work quite well, but they most certainly do not match up in any way one could have predicted, nor can they be derived from each other in any obvious way (adapted from Bascom:2003).

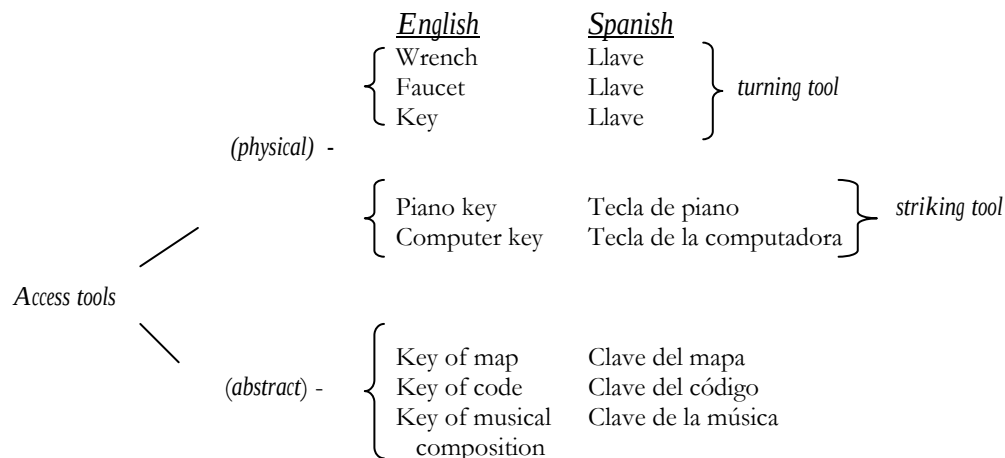


Figure 10. “Key” and “*llave*”: matches and mismatches.

A more serious problem for Bible translators is the mismatch between the conceptual systems of biblical Hebrew and modern English with regard to the terms and concepts of “heart.” While prototypical meaning associations for “heart” in English are overwhelmingly sentimental (love, tender feelings, romance), the situation for ancient Hebrew is quite different. While emotions are expressed with the term, they are nearly always by metaphorical extension (see table below). Thus for example, if one is angry, one’s heart is “hot.” But heart by itself, even in the famous case of loving with one’s heart, is arguably less about emotion and more about commitment.

“Heart” in Hebrew and English (from Bascom:1996)

Hans Walter Wolff (1974) has documented the fact that לֵב (“heart”) is not the seat of emotion in Hebrew as it is in English, but of intentionality. It reflects human thoughts directed towards the future, in planning, willing or wishing. What Wolff does not go on to say, but is surely an important expansion of his explication, is that לֵב may well never be literal (meaning the organ of the body) in the Hebrew Bible. The one possible exception is the case of Nabal in 1 Samuel 25.37, where his heart is said to have died within him, referring perhaps to a stroke or a heart attack. Yet even here there is doubt, since the next verse says that ten days later Yahweh smote Nabal, and he died. Thus the first instance could just as easily be describing deep discouragement or depression. Interestingly, the NT does not use καρδια in a literal sense either (Louw:1989).

Furthermore, אהב and לֵב are never used together in Hebrew outside of the usages in Deuteronomy referring to loving God. More importantly, only rarely can one find any connection between even the concept of love and the heart in the Hebrew Bible (cf. Song of Solomon 4.9 “you have ravished my heart...”). In Deuteronomy, while the human לֵב can stand for emotions, unless we count the text under discussion (and related ones) those emotions are never love or compassion, but discouragement (1.28 “melt”), pride, (8.12, 17.20 “lifted up”), stubbornness (15.7 “hardened”), sadness (15.10 “grieved”), anger (19.6 “hot”), fear (20.8 “faint”), or shock/surprise (28.28 “astonish”). Yet even these texts are fewer and less significant than those which show the לֵב as the center of intentionality (planning, willing, wishing). In Deuteronomy alone, outside the text(s) under consideration people consider in their hearts (4.39, 8.5), say/speak/congratulate in their hearts (7.17, 8.17, 9.4, 29.19), are deceived in their hearts (11.16), ponder/memorize in their hearts (11.18), think in their hearts (15.9), and perceive in their hearts (29.4).¹ The richness of idioms connected with לֵב, including a number of examples denoting emotions, coupled with the lack of idioms with לֵב denoting love (no “tender” or “delicate” or “soft” לֵב, for example) seem to point to a lack of connection between לֵב and the concept of love in general (Bascom:1996).

The following table can be variously arranged according to the various usages of “heart,” or by what these usages are apparently trying to convey, or by where there is overlap in various usages to convey similar ideas. I have basically done the latter, and tried to accommodate the former two where possible. Thus the Hebrew use of a “hot” heart could be put next to the English “heartburn,” but what they are trying to convey are so different as to make the comparison not very interesting, since these meanings are not likely to be confused. “Hard-hearted” in Hebrew and English is a more interesting case, since in Hebrew it clearly means stubborn (cf. all the references to the Pharaoh in Exodus), while in English it means lacking in compassion or pity. At least as important to a translator are cases where a single concept (e.g. discouragement) is rendered by one usage in Hebrew (“cast down”) and others in English (“lose heart, heart sinks”). One must consider how the English usages and mental mappings have been influenced by the tradition of formal translation of scripture. A “pure” heart, for example probably comes from the common scriptural usage of dedicated single-mindedly to God, and becomes sincere or honest in English. Broken-hearted in Isaiah 61.1 certainly means discouraged, but is converted in English to prototypically refer to the specific sadness that comes from the loss of a romantic relationship. If one’s heart faints in Hebrew, it is due to fear or panic, but in English one is fainthearted if unable or unwilling to face fearful situations. And so on.

