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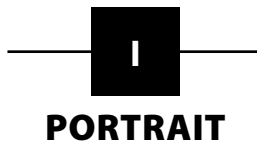
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PORTRAIT

Bloch on Bloch on 'Religion'

Maurice Bloch

The reflections presented here demonstrate the coherence and continuity of the part of my work that can be labeled as dealing with religion and ritual. This of course does not mean that everything I have written on the subject is coherent and continuous. Indeed as time has passed I have learned many things from my readings and experiences, from interacting with colleagues and friends, and from working with others, including the people I have studied and, above all, the PhD students I have supervised. As a result I have had to modify what I thought. Looking back I believe there is an ongoing line of argument in what I have published and this is what I attempt to clarify in what follows.

The necessary starting point of a consideration of my work on 'religion' is to emphasize that I do not believe there can be theory about religion. Theory has to be a contribution to the general understanding of what kind of animals human beings are. It need not make general claims about human universals but it needs to make claims that can be related to general claims about human beings. A theory of religion cannot do that because, as has been argued, 'religion' is a word that can only refer to a series of historically created situations which, although continually changing, have unique and specific genealogies closely linked to the Abrahamic religions (e.g., Asad 1993; Bloch 2008). This history can be traced to the various places and times when, and where, 'religion' has manifested itself. In these places and times its phenomenology can be described and interpreted but one cannot glide or slither toward theory from such descriptions. Religion cannot be theorized anymore than there can be a theory about 14 November 1704. In other words religion is not a natural kind, by which I mean a category that has a basis other than that given by an arbitrary definition.

Assuming that religion is a natural kind and that there can therefore be a theory of religion, or believing that using the word loosely will do, leads to misunderstanding. An archaeologist who tries to reconstruct the past in a particular place by looking for signs of religion in a pre-Bronze Age site is already on the wrong path (Bloch 2010). Recently, I was asked to comment on what could be guessed about the 'religion' of the people who, about ten thousand years ago, lived at the fascinating early Neolithic site of Catalhuyuk in central Turkey. My response was that as soon as we approach the question in this way we are begging the question. Looking for religion in such a place is rather like looking for traces of their parliament building. An anthropologist who 'seeks' religion when trying to understand a place where the Abrahamic religions have not been present will only mislead. This is what Evans-Pritchard did when he wrote Nuer Religion (see Needham 1972 for a discussion of this point as it relates to Nuer 'belief').



The dangers of 'religion' are all the greater in the common contemporary situations where contact between non-Abrahamic traditions and the Abrahamic religions is present. In *From Blessing to Violence* (1986) and in a 2002 article criticizing the idea that religion could be characterized by minimally counterintuitive beliefs, I illustrated this point by referring to the quandary of the nineteenth-century British Christian missionaries in Madagascar who saw their task not only as the introduction of true religion and belief but also as the eradication of false religion and belief. Their problem, like that of Christian missionaries in China before them, was that they were not sure what was that 'religion' they were to destroy. They therefore settled on certain apparently 'religious' cults concerning what they named 'idols', which had the characteristic counterintuitive feel of modern European Christianity, at the same time quite arbitrarily ignoring other practices and beliefs, such as those dealing with ancestors. This decision, or misunderstanding, was to have great significance for subsequent Malagasy Christianity and led to the creation of the local and now very powerful idea of 'Malagasy traditional religion'.

The use of the word 'religion', as a quasi-analytical term, also creates major misunderstandings in those other common situations where quite different systems, which the discipline 'religious studies' has long considered as within its field, are being recreated along Abrahamic lines. This was the case when Hinduism became Abrahamized as it was re-represented in India and elsewhere as an 'alternative' to Islam. It was also so in Sri Lanka, where a form of Buddhism has become 'protestant' as influential European converts, much more molded by Christianity than they were themselves aware, saw Buddhism as an 'alternative religion' to that in which they had been brought up and, as a result, modified local Buddhism to make it fit as an example of 'religion'.

My work has consisted in an attempt to outflank 'religion' as an analytic tool; though, as time has passed, I have become clearer as to the implications of the terminological problem. We must free ourselves of 'religion' in much the way Lévi-Strauss freed the anthropological discussion of totemism by outflanking it. He did not deny that authors who had written about 'totemism' had been talking about important things, nor that these phenomena often had some aspects in common, but he showed that these common features were arbitrarily selected. They were merely eclectic manifestations of a genuinely human characteristic; that is the use of a system of classification, which had been developed to apply to a particular part of the cognized world to understand another. By this move he moved the topic to a theoretical level.

The criticism of theorizing 'religion' has two sides. It is not simply that arbitrarily defining religion and then studying what the phenomena so described can have in common leads to the kind of tautology that Durkheim's *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* so spectacularly illustrates. It is also that it stops us from considering centrally significant aspects that spill over between what has been labeled as religious and that which has not. In my 2008 article I argue that one of the most unfortunate effects of attempts to theorize religion has been to implicitly represent the nonreligious in a naive way. This mistake has a long history. Traditional anthropologists had by and large assumed that they could define religion (or religion and magic) as that which relates to the supernatural (Tylor, Frazer, Goody). In a very similar way Geertz defined 'religion' as the nonfactual that seems uniquely realistic. These authors have been followed by more recent writers who use different words but who similarly characterize religion as beliefs having a distinguishing element of the counterintuitive (Sperber, Boyer). It seems to follow from these definitions that the nonreligious is about the straightforwardly 'natural', the 'normally factual', or the 'fully intuitive'. However, when we think of phenomena such as social roles or imagined communities, it becomes obvious that such characteriza-

tion is completely misleading. Normal social life in many of its aspects is also supernatural, nonfactual, and partially counterintuitive. This is why I have attempted to dissolve the notion of 'religion' into a much more inclusive one for which I previously used the word 'ideology' but which, as my work has evolved, I have called the 'transcendental' for reasons explained below.

In the 1950s Leach moved from the LSE to Cambridge to take up a readership. A result of this move was that he was exposed to both the transactionalism dominant in one institution and the social structuralism dominant in the other. These he combined in his book *Political Systems of Highland Burma* (1954) where, after criticizing the misplaced realism of such 'social structural' phenomena as descent groups and legal/political normative representations, he stressed their relevance not as cogs in some sort of social machine as they had been represented, but as ideals which affected actual choices in a partial way. Having myself followed the same trajectory as Leach, I found that his approach, combining two very different lines of thinking, influenced me to an important extent. Furthermore it seemed to fit well with the situation that I found in my fieldwork among the Merina.

This first fieldwork took place in an area of recent migration where alliances were continually being negotiated and renegotiated as people of different origins were mixing and where class differentiation was growing. Conversely, there seemed to exist an alternative, almost fantasmagoric, representation of society, which had little relevance for everyday short term social organization and strategies but which was a matter of deep emotional commitment. This alternative presented a picture of Merina society as divided into ranked descent groups. A caricatural, sociostructural, ahistorical account of Merina society in these terms could, I suppose, have been given, but this would have eluded the modern everyday and exoticized or primitivized the Merina. In order not to do this I gave, for example, the Christian churches and Christian belief a place in my ethnography; though perhaps, with hindsight, this was insufficient. I discussed the significance of the colonial period. I even deliberately chose as an illustration in *Placing the Dead* ([1971] 1993) a portrait of one of my main informants wearing a jacket and tie rather than the more 'Malagasy' clothes he usually wore. At the same time I did not want to ignore or minimize what I called, following Leach, the 'ideal' society—that which would have been the framework of a structural functional account—if only because it had such a phenomenological reality for the people whom I had known. Life in the Merina villages I studied was thus seen concurrently from two very different points of view, which accidentally corresponded to one or other side of my dual training.

It is understanding the co-existence and twin phenomenology of these two points of view, which were, and are, as real for the people I had studied as they had appeared to me, that has been the guiding thread of my subsequent work. I variously called these two phenomenological realities "everyday communication/cognition" and "ritual communication/cognition" (Bloch 1977a).



In the presentation of my work for this journal I am inevitably more concerned with 'ritual communication/cognition', because this is what touches on what has been called 'religion'. However, I believe we must never look at one without bearing in mind the other: everyday communication, since throughout I have argued that ritual communication/cognition must be studied as the product, though the indirect and partially autonomous product, of 'everyday cognition'.

The everyday level of cognition, of choices and transactions, was understood by Leach in the tradition of classical economics' maximization theory, which had been introduced into anthropology at the LSE by Firth and Malinowski. This seemed unsatisfactory for reasons having to do with my more psychological understanding of human cognition and motivation. British anthropology felt, and still feels, that it need not be interested in cognitive issues, treating the matter as though these were transparent, and consequently, leaving the field to American cultural anthropology. These types of psychological theories were also unsatisfactory, but for another reason. American cultural anthropology, largely in the wake of the Boasian attack on racist evolutionists, emphasized cognitive relativism, a tendency that reached its extreme form in the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. I was always uncomfortable with such a position for a number of reasons, not least of which was my experience of participant observation in fieldwork. Probably the most important lesson I had learned from this type of research was the ease with which interpersonal communication and cooperation between myself and the people I studied occurred; a facility which, in the light of our cultural distance, gave the lie to any strong relativist stance. Most of the time, I had felt at ease in a place where, according to American culturalist theory, fluent sharing should have been extremely difficult.

This unease made me receptive to new theories that challenged Boasian relativism. I was exposed to these as a visitor to the anthropology department in Berkeley. These challenges mainly came from the linguists. Brent Berlin and Paul Kay's *Basic Color Terms* (1969) seemed to demonstrate universal constraint in the cognition of color, the very field where cultural relativity was often introduced to students. This forced me to rethink the field. This universalism was accompanied by my growing acquaintance with the nativism of aspects of Chomsky's transformational grammar. Such work comforted my view that the human mind was not the blank slate, which had implicitly been implied in what I had called the "anthropological theory of cognition" (Bloch 1985); a position later strengthened as, via Sperber, I learned more about the modularist view of the mind.

Furthermore, and in a linked way, also at Berkeley, I became influenced by new semantic and pragmatic theories of language, such as speech act theory. These challenged the semiotic views of meaning that were implicit or explicit in cultural and social anthropology (Bloch 1974). As Malinowski had argued long before, participant observation leads naturally to this type of pragmatic views of meaning. According to such views, meaning cannot be separated from action, and, because action occurs in the interaction between human beings and the world, this theoretical stance clashed with the idealism and relativism that was taking root in British anthropology, in part as a result of the growing influence of Geertz and other American scholars.

By contrast a Malinowskian 'practice' approach to meaning was congruent with certain forms of Marxism, as was later to be argued by Bourdieu. For political reasons I had always been involved in Marxism, although from very early on, I was also repulsed by its Soviet version. I was therefore receptive to the non-Soviet Marxist theories that developed in French anthropology from the 1960s on. Much of this work concerned ideology but I was equally, if not more, interested in the fragile Marxist theories about nonideological cognition, the basis of what writers such as Gramsci and Lukacs had discussed under the label 'the consciousness of the working class'. According to them this consciousness or cognition had its roots in human nature and in the practice of production. These Marxist writers, and subsequent ones, were shallow in their consideration of the cognitive side of things. Vygotsky could have been a source of inspiration for them but he was little known. Conversely, the stress on cognition and meaning as found within the interaction of humans and the world, such as was analyzed

by speech act theory and developmental psychology, including that of Piaget, seemed to be a way for understanding nonideological cognition. It would enable us to develop a proper psychological and philosophical theory of human beings in the business of producing and reproducing their lives. The work of these writers seemed to me to show the way for the kind of psychological theory we would need and ever since I have tried to contribute to the building up of this area.



The interest in everyday practical cognition thus also creates the framework I have used in my attempt to understand ideological or ritual cognition. The recognition that these alternative systems of representations had phenomenological reality for actors, especially those I know in Madagascar, defined for me the two questions that I have subsequently tried to answer. The first is how can such alternative understandings of the world be made real if the source of such cognition is not to be found in everyday practice?; and second, what are the characteristics of these alternative understandings?

The discussion concerning the mechanism that created or maintained ideology by writers such as Althusser had concentrated on such institutions as schooling. These were seen by him as emanations of the state. This idea of ideological state apparatuses seemed much too narrow to understand the phenomena that had intrigued me and quite insufficient for a more anthropological approach to the question. In any case, the notion of ideology, as used in the work of Marxist authors—as a kind of plot consciously produced by the dominant class—seemed fanciful. Some Marxists thinkers had sought to free themselves of it but, somehow, this type of functionalism always seemed to trap the arguments. As a result I distanced myself from this literature and concentrated my work on ritual. Ritual is a phenomenon found in all types of society and, following a number of anthropologists, Leach in particular, I argued that it was ritual that made possible these alternative representations of the world, which had such power for certain moments and from certain perspectives.

It might be thought that the problems with the word ‘ritual’ might be of the same kind as those I have discussed above concerning the word ‘religion’. This is not so. The term religion cannot be attached to anything that we can assume *a priori* is a characteristic of our species. As a result any definition we might want to give of the term remains totally arbitrary and therefore misleading. Conversely, ritual is more like the word ‘hat’. In different places and times words cognate with the word ‘hat’ have different semantic fields but, nonetheless, we can create an unproblematic working definition of a word such as hat by saying, “For the purpose of this analysis, any covering of the head is a hat.” This works because the existence of heads is not a subject for debate and it serves as an external anchor for the definition. Similarly, ritual can be defined as a specific type of modification of the way human beings communicate and, as is the case with heads, the fact that humans communicate is not in doubt and therefore serves as a similar anchor. Also, the representations of ritual are systematic transformations of everyday cognition, which has universal bases, and these provide another anchor. Of course, if we were seeking the essence of ritual we would be wasting our time because we would then be simply repeating our initial definition, but studying the implications and effects of the type of modification of human communication indicated by the definition of ritual is unproblematic.

The key initial step in most of what I have written on ritual is the assertion that ritual evokes representations, which are radically different from—but also *derived* from—the rep-

representations that govern everyday practice. It is because of this that a cognitive theory of practice is a necessary preliminary to a discussion of ritual. The theory I have developed by using work from outside the discipline of anthropology cannot be discussed fully here. But it relies on the assumption that the human mind is made by natural selection to represent the world in a way that is appropriate for human practice. If this were not the case we would not be here to write pieces such as this.

In rituals (Bloch 1982, 1986, 1987, 1992), certain fundamentals of practical understanding concerned with time and the processes of life are apparently negated, but, as is inevitable in all negations, these understandings are predicated on what is negated. The negated practical understandings are universal because they come from the interaction between minds and the world in its most fundamental aspects. For example, funerary rites are based on an understanding that death is the end of life, but then ritual gets to work on this representation and evokes—in a ritual drama—life after death represented as a negation of the basic representation. Similarly, initiation rituals are based on the understanding that children must come out of women's bodies, and such an understanding must be there before ritual can represent children as being, somehow, born through the actions of men, the church, elders or even the state; otherwise the ritual would have no power.

This anchoring in basic understandings is why funerary rites or initiation rites are so similar in unrelated places. It is because the ground on which they stand, which exists independently of them, is the same. Furthermore, this ground offers certain affordances for its own negation. Thus, our knowledge of birth and death leads easily to a representation of a new second birth by means of a death theme. This is so for the simple reason that, if you want to stress that it is men and not women and men, who are the true source of life, you will have, as a part of the ritual, a negative allusion to birth by women. This can be dramatically shown as a sequence when the initiate apparently 'dies' as it renounces its first birth and this negative moment in the ritual then offers a suitable contrastive backdrop for the positive part when the child is 'reborn' through the ritual acts of men. Even this final representation is determined, though loosely, by the affordances of everyday representations. Thus the 'birth' through men will often be dramatized by images derived through allusion of the child coming out of a woman's body. In a similar way funerals, which establish a kind of permanence in time of people—which, in turn, transcends the continual transformation of the body in linear time—are very likely to play with the contrast between a caricature of the processes of putrefaction and the longer temporality of such phenomena as the heavens, landscape, or stone. These are the materials that are 'ready to hand' for human minds made by the evolution of cognition, to understand the world as it is and which become the tools for its negation.

There are two further aspects to the analysis of ritual that I have been developing. The first concerns violence. As I argued in *Prey into Hunter* (1992), the kind of bounded logic of ritual representations, which leads to a negation of everyday understanding in order to construct an alternative reality, requires a double form of violence. The first violence concerns the movement out of the world. This corresponds to what authors such as Turner would have referred to as the entry into liminality. Thus, in initiations the initiate is symbolically killed in an enacted rejection of birth. However, I also stressed a second rebounding violence, which concerns the re-entry of the liminal entity that must 'consume', often literally, the world it has left behind. In the case of initiation the 'dead' initiate returns as a new transcendental being to claim his place in the noninitiated world, which becomes a consumable resource. This is necessary so that the transcendental liminal being can be refurnished with life and not remain a transcendental irrelevance to the real world. The recurrence of this double pattern of violence is again to be explained by the limited affordances, which come from the way the

world is understood in the limited manners in which it can be re-represented. I noted how this second violence can, under certain political circumstances, legitimate actual aggression or offer a kind of elective affinity to warfare; but it also would be quite misleading to see this use as, in any way, a sufficient explanation of the whole matter.

The second aspect of the analysis of ritual is that ritual is the way a certain characteristic of the human social and political are created. Here I return to the discussion of what the structural functionalists have called 'social structure'. Radcliffe, Brown, and Fortes had stressed that 'social structure' is a means by which the fluidity and impermanence of human life are apparently overcome by the creation of roles, such as kingship for example. These roles seem to have an existence independent of the holders of such roles. This apparent independence of the transformative life of natural people is also true for groups, such as descent groups, which can be represented as 'one body' that can comprise not only many contemporary individuals, but also forebears and future members. These roles and groups seem to form systems that live in a temporality that negates basic and universal understandings of the passage of time and the ever-changing facts of human reproduction and mortality. Such nonempirical creations are the product of ritual and the way it transforms everyday understandings to create imaginary representations, which nonetheless have great significance. They are particularly interesting in that the existence of such transcendental phenomena as roles and corporate groups, and the systems in which they seem to fit, constitutes one of the most fundamental difference of the organization of the social from that of our closest nonhuman relatives, the chimpanzees.

Ritual thus enables us to live, some of the time, in large part in imagination, in systems that negate the linear passage of time as well as our individual impermanence and its dialectic. These 'social structural' systems are continuous with those that have been called by some writers 'religion' and share the same characteristics. I therefore propose that we dissolve the phenomena that have been so labeled into the much wider pool of alternative representations created by ritual. The fact that the phenomena just discussed, initiation rituals and funerals, are variously included in discussions labeled religion or social organization shows the inseparability of different parts of this wider pool. As I argued in "Why Religion Is Nothing Special but Is Central" (2008), our human ability to create this alternative system of representations is best seen as a tool by which we seem to be able to live in 'social' systems, which are much larger and of a different kind to those of other animals. These representations enable us to live in subjectively holistic imaginary systems which, because of the hierarchical character of holistic representations demonstrated by Dumont, can serve various forms of domination. It would, however, be totally misleading to think that these repeated uses explain in a functionalist manner the existence of the phenomenon. Furthermore, the evocations of ritual cannot become the organizing system of human life. They remain possible alternatives rather than replacements. The process of life cannot be more than a compromise and dialectic between ritual evocation and everyday cognition.



Analyzing the cognitive status of ritual representations does not, however, explain how it is possible for these to become so powerful. Why can representations that seem to contradict our everyday understanding be entertained and remain as something other than dramatic make-believe theater? For an answer to this question we need to turn to an examination of what kind of human communication can be called ritual. This I have attempted to do in a number of places to which I have not yet referred.

In two articles (Bloch 1974, 2004) and in two books (Bloch 1986, 1989) I discussed the semantic implications of ritual. Ritual as a form of communication is found both in events, which can be called rituals, and in aspects of other social acts, which have a ritual element such as handshakes (Leach 1966). In my publications I stressed the effect of formalization in ritual and the consequent lack of individual creativity in archaic fixed language, singing, and dancing, all of which are characteristic of the type of events or actions that can be called rituals. This lack of creativity affects the propositional force of the language and of other forms of communication involved because the force of the meaning of ordinary proposition derives from the presumption that the speaker intends what they do and say. If what they say is assumed to be a matter of following a formula, then the intention of the content is absent. This, of course, does not remove other kinds of meaning from the speech or gesture acts made. In Bloch 1974 I stressed how social commitment may actually increase with the diminution of propositional force. Also, it is important to remember that I was talking about communicated meaning, not what the action meant for the performer. In fact the separation of intentionality from action in ritual gives the performer great freedom in what he or she may feel or think as the acts are made. For example it is possible to be a competent performer of ritual while thinking about quite different matters, such as what one ate the day before, but that does not mean that the equally competent performer standing next to you may not be intensely emotionally aroused. It is because of this freedom I am suspicious of theories of ritual that assume that certain emotional states can be paired with the performance of specific rituals.

In "Ritual and Deference" (Bloch 2004) I returned to my earlier central argument that ritualization implies the semantic shift of removing the truth commitment of the actor to the side, so to speak. It is as if the ritual actor, as she follows the required ritual action or language, was saying: "Don't ask me why I am doing this, or saying this. I am just following others, who may know why this is done or said but, because I trust them, I therefore defer to them by acting in the way they have shown me even though I don't know the reason why I am acting thus."

This element of trust is central to ritual. It explains how challenge to the propositions of ritual is, if not impossible, very difficult. One does not have to explain to oneself, or to anybody else, why one is doing or saying what one is doing or saying because one has, by the very fact of ritual participation, trusted others with the reasons of what is done. One is inside a community of people who trust. Participation is crucial, even if it is only a matter of being present, and rejection becomes to be seen as a radical de-solidarization. In this way ritual has, by its very nature, strong fortifications against examination.

Trust, and deference in general, is an essential aspect of living in human societies. Like the capacity to create in imagination roles and transcendental groups, it is another essential contrast between our species and others who seem never to trust each other and who therefore must know for themselves the reasons for their own actions (Jensen, Call and Tomasello 2007). On the contrary, we could not live our lives without trust, as Hilary Putman has shown. He gives the example of how, when we buy a gold ring from a jeweler, we do not bring a mini laboratory to test the chemical nature of the metal; rather, we trust the jeweler's expertise. A moment's reflection shows how general this is: we use and assume trust; otherwise our lives would be existential hell. This explains why the trust on which ritual is based not only hides the content from scrutiny but also why participation in ritual appears as comforting, or recomforting, especially in times of trouble. It is true though that it may also be felt by the leading participants as something of a burden, which makes the weight of society to rest on their shoulder. But this is so only for a few. Ritual is thus experienced by most participants as

moments of great self-abandonment of intentional propositional meaning to others whom we trust and to whom we submit. It is an extreme instance of those least anxiety-provoking aspects of human social interaction (Bloch 2004).

This brings me back to the political aspect of ritual, which can serve as a summary of this survey of my work on ritual.

The deference at the heart of ritual action makes desirable what it protects from rational evaluation. It does this because it is an extreme form of one of the most comforting aspects of social life: our trust in others' wisdom. It is a willing act of plunging in action with limited knowledge. But what is it that ritual protects from scrutiny? It is the suggestion of a type of a system of life that has vanquished the experience of the irreversibility of the passage of time and the mutability of life, especially death and the short-term dangerous strategies of the Machiavellian social. What is evoked includes many aspects which have sometimes been called religious but these involve much, much more. These evocations, which can remain vague because of deference, have been created through a system of dramatic negation which, by its very nature, requires a double symbolic violence against evocations of everyday life. However, the imaginary social, which rituals create, has great significance for practical human society because this makes possible the complexity and scale of human society. These evoked systems are holistic and organic as they suggest a re-representation of the world as stable and time defying. Such systems are holistic in the sense of the word used by Dumont (1966) and they are therefore hierarchical. Because these systems are hierarchical, they legitimate traditional authority. But then the legitimation of traditional authority can become the legitimation of power when power holders manipulate themselves into the positions of authority created by ritual (Bloch 1986).

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Why Maurice Bloch's Work on 'Religion' Is Nothing Special but Is Central

Laurent Berger

After the work of Durkheim and Weber, one of the most important agendas in the social sciences has been to describe, understand, and explain religious practice. Unfortunately, Durkheim's and Weber's heirs have continued to distinguish and oppose two complementary approaches. The first approach focuses on the mode of ritual communication through which 'non physical imagined agents and forces' are inferred and felt as sources of life during groupings, transforming the idiosyncratic, egoistic, and empirical forms of individual consciousness into altruistic and conceptually shared forms (the anchoring of religious domain in human nature).¹ The second approach studies how, in the name of different agents and forces, human representatives of the divine enter into competition for blessing or cursing people, by enacting relationships of power and affiliation, organizing patterns of property rights, legitimating inequalities and promoting specific social networks, movements, organizations, or societal systems (the anchoring of religious domain in history and political dynamics).² I argue against Bloch on Bloch that Maurice's work is actually in-between these two positions, and that is why it is indeed so central to anthropology.

Of course this centrality is linked in part more generally to Maurice's familial, institutional, and intellectual background. Durkheim's grand-nephew and Mauss's second cousin, born and educated in France under the cultural influence of the École Polytechnique, trained in Cambridge, Berkeley, and the LSE with contemporaries such as Marilyn Strathern, regularly invited to European, American, and Asian universities, conducting fieldwork in a former French colony (Madagascar), Bloch's anthropological reflections are situated at the cross-roads of French, English, and American traditions and rely on the crucial contributions of archaeology, history, political economy, linguistics, ethology, and cognitive sciences to the development of social and cultural anthropology. Moreover, his fidelity to the Kantian project of Enlightenment (calling into question why people act as they do here and there but not everywhere) and his advocacy of long-term and recurrent fieldwork alongside academic life (I first met him in a refuge for Malagasy parish priests in 1999) make him one of the most distinguished representative of the Malinowskian tradition, linking ethnographic descriptions and interpretations of actual people's lives to wider theoretical issues and broad comparison.³ The best example of this inductive method is his own elaboration of the "rebounding violence schema" (Bloch 1992) based on what has remained invariant in the practice of Merina circumcision over two centuries, which he carefully reconstituted through archives and participant observation.⁴ His explanatory theory of the core ritual process both develops insights from Van Gennep (1909) and Hocart (1936, 1954) about its tripartite sequence and illustrates its properties through diverse empirical case studies related to Orokaiva initiations, Christian

millenarian cults, Dinka, Greek, and Buid sacrifices, Tibetan ritual marriages, Shona spirit mediumship, and Hindu funerals.

More specifically, I argue that the centrality of Bloch's work is also the result of a theoretical and problematical positioning, which is not totally covered in his presentation and also somewhat misrepresented. In the latter Bloch insists indeed on the discrepancy between the Durkheimian naturalists' success in explaining ritual as a basic behavior anchored in the human condition, and the Weberian historicists' understanding of religions as ephemeral and ghostly events that are indistinctly political, economical, aesthetic, legal, cosmological, or domestic. Lévi-Strauss (1962) deconstructed totemism by arguing that this particular set of religious practices was the result of a human capacity for analogical reasoning and categorization applied to similarities and differences between animal and vegetal species on the one hand, and human groups, on the other hand (Species 1 : Species2 :: Group 1 : Group 2). Alternatively, Bloch asserts that religion is a polythetic concept, the genealogy of which is entirely specific to Abrahamic monotheisms. Beyond deceptive appearances, two sets of inherited human capacities would be at stake in the adaptation and evolutionary process of humankind: the propensity for sociality and the ritualization of action. The first one implies the distinctive ability to live in fictional worlds by imagining essentialized social roles, statuses, and groups (Harris 2000);⁵ the second one is a formalized mode of communication relying on goal-demotion and deference to enhance trust and truth commitment between human animals using language (Bloch 1974, 2008; Rappaport 1999).⁶ Thus, as Firth and Leach have also suggested, anthropologists should be attentive to the way different kinds of knowledge are created and activated according to the types of interaction occurring among persons, animals, and artifacts. In cases where the 'transcendental' dimension is preponderant, people act toward each other in terms of essentialized roles, statuses, and imagined communities. But in the 'transactional' version, people act toward each other in terms of short-term Machiavellian strategies based on individual achievements, choices, perceptions, calculus, and everyday empirical monitoring. A Durkheimian approach would be then the best way to grasp how rituals make possible these alternative and transcendental representations of the world by violently transforming 'everyday cognition' about time, life cycle, egoistical interests, and core knowledge into shared and hierarchical cosmologies (the rebounding violence schema).

However, there is a slight problem with this Bloch on Bloch version. This perspective was elaborated after Maurice took his cognitive turn in the 1980s, abandoning the Marxist analyses of ideology he was renewing thanks to his utilization of semantic and pragmatic theories of language. But, as Parry (2007) recently pointed out, if his work tries to demonstrate that ritual is the domain in which ideology is forged, hierarchy legitimated and political domination naturalized in pre-capitalist societies, some of his published texts also tackle two complementary issues. The first one explains the correlation among the 'degree of instituted hierarchy', the level of complexity of social structure, and the 'amount of ideological knowledge and ritual communication' performed. The second issue investigates the learning and functioning of everyday cognition and ideological knowledge through the "organization of practical activities and daily tasks, especially productive activities" (Bloch 1977, 1998). These investigations and analyses seem necessary to Bloch because of two intriguing facts: on the one hand, capitalist societies produce ideological knowledge through mediums others than rituals; on the other hand, horticultural as well as hunter-gatherer societies produce sometimes more ideological knowledge through their daily practical activities than through rituals.⁷ This is why Bloch (1975) compared Merina irrigated rice cultivators with Zafimaniry swidden farmers from the perspective of their property rights, kinship systems, and tech-

nologies of production and power, and analyzed the respective symbolism of their tombs and houses (the fetishization of lands and tombs being for him a consequence of Merina slavery, irrigation system, and state-building through long-distance commerce).

In other words, before his cognitive turn, Bloch was conjugating a Durkheimian and a Weberian approach: human beings were not only representing to themselves essentialized roles and groups thanks to specific modes of communication. They were also participating in the configuration and performance of relationships and technologies of production, communication, and power whose objective properties informed and constrained the way they could imagine and experiment the transcendental and transactional dimensions of their mutual interactions. Merina elites not only had the charge of supervising rituals: they also controlled lands, guns, slaves, and military forces in the nineteenth century. As Parry (2007: 356) reminds us, the wild power that Vazimba entities represented in Merina circumcision was an allegory of the real dependence of Merina society on slaves raided from neighboring peoples; circumcision became a major state cult at precisely the point at which the Merina army killed, pillaged, and enslaved on a terrifying scale.

Consequently, there is no reason to desist from studying the objectification of the properties of social life related to the morphology and extension of interaction networks, because it is quite difficult to postulate the autonomy of knowledge from political economy and social stratification. Even Bloch (2008) has to recognize that the creation of an apparently separate 'religion' is closely tied to state formation processes and the Bronze Age Revolution, as it has been attested in Mesopotamia, Egypt, or China. Religious rituals manifest themselves in identifiable forms such as religious movements, networks, organizations. Sometimes, during globalization processes, new societal systems emerge as religions where the question of orthodoxy, orthopraxy, and leadership are differently dealt with (e.g., what is central or peripheral to the religious tradition, who and what does or does not belong to this religious tradition, who has the authority, what are the sanctions).⁸ Therefore, explaining the spread, transmission, and learning of ideological knowledge through rituals from a complementary Durkheimian and Weberian perspective as Bloch initiated it could consist in developing an anthropology of ritual policies. The aim would be to explain both ritual sequence variations and invariance through history. The variation or invariance of the performance frequency, of the sensory pageantry, of the place delimitation, of the encoding style of exegesis, of the audience and legitimate participants and authorities, of used materials, objects and ornaments, of the sequence of verbal and sensory-motor performances, of the 'relational configurations' enacted inside and outside the cult, would appear as both determined by cognitive and ecological factors. These parameters could be analyzed as an activation of reasoning and memorizing processes influencing, by feedback, their own stabilization or evolution, at the same time as they would be strategically selected by human agents confronted by a mix of religious traditions and the rise and demise of competitive polities and business organizations.

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■ NOTES

1. See, among others, Durkheim (1913), Lévi-Strauss (1971), and Rappaport (1999).

2. See, e.g., Geertz (1968), Gellner (1981), and Weber (1996).
3. See Bloch (2008: 16): "Functionalism enables us to recognize the inseparable totality created by the particularisms of the specificity of human history and the properties of natural being in the natural world. ... Its strength lies in its insistence on the complexity of life in particular places and at particular times, on the fact that in normal practice the many facets of human existence are inextricably together."
4. Bloch (1986) displays how despite fundamental changes in political economy and social stratification over the last two centuries in Malagasy highlands, the same basic structure of Merina circumcision ritual continues to take place. But more important is the fact that some parts of this ritual have been enacted in specific historical periods, parallel to the expansion of definite highland Malagasy polities. These 'ancestral' polities successively took the form of deme and chiefdom during the eighteenth century (Andriamasinavalona's descendants' rules), sacred kingship and early state at the turn of the eighteenth century (Andrianampoinimerina's rule), as well as military, administrative, territorial empire, and modern state before the French conquest and colonization throughout the nineteenth century (Radama and Ranavalona's rules).
5. See Bloch (2008: 2059): "What the transcendental social requires is the ability to live very largely in imagination. We often act towards elders, kings, mothers, etc. not in terms of how they appear to the senses at any particular moment but as if they were something else: essential transcendental beings. Once we realise this omnipresence of the imaginary in the everyday nothing special is left to explain concerning 'religion.' What needs to be explained is the much more general question how it is that we can act so much of the time towards visible people in terms of their invisible halo. The tool for this fundamental operation is the capacity for imagination. It is while searching for neurological evidence for the development of this capacity and of its social implications that we, in passing, will account for religious-like phenomena."
6. Goal-demotion consists of disconnecting actions and means from their usual and ordinary aims. Rituals include a lot of actions and sub-actions whose repetition reinforces goal demotion by creating actions without goal ascription and possible alternatives—a kind of a behavioral tunnel described by Bloch (1974).
7. Bloch (1998: 27) presents a few linked central mental models accounting for the conceptualization and practice of Zafimaniry society. All anchored in practice and material experience, they are the main principles through which Zafimaniry social life seems to flow: (1) the mental model of what people are like and how they mature; (2) the mental model of the differences and similarities between women and men; (3) the mental model of what a good marriage is like; (4) the mental model of what trees and wood are like; and (5) the mental model of what houses are like.
8. See Beyer (2003).

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Maurice Bloch, or How to Think Persistence in Religion?

David Berliner

It is a great honor to comment on Maurice Bloch's writings, as his work has been very inspirational to my youthful ethnography. A Marxist theorist with a Durkheimian style (Gellner 1999), as well as an indefatigable fieldworker, Bloch has been one of the most stimulating thinkers of religious persistence—or ritual persistence, one might say, given the trickiness of the word 'religion' (Bloch 2005). In this short article, I would like to develop what I see as Bloch's contribution to exploring this foundational anthropological theme in a very innovative way.

The question of continuity is as old as anthropology which, as a discipline, has been historically skewed toward documenting the persistence of cultural items and the reproduction of social forms. I concur with Joel Robbins (2007) when he writes that anthropologists have been much more interested in tracking cultural continuities than radical ruptures. Although always apprehending the naturalness of change as a succession of slow modifications occurring *petit à petit* on the scale of *longue durée* (with a very Durkheimian stance), many anthropological traditions have indeed seen change as secondary to permanence.

Issues of persistence have been under particularly obsessive scrutiny in the field of religious studies, starting from Edward Tylor on 'survivals', moving to Pascal Boyer on 'counterintuitive beliefs' and passing by Melville Herskovits on 'acculturation'. Although he is interested in plasticity and change, Bloch's endeavor, at least since *From Blessing to Violence*, can be seen as a series of investigations to better understand why certain practices, mostly rituals, survive across hundreds or thousands of years. The last chapter of *From Blessing to Violence* is intended to lead us toward a theory of the slow transformation of ideology and to "cope with the historical problem," but it eventually ends up with the recognition of the stability of ritual, its "overall lack of change" over a time span of 170 years (Bloch 1986: 177, 165). I do not have the space here to expand on Bloch's fine-grained ethnography but, in a nutshell, he argues that—political and historical changes aside—Merina circumcision ritual is continually perpetuated. Whereas one finds here an incisive perspective on the conservative dimensions of ritual taken as orthopraxy (following Robertson Smith), Bloch goes further and manages to explain ritual stability sociologically. Such perpetuation, or in his terms "this ability not to change in changing politico-economic circumstances," is due to ritual's own internal machinery, which integrates singular events into a "timeless order" (ibid.: 185), and confers an emotional power and individual satisfaction. With a Marxist nod, he suggests that ritual perpetuates something of a dominance unchanged from the pre-colonial past, and expressed in authority roles taken over according to political needs and circumstances.

