



## AN INTRODUCTION TO THE TRANSCENDENTAL LEAP

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**Abstract:** This paper is an attempt to introduce and explain the term Transcendental Leap in the field of semantics. With this concept, the process of meaning-making is explained more clearly. The semantic process of Transcendental Leap takes place within the Neuro-context of a person. Therefore, the transcendental leap varies in accordance with the expansion of one's neuro-context. This academic paper opens the door of linguistics to the field of science, especially to Neuro-Linguistics. The academic paper does not deal with anything with regard to the brain and its physiology directly, whereas it is directed towards the same. This concept is explained with the imagery of 'the Medicine of Life' of St Ephrem which is used to denote the Holy Eucharist.

Key Words: Transcendental Leap, Neuro-Context, Linguistics, Hermeneutics, Theory of Interpretation

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The proposed academic paper, "An Introduction to Transcendental Leap" is an attempt to study the pattern of meaning generation with special reference to Ephrem's way of theologization by making use of the Eucharistic imagery of *the Medicine of Life*. The main purpose of this study is to analyze the shift of meaning in the Eucharistic imagery of *the Medicine of Life*. Why is it significant? This analysis will enable a person to understand an imagery or any form of expression in language. This academic paper not only studies the 'what' aspect of semantics but also the 'how' and 'why' dimensions too. To give a better clarification of these aspects to the postmodern world, few new terms are introduced in this academic paper to explain the process of meaning generation. Those terms are 'transcendental leap', 'neuro context (NC)', 'fragmentary neuro context', and 'collective neuro context'. The semantic shift of the Eucharistic imagery of *the Medicine of Life* is analyzed with the said technical terms.

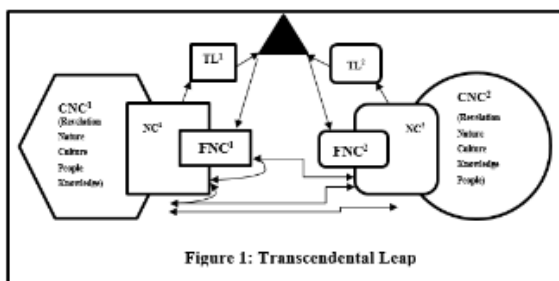
### 2. TRANSCENDENTAL LEAP

All these linguistic terms represent the formation of an idea and its shift of meaning. The semantic shift is indicated with the term transcendental leap (TL). Transcendental Leap cannot be understood as a synonym with a semantic shift in

linguistics (suggestiveness). Whereas it goes beyond the physical world to the metaphysical world when it comes in the religious and theological language. Therefore, TL is the process of interpret the divine revelation in the human language. For example, the meaning of the phrase 'New Jerusalem' is not 'a modern Jerusalem' when TL takes place. The said phrase will get an eschatological interpretation. What will be the situation if this eschatological dimension of the meaning is not transferred to the reader? When we deal with the religious language and theological language TL is a necessary linguistic phenomenon. Therefore, in TL both the process of meaning generation and the semantic leap are included. In normal cases, semantic change is the result of cognition. Whereas in TL it is the result of cognition, contemplation and divine revelation. Where does and how does this complex process take place? The direct answer to this question is in the brain with the neural network which is exposed to sensory experiences and divine revelation. In this academic paper we do not intend to enter directly into any physiological explanations, but I will be using the terms such as Neuro Context (NC), Fragmentary Neuro Context (FNC,) and Collective Neuro Context (CNC). Since these terms are new inventions to explain the Theo-semantic phenomenon of Transcendental Leap (TL), a short introduction is given to

the use of these terms (see Figure 1). The term *Neuro Context* stands for the entire sensory information and the capacity to cobble new ideas by making use of the existing information. It means that *Neuro Context* is always dynamic and open-ended. Therefore, *Neuro Context* can be defined as the total of the received data the neural ability to manipulate data to generate new knowledge, and the ability to go beyond the data at the same time to contact the new context.<sup>1</sup>

*Neuro Context* is always connected to *Collective Neuro Context (CNC)* as it is portrayed in *Figure 1*. Since it is dynamic in its very nature it is always widening until it ceases to exist. When a person hears, sees, touches, tastes or smells something the data become part of the *Neuro Context*. The reason for combining the words ‘neuro’ and ‘context’ is to indicate the neural activity and the space where it takes place. Therefore, the words ‘neuro’ and ‘context’ in the term *Neuro Contexts* and for the continuous neural networking and the brain. Since we are not dealing directly with neurolinguistics here in this thesis, we will be focusing on the ideological aspect of *Neuro Context*. Why *Neuro Context* becomes significant is that it will help a person how to read religious and theological works. *Neuro Contextual Analysis*