Usages of “heart” (*leb*) in Hebrew and English

Hebrew	(English)	Used to Convey
hot		anger
lifted up		pride
hard		stubbornness
pure		single-minded
turn heart / cause to turn heart		commit to / convince
(feel) good		intoxicated
sustain		physical recovery (from hunger/thirst)

¹ One never finds, for example, as in Mayan languages, that the heart “hurts” (= love), or is “delicious” (= happiness). It is the fact that love and heart rarely combine in any text (e.g. as with “you have ravished my heart” in Song of Songs) to mean emotional attachment that is significant.

smitten		guilty
upon		lonely for
steal		gain loyalty of
go after		be loyal to, follow
Hebrew	English	Used to Convey
astonish, faint, go out, melt (like wax)	freeze/stand still/stop / heart failure	fear/shock /panic
cast down, hinder, break, die	lose heart, sink, disheartened	discouragement, giving up
grieve	sick	relational sadness
set (to), ponder in heart	take to heart	consider, think about, reflect
strong, stout	brave, lion-hearted	bravery
sing	leap	joy
ravish	steal	infatuation
with all/whole	half/whole heartedly, a lot of heart, heart not in it	commitment /desire, lack of same
be upon, write on heart	by heart	memorize
after one's own heart (usually God's)	after one's own heart	in conformity to the desires or nature of
trembling, fearful of heart	faint-hearted	timid, cowardly, fearful
(Hebrew)	English	Used to Convey
	hard, cold, of stone, no heart	lacking in compassion or pity
	pure	honest, sincere
	heavy	worry, sadness
	soft, tender	compassion, tenderness
	warm/kind/good-hearted	kind, sympathetic
	have a /have no heart	compassion/lack of compassion
	throb	romantic love
	break	relational love - sadness
	from bottom of heart	depth of feeling
	heart in hand	repentant, humble
	big heart, you're all heart	generous
	heartburn	specific physical pain (cf. Heb. "heart is hot"=anger)
	take heart	be encouraged, made brave
	heart to heart	candid, frank
	heart-struck	grief, dismay, remorse
	large/big-hearted	generous
	all heart	generous (usually sarcastic)
	false-hearted	deceitful, treacherous
	chicken-hearted	cowardly
	warm the (cockles of) heart	cheer, gladden
	heart-warming	causing gladness or pleasure
	pluck at heart-strings, make heart bleed	make sad
	eat one's heart out	long for, desire (unfulfilled)
	heart in one's mouth	excited anticipation
	heart rending	causing anguish or deep distress or sympathy
	bleeding heart	considered to be overly and impractically sympathetic
	lonely hearts	missing romantic companionship
	heart of hearts	innermost self
	at heart / get to the heart	core, important part (in Hebrew, done with bone)
	from the bottom of the heart	sincerely, with conviction and emotional force
	wearing one's heart on one's sleeve	oversensitive, thin-skinned
	heart in hand	repentant, humble
	set one's heart on	desire, emotionally focus
	full heart	overcome with emotion
	to one's heart's content	as much as desired
	cross one's heart	vow, solemn promise
	lives in one's heart	be ever-present in the mind/attention, commitment (context is often where the commitment cannot be expressed openly)

Friend as a Cross-Cultural Concept

Ronald Ross (2003) cites Anna Wierzbicka with regard to a concept that might easily be assumed to be universal across cultures—that of a “friend”:

[Wierzbicka] ...points out that many languages have a word resembling ‘friend’, and that we blithely translate them from one language into another by means of each other, assuming a high degree of correspondence. However when the meaning of these words is analyzed, enormous dissimilarities appear. For instance, to Anglo Saxons, ‘friend’ refers to someone they are very fond of, want to spend time with, do things with and for, go places with and confide in. The corresponding Polish word, however, means something very different. It refers to a person who does the same thing you do at the same place you do it. If you sell fish at the market and there is a fellow across the aisle who sells carrots, and the two of you spend many hours together every day talking, complaining about the government, and grouching about the low price of fish and carrots, then you are friends. But it would never occur to you to invite him to your house or suggest that you go to the beach together. That’s what *family* is for. The Polish notion of ‘friend’ is strikingly similar to that of *amigo* in certain parts of Latin America. She attributes the Anglo Saxon concept of friend to this culture’s having replaced the extended family with friends.

This example, along with the preceding and the following ones, fit a pattern which will be further examined below. That pattern, first made explicit by the sociologist Emile Durkheim, has been further developed by Mary Douglas. The model predicts that when cultures move from a hierarchist to an individualist mode of self-understanding and structure, their conceptual systems will reflect that change. Thus the hierarchist biblical culture’s commitment-centered underlying metaphor for *leb* is unsurprisingly (if not predictably in the particular case) replaced by an individualist notion of heart as the seat of personal feeling and love. In such a cultural transformation, *family* obligations are replaced by the free choice of *friends* by autonomous persons. And even wine-drinking (next example) moves from a social behavior to a personal mode of recreation (and thus for some, a personal vice).

Wine and Drinking in Receptor Languages

The term “sober” in English refers prototypically to not being intoxicated, but can have several other associations, including responsible, disciplined, serious and even sad. In Plautdietsch (PD—a Low German dialect spoken in Canada and in various parts of Latin America), the corresponding term “nichts” is, according to the main translator of this Bible, understood almost exclusively to refer to not being intoxicated, with no established connections to any other meanings.

There are a number of biblical references (1TI 3,2; 2TI 4,5; TIT 2,2; 1PE 1,13; 4,7; 5,8) where the case could be made that intoxication is not what is in focus at all. The Greek word which is usually involved is νήφω. Louw and Nida’s Greek-English Lexicon Based on Semantic Domains reports the term either as related to thought or behavior: “...a figurative extension of the meaning of νήφω to not be drunk, probably not occurring in the NT... to be in control of one’s thought processes... to be sober-minded... to behave with restraint and moderation...to be self-controlled...” They go on to quote 1Th 5.7-8 “those who get drunk get drunk in the night; but we belong to the day and we should be sober”... and say, “most scholars interpret the use of νήφω in the NT as applying to a broader range of...restraint and moderation...”