Undoubtedly, Maurice Bloch has prophetically pushed many contemporary anthropologists of religion toward investigations of persistence, as is the case with my own fieldwork in

Guinea-Conakry (Berliner 2005), which constitutes an example of the durability of religious ideas and status in the absence of ritual performances. Indeed, among the group of coastal rice-cultivators named the Bulongic, masculine initiation rituals vanished in the 1950s, but discourses and songs about elders' secrets and initiation spirits circulate to this day. In this context, beliefs, secrets, and status related to non-Islamic initiation rituals speak louder than ritual actions per se, a subtle mechanism of religious persistence that Bloch's *From Blessing to Violence* helped me to figure out. Not only did it draw my attention to a better understanding of the minimal conditions—that is, the simplest ingredients—necessary to render a ritual practice or a religious idea persistent but it also invited me to develop new perspectives on how and why people decide to stop performing rituals, or how and why some lose belief. In this regard, loss as an anthropological conundrum (and not as an ideology) seems to me as revealing as continuity in the study of religion, whether it is among the Bulongic where people are devout believers in initiation spirits despite the vanishing of ancient ritual actions or among American pastors described by Dennett and LaScola (2010) who have lost faith but continue to preach.

I perceive Bloch's cognitive turn, brought about under the influence of Chomski in the 1970s, to be a continuation of the same theoretical quest, a quest for explaining persistence now framed within the new theoretical apparatus offered by cognition studies (Bloch 1998, Bloch 2005). The pioneer of a perspective that has become a truism for many European anthropologists, Bloch has indeed played a crucial role in drawing our attention toward a fertile collaboration among cognitive scientists, evolutionary psychologists, and cultural anthropologists to build new theories about religion, transmission, and the mind; a fruitful interdisciplinary cooperation promising to enhance our knowledge of the cognitive foundations of cultural practices, yet avoiding the traps of cognitive-only forms of explanation (Berliner and Sarró 2007). Scholars such as Boyer or McCauley and Lawson carve out little or no space for people's lived experience of religion in scientific explanation, but Maurice Bloch has made a strong claim for taking into account phenomenological realities, although these are not always linguistic (Bloch 1998). Perhaps indicating his early interest in pragmatic theories of language, he deploys an approach to religion, which in some way is consistent with the experiences of its practitioners, his latest endeavor being to bridge the gap between the theories of mind produced by cognitive psychologists and those of the Zafimaniry people of Madagascar (Bloch 2006). In the same vein, Bloch has emphasized the crucial importance of notions of 'trust' and 'deference' in rituals, thought of as "orgies of conscious deference" (Bloch 2005: 136), in which participants allow themselves to depend on others (whether these others are indeterminate ancestors or ritual experts). Whereas rituals bring into play complex cognitive mechanisms, he asks how one can account for "the meaning of what is going on for participants" (ibid.: 123) and, in particular, for the fact that they 'seem right' to people, besides the banal observation that 'we do it because it is our tradition'. By so doing, his approach to ritual effectively integrates issues of authority, truth-making, and cognitive processes in the midst of human interactions.

Questions of this kind reveal the potential for anthropology inherent in Bloch's perspective. His plea for a delicate balance among the social, the phenomenological, and the cognitive, as well as between the discovery of cognitive mechanisms and the practice of meaning-oriented ethnographic fieldwork (and the way they can mutually enrich each other), has come as a relief for many of us who did not really see how contemporary cognitive studies of religion could effectively come to grips with the lived and interactive dimensions of religious experience. In his endeavor, Bloch has found a subtle equilibrium between naturalism and

hermeneutics, which opens new avenues for thinking through the social and cognitive underpinnings of what makes 'religion' vivid and persistent.

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Is Ritual Really Like a Hat? Or, The Category Formerly Known as 'Religion'

Fenella Cannell

Few experiences could be as educational as disagreeing with Maurice Bloch, whose originality and breadth of learning put most of us to shame, and whose commitment to the articulation of a distinctive body of theory provides a continuous incitement to think. Bloch's writing on ritual is full of insight, particularly in its attention to the ways in which inequality is produced, reproduced, and may be experienced as something other than what it is. I am not a cognitivist anthropologist, but I learn much from Bloch's cognitive writing, particularly from his insistence that anthropologists distinguish narrative from thinking, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, from his rejection of an extreme relativist position that would deny the possibility of both cross-cultural human communication and a universal discipline of anthropology.

The piece Bloch presents here is a welcome and lucid report on the present state of his thought, and makes a strong case for the continuities in its trajectory, while also acknowledging that he has made some amendments over time. Along the way, Bloch makes statements on which I would have a different view. Thus, I find the characterization of Evans-Pritchard as one unaware of his own bias toward an Abrahamic model of 'religion' quite puzzling. A reading of the closing chapters of *Nuer Religion* ([1956] 1970) suggests to me that Evans-Pritchard wrote with an acute sensitivity to the grounding of his own descriptive language in the Catholic terminology of his personal faith. Certainly, he wrote explicitly about the theoretical tension between Christianity and anthropology ([1960] 1962) at a period considerably before the topic became widely discussed in the light of Asad's work. As to whether there is any legitimacy to the comparisons Evans-Pritchard sought to make—despite the pitfalls of the term 'belief' to which Needham and others reasonably drew attention—this surely would be an empirical question, and a highly complex one. But if it is clear that one should not assume the mapping of the twentieth-century English Roman Catholic category of 'belief' onto the Nuer, it also seems evident that there may nevertheless be unexpected points of conjuncture between Nuer thought and Catholic thought, which might even reshape our categorization of each.

One might also question whether Bloch has in some respects overstated the continuities in his thinking (Chomsky plus Althusser?), and in other respects understated them. One shift I personally see in Bloch's more recent writing is a willingness to envisage an element in what-other-people-sometimes-call 'religion' that is less closely tied to the idea of social domination and inequality than is the case in most of his earlier work. In *Prey into Hunter* (1992) and *From Blessing to Violence* (1986), the focus is centrally on ritual, and ritual is almost exclusively discussed as what continuously recreates the ideological misrepresentation of human potential, mortality, and social relations (see also Bloch and Parry 1982). There is a space for the possibility of 'ritual' without overt social inequality; this appears, for example,

in *Prey into Hunter* in the account of forms of shamanism in societies with strong egalitarian values (Bloch 1992: 43–5, 50), but such spaces are uncommon, fragile, and temporary. Bloch's emphasis is generally on ritual's expressions of a "hatred of life" through a limited range of symbolic oppositions that "will do for any domination" (Bloch 1986: 169, 177). Drawing on wide-ranging evidence, this powerful model of ritual as ideology ultimately rests not only on what Bloch takes from Marxism, but also on Bloch's Merina ethnography and history and thus, as I have argued elsewhere (Cannell 2007), runs the risk of generalizing from a very Merina concept of the ancestral transcendent, and a very Merina emphasis on the centrality of hierarchy.

By contrast, Bloch's current writing allows for an enlarged category of 'transcendence', which is now seen as being always present in human social life, and is explicitly placed outside as well as inside the parameters of formal ritual action. This 'transcendence' is not reducible to the ideological aspects of ritual. Indeed, Bloch suggests in a recent article that it may be identified with the human capacity to imagine social roles, viewed as the evolutionary development by which humans were differentiated from their closest primate relatives (Bloch 2008). This re-statement—which in effect identifies 'the transcendent' (Bloch's current 'religion' substitute) with what makes us human—reads to me like a not inconsiderable concession to those critics who, over many decades, have asked whether his earlier theory does not underestimate the creative possibilities of 'religion'.

Be that as it may, in other respects, Bloch's views appear consistent with his earlier, Marxist, focus on ritual. For Bloch in his cognitivist mode, 'ritual' is still central, but now it has come to be treated as a natural kind, or at least as something with a close enough reference point to a natural kind to permit 'ritual' to evade the problems of anachronism, which he claims beset the term 'religion.' 'Ritual' is a hat, even if it is not a head. But is it?

Bloch's 'anchor' for the natural kind claim is that ritual is a modification of human communication. In fact his theory of ritual is not reducible to this, but equally requires the other linked elements of his earlier writings, including the symbolic negation of natural understandings of the world, and the claim that the personal experience of any given participant in a ritual will have no impact on the efficacy of the whole. People taking part in ritual, says Bloch, are engaging in what he now calls 'deference'; that is, they are "saying 'don't ask me why I am doing this... I am just following others who know why this is done.'"

Bloch presents this bundle of statements as if they self-evidently belong together and as if they were clearly universally true of ritual, which is what he himself believes. But these are only claims about what ritual is and as such they are surely open to empirical testing. Elsewhere (Cannell 2007) I have discussed some material from my work with American Latter-day Saints (LDS; Mormons) and their accounts of Mormon temple ritual, which does not seem an easy fit with what Bloch proposes. The LDS Church is strongly centralized, and in many respects offers minute instructions to its members on what they should do and how they should feel in a range of situations. However, the space of the temple is sacred, and the church hierarchies strenuously enjoin avoidance of explicit discussion of its liturgy. Those entering the temple for the first time therefore encounter ritual with which they are not familiar, and which they often find surprising compared to the most austere Protestant forms of the regular Sunday services (held in local meeting houses, not in the temples). For some people, the underdetermination of the meaning of sacred space provides an exhilarating freedom to think and inhabit their religion, which they experience as intensely creative. For others, the dissonance between the experience of temple ritual and their expectations of how it should make them feel produces painful reactions and, in some cases, actually results in people deciding to leave the LDS Church.

In this example, therefore, we can see 1) a ritual in which the experience of individuals has much weightier consequences than Bloch's theory seems to allow and 2) a ritual in which many participants claim that space is open for creative and even critical thinking, despite the elaborately formal 'communicative' elements of which it is composed. This suggests to me that 'ritual', as much as 'religion', is actually a historically changeable category. It might be argued, of course, that 'rituals' inside the historically specific formation of (Christian) 'religions' are the exception that proves the rule, but I would be doubtful of such claims. On the contrary, it seems to be open to inquiry to determine whether there are unexpected points of contact, as well as of divergence, between (for instance) concepts and experiences of 'transcendence' in contexts inside and outside the Abrahamic religious traditions, and whether the Marxist view of transcendence as 'ideology' does not in fact in some ways reproduce such Abrahamic traditions in inverted form (Cannell 2007). Bloch's important critique of Boyer (2002) rested on a commitment, reiterated here, to retain a focus on what is phenomenologically true for people—a focus that is often lost in other cognitivist writing. But Bloch's materialism—which seems a product of both conviction and intuition—obviously entails a privileging of 'secular' ('scientific') explanations of reality, even while he is deconstructing the opposing category of 'religion' in his own unique style. Thus the element of 'trust' in deference could read in some ways like a kinder way of replaying the familiar assertion that religious effect consists in reliance on the 'imaginary friend'. In this area, Bloch's accounts of religious experience could become more phenomenological still. Although I do not anticipate convincing Maurice Bloch of these or any associated suggestions, I do look forward to seeing how he develops his own current usage of 'transcendence', and whether the possibility of human creativity is given a greater theoretical part in its future formulations.

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The Cognitive Turn and the Materiality of Social Life

On Bloch on Religion

Webb Keane

Maurice Bloch belongs to that great lineage of anthropologists who have taken the paradoxical character of our enterprise as a license to ask the most ambitious questions. He keeps rare company in an era when so many cultural anthropologists have taken refuge in cautious particularism. The paradoxical character to which I refer lies in the effort to bring the lapidary specificity of fieldwork to bear on questions raised by the broadest comparative framework. This requires a capacity for both intimacy and estrangement (Keane 2003a). If Bloch has said of himself, "I am, in the first instance, an ethnographer" (1998: 43), it is clear that ethnography is not the final instance. He also insists (in this volume) that anthropology should contribute to "the general understanding of what kind of animals human beings are."

The dual character of anthropology has two important consequences for Bloch's approach to 'religion'. First is his effort to overcome "the two fundamentalisms" (1998: 40) that would reduce anthropology to either hermeneutics or natural science. This is worth stressing today, when many cultural anthropologists see as their task 'to complicate the picture'. Meanwhile many of the naturalists have forgotten much of what anthropology has learned about human life in order to offer evolutionary just-so stories to an eager public. Bloch has made it his business to annoy members of both camps by telling each what can be gained from the other.

In Bloch's earlier writing the engagement of ethnography with comparison helped sustain a transcultural concept of 'religion' (e.g., Bloch 1992). In his cognitive turn, however, he develops one consequence of his view of anthropology's goal ("what kind of animals human beings are"), that theory "needs to make claims that can be related to general claims about human beings" (this volume). This eliminates the 'middle range' theories about such categories as class, modernity, authority, capitalism, the state, or secularism to which much social science aspires. Because it also eschews stipulative definitions and ideal types, the finding that religion is not a 'natural kind' seems to deal a fatal blow to any comparative approach to those phenomena that had heretofore seemed to count as religious. Indeed, when Talal Asad (1993) made his own case against the category of 'religion', this was the usual conclusion his readers took (the naturalists simply ignored him). The best of the work that has followed Asad has developed a thoroughly historical or, in Foucault's terms, a genealogical sensibility. Although Bloch accepts Asad's position, he does not abandon the comparative project. Rather, he raises comparison to a higher plane of generality, assimilating religion to ritual, and building on themes apparent in his work on ceremonial language (Bloch 1975) and mortuary practices (Bloch and Parry 1982). There he treated ritual as manipulating elements of nonritual life. But how does this differ from the thesis he has criticized, that religion consists of minimally counter-intuitive beliefs? I will not reiterate his essay here, except to endorse his observation that the cognitivist thesis tends to reproduce a naive view of the natural. But

there are two points to stress. First, Bloch's approach to ritual aims to privilege practices over beliefs, and thus is consistent with criticisms of belief-based definitions of 'religion' (Asad 1993; Needham 1972; Smith 1962). Second, this approach takes universal conditions of life, such as "growth, decline, reproduction, eating and excreting" (Bloch 1998: 63), as the conditions of possibility for comparison. These conditions are material but not reductively so: to experience growth and decline, for example, requires not just immediate sensory perceptions but also memory and foresight. Within this observation lies the seed of Bloch's stronger assertion that social life depends on the basic imaginative capacity to transcend the here and now. I think this assertion is persuasive, but as I suggest below, neither ethnography nor the cognitive turn are sufficient to fully develop the insight. To go further requires taking semiotic mediation more seriously than Bloch has been willing to do.

To rephrase Bloch, ordinary life involves practices and cognitive structures that provide affordances for the transcendence that makes social life possible. This includes a material logic. Thus, Zafimaniry find in the material qualities of wood ways of coping with human mortality (Bloch 1998). I would push this analysis further. Wood is not just a *metaphor* for durability—that is, an *idea*. Wood, from its state as a tree and onward over its career, bundles together a wide range of material qualities, most of which are irrelevant to any immediate use to which people put it—they remain affordances for unrealized projects. But those qualities also impose on people practical requirements and sensual experiences that go beyond their conceptual purposes and emotional needs (Keane 2003b, 2008a, 2010). Moreover, the materiality of wood enters into causal relations with other aspects of people's practical lives, such as tools, bodily habitus, agricultural practices, turns of phrase, climate, likely accidents. Thus wood involves a practical logic that is necessarily in excess of human desires, concepts, or projects. But it also possesses its own affordances, potential objectifications in response to which people may learn something about themselves and their possibilities. These may be practical (tree as house, shade, canoe, firewood, obstacle) or conceptual (tree as model for kinship, evolution, branches of knowledge, growth, endurance, disorder).

I take this to be implicit in Bloch's writing, but somewhat undeveloped for two reasons. One is a contradiction between his commitments to cognitive science and to the pragmatics of daily life. To the extent cognitive science privileges thought, it reinforces the view that culture is a kind of knowledge, even if only tacit (Bloch 1998: 4). This view discourages us from developing the theoretical implications of the ways culture is also bound up in artifacts, institutions, ecosystems, and the causalities they entail.

A second has to do with his view of language and signs. Bloch has been a salutary exception to the tendency in British social anthropology to avoid serious attention to language. But his treatment of language is somewhat limited. In his early work, ritual speech is characterized by being invariable, limiting intentionality, and thus being semantically impoverished. This is often—if not always—correct. But language does not serve merely as a vehicle for reference and predication, and semantic impoverishment hardly accounts for all the powers of ritual speech (Keane 1997).

Bloch is quite right to criticize anthropologists who rely on the propositional content of talk. But this point was recognized long ago by linguistic anthropologists (e.g., Briggs 1984). Indeed, Bloch's remark that "people's explanations probably involve *post hoc* rationalizations" (1998: 25) echoes Franz Boas's 1911 warning against 'secondary rationalizations'. To go beyond propositionality requires careful attention to all the things language does beneath speaker awareness. Linguistic anthropologists focused on grammatical structures, including nonpropositional distinctions such as animacy, person, alienability, temporality, and episodic modalities. More recently, they take such things as registers, honorifics, reflexivity,

participation roles, stance, language ideologies—all ways language practices work within an ecosystem of practices.

Like Bloch, Alfred Gell (1998) also dismisses ‘semiotics’, yet draws heavily on semiotic concepts such as ‘indexicality’. Indexicality introduces a crucial component of realism and, especially, causality to the cultural dimensions of human life that interpretive or symbolic approaches had tended to portray solely as conventional and semantically meaningful (see Keane 2003b, 2007, 2008a). In dismissing ‘semiotics’ both Gell and Bloch seem to be thinking of hermeneutics or else, of structuralist codes. In contrast to the hermeneutic focus on interpretation of meaning, the central semiotic problem for anthropology is mediation. The missing element that mediates between cultural practices and cognitive structures is semiotic form. Semiotic forms, like other aspects of material practice, have affordances that are open to appropriation in an indefinite number of ways. These affordances permit the materialization of, and give social reality to, what would otherwise remain private cognitions.

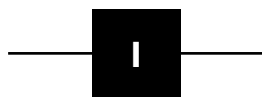
Bloch’s thesis that social existence depends on transcendence is compelling. But for that transcendence to extend beyond individual brains requires semiotic mediation. Once that mediation takes material forms (including linguistic sound), it is no longer entirely reducible to a cognitive representation. It has a social life and enters into a historically constituted human reality. Semiotic form mediates. It involves both materiality and cognition, and thus opens doors to comparison that the purisms (historicity, in its particularism, and naturalism, in its generality) tend to shut. Thus, for example, semiotic mediation allows us to see that if something like ‘theory of mind’ is indeed universal, then when Melanesians (Robbins and Rumsey 2008) or Maya (Danziger 2006) deny that they can see into other people’s minds, this is not merely one possible cultural construction. Rather, that denial is a kind of cultural work that grabs hold of a cognitive affordance (theory of mind) in order to suppress it in material practices (e.g., exchange and speaking styles) for political effect (minds are private and dangerous places; see Keane 2008b; Schieffelin 2008; Stasch 2008). The cognitive turn should not be a turn away from ethnographic experience, nor vice versa. Bloch has been one of the few to insist on the productive power of anthropology’s paradoxical nature.

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PORTRAIT: JOSÉ CASANOVA

Deprivatization, the Public Sphere, and Popular Religion

Hubert Knoblauch

José Casanova's *Public Religions in the Modern World* (1994) has transformed the study of religion quite considerably.¹ As I recall, the book was received relatively slowly in its first years. Casanova's thesis gained momentum with the escalating focus on religion after 9/11 and the ensuing publicity for Huntington's (1996) thesis of an imminent clash of civilizations. While many only then turned to the study of religion, Casanova had already prepared the ground for a global comparative approach with his path-breaking diagnosis of the state of religion in the different modes of modernity. The growing reception of Casanova's thesis was accompanied by the increasing interest of political science (and politics in general) in religion. In fact, Casanova has shed new light specifically on the role of religion in politics. Furthermore, his thesis on 'public religion' has had profound impacts on the long-lasting debate on secularization in the humanities as well as in the public domain. In this respect, there is no doubt that Casanova has contributed a major, classic work to the social study of religion.

Since then, Casanova has continued working on and refining his thesis. However, despite minor concessions to his critics (see Casanova 2008), he still maintains the major strands of the arguments developed in his 1994 volume. The core of his thesis consists in the claim that religions assume a new role in public. To be more exact, "precisely those religious traditions" (Casanova 1994: 5) that theories of secularization, as well as cyclical traditions, predicted would become marginal in contemporary society have succeeded in assuming a new public role and have affected—to a greater or lesser degree—recent social changes. Casanova's thesis is framed within the context of the secularization thesis, which he subdivides into three separate arguments: first, that secularization refers to the increasing separation of religion from politics, science, and other secular domains; second, that this separation is to be distinguished from the declining social significance of religious belief; and, third, that the secularization thesis includes the concept of the privatization of religion, according to which, as Luckmann (1967) claims, religion is increasingly reduced to the private sphere. It is this third aspect of the secularization thesis that Casanova is challenging. As much as he assumes that the first two processes are ongoing, the process of the privatization of religion is, he claims, being reversed. Religion has become subject to a process of *deprivatization*. In other words, it is going public, becoming public religion, and Casanova provides abundant evidence from a broad range of societies that has amply confirmed that the process of deprivatization of religion is a global trend (Casanova 2008: 101).



In his assessment of Casanova's thesis, Asad (2003) wonders to what extent the different parts of the secularization thesis in general can actually be separated from one another. Indeed, Casanova's claim parallels Berger's (1999) strong thesis of 'desecularization'. Yet, while Berger implies that privatization is a part of secularization, to Casanova privatization is not an essential element of secularization. Instead of discussing the secularization thesis in its entirety, in this short comment I want to focus on the aspect that is so crucial to Casanova's thesis: deprivatization and the transformation into public religion. In fact, in his review of his own work, Casanova (2008: 102) mentions the restriction to the "public sphere of civil society" as one of the three shortcomings of his own argument (next to "Western-centrism" and the neglect of "transnational global dimensions"). He concedes that his analysis covers mainly Western societies, and there is also a certain bias toward "Western Christendom" and an orientation toward a notion of religion that is strongly influenced by the institutional structure of the Catholic Church (*ibid.*).

Institutions are, in fact, the major focus of Casanova's studies. He focuses particularly on religious organizations that have serious effects on other institutional structures within society. For example, he analyzes the influence of the Catholic Church on the political movement in socialist Poland and the impact of political Protestantism on political parties and leaders in the US. One could say that Casanova follows an institutionalist view of religion, if he did not also focus on the role that these organizations play in what he calls the 'public sphere'.

This special focus is of quite some importance (as one sometimes has to remind scholars working in the field of religion and politics), for it was exactly the institutionalist view on religion in sociology that had earlier been subjected to severe criticism by Luckmann (1967). He was concerned that the concentration on religious organizations leads to what one might call 'institutional reductionism': religion becomes identified with the official structures and legitimations of religious organizations. The identification of religion with its institutionalized forms means that the role it plays in actions that are not part of or oriented toward formal organizations is as much neglected as its role among actors outside the religious organizations. Moreover, institutional reductionism causes the widespread methodological problem whereby the definitions of religion that are legitimations of the religious organizations (or 'collective actors') are accepted at face value by the social scientists studying them.

It comes as no surprise that religious organizations and those who are interacting with them (most notably state organizations) are eager to accept these institutionalist views as 'the' social reality of religion. This tendency should not, however, be seen as evidence for the institutionalist view. As the massive loss of formal membership in many mainstream religious organizations has made clear, there is a huge difference between organized religion and religious practice by actors. As an example, consider the attempts to organize Islam in Germany, where a number of Muslim organizations are in dialogue with the Ministry of the Interior in order to be able to practice public religion, despite the fact that they do not represent a substantial proportion of Muslim practitioners. Institutional definitions of religion face not only the question of whether members of institutions are 'included' in the formal organizations (with respect to various religious dimensions, such as dogma, ritual, knowledge, ethics, etc.); they also face the question of whether actors indeed share the official definition of religion, either of the religious organizations or of the social scientists who adopt the organizations' views. This question is posed, for example, by the rising gap at global levels between people who consider themselves to be 'religious' and those who see themselves as 'spiritual' (cf. Knoblauch 2008). Does their religiosity not differ in an important way from what is claimed and legitimated as being religious by organizations for the sake of symbolic capital?

This question relates to institutionalist approaches in general, yet it may seem to concern only a subordinate problem in the work of Casanova himself—the thesis of global denominationalism

or, in other words, the dissemination of the American model of religious organization. The problem of institutional reductionism also has repercussions for Casanova's major thesis of deprivatization. The first reason for this is that Casanova's claim of deprivatization is somewhat exaggerated in Western societies. Privatization is still effective in many legal systems, not only in 'laicist' societies, as in France, but also in societies in which organized religion exerts official and institutional influences upon other spheres (science, military, media, etc.), as in Germany. The second and more important reason is that the thesis of public religion presupposes that it is opposed to the private sphere. Instead, the major tendency consists in the transgression of the boundaries between the public and the private spheres. The most important question, as Asad (2003: 182) expresses it, is "*how religion becomes public.*"

In fact, Casanova (1994: 6) himself recognizes insightfully that religion participates in the struggle to define the boundaries "between the private and public spheres." Yet by pushing the thesis of deprivatization, he establishes a rigid distinction between them. Empirically, however, the boundary between the two in religion is continually transgressed. Take as an example Billy Graham's hybrid 'electronic church' events televised from Madison Square Garden, in which religious communication crossed the gap between the private and public spheres in a way that transformed the phenomenon of conversion (cf. Stromberg 1993)—an experience that could now be enacted in front of the television. The tendency to transgress the boundaries between the private and public spheres can also be detected when, starting in the 1980s, private confessions became a standard genre of mass media communication. In the last decade, interactive forms of mediated communication, in particular digital network media, have contributed enormously to the transformation of communication structures and, consequently, to the shift of the public sphere into "mass self-communication" (Castells 2009: 4). Every individual can, in principle, publish anything and everything, so that the private tends to become public and the public tends to become private.

By transgression, I do not mean that the distinction between the private and public spheres is being dissolved. Rather, it seems that 'private' and 'public' cannot be regarded as a pair of mutually exclusive categories. If public religion, however, cannot be separated categorically from 'privatization', the thesis of deprivatization cannot be maintained. The reason why Casanova sticks to an opposition between private and public is to be found in the institutional reductionism mentioned above, which predominantly (but not exclusively) considers organizations as relevant actors participating in the public sphere. If, following Habermas's (1989) proposition, one takes the public sphere to be not just a set of institutions but a result of communicative actions (without accepting Habermas's normative stance), one can easily discern that the increasing amount of public religious communication is accounted for not by religious organizations but by individual actors. Supported by modern technology, they are communicating on religious issues in a way in which their subjectivity finds its own—mostly very popular—expression (Knoblauch 2010). As Meyer and Moors (2006) show, these forms of religious communication that transgress the dichotomy of private and public can be found not only in predominantly Christian cultures but also in other cultural areas and transnationally in a way that is not identical with the official forms of communication by institutional actors in organized religion, for example, Casanova's public religion.

Without doubt, one of José Casanova's lasting achievements is to have demonstrated the importance and relevance of the public sphere for religion: the understanding of contemporary religion has gained much through this notion. This concept can be of even more use, I want to suggest, if we acknowledge the communicative dimension of public religion.

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■ **NOTES**

1. In this piece, I am commenting on Casanova's general work rather than on his specific text for this volume.

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Public and Private in the Study of Religion

Imaginative Approaches

Grace Davie

Always stimulated by my meetings with and reading of José Casanova, I have chosen two themes from his work as a trigger for the following comments. The first concerns his celebrated account of the 'deprivatization' of religion (Casanova 1994). The second relates to the claim that the so-called secularization of Europe has more to do with the knowledge regimes of European intellectuals, public and otherwise, than with processes of economic and social change (Casanova 2006). The two are necessarily related.

I begin by reflecting on the assumptions of European social scientists in the mid post-war decades and the extent to which they were mistaken regarding the public and the private dimensions of religion. Initial (i.e., mid-twentieth-century) interpretations of this situation went more or less as follows: scholars of religion very largely agreed that religion was disappearing from the public sphere in Europe, but that it continued to endure in the private lives of many Europeans. Indeed, Bryan Wilson (1969) went so far as to define secularization as the decline in the social (public) significance of religion. This was moreover a normative position: most Europeans, notably the political class and a wide range of intellectuals, deemed the privatization of religion to be a good thing.

The question can also be approached in terms of religious practice. As the twentieth century progressed, the decline in churchgoing became increasingly evident. The fact that this happened more quickly in some parts of Europe than others, that the patterns of detachment varied from place to place, and that certain countries in Europe bucked the trend should not detract from the overall pattern that can be illustrated in any number of empirical inquiries.¹ Religious belief, however, proved more resilient than practice, at least in the short term—a situation captured by the phrase 'believing without belonging' (Davie 1994). Not everyone agreed with the thinking that lay behind this expression, but it became, without doubt, a touchstone for the debate. Central to the discussion was the long-term viability of non-institutional forms of religion. Many commentators argued, quite rightly, that detached belief was unlikely to sustain itself for more than one or two generations (Bruce 2002; Voas and Crockett 2005).

For precisely this reason I introduced the notion of 'vicarious religion' (Davie 2000, 2007, 2010), which evokes rather better than 'believing without belonging' the residual attachments of European people to their majority churches. This notion in turn has now come under attack, largely from the same commentators as before (Bruce and Voas 2010). Such exchanges are interesting in themselves, but they also prompt a further question about ways of working. Are the methodological tools currently in use in social science sufficiently sensitive to reveal not only the existence but also the full potential of passive as well as active membership in the historic churches of Europe, and the implications of this situation for a better understanding of the societies of which they

are part? I argue strongly for more imaginative approaches—those that, among other things, capture the ambiguity between the public and the private (Davie 2010).

Much more radical, however, are the very visible changes that began to appear in the final decades of the twentieth century, which are, if anything, intensifying at the present time. The series of events or episodes that brought the question of religion to the forefront of public attention in Europe is well-known and need not be restated here. It is important to note, however, that the majority of these complex and difficult issues relate to the existence of Islam in Europe, rather than to the mainstream churches. Clearly, there is a need for a mutual learning process, as European societies find ways to accommodate forms of religion that—simply by their existence—challenge the notion of privatization. Muslim communities, meanwhile, must find ways to live in diaspora, beyond the borders of a Muslim state. Neither the host societies nor the incoming populations will find this process easy.

In short, a somewhat unexpected combination of events has occurred, undermining earlier predictions. The ongoing process of secularization is continuing to erode the effectiveness of religion in the *private* lives of many European people; conversely, religion continues to figure strongly in *public* discussion—exactly the reverse of what was anticipated some 30 years ago. An important, if regrettable, consequence of this situation is the lamentable standard of debate regarding religious issues in some, if not all, European societies. The reason is simple enough: despite their continuing attachment to their churches, European populations are losing the vocabulary and understanding that are necessary to discuss the place of religion in public life just when they are needed most. Deprivatization has taken an unexpected turn.

Pushed to its logical conclusion, moreover, the process of deprivatization will demand a great deal more of the economic, political, and social sciences than they are currently prepared to give. Casanova (2006: 15) captures this situation as follows: “[T]he most interesting issue sociologically is not the fact of progressive religious decline among the European population since the 1950s, but the fact that this decline is interpreted through the lenses of the secularization paradigm and is therefore accompanied by a ‘secularist’ self-understanding that interprets the decline as ‘normal’ and ‘progressive,’ that is, as a quasi-normative consequence of being a ‘modern’ and ‘enlightened’ European.” We can agree that this situation is far from satisfactory, but how can we move on? The following paragraphs suggest a starting point for the discussion.

Both in Europe and elsewhere, the study of religion is currently in transition in the sense that religion, in all its diversity, has shifted from being ‘invisible’ to being a ‘problem’. There is, of course, a secondary debate to be had at this point, one that asks whether this is primarily a shift in reality or a shift in perception (or indeed in both), but it is not an argument that can be developed in a short article. More to the point is the fact that, however conceived, this shift has prompted a huge investment of public money into research on religion in the last decade or so.² The rationale runs as follows: given its unexpected—and for many untimely—appearance in the public spheres of almost all Western societies, religion constitutes a problem, and, in order to be better managed, it must be thoroughly researched. On one level, it is important to welcome these initiatives. At the very least, they correct the serious underinvestment in research in the field of religion that was evident until the 1990s.

The motives for this activity, however, are dubious since they rest on the assumption that there is a necessary incompatibility (both philosophical and structural) in being fully religious and fully modern. Why else would this topic merit such intense scrutiny? Or, to put it differently, it seems that the seriously religious constituencies that are currently emerging in different parts of the world, including Europe, are challenging the coherence of late-modern, essentially secular societies and must therefore be investigated—precisely the point made by Casanova. Research on this scale, however, has a logic of its own in the sense that it not only gathers new data but also

generates new questions. These are many and varied, but among other things it becomes necessary to think again about the philosophical core of the disciplines in question—specifically, the economic, political, and social sciences—and inquire what difference the serious study of religion might make to their ways of working. Is it possible, in other words, simply to ‘add’ religion to research agendas without this having a serious effect on the discipline(s) themselves?

The size of the task should not be underestimated. The areas of inquiry under review have emerged more or less directly from the European Enlightenment, implying that they are underpinned by a markedly secular philosophy of social science, a fact that determines their agenda. And the more ‘scientific’ their aspirations, the worse the problem gets. Interestingly, it is precisely this point that Jürgen Habermas (2006) appreciates so clearly and addresses in his recent writing. He insists, moreover, that others have a similar responsibility to rethink the foundations of their respective fields of study in order to accommodate fully the implications of religion and religious issues in their analyses of modern societies. Quite apart from anything else, this means accepting religion as it is, not as we would like it to be. It also suggests that we might consider religion to be as much a resource as a problem—in other words, as an integral and healthy part of late-modern societies, including European ones.

As a postscript to this short contribution, it is important to nuance the generalizations made in the previous paragraph. It is quite clear that these are more applicable in some places than in others, to some disciplines than to others, and to some researchers than to others. Broadly speaking, the potential of religion to become a positive resource and therefore a welcome feature of social and cultural existence is most easily appreciated by those who know it best. Specifically, American scholars find this notion easier to envision than their European counterparts, and those who work in the global South—notably, anthropologists and development workers—find it easier still. Right from the start, the former have been less affected by the secular turn than their sociological cousins. The latter are practical people driven by the circumstances in which they find themselves. They often work in places where religious networks are both more intact and more reliable than their secular equivalents. It seems, moreover, that researchers who ‘live’ in the field (in whatever capacity and in whatever kind of society) are more likely to display a respect for their subjects and the lifestyles that they embrace, keeping in mind that respect must include a critical perspective.

It is at this point that the questions set out at the beginning of this article join together. Religion is most easily appreciated by those who are ready to deploy imaginative approaches to the study of religion in public as well as private life. Positivists, on the other hand, will find this harder, both with respect to their philosophies of social science and to the methods that they use. Most important of all is to grasp that simply deeming religion to be a private matter is not a sensible policy, in that it almost always hides the very problem that it is trying to solve.

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■ NOTES

1. See, for example, the data generated by the European Values Study (<http://www.europeanvaluesstudy.eu/>) and the International Social Survey Programme (<http://www.issp.org/>).
2. See Davie (2011) for an overview of recent research on religion.

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Casanova, Asad, and the Public Debate on Religion in Modern Societies

Kim Knibbe

Until recently, I was mostly aware of José Casanova's work as a milestone within the secularization debate; my own research on Catholicism and spirituality in the Netherlands did not touch on the theme of 'public religion'. This concept has now become one of the most important cross-disciplinary frameworks for discussing the role of religion in the contemporary world. My awareness of the importance of Casanova's contribution to this debate grew when I started to think about the role of religion in the public sphere in relation to my research on Nigerian-initiated religious networks in Europe. While rereading his works, I realized that the qualities that can be criticized—and have been, notably by Talal Asad (2003, 2006)—are the very qualities that make Casanova's writings extremely relevant to current, heavily politicized debates on the role of religion in the world. These features are, namely, his unembarrassed discussion of normative questions and his commitment to the political form of modern liberal societies. Below I will outline what I think has been the importance of Casanova's concepts to the study of religion in contemporary societies in general before examining Asad's critique. I will then go on to explore why I think that Casanova's work is still of considerable importance, both inside and outside academia.

Shifting the Debate from Secularization to Public Religion

My purpose in attempting to offer a reformulation of the theory of secularization was to mediate in what I considered to be a fruitless and futile debate between European and American sociologists of religion concerning the validity of the theory of secularization. The fact that the contentious debate has continued unabated only indicates how unsuccessful my attempted mediation has proven to be and how ingrained are the positions. (Casanova 2006: 15)

While offering a reformulation of the secularization thesis, Casanova's book *Public Religions in the Modern World* (1994) shifted the discussion about religion away from tedious debates on secularization—in which numbers of churchgoers and 'believers' were endlessly disputed by those who supported or countered the thesis—toward an appreciation of the various ways that religion is relevant in present-day societies and the implications that this salience has for theorizing religion. To anthropologists, the relevance of religion in contemporary life, even in Western Europe, seemed obvious, but it proved hard to maintain this position in the face of the demands of quantitative sociologists to see 'proof' in terms of increasing numbers of churchgoers. There was simply no common language to enable the discussion. Casanova's discussion of this issue has provided social scientists with a conceptual vocabulary to discuss the role of religion in society beyond the secularization paradigm and across disciplinary traditions.

I will briefly summarize the most relevant points of Casanova's critique here in order to be able to refer to it later on. First, Casanova distinguishes within the debate on secularization three separate hypotheses: secularization as the differentiation between religious and secular domains; secularization as a decline in belief; and secularization as the privatization of religion. These theses have to be examined separately from each other. In Casanova's view, only the first (differentiation) really holds: "The differentiation and emancipation of the secular spheres from religious institutions and norms remains a general modern structural trend" (Casanova 1994: 212).