**Figure 1: Transcendental Leap**

enables a person to understand how a theologian thought. This analysis helps the process of theologization. Now I will explain the how *Neuro Contextual Analysis* functions. As you see in *Figure 1* there are many factors included in CNC such as Divine Revelation, Nature, Culture, People,

Available Knowledge and so on. Therefore, *Neuro-context* is the result of continuous communication. Slowly *Neuro*

*Context* produces *Fragmentary Neuro Context (FNC)*. Any expression or literary work comes under *Fragmentary Neuro Context*. That means within a lifetime a person creates millions of *Fragmentary Neuro Contexts*. The preserved *Fragmentary Neuro Contexts* are used for references (Like a book of an author). It means that each *Fragmentary Neuro Context* points to the source from which it originated (ie.NC). No one gets a direct entry to anyone’s *Neuro Context* without the help of an available *Fragmentary Neuro Context*. Therefore, the proper understanding of any *Fragmentary Neuro Context* primarily demands research in the CNC and other *Fragmentary Neuro Contexts* of the NC of the author.

If the author is NC<sup>1</sup>, then the reader is NC<sup>2</sup> as it is portrayed in *Figure 1*. When the reader starts exploring NC<sup>1</sup> occurs at least four types of dialogue as it is indicated in the picture with arrows.

- NC<sup>2</sup> – FNC<sup>1</sup> — NC<sup>2</sup> — FNC<sup>2</sup> (TL<sup>1</sup> and TL<sup>2</sup> will be similar or advanced)
- NC<sup>2</sup> – CNC<sup>1</sup> — FNC<sup>1</sup> — FNC<sup>2</sup> (TL<sup>1</sup> and TL<sup>2</sup> will be similar or advanced)
- NC<sup>2</sup> – FNC<sup>1</sup> — CNC<sup>1</sup> — FNC<sup>2</sup> (TL<sup>1</sup> and TL<sup>2</sup> will be similar or advanced)
- NC<sup>2</sup> – FNC<sup>1</sup> — FNC<sup>2</sup> (TL<sup>1</sup> and TL<sup>2</sup> are not be similar, but advanced)

In the case of religious language and theological language a special linguistic phenomenon takes place and that is called *Transcendental Leap (TL)*. It means that each religious or theological work generates a shift in meaning in the minds of the reader. That means when this shift happens the *signifier* transcends its limits brings the minds of the reader to the *signified* which is metaphysical or divine. It is the result of *Transcendental Leap* in the NC<sup>2</sup>(reader). If the reader is not accustomed with the CNC<sup>1</sup> and FNC<sup>1</sup> the desired leap will not take place, but there will be a kind of *Transcendental Leap* as in the case of ‘d’. The *Transcendental Leap* always directed to God and the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. J.John, “Neuro Contextual Analysis of Sacramental Symbols” *Ensygloge: An International Journal for Arts and Science* (January-June, 2021, Published on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2021, Vol 1,

Issue 1),p.2 [<https://www.ensyglodge.com>](accessed October, 2021)



economy of salvation. *Neuro contextual analysis* studies how this transcendental leap occurs.

So if a person is 20 years of age that person's *Neuro Context* consists of 20 years' entire experiences and the continuous generation of ideas by making use of the past and present experiences. It means a person's *Neuro Context* is always infused with the society and the culture to which he-she e is part. That means the person's *Neuro Context* is always in communication with the existing *Neuro Contexts* (CNC). This connected network of existing *Neuro Contexts* is known as *Collective Neuro Context* (CNC). It means a person is born into the matrix of CNC. Therefore, it is necessary to know the particular CNC to which a new *Neuro Context* is used in order to trace out the exact meaning of all the meaning of the *Fragmentary Neuro Contexts* (FNC). The term *Fragmentary Neuro Contexts* refers to all the stored or preserved data or information outside a person in any form available to others. It is part of the CNC, because NC is always in dialogue with CNC. For example, if I write a book, make a phrase or a statement, draw a picture or make a gesture it becomes a *Fragmentary Neuro Context*. It means that *Fragmentary Neuro Context* itself is emanate either from *Neuro Context* or from the *Collective Neuro Context* is the visible. It is the connecting link to NC and CNC. It has the capability of a causing *Transcendental Leap*. For example, the Eucharistic of imagery *the Medicine of Life* is a fragmentary neuro context. To find out the *Transcendental Leap* of this FNC, it is necessary to study how the NC of the author of the said imagery is developed and to which CNC the author and the reader were exposed. It also means that there are many CNCs influences a particular NC. Therefore, every FNC is the outcome of the ameliorated version from the NC. This is an open ended process. It means that this process never stops. It means even that such a small phrase will generate different levels of meaning and culminates it in the *Transcendental Leap*. I will discuss this in the succeeding chapters.