Whether right about this passage or not, Louw and Nida certainly seem to have captured the sense as it usually is found in the NT. Thus a prototypical meaning of sober as “not drunk” is usually if not always used in a metaphorical sense with extended meanings of restrained and responsible in the NT. When the PD translation decides to use “nichts” in these cases, it can only do so legitimately if there is enough context in the translation to achieve the presumed metaphorical extension present in the Greek text. Otherwise the default prototypical (culturally contextual) meaning of non-intoxication will override the most probable original contextual meaning, which is something more like “self-controlled, restrained.”

A problem of mental mapping in the same general area of drinking alcohol is present in Tzotzil, a Mayan language of southern Mexico:

The Tzotzils have always had a local drink (*pox*), but it is not made from grapes. Thus with the arrival of the Spaniards they borrowed the term *vino*. In time this borrowing came to mean any alcoholic drink, similar in usage to the English verb “to drink” without an object (“he drinks”). The problem for Bible translators came when they tried to translate the term as it appears in the Bible. In the local Tzotzil setting, social drinking was virtually unknown. If Tzotzils drink any sort of alcohol, it was and is widely assumed they do so to become intoxicated. Thus the use of *vino* would make all the passages in Scripture seem to be talking of situations in which the partakers were getting drunk. Yet no other terms seemed appropriate. One could use “juice of the grape”, but that had no alcoholic associations whatever. And the use of both terms would make it seem like there were two kinds of drink rather than two kinds of drinking (Bascom:2003).

Finally, even in English we have a case of a sub-cultural mismatch in this area of intoxication. In Gen 43.34, the text says of Joseph and his brothers: “So they drank and were merry with him.” The combination drinking (understood as wine) and making merry without fail elsewhere mean getting drunk. But while at other points this is made clear by translators, here most translations are much more circumspect than the source text (cf. CEV’s “had a good time”). One suspects the mismatch in this case to have been a case of piety influencing the translation. Joseph simply should not be getting drunk, and so translations into English at least (with the exception of the TEV) usually protect his reputation. Drinking alcohol and/or getting drunk has become so strongly identified as a prototypical personal vice or sin in certain modern receptor cultures that it is difficult for translators to be honest with the biblical text and at the same time not give the impression to their modern readers that revered biblical persons were of questionable character and commitment to God.

These and many other examples like them show that when examining problems of meaning cross-linguistically, it is not simply that terms many have a one-to-many or many-to-one relation across languages. Conceptual systems themselves (mental maps) often diverge, many times through prototype effects (Lakoff, 1986). The metaphors they are built upon can be fundamentally different (“key”). Or the structure of associations can simply have been built up differently, producing a different overall network (“heart”). Or cultural experiences or biases of one kind or another can make certain original language meanings difficult to almost impossible to convey without recourse to extended explanation in receptor language cultures (“friend,” “wine”). But it remains to investigate both the basis for the apparent lack of universal mental mapping, but also to attempt some sort of typology of the possible worlds which are produced as a result.

On Similarity, or “Resemblance is not a Property” (Lakoff:1980, 1986; Douglas:1986, 1996)

Both Lakoff and Douglas make the point that categorization is the basis for building conceptual worlds. More importantly, they both agree that the process of categorization does not take place the way nearly everyone assumes that it does. Similarities inherent between objects in the physical world would naturally seem to be the logical basis for creating categories. Thus human beings are obviously alike, and sheep are alike, and so on. However, it turns out that cultures often categorize in ways which are quite different from each other, and in ways which seem mutually inexplicable until some work has been done to find the basis for the categories.

Douglas (like Lakoff) makes the point that “similarities” are therefore not really “out there” attached to the objects we categorize, nor are they empty mental bins pre-constructed for just such objects, but are always related to specific human purposeful activity, which she calls the “frames of reference” for the categories we make. “Sameness is not a quality that can be recognized in things themselves; it is conferred upon elements within a coherent scheme... The idea of a quality of similarity keeps resurfacing because sets of similar things are so well-established within a particular culture that their sameness has the authority of self-evidence,” (1986, pp. 59-60).

It is not that there are no such things as similarities inherent in objects in the world. Rather it is that so many possible similarities exist, and so many reasons for making categories exist, that it is difficult to impossible to predict

which categories will be formed and what objects will be clustered in them. It is the second reason stated above, that is, purposeful human activity, which Lakoff and Douglas believe is the true basis for categorization.

Lakoff (1986) speaks of motivated (rather than inherent, universal, or *a priori*) bases for categories. What he means is that once one understands a formerly unfamiliar categorical system, it can make perfectly good sense (i.e. have a logical structure and an extendable pattern). It can be seen to be motivated by certain concerns particular to the category-makers. But often it would be impossible to have predicted the category or the reasons for it beforehand. Thus the title of Lakoff's book *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things*. These are all categorized together in Dyrbal typology for reasons which to the outsider may seem complicated and strange, but which not only seem perfectly natural within Dyrbal culture, but which in the end both give logical structure to the category and serve the purposes for which the category was created.

Lakoff at another point refers to this filtering of certain similarities on the basis of categorization as the metaphorical structuring of our understanding. He believes that "understanding takes place in terms of entire domains of experience and not in terms of isolated concepts." (1980, p. 117). In a way reminiscent of Goffman's natural frames, Lakoff speaks of certain "basic domains of experience" which are nevertheless metaphorically structured. He argues that they are "natural" in the sense that they have to do with our own interaction with our bodies or with our interaction with the physical environment, or with our interaction with others within our culture: "In other words, these 'natural' kinds of experience *are products of human nature*. Some may be universal, while others will vary from culture to culture." (1980, p. 118). His now famous TIME IS MONEY or ARGUMENT IS WAR examples are illustrations of culture-specific metaphorical structuring of basic or natural domains of experience.

Douglas calls these filters frames of reference. She goes on to say (1996:149):

Any two things whatever, as disparate as you like on some criteria (such as the camel and the rock badger in Leviticus 11), can be counted the same by selecting shared features. There are an infinite number of good reasons for assigning any two things to the same set (Goodman, 1969). Being similar is an endowment of intellectual activity, which necessarily has to start with sets, categories, classes. But the intellectual activity articulates the rest of the behaviour, and the clues as to what is going on are in that behaviour.

