

What's "up" with God? Vertical space as a representation of the divine.

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ABSTRACT

1. "God" and "Devil" are abstract concepts often linked to vertical metaphors (e.g., "glory to God in the *highest*," "the Devil lives *down* in hell"). It is unknown, however, whether these metaphors simply aid communication or implicate a deeper mode of concept representation. In 6 experiments, the authors examined the extent to which the vertical dimension is used in noncommunication contexts involving God and the Devil. Experiment 1 established that people have implicit associations between God-Devil and up-down. Experiment 2 revealed that people encode God-related concepts faster if presented in a high (vs. low) vertical position. Experiment 3 found that people's memory for the vertical location of God- and Devil-like images showed a metaphor-consistent bias (up for God; down for Devil). Experiments 4, 5a, and 5b revealed that people rated strangers as more likely to believe in God when their images appeared in a high versus low vertical position, and this effect was independent of inferences related to power and likability. These robust results reveal that vertical perceptions are invoked when people access divinity-related cognitions. (PsycINFO Database Record (c) 2012 APA, all rights reserved)