Second, Casanova concludes that the central assumptions from which the social sciences have been working concerning the relationship between religion and modernity have to be re-examined. Although the sociology of religion has become a marginal topic within mainstream sociology, the relationship between religion and modernity was a central concern for the founding fathers of the discipline, such as Durkheim and Weber (and was viewed by Marxists as a form of 'false consciousness'). This means that these assumptions pervade the social sciences in general, leading to the general neglect of a very important topic.

Third, Casanova maintains that religion in fact has a legitimate role to play within the public sphere of modern liberal societies, provided that it is differentiated from state power. This last argument is clearly a normative standpoint that is based on a particular notion of how modern liberal societies should function and the role of the public sphere, which can be traced to Habermas (1989), although with significant modifications inspired by critics of Habermas's public sphere theory, such as Seyla Benhabib (1998).

Despite Casanova's clear-headed criticism of the secularization thesis, I have to agree with him that it has not really changed the debate on secularization itself. In rereading the first chapters of his book (Casanova 1994), I realized that his statement that the events of the 1980s prove that religion is not disappearing and has no 'intention' of disappearing could be substituted by the 1990s or the first decade of the twenty-first century and republished to address those who are still investing their energy in the secularization debate and discussing whether the process is a temporary reaction to modernization and globalization. This is a pity, since such energy could be much more fruitfully devoted to developing new concepts and tools for analysis to address the important role of religion in the contemporary world. This point is especially true for British sociology.

However, in another sense Casanova has been successful because in the meantime a completely new field of discussion has been opened up by his book, augmented by the increasingly prominent role that religion now plays on the world stage. Secularization sociologists may argue until their last breath about the significance of such developments in terms of this old paradigm, but the fact is that much inspiring new research and many discussions have taken place under the heading of 'public religion' or the 'religion in the public sphere' concept.¹ These notions, moreover, bring together people from various disciplines: sociology, anthropology, political science, and philosophy. They have provided a vehicle for these disciplines to share their ideas and findings across boundaries. The much-discussed 'return of religion', which to anthropologists does not look like a return at all since in their eyes it has never disappeared, is nevertheless very beneficial due to the interest now expressed in their work, not to mention the funding made available for their research.

Normative Questions

As noted, a feature that I have found refreshing about Casanova's work is that he is not ashamed to ask and answer normative questions. Normally, such questions and social scientific research on religion do not go together well. The implicit normative attitudes held by students toward

religion are among the first things that need to be reflected on, whether their background is religious or not. In the Netherlands, the most common assumptions among students are either that religion cannot but be a good and beneficial influence on people's lives or that it is inevitably an oppressive force from which people will slowly liberate themselves.

Furthermore, many discussions of religion suffer from being informed more by normative agendas than by a proper understanding of the religious ideas and practices being discussed. In Casanova's work, however one might criticize the details of his study, this is not the case. In fact, he has shown how a better appreciation of social and cultural realities can inform important theoretical and normative discussions that have shaped our societies, but which have too often simply ignored or dismissed these realities relating to religion because they did not tally with the implicit assumptions of the social sciences—that religion is a thing of the past or that, if it is not so yet, it soon will be.

Nevertheless, there are some problems with his conceptual framework, which owes a lot to Habermas's notion of the public sphere and to critical theory in general. Although one cannot say that Casanova is unaware of these problems, it might still be worthwhile to contrast his treatment of religion with that of one of his most incisive critics—Talal Asad.

Asad and Casanova

In chapter 6 of his *Formations of the Secular*, Asad (2003) has criticized the restatement of the secularization thesis by Casanova, a critique that he restates in reply to Casanova's defense in an edited volume (Scott and Hirschkind 2006) in which Casanova and others react to Asad's work. For the sake of brevity, I will base my summary of Asad's critique primarily on his 2006 reply to Casanova's defense.

First of all, Asad (2006) criticizes Casanova's work on secularization for equating the differentiation of religious and secular domains with modernity. This seems to reinstate the 'teleological' character of the types of secularization theories that Casanova himself criticizes: when secular and religious domains are not differentiated, a society is not (yet) modern. At the same time, Asad argues, an analysis of the relationship between religion and the state in France and the US—two countries that are supposedly 'modern' in different ways—shows that religion and state are never completely separate. Furthermore, if religion indeed goes public, this undoes the very separation of domains in the original secularization thesis that Casanova says can still be maintained. Finally, Asad points out that there are many questions concerning the historical processes by which the boundaries between the religious and the secular come to be defined as modern that simply do not seem to interest Casanova.

Casanova (2006: 15) sees the crucial difference between Asad and himself in the following way: "Asad follows a Foucauldian genealogical approach with illuminating results. I follow a more traditional comparative historical sociological analysis." However, Casanova states, their aims seem to be similar: they both offer a critique of dominant ways of thinking about the supposed secularity of modern societies.

Weakness = Strength

Asad protests that he does not think that their aims are the same, and I would agree with him. Unlike Asad (presumably), I do not think that this is a bad thing. I agree that Casanova does not adequately historicize the concepts that he uses, but I consider that to be the strength of his

approach. He engages fully with some of the most influential political theories—as well as the ideals of these theories—on a topic that has become even more controversial since he wrote the original book. This makes him an important public intellectual. To know that our concepts are accidental historical formations (and it seems to me that Casanova is not unaware of this) does not answer the question of how politicians, publics, and states should deal with developments that (1) challenge European self-identities as modern and secular or (2) are in danger of causing worldwide religious polarization between Christianity and Islam.

Researchers are often frustrated by the fact that their nuanced uses of notions such as culture and ethnicity and their discussions about the dynamic and fluid nature of religious ideas and practices are ignored in public debate. This seems to indicate that, to many academics, good research informing intelligent normative discussion is often the ‘submerged’ aim of what they do (and why else should we think it is important?). Although normative questions can be blinding in research, we cannot maintain that we should keep these questions away from our work and leave them to populist politicians such as Geert Wilders² in my own country. Most importantly, by its very ‘flawed’ nature, this conceptual basis engages with current political discussions that are used to shape the world, which are inevitably teleological. However, Asad’s implied questions to Casanova remain relevant even in normative political discussions: Is the differentiation of the religious and the secular the most important characteristic of modern societies? Are those societies that we usually identify as modern actually differentiated in this way? Following from this, can a society be modern if religious and secular domains are *not* differentiated?

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■ **NOTES**

1. For example, see the Program on Religion and the Public Sphere of the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) at <http://www.ssrc.org/programs/religion-and-the-public-sphere/>. See also the many discussions where some version of the term ‘public religion’ or ‘religion in the public sphere’ is used on another SSRC site, The Immanent Frame: Secularism, Religion, and the Public Sphere, <http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/>. In addition, see *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere* (Butler et al. 2011), which includes contributions from Habermas, Judith Butler, and Charles Taylor, and edited volumes such as *Religion, Media, and the Public Sphere* by Meyer and Moors (2006).
2. Wilders is a controversial Dutch politician who has managed, in the space of a few years, to gain a huge following in the Netherlands by promoting a largely anti-immigration and particularly anti-Islam program. His negative views on Islam have gained him international fame (and notoriety), and his sudden popularity has forced other parties to adopt some of his views. He is currently a major force in Dutch politics because he supplies the supporting votes to the current minority (right-wing) coalition.

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Toward a Post-Weberian Sociology of Global Religions

Manuel A. Vásquez

José Casanova is well-known for his ground-breaking work on secularization. His volume *Public Religions in the Modern World* (1994) was one of the earliest and most successful attempts to transcend unproductive debates in the sociology of religion between those who wanted to reject the theory *tout court*, such as Rodney Stark and Roger Finke (2000), and those who, notwithstanding the visible role of religion in the Iranian revolution, the election of Ronald Reagan, and the political upheavals in Latin America, wished to defend the theory's nomothetic status as a universal law about the dwindling public place of religion in modernity. In his book, Casanova showed that the secularization paradigm is in fact a complex and evolving research program (in the Lakatosian sense)¹ with differentiated claims, some of which are more tenable than others. Moreover, by contextualizing the underlying assumptions behind the secularization thesis, Casanova (2003: 22) was able to "dissociate the historical theory of European secularization from general theories of modernization. The secularization of Europe is a particular, unique and 'exceptional' historical process, not a universal teleological model of development which shows the future to the rest of the world." In fact, "[t]here are multiple and diverse secularizations in the West and multiple and diverse Western modernities" (Casanova 2006: 11). Recognition of the contingent and variegated nature of the secularization thesis, in turn, has enabled the conversation about the enduring vitality of religion to move in more fruitful directions, leading directly to Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age* and Robert Bellah's *Religion and Human Evolution*.

Less well-known but arguably just as important is Casanova's work on the interaction between religion and globalization. This work represents the best of what we may call a post-Weberian comparative and historical sociology of religion. In his effort to identify the confluence of material and spiritual factors that made possible the emergence of modern capitalism in Europe yet not in other places such as China or India, Weber constructed a typology of religions according to their soteriological loci (this-worldly vs. other-worldly) and their mode of subjectivation or ethos (asceticism vs. mysticism). For all its flaws—its Orientalist imagination and essentialist views of culture and religion—this typology allowed for the first systematic, comparative study of world religions, a critical ingredient in the rise of a true *Religionswissenschaft* in the sense first envisioned by Max Müller.

Casanova's work on religion and globalization preserves the historical and comparative impetus of the Weberian sociology of religion, as well as the stress on the analytics of institution building and maintenance. However, by focusing on the historical development of polymorphic transnational religious regimes, Casanova (2003) avoids falling into the reductive essentialism that informs Weber's thesis of European exceptionalism. The relationship between religion and globalization has been examined by seminal thinkers such as Roland Robertson (1992)

and Peter Beyer (1994). Nonetheless, while these theorists focus on macro-processes, such as the simultaneous emergence of a global sense of humankind (humanization) and of the value, uniqueness, and irreducibility of the individual (individuation), Casanova (2001: 424) advances the conversation by introducing a focus on changing institutional morphologies, that is, a focus “from a long-term historical perspective [on] the changes in the patterns of relations between church, state, nation and civil society brought about by processes of globalization.”

Building on the work of Linda Basch, Nina Glick Schiller and Cristina Szanton Blanc (1994), Casanova (2001: 429) identifies the effect of globalization on culture and religion as one of deterritorialization: “By de-territorialization I mean the disembeddedness of cultural phenomena from their ‘natural’ territories.” From the Peace of Westphalia onward, these natural territories have been determined by the boundaries of nations as ‘imagined communities’ (Anderson 1983). While contemporary globalization does not spell the end of the nation-state, it does mean that “states are becoming less undivided and exclusive sovereign territorial domains and more regulatory administrative territorial networks interlinked and overlapping with wider networks ... The solid territorial embeddedness of all social phenomena under the sovereign jurisdiction of the state is dissolving into more fluid conditions” (Casanova 2001: 429). According to Casanova, religion played an ambivalent role in the process of building nations as imagined communities. On the one hand, with the breakdown of Western Christendom, churches contributed to the rise of the system of nation-states by seeking to fuse religious identity with polity and with linguistic, cultural, and national identities. On the other hand, Christianity’s constitutive missionary *imaginaire*, which is reflected by the Great Commission, the injunction in the Gospel of Matthew (28:19) to “go forth and make disciples of all nations,” always lay ill at ease within the “straight jacket of the sovereign state” (Casanova 2001: 429), particularly as the state became increasingly dominated by secular elites inspired by Enlightenment ideals.

Globalization’s deterritorialization, therefore, represents a reworking of the cognitive and politico-cultural cartography in which religion has occupied increasingly narrow and marginal spaces within the modernizing nation-state. Here Casanova’s (2001: 430) rethinking of the secularization paradigm informs his understanding of the changing place of religion within globalization.

Globalization facilitates the return of old civilizations and world religions not only as units of analysis but as significant cultural systems and as imagined communities, overlapping and at times in competition with the imagined national communities. Nations will continue to be, for the foreseeable future, relevant imagined communities and carriers of collective identities within this global space, but local and transnational identities, particularly religious ones, are likely to become ever more prominent. While new transnational imagined communities will emerge, the most relevant ones are likely to be once again old civilizations and world religions.

Casanova puts this notion of the return of old-time transnational religious actors to good use in his insightful analyses of modern Catholicism. In Casanova’s eyes, the current episode of globalization offers Catholicism the possibility of repositioning itself as a universal church, of placing the Holy See at the center of a myriad of transnational networks, flows, and movements that are responding to the local challenges posed by late modernity. “Ongoing processes of globalization offer a transnational religious regime like Catholicism, which never felt fully at home in a system of sovereign territorial nation-states, unique opportunities to expand, to adapt rapidly to the newly emerging global system, and perhaps even to assume a proactive role in shaping some aspects of the new system” (Casanova 1997: 122).

Casanova traces the recentering of Catholicism on the global stage to the papacy of Pius IX, an assertion that may seem paradoxical, given that under his reign the Papal States were lost.

But this loss of temporal sovereignty was matched by the proclamation at the First Vatican Council (1869–1870) of the doctrines of papal infallibility and primacy. As Casanova (1997: 125) expresses it:

[F]rom their position of seeming captivity, Pius IX's successors began to renew the papal tradition of speaking ever more frequently *urbi et orbi*, thus setting the basis for the process of globalization of the modern papacy, a process that has accelerated since the 1960s ... Three processes characterize the operation of the current Catholic transnational regime: [1] ... the ever wider publication of papal encyclicals dealing not only with matters of Catholic faith, morality, and disciple but also with issues of the secular age and of the secular world affecting all of humanity; [2] ... the increasingly active and vocal role of the papacy in international conflicts and in issues dealing with world peace, world order, and world politics; [3] ... the public visibility of the person of the pope as the high priest of a new universal civil religion of humanity and as the first citizen of a global civil society.

While Casanova illustrates the first two processes through a rich and persuasive analysis of papal encyclicals and church-state relations starting with the Lateran Treaty, his most compelling treatment of the dynamics behind the transnational Catholic regime centers on the public visibility of the pope, particularly John Paul II, who was recently beatified, bypassing the normal requirement to wait five years after death before canonization proceedings can begin. Pointing not only to John Paul II's key geopolitical role in the fall of the Berlin Wall and his missionary travels throughout the world, but also to his deft use of the mass media as a means to project his charisma, Casanova (1997: 133) demonstrates how the papacy has "assumed eagerly the vacant role of spokesperson for humanity, for the sacred dignity of the human person, for world peace, and for a more fair division of labor and power in the world system." More than any pope in history, John Paul II employed the most advanced tools of modernity—electronic communications—to deploy a "direct contact with the masses of faithful extremely effectively as a kind of popular plebiscitarian support for his authority and policies, using it whenever necessary to impress secular leaders, to bypass national hierarchies, or to check dissenting tendencies from Catholic elites" (*ibid.*).

Casanova's analysis can be easily extended to more recent developments in the Vatican. While Benedict XVI does not have the charisma that allows him to establish a direct, almost visceral contact with the masses through electronic media, as John Paul II did, he shares his predecessor's drive to "re-create the universalistic system of medieval Christendom, but now on a truly global scale" (Casanova 1997: 133). Benedict XVI's strategy has been to highlight the excesses of modernity, which, devoid of faith and a sense of transcendence, have led to a 'dictatorship of relativism'. In a lecture given the day before the death of John Paul II in 2005, the then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger declared that today moral strength "has diminished, because the technical mentality relegates morality to the subjective realm, while we have need, precisely, of a public morality, a morality that is able to respond to the threats that weigh down on the existence of us all."²

According to such a view, this moral subjectivism undermines the claims to the universality of values such as freedom and tolerance that are at the heart of the Enlightenment. Moral subjectivism is the symptom of a new dogmatism: relativism. Relativism "becomes a dogmatism which believes itself to be in possession of the definitive scope of reason, and with the right to regard all the rest only as a stage of humanity, in the end surmounted, and that can be appropriately relativized. In reality, this means that we have need of roots to survive, and that we must not lose sight of God, if we do not want human dignity to disappear."³ In his homily to the College of Cardinals gathered to elect John Paul II's successor, Ratzinger was even more

blunt: “[R]elativism, that is, letting oneself be ‘tossed here and there, carried about by every wind of doctrine,’ seems the only attitude that can cope with modern times. We are building a dictatorship of relativism that does not recognize anything as definitive and whose ultimate goal consists solely of one’s own ego and desires.”⁴

Against the dictatorship of relativism, Benedict XVI has sought to present the Church as the true heir of modernity, as the source of the foundational values that inform modern European civilization, insisting that the stability and health of Western democracies demand the recognition of Catholicism’s moral, spiritual, and cultural authority—particularly against the thread of an anti-modernist Islam brought to the core by large numbers of Muslim immigrants and the potential integration of Turkey into the European Union. Casanova’s analysis thus continues to hold water. The bottom line is that “transnational religious regimes are reacting to the new challenges [of globalization] and are playing a crucial role both in the revitalization of particular civil societies and in the emergence of a global civil society” (Casanova 1997: 138).

If that assertion is correct, can we extend the notion of transnational religious regimes to other salient global religious dynamics? Indeed, Casanova (2001: 434) has attempted to apply the concept to global Pentecostalism: while the Catholic transnational regime is highly centralized, Pentecostalism is “a highly decentralized religion, with no historical links to tradition and no territorial roots or identities, and which therefore can make itself at home anywhere in the globe where the Spirit moves.” Peggy Levitt (2004: 8) has helpfully described Pentecostalism as primarily a “negotiated transnational religious organization” that links immigrants, pastors, and missionaries through dense informal and horizontal networks in sending and receiving countries. In this type of organization, “relations between sending and receiving country churches evolve without a strong federated institutional structure or rules. Instead, individuals and organizations enter into informal agreements with one another that have weaker connections to political circles but are more flexibly constituted” (*ibid.*). Levitt contrasts the negotiated transnational religious organization to the “extended transnational religious organization,” whose adherents “broaden and deepen a global religious system that is already powerful and legitimate” (*ibid.*: 6). Catholicism as characterized by Casanova would thus be an example of an extended transnational religious organization.

Noting that Pentecostalism is “complex and fluid,” as well as a “chaotic field,” Casanova (2001: 435) prefers to describe Pentecostalism as a “de-territorialized global culture” (*ibid.*: 437). As he puts it, “It is truly the first global religion. Global Pentecostalism is not a religion with a particular territorial center like Mormonism, which is rapidly gaining worldwide diffusion. Nor is it a transnational religious regime like Catholicism, with global reach” (*ibid.*). To provide an alternative characterization, Casanova (*ibid.*) quotes Paul Freston, a scholar of Brazilian Pentecostalism, who holds that “new churches are local expressions of a global culture, characterized by parallel invention, complex diffusion and international networks with multilateral flows” (see Freston 1997: 185).

The notion that Pentecostalism is a global culture dovetails nicely with the work of Thomas Csordas (1997, 2009) and Simon Coleman (2000, 2010), who show that, despite the great local diversity and the polycentric production of discourses, practices, and institutional forms, Pentecostalism does have a common set of technologies of the body and forms of subjectivation that make possible and render authoritative widespread practices such as glossolalia, prophesizing, divine healing, and exorcism. Coleman (2010: 188) also refers to “charismatic corporetics” to make sense of the ways in which Pentecostals link the disciplining of the body and the inculcation of Christian habitus with “technologies of visualization,” including the global circulation of images through media such as television and the Internet. In particular, the spectacle of exorcism—of the cosmic battle between Jesus and the Devil and his minions, who cause

the evils of poverty, crime, domestic violence, and drug addiction that affect vast sectors of the world's population—has become a defining “mediascape” (Appadurai 1996: 35) in Pentecostalism's imagined world.

It remains to be seen whether Casanova's notions of transnational religious regimes and globalization as the deterritorialization of unruly religions hitherto contained within the system of nation-states can also be useful in exploring the global dynamics of Islam or the ‘diaspora’ of new religious movements. These dynamics include, for example, the simultaneous commodification (via exoticism and primitivism) and re-Africanization of African-based religions such as Santería, Candomblé, and Umbanda, as well as the tension between New Age hybrid appropriations of indigenous spiritualities and the construction of global pan-indigenous identities around neo-shamanism. As Csordas (2009: 8) rightly points out, “the transcendence of local boundaries by indigenous religious traditions is not limited to contacts among third and fourth world peoples. The current context of globalization includes the increasing likelihood of religious influence extending in a ‘reverse’ direction, from the margins to the metropole.” In turn, multi-scalar and multi-directional transnational and global religious networks and flows render Weberian notions of European (and even American) exceptionalism still more problematic.

Casanova himself recognizes that the sociology of religion needs to be “more attuned to the new forms that religion is assuming in all world religions at three different levels of analysis: the individual level, the group level, and the societal level. In a certain sense, Ernst Troeltsch's three types of religions—‘individual mysticism,’ ‘sect,’ and ‘church’—correspond to these three levels of analysis” (2006: 17). Thus far, Casanova has focused primarily on global religions at the societal level, which include secular nationalism and national civil religions, as well as transnational imagined religious communities. To a lesser extent, in his discussion on Pentecostalism, he has also begun to address the group level, which he associates with voluntary religious congregations. “Most of the so-called ‘cults,’ ‘new religions,’ or ‘new religious movements’ assume the form of voluntary congregations, but so do the most dynamic forms of Christianity, like Christian base communities in Latin America or the Pentecostal churches throughout the world, or the most dynamic forms of Islam—such as Tablighi Jamaat, a form of evangelical Islam akin to early nineteenth-century American Methodism—and the many forms of Sufi brotherhoods” (ibid.: 19). Given the multiplicity of religious phenomena at this level of analysis, however, further theoretical and methodological specification is needed.

Finally, Casanova has written only a tantalizing paragraph for those global religions operating at the individual level. These religions are part of a ‘post-materialist’ spirituality that results from individuals sifting through deterritorialized religious symbols, narratives, identities, and practices in an effort to make sense of the uncertainties and anxieties of the postmodern condition. What is “new in our global age is the simultaneous presence and availability of all world religions and all cultural systems, from the most ‘primitive’ to the most ‘modern,’ often detached from their temporal and spatial contexts, ready for flexible or fundamentalist individual appropriation” (Casanova 2006: 18). This is certainly an excellent starting point to begin to make sense of such phenomena as the spread of the Umbanda and Ayahuasca religions. Built around the ritual preparation and use of a psychoactive substance, these religions, which originated with the shamanic practices of indigenous peoples in the Amazon, have now spread among the rapidly expanding urban middle class in Brazil and in ‘advanced’ countries as diverse as the Netherlands, Japan, and the US, as well. Still, much remains to be done at this analytical level.

Despite these gaps, there is no question that Casanova has made significant contributions to the sociology of global religions. By offering a fruitful post-Weberian comparative and historically deep approach to the interplay between religion and globalization, Casanova has

generated a valuable framework through which we can study the evolving place of religion and religions in late modernity. The bottom line is that “[b]y undermining the territorially-based fusion of state, market, nation, and civil society, globalization also undermines the model of territorially based national religion or culture. At the very least, we can say that globalization makes Weber’s definition of both, church and state, outmoded and increasingly irrelevant” (Casanova 1997: 425).

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NOTES

1. Offering an alternative to philosopher Thomas Kuhn’s understanding of the evolution of scientific knowledge, which involves radical ruptures generated by the confrontation of incommensurable paradigms, Imre Lakatos (1970: 91) argues for a “methodology of scientific research programmes.” Science grows as competing research programs seek to protect their core epistemological assumptions against falsification, generating new testable hypotheses that can successfully account for an increasing variety of phenomena. Those research programs that fail to expand their “protective belt” around the core or that encounter a growing number of anomalies are “degenerating” (ibid.) and will eventually be superseded by more progressive ones. What Casanova did was to show that the secularization thesis is not a paradigm that can be replaced once and for all by a ‘new paradigm,’ as sociologists influenced by Stephen Warner (1993) would argue, but that it is, in fact, a complex research program with multiple claims, some of which are progressive, while others are degenerating in the Lakatosian sense.
2. Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, “On Europe’s Crisis of Culture,” <http://www.catholiceducation.org/articles/politics/pg0143.html> (accessed 15 July 2010).
3. Ibid.
4. Mass, “Pro Eligendo Romano Pontifice’: Homily of His Eminence Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, Dean of the College of Cardinals, Vatican Basilica,” 18 April 2005, http://www.vatican.va/gpII/documents/homily-pro-eligendo-pontifice_20050418_en.html.

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From Modernization to Secularization to Globalization

An Autobiographical Self-Reflection

José Casanova

I have always held the belief that science is to a large extent autobiographical. Such an assumption, which is probably valid even for much of natural science, is even more evidently so for the social sciences. That all knowledge and knowledge production is socio-historically situated is of course one of the main premises of the sociology of knowledge. “I am I and my circumstance” is one of Ortega y Gasset’s famous aphorisms. The invitation to write a ‘profile’ of my work for this volume offers the opportunity to sketch a self-autobiographical reflection of my own ‘circumstance’, of the biographical conditions that have shaped my scholarly lifework, the choice of academic discipline (sociology rather than anthropology), and the evolving thematic focus of my work—from modernization to secularization to globalization.

Modernization and Sociology

I was born and grew up in a rather secluded village in Lower Aragon in the 1950s during the autarkic phase of development—or rather underdevelopment—of Franco’s regime. For Spain, this was a time of extreme isolation from the rest of the world, before the re-establishment of diplomatic relations of the pariah fascist regime with the Vatican and the United States, and before the criss-crossing migrations of European tourists going south in search of sunny beaches and Spanish *Gastarbeiter* going north in search of industrial work. It was the kind of ‘traditional’ village that anthropologists were just discovering in rural Mediterranean Europe (e.g., Lison-Tolosana 1962; Pitt-Rivers 1961).¹ Naturally, being a ‘native’ villager, I had little inclination to dedicate my life to the study of ‘primitive’ or ‘traditional’ *Gemeinschaft*, a way of life that I knew all too well and wanted to leave behind. I was attracted instead to the study of sociology, the science of modern, urban, industrial *Gesellschaft*. Of course, our post-industrial and postmodern consciousness finds the binary juxtaposition of tradition and modernity, and the meta-narrative of modernization that it implies, problematic and suspect, if not outright ideological. Indeed, anthropologists who tended to come from more ‘modern’ contexts also tended to have a more critical attitude toward progressive teleological theories of ‘Western’ modernity, knowing all too well the heavy costs and damage that modernization and colonial encounters continued to bring to so-called primitive peoples and communities.

Personally, however, I found that the narrative of modernization made compelling phenomenological sense to me. I had experienced it in my own life trajectory, starting in a traditional village and ending up studying and teaching sociology at the New School for Social Research in New York, the paradigmatic modern global metropolis. One could even view me and my career

as an embodied illustration of modernization, of the passage from tradition to modernity. Alternatively, one could say that sociological theory offered me a form of self-reflective critical knowledge of my biographical circumstance. Fortunately, my encounter with sociology was first mediated through theology, and my passage from a rural village to New York first took the intermediate detours of secondary education at the Metropolitan Seminary of Zaragoza and higher education at the University of Innsbruck in Austria. My first choice of vocation, as far back as I could remember as a child, was actually that of becoming a priest, a rather common ambition (or tradition) among young boys in my village. Consequently, my academic ‘calling’ to sociology was as a rather late adult, graduate avocation. It came, moreover, after a solid education in German philosophy and theology.

I have always thanked *Fortuna*, or Providence, for such a German theological detour. It saved me from first encountering modernity in American society or from discovering the discipline through some ‘introduction to sociology’ textbook in some American college course. It would have been highly unlikely that such an undergraduate experience would have awakened in me the interest in becoming a sociologist. Had it done so, however, I would most likely be doing an altogether different kind of sociology. In fact, I came to New York not in order to study American sociology but to study German sociology. My first encounter with sociology was through the work of Jürgen Habermas (1962, 1967) and the critical theory of the Frankfurt School.² Indeed, it was Franz Schupp, my professor in Dogmatic Theology at Innsbruck, who introduced me to critical theory and, upon learning of my interest to study German sociology, suggested that I go to the New School, because if I went to Germany, I “would end up studying American sociology.”³

The definition of sociology that I first encountered on reading Habermas (1988: 176–189)—‘a theory of the present with practical intent’—corresponds to a large extent with the kind of sociology that I was taught at the New School. It is a definition that stuck with me and which I believe has shaped to this day both my own self-understanding of what the discipline ought to be and my lifework as a sociologist. I have always found the emphasis on ‘theory’ more relevant than the emphasis on ‘science,’⁴ and I have never been overly concerned about the ‘scientific’ claims and aspirations of sociology. It was not theoretical sociology or theory building for its own sake that I found attractive, but rather theoretically informed empirical research and an empirically grounded theory of the present, which is in my view the model represented by classical sociological theory.

Moreover, I have considered the practical intent of coming to an explanatory self-understanding and interpretation of the present, which may serve to inform and guide our practical collective action, to be the real aim of sociology, rather than the discovery of the positive ‘laws’ of society, which may serve to manage or control social change. The present has always meant for me ‘the modern world’ in all the historical complexity of the ‘three worlds of development.’ In this respect, my main interest has been linked to the comparative historical study of types of modernization. Furthermore, I have understood modernization in the very broad sense of the still unfolding world-historical expansion of the two modern revolutions, the ‘industrial’ and the ‘democratic,’ with their accompanying structural, institutional, and cultural dimensions. In this broad sense, sociology was born as a theory of modernization.

Briefly, classical European social theory (Marx, Tocqueville, Durkheim, Simmel, and, above all, Max Weber) and what my professor Benjamin Nelson used to call “the comparative, historical, and differential” sociology of modernization constituted the two main areas of my sociological training.⁵ Searching for a topic for my dissertation and being concerned, like so many young intellectuals since the young Marx, with the ‘backwardness’ of my own society, after finishing my coursework I spent much time revisiting the history of Spain from the sixteenth century to the Spanish Civil War, looking for the key to explain Spain’s ‘failure’ to modernize.

But while searching for the sociological explanation of what modern Spanish intellectuals had called 'Spain as a problem,' I realized that the modernization of Spain—or at least what used to be called, in the jargon of the modernization theory of the times, 'the take-off phase' of modern industrial economic development—had already taken place under the Franco regime (Casanova 1982b).

This seemed to be a paradox in need of sociological explanation. How could a reactionary, clerical, traditionalist, and anti-modern 'fundamentalist' regime have contributed in any way to the modernization of Spain? I was at first rather reluctant to take the *Opus Dei* seriously or to view its 'ethic' as the functionalist equivalent of the Protestant ethic. The parallel was at first too obvious and seemingly superficial (Casanova 1983a). Moreover, I had already expressed serious reservations concerning the uses of the functionalist-equivalent thesis by Parsonian-Weberian scholars of modernization such as Edward Shils, S. N. Eisenstadt, Robert Bellah, and Clifford Geertz (Casanova 1979: 236–239). Yet I ended up writing a dissertation titled "The *Opus Dei* Ethic and the Modernization of Spain."

It was to be sure an application of Weber's Protestant ethic thesis, but it was also an application of Habermas's (1970, 1975) critique of technocratic political ideology, which was directed to a large extent against Weber and against Weberian political theories. However, I was more interested in developing a critique of the political ethic of the *Opus Dei* technocrats than in probing the associations between the *Opus Dei* economic ethic and modern capitalism (Casanova 1983b). In a nutshell, my main thesis was that the *Opus Dei* ethic had a kind of elective affinity with authoritarian technocratic capitalism that was similar to the relationship that existed, as Weber claimed, between the Protestant ethic and liberal bourgeois capitalism. My central argument was that the *Opus Dei* technocrats could serve from 1959 to 1973 as carriers of the modernization of Spain, but not because of their own technocratic expertise or because they formed a 'Holy Mafia' that just happened to gain power at the right time. Rather, they offered the Franco regime a model of technocratic capitalist development that had elective affinities with the political ethic of *Opus Dei* and that promised to be able to integrate the Spanish economy into the American-led world capitalist system without challenging the authoritarian structures of the regime and without curtailing the arbitrary decisionist power of the *Caudillo* at the top.

You may have noticed that so far I have not used the word 'religion' even once. Of course, given my personal background, I could not possibly claim (falsely like Weber) that I was 'religiously unmusical'. While studying theology, I had been influenced not only by the giants of twentieth-century German Protestant and Catholic theology (Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann, Paul Tillich and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Karl Rahner and Urs von Balthasar) and the French *Nouvelle Théologie* (Yves Congar, Henri de Lubac, and Marie-Dominique Chenu), but also by the negative theology of Theodor Adorno, the messianic thinking of Walter Benjamin, and the utopian theories of Ernst Bloch. Other influences included Latin American liberation theology and the more contemporary political theologies of Johann-Baptist Metz and Jürgen Moltmann. While at the New School, I had immersed myself in all the classical works on sociology and much of the anthropology of religion. I followed closely the secularization debates of the 1960s. After all, Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann had preceded me as students and teachers at the New School. I had also examined the literature on the new religious movements and what Bellah (1976) referred to as the 'new consciousness' reformation, which he associated with the counterculture.

But while studying sociology at the New School, I did not become particularly interested in the sociology of religion—at least, not in the way that it had become a differentiated and rather isolated sub-discipline in the United States.⁶ I did not find the study of the differentiated sphere of religion within modern societies, or of its internal structure and dynamics, to be that compelling sociologically. My interest has always been in the mutual interrelations between religion

and society, insofar as they become relevant for a theoretical understanding of the present. My relative distance from the sociology of religion was reflected in the fact that, prior to the publication of *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Casanova 1994), only once had I presented a paper specifically on religion at some kind of professional sociological meeting.⁷

In retrospect, it is obvious that I had adopted two of the key theoretical assumptions of the dominant paradigm of secularization, namely, the progressive decline and the increasing privatization and marginalization of religion in the modern world.⁸ I even tended to agree with Luckmann's (1967) thesis that religion was becoming 'invisible' and that the sociology of religion should not pay so much attention to the traditional ecclesiastical institutions since they were becoming, so it seemed, increasingly irrelevant.

Secularization and Modern Public Religions

My renewed interest in religion derived not from internal debates within the sociology of religion but rather from public debates trying to make sense of the widespread and unexpected religious revivals that were popping up all over the world. My interest was also spurred by debates within the public intellectual sphere of *Telos*, a neo-Marxist critical theory journal with which I had become associated through my close relation with Andrew Arato, who began teaching at the New School as I finished my coursework. It was the unsatisfactory character of those debates that moved me to write an essay, "The Politics of the Religious Revival" (Casanova 1984b). Even though this essay anticipates some of the arguments that were developed more systematically in my later work, it is more a review of emerging theories and arguments that were trying to make sense of the new religious trends than a serious attempt to offer an empirically grounded, satisfactory theoretical interpretation of the new developments.

As I have stated frequently, four dramatic events that erupted unexpectedly and almost simultaneously on the world stage in 1979 forced 'all publics' to take religion a bit more seriously: the Islamic Revolution in Iran, the election of a Polish pope and the rise of Solidarity, the Nicaraguan Revolution, and the emergence of the Moral Majority in the United States. Besides their dramatic performative character, which they had in common with most unexpected world-historical events, these public outbursts of religion in political conflicts in all three worlds of development put into question one of the central premises of most theories of secularization, namely, that religion was becoming an increasingly private and irrelevant phenomenon in the modern world. This was considered to be especially the case for the larger and dominant modern systemic structures, particularly for the world of *realpolitik* at the national level and, most importantly, at the level of international relations and world politics.⁹

When it was published in 1994, *Public Religions in the Modern World* challenged both the empirical claims of sociological theories of secularization and the normative claims of secularist liberal political theories and theories of the secular public sphere. Since the reviewers of my work in this volume have offered critical yet generally sympathetic reconstructions of those elements of my thesis that have had some influence in shaping the direction of public debate and new reformulations of our theoretical understandings of secularization, public religions, and modernity, I do not need to reconstruct what I think are the book's most important and lasting contributions. I am very thankful for their generous reviews. I can only touch here briefly upon some of the critical questions that they have raised concerning those aspects of my argument that appear to be either problematic or ambiguous and in need of clarification.

Hubert Knoblauch has raised a very important critical point concerning the extent to which what I called 'deprivatization' should be viewed as a reversal of a previous trend of privatization.

Deprivatization represents a reversal only in the sense that, at the time, the dominant perception had been that privatization was the only relevant religious trend in the modern world. Yet, acknowledgment of the relevance of the new trend does not need to imply that the old trend of privatization might not also continue unabatedly. As I emphasized in the round-table debate with Luckmann that Knoblauch moderated in November 2008 at the Institute of Social Sciences in Lisbon, Luckmann's theory of 'invisible religion' and my theory of 'public religion' are not to be viewed as incompatible but rather as complementary theories. Both processes go on simultaneously in most societies: the question as to which of the two might be dominant at a particular time and in a particular place, or how they might be interrelated, is empirical. The very notion of deprivatization implies a previous process of privatization. Habermas's theory of the public sphere presupposes individual citizens who first secure the right to privacy and only then also attain the right to constitute and enter a public sphere. So long as the right to privacy and to freedom of conscience is viewed as an inalienable individual right, the movement toward increasing individuation and privatization is likely to persist.