In my household, for example, I could decide to classify all the living beings (already a decision taken presumably for a specific reason). I might choose to ignore the ants and spiders and such, and instead concentrate on the humans and pets (for one thing, they are easier to count). Humans could go in one category (myself, my wife, my son), and pets in the other (a spayed female cat, a male beta fish). However, I may want to group the males together (myself, my son, the beta fish) against the females (my wife, and in some sense at least, the cat). Or fur might be the distinctive or salient feature for categorization, or gills, or color of eyes, and so on. All kinds of categories are possible, each one as legitimate and as perfectly good as any other, depending on the purpose of the classification.

Another example can be given from the rudimentary intelligence test in which the test-taker is presented with three objects such as those below:



The question is then posed: which of the objects is different? Of course the answer seems painfully obvious. The triangle is different. But let us imagine a culture in which "first" things are special (such as first-fruits or first-born in the Hebrew Bible). Furthermore, let us imagine that this culture has a built-in left-to right spatial orientation preference (as for example with left-to-right writing systems). Then the square on the left might be chosen as "different," and the (to us) obvious difference between the squares and the triangle ignored. Or imagine a culture where "middle" things are somehow salient (cf. chiasm in the Hebrew Bible). Then the middle square would be chosen. Or take a culture with absolute orientation preference. Then the east/west/north/southmost (depending

on which was salient for the culture) might be chosen, and would differ depending on where one was sitting in relation to the objects. And so on.

In our culture, we have ready-made concepts of what constitutes an object, as well as how to manipulate abstract versions of such objects (or shapes) on a page (geometry). Other cultures with different organizational interests may have built up other categories such that the very question above would have questionable meaning. Perception itself is dependent, at least in part, on underlying ready-made conceptual systems. What people will see (squares and triangles, or something quite different) and how they will understand what seem to be even the most straightforward utterances (objects... different) can only be fit in some way or another with their prior experience as well as their organization of that prior experience. Otherwise their experience will be by definition either existential and ineffable or no experience at all.

Lakoff makes it clear that the similarities he is talking about are epistemological and experiential, not ontological (1980, p. 154):

...things in the world do play a role in constraining our conceptual system. But they play this role *only through our experience of them*. Our experiences will (1) differ from culture to culture and (2) may depend on our understanding of one experience in terms of another, that is, our experiences may be metaphorical in nature. Such experiences determine the categories of our conceptual system. And properties and similarities, we maintain, exist and can be experienced only relative to a conceptual system. Thus, the only similarities relevant to metaphors are *experiential*, not *objective*, similarities.

Thought-Communities and Cultural Clusters

Douglas starts from the point of view that the conceptual worlds formed from the purposeful categorizing activities mentioned above are essentially social, not individual.

Emile Durkheim had another way of thinking about the conflict between individual and society (Durkheim, 1903, 1912)... For him the initial error is to deny the social origins of individual thought. Classifications, logical operations, and guiding metaphors are given to the individual by society. Above all, the sense of a priori rightness of some ideas and the nonsensicality of others are handed out as part of the social environment. He thought the reaction of outrage when entrenched judgements are challenged is a gut response directly due to commitment to a social group. (Douglas:1986, p. 10).

Douglas uses the work of Ludwick Fleck to further develop this idea of the social origins of conceptual systems, which he calls thought collectives and thought styles:

For Fleck, the thought style sets the precondition of any cognition, and it determines what can be counted as a reasonable question and a true and false answer. It provides the context and sets the limits for any judgement about objective reality. Its essential feature is to be hidden from the members of the thought collective.

Douglas has developed a grid/group theory of cultures which is an extension of the idea of personal freedom versus social solidarity put forth by Durkheim as the contrast between community and society. The original social argument stated that where there existed a high degree of individual freedom, there usually was also a lack of social solidarity, and vice versa. In other words, in communities where an individual's business is everyone's business, that person is nevertheless supported by means of the social structure as long as she or he plays by the rules of the group. In societies where one may do pretty much as one pleases, there is also a marked lack of support from others when anything goes wrong. Douglas has mapped this onto a graph which describes not two, but four different cultural patterns.

Cultural Clusters

Isolate – Alienation	Hierarchist – Cooperation within structure
Individualist – Individual competition	Enclavist – Cooperation in dissent



Increasing limits on personal freedom // Increasing solidarity →

In this graph, the horizontal axis describes increasing solidarity while increasing limits on options is plotted along the vertical axis. The resulting chart describes four cultural models, and Douglas argues that cultures tend to cluster in these corners, such that one does not usually get the values and behaviors of the differing patterns mixing together to any great extent. The cultural modes can express themselves in various aspects of life, whether economics, religion, politics, the arts, or even such things as “personal” taste. The four models are:

Hierarchists – socialist or welfare economies, these are those cultures whose various and varied attempts to form a more structured society than that of the individualists give them a great deal of social cohesion but rob them of personal freedom. Knowing and keeping one's place in society is highly valued.

Individualists - market economies, these are individualist cultures where the free and open exchange of goods, ideas, values, etc., is the primary mode of interaction. Personal achievement is rewarded; failure to achieve on a personal level is not well tolerated. Competition is expected, conspicuous consumption a sign of wealth.

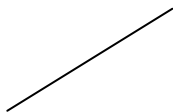
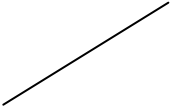
Enclavists - also known as sectarians or communards, these are those who both love personal freedom and social solidarity. The only way to achieve the latter without sacrificing the former is through sheer commitment to the group. Utopian groups cluster here. Leadership is weak, membership often temporary.

Isolates - these people are not connected well to their peers, but feel trapped by rules imposed by the dominant cultural forms. They are the homeless, the blue-collar workers on the bottom rung without union support, and others living at the margins of the other cultural models.