Since this study takes place in the 21st century it is not possible to get a direct entry to the CNC and NC of St

Ephrem, but it is possible to reason the treasures out of the available resources such as the works of St Ephrem,

Secondary Sources about him and about his works and so on. As it was stated all these are the available *Fragmentary Neuro Contexts* which directs to the *Neuro Context* and *Collective Neuro Context* of St Ephrem. Otherwise we will directly associate and interpret the FNC of St Ephrem within our own NCs which are not exposed to the CNC and NC of St Ephrem and finally and with entirely different interpretation which St Ephrem had not thought of. Therefore, in this thesis I am trying to analyze how the Eucharistic imagery *the Medicine of Life* has got the *Transcendental Leap* and try to find out the theological meaning encapsulated with the said imagery with the help of *Neuro Contextual Analysis*.

Here I am following the second pattern of dialogue (NC<sup>2</sup> — CNC<sup>1</sup> — FNC<sup>1</sup> — FNC<sup>2</sup> [TL<sup>1</sup> and TL<sup>2</sup> will be similar or advanced]).

Therefore, as it is depicted in *Figure 1*, it is necessary to understand the cultural background of St Ephrem (CNC<sup>1</sup> to get a wider look at the formation of the theological formation of St Ephrem. It is this understanding gives clarity with regard to the *Transcendental Leap* of the Eucharistic Imagery *the Medicine of Life*. According to Sebastian Brock, there are nearly 500 hymns of St Ephrem are available and all these hymns are product of a life of profound and meditative reading of the Scriptures.<sup>2</sup> According to H.E. Mar Joseph Kallarangattu, the oriental liturgical theology is based on the dictum *Lex Orandi Lex Credendi*.<sup>3</sup> It means law of the prayer is the law of faith. That means the theology in the Church is interpreted within the liturgy of the Church. Apart from this background study, the biblical, patristic and liturgical realms also will be given due importance. The main formative influences identified and discussed here are the ancient Mesopotamian, Jewish and Greek.<sup>4</sup> The analysis of the historical background of St Ephrem gives clarity with regard to his theologization. The analytical study of the *Transcendental Leap* of the Eucharistic Imagery *the Medicine of Life* is further

<sup>2</sup> Cf. S. Brock, "A Hymn of St Ephrem on the Eucharist" in *The Harp*, (1987,1988) Vol 1, Issue 1-3, 63.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. J. Kallarangattu, *Kizhakkinte Daivasastra Aadhyathmika Parambaryangal* (Kottayam: OIRSI, 1999), 18.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. S. Brock, *A Brief Outline of Syriac Literature* (Kottayam: SEERI, 1997) 9.



developed based on this analysis. The different dimensions of the Eucharistic imagery is primarily based on the historical background.

### 3. CONCLUSION

The imagery the *Medicine of Life* is one of the key imageries in the work of St Ephrem. This imagery is the key by which St Ephrem unlocked the mystery of salvation through the Eucharistic theology. Therefore, a detailed search in the work of St Ephrem is required to find out how and what sense the imagery the medicine of life is used. According to Aron C.T. Smith, "Cultural explanations for religion focus on practices and behaviours while cognitive and evolutionary explanations rely on the assumption that faith comes naturally. At the same time, the neuroscientific evidence suggests that religious thought engages the same brain structures as any strong beliefs, distributed through both emotional rational centers."<sup>5</sup> It means that religious cognition and theologization cannot be considered as unique form of cognition, for both these are rooted in the ordinary representations.<sup>6</sup> This argument cannot be true completely. Though all religious experiences are entrenched in the same structure where all other strong believes are centered stimulation that makes the ordinary to extraordinary is different.

In the said case a kind of transcendental leap of meaning takes place. Modern cognitive science considers it as a kind of paradigmatic grafting where cognitive science builds new explanations by cobbling together old ones from multiple disciplines.<sup>7</sup> But in the case of transcendental analysis mere cobbling of ideas may not lead to the Transcend the leap. Here one requires the faith in God. The revealed mystery of salvation is received gradually by submitting oneself humbly before God. When one humbles oneself before God the divine mysteries will be revealed to him. The revealed mysteries will be understood and expressed with the available information in the neuro context. It means transcendental league is the process of understanding the divine mysteries with the eye of faith by making of the

fragmentary neuro context within the neuro context. Therefore, in the General Conclusion, I will analyze the transcendental leap of the said Eucharistic imageries in order to explain how this leap happens in St Ephrem's literature.

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<sup>5</sup> S. Aaron C.T., *Thinking about Religion: Extending the Cognitive Science of Religion*. (Australia: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 4.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Aaron C.T., *Thinking about Religion: Extending the Cognitive Science of Religion*, 33.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Aaron C.T., *Thinking about Religion: Extending the Cognitive Science of Religion*, 76.





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