

Fides et ratio: Apocalyptic Experience of "I" in Light of McNamara's Neurocognitive Mechanisms of Decentering

The overarching purpose of the paper is to apply McNamara's Neuroscience of Religious Experience (2009) to ancient apocalyptic texts, especially the Apocalypse of John. They are treated as reports of subjective religious experiences seriously (14). Special attention is paid to the neurocognitive "decentering" mechanism in them. Decentering is an "offline" process of construction of "a centralized executive Self by reducing the discrepancy between an ideal Self and the current Self" (44). In a religious sense, the Self enters a liminal state. Cognitive-architecturally the decentering mechanism involves four stages of implementation (as shown in Figure 3.2.): (i) "offline" of agency/volition (Rev. 1:9-10); (ii) Self-concept placed in "Possible World" Box (PWB) (Rev. 4:1); (iii) search for optimal Self (Rev. 5:10); and (iv) binding (Rev. 22:8; cf. 22:18). Thus, John's work is investigated for any remaining clues about the decentering stages. The grammatically emphatic "ego" (Greek word: "I") in Christian Apocalypse(s) become(s) surprisingly the entry point of research. "Ego" appears 97 occurrences in the Apocalypse of John. This paper attempts to analyze these apocalyptic "ego" as locale of John's neurocognitive self-construction. McNamara's and other related neuroscientific research results of religious experience are adopted to help explaining these "ego"-construction. In surface level, John mentions his own "ego" as if simply a spectator in a heavenly throne-room and spiritual journey. However his cognition of self-construction is far more complicated. "Ego" is rather used by other characters too. Plausibly, Christ the Lamb's "ego" is his ideal Self. Earthly human beings' "ego" reflects his own current Self whereas heavenly worshippers' "ego" echoes his new possible Self. If McNamara's neurology of the self would have not been applied in the biblical studies, neurocognitive self-construction in the Apocalypse of John might still be kept unexplored in its Forschungsgeschichte. On and on limitations of McNamara's neuroscience would be kept noticed.