Douglas considers isolates and enclavists by their nature to be less stable, and thus less viable as long-term cultural patterns than the individualist and hierarchist models. That is because she believes that what she traces out as the diagonal between individualists and hierarchists (shown below as the diagonal of power) describes the older, but still valid observation (by Durkheim) that individual freedom and social solidarity naturally work as opposing pairs to form the most stable cultures. While isolates and enclavists do exist, they usually do so in some sort of subordinate or dissenting relationship to an individualist and hierarchist culture.

Douglas further maps out the cultural types along the two diagonals of her graph. The first, which she calls the positive diagonal (below listed as the diagonal of power), is where most organized groups and societies cluster. Hierarchy and individual competition seem to be the most stable of the cultural groupings. Again, these two types correspond most closely to the original Durkheimian community/society contrast. Though they differ in how they are structured, they both have strong leadership which can reward members (by personal honor or financial gain or by prestige within the group structure) and punish them (by personal failure or poverty or by exclusion from the group) based on how well they are able to play by the rules of the ruling cultural type.

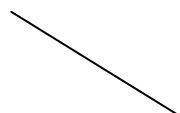
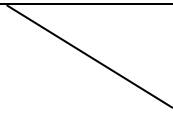
Diagonal of Power

	Hierarchist – Cooperation within structure 
Individualist – Individual competition 	

While Durkheim and other sociologists were keenly aware of isolates (the term they used to refer to their alienated states was *anomie*), Douglas adds the dissenting enclave and completes her paradigm with a negative diagonal (listed below as the diagonal of dissent). Here, whether in groups or as individuals, are the cultural clusters which are anti-structure. Environmentalist groups, anti-war movements, and some sectarian communities represent the enclavist cluster. They have weak leadership and not much structure. They can neither structurally punish nor reward. Yet individual members have such a high degree of solidarity with other members of the group that enclavists can achieve a great deal together, until such a time as they decide not to work together any longer. Isolates, on the other hand, are completely independent, not forming even the temporary alliances of the enclavists. Either by choice or by lack of options, isolates are the marginalized persons from every other cultural cluster.

An important feature of Douglas' argument is that most of this loyalty to whatever cultural type or cluster one belongs to goes on without the explicit recognition of it or how it works by the members of the group. In this way it acts like the grammar of a language, known and obeyed by all who speak the language, but often explicitly known only to a few. In fact, the group loyalty is usually expressed not positively, but negatively. In her article "On Not Being Seen Dead: Shopping as Protest" (Douglas:1996), she describes the choices made by consumers as "an agonistic struggle to define not what one is, but what one is not." (p. 104). Many have noted (cf. Hall:1990) the hidden dimension of cultural beliefs and values (though one might argue that marketing specialists must understand some aspects of these very well). Douglas' contribution is to attempt to categorize the kinds of systems to which these heretofore little-understood or examined areas of social structure belong.

Diagonal of Dissent

Isolate – Alienation 	
	Enclavist – Cooperation in dissent 

In more that one of her books (1992, 1996), Douglas uses her model to look at different approaches to the problems of dealing with the natural environment. Here a different sort of illustration is useful. One can see the different cultural styles at work in the attitudes towards nature and human interaction with it. Individualists see

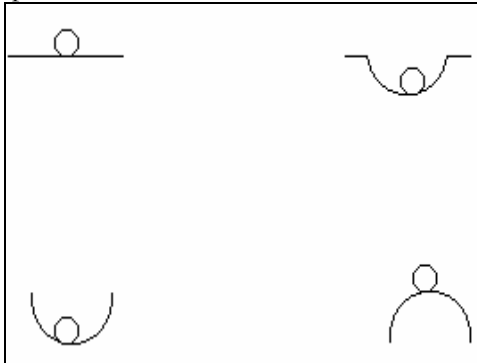
nature as robust. Thus human intervention (logging, drilling, etc.) is not to be feared, since nature will recover its equilibrium easily (in the figure, the ball representing the environment will roll back down into the bowl even when pushed far up one side or the other). Isolates take no particular view, and see nature as essentially unpredictable. Hierarchists are willing to interfere to a degree, but wish to put limits on human action with regard to nature. And enclavists see nature as precariously balanced and in need of protection. Thus enclavists oppose the intervention of the hierarchists and especially of the individualists. While all these positions seem to be about nature, according to Douglas they are really about the cultural types. One can see how these views of nature justify the very kinds of behavior one expects from each of the clusters.

Isolates-Fatalists:

Nature is Capricious

Hierarchists-Balancers:

Nature is Robust within Limits



Individualists-Entrepreneurs:

Nature is Robust

Enclavists-Protectors:

Nature is Fragile

In another application of Douglas' grid/group model, Gerald Mars (Douglas:1992) has analyzed organizational cultures using various animal metaphors. The categories are self-explanatory, and the metaphors are helpful in capturing the distinctive traits of the four different styles or cultures.

Organizations

Isolate – Donkeys Used by others Unorganized labor	Hierarchist – Wolves Pack hunters Organized labor/management
Individualist – Hawks Lone operators Entrepreneurs	Enclavist – Vultures Solidarity/individuality Sales reps, semi-skilled craftsmen



Increasing limits on personal freedom // Increasing solidarity →

One can easily expand the model to include cultures relevant to whatever area is under discussion. Thus religion, or one particular form of it, can be classified as shown below:

Christianity

Isolate – Some forms of asceticism	Hierarchist – Roman Catholicism
Individualist – Protestantism	Enclavist – New Testament Era Christianity

In this representation, the history of modern Europe and North America can be seen a general move from hierarchist to individualist modes. Whether in the arts (The Renaissance) or science (The Enlightenment) or religion (The Reformation), the trend has been from the upper right to the lower left.