Moreover, the boundaries between 'private' and 'public' are not spatially fixed or located equally everywhere. Because they are always socially constructed, they are also open to contestation. This contestation in turn leads to constant redrawing. This point was central to my argument, which I had simply appropriated from various critiques of Habermas's theory of the public sphere, particularly from the feminist critiques of Nancy Fraser and Seyla Benhabib. As I have also pointed out repeatedly, and as the current sexual abuse scandal within the Catholic Church makes so evident, the process of deprivatization is a two-way street. It is not only religion or the Church that claims the right to enter the public sphere: the public sphere and other kinds of 'publics' force their entry into the hidden, private sphere of the Church in order to turn private abuses into public scandals. Transgressions, as well as the blurring and shifting of boundaries, are happening all the time, everywhere. Indeed, the very contestation over how, where, and by whom the boundaries should be drawn constitutes one of the most remarkable aspects of our contemporary global situation.

It is of course our spatial conception of the public sphere that leads to some terminological misconceptions. Knoblauch is right when he argues that 'private' and 'public' should not be reified spatially "as a pair of mutually exclusive categories" and that it is better to view them as overlapping and intersecting 'virtual' fields of communication (here again we find the problematic spatial imagery from which it seems so hard to free ourselves). But I do not think that he is right in attributing the problem to my concern about "institutional reductionism," which "predominantly (but not exclusively) considers organizations as relevant actors participating in the public sphere." It is true that 'church' is the central analytical category of my historical comparative study *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Casanova 1994: 70). The five case studies analyzed in this volume are structured as long-term historical reconstructions of the relations between church, state, nation, and civil society. But I also make it clear throughout that there is a constant tension between three different meanings of 'church': (1) the ideal-typical sociological meaning, as defined analytically by Weber, Troeltsch, or anybody else; (2) the phenomenological, doctrinal self-definition of the relevant collective actors who constitute the church as an ecclesiastical institution; and (3) the changing structural location of the church in relation to state, nation, and civil society. My study focuses on the changing structural location. I argue that, in terms of their internal ecclesiastical organization, there are no significant institutional differences between the Spanish, Polish, or Brazilian Catholic Churches. It is in terms of their relations with state, nation, and civil society that the differences have been substantial throughout history.¹⁰

In fact, neither the self-definition of the actors nor the changing structural location needs to imply any institutional reductionism. Vatican II's redefinition of the Church as 'the people

of God' had dramatic repercussions for the kind of ecclesiastical communications entering the public sphere: Who is the Church? Who speaks for the Church? Which kind of Church communication is relevant for whom? These now became open empirical questions. My analysis of the deprivatization of Catholic Church actors, individual and collective, since the 1960s makes this evident in all of the case studies (Casanova 1994). Sometimes bishops' pastoral letters would go through several rounds of communication with laity at the parish and diocesan levels before they were drafted. Sometimes the public intervention of Cardinal O'Connor of New York would provoke the response of lay Catholic Governor Cuomo, who might challenge the propriety of the cardinal's intervention, who in turn might then recognize that the lay governor was right. I could mention many other illustrations.

My own book can be read as a public intervention in the transnationally organized Catholic public sphere, which in turn intersects with many other public spheres. Individuals on the Internet are constantly adding their own voices to public communication and to the cacophony of commentary in any public sphere. Evangelical Protestantism in the United States does not purport to constitute a single ecclesiastical institution. It is actually formed by hundreds of denominations, thousands of different congregations, and millions of individuals who sometimes speak or act in unison but very frequently do so at cross purposes. At first, the Moral Majority was nothing more than a rhetorical project. Whether such an enterprise ever becomes institutionalized as some kind of collective action, collective organization, collective identity, or collective movement is an empirical question. What we *can* ascertain is that communication in the public sphere and the mobilization of pre-existing institutional resources can create the very conditions of possibility for the constitution not only of any majority (moral or otherwise) but of any collective action. To argue, as I do, that the institutional resources of the Catholic Church in the period that I analyzed (the 1960s to the 1990s) were put to extremely effective use in the four countries under scrutiny (Casanova 1994) does not imply any institutional reductionism. Other actors, individual and collective, may have responded to the Catholic communications and mobilizations with their own counter-communications and counter-mobilizations.

I agree with Grace Davie that the issue in Europe is not so much that of religious actors re-entering the public sphere, but rather the fact that secularist assumptions have turned religion in the abstract into a 'problem'. The deprivatization of religion in Europe manifests itself primarily as a general public anxiety about religion. Most often, it is the presence of Muslim immigrants in Europe, or even more broadly the presence of Islam, that appears to trigger this concern or general anxiety, which I have written about in two recent essays (Casanova 2006, 2008). When one of these pieces, "The Problem of Religion and the Anxieties of European Secular Democracy" (Casanova 2008), was translated into German (Casanova 2009d), the level of concern was raised from 'anxiety' to 'fear'. In some of my recent essays I have indicated that the contemporary discourse on Islam in the West, in Europe as well as in the United States, has structural similarities with the nineteenth-century discourse on Catholicism that emerged in Protestant societies such as the United States and Britain, which were confronting Catholic immigrant minorities (Casanova 2009a; see also Casanova 2001a, 2005, 2009e).

It is only in the last 20 years that we have moved from confidently measuring degrees of secularization in terms of the decline of beliefs and practices to questioning more critically and systematically the ways in which the categories of 'religion' and 'the secular' are variously produced, entangled, and mutually constituted. The work of Talal Asad has been crucial in this respect, and I gladly acknowledge the extent to which his critique of my work has forced me to rethink both categories and to revisit my own theory of public religions, redirecting my work accordingly. I cannot elaborate further here, but I would like to indicate simply that lately my work has focused much less on religion and secularization and much more on the analytical

reconstruction of the category of the secular, on modes of secularism, and on comparative historical analyses of regimes of secularism and modes of state management of religious freedom and religious pluralism (Casanova 2009c).¹¹

I appreciate very much Kim Knibbe's critically insightful and nuanced reading of the debate between Talal and myself. I also appreciate her generous defense of the relevance of my normative position, although I have to acknowledge that under Talal's incisive critique my own normative position may have shifted more than Knibbe seems to realize. In a sense, in all of my recent work I have been trying to answer the critical questions raised by Talal, which Knibbe has reformulated most succinctly here: "Is the differentiation of the religious and the secular the most important characteristic of modern societies? Are those societies that we usually identify as modern actually differentiated in this way? Following from this, can a society be modern if religious and secular domains are *not* differentiated?" (see also Casanova 2011c).

The short response would have to be both yes and no. The longer response has taken the form of a series of public conversations with Jürgen Habermas, Robert Bellah, Charles Taylor, and Hans Joas, all of whom in different ways have lately been addressing similar questions. In my debate with Taylor, I have tried to revisit the question of European and American exceptionalism, but now in terms of Taylor's (2007) own analysis of the phenomenological conditions of belief and unbelief across the North Atlantic. What can explain the fact that, within the same secular age, one finds such different phenomenological conditions of belief and unbelief (Casanova 2003, 2009b, 2010, 2011b)? In my conversation with Habermas, I have indicated that the discourse of a post-secular society that he himself has initiated in Europe requires a more precise analysis of the different meanings of 'secular' (Casanova, forthcoming a). In response to Joas's (2008) stimulating collection of essays, *Do We Need Religion? On the Experience of Self-Transcendence*, I counter with a rhetorical question, "which kind of religion do humans need?" (Casanova 2011a). My central argument is that Joas has incorporated into his theory of religion as 'transcendence' (and not without tension) two radically different theories of religion, namely, Durkheim's theory of 'the sacred' as the collective social religion and William James's theory of individual religious experience. I argue that, after many attempts, sociology has not been successful in incorporating Durkheim's and Weber's radically different theories of religion into a single, unified sociological theory.

I develop a related argument (Casanova, forthcoming b) more systematically in my critical review of Bellah's (2011) theory of religious evolution. There I point out the intrinsic difficulty of constructing not only a consistent transhistorical and transcultural category of religion, but also one that cuts across the very different binary systems of classification of reality implied in Bellah's own evolutionary scheme, namely, the pre-axial 'sacred-profane', the axial 'transcendent-mundane', and the modern 'religious-secular'. It should be obvious that these three dichotomous classificatory schemes do not fit neatly with one another. The sacred tends to be immanent in pre-axial societies, transcendence is not necessarily religious in some axial civilizations, and obviously some secular reality (the nation, citizenship, the person, and individual human rights) can become sacred in our modern secular age.

In fact, we now find ourselves within a global secular-religious system of classification, in which the category of religion has to do extra work and serve to articulate and encompass all kinds of different 'religious' experiences, both individual and collective; all kinds of magical, ritual, and sacramental practices; all kinds of communal, ecclesiastical, and institutional arrangements; and all kinds of processes of sacralization of the social, be it in the form of religious nationalism, secular civil religions, or the global sacralization of human rights. We use the same qualifier, 'religious', to characterize all of these diverse phenomena in a way that has to be mind-boggling for both secular and religious mind-sets. But there is no point in bemoaning this fact, since the global secular-religious system of classification of reality is here to stay.

Globalization

This brings me to my final comments concerning my most recent work on globalization and religion, which Manuel Vásquez has reviewed so generously and sympathetically. I wish that he had raised some more critical and difficult questions, since this is an area in which he himself has made such important contributions. I would like to add only two final comments concerning the globalization of the secular-religious system of classification and the simultaneous temporal and spatial co-existence of all forms of religion.¹²

We scholars of religion are confronted with an interesting paradox. Some of our distinguished colleagues have been questioning for some time the validity of the category of religion at the very moment when the discursive reality of religion is more widespread than ever and has become global for the first time. I am not entering here the debate as to whether people today are more or less religious than they may have been in the past. I am only claiming that religion as a discursive reality—indeed, as an abstract category and as a system of classification of reality used by modern individuals as well as modern societies around the world—has become an indisputable, global social fact. Religious studies scholars may bemoan this social fact, but it is our task as social scientists to understand its coming into being and to analyze it in all its global complexity.

Certainly, we ought to be as analytically clear as possible about the manifold and very different discursive ways in which we use the category of religion today in our contemporary global age, namely, to identify what counts and what does not count as religion and to recognize the diverse phenomena (beings as well as things, groups and institutions, beliefs, practices, and experiences) to which we may attach the attribute or qualifier ‘religious’. Included in this latter ‘we’ are not only scholars of religion and religious practitioners (religious elites as well as ordinary people) who denominate what they do, what they believe, or what they experience as being somehow ‘religious’, but also secular political authorities (legislators, judges, administrators) and citizens who constantly have to make decisions concerning what, when, and where something is constitutionally protected or prohibited precisely for being or not being religious. After all, every state constitution in the world today makes some reference to religion, to religious freedom, or to the freedom to believe or not to believe.

In fact, the modern secular-religious system of classification that emerged out of the transformation of Western Christianity and which we tend to characterize as a process of secularization has now become globalized, entering into dynamic transformative interaction with all non-Western systems of classification, pre-axial as well as axial. All the religio-cultural systems, Christian and non-Christian, Western and non-Western, are now being transformed through these global interactive dynamics. Following Taylor (2007), one can understand this process as the global expansion of the secular ‘immanent frame’.

In this respect, not only the so-called secular societies of the West but the entire globe is becoming increasingly more secular and ‘disenchanted’, in that the cosmic order is increasingly defined by modern science and technology; the social order is increasingly defined by the interlocking of democratic states, market economies, and mediatic public spheres; and the moral order is increasingly defined by the calculations of rights-bearing individual agents, claiming human dignity, liberty, equality, and the pursuit of happiness. Yet, comparisons of secular Europe and religious America, as well as the evidence of religious revivals around the world, make clear that within the same secular immanent frame one can encounter very diverse religious dynamics (Berger et al. 2008). In this respect, the disenchantment of the world does not necessarily entail the disenchantment of consciousness, the decline of religion, or the end of magic. On the contrary, it is compatible with all forms of re-enchantment and religious revival.

What is increasingly less tenable is a secularist reading of the historical process of secularization. As a modern philosophy of history, secularism turned the particular Western Christian historical process of secularization into a universal teleological process of human development from belief to unbelief, from primitive, magical irrational religion to modern, rational, post-metaphysical secular consciousness. Even when the particular role of internal Christian developments in the process of secularization is acknowledged, it is not to stress the particular, contingent nature of the process but rather to emphasize the universal significance of the uniqueness of Christianity. According to Marcel Gauchet's ([1985] 1997) striking formulation, Christianity is the religion that produced an 'exit from religion'.

Globalization is likely to make such a Western-centric view of history and human development increasingly less credible. Indeed, what characterizes the contemporary global moment is not simply the fact that all forms of human religion, past and present, from the most 'primitive' to the most 'modern', are available for individual and collective appropriation. Equally relevant is that fact that increasingly these forms must learn to co-exist side by side in today's global cities. This contemporary social reality tends to put into question all teleological schemes of religious rationalization and development that tended to place 'primitive' and 'traditional' forms of religion as older human cultural forms to be superseded by more modern, secular, and rational ones. Paraphrasing Johannes Fabian's (1983) analysis in *Time and the Other*, one could say that the social scientific study of religion had been permeated by a modern secularist stadial consciousness that placed the social scientists 'here and now' in secular modernity, while placing their object of study, religion, 'there and then', as the 'Other' that somehow persisted as a pre-modern anachronistic survival in a time not contemporary with our secular age.

This was the fundamental premise on which every theory of modernization and every theory of secularization was built. Our age of globalization, however, is changing this perspective. Globalization is the new philosophy of space that has come to replace the modern philosophy of history. In a sense, with globalization the spatial metaphor has begun to replace the dominant temporal-historical metaphor of Western secular modernity. It is a short trip indeed from the most traditional village to the most modern global metropolis and back.

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■ NOTES

1. What this anthropology soon began to document was not 'unchanging village tradition' but rather the aspiration for, and increasingly the reality of, rapid modernizing change. See also Aceves (1971), Aceves and Douglass (1976), and Barrett (1974).
2. See the debate between Habermas and Hans Albert in Adorno et al. (1969).
3. Schupp succeeded Karl Rahner as the chair of Dogmatic Theology at the University of Innsbruck and was the first post-Vatican II theologian to be removed from a faculty of Catholic theology due to his heretic teachings. One only needs to read typical entries in the academic journal *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* of the late 1960s to grasp the acuteness of Schupp's observation. The work of Weber, to a large extent forgotten in post-World War II Germany, was rediscovered later

through the systematic reconstructions of Niklas Luhmann, Wolfgang Schluchter, and Habermas, all of whom were indebted in different ways to the interpretations of Talcott Parsons, Reinhard Bendix, and other American sociologists.

4. For an illuminating discussion of the origins of 'theory' in the axial age and its various meanings, see Bellah (2011), particularly the introduction to the axial age chapters (ibid.: 265–282) and the conclusion (ibid.: 567–606).
5. The lifework of Max Weber and the sociology of modernization, broadly and critically understood beyond the American paradigm of modernization of the 1960s, formed the two thematic areas of my PhD comprehensive exams. The papers I wrote for the occasion were published as "Legitimacy and the Sociology of Modernization" (Casanova 1979) and "Interpretations and Misinterpretations of Max Weber: The Problem of Rationalization" (Casanova 1984a).
6. The relative isolation of the sociology of religion within American sociology is manifested in the fact that the two most important professional associations, the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion (SSSR) and the Association for the Sociology of Religion (ASR), have separate organizations and meet separately from the American Sociological Association (ASA) and that a section within the ASA on the Sociology of Religion was first established only in the late 1990s. This was partly the reason that I rejected a professor's suggestion that I choose the sociology of religion as one of my two PhD comprehensive examination fields.
7. This sole presentation was at a meeting of the Eastern Sociological Society (ESS) in Providence, RI; the paper was later published (Casanova 1982a). Professionally, I have tended to present my work at interdisciplinary and international thematic conferences dealing with current or 'present' issues, instead of professional meetings that are organized to advance the trends and paradigms of scientific disciplines.
8. After all, I had studied theology at a time when even theologians were proclaiming the 'death of God' and the inevitability of the 'secular city'.
9. Since the 1990s, many books have appeared discussing the resurgence of religion in world politics and the questions that it raises for traditional international relations theory. See Toft et al. (2011), Hurd (2008), de Vries and Sullivan (2006), Thomas (2004), and Banchoff (2008).
10. Commenting on the sermon given by Cardinal Wyszyński concerning the perennial union between the Catholic Church and the Polish nation, I point out that it would have been unthinkable for any Spanish cardinal to make such a public communication, since it would not have been credible. The question is not whether the claim is objectively true, but whether the communication is publicly effective and works rhetorically (Casanova 1994: 262n20).
11. This article appears in a special double issue of *Social Research*, which contains the papers of a conference that I helped to organize at the New School under the title "The Religious-Secular Divide: The U.S. Case."
12. For a succinct presentation of my theory of globalization, see Kumar and Makarova (2002) and Casanova (2001b).

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PORTRAIT: JEAN COMAROFF

Religion, Society, Theory

Jean Comaroff

Colonial frontiers, we have long been told, put conventional categories at risk. I grew up on one such frontier, itself an anachronism in the late-twentieth-century world—apartheid South Africa, where many of the key terms of liberal modernity were scandalously, publically violated. Religion was one of them. Some have argued that the act of separating the sacred from the secular is the founding gesture of liberal modern state making (Asad 2003: 13). In this, South Africa was a flagrant exception. There, the line between faith and politics was always overtly contested, always palpably porous. Faith-based arguments were central to politics at its most pragmatic, to competing claims of sovereignty and citizenship, to debates about the nature of civilization or the content of school curricula. As a settler colony, South Africa had long experimented with ways to ‘modernize racial domination’ (Adam 1971) in the interests of capitalist production, frequently with appeals to theology. After 1948, in contrast with the spirit of a decolonizing world, the country fell under the sway of Afrikaner rulers of overtly Calvinist bent. They set about formalizing a racial division of labor that ensured that black populations, the Children of Ham, remained economically subservient and politically marginal.

The liberal Jewish community in which I was raised included refugees from the Holocaust and was a distinctly nervous fraction of the dominant class (Bourdieu 1984: 186). Its members were white but not of the *Herrenvolk*, and they were acutely alive to the perils of racial persecution. Torn between keeping their heads down and voicing moral protest, many found solace in the call of another Zion, in a strong identification with the State of Israel, which, in 1948, had established itself as an ethno-nation on the world geopolitical map. But South Africa had also spawned other visions of a Promised Land,¹ other images of Zion, other millennial aspirations that would color my own understanding of religion and society. While I was schooled in a system dubbed ‘Christian National Education’ (Davies 1978), my consciousness was suffused, from early on, with competing political theologies, with a vibrant brace of liberation movements, for instance, in which evangelical revival confronted—not always peaceably—European socialist thought and New World critiques rooted in the work of Du Bois, Garvey, and Fanon.

Such a world predisposes one, if not to skepticism about *any* claim to sovereign truth, at least to an acute awareness of the context dependence of all orders of faith and knowledge. It also fosters distrust of the evolutionary conceits of Western modernity, among them, that secularism advances steadily as enchantment declines, or that religion is everywhere identifiable as that which pertains to the divine or the supernatural. For what can, or cannot, claim to be ‘religion’ (as against heresy, superstition, magic, satanic rite), and who is or is not authorized to



decide, has long been a domain of conflict here. It has also provided an idiom for establishing hegemony. Early European settlers and evangelists, some denounced as heretics at home, often deemed Africans to be devoid of all trace of religion, finding no ready counterpart for their own idea of faith among peoples who had no term for ‘religion’ or ‘belief’—peoples whose word for ‘spirit’ (*moya*, ‘breath’ in Setswana), albeit an echo of Old Testament usage, seemed irretrievably corporeal in conception. Colonial missions labored hard to instill a Protestant ontology—and the mercantile *geist* it bore—in African consciousness. But the dialectic set in motion between European and African religiosity would yield unforeseen mutations, blurring Cartesian divides, queering reigning creeds, calling new revelations into being. In the process, Christianity was Africanized, and Africa Christianized, distilling novel self-awareness on all sides, not least of the ways in which, as Asad (1993: 123) has put it, “power create[s] religion.” It also revealed ways in which religion creates power and showed how people might act upon that awareness, both as colonizer and colonized.

All this made it plain to me that—while the category of religion was irreducibly relative, at least in the Euro-modern world—a Judeo-Christian definition of the concept was hegemonic, not only in theological orthodoxy and public culture, but in much scholarly analysis as well. In contrast to some anthropologists (e.g., Bloch 2010), these evident facts do not lead me to conclude that no viable theory about religion is possible, that we would do best to free ourselves of the term as an analytical category in favor of a putatively more universal one such as ‘ritual’. For me, it is precisely the inescapable embeddedness of religion in particular social-historical formations that is the point of departure for useful critical investigation.

Of course, it is all a matter of what one takes to be ‘theory’, what one understands as its objects and objectives. For Bloch (2010: 5), to be worthy of its name, theory must contribute to “the general understanding of what kind of animals human beings are.” Ritual is more useful than religion in this regard, he argues, because it can be “described as a specific type of modification of the way human beings communicate” (ibid.: 8), this on the basis of universal cognitive qualities of human existence.² Religion, by contrast, is not a ‘natural kind’. Its definition remains socially and historically arbitrary. As will be clear, my understanding of theory and its uses in relation to religion, or any other aspect of the social world, is rather different. I am not primarily interested in identifying ‘natural’ kinds or establishing “general claims about human beings” (ibid.: 5) that presume a metaphysical naturalism and an unmediated analytical vantage. My ethnographic training has reinforced my predisposition to see all categories of human thought and being—including analytical terms like ‘ritual’, which I deploy a great deal in my work—as inflected by specific social systems, systems of meaning and signification. In this sense, I am interested less in theories of religion than in theories of religion and society. It is precisely the nature of this relationship and its historically specific transformations that fascinate me—most specifically, its modern transformations, for those are the ones that our epistemological apparatus engages most effectively, at least in the human sciences (cf. Casanova 2011). What, with twenty-first-century hindsight, is the sustained relationship between the Protestant ethic and the nature of capitalism, for instance—not to mention the nature of ‘modernity’ itself? The terms of human knowing and acting are never simply determined, once and for all, by genealogy or context. Nor are they unchanging or without contradiction and incoherence.

For me, useful social analysis is that which strives, within those limits, to gain reflexive purchase, from a distinct disciplinary location, on particular phenomena of varying scale, generality, and temporality. In my earlier work, for instance, I interrogated the ironic role of evangelical Protestantism as a vehicle for both the colonization and the emancipation of southern African peoples. I did so as an anthropologist and as a person from the global South, one especially sensitive to the fact that European religiosity was embedded in a particular hegemonic order of social,

textual, and material relations. I was aware, too, that this ostensibly universal faith was saturated with specific sensibilities and values whose implications were profoundly worldly and central to imperial efforts to transform African societies and economies wholesale. The interplay that ensued would significantly refashion the European Christian legacy.³ In the process, the ethnocentrism of the latter and its ideological role were often made apparent, raising new sensibilities and a host of independent movements, and prompting anguished debate among scholars, politicians, and churchmen as to who should be deemed Christian and where the line should be drawn between church and sect, enlightened belief and primitive mentality. As this suggests, the role of religion was of signal importance to the modern colonial project *tout court*, as the necessary ‘supplement’ (Derrida 1976) to secular discourses of reason, civilization, race.

This approach implies a vision of grounded theory in which lived practice—including self-conscious theory making itself—is always seen to exist in a dynamic relation with immediate context and with larger-scale processes of transformation, one in which tangible facts, the concrete, cannot be understood without recourse to abstraction, to theory, and vice versa. This also implies reflexive critique: a concern not merely with how social worlds are constituted, but also with how they might conceivably have been different and how their present might give rise to better futures (Horkheimer 1972). This impetus allies me with analytical approaches produced on other authoritarian frontiers—with the kind of immanent critique developed by the Frankfurt School, for instance, which probes contradictions, differentiations, and paradoxes in the constitution of given worlds, thus to estrange their ruling assumptions and to envisage other, emancipatory possibilities.

Anthropology and Its Spirits of Resistance

One such critical engagement, for me, was with the self-imposed limitations of the ethnographic tradition in which I was trained at the London School of Economics in the late 1960s. While the wider world around us was seething with the onset of an already late-capitalist, post-colonial moment, British anthropology remained committed, for the most part, to presentist models of small-scale, non-Western polities, still clinging to the possibility of accessing the totality of relations of a society, the essential workings of a culture, in any one place and time (cf. Gupta and Ferguson 1997). To be sure, there were more advantages to this approach than is often acknowledged these days, not least its facilitation of bold theory making (John Comaroff and Jean Comaroff 2012). But the sprawling Tswana-speaking ‘homeland’ that confronted me as a neophyte fieldworker in the days of high apartheid simply could not be reduced, either ethically or methodologically, to a bounded, self-reproducing ‘society’ or clutch of ‘villages’. Neither could the ever-evolving Zionist churches—whose prophet leaders so captured local imaginations—readily be described as ‘traditional’ religions. How, then, to acknowledge, in the particularity of the local, forces of ‘awkward’, translocal scale, forces whose historical sociology demanded attention in an age that seemed post-anthropological (Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff 2003)?

It was with this task that I wrestled in *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance* (1985). These overtly syncretic religious movements provided the most sustained, emotionally compelling focus in the lives of depleted rural communities on the periphery of the South African industrial economy, where they served as its racialized, reserve army of labor. The product of secession from the colonial missions and offshoots of late-nineteenth-century American revival, these churches, being sites of mimesis and refusal, bore witness to the forces that had shaped this local world. Wielding the creative power of signs, they made the gospel speak of this-worldly redemption, providing a moral *lingua franca* for a new society of colonized workers and of African

nationalist struggle. In seeking to expand my ethnographic gaze to encompass the multi-scalar forces at play in this creative enterprise, I grafted Weber's sense of the Protestant ethic onto Durkheim's view of the pragmatic power of ritual and deployed both in a reading of imperialism and race-class formation inspired by Marx. In so doing, I strove to demonstrate something especially evident to those raised in the global South: the role of religion in the profane business of building—and surviving—markets and empires.

This work drew lively responses and various strains of critique, some directed at my blatant eclecticism, some uneasy with my readiness to juxtapose 'experience-near' ethnography with theoretical abstraction. Anthropology has always had a strongly empiricist strain, of course, although our founding fathers were more ready to posit bold hypotheses about society and culture than many of their late modern heirs (John Comaroff and Jean Comaroff 2012)—of which more in a moment. A few commentators expressed discomfort with what they saw as an over-readiness to dwell on the social and material aspects of religion at the expense of its spiritual dimensions. Some raised this same point in response to *Of Revelation and Revolution*, the two-volume study that I undertook with John Comaroff in the 1990s, which explored the relationship of religion to colonialism by returning to the 'long conversation' between British Nonconformist missionaries and the Southern Tswana peoples (Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff 1991; John Comaroff and Jean Comaroff 1997). The study aimed to pursue the implications of this case for a more general understanding of historical agency: the missionaries were, after all, self-conscious 'agents', not just of God's Kingdom, or even of a 'revolution' of hearts and minds, but of the whole mode of life bred of the Great Transformation that had nurtured their civilizing outreach. Within this framework, the study sought also to rethink the concept of culture in relation to the concepts of hegemony and ideology. And it aimed to do so by way of grounded theory, by training an ethnographic eye on those who seeded a state of colonialism from which the colonial state took root: the churchmen, merchants, and politicians who were the cultural foot soldiers of the Empire. This historical anthropology required some experiments in methodology, for instance, assembling an archive that went beyond conventional texts to include objects and archaeological remains, objects that bore witness to the practices that built the substance of a colonial world. Why were trivial commodities so central to the larger spiritual design of God's agents? Why should paper, indigo print, or starched church uniforms have taken on almost magical salience on all sides of the nineteenth-century frontier? How did window glass or the replacement of round dwellings with square ones come to index the advance of civilization for its champions? And how did the fetishism of these objects expand imperial commodity markets and link neophyte proletariats in Africa to workers in Liverpool and Manchester?

Once more, these studies have evoked lively commentary. Some critics have argued yet again that we lay undue stress on the worldly, rather than the sacral, dimensions of religious life. This, we suggest, says more about the Cartesian sensibilities of our critics than those of the subjects on whom we focus, for most of whom the spiritual and the pragmatic domains of life are not as nicely segregated. At the same time, we have also shown, in some ethno-historical detail, how categories such as 'religion' and 'belief' emerged as distinct constructs, themselves a consequence of the dialectics of the colonial encounter and part of a larger semantic field that included dualisms distinguishing 'African' from 'European' ways, 'tradition' from 'modernity' (Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff 1991: 218ff.). But southern African devotional practices have never been wholly contained within these categories, being embedded in a diverse, labile field of thought and action. Neither has our intention ever been to present a reified analysis of 'religion as a cultural system' (Geertz 1973) *sans* social and material grounding or distinct from larger historical processes.

Yet there are still those who persist in reducing our dialectical analyses to more simplistic, unidirectional arguments. Joel Robbins (2007), for example, accuses us—bafflingly, in light of

the seven hundred or so pages of *Of Revelation and Revolution*—of asserting ‘cultural continuity’ over ‘change’ (terms that we deliberately deconstruct) in our historical anthropology of the colonial mission (see the more nuanced reading of this same project by Masquelier in this section of the volume). And there is Ruth Marshall (2009), who takes us to task, despite all the evidence to the contrary, for failing to acknowledge the profoundly transformative effects of the colonial moment. The fact that others have charged us with doing precisely the opposite—of being all too ready to identify the presence of large-scale processes on local African landscapes (among them, the rationalizing effects of missionization, colonial law, and literacy, or of proletarianization and the growth of commodity markets)—should give them, Robbins and Marshall, that is, pause. So, of course, should a close reading of the texts. There certainly *are* contemporary anthropologists strongly invested, as an article of professional faith, in the longevity of local systems of knowledge ‘in their own terms’, those who are eager to defend the resilience of these systems in the face of global forces besetting the “little guys” (Graeber 2002: 1223) all over the map. As Geschiere notes in his perspicacious commentary in this section, those approaches are more plausible objects of the charge of ignoring the transformative effects of colonialism, Christian or otherwise. Both those who accuse us of peddling cultural ‘continuity’ or ‘domestication’ and those who argue the obverse fail to appreciate that arguments couched in terms of dialectical histories presume a more carefully specified, reciprocal play of cultural and material forces, a more subtle co-existence of processes of transformation and reproduction, a careful distinction between the form and the content of those processes. Assigning the proportions of ‘change’ and ‘continuity’ in any given situation—if, indeed, these impoverished analytic terms retain any theoretical utility whatever in their own right, which we doubt—is a matter of historically situated analytical judgment. Does the act of conversion imply a radical break, an all-or-none substitution of new ‘models of time and belief’? Or does it involve a more subtle, more complex accommodation of old and new? And why would one reduce that complexity to sweeping, simplistic adjectives of limited heuristic utility? To be sure, the dialectics of the colonial encounter—those involving temporality and belief, religion and conversion—have themselves shifted over the long history of African modernity. The early colonial moments that gave rise to unambiguous efforts to domesticate Christianity, in the southern African contexts that we describe, are hardly the same as the late-twentieth-century post-colonial conditions that have seen the rise of zombies or the efflorescence of ‘born-again’ faiths. The latter call for a different appraisal of the interplay of constituent elements and precipitating forces, none of them reducible to the simplifications embodied in terms like ‘continuity’ or ‘change’. An informed historical anthropology of colonialism—indeed, an informed historical anthropology of anything—deserves better theory work than some of our critics have proffered in preference to our own.

Zombies and the Violence of Abstraction

I myself have never been unduly concerned that the anthropological craft was under threat or that the world to which it bore witness was tragically on the wane. ‘Primitive’ societies, as we all now know, were never the independent isolates that they were made to be in much classic ethnography. What is more, the discipline has always drawn on theory from the broader human sciences (from biology to political philosophy, psychoanalysis to linguistics) to universalize and to ‘scale up’, that is, to situate its ethnographic cameos within wider fields of social, political, and economic relations and forces. What remains distinctive about anthropology is its commitment to the role of local meaning and modes of practice in shaping human activity and its preoccupation with the interplay of subjective value and objective conditions—however complex,

labyrinthian, or dauntingly 'global' these might be. We respect the fact that our subjects, like we ourselves, seek ways of interpreting the world, ways of engaging the conditions of their being. And, as theorists as varied as Émile Durkheim ([1912] 1976: 277) and Walter Benjamin (1968: 253ff.) would have predicted, in the face of 'fragmentary realities', the quest for meaningful practice readily finds a mystical, even a messianic, 'impetus to action'.

The ethnographer's 'ear to the ground' makes her sensitive to these shifts in hermeneutic register—not least, in registers of religious imagination and their intimate entanglement with the challenge of ordinary life. Take the matter of zombies. When John Comaroff and I returned to South Africa after the end of apartheid, we had the promise of new-found freedoms on our minds. The last thing we expected to encounter in the rural communities we knew best was an epidemic anxiety about the living dead. Yet there could be no denying this preoccupation, not only in Tswana communities, but elsewhere in South Africa as well. Far from exotic tales from the backwoods, the presence of zombies was widely discussed in popular culture. Respectable local newspapers carried banner headlines proclaiming "'Zombie' Back from the Dead";⁴ defense lawyers in provincial courts argued that their clients had been driven to murder by the zombification of their kin;⁵ and illicit zombie workers were named in formal labor disputes.⁶ In 1995, the Commission of Inquiry into Witchcraft Violence and Ritual Murders, appointed by the Northern Province administration to investigate an 'epidemic' of occult violence, reported widespread fear of the figure of the zombie—"a person who is believed to have died, but because of the power of a witch ... is resurrected ... [and] works for [him/her]" (Ralushai et al. 1996: 5).

While witchcraft has long been integral to Tswana thought, zombies have not. I was struck by the particular features attributed to these specters in vernacular parlance: zombies (the common term here is *diphoko*, from the Afrikaans *spook*, or ghost) were spoken about on the street, in private backyards, and in churches. But their mention was almost invariably related to another prevalent concern—the disappearance of work, this amid radical shifts in the post-apartheid economy under the impact of policies of liberalization. In optimistic policy-speak, the situation was termed 'jobless growth'. We found the discursive splicing here suggestive: long-standing conceptions of witchcraft, or *boloi*, had come to embrace zombie making, the brutal reduction of others to instruments of production, to insensate beings stored, it was said, "like tools" in sheds, cupboards, or oil drums of their creators—the latter usually, if not inevitably, people of conspicuous new wealth whose source was not readily explicable (cf. Ralushai et al. 1996: 50). In a world of flexitime employment, it was even said that some workers were made into "part-time zombies" (ibid.: 224–225), whose exhaustion in the morning spoke of involuntary toil on the night shift.

How to make sense of the poetics of this local nightmare, one that seemed to be haunting widening sectors of the national population? If ever there was a figure that typified the sudden rise of joblessness, the mysterious production of wealth without work, and the apparently occult grounding of neo-liberal capitalism in local experience, it was the zombie. A creature of "estranged recognition" (Clery 1995: 114) in perplexing times, s/he was all surplus value, not costly human needs. This kaleidoscopic figure, the ultimate embodiment of flexible, 'non-standard', asocial labor, was not unprecedented, of course: it has come to us in a range of ethnographic, historical, and literary accounts from Africa and the New World that point both to subtle differences and to non-coincidental similarities. Zombies appear simultaneously translocal and local, simultaneously planetary and (refracted through the shards of vernacular cultural practices) profoundly parochial, just as they appeared, long ago, on the plantations and in the mines of far-flung colonies.

As has been noted before, our concerns here were not, in the first instance, theoretical or conceptual.⁷ We came across the zombie through an empirical conjuncture: it was the force of

historical fact, rather than abstract analytical interest, that compelled us to make sense of it *in situ*. But by what ethnographic means does one comprehend human musings on the visceral experience of personal devaluation, both as moral being and as labor power? How to capture a world in which jobless growth appears as the mystical capacity of some to thrive on the lifeblood of others? How does one make sense, in other words, of new religious and social movements that accompany radical change in conditions under which people must produce and reproduce their lives and their self-worth? These are not matters that can simply be proven by empirical means, although attention to the texture of local discourse certainly takes one some of the way (cf. Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff 1999b). Zombies bespeak intimate community frictions. But they also register the impact on these local worlds of larger forces at once palpable yet opaque, of the violent abstraction that has withdrawn capital—lifeblood—from what once were viable modes of production to invest it elsewhere, away from workers with contracts to cheaper, casualized labor, to machines, to offshore production, to finance markets that promise the capitalist dream of producing wealth without workers. When we first lived in the rural, Tswana-speaking northwest, upward of 80 percent of all men spent a sizable proportion of their lives in the migrant economy. By the mid-1990s, that figure had dropped to below 15 percent. Grasping the impetus behind such radical transformation requires an act of “inspired guesswork” (Leach 1961: 5), both by the organic thinkers who live the effects and by those seeking to understand their situation. What is required is the courage—the foolhardiness, some would say—to move between the concrete and the concept, poetics and political economy, to hypothesize about the workings of large-scale abstractions so as to posit their relationship to the grounded realities that meet our gaze.

