

Making Sense of Religious Humour

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Keywords: humour theories, religion, pragmatic interpretation, linguistic resources, collocations.

Abstract

Religious figures often provide grist for the best of jokes all over the world. Yet, it is not common, and it may also seem unsafe ground, to associate humour with any of the existing religious texts, beliefs or figures. Is the image of God, or Allah, for example, deformed in the jokes we play on them? Do we perceive them differently in accordance to our belonging to a certain religious tradition, or can we speak of a universal, global mindset regarding such figures? Our purpose in this paper is to assess whether religious figures have the same attributes and virtues in several different cultures, as reflected in their humour. Furthermore, we shall set forth a pragmatic interpretation and we shall also examine some linguistic resources of such jokes. Such an analysis should elucidate whether, in the case of religious figures, people from different cultures have the same or diverging humorous attitudes and perceptions.