Key terms/concepts:

An application of Douglas' model to key concepts in scripture can also be enlightening. These key concepts (sometimes less helpfully referred to as key terms) have for some time been a special concern for those involved in Bible translation. There has been a feeling that somehow these particular words, or better the ideas behind them, are both especially important and especially difficult to translate. But no one has ever successfully explained why this is so, or even why a particular term or concept should be included in the list.² Using Douglas' cultural clusters can help us to make a start. Concepts are hard to translate when, at least, the conceptual systems largely given to individuals by the communities to which they belong are so fundamentally different that the very ideas are not seen in the same way.

Faith in the Hebrew Bible (a hierarchist culture) is almost always presented as faithfulness. In a society valuing social solidarity, it is hardly surprising that this should be so. The NT situation is already quite different. The nascent Christian community is enclavist, and thus we see faith as trust and hope (cf. Paul's' famous reinterpretation of the Habakkuk citation "The just shall live by (their) faith(fulness).") Yet in modern interpretation (within individualist cultures for the most part) belief, or strength of conviction are usually emphasized. For isolates, it is difficult to predict, but one can imagine that faith for them would be both personal and risky.

One can easily see how important it would be to know and account for the receptor culture type as well, since one might need to mediate understandings of commitment and loyalty into a culture of personal belief and conviction, or alternately ideas of trust and hope into a culture of social solidarity and hierarchy. Individualist culture often understands commitment negatively as odious duty, and hierarchist culture often sees trust or hope as too weak to sustain the relationships between God and humans described in scripture. Translators need to mediate these understandings one way or the other in order to be true to the presumed original communication as well as ensure that the receptor culture comes away with the right understanding.

² Some have speculated that nominalization (the fact is that most of the key terms/concepts are abstract nouns in the original languages) is the cause of the difficulty, but to my knowledge no serious work has been done on the problem, even toward justifying the nature and extent of the list.

Faith

Isolate – “Blind” faith?	Hierarchist – Commitment/loyalty (faithfulness)
Individualist – Belief/confidence/conviction	Enclavist – Trust/hope

Righteousness is another term/concept with which translators wrestle. In Gen 38 the Hebrew Bible relates the story of Judah and Tamar, his daughter-in-law. At the end of the story (which includes the tricking of Judah by Tamar into having sexual relations with her), as Tamar is being brought out to be stoned and in that moment reveals that Judah is the father of the child she is bearing, Judah declares: “she is more righteous than I am.” This sentence is nonsense to most modern readers from individualist cultures. For them, righteousness is personal piety and virtue. Seducing your father-in-law by trickery does not only does not qualify you as righteous, but quite the opposite. Yet for a culture of hierarchy, the whole point of the story is that Tamar was simply doing all she could to fulfill the mutual obligations which existed in the relationship between herself and her father-in-law. He owed her a husband, and she owed him an offspring to continue his lineage. That she felt forced to do this by subterfuge and incest is secondary to the real point of righteousness in such a culture. The NT at times assumes the hierarchist perspective of the Hebrew Bible with regard to righteousness, but at other times (cf. Romans) seems to take an enclavist position whereby righteousness is more of a state of being in a right relationship based on trust (faith).

Righteousness

Isolate – Existential good faith (true to self)	Hierarchist – Mutual obligations
Individualist – Personal virtue/ human rights	Enclavist – Universal love

Salvation is a term/concept which normally is discussed in commentaries under the headings of the individual or the community, and of physical or spiritual realization. As a matter of fact, the Hebrew Bible speaks often of salvation in both physical and communal terms (though the Psalms seem to have a personal salvation in view in many contexts as well). The NT is many times less clear on both levels, speaking of salvation through/in Christ without specifying directly whether it is personal or communal, physical or spiritual.

In modern contexts of interpretation, there is often a sharp difference between different interpretive communities on the biblical concept in general. Personal spiritual salvation is the preferred interpretation within the individualist cultures of European descent. Yet the Theology of Liberation has sprung up in the more traditional hierarchist soil of Latin America, emphasizing both the communal and physical aspects of salvation, and not surprisingly, depending mostly on texts from the Hebrew Bible to support their case. And when the audience is truly marginalized (isolates), the salvation message is often of both a personal and an apocalyptic (future) nature. According to Douglas’ analysis, we would expect just these patterns, as represented in the illustration below.

Salvation

Isolate – Personal/apocalyptic	Hierarchist – Communal/physical
Individualist – Personal/spiritual	Enclavist – Communal/spiritual

At this point it is useful to turn to Douglas again. In *How Institutions Think*, she does not balk at turning her attention to those beliefs and values which her readers would most resist subjecting to the scrutiny of her scheme:

...the idea of justice is not a natural response as to an emotion or to an appetite. As an intellectual system, it has a kind of second-order naturalness because it is a necessary condition for human society. Fabricated precisely for the purpose of justifying and stabilizing institutions, it is founded on conventions ... no single element of justice has innate rightness: for being right it depends upon its generality, its schematic coherence, and its fit with other accepted general principles. Justice is a more or less satisfactory intellectual system designed to secure the coordination of a particular set of institutions. (1986, p. 114).

Douglas examines the concept of justice in the context of the individualist cultural pattern within which both she and most of her readers live:

The more the discrimination by birth and the larger the gap between the entitlements of different classes, the more we would condemn the inequality of it. Yet, however vehemently we assert our own principles of justice, they are still the principles which have emerged over the last two hundred years, along with the emergence of an economic system based on individual contract. Turning itself from a horizontal pattern of integration to a vertical one...The result has been the sacralization of a society based on an extravagant use of energy unprecedented [sic] in the history of the world. This is a society that uses equality of individuals to justify itself, but in world-wide comparisons of justice its economic ascendancy and its efforts to maintain its unequal advantage become hard to justify by its own principles of legitimation. (1986, pp. 118-119).

Thus a network of ideas of loyalty, obligation, and physical salvation of the community within the hierarchist culture of mutual obligation represented by the Hebrew Bible were first transformed in the enclavist culture of the NT into concepts of trust, love, and spiritual community salvation. And these both have finally been largely distilled out within modern individualist cultures as conviction, virtue and personal salvation.