One must be prepared to bear the risks of the ‘sociological imagination’ (Mills 1959). As with some of my earlier work, the accounts of these transformations—of the culture of neo-liberalism and of what John Comaroff and I have termed ‘occult economies’ (Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff 1999a) and ‘millennial capitalism’ (Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff 2000)—have drawn both rich engagement and robust critique. Much of the latter was concerned, once again, with our readiness to link religion to political economy, local life to large-scale forces (Moore 1999), ethnographic methods to what one pair of critics termed the ‘meta-narrative of modernity’ (England and Leach 2000)—phrased by them in such a way as to sound suspiciously like a synonym for ‘Theory’ in the upper case. Such an association, they claim, “undermines what is unique in the ethnographic method—its reflexivity, which gives subjects authority in determining the context of their beliefs and practices” (ibid.: 225). This objection is at once myopic and irresponsible (Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff 2003); it both overvalues the role of academic analysis and underrates the impact of structural forces on ‘local worlds’. Local beliefs and practices do not exist in zero-sum relation with macro-forces of modernity. As we, and others, have shown repeatedly, they exist in complex dialectic, a shifting interplay, which itself determines the nature of what is taken to be ‘local’ and/or translocal in the first place. To be sure, determining how and what is local, and how and in what proportion it is situated in worlds beyond itself, is a constant challenge to anthropology. After all, it is global historical processes, such as the marginalization of communities described above, that threaten the authority of local subjects to determine the context of their beliefs and practices—not the proclivities or activities of social theorists. Certainly, those impacted by the kinds of job loss we witnessed in South Africa made their own narrative accounts of this epidemic fully audible and in an idiom very much their own. In an effort to understand their situation, and that of many other structurally equivalent peoples in an ever-more-interdependent universe, why would one *not* draw on the Theory—the ‘meta-narratives of modernity’, if you will—provided by foundational thinkers concerned with the long history of global interdependence, that is, on the likes of Durkheim, Marx, and Weber?

The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Late Capitalism

In fact, in order to understand the late modern world, including changes within it concerning the meaning and status of 'religion,' my most recent work has returned to precisely the kinds of questions that animated these founding social thinkers. Weber might have been right about many things in this respect, but he could not have been more wrong in his conviction that, as capitalism matured, the Protestant ethic would cease to be necessary as its ideological impetus and that enchantment would wither away. Notwithstanding the universal impact of rationalization, the line between sacred and secular was never thoroughgoing, save perhaps at the level of ideology, either within European polities or beyond them. In late modern times, that line has become ever more overtly contested, ever more challenged by social and religious movements—Christian, Muslim, Jewish, and Hindu alike—that often look less like modern voluntary associations and more like would-be theocracies: communities at once religious, commercial, and political, governed by divine inspiration and reformist zeal. Why should this be?

Elsewhere, John Comaroff and I have argued that the late twentieth century underwent a radical social, economic, and territorial reorganization—akin to that of the Age of Revolution of 1789–1848—which ushered in the social and political architecture of the modern world and erected the conceptual scaffolding of modern social science (Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff 2000). This second age of revolution, we suggested, is witnessing another epochal shift in relations among capital, labor, and geopolitical organization. The sources of this transformation are complex, of course, linked to the ever more integrated nature of global capital, especially, finance capital; to the salience of ever more abstract, electronically mediated means of production; to the increasing commodification of culture, services, and affect; and to the rise of new kinds of accumulation vested in knowledge, franchises, brands, intellectual property, and so on. These non-proletarian modes of production have dramatically eclipsed the ideological role of labor—in its modern, industrial form—as the recognized basis of generating value, both abstract and embodied (a fact made poignantly manifest by the figure of the zombie). In addition, the sociology of primary production, reorganized as the quest for cheap, tractable labor, has eroded existing bases of industrial manufacture and globalized the division of labor, a process that has been abetted by the growing liberation of corporate enterprise from state regulation. As sites of manufacture and consumption have been dispersed across the earth—America's working class is ever more to be found in Asia or Eastern Europe, for example—connections among these sites and populations have become fragmented and opaque, undermining the very idea of a national economy in which local interest groups recognize each other as interdependent components of a commonweal (*ibid.*).

As an upshot, the spatial articulation of politics and economy has been fundamentally disrupted, and footloose capital has renegotiated the terms of its relation to the nation-state, itself ever more corporate. Governments have had to make new kinds of accommodation with business and with translocal market forces, striking novel power-sharing partnerships with private enterprise, both local and foreign. Ruling regimes have tended to outsource key state functions, from customs and excise to prisons and warfare, rendering borders ambiguously both open (to trade, investment, and favored populations) and closed (to immigrants of less desirable quality). Under these conditions, sovereignty is often blurred or overlapping. And ever more intense, disarticulated flows of bodies, goods, and fiscal media link local units in convoluted circuits of exchange that governments are unwilling or unable to regulate. This, in turn, undermines the experience of a cohesive political or moral community, contained by the common space-time of the nation.⁸ The growth of these transnational circuits also disrupts the modern idea of 'society,' which has presumed the same national-territorial architecture, the same integrity of organization. The disparate horizons mapped by the rapid expansion of deregulated exchange multiply

the bases of popular belonging, calling upon people to reconsider the once axiomatic attachments to nation and community. Representation, at once semiotic and socio-political, is destabilized by these shifts. People lose trust, not merely in those who represent their interests, but also in the coinage of public communication itself—and in the face value of signs. This distrust is heightened, in many places, by the sudden, radical devaluation of key media of exchange, such as national currencies. There is a widespread perception, post-Bretton Woods, that the real worth of money is inconstant as never before, that the relation between signs and meanings is ever more slippery. The fact that the exchange rates set up by Bretton Woods were based on common consensus, rather than some absolute scale of monetary value, seems to have been beside the point. Note, in this regard, that the Tea Party movement in the US has expressed the desire to return to the gold standard, as if this might stabilize national tender and value *tout court*.⁹

Revitalized religious movements seem especially capable of finding a foothold on such unsettled terrain (Jean Comaroff 2008, 2009). This raises a key theoretical question for contemporary social analysis: Why do faith-based organizations thrive in many contexts where the architecture of modern social institutions, institutions à la Durkheim and Weber, seems to be eroding? Why are these movements so vibrant when prior forms of organization, like labor unions or more orthodox religious denominations, have weakened? Why are the solid lines between the sacred and profane, the private and public—lines that seem synonymous with liberal modernity—under attack in many places? I think here of the worldwide evidence of the rapid growth of charismatic and related ‘renewalist’ or ‘spirit-filled’ faiths, above all in the global South, where these movements are “reshaping the social, political and economic landscape”¹⁰ by engaging in mainstream politics, business, and civic life with the express aim of putting “God-in-everything,” so “anything-can-be-holy.”¹¹ At issue here, too, is a reanimated role for affect in public expressions of religious fervor, as Kamari Clarke rightly suggests in this section (see Jean Comaroff 2011, 2012). Born-again belief, I stress, is not an autonomic response to neo-liberal transformation. Revitalized teaching has often ‘run ahead’ of neo-liberalism, bearing the aspirations, the visions of a this-worldly millennium that prepare the ground for radical, market-oriented reform. This raises a historical Weberian question about the relationship between the ‘neo-Protestant ethic’—often linked to a ‘prosperity gospel’, with faith in ‘Jesus and the market’ (Kintz 1997)—and a millennial spirit of capital in our own age.

What this suggests, once again, is that we inhabit a moment that raises, if in new guise, many of the founding questions of the social sciences, questions first posed by the advent of modern society within the framework of liberal democracy, industrial capitalism, and the nation-state. Now, as older maps of socio-political space are overwritten by a global division of labor, a planetary economy, and a virtual electronic commons, how do social groups organize themselves and their processes of social and moral reproduction? What undergirds authority now that sovereign forces are blurred, undermined, displaced? What defines human worth as shifts in the nature of work and in the production of value suddenly render large sectors of the population irrelevant, incapable of self-sustenance, disposable—as they did during the rise of the modern industrial world, which bred its own army of predatory specters (Thomas 1971)? Are radically different forms of mutuality, of emancipatory politics, made possible by new communicative media? Or are the latter merely novel vehicles for long-standing social and moral processes? Are new kinds of effervescence evoked by televangelicals and cyber-congregations when messages can be e-mailed to the Wailing Wall, care of Email-God.org? Or does mystery get lost in the wiring, the graft, the infinite loops of the virtual social network?

Certainly, ours is not the spiritless age that rationalist theorists of modernization predicted. Faith, whatever we make of it, is born-again in late modern times. For Adorno (1981: 95), “phantasmagoria comes into being when, under the constraints of its own limitations, modernity’s latest

products come close to the archaic.” In one guise or another, religion remains, remaking itself as the domain in which temporal sovereignty gives way, inevitably, to an authority of a radically different kind. Destined ever to run ahead of human reason, faith exists in mutually constitutive relation with society. It is its necessary other, as it were, whether to authorize established arrangements or to wield its revelatory force, its otherworldly legitimacy, to ‘speak truth to power.’ For social scientists at least, our concern must lie precisely *in* this dialectical relationship—in the endless, reciprocal interplay of religion and society, the occult and rational utility, in the long, unfolding history of the modern world.

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■ NOTES

1. See “God Was on Everybody’s Side: An Interview with Jean Comaroff,” inaugural interview on The Immanent Frame blog of the Social Science Research Council, 25 January 2010, <http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/2010/01/25/god-was-on-everybodys-side>.
2. Ritual is itself a construct with a particular genealogy, a significant aspect of which (see, e.g., Turner 1967: 19) overlaps with that of religion in Western thought. The term has been the object of a long, unresolved debate in the social and behavioral sciences. Bloch’s reliance on its cognitive qualities as a distinct mode of communication would not satisfy those who dispute whether ritual can be adequately distinguished as a type of human interaction either within or across different cultural universes. There is also argument as to whether ritual pertains only to stylized ‘symbolic’ or ‘indexical’ communication, or would better be defined as the “communicative aspect” (Leach 1964: xiv) of all human behavior. In the latter case, the category is little different from communicative action in general.
3. I choose not to use the category of ‘Abrahamic religions’ (Asad 1993; Bloch 2008) in my work. This is not merely because the category is vastly overgeneralized or because it implies certain unwarranted commonalities among Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, while failing to capture significant differences. It is also confusing in the African context because its chief discriminating feature—monotheism—was often a feature, if in distinct local idiom, of indigenous cosmologies.
4. Sonnyboy Mokgadi and Moopelwa Letanke, “‘Zombie’ Back from the Dead,” *Mail* (Mafikeng), 11 June 1993, 1, 7. See also Sonnyboy Mokgadi and Moopelwa Letanke, “Zombie Missing,” *Mail* (Mafikeng), 17 December 1993, 1, 4; Joe Davidson, “Apartheid Is Over, but Other Old Evils Haunt South Africa: Witch-Burning Is on the Rise as Superstitious Villagers Sweep House of Spirits,” *Wall Street Journal*, 20 June 1994, A1, A10. Mokgadi, co-author of the first two stories and many others on the topic, was killed some two years later in mysterious circumstances involving a ‘township fight’. Rumors soon spread that his violent death was due to his investigation of zombies.
5. See, for example, “Petrol Murder Denial,” *Mail* (Mafikeng), 2 June 1995, 2; Nat Molomo, “Bizarre Zombie Claim in Court,” *Mail* (Mafikeng), 31 March 1995, 2.
6. In 1995, for example, striking workers on an Eastern Transvaal coffee plantation demanded the dismissal of three supervisors who were accused of killing employees to gain control of their jobs—even worse, of keeping zombies for their private enrichment. See “Spirits Strike at Labour Relations,” *Mail & Guardian*, 27 January 1995, <http://mg.co.za/article/1995-01-27-spirits-strike-at-labour-relations>.
7. Cf. Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff (2003). The theoretical and conceptual issues raised by the figure of the zombie and by occult economies are addressed in a series of interrelated essays (see, e.g., Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff 1999a, 1999c, 2000).

8. In South Africa, as I write, the minister of arts and culture is hosting a Social Cohesion Summit, attended by political and civil society leaders from across the nation. The summit is intended to address the urgent challenges standing in the way of building a sense of common nationhood. See "President Zuma to Open Social Cohesion Summit," *SABC News*, 4 July 2012, <http://www.sabc.co.za/news/a/049b4a004bd940a09509f7dcfc8ee867/President-Zuma-to-open-Social-Cohesion-Summit-20120407> (accessed 10 July 2012).
9. Alex Heigl, "Tea Party Is Actually Pushing to Make Gold the Only Legal Currency," 3 June 2011, *Nerve*, <http://www.nerve.com/news/politics/tea-party-pushing-for-a-return-to-the-gold-standard> (accessed 10 July 2012).
10. "Pentecostal Resource Page," *Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life*, 5 October 2006, <http://www.pewforum.org/Christian/Evangelical-Protestant-Churches/Pentecostal-Resource-Page.aspx> (accessed 11 July 2012).
11. Greg Newton, "Free-Market Christianity?" *Travelers: Theological Conversation for the Journey* blog, <http://travelersjournal.blogspot.com/2006/03/free-market-christianity.html> (accessed 5 May 2008).

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Religion's 'Others'

Jean Comaroff on Religion and Society

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To start with an apologetic note, it is quite a step for me to write something for a journal on religion (even if it is on religion and society). The very first lines of Jean Comaroff's vivid piece made me realize that there is a common trait to where we come from, but that our reactions have been very different. For the Netherlands as well, it is difficult to maintain that the separation of the sacred from the secular was its founding principle as a modern state. On the contrary, the two have never been clearly separated. I remember quite vividly that in the 1950s most Protestant pastors and all Catholic bishops did everything to stop their flocks from voting for the socialist party (even then a very moderately socialist one). When more and more Christians nonetheless did so, people spoke of a *doorbraak* or 'breakthrough' (conveying the image of a dyke breaking for the Dutch); this announced the gradual collapse of the pillarized organization of society. I was raised in the Protestant pillar and therefore studied at a Protestant university. Until the 1980s, candidates for a professorship had the choice either to subscribe to the university's principles (teaching and research on the basis of the Bible) or to declare themselves 'not to be against' these principles. Of course, this procedure worked like a trap, since the best person on the latter list had to be a much better candidate to have a chance of being appointed over the top person on the subscribers' list. All this made me decide never to work or write on religion. I was further fortified in this decision when, on switching from history to anthropology, I discovered that religion seemed to be *the* theme in Dutch anthropology. At the time, this was seen as a somewhat uncomfortable sign of being backward. Yet now this seems to put at least some Dutch work in an avant-garde position (see, e.g., Meyer 1999, 2009; Moors 1995; van der Veer 1994).

All this is to explain why my contribution to this debate will hardly dwell on religion (as I warned the editors). I accepted the invitation to participate since I owe so much to Jean and John Comaroff's inspiration for my own work. But this debt concerns rather what Jean—in her ironic comment on the unproductive debate about "what can, or cannot, claim to be 'religion'"—qualifies as religion's others: superstition, magic, satanic rites. What gave me a boost was especially the open and imaginative way in which the Comaroffs related—and continue to relate—these apparently retrograde (or in any case peculiar) phenomena to broader developments. As Jean summarizes this broader view in her piece: "This approach implies a vision of grounded theory in which lived practice—including self-conscious theory making itself—is always seen to exist in a dynamic relation with immediate context and with larger-scale processes of transformation."

For me, this dynamic approach—sometimes inspiring vertiginous visionary excursions, but always referring to concrete experience—was most effective in returning respectability to a topic like witchcraft. When reading the Comaroffs' (1993: xxv) introduction to their collection *Modernity and Its Malcontents*, I remember my surprise at how witchcraft emerged quite

abruptly as a key topic for further studies. At the time, I was wrestling with a book on witchcraft and politics¹ and feeling uneasy about it, as it was quite clear that this topic was not politically correct. After giving presentations, I was often reproached that speaking about witchcraft was primitivizing Africa, putting it back into the nineteenth century.² Yet I found it difficult to give up on the topic. In the field I had been struck by the dynamics of these representations and the ease with which they were grafted upon new kinds of technology and enrichment, taking on completely new forms that people saw as particularly powerful. The then still current tendency to qualify these notions as ‘traditional’ was strikingly inadequate to deal with all this ferment. The Comaroffs’ introduction suddenly made my fascination with the topic go beyond cultivating an interest in an archaic, quaint singularity. On the contrary, it turned out to be crucial for understanding people’s positioning of themselves in the modern world.

The success of the Comaroffs’ 1993 book and the approach it inspired may be well-known. Witchcraft had been for some time a topic that anthropologists tended to dodge. Thus, when in the 1980s my Cameroonian colleague Cyprian Fisiy and I looked for inspiration on how to analyze the role of these conceptions in new forms of politics or entrepreneurship, we could hardly refer to any anthropological study. But after 1993 witchcraft became the new craze in anthropological studies, especially for Africa. Indeed, in the subsequent two decades there appeared so much on the dynamics of these conceptions and practices in new contexts that it is hardly surprising that a reaction followed.

In the rest of this short text I want to address these recent criticisms of what some people dub ‘the new paradigm of witchcraft and modernity’. I think this offers a good starting point for addressing more generally the possibilities and issues raised by the Comaroffs’ vision of how anthropological topics, such as religion, should be studied in a dynamic relation with larger-scale processes of transformation. What interests me especially is to oppose this approach to the current revival in our discipline of the notion of ontology—in itself a notion with great potential, but in the hands of anthropologists always in danger of being used for evoking a culturalist vision of radical cultural contrasts. Such a version of the notion, emphasizing cultural contrasts as given, seems to fit the world order particularly badly in the present, so deeply marked as it is by hybridization and creative efforts for mixing. Exploring the differences from the Comaroffs’ visionary approach can all the better bring out the value of the latter.

The Rapid Rise and Fall of a Supposed Paradigm: Witchcraft and Modernity

As far as I know, the first to use the expression ‘a paradigm of witchcraft and modernity’ was Blair Rutherford (1999). As has now become habitual, he used the notion of paradigm to highlight certain shortcomings of the studies on this topic. For him, these were a tendency to neglect the anthropologist’s own role in ‘the politics of witchcraft’ and, more importantly, a functionalist tenor. Anthropologists working within this paradigm might criticize the classic studies for trying to understand witchcraft in its function of restoring the social order, but in Rutherford’s view the new levy of witchcraft studies has been equally functionalist in trying to reduce witchcraft to modernity. More recently, it has become almost commonplace for authors to begin by establishing their distance from this supposed paradigm—the Comaroffs serving as the first target and my book *The Modernity of Witchcraft* as a secondary one—before the author steers his or her own course. A very outspoken critic is Koen Stroeken (2010) in his study of the ‘magic of witchcraft’ among the Sukuma (Tanzania). For him, the paradigm attempts to understand the resilience of witchcraft in African settings only as an effect of modern inequalities and uncertainties, thus completely neglecting the long history of the notions involved. In their

introduction to a special issue of *Cahiers d'Études africaines*, titled *Territoires sorciers*, Christine Henry and Emmanuelle Kadya Tall (2008) are even more dismissive. According to them, these studies brought only a facile reduction of "le phénomène sorcier ... comme preuve et épreuve de la modernité [as proof and ordeal of modernity]" (ibid.: 16–17; my translation).³

Of course, one should never object to serving as a punching bag for subsequent authors if this helps academic debate to progress. This is the purpose that the ever more popular notion of paradigm now mainly seems to serve. However, I am not sure that in this case this notion is very helpful. Of course, none of the authors who are supposed to have launched this paradigm would ever claim that witchcraft in present-day African contexts would be only about modernity. All of them are conscious of—and often also worried by—the diffuse and very inclusive tenor that this concept is acquiring in everyday talk, making it indeed an all-pervasive presence.⁴ Nor would these authors ever claim that the recent dynamics of these notions are to be understood without taking into account their long and variable histories. Even if these dynamics make people evoke planes, magical airstrips, and notions of debt that easily intertwine with capitalist logics, it is clear that these haunting images have their own history that has acquired special aspects for each regional context. Conversely, it is, of course, impossible to reduce people's experiences of modern changes to just witchcraft (see Geschiere, forthcoming).⁵ Many more narratives are around, in present-day Africa as well. What these studies have in common is an interest in the ease with which people refer to witchcraft discourse when trying to make sense of modern changes.⁶ Certainly, in the 1990s it was important to highlight the impossibility of sticking to an image of witchcraft as a traditional relict that would disappear with modern changes. As noted, the dynamics of witchcraft ideas and the ease with which new technology and ideas were becoming central in people's discourse on witchcraft made the 'modernity of witchcraft' an urgent issue. But is this enough to speak of a paradigm?

The danger is, of course, that this paradigm notion is used to shut down discussion of ideas and freeze insights that were presented as very open ones. For me, it is surprising how easily this can apparently happen with the Comaroffs' notions of 'occult economies' and 'millennial capitalism' (see Jean's present text). For an Africanist, there may be attractive aspects to the idea that millennial capitalism does not bring increasing transparency but is instead everywhere accompanied by occult economies that further cloud its workings. This can at least serve to show that Africa, with all the excitement about hidden conspiracies of witches, is not that exceptional. Yet it is a riddle to me how anyone can deduce from this that the term refers to an "occulte universel et toujours violent [a universal occult that is always violent]" (Henry and Tall 2008: 15; my translation). The relevant texts by the Comaroffs (1999, 2000) refer to a wide range of examples that highlight precisely the different forms such occult economies can take in different contexts and in relation to different histories. What we clearly need are open terms that can do justice to the uncertainties of the late modern world on which Jean focuses toward the end of her text. It is debatable whether it is then useful to try to close notions by making them part of a supposedly rigid paradigm. For me, the interest of a notion such as occult economies is that it clearly refers not only to the present-day context of a highly adventurous and unstable capitalism, but also to hybrid constructs of highly different elements (and with highly different histories) with which people try to deal with these uncertainties.⁷ Of course, there is always a danger of mechanistic explanations (especially when critics work with simplified summaries of complex texts). This is why Jean's emphasis on 'lived practice', as the anchor not only of ethnography but also of theory, remains so important.

To return to witchcraft and modernity (although the same applies when analyzing religious dynamics), the starting point should always be people's own reflections. In the regions where I did fieldwork, the link with modernity is there, even in glaring forms. My Cameroonian friends

constantly complain that *la modernité* only seems to reinforce witchcraft. Why does it not disappear, they ask, as in Europe? It might be important to emphasize that this is not an academic quibble but rather a strong preoccupation in the study of societies—part of an everyday struggle with new possibilities that remain highly elusive and suggest all the more upsetting inequalities.⁸ Returning to lived practice is a guarantee that our efforts to relate to wider contexts will not lead to mechanistic explanations.

Anthropology, Continuity, and the Return of Ontology

It is striking that the Comaroffs' work—notably Jean's on religion—has also been criticized from an opposite angle as an example of a typically anthropological inclination to fall back on continuity. Joel Robbins's (2007) attack on anthropology is well-known. Starting with Melanesian examples, he denounces a current tendency among anthropologists to take the continuity of local elements as a premise and to focus on the 'domestication' of outside interventions rather than on the novelty of emerging arrangements.⁹ In her recent book on the Pentecostal 'revolution' in Nigeria, Ruth Marshall (2009: 5) similarly denounces a "paradigm of the 'domestication of modernity'" in the work of the Comaroffs and their students, who would start from "a supposedly local repertoire" that would work to "demystify modernity" (ibid.: 24–25). Marshall attacks the work of Birgit Meyer (1998, 1999) on the same grounds. Yet one can wonder who is localizing what?¹⁰ If we stick, for instance, to the zombies referred to in Jean's article in this section (they appear constantly in the Comaroffs' work since the 1990s), it is quite clear that their emergence was a new phenomenon in South Africa. In the part of East Cameroon where I did my main fieldwork, people explicitly linked the emergence of similar zombies to the development of cocoa cultivation in the central areas of the country, which attracted many laborers, some of whom chose not to return. But people saw this most explicitly as a new relation.

Marshall's plea for a strictly historical approach—in which every relation is seen as newly emergent from a specific historical situation and not as an outcome of a continuity, taken by the researcher as self-evident—is highly inspiring.¹¹ She insists that the idea of religion as a separate domain was shaped by the colonial encounter and that this applied equally to witchcraft, as religion's 'other'. This is of course not a new insight. Marshall clearly takes her inspiration here from John Peel (1968) and also from Joseph Tonda (2005). But, like Tonda, she succeeds in conveying most vividly the urgency of this conceptual shift away from any idea of a continuous African tradition by the powerful ways in which both she and Tonda relate this to the present-day realities in the parts of Africa that they study. Taking as her starting point Foucault's idea of the event as a *rapport de forces* that can always be turned around, Marshall (2009: 26) warns: "Witchcraft and Christianity are not eternal objects, but historical, rare ... there are no lines of cultural continuity in an objective or material sense; such lines are only analytical abstractions or forms of representation objectified through practices, whether practices of ethnographic inscription or real political struggles" (see also ibid.: 35). One of the admirable features of Marshall's book is that even her more abstract and theoretical passages remain so deeply grounded in her experience of the everyday life of Pentecostals in Lagos. This gives her general explorations all the more power and impact. And, indeed, Marshall's interpretation of the Foucauldian notion of event comes remarkably close to the Pentecostals' view of conversion as a crucial moment that effects a 'complete break with the past'¹²—of which Paul's dramatic experience on his way to Damascus is, of course, the archetype. For Marshall: "The [colonial] encounter was, in every sense, a situation of beginnings" (ibid.: 63).

Tonda, the Congolese sociologist already mentioned, is even more outspoken about the novelty of *la sorcellerie* in (post-)colonial contexts and is equally critical of at least some anthropologists. Tonda's (2005) *Le souverain moderne* is one of the most original and powerful books from Africa of the last few years. From it, the figure of the 'modern sovereign'—*le corps du pouvoir* (the body of power) in Congo and Gabon—emerges with haunting force. Tonda describes this somber figure as "the power that, since the colonial encounter, rules, from inside, the African masses, both the subjects and the mighty" (ibid.: book cover text; my translation, here and elsewhere). Crucial for him is that this particular *dispositif* of power does not emerge from the opposition between, on the one hand, mission, market, and state and, on the other, local ideas of occult forms of power (*l'esprit sorcellaire*). On the contrary, the modern sovereign is created by the magma-like fusion of all of this. Tonda's main target includes scholars, notably anthropologists, and others who believe in 'the Great Divide'—that is, 'African culture' as some sort of antipode to external influences like development, liberal reform, and especially *le travail de Dieu* (the missionary impact).

Tonda sees it as a complete fallacy to blame the continuing crisis in Africa on a tenacious traditional African culture—a 'pagan spirit' obsessed with witchcraft. On the contrary, for him 'the workers of God,' the politicians, the businessmen, and the consumers with their greed for Western products, are as deeply implicated, since it is precisely from the amalgam of all these elements that the fetishization of power and consumption—the very hallmark of the modern sovereign—was born (see Tonda 2002: 39, 180; 2005: 182). Only by recognizing the deep imbrications of witchcraft, missionary impact, state performance, and new forms of entrepreneurship and consumerism can we finally get rid of the tenacious opposition of tradition and modernity.

As with Marshall, the colonial encounter for Tonda (2005: 258) is an incisive occurrence that has to be taken as the starting point for understanding new beginnings. It brought a *déparentélisation* (dissolving of kinship) of society by creating *des lieux non-lignagers*—places outside the logic of the lineage (think of the missionary posts, the administrative centers, the trading posts)—where a completely different logic 'of the camp' emerged (ibid.: 11, 77, 121). The consequence is not a disappearance of witchcraft but, on the contrary, the rapid expansion of completely novel forms of *sorcellerie*, now also 'de-parentalized'—that is, no longer linked to the lineage but tuned to wider horizons of global circuits (ibid.: 77, 213; see also Tonda 2002: 27). As Tonda (2005: 258) puts it: "Indeed, the colonial moment frees the constitutive imaginary of witchcraft ideology, since this moment undermines the ideological configuration of the lineage ... The work of the imagination that is set loose by this moment is the same that continues in our time in ever more intensified forms under the impact of globalization."¹³

Marshall and Tonda certainly show how much any idea of 'African culture' hinges upon unwarranted assumptions of continuity. Moreover, it is quite clear how incisive the colonial encounter has been in delimitating religion as a separate field and hence also in objectifying witchcraft as some sort of counter-domain.¹⁴ Yet it might also be important to point out that the colonial encounter has a history of its own: it has lasted far too long to be seen as a more or less abrupt 'moment' in time. I would rather see it—and maybe also the emergence of Tonda's modern sovereign—as a long-term 'articulation' in which different elements are combined in highly precarious and accidental ways.¹⁵ One might wonder whether Marshall's notion of event, in the traces of Foucault, is not too abrupt—maybe due to the influence of her Pentecostals and their obsession with abrupt conversion. Tonda and Marshall rightly warn against any tendency to look for an essence of witchcraft—or of religion—as some sort of given of human nature, which, since times immemorial, reproduces itself in different forms yet still remains the same unto itself. Yet seeing it as just a product of the colonial moment—however innovative that moment may have been—seems to turn history into some sort of roller coaster. Construing continuity is

not only a preoccupation of (some) anthropologists; it is often also very important to the people involved, both the dominant and the dominated.

For me, the main question is whether Marshall (and also Tonda) are not putting their criticisms in front of the wrong door—all the more so since there is a return to continuity thinking in some corners of anthropology that makes their critiques increasingly important. Over the last few years I have been working on a forthcoming book titled *Witchcraft, Intimacy, and Trust: Africa in Comparison*, trying to put African obsessions with new forms of witchcraft into a comparative perspective. Reading on various regions, I was struck by the return of notions of ontology in different corners of anthropology. A good example is Andrew Lattas's (2010) vivid study of the current outpouring of so-called cargo cults in Melanesian contexts. These cults are centered on millenarian dreams of untold riches that are confiscated by the whites but will ultimately become available for the Melanesians. Precisely because of the vividness with which Lattas highlights the fascinating dynamics of these cults and the sometimes fantastic hybridizations of local and foreign elements in their imaginary, it came to me as a surprise that he analyzes them in terms of a "cultural ontology" (ibid.: 49).

Clearly, I should not have been surprised since apparently ontology is becoming a new buzzword in the discipline and beyond. This is most promising, if the inspiration comes from innovative and challenging versions of this notion as in the works of Deleuze and Latour, who both emphasize ontology as multiple and contingent. However, as previously stated, many anthropologists still seem to be plagued by a persistent tendency to use the concept in a closed sense for evoking supposedly radical contrasts—'ontological differences'—between cultures or regions. Such culturalist tendencies are, for instance, very present in the challenging and highly sophisticated reflections of Brazilian anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro. Strongly influenced by Deleuze and also by Latour, Viveiros de Castro is lately attracting much attention in British anthropology and also in France. In his *Métaphysiques cannibales*, Viveiros de Castro (2009: chap. 1) makes an urgent plea for the need to denaturalize the ontology that shapes Western academia. Anthropology should be much more open, even in its theorizing, to 'native thinking'. This is an important and welcome project (although less new than Viveiros de Castro seems to think). However, it is quite surprising how quickly this boils down in his book to outlining dyadic contrasts between an Amazonian ontology and academic thinking—"deux schèmes ontologiques 'croisés' [two ontological schemes that 'intersect']" (ibid.: 49; my translation). Of course, the former turns out to be in every respect the opposite of the latter. In contrast to his earlier work that emphasized the historicity of Amazonian societies (Viveiros de Castro 1996), including in the pre-Columbus era, Viveiros de Castro's (2009) sketch of *la métaphysique de la prédation* marking all Amazonian societies seems to be a given, outside history. It is also striking that he now allows for clear correspondences in this respect between Amazonian and Melanesian ontologies—both, of course, in radical opposition to the West. Such simplistic oppositions seem to become ever less valuable in a world that is marked by the creative hybridization of very different elements, leading to constantly new and unexpected experiments. Indeed, there may be some truth in the polemical title "Ontology Is Just Another Word for Culture" of Venkatesan's (2010) report on a Manchester debate—even if it seems to go against the ontological tide in British anthropology.

Of course, much more remains to be said about the possibilities of notions of ontology as multiple and contingent in the discipline of anthropology. I only mention the tenacious trend in our discipline to use the concept in a culturalist sense in order to highlight the great value of an approach as outlined in Jean's text. For me, the continuing efforts of the Comaroffs to start from lived practice and analyze it in a dynamic relation with immediate context and larger-scale processes of transformation is a reassuring antidote against powerful culturalist and ahistorical tendencies that continue to plague the discipline.

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■ NOTES

1. This book, *Sorcellerie et politique en Afrique: La viande des autres* (1995), was published later as a lengthier work titled *The Modernity of Witchcraft: Politics and the Occult in Postcolonial Africa* (1997).
2. Interestingly, those comments mainly came from Europeans and Americans or from Africans in diaspora. In Africa itself, people are much more eager to discuss the topic.
3. For more subtly formulated reservations, see Bernault (2009), Ceriana Mayneri (2010), and Sanders (2003).
4. See also Sanders's (2003: 338) balanced formulation: "African witchcraft may well be part of modernity, but by no means needs to be *about* modernity."
5. Cf. also Palmié (2002: 338n2), who warns me against "the overextension of an ethnographic concept [i.e., witchcraft] ... as the descriptor of an allegedly 'global(izing)' condition." All this on the basis of my simple observation that certain aspects of witchcraft discourse make it a tempting way for people to address the riddles of modern developments (see Geschiere 1997, 2011). Overextensions seem to be everywhere in this whole debate.
6. See also Siegel's (2006) challenging analysis of a sudden eruption of witch-hunts in East Java in 1998 (just after the fall of Suharto) in terms of confrontations with 'the uncanny'. In this particular case, it was clearly related to a sudden collapse of the modern state. Yet Siegel sees the uncanny as omnipresent and of all times.
7. In this sense, the concept relates very well to Anna Tsing's (2005) magisterial analysis of the haphazard and highly fragmented character of capitalist interventions in a local setting such as Kalimantan.
8. Cf. the Comaroffs' surprise on returning to South Africa at the end of apartheid and unexpectedly encountering people's preoccupation with zombies, as described in Jean's text.
9. Robbins's (2007) critiques of studies on the anthropology of religion in Melanesia are quite convincing. But one can wonder whether it is wise to target an entire discipline. Is it, for instance, possible to maintain that such continuity thinking was also a constant in economic anthropology?
10. Marshall (2009: 25) herself adds that the "Comaroffs' work also shows that today's figures of occult practice and religious discourse are not atavisms from the distant past." But she continues: "Nonetheless, smuggled into some of these analyses is a tacit understanding that perpetuates the relation of exteriority between Western and African modernities," and she adds references to van Binsbergen and Devisch. A problem is that these two authors' works are of a very different signature than that of the Comaroffs. It seems that Marshall is spanning her net too wide here, attacking quite indiscriminately a whole discipline rather than addressing her critique, in itself certainly valuable, to studies for which it is relevant. For instance, one can wonder whether Meyer's (1999) study on Ghanaian Pentecostals, *Translating the Devil*, can be cited as an example of continuity/domestication thinking. Meyer's emphasis on translating as producing new meaning is in line with Marshall's approach.
11. A fine example of how to historicize witchcraft can be found in Ceriana Mayneri's (2010) account of his research in the Central African Republic. His reconstruction details how—through a series of misunderstandings between missionaries, administrators, and interpreters—the notion of *sorcellerie* was grafted onto local concepts and then generally appropriated.
12. Based on a common Pentecostal slogan, this phrase is the title of one of Meyer's (1998) influential articles on the upsurge of Pentecostalism in Ghana.

13. Cf. also Tonda (2002: 237): "la recomposition de la sorcellerie ... en la sortant des limites anthropologiques du pensable et possible [the recomposition of witchcraft ... that goes beyond the anthropological limits of what is thinkable and possible]." Cf. also Florence Bernault (2006, 2009).
14. It might be useful to emphasize that in other parts of Africa the much earlier encounter with Islam had already brought an idea of religion. But then, Tonda focuses especially on western equatorial Africa, wisely avoiding any strict geographical delimitations for his explorations.
15. Cf. Tonda (2005: 264) where he quotes with approval the Comaroffs' idea of 'a long conversation'. The notion of articulation comes, of course, from the old Marxist debate on an 'articulation of modes of production' that was marred by the heaviness of the mode of production concept. However, it did show the possibilities of the articulation notion for historically following uncertainties and variety in the grafting of capitalism upon pre-existing forms of production and exploitation (see, notably, Rey 1973).