The ABS Portion “Life In All Its Fullness”

A good example of the mismatch between biblical and modern (esp. individualist) cultures, as well as some examples of how these might be addressed, can be found in an examination of the American Bible Society portion entitled “Life In All Its Fullness.” This booklet takes as its basis the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and combines it with biblical texts on themes of peace and justice. It does not approach this task directly, but rather by printing the UN declaration in full in the back of the booklet, and then placing a summary of each article (or at times parts of an article) of the declaration to be used along with biblical texts as the sub-headings for each section. At times certain articles in the declaration are combined under thematic headings, at other times articles are left out. The booklet also has an introduction, with the following words nearly at the beginning: “While the expression ‘human rights’ may not be found in the Bible, its essential components—freedom, justice, and peace—are. Each is central to the Bible’s message and each is grounded in God’s promises.”

Thus the bridge between the ancient hierarchist and enclavist biblical cultures and the modern individualist culture represented by the UN document is already made. But the gap is a wide one, and the need for more bridges is apparent at every point. The portion is therefore at times more successful than at others. Thus the third article in the UN declaration reads as follows: “Everyone has the right to life, liberty and the security of person.” The corresponding thematic heading states: “Life, liberty and the security of person are God-given rights.”

This is then merely restated in the sub-heading. One can clearly see how the UN’s “right” turns into “God-given rights” in the adaptation which the portion makes. The main support for the bridge is already in place. But still the appropriate biblical texts need to be added. The texts that are used to support this begin with the Ten Commandments. One can imagine how prohibitions against stealing or killing could be construed as supporting such an idea, but the context of the Ten Commandments (which are actually mostly prohibitions) is the maintenance of property boundaries and the status quo within a hierarchical society (this is not to judge the system as such as unjust, since that in itself would be a pronouncement from an individualist perspective).

The point is that while there are some biblical texts about caring for the kinds of persons the UN declaration may have in mind, they are texts which still assume a hierarchical society. In such a system, justice is seen as the care for (not the rights of) the widow, orphan, and stranger (all marginalized persons). These persons are to be cared for not for their own sake (or due to their own “rights”), but because the structure of mutual obligation within the hierarchical society must be preserved. The hierarchical system comes full circle when God, at the very top of the hierarchy, makes it his own responsibility to care for those persons at the very bottom, and thus passes that responsibility back down the chain of command.

Another article of the declaration proclaiming the right of free basic education for all is interpreted in the heading and sub-heading of the ABS portion without the concept “free” appearing anywhere. One can see why this would be so, since the biblical text does not address free primary education as such. When it comes to finding biblical passages to support the general principle of education, texts from Proverbs and James are cited concerning the getting of wisdom. The heading for the Proverbs passage includes the phrase: “Education is Essential to Life,” and the text makes it obvious that this life is a moral life. The other biblical texts follow the same line. Thus the portion makes the bridge between UN and biblical texts by first leaving out the aspect of free education (certainly in focus in the UN document), and then adding in its place the biblical dimension of a moral education. This is quite clever, but at some point the portion may no longer be fair to either of the source texts (UN, Bible) upon which it depends and which it seeks to relate to one another.

Other UN articles on personal freedom of marriage and of individuals within marriage as well as opposition to slavery are combined with biblical texts concerned with sexual purity and the humane treatment of slaves, respectively. While certain biblical texts do indeed sow the seeds for the destruction of many oppressive aspects of the hierarchical cultures in which they (mostly) came into existence, the situation is far more nuanced. The biblical tradition generally assumes the rightness of slavery and the subjugation of women in principle, while at certain points trying to soften the abuses possible under such (hierarchical) systems. In some cases it might have been

better just to say something about the distance between the texts and the meaning of justice within different cultural settings in the bridge material, and not try so hard to make the Bible speak in modern terms.

“Life In All Its Fullness”

Isolate – The right to be left alone?	Hierarchist – OT (e.g. security of persons/Ten Commandments)
Individualist – Declaration of human rights (United Nations – 1948)	Enclavist – NT (e.g. freedom of expression/speaking the truth in love Eph. 4)

Conclusion

In summary, there are several points at which Lakoff’s and Douglas’ thinking coincide or complement one another, and which can be listed as follows:

1. What members of a culture pick out as *similar* (by virtue of their activities of categorization) are products of human activity, usually group activity, and are not necessarily inherent in the objects of the physical world.
2. *Metaphors* often form the backbone of conceptual systems, and guide the kinds of semantic networks that are possible for given terms. This (often metaphorical) categorization is the semantic basis for culturally disparate mental maps.
3. Conceptual systems are in large part influenced by and representations of group or cultural loyalty. Ideology is *sociology*. In this way cultures express themselves through the members of the culture, and in fact direct and to some degree determine the values, beliefs, ideas, and even tastes of those members.
4. This sociological basis for conceptual systems from values to tastes is largely *hidden* from those participating in the process of cultural influence. To expose it for what it is would make it difficult to maintain.
5. *Exclusion* is the basis of the sociological processes described above. Thus it is in disagreement, rather than in agreement, that most people define their conceptual systems (e.g. Douglas’ “On not Being Seen Dead” article).

Clearly, what has been presented up to this point has several implications for translation. To begin with, the idea of frames and framing changes the focus of the task of translation from the text-signs to the frames of reference within which and under whose terms those signs are understood. This is by no means to say that the text-signs are to be disregarded, or that they are somehow less important than before. They are, after all, the only direct clues we have in a written text to what the original frames of communication and understanding were. But without a clear understanding of the various frames of reference, a translator has very little chance of serving (in Katan’s terms) as a proper mediator between the original language and receptor language cultures. Of course the issue becomes even more complicated and thus more crucial when the translation is being done in an indirect way through a third language, as is often the case with Bible translation into minority languages.