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Thoughts on Jean Comaroff's Political Economy of Zombies

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Jean Comaroff is in a rare and prolific class of scholars. She straddles the twentieth and twenty-first centuries with broad-reaching and intellectually significant contributions to the way we understand some of the most profound changes of our time. Drawing from a childhood in apartheid-era South Africa among liberal Jewish refugees from the Holocaust, and then coming of age in a climate suffused with related discrimination and suspicion, Jean opens her comments by narrating the profound impact that experience had on her intellectual life. With related experiences in African liberation struggles and socialist movements in a context where evangelical revivalism and Pan-Africanism were at large, she explores how she has come to see human categories as shaped by specific meanings and forms of signification. At the core of her message is an attempt to make sense of the role of religion alongside the political economy of markets and empires. Her argument—that contemporary capitalist political economy is the explanation for the emergence of zombie religious formations in South Africa—is useful for understanding the ways that religion, as a social category, is made real. For, as she shows, it is not just genealogy that determines the epistemological basis of human knowledge. Rather, lived practice is “always seen to exist in a dynamic relation with immediate context and with larger-scale processes of transformation.” And in that regard, Jean questions how those practices constitute social worlds that not only are understood as real but also are contradictory, paradoxical, and emancipatory (Comaroff and Comaroff 1997, 1999, 2000, 2002, 2004a, 2004b).

Although this approach offers a productive tension for making sense of the complexities of religion as lived, with a Weberian attempt to merge political economy with culture and a Durkheimian conceptualization of religion as productive of contemporary social realities, Jean insists on an analytic that highlights the genealogical making of religion while also taking on religion as an a priori category (Asad 1993). Herein lies the robustness of her argument: that religion exists in society but its profound manifestations work alongside power to remake itself in a range of ways. While she accepts a particular ontology within which to situate religion and society, she does so within a particular dialectic that addresses the limits of a genealogical understanding of religion. Thus, religion is a product of social consciousness (or social facts) (Durkheim [1912] 2001), which is closely aligned with the materiality of the everyday. As she suggests, through her departure from Weber, new forms of capitalist rationality have ended the expression of rationalist belief. Instead, what we are seeing is religion remaking itself.

The key for Jean is to disaggregate faith from religion and to show how it is mutually constitutive with society. In relation to society, she is interested in how religion is a product of contests over sovereignty and authority; through those struggles its worldviews are established and legitimized and its truth produced. Jean's commitment to this duality in defining religion is not surprising, given her lifelong commitment to dialectical thinking and complexity. What

is surprising is her suggestion that capitalist political economy/capitalist anxiety is the central answer to the question, Why zombies, why now?

While capitalist anxieties are part of the answer, there are other elements that are subsumed that need particular consideration. How else might the political economy of capitalism explain the rise of the manifestation of zombies? Thinking about the multiple trajectories for making sense of capitalism as part of a complex set of social encounters is especially critical because of Jean's commitment to society and complexity. In furthering a hypothesis that capitalist rationality has ended the expression of rationalist belief, it also seems important to consider these religiosities against the backdrop of something like atheism and what the competing discourses are. Thus, to complete the argument that particular religious manifestations that take the form of witchcraft or zombies are fundamentally tied to capitalist anxieties and the erosion of particular forms of rationality, I suggest that we also think about the other belief forms that are on the rise and consider the role of the state and its institutions and of global organizations in arbitrating the continued conflict between religion and society.

At a time when talk about religiosity (Pentecostalism, Islam, occult practices) is on the rise, there are also findings that atheism is increasing. A survey of 51,927 people collected by the WIN-Gallup International network in 57 countries reported a drop in religiosity around the world: 59 percent of the respondents claimed religious beliefs, a decline of 9 percent since 2005. Interestingly, the country exhibiting the largest drop in religiosity was Vietnam, while Ireland placed second for the most significant decrease. The number of Irish who consider themselves religious had fallen by 22 percent in 2011, down from 69 percent in 2005. The staunchest atheists were found in Japan (31 percent), the Czech Republic (30 percent), and France (29 percent). The countries where most people self-identified as religious were Ghana (96 percent), Nigeria (93 percent), and Macedonia (90 percent).¹ The reasons for the decline are widespread, ranging from Catholic disenchantment as a result of sexual abuse accusations to increases in educational opportunities in the North, resulting in greater access to alternative theories of human existence. The trend is clear, however: in the North there is a profound decline in religious fortitude, while in the South and more impoverished communities, or in sites where religious politics are heightened, there are greater claims of religiosity.

This survey is important in highlighting that there must be a variety of causal explanations for increases and decreases in new religious beliefs. It is clear that the 'survival' of religiosity is not uncontested in those places where new religious formations have arisen or where claims to religious freedom are either under attack or being curtailed. And while Jean makes clear that in post-apartheid South Africa the promise of freedom and equality came with a range of new realities, one of them being the reality of defendants whose lawyers "argued that their clients had been driven to murder by the zombification of their kin," in many of the court cases related to religious questions that I have observed and tracked, we see that boundaries are being increasingly tested and that there is an ongoing contestation to maintain the rationality of the state. An excellent example of this is the struggle over religious rights that is taking place at various court levels. When stakeholders vie for the right to wear religious garb at work or school, or insist on using the Bible in public education, they are calling on certain forms of rationality to expand religious freedoms (also see Feldman 2005; Sullivan 2005). Through arbitration over the limits of state accommodations, they are reinforcing particular, rational legal principles and articulating the meaning of religion and its allowances.

One arena for examining this growing rationality is the struggle to establish universal notions of rights. In particular, it is not just human rights but animal rights that are becoming battlefields of religious practice: over the past 30 years, the notion of rights has been extended to include animals. In other words, the boundaries for the permissibility of lives to be protected are

increasingly being extended beyond human beings. Recent examples include limitations on animal ritual sacrifice among Orisa/Santeria practitioners, the successful outlawing of bull fighting, banning the sale of *foie gras* (certain types of animal liver) in the state of California, and fighting to save the lives of African elephants (hunted for tusks) and seals (hunted for meat and fur). In these campaigns, the concept of human rights has gone beyond the human individual and has been extended to a universalist principle that is endorsed by international institutions. The fight for the terrain over the application of universal rationality is as much a site of contestation as is the arena of religiosity. For just when it seems that religiosity is spreading as a result of capitalist disenchantment, so too is atheism, based on a range of other convictions that are producing new imprints for social action. I want to call attention to the processes at play and the actors and institutions that are engaged in these sites of struggle. What interests me here are how these zombie stories have come about and the stakes involved, as well as the affective experiences that provide the impetus for narrativizing zombie stories.

Jean's answer to the question, why do people tell stories about zombies? is that it is because of their anxieties about joblessness in the midst of visible economic growth in South Africa. The presumption here is that new forms of capitalist rationality have emerged alongside new religious 'guises' and that the social realities with which people contend—the disappearance of work, ostentatious capital accumulation, and the impact of policies of capitalist liberalization—are increasingly connecting long-standing conceptions of witchcraft to the new zombie phenomena. These religious manifestations are far from Weber's ([1930] 1992) prediction of increasing rationality. They provide one of the key terrains around which religious and secular logics are playing out. Religious and secular rationalities are a key site of contestation.

It is also important to ask how people experience joblessness. Jean's interest in the modernity of religion has helped us to connect the dots and make sense of how knowledge forms work and how these forms resemble people's life-worlds. What has become increasingly interesting to me about these new religious phenomena is how the advent of social forms such as zombies, or increasing forms of police surveillance and infiltration, are opening up spaces to think about affective dimensions that shape these new realities and the contestations engaged through them. In this regard, I find that the emotional responses that shape zombie accusations are fundamentally subsumed within Jean's larger concern with the political economy of witchcraft and zombie making. In other words, the affective experiences that shape the many contours of South African sociality fall out of focus when the political economy of religion becomes the main way we make sense of these highly affective social worlds. Thus, if we also ask, why does this idea about the zombie become charismatic? the inquiry moves us in a different direction where political economy becomes one of many points of entry.

Although there may be a causal relationship between the materiality of everyday life and the development of religious ideology, the structures of fear and anxieties that shape the narrativization of zombies in South Africa are more than meta-narratives about modernity. Along with the recent rise of the language of zombies among the Tswana-speaking people of the northwestern region of South Africa, what is fascinating is the way that affective effervescence is understood to exist alongside familiar cultural practices. The structures of feelings that shape the responses to zombie threats connect not just to presumptions that occult practices are corollaries of new capitalist phenomena, but also to deep fears, anxieties, obligations, and anger related to an array of unknown forces—human or otherwise. The emotions that zombies conjure may range from anxiety, paranoia, or anger and may lead to human dispossession, but they also index a different temporality of personhood that requires belief in the afterlife and what Aisha Beliso-De Jesus (2012) refers to as an understanding of ancestral co-presences. So what, then, are we to make of the affective responses to these realities? How might structures of poverty and changing forms

of work serve as scaffolding for making sense of the affective faith experiences that shape the many contours of South African sociality?

The development of the new field of religion and emotion has only recently emerged in the social sciences as a response to the recognition that emotions and their histories of social meanings play a role in the life of individuals and society (Barreto 2010; Bertolino 2010; Davies 2010; Ridler 2010). In anthropology, studies of affect can be traced back to Raymond Williams (1983: 281), who argued that since the fourteenth century, sentiment has existed in English to denote “physical feeling, and feelings of one’s own.” Today, it brings together private, interior, individual emotions and ‘public sentiment’ as part of a larger set of political meanings that have been harder to make sense of, but that are central to the ways that affective structures work to shape the public imagination (Masumi 1995). In this case, the public imagination is indeed the site for understanding the affective management of both economic and political change. But it is also a space of contestation over the classification, appropriateness, and transformation of religious practice. The complexity of those encounters—and those who are involved in them—is as important as the existence of the encounter itself. Thus, explaining the experience of the religious encounter is as important as explaining the political and economic factors that contribute to it.

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■ NOTES

1. “Religiosity in Decline, Atheism on Rise,” OnIslam, <http://www.onislam.net/english/news/global/458486-religiosity-in-decline-atheism-on-rise.html>.

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Religion, Society, and the Everyday

Adeline Masquelier

Of all the lessons I learned as a graduate student under Jean Comaroff's nurturing mentorship, perhaps the most important one was that rather than confining my study of religion to the domain of the sacred and the formal enactment of highly charged symbolic performances, I should also venture into the humbler domain of the everyday to document the role of mundane practices and ordinary objects in the constitution of moral communities and spiritual selfhoods. It is a lesson I took to heart after I arrived in Niger in 1988 to conduct doctoral research on *bori* spirit possession. Tucked in my luggage was my worn-out copy of *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance* (Comaroff 1985). During my 18 months of fieldwork, Comaroff's path-breaking historical ethnography of Zionist churches in apartheid South Africa provided much-needed clarity and inspiration, helping me identify the creative, at times subversive, but always practical potentialities of *bori* for an entrenched religious minority threatened by Muslim hegemony (Masquelier 2001). Like the Tshidi of the South Africa-Botswana borderland, whose contestation of political power and social inequality found shape in ritualized practice, sartorial syncretism, and poetic language, the *bori* devotees among whom I worked resisted the ascendancy of Islam through the medium of symbolic activity and the enactment of minor acts of defiance. Just as Zionist churches in the age of apartheid harnessed the potency of colonial symbols, routinely redeploying them as "subversive *bricolages*" (Comaroff 1985: 198) within and against a dominant power, so *bori* practices—some pertaining to the realm of the everyday, others anchored in ritual performance—became sites of both parody and protest, which bore witness to the transformations wrought by colonialism, Islamization, and commerce.

Needless to say, *Body of Power* is much more than an ethnographically situated history of African resistance on the periphery of the industrial world. One of its key arguments is that mission Christianity in southern Africa provided both the scaffolding for the colonial project of proletarianization and the tools deployed by disempowered Africans to reverse the logic of industrial capitalism and resist oppression. Comaroff's brave and imaginative foray into the contradictory legacies of colonial evangelism paved the way for the study of other populist and religious movements in the global South, whose millennial aspirations have similarly fed on European counter-orthodoxies. It has emboldened a whole generation of scholars to think critically about the relationship between history and ritual, consciousness and embodiment, and ideology and lived practice—and ultimately about the role of religion in the making of modernity. Reflecting on the theoretical significance of *Body of Power* some 20 years after its publication, Shipley (2010: 479) rightfully notes that the landmark study was a powerful demonstration that culture "is not the language of tradition, but rather a highly reflexive mode of discourse" through whose reproduction and contestation "modernity itself can be negotiated." Here Comaroff's Durkheimian understanding of ritual as an inherently pragmatic endeavor is enlivened by the way she draws on Weber's work on social change and historical contingency. I should also add that by convincingly

documenting how the discourse of Zionist counterculture “stretched far beyond the domain of ritual itself, penetrating acutely into the experiential fabric of everyday life” (Comaroff 1985: 11), *Body of Power* has in fact compelled us to rethink the place of religion in society.

As I reflect on Comaroff’s remarkable contribution to the anthropology of religion, let me single out her critical intervention in scholarly debates on the colonial encounter because it enables us to dwell on the consistency of her approach to religion—an approach that is solidly grounded in the classical social theories of Durkheim, Marx, and Weber. As an individual author or in tandem with John Comaroff, with whom she has built an extraordinary intellectual partnership, Jean Comaroff has pioneered a brand of historical anthropology whose mission is to illuminate the contours of wide-scale processes of social transformation through the lens of the local and the ordinary. Whether she explores the workings of colonial evangelism in nineteenth-century Tswana communities or what later emerged out of it—in the image of Zion, for instance—she does so through a detour into the everyday. With a nod to de Certeau (1984), Elias (1982), Goffman (1959), and Lefebvre (1971)—who have variously urged us to consider dimensions of life that generally go unremarked because they are deemed unremarkable—she locates the ethos of a whole society in its practices of bodily adornment, its architectural aesthetics, its patterns of production and consumption.

In volume 2 of *Of Revelation and Revolution*, the third book she co-authored with John Comaroff, the colonial encounter is thus characterized as “an epic of the ordinary” (John Comaroff and Jean Comaroff 1997: 35) unfolding against the backdrop of a broader social dynamics. By treating the everyday as “a properly proportioned part of the workings of society and history” (ibid.: 31), the Comaroffs draw our attention to the fact that for the British Nonconformist evangelists who brought Christianity to Southern Tswana people—and, by implication, for other colonists on other colonial frontiers—civilizing the heathens involved a “quest to refurnish the mundane” (ibid.: 9). In much of their writings on the colonial encounter, evangelism in this corner of Africa is described as less “a theological crusade than ... an effort to reform the ordinary” (Comaroff 1996: 19). Despite the fair share of criticisms they have elicited, the Comaroffs’ early as well as more recent efforts to demystify religion and “[put] it to work in the everyday world” (Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff 1993: xvi; see also Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff 1999) have inspired numerous scholars, including myself, to focus on the worldly rather than the ‘holy’ dimension of religious phenomena.

Granted, the notion that the realm of the sacred intersects with (and may even be indistinguishable from) the world of the everyday is far from novel. Seventy years ago, Evans-Pritchard ([1937] 1976) insisted that witchcraft was such a ubiquitous part of Azande life that scarcely a day went by without reference being made to it. Today it has become commonplace to speak of the banality of spirits, zombies, ancestors, and fetishes and to stress that it is all a question “not of the fantastic but of the routine” (Olivier de Sardan 1992: 11). Stressing the everydayness of religion by tracing its embeddedness in the mundane does not imply that quotidian acts and ordinary experiences can be dismissed as meaningless or as transparent, however. As Jean Comaroff has beautifully shown in the southern African context, it is by dissecting dress codes and domestic patterns, built forms, bodily disciplines, and regimes of temporality and property that one can glimpse the contours of not just material worlds but moral orders as well. In something as banal as the cut of a woman’s dress (or the shape of a house), one can discern the imprint of Christian discipline and Victorian rationality, suggesting that if the Protestant mission did not always produce converts in the conventional sense of the term, it nevertheless penetrated deep into the seams and folds of the Tswana social fabric.

No doubt the Nonconformist evangelists who set out to save Tswana souls by reforming indigenous lifeways had grasped the centrality of cloth and other consumer goods for “making

visible the categories of culture” (Douglas and Isherwood 1979: 59), and this is partly why, as Comaroff insists, they themselves played such a critical role as the vanguard of colonial capitalism. Summoning Marx (1967), who understood well how the most trivial stuff can acquire an almost magical character, Comaroff tracks the social life of ordinary objects—church uniforms, clocks, coins, and so on—demonstrating that such life makes little sense outside of the wider spiritual order of things and vice versa. In so doing, she only hints at the way that Marx’s understanding of fetishism as the “religion of sensuous desire” (Marx and Engels in Pietz 1993: 136) can illuminate how human passion (i.e., the simultaneous urge to possess and the experience of being possessed) “emerges within a material dialectic between human sensory routines and material objects” (Pels 1998: 101). In the end, Comaroff is more interested in what is produced out of the wider dialectic between religion and society. Note that this interest is informed by a Weberian insistence on the specificity of historical circumstance. Thus, when Comaroff examines the relation between Protestantism and say, capitalism, it is in the context of particular historical circumstances and with an eye to the particular configurations it produces.

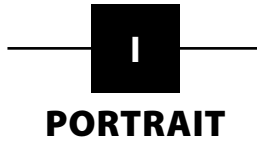
Drawing from anthropology and history, Jean Comaroff has carved out a critical analytical space from which she provides glimpses of the reciprocal interplay of African and European life-worlds and the ongoing permutations arising out of the “structure of the conjuncture” (Sahlins 1981: 35). Her small-scale analyses of how indigenous conceptions of value, personhood, power, and productivity were radically transformed following the missionaries’ arrival instantiate the logic of much larger social transformations. Through careful descriptions of how local mission work, with its struggles and its successes, routinely unfolded and how such work subsequently spawned new practices and new persons, it is also the vaster project of European colonialism—that is, the expansion of not just Christian culture but industrial capitalism—that is afforded visibility. Nowhere is this better exemplified than in missionaries’ efforts to dress African people, since clothes “bore with them the threads of a macroeconomy” and were an effective means of inserting indigenous people in the British consumer market (Comaroff 1996: 36).

Whether she muses about Zionist rituals or zombies, the Protestant ethos or millennial capitalism, Jean Comaroff ultimately compels us to address one of the important issues of our era, namely, the place of religion as the “necessary other” (as she puts it in this section) in the late modern world. Resolutely eschewing predictions of the impending demise of religion as well as affirmations of its irrelevance as an analytical category (Bloch 2005, 2010), yet mindful that its very definition is the outcome of a particular history of knowledge and power (Asad 1993), Comaroff writes with great passion and sensitivity about the historical entanglements of religion and society out of which the modern world—including Africa—emerged. As an individual author and in partnership with John Comaroff, she has probed the complexities and practicalities of religious engagements beyond the domain of the divine or the supernatural to show how religion remains enduringly rooted in social configurations that it helps sustain, replenish, and revise. Through her forceful demonstrations of the historical (as well as contemporary) significance of faith in the making of modernity, she has revitalized the anthropological study of religion, offering us renewed analytical purchase for a critical appreciation of the ‘religious’ as part of the warp and weft of modern society.

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Ritual Practice and Anthropological Theory

Bruce Kapferer

The idea of writing a personal statement regarding my approach to ritual and to present a self-portrait of my own movement into this field is difficult, to say the least. This is particularly so as the idea has too much of an overriding finality to it—an epitaph, after which there is no more. There is the implication that somehow over the 40 or so years that I have been working in the anthropological field of ritual and religion that I have been building a distinct coherent approach. It is tempting to say so, but it would be wrong. I would say that my orientation has taken many different paths. I have always, like most anthropologists, been directed by the problem-at-hand, given the empirical realities in which I found myself and the issue in the subject of anthropology that appeared to me to be particularly problematic at the time. This has sometimes resulted in a critical look at prevailing orientations and has led me in unexpected directions. The ethnographic materials with which I have been recently working, primarily in North Malabar of the Indian state of Kerala, is setting me off on new routes of analytical possibility, at least new for me. This is also the case with my (see Kapferer 2013a, 2013b, 2014) current interest in film and its relevance for the anthropological study of myth and ritual. Such changes in direction are far from unusual in the ethnographically driven circumstance of anthropology in which ethnography is the ground for analytical and theoretical construction (and not the other way around as in other social sciences where theory governs research, see Kapferer 2007).

Here I should make clear that my interest in ritual and religious practices is not in these forms of action as such. That is, I would not like to be categorized as an anthropologist of ritual and religion, a specialist in a subspecialism. I am interested in them because they raise critical questions about sociocultural processes and, therefore, for anthropological understanding as a whole. I have no theory of ritual (or religion) and I am interested in what may be regarded as ritual because it is a practice that appears to be largely defined (and this is highly problematic) by its symbolic density and intensity. Rituals are generative events par excellence and it is this that is at the foundation of my interest in ritual/religious dynamics and processes. Here my early field experience has some relevance.

My concentration on ritual practice and religious ideologies was largely developed during my fieldwork among Sinhalese Buddhist villagers in the southwest of Sri Lanka mainly in the 1970s and 1980s. I had come to Sri Lanka from research conducted in rural and urban centres of Zambia, where I completed over three years of fieldwork connected to the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute. This was the main research station for Max Gluckman's "Manchester School" of social anthropology and the eventual interest that I was to take in ritual (not my major concern while



in Zambia) was influenced by the Manchester approach and particularly its methodological stress on situational analysis and the exploration of events. This orientation, as is well known these days, developed from Gluckman's (1940) idea based on the study of a bridge-opening in Zululand in South Africa in the 1930s. This event compressed or condensed sociopolitical dynamics that were reflected in the larger scene of South Africa as a whole. It revealed dimensions of wider complexity that opened to a particular theoretical understanding that Gluckman was to develop later in numerous ways. Gluckman's idea was that the event was the source of conceptual and theoretical understanding and that particular kinds of events (indeed of a ceremonial or ritualistic kind such as the bridge-opening) were intensive reflexive moments that revealed or threw open the problematics of everyday existence. He was highly influenced by historians' focus on significant events as well as Freudian perspectives that saw in events the revelation of concerns of an ontological kind. In other words the event or what he described as the situation was an opening to understanding within the ongoing flux of life and it was this flux that Gluckman wanted his anthropology to enter. His was a move from the static understanding of society and culture that afflicted much of the anthropology at the time. It was also a shift away from homogeneous understandings. In numerous ways, Gluckman's perspective and especially as it was developed by his colleagues and students—particularly, Clyde Mitchell, Victor Turner, and Jaap Van Velsen—anticipated more recent developments. Thus, Marshall Sahlins's (1980) orientation in his revision of structuralist anthropology conceived of the significant event as marking a crisis in the sociocultural structuring of everyday life, and having a larger reproductive transformational effect on the schemes of and for life. Gluckman's situational analysis well foreshadowed Sahlins's perspective and has important resonance with the more recent social philosophical orientations to the generative event that are explored by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1994) as well as Alain Badiou (see Kapferer 2006a).

It was Turner (1957, 1974) in his Ndembe and later more world-ranging studies who realized the potential of Gluckman's situational analysis perspective for the study of ritual. He saw clearly the identity between the kinds of sociopolitical crisis of the types of events to which Gluckman was drawn (see also Gluckman's *The Judicial Process among the Barotse of Northern Rhodesia*, 1967) and rituals of crisis (those of life crisis) that Turner discussed. Gluckman, of course, was still wedded to a neo-Kantian Durkheimian orientation. Although he was adamant that his situational or event analysis should not be used as illustrative (in a representational sense as was the custom in anthropology at the time and still) and contained the elements of change and the emergence of new potential (a point that Clyde Mitchell in *The Kalela Dance* (1959) stressed especially—arguing that the event was always in critical aspects unique, effectively a moment of sociocultural creation), it was Turner that was to realize the possibility the most fully.

Turner, of course, traced the lineage of his thought concerning the liminality of rite and ritual as an event for the generation of new potential (for the creation of original categories or the reordering of categories of thought and practice that broke with Kantian rigidity) to Arnold van Gennep. I suggest that the weight that Turner gave to Van Gennep was more in the interest of creating an alternative genealogy for anthropology to that of Emile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss. It was somewhat akin to current efforts, such as that of Bruno Latour, to break anthropology's association with Durkheimian sociology by the elevation of his intellectual enemy, Gabriel Tarde, to prominence. But the real influence on Turner's development was of course Gluckman's situational analysis and, possibly, Friedrich Nietzsche (especially his *The Birth of Tragedy*), rather than Van Gennep (who incidentally Gluckman was also considering at the time). Nietzsche's opposition between the Apollonian and the Dionysian has considerable resonance with the orientation that Turner developed.

My research in Zambia was not on ritual or religion, although I had some minor flirtations. However, I was fascinated by situational analysis and much of my work focused on transitional or transformational events, particularly in urban industrial settings (Kapferer 1972). Mitchell's excellent study of *The Kalela Dance* (1959) was of considerable influence and I was fortunate to study both rural and urban forms of the *kalela* (see Kapferer 1967, 1995). The broad point is that the interest that I was to develop in ritual processes, in the context of Sri Lanka and not Zambia, flowed from situational analysis and a concern to explore both the internal dynamics of such events and their relation to larger encompassing processes.

My friend and colleague Don Handelman (1991) has developed the connection between event analysis (of the kind pursued by Gluckman and Turner but not limited to them) the most and I was also influenced by his perspective when we were together in the Manchester department.

For me the domain of ritual—or what in diverse contexts may be variously recognized as ritual (for what is ritual, as Handelman demonstrates, is relative to context and is notoriously difficult and perhaps impossible to define)—presents the anthropologist with the opportunity to enter within the imaginal processes wherein human beings constitute or weave their cultural and existential realities. Rituals are for me not representations of the social (the still Durkheimian emphasis of too much anthropology) nor ideological mystifications as some anthropologists still assert, but complex dynamics of reality construction and creation. They are in other words key spaces (what I have referred to as “domains of virtuality” (Kapferer 1997, 2004)) in which human beings enter within the vitals of their realities, as it were, adjusting their processes and constitutive effect for ongoing existence. As I will present later, they can be conceived as setting out the ontological ground that may form an understanding of socio-cultural practices outside the domain of rite.

I am writing, at this moment, with a colleague (Dinesan Vadakkiniyil) from Kerala about a village rite for the goddess Kali that involves the tying of *tali* (what Louis Dumont, 1983, calls a primary marriage among the Nayar of Malabar) for prepubescent girls. It is an act that binds the girls to their matrilineage but it is also part of a complex series of acts in which what may be conceived as relations of affinity (and potentially hostile to the matrilineage) are converted into relations of consanguinity. The *tali*-tying is far more than a rite of passage, as many anthropologists have described it, but a practical dynamic in which the nature of kinship relations are forged, having implications for the girl in the future and for bodies of kin that are brought into connection through the girl. It is a rite that involves all the participants entering into an imaginal space—what I have referred to recently as a “phantasmagoric space” (Kapferer 2003) (or a virtual reality of the kind that social philosopher Deleuze discusses)—where a kin-based world in all its complex and frequently contradictory potential is entered within and reorganized.

I should say at once that I am more interested in the theoretical understanding concerning processes of human action that emerge from ritual practice (ritual itself as a conceptual and imaginal domain for investigating human existential dynamics) than theories about ritual (or religion) that in my view always fall short of the phenomena themselves. This does not mean that I promote ritual or religious theories of the world as sociological theories but rather that theory, or, better, the expansion of understanding concerning human practices in abstract theoretical terms, must be built through a close attention to the phenomenon it aims to understand. Here I would distinguish my own position from Clifford Geertz's “ethnographically near” notion of anthropology. I am not just saying that the theory must be appropriate to the phenomenon but that the theory should be formulated *through the phenomenon*. Geertz applies Gregory Bateson's concept of “deep play” to the Balinese cockfight, which then legitimates his Goffman-influenced analysis of the phenomenon leaving aside other Balinese cosmological factors (see Kapferer 1997b). I am suggesting that the ritual phenomenon itself can contribute to its own understand-

ing as well as participate in the formulation of concepts and theory that may apply to nonritual contexts as well as to larger philosophical debate.

The Kali rites I have referred to open up very interesting questions concerning the nature of time, for example. Ritual time as discussed by Claude Levi-Strauss and also Edmund Leach is conceived of as circular and specific to rite. But such a concept of time is a dimension of what Nietzsche discusses in relation to the notion of the Eternal Return. – Time as Totality. Following Nietzsche it might be said that ritual aims to re-situate (re-originate, re-birth) its participants within time so that the past is stopped from becoming its future – indeed the past and its effects being overcome through the machinery of rite in which, effectively, a new past is created through the future rather than vice versa (see Kapferer 2013a, 2014).

Within ritual participants can be conceived as entering into time in itself from which all existence (Past, Present, and Future) can be conceived as being emergent. This is consistent with the structure of the Kali rites (specifically rituals known as *teyyam*) in Malabar that I have been investigating. Within these rites participants are introduced into the process of time itself and come to foresee as well as adjust their life's circumstance.

This is also explicitly the case with the major sorcery rite performed among Buddhist Sinhalese known as the *suniyama*, which I describe in *The Feast of the Sorcerer* (1997a). In this rite the sorcery victim upon whom the ritual action is focused is literally re-oriented away from the past and re-directed towards a future at which time the victim engages in a sacrifice of re-birth and the bringing forth of new existential circumstance. In the *suniyama* the victim has the ill-effects of the past, that are conceived as clinging to the victim's body, cut away – the victim is re-situated in the eternity of time to begin life anew. The *suniyama*, as the Kali rites, have a sacrificial structure that can be interpreted as dividing the past from the future whereby a space or a clearing is made for the formation of new realities of experience. To a major extent rites can be seen as opening a phantasmagoric space within the eternity of time that they describe – this phantasmagoric space (see Kapferer 2003, 2006b) conceived as a virtual reality in which the fullness of the potentiality of existence within time is opened to ritual participants.

In my opinion, such rites as these raise philosophical issues of considerable interest and of relevance to current discussions within and outside anthropology. This is so not only as regards such grand problems as being and time but also processes concerning the formation of social persons, their relations, and the dimensions of the realities that they may come to inhabit.

Earlier I said that ritual may be impossible to define. However, I am prepared to hazard a kind of definition that relates to the significance I attach to ritual as a key event-practice for anthropology important in the formation of concept, theory, and understanding in general. In other words (and to invert Levi-Strauss's famous dictum), ritual is good to think with. This is so, as I have already said, because ritual is an intense imaginal space in which participants (including the anthropologist) can explore the potentials within everyday experience, often far in excess of the rationalities of mundane understanding, in a space that is relatively independent of routine constraints. This is similar to what Levi-Strauss observes for myth (which he values above ritual in this regard). However, in my experience ritual is the space in which the manifold potentials of myth are elaborated and often created. However, I add to such observation the pragmatism of ritual, its ultimate direction to everyday existence while not being a necessary reflection of it. The sacrificial structure of ritual (a key dimension of which is the very opening of space within existence) is thoroughly to do with the vital reoriginating pragmatics of rite. I think Hubert and Mauss saw this clearly in their classic work *Sacrifice* that effectively understands ritual as thoroughly sacrificial in its dynamic. Their approach, of course, is centred in Sanskritic and Judeo-Christian notions of sacrifice (a point that Luc de Heusch makes in his far too-neglected *Sacrifice in Africa* (1986) that develops notions that were influential for my work on the sacrifice

of the *suniyama* rite), but they indicated sacrifice as the central organizing dynamic of ritual—an orientation that I broadly follow. I would define ritual as being sacrificial and it is this fact that distinguishes it from other forms of intensely symbolic performance that are too frequently encompassed by the concept of ritual.

It is ritual as a sacrificial, originating dynamic par excellence that relates to its capacity to open up the critical dimensions of how human beings constitute their realities and are oriented within them. What makes ritual so good to think with is its (re)generative and sacrificial impetus whereby human being and the world of its existence—indeed the cosmologies of its groundedness—are revealed. Through sacrifice human beings enter within the space of originating and differentiating existential dynamics (a process in which human beings in effect make themselves and their realities). All the rites that I have been concerned with have perforce been sacrificial in structure. This is certainly the case, as I have already indicated, with Sinhala Buddhist healing rites (all structured around sacrifice) and now with the rites in Malabar that I am currently interested in. The Sinhala sorcery rite, the *suniyama*, that is my primary concern in *The Feast of the Sorcerer* (1997a), is thoroughly a sacrifice and derives its intense pragmatism from this fact.

Here I should stress that my interest in sorcery (and witchcraft) rites is because of their social and psychological pragmatics, for their paramount concern is with the existential forces that attack social and personal potential and upset the daily workings of everyday life. Sorcery ritual is thoroughly concerned with the making and unmaking of the orders of existence, indeed with the profane as Durkheim and Mauss would have it—and it is possibly profane rites that generally may be the most fascinating from the anthropological perspective that I pursue. Thus the *suniyama*, in its context of Buddhist cosmology and phenomenology, opened and unfolded a technology for the production of consciousness, language, the generation of social relations, etc., all disrupted by sorcery. I found it immensely instructive for conceptualizing and theorizing about such matters generally and not merely for illustrating already regnant theoretical understanding. I certainly applied a phenomenology—largely derived from Edmund Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty—which continues to interest me because it is relatively open to revealing the potentials of understanding that are part of emergent events such as that of ritual. A phenomenological orientation generally, in my view, is most sensitive to the development of theory through ethnography and more so than other sociological orientations of which I am aware.

I addressed the *suniyama* sorcery rite in relation to Sinhalese Buddhist nationalism and the patterns of its violence, first in *Legends of People, Myths of State* ([1988] 2012), and later in *The Feast* (1997a). I noted parallels in dynamic. Both nationalism and sorcery are concerned with the unmaking and making of social and personal existence. Both are sacrificial in their key dynamics (nationalist myths are most frequently sacrificial in their mythic content, as are the myths of the sorcery rites I have studied). Moreover, nationalism (and sorcery) are ontogenetic. I have discussed both nationalism and sorcery rites as developing particular kinds of ontological schemes that are concerned with constituting the subjects at their centre in a specific relation to themselves and to others within or at the boundaries of their existential horizons. My interest has been in examining the ontological potentials of nationalist myth and rite – an interest that was initiated in my Sri Lanka experience where the myths of the sorcery rites that I studied were re-invented as vital in contemporary Sinhala nationalism. The question that I asked concerned the extent to which nationalist myths connected to sorcery carried their ontological import into modern Sinhala nationalism and achieved potential relative to their modern historical and political circumstance. I asked similar questions of the myths and rites of Australian nationalism. The issue of ontology (to which, I hope I have made clear, the study of ritual is particularly germane) is relevant to understanding nationalism and its processes aimed at creating national

subjects. In this sense nationalist myths (or, in the case of Sri Lanka, myths from traditional healing rites transposed into the political myths and rites of Sinhala nationalism) are not reflective of culture (as I have been commonly misinterpreted) so much as instrumental in the invention of it—a national culture. As such the ontology of myths given ritual force in nationalist rites and political practice are made vital in (re)orienting national subjects to their everyday social and political realities. This was so, for example, in the post-colonial and modern historical political world of Sri Lanka that was increasingly defined in ethnically (and religiously) divided terms (Sinhala versus Tamil) with Sinhalese and Buddhism in the ruling position (over Hindu Tamils). The rituals I studied became, I still contend, important in developing a theoretical understanding of nationalist processes including the shaping of its violence – an understanding that conceived of different nationalisms as expressing potentially distinct ontologically-related forms of violence. This did not negate well-known sociological perspectives on nationalism in general but showed how specific cultural constructions involved in ethnic nationalism might come to have particular passionate effect. The sacrificial structure of the *suniyama* extended an understanding of the mythological intensities of Sinhalese Buddhist nationalism.

This was so too with the legendary or mythological dynamic of the Australian nationalist ANZAC ceremony that memorializes the loss of life of Australian and New Zealand service personnel in theatres of war, most significantly in the Gallipoli campaign of World War I. This rite works in a Christian, rather than Buddhist, sacrificial (and ontological) dynamic. Thus ANZAC presents the people as suffering the sins of the state, whereas in the Sinhalese Buddhist *suniyama*, the state is effectively the victim and the force for overcoming personal and community suffering. ANZAC is highly individualist (as is the tenor of much nationalism in Europe and America), and, some parallels with Sinhala nationalism notwithstanding (both are the inventions of modernity), is more stridently egalitarian than hierarchical (the latter being defined in Dumontian terms of “the encompassment of the contrary” rather than in the usual stratificationist sense) in which the state is the ordering principle creating unity out of difference. Both end up as potentially destructive. But the former (Australian nationalism) is exclusionist (and radically communitarian based on a fundamental similarity in identity) whereas the latter (hierarchical) is inclusive (identity is relational rather than essential as in the Australian case), valuing the submission of difference rather than its exclusion. Thus I argued, on the basis of the hierarchical dynamic of the myths of identity in ritual, that Sinhala identity and the integrity of the person involved the subordination of non-Buddhist others. Indeed, I suggested that the maintenance of Tamils within the Sinhala nationalist polity, but in a subordinate and suppressed position, is integral to the Sinhala nationalist person. The two nationalisms (Australian and Sinhala nationalism) have extreme, destructive, and violent potentials (as does most nationalism, in my opinion) but they are produced through relatively distinctive dynamics that are evident in the sacrificial dynamics of the rites in which the nationalist myths are of central and vital focus.

In the Sinhala and Australian cases the nationalist ritualization of the respective myths demonstrates relatively distinct ontological processes connected to specific values of identity. I note that the perspective that I developed extended from Ernst Cassirer’s wonderful discussion of *The Myth of the State* (1946) concerned with the mythologies of national socialism and written on the eve of the Second World War. The realization, perhaps, of what I essayed in *Legends* was grimly played out in the massacre of Tamil civilians (over 40,000 it is estimated, see Weiss 2012) in the last weeks of the Sri Lankan ethnic civil war.