In practical terms, this means that translation should begin with a full investigation of all the cultures involved in the translation, using the resources that Lakoff and Douglas present to unpack the most probable understandings of a given text under various translational transformations. Without such a study, the translator is bound, without knowledge of her of his own limits, to either make a translation which suits his or her frame of understanding (domesticated), or to use text-signs which will be similar in various formal aspects to the original (e.g. word-for-word lexical correspondence, grammatical constructions, etc.), but which will fall well outside the frames of experience and understanding of the receptor culture.

Secondly, the issue of similarity is critical to the translator and to those who would attempt to help the translator. Lakoff (1980, pp. 136ff.) cites Dwight Bolinger in an attempt to show how nearly all changes in linguistic form (within a language) produce a change of some kind in meaning. Lakoff claims this is due to the spatial nature of our metaphorical understanding of sentences themselves. Thus length, closeness, or similarities of various formal kinds are used to mark sometimes subtle differences in our understandings of otherwise virtually identical sentences. Lakoff further notes that these formal similarities are often perceived or chosen through a metaphorical filter. He uses as his example the rising tone at the end of yes-no questions. He relates this to the conceptual metaphor UNKNOWN IS UP / KNOWN IS DOWN (e.g. “It’s up in the air,” vs. “That settles it.”). Interestingly, his example of rising tone for yes-no questions is apparently nearly universal, so if he is right about the metaphor guiding the intonation, this metaphor should also be nearly universal.

Since translation already requires various changes in form, similarity must be raised to the level of equivalence (or perhaps simply similarity) at the level of comparable conceptual systems. Lakoff sums up the issue of similarity as related to conceptual systems (1980, p. 147):

We have seen that many of our experiences and activities are metaphorical in nature and that much of our conceptual system is structured by metaphor. Since we see similarities in terms of the categories of our conceptual system and in terms of the natural kinds of experiences we have (both of which may be metaphorical), it follows that many of the similarities that we perceive are a result of conventional metaphors that are part of our conceptual system.

The point made by Lakoff and Douglas about similarity are crucial to anyone using terms such as equivalence or correspondence to describe the products of the activity of translating. If they are right, any discussion of similarity must begin with the recognition that there are many kinds and levels of similarity, and that which kind(s) of similarity we pick out depends entirely on the purposes which those controlling the process of translation have in mind (either consciously or unconsciously). The following table illustrates some of the common frames or filters involved in scripture translation with their usual results:

Translation filters (Input is the biblical text)

<u>Filter</u>	<u>Output</u>
Strong church tradition	Formal equivalence translation
No biblical background	Functional equivalence translation
Money no object	Full Study Bible
Limited funds	Two-column text only
Long literary history	“Literary” version
First published work	Oral-oriented text
History of translation	Exegetical limits, yet freedom to innovate forms and media
First Bible translation	Freedom to innovate exegetically, but pressure to produce traditional-looking product

Finally, Douglas points out the extent to which what we think of as beliefs, values, and even personal taste are to a large extent given to individuals by the cultures in which they live. “For better or for worse, individuals really do share their thoughts and they do to some extent harmonize their preferences, and they have no other way to make the big decisions except within the scope of the institutions they build.” (1986, p. 128). This is something like the weak form of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, but at the level of the conceptual worlds which direct the understanding of those who inhabit those worlds by virtue of their membership in corresponding communities.

Douglas’ grid/group typology of the various cultural thought-worlds can bring a certain clarity to what otherwise might seem an insurmountable task. Her four cultural types categorize well the various cultures which are usually involved in Bible translation, as illustrated below:

Bible Translation Process

Isolate – Marginalized persons	Hierarchist – OT and most receptor language cultures and some national cultures
Individualist – Most translation consultants and some national cultures	Enclavist – NT and some receptor language cultures

The problems which can result may be seen clearly in such a table. Since the Hebrew Bible comes fundamentally out of a hierarchist culture, and the receptor cultures are also usually hierarchist, it should not come as a surprise that in many of these receptor cultures demonstrate a great deal of interest precisely in the Hebrew Bible, even more so than in the NT.

The translator is forever caught between the conceptual worlds of original text and intended audience. As Katan's cultural "mediator," the translator has a responsibility to both thought-worlds. If these worlds belong to the same cultural cluster, the job is not so difficult. But even between the Hebrew Bible and the NT the thought-worlds differ, so there inevitably will be points at which there is no obvious contact between the understandings the translator is trying to mediate. In such cases difficult choices must be made. Helps of various kinds can make the task easier. But in the end, the purposes of the translator and of the translation will determine what kinds of similarity will characterize a given translation.

Lakoff (1980, p. 231) captures the essence of the problem, made only worse for translators of the Bible by the fact that it is not possible to directly query the biblical culture in the process of mediating cultures:

When people who are talking don't share the same culture, knowledge, values, and assumptions, mutual understanding can be especially difficult. Such understanding is possible through the negotiation of meaning. To negotiate meaning with someone, you have to become aware of and respect both the differences in your backgrounds and when these differences are important. You need enough diversity of cultural and personal experience to be aware that divergent world views exist and what they might be like. You also need patience, a certain flexibility in world view, and a generous tolerance for mistakes, as well as a talent for finding the right metaphor to communicate the relevant parts of unshared experiences while deemphasizing others... [and] the ability to bend your world view and adjust the way you categorize your experience... When it really counts, meaning is almost never communicated according to the CONDUIT metaphor, that is, where a person transmits a fixed, clear proposition to another by means of expressions in a common language, where both parties have all the relevant common knowledge, assumptions, values, etc. When the chips are down, meaning is negotiated...

The task of translation is to mediate a new process of negotiation, understanding as much as possible both the cultural styles of the parties (original text, major-language text, and intended audience) involved, as well as the particular frames of reference that the aims of the translation bring to the work. If such an endeavor seems to exact too great a price, the cost of ignoring these cultural and purposeful acts of framing is even greater. Extensive study Bibles point the way toward solving many of the problems raised here, while ever-more innovative scripture products and bridge materials can, at their best, engage their modern audiences in cognitive cross-cultural dialog and engagement. This way, and this way only, lies understanding.

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