Returning to ritual more specifically, my approach has been to confront theoretical understandings that are constructed independently of ritual contexts (but frequently applied to them) with the “arguments” that arise in ritual practice. Thus I have been concerned to contest a variety of commonly applied approaches to ritual—whether functionalist, structuralist, psychoanalytic,

cognitivist, linguistic—with the evidence of the ritual practice itself and the way participants define and comprehend their situations.

This was the point of much of the argument in my first book on Sinhala healing rites, *A Celebration of Demons* ([1983] 1991). Thus in that work I addressed psychological functionalist explanations involving the centrality of women in ritual performances, in trance especially, which posited that this expressed their social and psychological marginality (e.g., Lewis 1971). My point was that healing rites conducted in domestic space were biased in the direction of women because it was through their bodies that the ritual could gain efficacy in relation to a wide array of difficulties, including those affecting men, in which women were crucial. Broadly the female body encompassed an assemblage of diverse concerns and problems. This approach did not exclude individually-centred problems but conceived these as potentially dealing with much more, indeed a collectivity of issues affecting numerous others in the community. Moreover, conceptions of ritual healing that were individualistically based (often motivated in the Western individualistic medical model) missed the ideas upon which the rituals of my ethnography were premised. In the cultural situations I was studying the “patient” of ritual treatment was not necessarily the victim of the illness in a Western individualist sense but rather its catalyst, the entry and distribution point of affliction, and also a surrogate for a wider social community of dis-ease.

In the same study, although very much influenced by the drama-performance approach to ritual developed by Turner, I began to contest the applicability of the theatre metaphor that is applied to much ritual and other social action by anthropologists. This is a critique that I have been developing in various other ways and underpins my current interest in the analysis of cinema by Deleuze (1986, 1989), which I think, without in any way reducing ritual to cinema, offers kinds of analysis that might well be applied to ritual. My use of Deleuze extended from the interest I have in the aesthetics of ritual, or the way different symbolic forms (music, song, dance, etc.) structure perception and experience. This attention to aesthetics developed from my reading of A. N. Whitehead (1948) and especially Susanne Langer (1953), who combined Whitehead’s orientation with that of Cassirer. Langer emphasized not only reflective or intellectualizing processes in symbolic action but also direct or immediate sensory experiences and flows that are organized into symbolic forms that generate existential effects for those brought within their perceptual fields. This last is a feature of Deleuze’s perspective on the arts generally but is perhaps developed the most radically in his discussion of the aesthetics of cinema from which he develops a new phenomenology that goes beyond that centered in the body—the basis of that phenomenology developed from Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, for example, with its stress on intentionality. Langer and Deleuze can be said to stress the constituting force of symbols and images in relation to those who become audience to them. The senses have symbolic form and the potential of their experience and meaning are already within them activating such in the subjects towards whom they are addressed. In other words sense, meaning and experience, are not merely functions of subject intentionalities and interpretation. Deleuze, of course, is concerned to escape subject/object dualism or objective/subjective experiential contrasts (so clear in Turner, for instance). In Langer there is a unity of the subject in the object – objects have sensory dynamics as well – and it was such a direction that I was concerned to develop.

I have recently attempted (Kapferer 2013a) to show the possibilities of a Deleuzian cinematic orientation to ritual through a reanalysis of the material presented in *The Feast of the Sorcerer*. Deleuze describes cinematic perceptual processes that involve techniques that expand the field of what might be understood as “normal” perception. Cinema creates its realities by overcoming the limitations of normal perception. What is apperceived – hidden from normal direct perception – even if imaginatively seen (integral to the ongoing imaginal construction of everyday realities), in cinema is made more directly and openly available. Cinema plays with the imagi-

nal procedures of everyday reality construction both heightening them and objectivizing them. Furthermore, the viewing, listening, sensing subject is liberated from its bodily constraint and often quite literally displaced into other bodily and object positionings. Cinema audiences/ subjects do not simply take the attitude of the other, as in dramatic performance, they virtually, if momentarily, often *become the other* and are effectively subjectively positioned as if in the body of the other. This is effected through a diversity of camera techniques. Most especially, Deleuze argues that in cinema, while the audience (as in theatre) is in a fixed relation to the screen, the movement of images across the screen operates to continually shift subject positions and realign their relations. That is, through the movement of images on the screen subject positioning and perspective is continually changing – the subject in the situation of the audience is routinely re-positioned through the organization of images. The audience is not always in a reflective distanced situation but becomes one with the changing images on the screen. Rituals can achieve something similar but obviously through other techniques than those of cinema. In many respects there is no audience in ritual, rather changing relations of participation. Moreover, participants in rites come to adopt the subject positions of agents or agencies in ritual—they often become what is represented, as in possession-trance, for instance. Cinema as a function of very different aesthetic techniques can achieve similar effects (audiences become absorbed into the action and not held at the same kind of reflexive distance, as in theatre or drama).

Deleuze's discussion of cinema with regard to such aspects opens up possibilities for ritual analysis (see Kapferer 2013 a, 2013 b). Without in any way reducing ritual to cinema, I am interested in the way a kind of cinematic approach may facilitate new understandings of ritual processes beyond orientations that have been dominated by performance and theatre approaches. Deleuze, of course, via his attention to cinema is concerned to develop a phenomenology that is not founded in the body as a singular integrated unity, which is at the root of the existentialist subjectivism of that phenomenology that Deleuze aims to supersede. His post-structuralism has the possibility of bringing together orientations towards ritual, such as those of Levi-Strauss and Turner, that have hitherto been opposed largely because of the dualism to which they cleave. The current turn I am taking promises an overcoming of such dualism, bringing a Turnerian perspective into closer combination with the structuralism of Levi-Strauss, perhaps effecting a resolution merging Turner's subjectivism with Levi-Strauss's objectivism.

Presently I am working on completing a book that explores further the relation between cinema and ritual and the dynamics of their aesthetic and experiential effects, an interest that began with my first book on Sinhala Buddhist healing rites. I am also expanding my interest in mythology and especially that of contemporary globalizing realities through an exploration of the mythic in cinema. My first exercise in this regard concerns an analysis of the poietics of the image in the cinematic work of Stanley Kubrick (2014).

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Creating Creativity

Bruce Kapferer at Adelaide University

Andrew Lattas

Creativity is never just there, it has to be worked on and it emerges and flourishes within a particular kind of social milieu. That milieu is also not just there but has to be produced and cultivated, and this can be through practices of generosity that involve sharing ideas, sociality, food, drink, and also forms of care. This article is about the creative milieu of the Department of Anthropology at the University of Adelaide (1973–1985) when Bruce Kapferer was founding professor. He had previously been a Commonwealth Scholar and a researcher at the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute and had taught at the University of Manchester. He was close to Max Gluckman, Clyde Mitchell, Victor Turner, and Mary Douglas and he brought to Adelaide the creative energy of British anthropology. Its innovative insights and theories, which had been developed using largely African ethnographic material, were taken in new directions as Kapferer applied them to other ethnographic regions and topics with students and colleagues at Adelaide.

Prior to enrolling as an undergraduate, I had left high school early and as a mid-teenager I attended informally Kapferer's lectures to first-year students. My girlfriend at the time was enrolled in anthropology and on my days off from working at a take-away food shop, I would attend lectures with her. The first-year theatre was packed with students often sitting in the aisles. I still remember the riveting lectures on Evans-Pritchard's work: on the social functions and the circular self-sustaining logic of Azande witchcraft beliefs and accusations; and on the Nuer as an example of the structured social nature of conflict, violence, and political processes in a stateless society. Wearing cargo pants before they became fashionable, Kapferer would smoke and pace rhythmically back and forth on the podium. He spoke with modulating tones to emphasize profound points, often dropping off to a hushed soft voice and thoughtful pause, a rhetorical style that he has not lost. Though he was totally familiar with the ethnography and the arguments, it was obvious to all that he remained enthralled by the material and it was this fascination that he taught to students.

Kapferer has always embodied, lived, and transmitted the entrancing, creative magic of intellectual ideas. What's more, his work and teaching explores how this creative magic is also there in everyday life where people become entrapped by the power of ideas to create a social world full of hope, joy, suffering, pain, and hate. It is this ambiguous, captivating nature of the human imagination in its relationship to creating structures of social order, domination, and freedom that runs through Kapferer's evolving intellectual concerns. It was there in his concern with: transactionalism and the kinds of relationships people negotiate and generate within wider constraints; the way play elaborates, expands, exhausts, and allegorically reworks the structure of everyday social relations; the role of ritual and aesthetic mediums in the transmission and transformation of structures of meaning, identity, and social relations; the social and cultural nature

of power and violence; and the relationship of the state to capitalism, individualism, egalitarianism, and the constitution of subjects and subjectivities.

Kapferer has covered a lot of intellectual ground and has always made original contributions. Well steeped in situational analysis and the “extended case method” of the Manchester School, he has always been good at discerning within the minutiae of everyday life the operation of wider systemic relationships (Kapferer 2006). His analytical ability to compose and recompose schemes of interrelationships using detailed empirical material has meant that Kapferer has always been good at generating teaching curricula, at crafting intellectual structures for students to pass through. He emphasized the importance of senior staff teaching first-year students and invariably he took up this challenge himself. As a PhD student in the 1980s, I remember him stressing to lecturers and tutors in the commons room that without a good intellectual base in the first year there would be wasted opportunities in what could later be taught and expected from students. Kapferer’s lectures were charismatic and he was successful in attracting students to a new discipline who had intended to major in other, more established disciplines. In subsequent years, when I taught in other universities such as Macquarie University and the University of Sydney, I became aware of how some senior staff avoided first-year teaching and undergraduate teaching in general. Kapferer loved teaching and knew how to engage and attract students using rich, detailed ethnography to concretize and illustrate more general and profound points about how humans create a social and cultural world only to then become prisoners and products of what they created.

Kapferer never romanticized the creative, imaginative dimensions inherent in human social orders but sought to convey the ambivalent, ambiguous aspects of human creativity, as both necessary for freedom but also able to invent even more horrendous and ingenious forms of domination and brutality. He has never just focused on systems of meaning and has always criticized interpretative approaches that ignore the specific practices, techniques, and ideologies of power that are constitutive of human sociality. This concern with studying the qualitative aspects of ideologies and regimes of power is what drew Kapferer (2011) to the comparative work of Dumont, which he has developed further and differently in his own work on egalitarianism, individualism, and hierarchy, and the different sociocultural forms these take.

Kapferer (1988, 2010) is highly political. He closely follows and interprets world events, debating how they are indicative of particular kinds of social orders and their life worlds, and of changing forms of power and domination. He has always been concerned with undertaking a phenomenology of power that does not psychologize and pathologize power. Instead, like the philosophers he admires—Cassirer (1946b) and Arendt (1951)—he treats seriously the constitutive ideational structures that are inscribed within ways of governing and controlling people. There is a creative and imaginative dimension to power that needs to be historically located within the specificities of particular sociocultural formations.

Though highly original in his thinking, Kapferer does not take his creativity for granted. He consistently works hard at producing and sustaining his originality. He does this in a number of ways. He reads continuously and critically classical and contemporary thinkers, and not just from anthropology but also from history, literature, politics, and philosophy. He also mentors and keeps close to him young, thoughtful students and academics, bouncing ideas off them and immersing himself in the possibilities of their own ethnography. More especially, Kapferer keeps his creativity alive through forming and living a paradoxical intellectual state of being that involves serious and intense commitment to the life of ideas, but also playfulness and irreverence for established positions and even for his own arguments. Often, other academics are puzzled and even annoyed by how Kapferer will in discussions fervently hold to an intellectual position that he later abandons and criticizes or he will embrace a position that he had earlier

opposed and rejected. But what he is often doing in the everyday arguments and debates that Kapferer continually generates around himself is pushing ideas and positions to find their limits and possibilities. He holds them firmly—partly so as to put pressure on them to see where and how they will crack. Kapferer has a restless concern with fault lines and follows them systematically to see where they intersect, merge, run parallel with, and deviate from other fault lines. It is not a question of avoiding fault lines but of immersing oneself in the architectural shapes and patterns that can emerge from their configurations.

Those who are close to Kapferer know that he lives ideas intensely, with a genuine passion and love, and especially for new ideas. He has a restless concern with going beyond established arguments and this includes not becoming entrapped in repeating his own ideas and positions, which he has continued to change and develop over a lifetime. To produce this intellectual movement and momentum, he cultivates practices for risking and destabilizing himself. He dares himself to think unorthodox and heretical thoughts, and so for this reason he develops and keeps close to him trusting friends who understand the serious forms of play that underpin the intellectual arguments that he creates on an ongoing and often temporary basis, and that he might later relinquish or turn against. In Adelaide, Rohan Bastin (2002) and Tom Ernst (1979, 1990) provided this intimate companionship. As Kapferer (1984, 1987) was developing the main arguments of *Celebration of Demons*, Ernst was the careful, thoughtful friend against whom Kapferer would bounce off ideas, possibilities of which he was unsure and still exploring. At Adelaide, the two were always in each other's company in the coffee room and at lunch. Ernst was to be transformed by this relationship and he developed a sociocultural phenomenological approach to Melanesia that had huge impact on Australian anthropology, for Ernst taught and inspired Richard Eves, Neil Maclean, Dean Fergie, Jeffrey Clark, Michael Nihil, Kerry Zubrinich, and myself.

At Adelaide, Kapferer (1972, 1976; Kapferer and Handelman 1972, 1980) increasingly moved away from transactionalism and exchange theory and took up more of a phenomenological approach to religion and ritual that drew on philosophers working on aesthetics, such as Cassirer (1946a, 1953, 1955, 1957), Langer (1942, 1953) and Dufrenne (1973). He became interested in the constitutive properties and power of the particular aesthetic mediums that humans used: music, song, dance, comedy. Like Lévi-Strauss (1972a, 1972b), Kapferer criticized the placebo model of ritual cure and instead emphasized the transformative efficacy of rituals. For Kapferer (1987), this lay in how a ritual began and finished with different aesthetic mediums, with each medium having its own possibilities for constituting and subverting the creation of lived human worlds. In Sinhalese exorcisms, the power of ritual to objectify and unfold a world that could be acted upon proceeded by using music and dance to install a demonic solipsistic reality that would later be progressively undone through comedy and laughter. Jokes and clowning worked to move a patient into an intersubjective world shared with the audience, marked by joint comic recognition of what is pure and impure, absurd and rational, profane and sacred. Comedy here is not just tension release or emotional catharsis but an intellectual reordering of categories. Kapferer developed in a different direction Mary Douglas's (1968) work on the cognitive aspects of jokes that had used Turner's (1967) concept of liminality as the social blurring and destabilization of categories. For Kapferer, jokes have this aspect but they can also be ways of re-establishing hierarchy and order; they can rebuild and reassert a shared cosmological world.

In his everyday interactions with students and colleagues, Kapferer often cultivates a playfulness, a serious playfulness, which partly re-enacts his intellectual arguments about the ambiguous aspects of play and comedy, their power to breach and recompose relationships and forms of order. In his development of transactionalist studies of everyday forms of play in factories in Zambia, Kapferer focused on the limits and articulations of this ability to posit an alterna-

tive world of meaning. The focus was on the elaboration and transformation of one frame of meaning into another (Kapferer and Handelman 1972). This was developed anew in Kapferer's study of exorcism rituals in Sri Lanka which heal by transforming the worldview of patients and audience, using the power of comedy to posit and subvert alternative (demonic) forms of order. Kapferer's focus on the transformative effects, which are produced as comedy takes over from dance and drumming, explored the limits and constitutive power of particular aesthetic mediums. In the background of all of this lurks the intellectual heritage of Evans-Pritchard, whose work on the Azande studied the creative, constitutive, and imprisoning power of cultural forms. Kapferer was also influenced by Turner's and Douglas's redevelopment of these ideas in their concern with liminality and *communitas* as involving breaches and escapes from structure that could nevertheless become constitutive of order. They explored the paradoxical, transformative power of what is dirty, monstrous, comic, and lowly, arguing that there is a creative power to remake and rebuild order in what seems to transgress it. This was also Gluckman's (1954) point in his analysis of rituals of rebellion.

Kapferer is a noisy person to be around; he borders continuously on riotous laughter. But he is actually a subtle thinker who loves to build and craft new systems. Behind the public noise, which occasionally operates as a mask and as tension release, he is thinking and is quietly constructing intricate intellectual structures. He continuously plays in a lively way with novel positions, and this building and tearing down of intellectual scaffolding is full of risk and anguish along with pleasure. To be close to Kapferer is to be aware of the angst that he feels as he combats and mobilizes a fear of becoming repetitive and ossified. He suffers as he pulls down what he has lovingly crafted, and it takes much energy to rearrange and sort what should be kept. He works hard at sustaining an ever-present edginess that takes a heavy emotional toll, which for him is more than compensated by genuine euphoric pleasure, passion, and excitement in the wondrous discovery of something new. It was Nietzsche (1961, 1968, 1982), one of Kapferer's favorite philosophers, who articulated, philosophized, and lived out this sense of creative practices as a playful madness, as a radical questioning of morality and established forms of order.

Kapferer was young (33) when he was appointed professor at Adelaide. It was during a period marked by social, cultural, and political reform. The appointment of Labor Party governments of a Fabian character (in South Australia, Don Dunstan 1970–1979 and at the national level Gough Whitlam 1972–1975) articulated a broader questioning of power, inequality, morality, and established forms of social order, and this had an impact on academia. It set the context for Kapferer's own cultivation of new intellectual positions. Adelaide anthropology became a dynamo of ideas and part of this involved the establishment of the journal *Social Analysis*. It quickly became a major international journal under the careful editorship of Kingsley Garbett and Michael Roberts. Both were close intellectual colleagues of Kapferer, who is still involved with the journal, now edited from the University of Bergen.

The Adelaide anthropology department positioned its new sociocultural phenomenological approach against the individualist, voluntarist, and behaviorist approaches to meaning that dominated popular culture and other humanities disciplines such as psychology, philosophy, and sociology. It also positioned itself as a rival intellectual center to the established anthropology departments at Sydney and Canberra, and Kapferer would never be forgiven for this. Threatened, some derisively labeled the Adelaide department “the Manchester of the South”. This was a humorous appeal to Australian authenticity and nationalism and it implied the department was a poor imitation of something more real that lay elsewhere. Invariably, Kapferer turned around these attempts at academic marginalization, positively valuing them and using them to fuel a radical edge amongst colleagues and students. Kapferer's own creativity is closely bound up with a sense of marginality and this comes partly from a self-cultivated sense of trans-

gression and quirkiness, but it has also been historically produced from the way the established academic centers in Australia feared his intellectual energy and the new directions that he was developing for anthropology. In the mid-1980s, their scholarly agendas and patronage networks had led them to overlook two of the best young academics in Australia: Jadran Mimica and Barry Morris. Kapferer appointed both as tutors at Adelaide, and they became life-long intellectual companions.

Mimica (1988) fitted into Kapferer's love of philosophy. He is a brilliant and a passionate intellectual who also loves the life of ideas and lives it to the full. Like Kapferer, Mimica is also loud and full of mirth. Well read in anthropology and philosophy, Mimica helped to develop at Adelaide anthropology an appreciation for Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of embodiment, Sartre's existentialism, and to a lesser extent psychoanalysis. Though Kapferer was never fond of psychoanalysis, he was not willing to see a gifted scholar marginalized within the discipline, and later Mimica was to join Kapferer at University College, London. Two of the people to whom Mimica became intellectually close at Adelaide were Sandra Pannel and Geoff Bagshaw. They brought the phenomenological forms of Adelaide anthropology into their consulting work, which sought to get land rights for Aborigines.

Morris's appointment as tutor took in a new direction the department's work on Aborigines and racism which Jeff Collmann (1988) had started. Collmann had used Kapferer's (1972) transactionalist work as an alternative to the social pathology models that were being used to interpret Aboriginal drinking. He analyzed drinking as a form of social exchange linking rural with urban Aborigines, and those Aborigines who had work with those who didn't. Collmann also argued that Aboriginal fringe camps were resistances to the policing regimes of the welfare state. This idea was developed anew by Morris (1989) into a Foucauldian-Marxist historical account of the genealogy of Australian race relations. Indeed, at Adelaide, there was a continual debate between the more phenomenological school led by Kapferer and Mimica and the Foucauldian anthropological approach being developed by myself (Lattas 1986, 1987) and Morris (1989). That debate is still ongoing (Lattas and Morris 2010a, 2010b; Mimica forthcoming). Later, Morris was to work with Kapferer on nationalism, egalitarianism, and racism in Australian society and on the commemorative ritual of Anzac Day (Kapferer and Morris 2003, 2006). At Adelaide, Kapferer argued strongly that anthropology should not just focus on exotic others but should also study one's own home society. Using situational analysis and his expertise on ritual, Kapferer analyzed how Anzac day articulated a particular understanding of sacrifice that was constitutive of people's relationship to the Australian state. When he started working on Anzac Day, it was to the bewilderment of some senior Australian anthropologists who dismissed the project, claiming that the ritual was insignificant and in decline. Recent international and national events affecting Australian citizens such as the Bali terrorist bombing, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and local tragedies involving bush fires and floods have all served to reinvigorate and redisseminate into everyday life this particular Australian sense of national identity through sacrifice.

Kapferer's work on Australian egalitarianism, nationalism, and individualism is part of the way he continually stimulates himself with intellectual diversity and intellectual movement. He always keeps multiple irons in the fire, working on a number of diverse projects simultaneously; for this reason, many people find him exhausting to be around. He moves from one project to another as he feels the need to think things through in one domain or as he becomes tired of a set of arguments and seeks new challenges.

A workaholic, Kapferer never stops thinking. When I knew him during the time I was a PhD student, he would wake up at four o'clock in the morning to do a bout of writing and reading. He would then go for an early morning swim at a pool near his home so as refresh and re-

energize his body and thoughts (he still uses swimming in the same way). He would then drive to Adelaide University in his open, roofless Mini Moke, often playing loud classical music. By the time he arrived in the department his wet hair had been dried by the open wind and stood on end, looking like so many twisted antennas pointing in diverse directions to receive whatever information there was around. There was always a mad look about him, which he has maintained. He is still frequently disheveled in appearance and his room is always a mess of papers and open books on the desk, floor, and couches. This outside disorder in personal dress and immediate surroundings is in stark contrast to the internal forms of order he continuously creates, tears down, and recreates. Kapferer's creativity emerges out of these kinds of personal tensions and contradictions between inner and outer, order and disorder, appearance and reality. He never seeks to synthesize or resolve these tensions in some sort of totalizing compromise but uses them as energy, in much the same way as tight strings in a musical instrument create the best sound.

Having a strong sense of humor, Kapferer easily bubbles over into mirth and boisterous laughter. He is very much a trickster figure, for his appearance of muddled, untidy, and messy exteriority belies the enormous energy and care that he puts into clarifying concepts, into shaping and crafting them into intricate arguments that weave together ideas and ethnography. He is a wordsmith who agonizes over the minute structure of sentences and prose, often completing no more than two or three sentences in a day. Alongside this close attention to detail, he is also a system builder who enjoys throwing up large schemes that capture the complex, wider interrelationships in human social worlds. I interpret the wonder that he finds in anthropology as part of a certain mysticism and awe that he generally has toward the structures of order in the cosmos, both at the level of the micro-particles of physics and at the more astronomic level of the origin and scope of the universe. This movement between the macro and the micro is present in how Kapferer ties together the minutiae of everyday practices with larger sociocultural structures and processes. This has always been his strength; it is what he gets from the Manchester School. It is thus no accident that Kapferer loves science fiction, which explores the structure of other possible life worlds, such as how alternative biochemical configurations might sustain alternative alien sociocultural civilizations.

At Adelaide, after having woken up at four am and having already done his serious writing, Kapferer would spend much time chatting in the department's common room, which made him very accessible to students. He was not one of those professors who hid, working in his room. He was and remains quite gregarious and this conviviality has always involved a generous sharing of ideas and time. He has continually been generous with money and hospitality. After the weekly staff seminar at Adelaide, which he always attended and strongly promoted, there would be dinner at a restaurant where the speaker, staff, and postgraduate students would continue the seminar discussion. Frequently, Kapferer would pay for the students and even for junior colleagues. He is good at establishing an intellectual culture around him, for he makes ideas an ongoing part of everyday life. Well read and lively, he called forth the best in others, positioning them as also needing to be well read and capable of engaging in debate. This is also how he engaged first-year students in his lectures (Bertelsen 2012). It was the Manchester model of teaching that involved not simplifying the arguments, for this positioned students as not being able to understand; it diminished them. Instead, Kapferer ditched the jargon and made the ideas accessible and clear. This served to symbolically elevate and incorporate the students into a shared intellectual worldview.

It is impossible to walk down the street with Kapferer without an ongoing analysis of the surrounding neighborhood, its architecture, history, ethnic groups, social relations, and culture. He lives and breathes ethnography; he lives and breathes the extended case study method. This has

all kinds of unusual manifestations, for example, he loves film. He studies closely the detailed interactions, plots, and scenery so as to unpack how history, sociocultural processes, symbolic structures, and social dramas organize the articulation of the narrative and the scenes. Today, he is undertaking an anthropological analysis of film that is going in two directions. One involves comparing film and ritual as aesthetic mediums that incorporate subjects and subjectivities so as to revalidate and reconstitute them. The second is an analysis of Stanley Kubrick's science fiction film *2001: A Space Odyssey*, which explores the changing relationship of humans to technology. The common interest in film, ritual, and science fiction is that they explore techniques for taking people outside of themselves so they can re-apprehend and be returned to themselves in new ways that reinvent the possibilities of what it means to be human. This can also be related to the fact that Kapferer is very much a traveler, indeed, a manic traveler. He is always on the move to conferences and fieldwork sites. He uses physical movement to stimulate and produce intellectual movement. There is joy in the dynamism of moving past what is familiar. But Kapferer also counterbalances this restless physical and intellectual movement by having close social relations to which he remains loyal. He cares for many people both personally and intellectually.

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The Politics of Virtuality

Rohan Bastin

It shows that circumstances make men just as much as men make circumstances.
– Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology*

Bruce Kapferer's work demonstrates that political anthropology and the anthropology of ritual need not remain locked in a functionalist paradigm regarding pomp and power whereby one merely serves the other. Arising from the commonly imagined relevance of politics vis-à-vis the merely representational qualities of ritual, this paradigm is deeply ingrained in the Western secular traditions informing both anthropology as well as common sense understandings. Frequently unexamined by large sections of the discipline and even larger sections of the social sciences with their focus on contemporary Western contexts, ritual is reduced to variations on the old psychological and structural functionalisms. Contemporary exponents of the representational approach react particularly to those ritual forms deemed so exotic as to be incommensurate with the observer's own taken-for-granted and thus rarely identified ideological and cosmological dispositions as well as ritual practices. In place of such exotic ritual, the neofunctionalists identify quasi-rituals such as elections or political rallies that derive something pompous and circumstantial from ritual while deriving their reality from their thoroughly secular basis of *realpolitik* participants—politicians and other citizens.

To suggest otherwise is not to suggest that no separation exists between ritual and routine everyday existence, for that would be to fly in the face of the very separation ritual participants perform and insist upon. With others, Kapferer (2004, 2006a) here notes ritual's attention to detail, to minutiae and to the sense of formulaic repetition as well as somatic deportment. Rather than identify such separation and repetition, such alterity from the everyday, as constituting a simply significant or expressive register that can then serve various functions, most notably legitimating functions when focusing on politics, Kapferer argues for ritual's generative potential and thus its capacity to innovate new possibilities, asking "how some rituals come to have interventional force in ongoing personal and social realities" (Kapferer 2006b: 671) and how ritual participants can themselves become expressions of ritual's "shifting moment". This does not mean, however, that rituals are simply both models of and models for reality. His position is more radical because its starting point is the centrality of ritual as a distinctive mode of human practice. Where other anthropologists are content to leave that side of human affairs to the *aporia* of belief (intimating that some people, generally not them, do certain things according to their beliefs) and focus instead on what they feel certain to be true—actual politics—Kapferer insists on understanding the dynamics of ritual as a form of practice in and of itself.

In the following, I first illustrate by way of one of Kapferer's critics the perpetuation of the functionalist paradigm in political anthropology's approach to ritual. This takes some space, because the paradigm is deeply embedded and, I suggest, highly political. Next, I address the reasons for that paradigm being objectionable and then consider the ways in which Kapferer

pursues a different approach by highlighting what I regard as some of his intellectual influences. Then I consider the importance of Kapferer's alternative approach, which, in its focus on practice, dynamics, and virtuality enables a more radical political anthropology to be pursued.

Ritual as Functionalist Representation

One critic of Kapferer's (2012) study of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism and ethnic violence, Jonathan Spencer (1990: 620), declares that any consideration of nationalist violence in Sri Lanka in terms of its sorcery and exorcism traditions is absurd because "nobody attacks demons with clubs or burns them to death with petrol." Nitty-gritty reality is juxtaposed here with ritual, leaving the latter to be considered as epiphenomenal cultural stuff in the face of politics and the veracity of ethnographic reportage that is deemed to be the missing feature in Kapferer's analysis. In its place, Kapferer is accused of looking for explanations in the strange and arcane rituals he has previously studied. Reiterated more recently in a longer work that Spencer regards as reviving the otherwise moribund field of political anthropology (Spencer 2007), Spencer's critique is that Kapferer's account lacks first-hand testimony of the 1983 anti-Tamil riots. The ethnography Spencer then furnishes entails little more than the fact that the Sri Lankan government was deeply complicit in the riots, with state functionaries assisting to identify Tamil homes and goons of the ruling political party's affiliated trade union doing the rioting. Kapferer fully acknowledged these points, but does not use them to isolate the perpetrators as a social rump.¹ Moreover, he takes up a central question from this evidence: what enables state formations like the Sri Lankan state to switch into a nefarious and exceptional form of itself and blatantly disregard its responsibility to protect?

Spencer also grants ritual a cursory mention in his more recent work reiterating the old notion of ritual's at best functional aspects, tempered somewhat by the particular rituals—elections—being more analogous to the category than genuine instances. Thus he describes elections as rituals of participation or legitimation (Spencer 2007: 77) and insists that we should not treat elections and "other so-called political rituals" as epiphenomenal, "but as crucial sites for the production and reproduction of the political" (ibid.: 78). Now, notwithstanding any disputes as to genuine democracy, its unrealized promise, etc., there is no argument here with Spencer's observation about elections being political; indeed there is no argument with his observation about elections producing and reproducing politics or that "the political is productive as well as destructive" (ibid.: 17). My argument is with the special pleading that results from such banalities. For it appears that when, as Spencer does, one labels an election a ritual, even a "so-called ritual", one must then make a case that the election is actually doing something. Deductively, rituals—the real ones—do not do anything and have no bearing on the real world of politics other than to legitimate.²

To argue, as Kapferer does, a ritual's relevance to a current political reality is also slightly offensive to political functionalists like Spencer, because, I suggest, the approach eschews a politics of recognition whereby the Other is reduced to a version of a modern secular individual according to an egalitarian assimilation of difference. In that scheme, politics becomes the activities of individual politicians who are assumed to be individuals like us in both an empirical sense as well as an ideological one.³ Thus, Spencer (2007: 15) declares that the politics he encountered in Sri Lanka "is a politics of semiotic excess, of transgression, of occasional violence, of humour and entertainment, love and fear." Apart from being as banal as the statement that elections are genuinely political, this statement reveals an individualist politics and with that a psychological politics. It is attuned to the hegemonic neocolonial paradigm that

replaces exclusionary racism with sameness as the only acceptable form of equality. Politics here is the realm of politicians, be they at the local, regional, or national level with little sense of the citizen, other than an occasional fanatical devotee for whom a politician like Tamil Nadu's M. G. Ramachandran was a god (*ibid.*: 14). Thus we can permit a measure of belief, a measure of culture as what resides in people's heads, to enter the story, but for the rest of it we must stick closely to our subjects as being people like us. Most importantly we must not ask what circumstances enable a politician to be considered a god in a context where, for example, language can be referred to as a goddess and linguistic nationalism can become engrossed by ritual possibilities (Ramaswamy 1997).

In Kapferer's approach, however, such a refusal of difference evident in the work of Spencer smacks simply of a Western imperial conceit and of a psychologism closely linked to that conceit. This is precisely why Kapferer's study of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism and ethnic violence was also a study of Australian egalitarian nationalism according to a comparative project inspired, in part, by the work of Dumont (1977, 1980, 1986) as well as the phenomenological method of critical meditation on the historical contingency of our *a priori* assumptions regarding human beings and their lifeworlds. In that approach, one does not take politics seriously by assimilating all politics according to a modern secular rubric wherein human lifeworlds are imagined as common and everything else is a bit of a song and dance. Instead, the potentially radical alterity of another's lifeworld is taken very seriously.⁴

Objections to the Functionalist Paradigm

In my view, two critical points underline why Kapferer's approach is less prosaically grounded in such a Western secular conceit. They are first, as I just noted, a reflexive critique of the contingency of common-sense categories, and second a close attention given to human lifeworlds and forms of suffering as the matter of politics, rather than the analysis of politics as what Marx and Engels (1977: 173) once disparaged as the deeds of princes and states. For, of course, the Marxian critique of conservative history, offering instead a focus on structure, practice, and dialectic, is also a critique of individualism and psychologism striving for a sense of holism, albeit a holism that is reduced by Marx to the materiality of modes of production. Marx, therefore, had little truck with religion and ritual, and, as Dumont (1977) ably demonstrates, was caught up with the modern triumph of economic ideology and has been, for that reason, so spectacularly influential. Nevertheless, Marx's approach is far less individualistic than what someone like Spencer presents as politics. It is attuned to the analysis of everyday life and the nature of class struggle, attuned, moreover, to the relational nature of the total social field and not simply the motives of a few politicians. One can, therefore, recognize the limits of Marxian analysis, but note that individualistic psychologism is not one of them. Importantly, moreover, Marx stressed the necessity of grasping the nature of human practice before thinking about ideas. As I will show, this is highly relevant to understanding Kapferer's approach to ritual as a form of practice and with that ritual's engagement in politics.

Kapferer's reflexive critique draws upon phenomenology and the method of bracketing taken-for-granted assumptions while staying true to Merleau-Ponty's insistence on the rigorous examination of knowledge as always situated.⁵ Such an insistence extends beyond Merleau-Ponty and the other great phenomenologists to the historicist critique of phenomenological essentialism, particularly in the work of Foucault and Deleuze and Guattari. At the same time, highly attuned to the importance of comparison and, with that, to anthropology's principal role in the history of Western thought, Kapferer draws upon the intellectual project of Dumont to

grasp the nature and historical foundations of modern individualism, and to make a case for the exotic in anthropological thought (Kapferer 2013). This exotic is not the rightly disparaged “Bongo Bongoism” that makes much anthropology mere travel writing, but is the intellectual category that drives comparison while being relentlessly critical of the politics of modern axioms rendered as human universals. Moreover, it is a category that can be found everywhere that humans exist.

The second point is the close attention given to forms of human suffering and the interpretation of human lifeworlds. Here, the Manchester School, heavily influenced by Marx but also *inter alia* by elements of the Chicago School of frame analysis, is a dominant influence in its close attention to situational analysis and the refusal to treat ethnographic contexts as pristine and precolonial. This is not political anthropology as the history of princes and kings—a schoolmaster ideologue here or a politician and his goon squad there. Rather, it is a political anthropology grounded in the ethnography of ordinary lives—the ordinary people who attend sorcery shrines and perform exorcisms in Sri Lanka, including schoolmasters and politicians, and who go to the pub and are obsessed with sport, can be deeply xenophobic and participate in nationalist events such as Anzac Day in Australia. Instead of imagining politics as what politicians do, Kapferer’s approach strives to understand the *polis* and its networks and complexity. Street-corner society, African factory workers, the patrons of shrines, and others whose lives are more often better understood by sociologists than anthropologists feature in the *polis* and do so as they are caught up in global processes of capitalism and modernity. Moreover, they are analyzed with an acute sense for the radically contingent nature of personhood—something better grasped by anthropologists than sociologists. Here one can see the legacy of Evans-Pritchard (1940) who demonstrates, for example, how a Nuer man is not simply a man who just so happens to compare his girlfriend to his favorite ox while knowing his genealogy and sense of lineage upwards of eleven generations, possibly including childless women and dead men who became fathers to the children of their wives.⁶ Instead of being mere cultural stuff, these fundamental aspects of that Nuer man’s being—his lifeworld—inform his politics. And so a Nuer prophet calls for a cattle raid. It is not a mere coincidence of the religious and the political underwritten by that prophet’s naked ambition (of which no doubt he has plenty). There is no saying here that such a man is “a man, like me.”⁷ Rather, it is the acknowledgement of that man’s humanity—the concept of being human—in the fullness of his difference as this or that being. It is in this regard, particularly, that Kapferer (2012: 79–84) develops his discussion of ontology and ideology, and it is in this regard, most strikingly and indeed ironically, that the unreflexive individualists like Spencer decry him as a cultural essentialist.

In addition to the influences of twentieth-century French anthropology and philosophy, and following directly upon the last point regarding personhood and lifeworlds that I illustrated with the example of the Nuer, Kapferer’s approach also derives tremendous insight from the profound knowledge of the Berava ritual specialists of Sri Lanka whose ritual performances have been the focus of two major monographs (Kapferer 1991, 1997) as well as numerous articles.⁸ Berava rituals are examined for the insights they convey, not merely insights into Sinhala Buddhist culture, a way of analyzing a cultural system represented by a ritual, but ways of seeing broader processes in human life. It is in this spirit that analyses of Berava ritual are then held up to comparison to reveal how such insights can reflect back upon the world and its processes. Thus, Berava rituals are not simply cultural artifacts to be analyzed according to a set of rational Western criteria that, for the most part, remain firmly grounded in functionalism (be it social or psychological) or firmly grounded in analogous realms of language and communication (Rappaport 1999). They are, rather, to be analyzed as serious intellectual contributions to broad human problems.⁹

The *Suniyama* for example is rich in Buddhist teaching. The songs of the lengthy *hatadiya* (seven steps) sequence of the rite convey themes of origination and the understanding “that it is human beings who are at the controlling and constitutive vortex of existence” (Kapferer 1997: 139). As the patient moves along the seven steps to enter the ritual enclosure—the palace of the first king Mahasammata—he is impelled by his attention, emphasized by the ritual specialists (*aduras*), to the Buddha’s deeds and qualities (ibid.: 149) and oriented to a reorigination of his consciousness and intellect in its relation to the world of others and with those others to the force of sorcery. In addition to these aspects of the rite, Kapferer discusses with the *aduras* the nature of ritual, a discussion that then bears upon his approach to ritual as a practical technology of virtuality.

Practice, Dynamics, and Virtuality

Kapferer’s approach to ritual and anthropology more broadly is, therefore, far more radical in its sense of ontology and personhood than the modernist reductionism that anthropologists like Spencer and others evince. For in Kapferer’s work ritual practice is never treated as representation, nor is it reduced to a putative reality that resides elsewhere and to which it relates as an unreality with at best some kind of function. Instead, ritual is “practice qua practice” (Kapferer 1997: 179)—the dynamic of the constitution of meaning or nonmeaning and not merely a representation of meaning. To echo Marx and Engels (1977: 173), ritual is a circumstance that humans make, precisely as it makes and remakes humans. As a category of practice, ritual is marked by repetition and formulaic attention to detail. These are well-known and well-recognized features along with other aspects such as ritual time, ritual language, the use of music, dance, and other prescriptively gestural embodiments of the world of the rite. However, instead of merely being noted as part of the grammar of ritual that sets ritual apart from everyday routine, in Kapferer’s perspective ritual sets itself apart in order to be the source of repetition, the eternal reduction of difference through the perpetual return to undifferentiated generative practice.

Sacrifice in this scheme has a definitive and primordial place as it informs a dynamic of ritual. Instead of taking as his starting point sacrifice as a violent theft of life that thereby relates to killing and other forms of violence in actual life (Girard [1977] 2005), while at the same time generating surrogates or substitute victims (Evans-Pritchard 1956) as a function of its inherently representational logic, Kapferer (2006a: 520) unpacks the internal logic of sacrifice as a ritual process that is “simultaneously deconstitutive and reconstitutive, the latter being dependent on the former.” The dynamic this informs, Kapferer (ibid.: 521) adds, is “the characteristic of ritual to break down totalities into their constituent elements and to reconstitute them again as totalities (often through principles of exchange).” It is thus in the exchange that representation and substitution become possible, but the exchange is not the motivation of the rite qua practice, because the practical aspect is primarily the ritual’s capacity to establish and re-establish categories, what, after Lévi-Strauss, we know as *bricolage*. While seemingly avoiding this term himself,¹⁰ Kapferer (ibid.) acknowledges the genius of Lévi-Strauss, albeit noting that Lévi-Strauss neglects to extend his brilliant insight regarding mythical thought to ritual as a form of practice that generates and frames its own logic. Where mythical thought is intellectual bricolage, ritual can be likened I suggest to a practical bricolage. No accident, moreover, that Lévi-Strauss’s (1981: 668–675) remarks about ritual come at the end of the *Mythologiques* where he carefully positions mythical thought in relation to mathematics, language, and, most importantly, music. For music is the most emotionally rich yet simultaneously meaningless art par excellence, central, therefore, to ritual dynamics.¹¹

Kapferer's approach to sacrificial dynamics as the foundational logic of ritual practice is, I reiterate, not a reduction of all ritual to sacrifice as some violent offering to a deity, but a dynamic of decomposition and recomposition of which the killing and offering of a life form is a perfect and ubiquitous example. To start with the killing, though, is to neglect the part/whole logic that informs it. For example, in the Hindu temple festivals in Sri Lanka and south India, an expanding circuit of processions of movable metal images constitutes the basic features of the festival days that can run from a single day to a lunar month. At the Munnesvaram temple in Sri Lanka, the movement of processions outside the temple walls commences at the base of the temple flag pole where a few days earlier the festival itself started with the raising of a special flag and bathing of the pole with copious amounts of milk and coconut water (Bastin 2002: 165–170). Now with the processions about to go outside the temple, an ash pumpkin is bisected with a sword and smeared with vermilion powder before being placed in a *homa* fire pit. A long bundle of coconut leaves is ignited at one end in the *homa* before being taken in procession inside the temple and then around the larger processional route. At every compass point and other significant junctures the procession stops and the guardian deities (*bhairavar*) are summoned and propitiated. The leaf bundle is named Purusa, the primordial man, whose self-sacrifice is the mythical origin of the cosmos and foundation of the temple (ibid.: 172). The ash pumpkin, a common sacrificial substitute, is also associated with the primordial man. Deity processions then take place around the village morning and night for the next 25 days culminating in the procession of the great chariots hauled by ropes around the circuit by devotees and stopping at each of those cardinal points. Shaped like an egg-like flower bulb based on massive wooden wheels and extensively carved with images that parallel the images adorning the temple towers, the chariots are likened to the fire of a single camphor flame. The movable statue of the deity sits within this flame. At the front of the chariot is a carved wooden statue of the charioteer Brahma with his four horses symbolizing the four ages (*yuga*) as well as the four directions. As the Lord of Progeny (Prajapati) Brahma is the source of the revolving tendency (*rajas*) (Daniélou [1964] 1985: 232–240) that the procession of the chariots enacts. It is also that *homa* fire now processing around and into the world, establishing an identity and with that an exchange between the cosmogonic sacrifice, the everyday offering of *puja* (the daily temple rite), and the festival as the world pillar—Mt. Meru. That primordial sacrifice is not, therefore, a violent killing or even an offering, but an act of composition of the parts in the whole, according to the fundamental Śaivite principle of the oscillating universe (Davis 1991).

The sacrificial dynamic that Kapferer describes as foundational to ritual practice and which I identify in the Śaivite temple festival closely relates to Kapferer's discussion of ritual virtuality. Kapferer derives the concept of virtuality primarily from Deleuze and Guattari (1994: 112) for whom the virtual stands in relation to the actual—where the actual is not what is but what will become, or more correctly the multiplicity that everything is becoming—and the real, where the real is what is and what has ceased from becoming (such as the events of real history which have taken place). Between reality and actuality resides the virtual as the space and structure of becoming, and it can be marked by repetition, not as the return of the real, but as its actualization as something different. Here Kapferer (2006b: 674) identifies ritual as being both a form of virtuality as with all human practice and ontology as well as a distinctive “technology of the virtual” as structured practice and the practice of structure.¹²

I stress virtuality as a direct and immediate entrance into the processes of reality and their formation. Reality is not set apart, as it were, or re-presented so that it might be reflexively explored. Rather, the virtuality of ritual, and ritual as a technology of the virtual, descends into the very reality it appears to represent, the very representation it engages being a technology for doing so.

In his 2011 Huxley Lecture, Kapferer (2013) extends this concept of ritual virtuality to discuss Deleuze's analysis of cinema as deploying a closely related virtuality and prompting a departure in his understanding of ritual from Turner's dramaturgical approach. His interest is in the nature of ritual's capacity to effect, to generate an emotion, even such a simple one as the recognition, without any other awareness, that indeed a ritual is taking place. Instead of dismissing these aspects as trivial or coincidental, Kapferer stresses their importance as practical dynamics—the creation of the spatio-temporal abyss (chaos) over which the bridge, or better, the tightrope of cosmos appears and meaning can but need not be made.

The representation of Mahasammata's palace in the *Suniyama*, the Hindu temple's being Mt. Meru, or the Christomimetic symbols of an Australian war memorial are thus representations or significant formations that reiterate the past, but do not simply stand for the past rather than create a bridge to an as yet not actualized future. And thus where the *Suniyama* repeats and reoriginates the first antisorcery rites, and every temple does not simply stand for the *axis mundi* but is that world pillar, so too does the war memorial open itself to future possibilities, future wars, and future mourning. Thus, the rituals of Australia's Anzac Day unfold and enfold new possibilities, including being a rite that is not simply antimilitaristic (Kapferer 2012: 168) but also embracing new expressions of Australian aggression in the resource wars of the early twenty-first century. There is no necessity here, no strict and simple determinacy, but only possibility continually drawing humanity back for an indefinite future.

Conclusion

The last point addresses my initial question regarding political anthropology and the anthropology of ritual and suggests that it is in the concept of ritual virtuality that Kapferer identifies the link. More than that, he identifies a fundamental importance of ritual to politics and thereby addresses the elephant in the room of both political anthropology and the anthropology of ritual, which is, to put it simply, why power, the power of command (in French *pouvoir*) is always so heavily ritualized and why so much ritual is concerned with the power of becoming (*puissance*). The answer is not the bland functionalism of a bread-and-circuses legitimization thesis that remains resolutely tied to a deep skepticism that rituals do anything combined with a patronizing attitude toward the believers who become in that scheme like the automata workers of Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*—enslaved to the ritual's dictates, its liturgical doxa and not to ritual per se—and thereby enslaved to the whims of politicians who are granted a politically expedient citizenship as part of the new world order. There is, in short, a politics to that position, an assimilationist politics of recognition. While I may have given an inordinate amount of space in this essay to a critique of that position, I have done so in order to emphasize above all that Kapferer's work is always closely linked to a deeply felt critique of contemporary global politics and the place of anthropology in that politics.

I end with an illustration from recent Sri Lankan history. In 2009 the Sri Lankan government ended its war with the Tamil Tigers through an extremely bloody military offensive that claimed upwards of 40,000 lives in its last weeks, prompting several to wonder if this was not another state-sponsored pogrom in the traditions of 1983, albeit different for being openly state violence. In 2011, the UN released a report into human rights abuses during these latter stages of the war. In Colombo, protests at the UN offices were staged involving Buddhist monks and blue shirt-wearing government supporters bearing a papier-mâché effigy of the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon. Towards the end of the protest, the effigy was torn to pieces with one blue-shirt tearing at Ban's throat with his mouth before being burned.¹³ The fury was, to echo

Kapferer (2012: 29), demonic. Its ritual was, like that of the 1983 riots, the organized political protest and not, as people wrongly imagine, the *tovil* and the *Suniyama* with which, nonetheless, an affinity is formed in the practice and the event.

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■ NOTES

1. And nor should he. Like Kapferer, I was not in Sri Lanka in 1983. I only commenced research in July 1984 and worked with Tamils along the east coast and in Chilaw until early 1986. From the many stories of Colombo Tamils I collected, the organized nature of the riots accounts for only some of the violence.
2. See also Hansen and Stepputat (2006: 300) who describe Kapferer's argument as "an attempt to *explain* Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict" by equating "the religious body of Buddhism with the political body of the state" and being both "unduly totalizing and curiously insensitive to the intricacies of *actual politics and modern government*" (my emphasis). They miss both the comparison with Australia that is at the heart of the argument as well as the fact that the book is not concerned with *explaining ethnic conflict*, but with interpreting the nature of nationalist ideology and how nationalist ideologies open themselves to certain ritual dynamics in the creation of a theater of power and the political. Notwithstanding these errors, the point I wish to note is the distinction Hansen and Stepputat draw between religion and *realpolitik*. This is a modernist secularism or more accurately a naïve positivism deeply embedded I suggest in anthropological approaches and something Kapferer's work eschews.
3. The empirical/ideological separation in respect to individualism is drawn from Dumont (1986).
4. Strikingly too, Kapferer's analysis draws fire from a postcolonialist anthropologist such as David Scott (1993) who has already taken exception to aspects of Kapferer's ([1983] 1991) study of Sinhala Buddhist exorcism rituals by challenging the underlying Eurocentric axioms in the use of certain terms such as exorcism, possession, demonic, and religion; he thereafter extended the critique to assert that the analysis of ethnic violence in respect to Sinhala Buddhist demonology is nothing other than an Orientalist reduction that exoticizes and pathologizes the colonial subject and so maintains its subaltern status (Scott 1990). What Scott neglects, however, is any radical critique of his own position as an assimilation of subalternity to the global postmodern form of egalitarian individualism that aligns the subaltern with being a transnational bourgeois while suppressing this class relation to peasants, working class, Dalits, and so on. Between Scott and Spencer, therefore, an assimilationist affinity becomes apparent. Seen in these terms one can explain why, as Spencer notes (2007: 122), Kapferer's work enjoys more success outside the narrow confines of area studies. This is not because, as Spencer imagines, fine-grained ethnographic and historical knowledge is to be found here. Rather, it is because these settings are where the global articulations of the new subaltern elite take place.

5. See especially the essay "The Philosopher and Sociology" (Merleau-Ponty 1964) and the preface to *Phenomenology of Perception* (Merleau-Ponty 1962: xix).
6. Note that I am assembling this imaginary Nuer person from Evans-Pritchard's seminal work; doing so I add in the knowledge that along with several of Evans-Pritchard's other works, *The Nuer* has been a staple teaching resource and thus important to think with throughout the three decades I have known Bruce Kapferer. I also note Spencer's (2007: 14) misreading of Evans-Pritchard and Fortes' comparative argument in *African Political Systems* as functionalism without culture as completely ignoring the longer ethnography as well as missing their point about comparison. But this is the oversight that informs the kind of reductionism Kapferer's work eschews.
7. See the Water Hill film *Geronimo: An American Legend* (1993) where the character of Charles Gatewood, the US officer who captured Geronimo, replies to the war chief's defiant declaration of who he is and what he has done that he, Gatewood, "is a man like you." Thus the capture is, in every sense, complete and an *American* legend is born. My thanks to Jadran Mimica for first pointing out this moment of the film.
8. Of the articles, I note in particular Kapferer 2002, 2005, 2006b.
9. The intellectual debt to Victor Turner and, in particular, to *Chihamba: The White Spirit* is extremely important. For in *Chihamba*, first published in 1962, Turner explores a major healing rite of the Ndembu as *inter alia* "protophilosophical speculation about determinacy and indeterminacy, order and disorder, and dualism and nondualism" (Turner 1975: 23). Thomas Aquinas, Martin Buber, Hinduism, and Zen color the work and confer an intellectual dignity on the Ndembu, especially the ritual specialist Muchona, all too rare in anthropological accounts.
10. Kapferer seems to avoid the term "*bricolage*" perhaps wisely, because the *bricoleur* is always engaging his or her art to address an actual need such as a household repair. While undoubtedly rituals are also engaging the world, indeed often making repairs, the important first principle in Kapferer's analysis is to explore the nonreferential elements and thereby bracket the various functions ritual may serve in order to grasp how ritual may achieve this. Ritual in this scheme is a technology that must be grasped according to its *techné* without being first reduced to something else. Along these lines, he explores in his 2011 Huxley Lecture (Kapferer 2013) insights to ritual made possible through a consideration of Deleuze's approach to film.
11. See Beck 1993, 2012; Friedson 1996, 2005, 2009.
12. The allusion here is to Bourdieu's discussion of *habitus* (Kapferer 2006a: 518; see also 1997: 325 n54).
13. The demonstration was photographed by Asanka Ratnayake and can be seen at http://abrfoto.photoshelter.com/gallery/Sri-Lanka-May-Day-Protests-2011/G0000k_bull6Vhko/C0000B5ovC3I8eXw (last accessed 26 October 2013).

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Bruce Kapferer, Deleuzian Virtuality, and the Makings of a Ritual Masterstroke

Don Handelman

What is a ritual masterstroke in anthropology? Consider this as a conceptual thrust which radically reshapes thinking on ritual for at least one generation of scholars. Ritual masterstrokes have been few and far between. The most evident in recent times is Victor Turner's reintroduction of "liminality" (Turner 1962, 1969). Turner made Van Gennep's sociological idea of liminality the centerpiece of a form of ritual studies that perceives rite as a creative focus and locus of transformation, turning being into becoming:¹ liminality as the time-space of the cultural imagination through the formation of anti-structures and *communitas*.² Bruce Kapferer (2010: 233) understands Turner's development of the liminal as a precursor of virtuality, given the former's generative capacity for cosmology and culture. Kapferer (2010: 235; see also Kapferer 2004) emphasizes that Turner grounded ritual process "in the phenomenon of ritual action itself"; in the powerful functionalism of Turner's time this idea of "ritual in itself" was most unusual.

Turner thereby emphasized the measured separation of ritual from everyday social life, perhaps as that which Marcel Mauss (1954) called a "total social fact," wherein, as he put it once, "body, soul, society—everything merges" (Mauss 1950: 302). Bruce, through his introduction of Deleuzian virtuality into the study of (at least a certain sort of) ritual, is turning Turner's formulation on its head by joining the formation of ritual to that of the ongoing everyday, and yet retaining ritual's generation of transformation. The implications for ritual studies of Bruce's formulation are potentially profound. This is what I delve into.

When Bruce shifted fieldwork from Central Africa to Sri Lanka some four decades ago, I told him that his anthropology would change radically. He encountered Sinhalese Buddhist healing rituals. The overt interiority of these rituals and their intricacy, together with the interest of the ritual specialists in the exegesis of their activities, resonated powerfully with Kapferer's insatiable intellectual curiosity and his indefatigable search for ethnographic fact. This long-term interaction has produced a most important oeuvre of ritual study with implications for other domains of scholarship that treat ritual and religion. Kapferer's encounters with the Sinhalese turned him into a cosmologist, one of the few to emerge from Manchester School social anthropology. Kapferer's contributions have complemented and extended those of his warm friend, Vic Turner. Turner's early fascination with symbolism in ritual, and his later concern with how ritual works through itself (e.g., Turner 1962) found resonance in Kapferer's (1983) earlier study of the performance of Sinhalese exorcisms for which Turner wrote the Foreword.

Bruce as ethnographer is intensely interactive, posing questions to informants that challenge their inquisitiveness, awakening their curiosity about their own commonsensical understandings. The Sinhalese ritual specialists were abreast of such challenges and they in turn pushed Bruce harder to question his materials. In an interview he commented, reflecting on his methods with himself: "I get a position and then work it until it can go no further."³ This does not

end with the exhaustion of a line of inquiry. At some future juncture he will return to (“working back into,” as he puts it) the seemingly worked-out argument with a counterpoint that does not destroy the former but rediscovers it from another, critical angle, thereby driving the inquiry even further. This pushes me to ask about the significance of his turn to virtuality for the study of ritual.

Kapferer’s (1997) analysis of the Sinhalese exorcism, the Suniyama, will become a classic among anthropology’s wealth of “ritual” studies. In 1984 he told me how impatient he was to return to Sri Lanka to study this ritual, for the exorcists had told him that it was foundational for the entirety of their ritual corpus; and he understood foundational to refer to their Sinhalese cosmos. The Suniyama “is the first rite,” the originary rite, in the creation of the Sinhala Buddhist cosmos. Given this, “every performance of the Suniyama is always a first performance ... an original repetition—always new and in possession of all the vitalizing potencies of the first” (Kapferer 1997: 177).⁴ Kapferer’s position offers a radical break with many other studies of ritual.

The victim entering the Suniyama has been ensorcelled and is cut off from the social, robbed of speech, trapped within his or herself, with consciousness dimming and intentionality losing its purchase in the world. Isolated, frozen, the patient is dying. The Suniyama removes the victim from sorcery. The patient is brought to the moment before (self)consciousness is born, the patient not yet fully sentient. The moment of consciousness is (re)awakened and with this, intentionality is no longer (because now, reborn, it never was) immobilized by sorcery. With intentionality the newly born has conscious orientation in the world, and through this returns to a life-way now free of sorcery’s occlusion of horizons of being.

A critical condition that Kapferer posits for this transformation is the following. He calls the ritual-space “phantasmagoric”: “a dynamic that allows for all kinds of potentialities of human experience to take shape and form ... a self-contained imaginal space ... that enables participants to break free from the ... determinations of everyday life ... a space whose dynamic interrupts prior processes but also ... a space in which participants can reimagine (and redirect or reorient themselves) into the everyday circumstances of life” (Kapferer 2010: 244; see also Kapferer 2003: 23, 2005: 673). Within this space, time is manipulated, slowed down.

Bruce emphasizes that the Suniyama is not a representation of the cosmos. The Suniyama *is* the cosmos. The Suniyama is wholly self-referential, without reference to any “outside”. This is so because the Suniyama creates the cosmos entirely out of itself. The ritual contains the elementary premises and dynamics of the cultural order that created the ritual that creates the cosmos. These dynamics enable the continuing emergence of the Sinhalese social. The premises and dynamics of everyday sociocultural order and of the Suniyama are the same (Kapferer 1997:180). Each generates the cosmos of the Sinhalese. This is why one can say that the exorcism intervenes directly in everyday life.

Yet why say each generates, if they are the same? Here is the theoretical step that in my view enables Bruce to argue that the Suniyama is the cosmos, that the everyday is the cosmos, that both emerge from the same cultural configuration, and yet one, the Suniyama, can be used to heal the other, the everyday. The theoretical step is his understanding of the idea of “virtuality” and the consequences of its positioning in the analysis. He takes virtuality in part from Suzanne Langer (Kapferer 2010: 236), from Deleuze himself, but especially from Deleuze and Guattari (1994). The Deleuzian virtual ~ actual relationship offers a distinctive mode of perception and Bruce’s interpretation of this is critical to that which I am suggesting as a potential masterstroke in the study of “ritual”. To my knowledge, Bruce was the first to introduce Deleuzian ideas into anthropology and into the analysis of ethnography.

Deleuze and Guattari (1994: 118) consider the virtual as characterized by chaos, “by the infinite speed with which every form taking shape in it vanishes ... a *virtual*, containing all possible particles and drawing out all possible forms, which spring up only to disappear immediately, without consistency or reference, without consequence. Chaos is an infinite speed of birth and disappearance.” Conditions of everyday existence (which Deleuze and Guattari call a “state of affairs”) relate to the chaotic virtual by taking from it potential that they actualize. With actualization this virtual potential is no longer chaotic, but acquires the consistency of the actual. The speed of virtual potential is no longer infinite; speed slows in keeping with the consistency of actuality. Yet this virtual potential qua potential nonetheless always exceeds that which is actualized and given form in the everyday. Therefore the excessive potentialities of the virtual are themselves a plane of immanence that is fully real yet not actual, immanent of course and, so, connected to the actual which continues to draw from this potential in its ongoing actualization (Colebrook 2005:10).

The plane of immanence is the potentiality of chaos made finite and fully real without being actualized. From the plane of immanence, actuality continuously takes potential which is real and formable. Actuality slows further (and speeds up) according to the exigencies of everyday existence. Writing on the virtual, the plane of immanence, and the actual, Deleuze (2005: 31) once put it this way: “What we call virtual is not something that lacks reality but something that is engaged in a process of actualization following the plane [of immanence] that gives it its particular reality ... the plane of immanence is itself virtual.” In my thinking the plane of immanence is the immanent virtual; potentiality is a never-ending dynamic of the immanent virtual becoming continuously consistent as it is actualized.

Kapferer upends the Deleuze and Guattari formulation. He describes everyday existence—actuality—as chaotic in the indeterminacies of its multiple forces and contradictory trajectories of living. Thus actuality is always an excess, an excess of the social, generated by the competing and conflicting complexities of social life. From this, Kapferer strikes out in a distinctly different direction,⁵ arguing: “The Suniyama is a virtuality in the sense that it is an organization of activities that are integral to the routine activities of the lived-in life world but not subject to the indeterminacies of its processes. ... Actuality is indeterminate, but virtuality is determinate and repeatable” (Kapferer 1997: 179). Here virtuality can be consistent, for “*The virtual is a dimension of the actual* in its process with some of [the actual’s] formational flux suspended or radically slowed down. Virtuality, then, is ... both an intrusion into [actuality] ... and an alteration of critical dimensions within it. Virtuality ... is an unmediated engagement with actuality” (Kapferer 2006: 675, my emphasis).

In this formulation, virtuality is actuality meeting itself, actuality meeting its own constituting premises and dynamics yet without actuality interfering in itself, as inevitably occurs in “chaotic” everyday existence. Thus the virtual is the “really real” of the cosmos, the uncontaminated lineaments of the social cosmos, in contrast with the “real” of the actual, which is indeterminate and uncertain. The chaotic, excessive indeterminacy of actuality is where sorcery thrives, since the coherency of the dynamics that generate and organize existence are obscured, blurred, defocused; their force eroded. But within the phantasmagoric space of the Suniyama, the time of actuality is slowed and consciousness and its rebirth become accessible to the orchestrations of the exorcists as the ritual transforms the cosmos inhabited by the patient (and all the others present for whom sorcery and the freezing of self are a potentiality). This “primordial slowing down” enables the exorcists to “descend into” the deep dynamics of virtuality, to engage with “the very ontological ground of being” (Kapferer 2010: 245), and to “set or reset the conditions from which the world develops or extends in all its changeability and expanding difference. ...

In the virtual time-space of the rite, they reset their patients within the time-space of reality construction" (Kapferer 1997: 180).⁶

In this analysis, virtuality is made functional for the ongoing existence of actuality at junctures where the chaos of the everyday threatens to overwhelm and destroy the lived consciousness of persons, groups, collectivities. In this rendering, chaotic actuality is made self-correcting through virtuality that enters actuality in depth. Virtuality here is a function of actuality and functional for actuality. Bruce subordinates the virtual to the actual, and both to the social; the social is the bottom line of and for the existence of human being. Social-scientific explanation ultimately must derive from the social, discovering its forming through the social, and remaining in the social.

Kapferer's rethinking of virtuality is a radical thrust from which at least three trajectories can impact on the study of ritual and religion. The first follows from Kapferer's argument that the Suniyama creates cosmos entirely out of itself since the ritual contains the elementary premises and dynamics of the cultural order that created the ritual that creates the cosmos of the cultural order. This erases the basic distinction between mundane time-space and that of the sacred. The ritual is entirely its own time-space, yet this time-space is neither radically different nor apart from ordinary lived time-space (Kapferer 1997: 180). Precisely because these time-spaces are consonant with one another, perhaps in the sense of musical resonance, that of the ritual enters into that of the everyday and corrects it by starting over the victim from her/his very creation. No less, this trajectory takes from ritual much of the significance that Victor Turner gave to liminality as the seedbed of anti-structures and *communitas* in traditional cultures.

Another rule of thumb is that whatever begins with the social never leaves the social, for better, for worse. Given Kapferer's interpretation of the actual ~ virtual relationship, ritual always emerges from the social of everyday existence and never departs from the social. The virtual is always tailored closely to the actual. The virtual embedded within the actual, which is embedded within the social, enables the virtual to come forth as the really real, remaking the social from within itself without any need to look beyond. The second trajectory has the social purifying the study of religion of any traces of mysticism and the uncanny. A subtext, intentional or not, of Kapferer's turn to ritual virtuality may be to save the social through ritual (and religion), still the greatest threats to the social (apart from cognitive brain studies), given their tendencies to slip and slide toward the mystical, as did Durkheim in his turn to effervescence in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* and Turner in his turn to the fellow-feelings of *communitas*.⁷

The third trajectory may well strike the continuing prominence of performance studies in the analysis of ritual, which I think both he and I consider as vitiating the analysis of ritual complexity in its manifold depths. Through ritual virtuality, performance becomes more the elaboration through aesthetics and emotion of modalities emerging from the virtual's capacity to play with time and less the sine qua non of the existence of ritual that performance theorists like to give it.

The first trajectory reflects that which I take to be foundational to Bruce's credo for the practice of anthropology. This is his bringing together of the Cartesian "radical doubt" and the phenomenological "suspension of disbelief" (Kapferer 2001: 342). Radical doubt challenges certainty and firms Bruce's antagonism to the presupposition that there can be final closure to gaining knowledge and understanding of human existence (Kapferer 2001: 343). The suspension of disbelief, says Kapferer, enables a "phenomenon to be grasped within its own terms" (Kapferer 2001: 344). One wonders how the conjoining of radical doubt and the suspension of disbelief goes together with his absolute commitment to the social as the beginning and end of the human condition. Or should scholarship necessarily be identified closely with the pursuit of consistency?

Is Kapferer's introduction of virtuality a masterstroke that could alter our thinking on ritual? This may well be so. To date, Kapferer, a comparativist to his core (see Kapferer 2012), refers only to the Suniyama ritual while hinting that his idea of virtuality can be applied very widely to the study of "ritual". Without doubt any of us who read his work seriously are pushed to question the maxims we take for granted and to ask critical questions of him and of ourselves. Kapferer entices thought, now, for me, with his treatment of temporality and his thinking on virtuality, and I offer some considerations on these.

Time is crucial to the Suniyama and to "ritual" more generally. This relates to how the human condition is at all possible. The uniqueness of human time is not that human beings distinguish past, present, and future, but that they create presentness that is continuous with itself, the presentness of the present or the present continuous, even as they know that they move from past into future. The artifice of the "presentness of the present" is that of acting as if time is controllable, the slowing down and speeding up of time, the artifice that enables "ritual" to exist and that in turn enables "ritual" to act on social order.

Historically, in traditional social orders, ritual has had a critical role in shaping and acting on the temporal dimension of humankind by manipulating the presentness of the present. Ritual, in order to actualize potentialities of the human, controls time: slowing, speeding, curving, reversing, obviating. The ongoing creation of the present continuous is that which makes possible copresence, coevalness, give-and-take, and other of the practices through which social life is constituted. The present continuous is the ongoing phenomenal construction of existence, requiring much more social and personal effort than the social constructions of pastness and futureness that are closer to the universal existence of temporal movement in the sense that the physicist Ilya Prigogine and the philosopher Isabelle Stengers (1984) argued for. Integral to human existence is to create and hold open the present continuous and to alter this by design in order to effect and affect social order. The "designs" are those of particular rituals. This argument is in tandem with my suggestion that, in traditional social orders, ritual was the primary avenue through which organized change was attempted and accomplished in order that society act on itself. In these regards, especially in modernity, bureaucratic classification and reclassification took over much of these operations (Handelman 1998: 76–81, 2004: 19–38).

The above is my response to Kapferer's analysis and to Deleuze's reading of Henri Bergson. Bergson argued that time is splitting continually into past and present, and that, rather than present being subsequent to past, the two coexist simultaneously, a moment of present with the entirety of the past. As Deleuze (1988:118) writes, following Bergson: "a memory is not constituted after present perception, but is strictly contemporaneous with it." From this perspective, present is pure becoming (Deleuze 1988: 55). Yet Bergson also argued that the present moment is an extended present of duration (Sellars 2007: 201), however brief the latter. In a later Afterword to his Bergson book, Deleuze (1988: 118) rephrases the above into, "At each instant duration divides into two simultaneous tendencies, one of which goes toward the future, and the other falls back into the past." In this understanding, past and future are created simultaneously and, in my interpretation, it is the present, the effort of continuing presentness, that is so problematic.⁸

My understanding of the relationship between virtuality and actuality is that the virtual is not subordinated to the actual. Rather, the actual is contingent on the virtual, in the terms mentioned earlier (Handelman n.d.). The virtual is chaotic, sheer potentiality, perhaps energy (Villani 2007: 50). Actuality uses—indeed, must use—something of this potential in order to actualize continuously. With actualization this virtual potential is no longer chaotic. Yet this potential always exceeds that which is actualized. Thus this potential becomes a plane of immanence, potentiality made consistent, yet without actualization, and drawn upon continuously

by the dynamics of actualization. Actuality cannot do without virtuality, and is in a sense surrounded by virtual planes of immanence and virtual chaos in all directions and dimensions. Living and practicing our actualities, our cosmos, and its multiplicities, we are in the midst of the virtual. The horizons of the virtual are unknowable, and cannot ever be specified, enumerated, tabulated. Virtual chaos is not tailored to the social. Whether planes of immanence are remains to be discussed. Yet the virtual potentiality of the immanent is nonlinear, and, so, the potential for emergence of the novel is always here and now, in the present continuous (see, for example, Handelman 1977).

Virtuality is actualized during the present continuous, which itself may be a function of the virtual. Sorcery freezes its victim and the present continuous ceases to flow. There is no futurity, no pastness. Time is critical here. Sorcery confutes actuality with virtuality, and the potentiality of the latter disappears. The temporal sense of the victim evaporates. Movement evaporates. Some anthropologists (Marriott 1989; Daniels 1984; Busby 1997) have posited for India (and perhaps for South Asia) a kind of personhood in which the person is constituted through the ongoing flow of qualities between persons, and between persons and other domains of existence in a highly interactive cosmos, a cosmos in which everything flows and likely is interconnected. In such an interactive cosmos fraught with errors of consequence in interaction, it is quite likely that sorcery is somewhere on the horizons of every person as messes accumulate and catalyze (Handelman and Shulman 2004). And then the terrors of being isolated and alone are profoundly destructive.

If so, then I suggest that the exorcists must bring the victim into temporal movement through reawakening potentiality. Perhaps this is best done in the Suniyama by slowing time in order to enter into how the social and consciousness are constituted, thereby rediscovering their potentialities. The Suniyama, the first ritual and the first cosmic corrective, seems to do just this, yet not only through the slowing of time. Deleuze and Guattari (1988) write of “intensities”, and this approach opens to the idea that change can occur in persons and relationships—and in ritual—when intensities are modulated. Intensity is “[t]he quality which belongs to quantity” (Deleuze 1994: 232). Increasing the degree of intensity turns a phenomenon into “something radically different yet maintains ... [its] identity. Despite the radical shift ... [it] remains the same thing” (Bar-On Cohen 2010: 271). This fits with the logic of Kapferer’s resonant argument. Perhaps, too, as intensity increases so does the density of the temporal; as the temporal “thickens”, becoming more densely present, the dynamics of cosmos are more accessible to the ritual specialists.⁹

Kapferer lives and enlivens Bergsonian temporality, thinking and doing the future, actualizing the virtual, continuously trying out virtual potentialities, doing his utmost not to give in to creating and participating in the artifice of presentness that potentially grows stasis, nostalgia, and contentment. So, in a way that is a constant reminder, it is less significant to reflect upon what Bruce has done, but much more to the point to apprehend that which he is thinking and doing, actively pursuing the actualizing of the virtual potentialities of ideas through the empiricism of fieldwork.

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NOTES

1. To understand just how radical this step was one need only compare “Les rites de passage” of Max Gluckman (1962), Turner’s mentor, with Turner’s 1964 rendition.
2. There are those very few of us who argue (through radically different reasoning) that the entire category, “ritual,” is useless and should be thrown out (Asad 1993; Goody 1977; Handelman 1998, 2006). My own view is that the monothetic category, ritual, includes so many phenomena that in their own logics of composition and dynamics are utterly different from one another, with simply no business of being included under the same encompassing rubric. Ongoing use of the category of ritual continues to distort its capabilities to do anything but serve the interests of cultural capital—professional, commercial, and intellectual—in the social sciences and humanities.
3. Quote found at: http://www.anthrobase.com/Txt/S/Smedal_Kapferer_01.htm (accessed 12 March 2005).
4. The Suniyama is no less the originary correction to cosmos injured. Creation and its correction are joined, as one might well expect. In this regard, the Suniyama is much more than an ideological justification for the existence of the exorcists.
5. Kapferer (2004: 48) writes that Deleuze and Guattari describe actuality as chaotic, and that he follows their usage. I assume the reference is to Deleuze and Guattari (1994). My reading of chaos in their work is different, as I indicate in the text.
6. In this the senses are engaged fully through the elaboration and accentuation of modalities of aesthetics, music, and play (on which Bruce has written extensively; cf. Kapferer 1983, 2000).
7. Bruce’s appreciation of Friedson (1996) may stem in part from the latter’s incisive demonstration that among the Tumbuka of Malawi, invisible spirits are made materially, tangibly, felt within the human body through music, a formation of the social (Friedson 1996: 164–165).
8. I avoid Deleuze’s apparent use of the thought of the ancient Stoics and their two distinct readings of time, Chronos and Aion, which exclude one another (Deleuze 1990: 61f.). Deleuze’s rendition of Stoic thinking on temporality is criticized by Sellars (2007: 200), who comments that French scholars (following Bergson) “affirm the extended present as primary,” while Anglo-American scholars (referring to William James) dismiss this argument as “specious.”
9. Interestingly, some translations of the Stoics render “the present moment” as “thickness” (Sellars 2007: 192–193).

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